



Bruno's Hat

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Notes for Parents and Educators

Bruno's Hat offers a playful and poignant look at the problem of bullying. A large number of children are touched by bullying and its harmful effects. Fortunately, there are things parents, teachers, and children themselves can do to help. Many anti-bullying resources offer powerful tools for working with bullies and their targets. In this guide, we offer suggestions for helping a third group: bystanders, or children who witness bullying. Like Bruno's best friend, Peter, these children have an important role to play in the struggle to stop bullying. Here are some ideas for adults who want to help:

1. Be aware that small children, not just adolescents, are affected. Teasing, exclusion from groups, and other forms of bullying start early. Begin talking with children about bullying when they're quite young.
2. Understand the feelings that stop bystanders from taking action. They may hesitate because:
 - ◆ they think the situation is none of their business;
 - ◆ they are afraid;
 - ◆ they feel powerless;
 - ◆ they don't like the child being bullied or feel that child "deserves" the abuse;
 - ◆ they don't want to draw attention to themselves;
 - ◆ they think that it won't help to tell an adult or that it will make things worse;
 - ◆ they simply don't know what to do.



3. Explain that children can often stop bullying without the intervention of an adult. Children need to understand that they can make a difference.
4. Help children build strong friendships that can deter bullying by building the confidence needed to stand up to bullies and by relieving loneliness, which can cause children to go along with bullies in order to fit in. Childhood friendships are often based on proximity. Teach children that the strongest friendships are based on qualities like kindness, loyalty, and the willingness to forgive mistakes.
5. Talk with children about groups that are commonly bullied, such as children with disabilities, those who have nontraditional gender identities, and racial minorities. Point out that kids can even be targeted for such small things as unusual clothing, like Bruno's hat. Explain that it's wrong to bully someone based on circumstances that they can't control or superficial things that aren't important.

Using *Bruno's Hat* at Home with Your Child



1. Before reading the book, ask about your child's experiences. For example:
 - ◆ Have you ever been teased by another kid? If so, what was it about? How did you feel?
 - ◆ Have you ever been left out of a group? What did you do?
 - ◆ Have you ever teased a kid yourself? Why? What happened?
 - ◆ Have you ever watched while a kid teased or made fun of another kid? What did you do? How did you feel?

Let your child's responses guide how you approach reading the book.

2. Read the first part of the book together. Pause after the point in the story where Sergio begins teasing Bruno. Talk about the following:
 - ◆ What does Peter do when Sergio starts teasing Bruno?
 - ◆ Do Peter's words stop Sergio?
 - ◆ Read the words Peter uses when he first confronts Sergio: "Stop messing with Bruno!" Point out that sometimes using "I" language is more effective: "I don't like it when you mess with Bruno." Ask what other "I" language Peter might have used.
3. Continue reading together. Point out that often a bully will stop when confronted, but Sergio keeps making fun of Bruno. Discuss the following:
 - ◆ Why is Peter so afraid of being called a weirdo that he turns away from Bruno? What would you do if you were afraid of being called a weirdo?
 - ◆ How do you think Peter feels about how he treats Bruno? How would you treat a friend in this situation? How would you want to be treated?
 - ◆ What do you think about the way Leah acts? Do her actions make Sergio's teasing worse?

- ◆ How do you think Peter's mom helps him? How would you like your parents to help? Who are other adults who might be helpers?
- ◆ What do you think about Peter's solution to help his friend?
- ◆ Do you think Peter's solution would work every time? How would you have acted, and what other solutions might work?
- ◆ What if Sergio had started hitting or kicking Bruno instead of throwing his hat in a puddle? Are there times when getting help from an adult first is the best plan?

Using *Bruno's Hat* with a Group

Teachers and educators may find the following suggestions helpful in guiding a group discussion. Keep in mind any anti-bullying policies and programs already in place in your school or organization, and tailor the questions to the children in your group. Let their questions and comments shape the conversation.

1. Before reading the book, ask volunteers to define the following: *bully*, *target*, *bystander*. Explain that sometimes children can take on all three roles, at one time or another. Then ask children to put their heads down and close their eyes. As you name each of the three roles in turn, ask them to indicate by raising a hand if they have ever taken on that particular role. Note for yourself how they respond. It's likely that many children responded as bystanders.
2. Point out that (1) bystanders often outnumber bullies and can stop bullying, and (2) it's natural to be unsure how to help someone who is being bullied. Explain that the book you are about to read can help them figure that out.
3. Read the first part of the book together. Pause after the point in the story where Sergio begins teasing Bruno. Discuss the following:
 - ◆ What does Peter do when Sergio starts teasing Bruno?
 - ◆ Do Peter's words stop Sergio?
 - ◆ Read the words Peter uses when he first confronts Sergio: "Stop messing with Bruno!" Point out that sometimes using "I" language is more effective: "I don't like it when you mess with Bruno." Ask what other "I" language Peter might have used.
4. Continue reading together. Point out that often a bully will stop when confronted, but Sergio keeps making fun of Bruno. Depending on what comments and issues arise, discuss some of the following:
 - ◆ Why is Peter so afraid of being called a weirdo that he turns away from Bruno? What would you do if you were afraid of being called a weirdo?
 - ◆ How do you think Peter feels about how he treats Bruno? How would you treat a friend in this situation? How would you want to be treated?



- ◆ What do you think about the way Leah acts? Do her actions make Sergio's teasing worse?
- ◆ How do you think Peter's mom helps him? How would you like your parents to help? What can you do to get help from a teacher at school? Who are other adults who might be helpers?
- ◆ What do you think about Peter's solution to help his friend?
- ◆ Do you think a solution like this would work every time? How do you think you would have acted, and what other solutions might have worked?
- ◆ What if Sergio had started hitting or kicking Bruno instead of throwing his hat in a puddle? Are there times when getting help from an adult first is the best plan?

Bruno's Hat Activities

1. Give children a tag board or poster board hat (see instructions on next page). Invite them to cut out and decorate their hats and wear them as you talk about the book.
2. Explain that a better way to describe a bystander who takes positive action is to call that person an upstander (see [Operation Respect](#)). On a large sheet of paper or a board, print two headings: "bystander" and "upstander." Ask children how they might respond when they see bullying and under which heading their response belongs. For example, watching and not doing anything would be recorded as "bystander." Speaking up as Peter did would be recorded as "upstander."
3. Take a friendship inventory. Ask children to name the qualities they look for in a friend and write them on a sheet of paper. Talk about why those characteristics are important, and ask what other traits might be valuable in a friendship. Then ask children to give examples of actions that demonstrate those qualities.



Bruno's Hat Instructions

Copy this pattern on tag board or poster board so that children can cut it out and decorate it. Attach the cut-out hat to a strip of poster board long enough to go around a child's head. Staple the decorated hat to the strip and then staple the ends of the strip together to make a hat to fit each child.

