

Free to Be

Creating Bully-Free Communities

Guide for Parents

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your interest in bringing the lessons of *Free to Be* home for your students. Here is an overview of the *Free to Be* assemblies and the main points of our program.

Free to Be 1- Creating Bully-Free Communities

Free to Be 2- Keeping the Peace in a Bully-Free Community

Free to Be 3- Going Beyond: Creating Connection in a Bully-Free Community

The *Free to Be* assemblies are 50-minute assembly programs for elementary students. Using multi-media presentation, live facilitation and student interaction, our program is fun while teaching students important skills to prevent bullying.

Types of Bullying

In the assembly, students meet Nate, Ally, and Ryan – three kids who do three different types of bullying:

- Physical Bullying: hits, kicks and takes things – usually picks on kids who are smaller.
- Social Bullying: spreads rumors, breaks up friendships and creates isolation
- Verbal Bullying: uses “put downs”, makes fun of others and uses words to hurt

Clarifying point: We believe that no one is really a bully. We believe that things happen in our lives that cause us to act out in ways that are hurtful or harmful to others. We use a metaphor of a balloon (borrowed from our friends at www.challengeday.org). Imagine that each of us has a balloon right in our bellies. This balloon is the place where all our hurtful feelings go and if we don't release the balloon by doing positive activities, then our balloon gets bigger and bigger. When our balloons are full we do things to help relieve some of the pressure. That could look like screaming, kicking, name calling, etc. More on this later. . .

How to Stop Bullying

In the assembly we learned about F.R.E.E., which stands for:

Flow – don't let it bother you (when someone is teasing you, don't let their words bother you, just let it flow right on by).

Radar – find a way to get safe (if your internal radar is telling you trouble is coming, move yourself closer to a teacher or other kids).

Express – speak up (use a strong “I” Message to let the person bullying know that it's not okay).

Enough – know when to ask for help (when you have tried all of the other ways and don't know what else to do, ask an adult for help).

HOW TO STOP if YOU Find Yourself Bullying

In speaking with thousands of students, we find that most students have used bullying at some point as a way to get what they want. If you find yourself bullying others, look for ways to relieve your balloon in a positive way. Examples would be hitting your pillow, screaming into your pillow, running around the schoolyard, playing a sport, hanging out with new friends, reading, talking to someone, crying or just taking a minute of quiet time. Here are the strategies we teach your children:

- **Walk Away**- when you see a situation where you know you will be a part of it, walk away.
- **Do Something Else**- go play, talk to someone, do something where no one gets hurt.
- **Stop and Breathe**- stop and take a deep breath and think about what you really want.
- **Ask For Help**- talk to a friend or an adult that you know will listen.
- **Empty Your Balloon**- find a way to empty the feelings in a healthy way.

What to Do when YOU See Someone Being Bullied

Often times when students see someone being bullied, they do not know what to do. Many times students watch from afar or turn their backs so they don't have to see it. We encourage students to "intervene" in those situations by stepping in and asking the person being bullied if they want to play or by finding an adult who can step in. Doing the right thing sometime takes courage. Here are the strategies we teach your children:

- **Before-Invitation** – redirect the behavior. Ask both parties to play, or something else.
- **During-Help Solve the Problem**- talk it out giving each student a chance, and then come up with a solution.
- **After- Call for a Class Meeting** – example on page 5

Family Action Plan

Bullying is a sensitive subject. It may bring up feelings of fear, shame, sadness or anger. When discussing the following, remember to use a caring heart and open ears. Share your experiences around bullying, so they understand that it is not just them.

- Discuss and review the three different types of bullying.
- Have each person share the last time he/she witnessed bullying.
- Review and discuss how F.R.E.E. can be used in your life.
- Have each person discuss a time when he/she used bullying on someone else.
- Review and role-play what can be done when you see someone else being bullied.