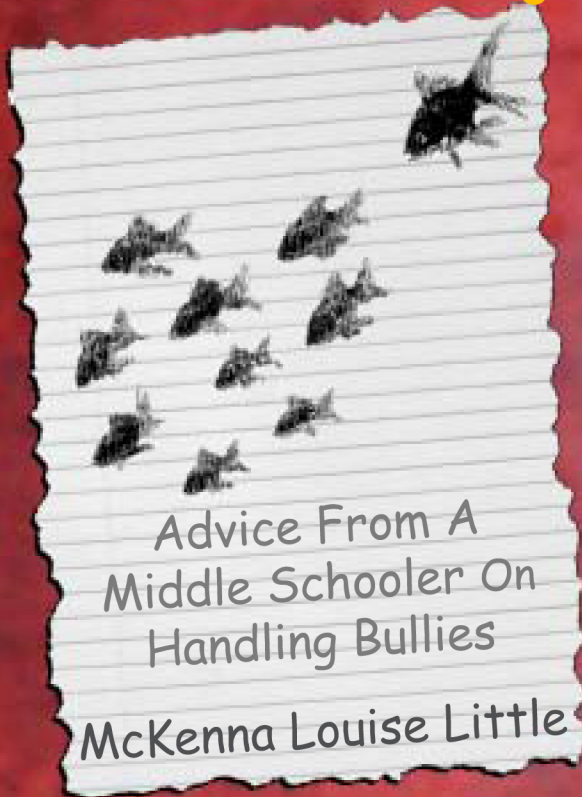


How to C.O.O.K. a Bully



Advice From A
Middle Schooler On
Handling Bullies

McKenna Louise Little

How to
C.O.O.K.
a Bully

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my little brother so he will know how to handle bullies like I did when I went to school.

Contents

Introduction

1. "C" Is for Calm page 7
2. "O" Is for Okay to Stand Up for Yourself page 23
3. "O" Is for Okay to Stay Quiet page 39
4. "K" Is for Keep it Safe page 67

Introduction

Have you ever wondered what to say when you are bullied? Wouldn't it be great to know exactly what to say to the kid who wants to beat you up after school, or makes fun of the way you look or the way you act? This book will help you.

Whenever you get bullied by someone, you don't have to feel badly because knowing what to say and do will make you feel good about yourself afterwards, and can also stop the bullying.

Bullying makes us feel mad, upset and sad. It's funny, sometimes a bully can even make me feel like I did something wrong. I was there when a bully was so mean to my friend Lilly that she cried right in the classroom. I didn't know what to do, so I just told her everything would be okay. But I wished I knew how to tell her exactly what to do and say next time this happened.

Being in the 6th grade, I wrote this book to help other kids like me know what to do when a bully strikes so that you will not be so upset and can be happier.

2 How to COOK a Bully

Have you ever wondered why some kids are bullies? Me too. I don't know whether it makes bullies feel good about themselves or they are showing off to get attention. I don't care. I'm not a doctor; I'm 11 years old! All I really care about is "what to do" when somebody decides to be a bully to me. So I wrote this book.

I've even seen bullying get dangerous. Sometimes a bully wants to hurt people or beat them up. It happens all the time. So, I decided to share some ideas of ways to cool things off or at least stay safe.

Bullies operate in several ways. Sometimes they threaten us, but threats aren't always about hurting you physically. A bully can threaten you verbally too. What if a bully said, "If you don't do my science project for me I'll tell the teacher that you were the one who spray painted her chalk board red." Even though you didn't spray paint anything, the threat is a way of bullying you with a threat.

Another form of bullying is insulting or picking on us. Have you ever known a kid who said something like, "Your face is such a mess, why don't you get your dog something different to chew on?" Or, "You're ugly; didn't I see you in the monkey section at the zoo?" What do you say

to something like that? What are you supposed to do? Well, this book will help you with those questions.

How about the bully that likes to find your weak spot and rub it in? Like when a bully finds the thing that hurts you the most and they make fun of it. I have a friend whose Dad passed away and there was a bully who made fun of him for "not having a Dad." He was also the shortest guy in school and cried when a bully made fun of how small he was. This book will suggest things to try when a bully tries to hurt your feelings.

A favorite of some bullies is laughing at you or making fun of you. I heard about a kid with a big nose who had to suffer this from a bully, "Your face looks like you've been using it as a doorstop." I'll give suggestions on what to do when a bully is making you the butt of their jokes.

I hate gossip, but some bullies love to spread rumors as a way of making themselves feel more important and proud of themselves. It doesn't matter if the gossip is true or not, it makes you feel horrible to have mean things said about you behind your back. I wrote this book to help you know what to do if rumors about you are going around school.

4 How to COOK a Bully

I wrote this book because I've seen a lot of kids get bullied, and I know you have too. I wanted to help you know what to do. This book shows you "how to C.O.O.K. a bully" and the process is easy to follow. Each letter in the word C.O.O.K. stands for a different strategy for handling bullies.

The "C" in C.O.O.K. stands for "Calm." I'll give examples of how "freaking out" doesn't help the situation at all.

The first "O" in C.O.O.K. stands for "Okay to stand up for yourself." If someone says something that's not true about you, or if it hurts you, it's alright if you clear things up by correcting what they said.

The second "O" in C.O.O.K. stands for "Okay to be quiet," which means you can think something, but not say it. Let's say a bully says, "You're ugly." If you turn around and say, "Well, you're fat," that really doesn't help the situation. It's okay to think it and not say it.

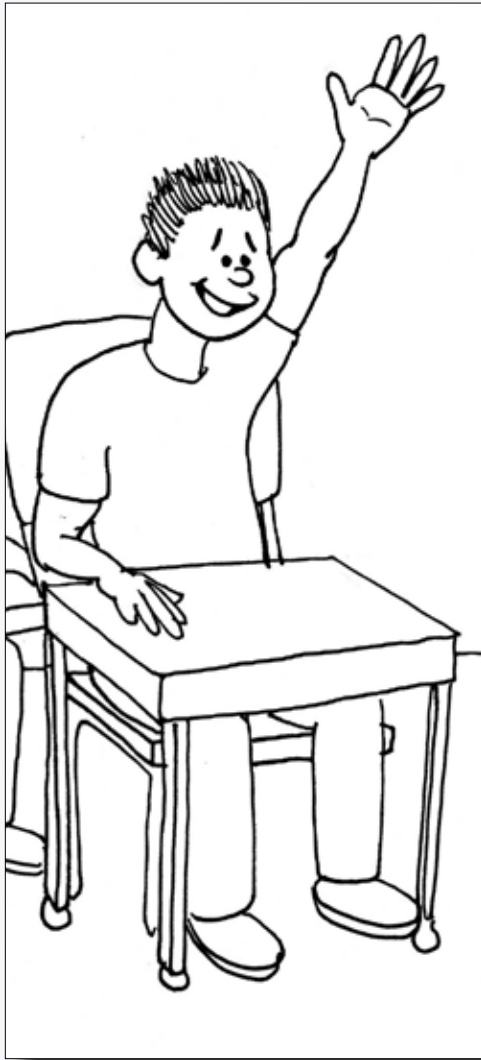
The "K" in C.O.O.K. stands for "Keep it safe." If a bully wants to hurt you physically, like punching you, shoving you or even worse—your job is to find your exit and stay safe and sound. I'll talk about that in the pages that follow.

It doesn't matter if a bully comes after you in

the hall, in your classroom, the cafeteria, at a friend's house, or on the play ground. Even if a bully picks gym class, the school bus, the school yard, or even in the bathroom to pick on you, this book will cover steps you can follow to stop the bullying.

So let's see how to use the first key to handling bullies in our first story and take the first step in learning "how to C.O.O.K. a bully."





1

"C" Is for Calm



Cindy raised her hand for the fourth time in a row. Everyone rolled their eyes. The teacher tried to pick someone else because Cindy had answered all the questions already. The bell rang and all the kids ran out of the classroom.

Cindy walked into the hallway and saw Dan standing there. Dan immediately told Cindy, "Hi, Cindypoo."

"What's up, Dan?"

"You think you're so smart don't you?" Dan frowned.

"Yes, I am. Thank you for the compliment," she smiled confidently up at Dan.

Just then a group from their 6th grade Social Studies class filed out into the hall past them. Dan saw them and immediately raised his voice so they could hear him.

"Cindy, your purple Barney underwear is showing," Dan lied.

Cindy wasn't wearing Barney underwear, of course, but somehow couldn't help but look down to check if anything was showing.

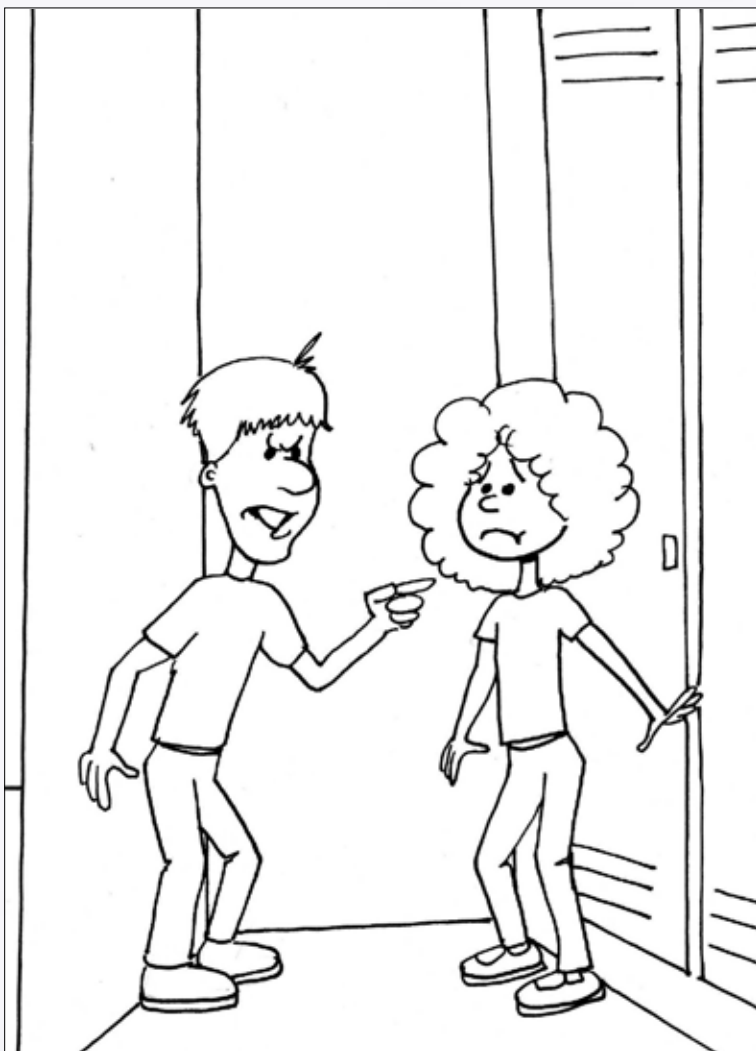
Cindy screamed at the top of her lungs, so the group could hear, "I am NOT wearing Barney underwear."

Dan jumped on Cindy's reaction and said, "Well then, what are you looking down for?"

The 6th graders turned the corner laughing at Dan's joke. With the other kids now gone, Dan immediately lowered his voice and, mean again, said, "You have some big brains for social studies and I need you to bring up my grades for me."

"I'll check my schedule. Ooops, looks like I'm 'all full,' plus you have a brain too, Dan, but I think the warranty ran out."

"Cindy, listen carefully to me, I want you to do my homework for me, and tomorrow during 8th period you need to let me cheat off your test."



Cindy's eyes opened wide as she backed up and then she turned and ran away like she had been frightened by a ghost.

Dan smiled at the reaction. "That's a classic," he thought, "I love it when they scream because I know I did it right."

As Cindy shuffled home, she wondered what would happen if she did not do Dan's homework. She thought to herself, "Should I do what Dan wants, or not? If I do, Dan will treat me like a slave, and if I don't he might hurt me. If the teachers find out I'm letting him cheat off me, I'd get in big trouble. I might even go to the office, which goes on my record. If I don't do his homework and let him steal my test answers, Dan might make fun of me about my parents. He knows my parents are going through divorce." Their parents had gone to school together and Dan knew everything about the divorce because their moms talked on the phone every day.

Cindy's hand shook as she took the house key out of her backpack. Worried about what to do, she ran up the stairs and slammed the door behind her. She neatly put her backpack in the closet, on the hook labeled "Cindy's Backpack," and laid back on her bed.

Hands behind her head, staring at the silver stars painted on her ceiling, Cindy sighed, "Maybe I'll do it just this one time." She calmed down as she thought, "It would only take me 15 minutes to do his homework for him, and instead of stealing my answers during class, I could just draw a "cheat sheet" on his hand before class." She began to get a feeling of relief thinking, "Whoa, this is going to be easy."

Smiling to herself she thought, "I think everything is going to be okay."

But then it struck her, "Wait a minute, what if Mrs. Planton recognizes my handwriting on Dan's homework. She's smart like that." Cindy's stress began to rise again; "Also, what if one of the teachers saw me writing the cheat sheet on Dan's hand?"

Nervously she flipped over onto her stomach. She screamed into her pillow, "And if I do this for him once, he'll probably ask me to do this every day for every class."

"Ughhh, what should I do? What should I do?"

Just then her heart started beating fast, but not from nervousness. It was something else. The self-talk in her head started whirling fast,

like a tornado in her head. It almost felt like all her thoughts were going to burst out from the top of her head and then she heard "POP." Like one huge kernel of popcorn popping, a sound came from the top of her head.

Surprised, she glanced around the room and saw on her shoulder a little version of herself blinking and smiling back at her.

Cindy screamed, "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAhhhhhh" at the top of her lungs and flung "Little Cindy" off her shoulder with flick of her finger.

"Whoaaaaaa!" cried Little Cindy as she flew backward into the closed door. "Whaack!" she slid down the door with a thump onto the cold wood floor. "Why did you do that?" she asked Big Cindy.

Picking herself up off the floor, Little Cindy flew in front of Big Cindy hovering like a hummingbird in front of her face, saying, "I'm here to help you with Dan."

Big Cindy, still in shock, said, "Who are you? Where did you come from? As a matter of fact WHAT are you? You look like a 'Little Me.'"



Staring confidently in Big Cindy's eyes, she responded, "I'm your conscience, I'm part of you, Cindy."

"Yeah, right," Cindy said moving off the bed standing to face Little Cindy, whose little wings blurred as they fluttered to keep her mid-air in front of Cindy.

"I can help you with Dan. I have some ideas about some things you can say and do when Dan

is mean to you or makes you do his work," smiled Little Cindy.

"How do you know anything about it? What do you know?" scoffed Big Cindy.

Confidently, Little Cindy explained, "I have been with you your whole life because I am part of your mind. I am the part that can help you think things through without freaking out. I am the part of you that figures out what to do."

"Well if you are so smart, then tell me how to get Dan off my back."

Calmly, Little Cindy looked her larger self in the eye and said, "There are four things you can do to C.O.O.K. a bully, but I think the first thing will work perfectly with Dan."

Putting her hands on her hips, Big Cindy said, "So what's your great idea 'smarty?'..." She's not wearing pants, thought Cindy, "So, what's your great idea 'smarty dress?'"

Little Cindy, happy for the opening, said, "The first step to C.O.O.K. a bully is harder than it sounds."

"Well, don't just hover over me, hurry up and

tell me will 'ya?"

Smiling confidently again, Little Cindy slowly said, "Just stay calm and you can work this out by just doing that one thing."

Mouth wide-open, Big Cindy rolled her eyes. "You've got to be kidding. Are you serious? That's it? Just stay calm; that's the best you've got?"

"Yup, yup, that's it, but it's harder than it sounds. Think about it; when Dan made fun of you why did you freak out? If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?"

"Well," said Big Cindy, "I didn't know he was going to say that about my underwear and it was embarrassing."

"Okay, but now you do, so you can think about how to stay calm next time."

"Hmm," thought Big Cindy, "she's right. I mean I'm right. I mean... this is confusing talking to my own conscience."

Little Cindy, could, of course, hear everything Big Cindy was thinking, and said "Good, it's done then. Let's try it out."

Cindy jumped as the bell rang to let all the kids into school the next morning. "Oh, my gosh, I hope this 'staying calm' works. Dan is going to be waiting for me in front of Social Studies 1st period."

Breathing deeply in and out, she struggled to stay calm. She couldn't help it, she looked cool, but her heart felt like it was beating 100 times a second.

As Cindy headed into the school, she was relieved that she didn't see Dan outside. Instead she saw Sarah standing as tall and graceful as ever, laughing with a group of her friends who stopped her as she happened to pass by Cindy.

Cindy smiled as she saw Sarah, but knew this popular group of girls wouldn't say "Hi." They didn't know Cindy existed, even though they had all been going to school together since 2nd grade.

Cindy frowned when she spotted Dan across the sidewalk. He looked ridiculous as he leaned against a tree, puffing out his little chest to look like a weight lifter and flexing his tiny biceps to impress Sarah. Dan said, "Hi, Sarah."

"Hi, Dan," Sarah smiled in response. Cindy knew Sarah probably didn't know Dan very well, but she was just so nice to everyone.

"Good morning to you too, Cindy," Sarah shocked Cindy with the greeting.

"I guess she does know me," Cindy thought as she fought back tears in anticipation of the confrontation about to take place with Dan.

Sarah sensed something was wrong as Dan spotted Cindy walking up the sidewalk glaring at her. Dan had "Social Studies" business with Cindy.

"Got my Social Studies homework finished, Cindy?" Dan glared, forgetting Sarah was standing right there.

Calmly, Cindy took a deep breath and said, "Sorry, Dan, I didn't do your homework, and you can't cheat off me during the test today either."

Dan fumed, not caring who was around. He shot back at Cindy, "So you changed your mind did you? What did you do with your diaper?"

Cindy, stayed calm and said, "Listen to me

Dan, you can get in as much trouble as me. Mrs. Planton could recognize my handwriting or we could get caught with you stealing my test answers."

Dan paused to think, but stormed ahead, "Cindy, you're such a nerd, and that tight T-shirt of yours looks uncomfortable. Why don't you slip into something more comfortable...like a coma."

Cindy, ignored the insult and stared him down, "Dan, you're smart enough to do your own work. I can tutor you, if you want."

Sarah watched quietly to see Dan's response. She didn't like Dan pressuring Cindy to do his work, but she was impressed with Cindy's calm reaction to him.

Frustrated, and now nervous about his Social Studies grades, Dan prepared a "low blow."
"Cindy, is it true that your mom is divorcing your dad for religious reasons? I heard your dad thinks he's God and your mom disagreed, so she left him."

As calm as she was, it upset Cindy that Dan would say something so cruel. Their family believed in God and this was just too much. Many things ran through Cindy's mind, but she kept

remembering "Little Cindy's" advice, "Stay calm. Just stay calm."

"Whoa, this is not easy," she thought.

She took a deep breath, looked Dan in the eyes and said, "I always liked your parents, Dan. I never knew you felt that way about my parents because my parents have always loved you."

This stopped Dan. He thought for a moment, but for the first time ever, no words came to mind.



Cindy started to say something more, but Sarah spoke first, "Dan, you are funny, but you need to be nicer. If you weren't so mean, people would like your jokes."

If Cindy's comment stopped him, Sarah's comment literally "shut him down."

Cindy walked over to Dan, who was staring quietly at his shoes. Putting her hand on his shoulder, Cindy said "Dan, you could be such a great guy, if you didn't make fun of people." Sarah smiled and nodded her approval to Cindy as she walked away.

"Your parents really like me that much?" Dan slowly asked Cindy.

"Of course, Dan. I heard that my dad took your dad to the hospital to be with your mom when you were born."

"I wish my parents felt that way about me. Heck, I just wish they'd come to my band concerts or tell me I'm special every once in awhile," Dan mumbled.

"Let's go to homeroom and get you ready for the Social Studies test and get your homework done. If you want, at lunch I can ask Sarah if

she'll go with me to your band concert tomorrow night."

Before going into 1st period, Cindy stopped in the girls' bathroom to calm down from all that had just happened. She felt good about herself for stopping Dan's bullying just by staying calm. She adjusted her hair and winked as she smiled at herself in the mirror. "Little Cindy" winked back at her as she heard her say, "Calm is the "C" in the word C.O.O.K., and if you want to C.O.O.K. a bully, the next letter "O" is an idea that's just as powerful as staying calm."

"Hmmm," thought "Big Cindy," "I wonder what the "O" in C.O.O.K. stands for.

~~~



2

"O" Is for Okay  
to Stand Up for  
Yourself



"Ouch!" yelled Tommy as he stumbled after a great rebound. One look by the coach at his badly skinned knee and "off to the nurse's office" Tommy went.

Tommy took a deep breath as the nurse poked his knee to be sure it wasn't broken. Nicole boogied by the nurse's office with her iPod "in" as she noticed Tommy up on the exam table. "OOOUCH!" said Tommy as the nurse poked his knee again.

Nicole smiled as she pulled one ear plug out of her ear. "Did you bring your asthma inhaler today Tommy?" asked the nurse. "Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm okay, Nurse Shangri. I don't have my inhaler with me, but I'll be okay once you take your finger out of the middle of my knee," said Tommy.

The second bell rang, so Nicole groaned as she realized she was tardy for her 4th period math class. She spun around to the main office to get a tardy slip.



"So who can tell me the value of Pi?" asked Nicole's math teacher. "Anyone? Anyone?"

Just as it looked like nobody was going to speak, Connor raised his hand. Nicole wished Connor knew and liked her better. He was Captain of the Computer and Technology Team, which was where Nicole wanted to belong.

"I know," Nicole thought, "I'll get his attention by showing him I am 'on the inside' and know 'fast-breaking news' before anyone else in the 7th grade."

She scribbled out a note as the teacher lectured and passed it towards Connor. One by one, the kids started laughing as the note worked its way toward Connor. Finally it reached him.

Nicole held her breath for his reaction.

Slowly he unfolded the note to scan it, but the teacher turned around from the board to ask the class another question. Connor quickly pocketed the note and raised his hand again.

"Ugggh," thought Nicole.

The halls filled instantly after the bell rang.

As the kids came out of 4th period math, they were smiling at Nicole and then they saw Tommy walking toward them with a bandage on his knee.

"Awww, here comes little Tommy with his hurt knee," one kid yelled out. Another kid said, "Hey Tommy, can I kiss your knee and make you stop crying?"

Puzzled, Tommy looked at Connor who was in the middle of the group, but Connor seemed puzzled too. Smiling, he shrugged his shoulders.

Tommy stopped briefly at his locker and then headed to 5th period reading class with Connor in tow. When Tommy entered the class there was a big laugh. As Tommy settled into his seat, the kid next to him said, "Dude, did you really cry at the nurse's office?"

"What?" Tommy asked.

Tommy spun around as the kid on his other side said, "Yeah, we heard that you forgot your inhaler and cried so hard that Nurse Shangri had to slap you to calm you down."

"No way, Dude, I'm busy right now. Can I ignore you some other time?"

"Seriously Tommy," the kid behind him now started up, "We all heard you got caught peeking in the window of the girls' locker room and almost broke your leg falling off the top of the lockers."

"What?" Tommy said again.

"Yeah, we all heard you almost had an asthma



attack and started crying uncontrollably in front of the nurse."

"But the best part, Dude," said the kid next to him, "was that the nurse was holding you in her arms while you were sobbing and she saw so much dandruff on your head, she told you the principal should call school off for a 'snow day.'"

Everyone in the class laughed uncontrollably again as Tommy stared. He was annoyed by all this nonsense at his expense.

Connor tried to hold back his laughter. He didn't know what everyone was talking about, because he still hadn't read the note Nicole passed around in class. The note was still in his pocket. But it was almost impossible for Connor to keep from laughing as one round of his classmates' laughter started another round of laughter. Soon the kids were laughing hysterically.

"This is out of control," thought Tommy. "Even the teacher is laughing at me now."

The day passed slowly for Tommy as he was the object of laughter in every class he entered. The teasing was worse in the halls. It seems the story was getting bigger and meaner as the day went by.

By lunch time, the story had grown to having Tommy begging the nurse for an ambulance to take him to the hospital.

In the afternoon, the story took an even more unpleasant turn. The rumor was now focused on a topic that secretly bothered him. He hated the way he looked and thought he was plain looking, maybe even ugly. By 6th period, as he walked into his art class, the kids had a hideous drawing of him up on the board. "Tommy, is it true that the girl who caught you peeking in the locker room said 'Hey ugly, stop looking in here, and besides don't you need a license to be that ugly?'"

"That's it!" he thought, "I have got to get out of here to think for a minute." He got a permission slip to go to the bathroom where he could think alone.

"Somebody is spreading ridiculous rumors about me," he thought. "I know, the next person who laughs or makes fun of me I'll just punch them out. Or," he brightened up even more as he pondered, "even better, I could just leave school right now and wait this out at home." Yes, leaving school and going home sounded like a good idea. What a relief to not be the object of everyone's humor, especially getting away from kids making fun of my looks, he sighed.

"But, wait a minute," he worried, "then I wouldn't know who's spreading all this around. Even worse, everybody will think this absurd story is true." He thought so hard that he thought he might get dizzy.

Then he heard "POP." Like one huge kernel of popcorn popping, a sound came from the top of his head.



Surprised, he glanced around the boys' bathroom and saw hovering next to him a little version of himself, blinking and smiling back at him.

Tommy jumped back and screamed, "Woooooaaah," at the top of his lungs and waived his hands around trying to swat "Little Tommy" like a fly.

"Wait a minute, Tommy, I know how to help with all these rumors," said Little Tommy.

Interested now, but confused by this ludicrous little bird that looked like him, "Did you start that rumor, you silly little man?"

"I'm not a man," said Little Tommy, "I'm your conscience and I did not start that rumor, but I do have an idea how to stop it."

"Really?" said Tommy who was now 'all ears.'

"Yes," said Little Tommy, "I know how to C.O.O.K. a bully in four steps."

"So it's a bully who's doing this?" Tommy asked.

"Of course," said Little Tommy., "Gossip is a favorite way bullies get attention and try to feel better about themselves."

"Well," said Big Tommy, "what are the four steps to C.O.O.K. a bully?"

"You are doing fine with the first step in C.O.O.K., which is 'staying calm,' that's the 'C' in C.O.O.K."

"Calm," said Tommy, "yeah, right, I screamed when the nurse put her finger in my bad knee."

"Yes, but you've handled the gossip better than most would," Little Tommy said while buzzing around Big Tommy. "What I want you to do is focus on the first 'O' in the word C.O.O.K., which is 'Okay to stand up for yourself.' Can you do that?"

"You mean punch the next person who laughs at me in the face?"

"No," said Little Tommy, "I mean telling what really happened and confronting the lies head-on."

"You're kidding! That's it?" Big Tommy said unconvinced.

"Yep, that's it," and with that Little Tommy disappeared with the same "POP" that made him appear in the first place.

Heading to the computer lab in the science department to find his geeky friend Connor for some advice, Tommy passed an 8th grader at the water fountain who sprayed water from his mouth as he giggled at Tommy passing by.

"What's so funny?" Tommy asked him.

"Well, you know," said the 8th grader, "You're the guy that got caught by the girls' locker room today and then freaked out in the nurse's office."

"If you're going to laugh at me could you at least get it right?" Tommy asked.

The puzzled 8th grader listened as Tommy continued, "I did hurt my knee and go to the nurse's office, but I was playing basketball outside. You can ask Coach Wilson if you like. He's the one that sent me to the nurse."

The 8th grader wasn't laughing anymore, "But what about crying like a sissy in the nurse's office?"

"Well, I did scream when she stuck her finger in the hole in my knee, but I didn't cry a single tear."

"Gross, Dude, did she really stick her finger in your knee?"

"Yes, she did. Ask her," smiled Tommy.

"Cool," said the 8th grader, stopping his football buddies walking by. "Hey guys, listen to this. Tommy here scraped his knee so bad that Coach Wilson sent him to the nurse."

"Whoa," said one of the guys, "I thought Coach



Wilson never sent anyone to the nurse. I've never seen that before."

"Yeah, but that's not the best part, Dude," the 8th grader continued. "Then Nurse Shangri stuck her finger in his wound."

"Oh man... that's gross, so what happened?"

"He just screamed at her," smiled the 8th grader.

"That's cool," said the football player.

That settled, Tommy headed on to find Connor.

Turning the corner into the Computer Lab, Tommy saw a concerned look on Connor's face as he stood there holding a note in his hand and talking to that weird girl Nicole. Both looked serious, but Connor turned to Nicole and said, "Go ahead, Nicole, tell him. I'll leave you two alone."

Connor closed the door and Nicole, ashamed, stared down at her purple Converse sneakers, avoiding looking at Tommy.

She started slowly, "I'm sorry, Tommy."

"For what?" he asked.

"Well, I'm the one who spread all those rumors about you today."

Stunned, Tommy started to leave the Computer Lab, but remembered what "Little Tommy" advised him. "I need to stand up for myself for once," thought Tommy.

Spinning around on his heels he looked calmly into Nicole's eyes and asked, "Why did you do that, Nicole?"

"Well, I thought if I could get Connor's attention, he would ask me to join the Computer and Technology team. But it back-fired. I didn't realize he was a friend of yours."

"Well, just so you know, I did not peek in on girls, I did not cry, and I may be ugly but I make up for it on the basketball court," said Tommy standing up for himself.

"I know," said Nicole "I'm sorry. If that happened to me I would have moved out of the country by now."

"Well, you can apologize by setting the record straight around school." Tommy continued standing up for himself. "If you set things

straight, then I'll tell you a guaranteed way to get Connor to let you on his computer team. I've known that guy since we were in diapers together."



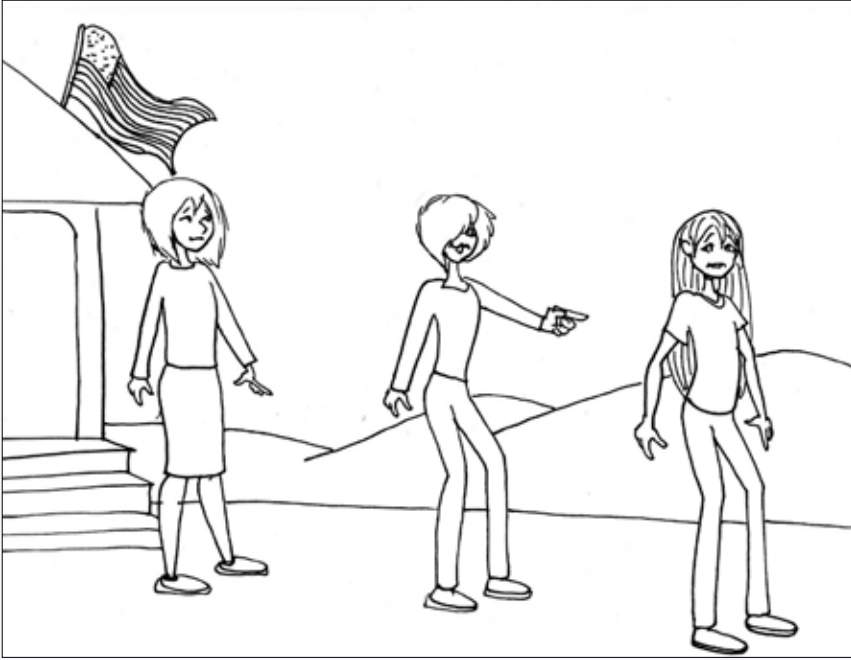
"Little Tommy" tapped "Big Tommy" on the inside of his forehead saying "Worked, didn't it?"

"Yes," thought Big Tommy, but what are the other two steps in C.O.O.K.?"

"I tell you what," Little Tommy said, "I'll write a book someday and you can read about it in

3

"O" Is for Okay to  
Stay Quiet



"Emma, duck!" Abby yelled as the volleyball got away from her and soared straight towards Emma who sat on a bench reading. Emma put her hand up to defend her face just in time for the ball to bounce off her fist with a "boiinngg." The ball flew the opposite direction as fast as it came.

Emma stared at Abby, who was stunned from the quick incident, and after a moment of horror both of them stared at each other and Emma burst out laughing.

"That was close," Emma sighed with relief.

Abby was thankful that Emma didn't hate her just because she ran around with Jennifer.

"Abby," Jennifer screamed from the volleyball court. "Get your tail back over here so we can finish this game, you Dweeb."

Abby thought, "Good thing I'm one of Jennifer's two friends; she's not nearly this nice to anyone else." Emma walked over to Jennifer with the volleyball.

"Stop!" Abby continued thinking, "Don't talk to Jennifer this morning. She's in a particularly rotten mood."

Emma said, "Here's your volleyball, Jennifer, and thanks for the 'heads up' Abby."

Jennifer gave Emma a hateful look and said, "I believe in respect for the dead and if my volleyball had hit you right then I would be respecting you a lot more right now; because you'd be dead!"

Emma smiled. "Whoa Jennifer. I see you're stringing words into sentences now. Did you get up on the wrong side of the bed this morning or something?"

"Nooo," thought Abby, "just drop it, Emma, she's going to rip you to shreds."

Unfazed, Emma tossed the ball to Jennifer with a grin and said, "Well, have a good morning girls."

"Hang on there, Miss Sweetie." Jennifer growled, "Doesn't your dad work for mine?"

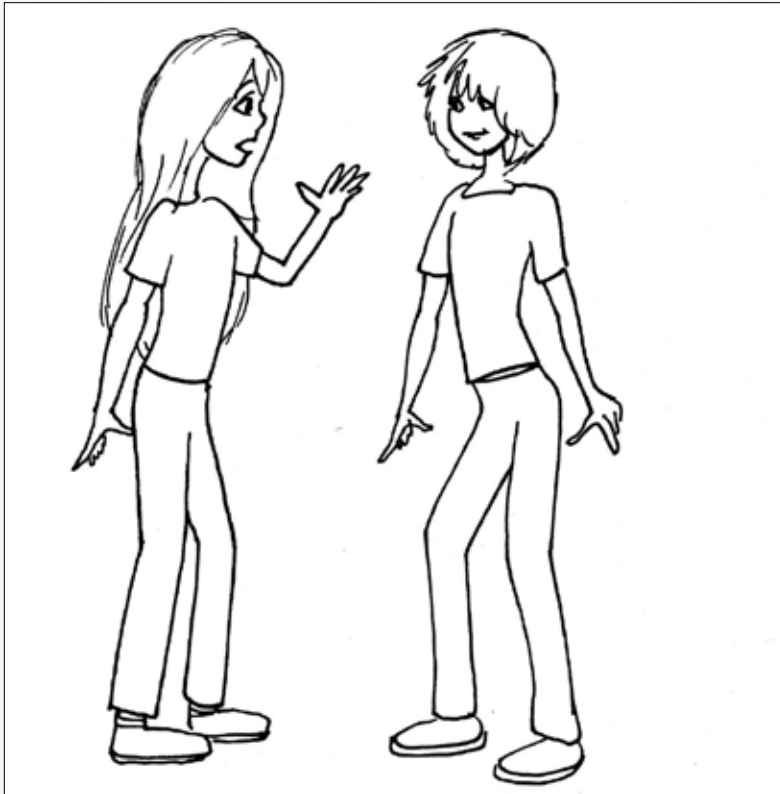
"Yeah," Emma grinned.

Abby thought, "Oh no, here we go again. Jennifer has to prove who the boss is."

Jennifer said, "Well, there are several people in school that I find obnoxious. I just met you and you're now **ALL** of them."

"Arrrrgh," thought Emma, "that's not very nice." Jennifer's reputation for hanging around only the two wealthiest girls in school was well known, and so was her nasty disposition. Emma had never been on the receiving end of it before and the feeling was brutal.

Jennifer saw the beautiful flowers pictured on her notebook binder and said, "Emma, do you still love nature, despite what it did to your face?"



Jennifer's other side-kick laughed hysterically while Abby groaned at the torture that was just beginning for poor Emma.

Ordinarily Emma was poised and confident, but Jennifer was so mean, she was getting under Emma's skin. Emma hated being picked on, and nobody had ever made fun of her looks before. She wondered if it was true.

"Jennifer, I know you probably said that without thinking, like you do most things."

"I remember you and your family from my dad's company picnic last year," Emma snarled. "I've seen people like your family before, but I had to pay admission to see those freaks."

That was it. Emma had enough. "I think my family is wonderful, Jennifer, and you are the meanest girl in school."

With that, Emma picked up her things and accidently knocked the books out of a 6th grader's hands as she ran past him with a tear in her eye.

Jennifer laughed uncontrollably as Emma fled into the school with Jennifer yelling after her, "Why don't you bring your brother to school with you tomorrow? It's 'bring an idiot to school day.'"

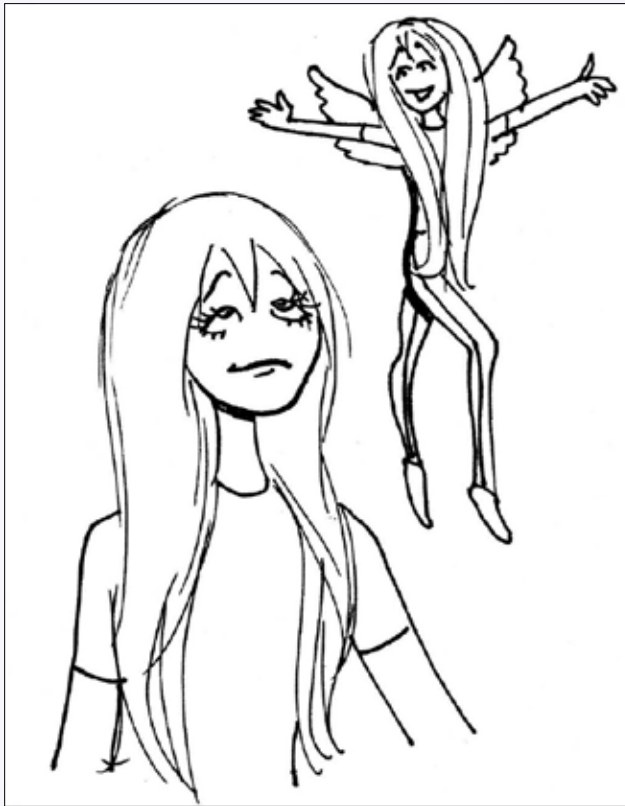
Picking on Emma's family crossed the line. Her little brother was the funniest and kindest soul she had ever known. Just because he was born special, didn't make him a freak or an idiot. She hated the word "disability" almost as much as she hated the fact that this school district kept wanting to put him in a "special school." Her little brother was one of her best friends and she knew her parents were "saints," who loved them both deeply.

That evening she tried to forget Jennifer, but her day had been ruined by the insults. It just steamed her up to think about someone picking on her brother and her parents, when her family would never say an unkind word about anyone.

"Uhggh," she grumbled, still not able to fall asleep. She tossed and turned in bed listening to the wind blow through the trees out back through her open window. Through her open bedroom window, Emma smelled the rain that was moving in. Jennifer had put a cloud on her day and now the clouds were moving in for real.

Emma had tried to put Jennifer's jabs about her brother out of her mind, but she just could not stand people picking on him. She hated how Jennifer forced thoughts into her head that she normally would never have. Thoughts that weren't good ones swirled like a cyclone in her head as the wind picked up outside. She began to cry softly. She loved her parents and her brother too much to let anyone say hateful things about them. The coming storm and the blowing leaves got louder and louder.

Then Emma heard a "POP." Like a huge kernel of popcorn popping, the sound came from the top of her head.



Surprised, she glanced toward the window, thinking the wind had slammed her window shut or something, but next to the open window, hovering over the picture of her brother on the dresser was a little version of herself smiling back at her.

"Huuuuuuuh?" Emma inhaled in fright as "Little Emma" flew over her chest of drawers with a finger to her lips mouthing, "Shhhhh, everyone's sleeping."

"Who? What?" Emma blinked thinking she was dreaming. "Who are you?" Emma rubbed her bleary eyes.

"Calm down," said Little Emma struggling in flight with the wind blowing in the window now. "I'm your conscience. I'm part of you and I can help with Jennifer."

"How can you help?" asked Big Emma as she struggled against the wind to shut the window.

"Well," Little Emma landed on the bed near the headboard, gracefully, "there are four steps to C.O.O.K. a bully."

Interested more in how to deal with Jennifer than with her little "fairy alter ego" she panted, "What are the steps?"

Taking a deep breath, Little Emma gulped and held up her pointing finger, "First you stay calm, which is the "C" in C.O.O.K. This one is not a big problem and you already do it pretty well. With a little planning you will be able to stay calm."

"What do you mean planning? How do I plan to stay calm?" Emma fell onto the bed

frustrated.

When Big Emma fell onto the foot of the bed, Little Emma trampolined into the air as the head of bed flew up.

Little Emma hovered over the bed poised and confidently explained, "Well, you can plan out your line of thinking when a bully says something to you."

It just struck Big Emma that Jennifer was a bully, and that's why her little friend was teaching her—how to C.O.O.K. a bully. It had not occurred to her in that way, but it was true.

"So, what's the best line of thinking when Jennifer picks on me?"

"There are lots of things you could say or do to stay calm, but there are three things that come to mind."

Palms up, Big Emma raised her eyebrows as if to say, "Why are you dragging this out?"

"When a bully picks on you, first ask yourself 'Is it true?'"

"How can that help?" Big Emma looked

doubtful.

"Remember when Jennifer said something about nature giving you an ugly face?"

"I remember!"

"Well, rather than staying calm, you insulted Jennifer back by saying that she never thought before she said stuff. Now, that didn't help anything. You even wondered why other people didn't insult your ugly face without stopping to ask yourself 'is it true that I have an ugly face?'"

Big Emma nodded her head at the recollection and knew that Jennifer didn't think she was ugly. Jennifer was just insulting her and that by taking the bait, she gave Jennifer what she wanted, which was a big reaction to the teasing.

"You know," Big Emma grabbed an orange from her nightstand and started peeling it, "being patient with people like Jennifer is almost impossible, but I'll bet being nice to her, especially when it's hard, would surprise her and might be good for her. I bet very few people treat her nicely." The smell of the fresh orange filled the bedroom.

"Another thing you can do to stay calm," Little Emma continued, "is to do what you do best. Just remember to be a 'class act.' Long after the bully is gone, you still have to live with yourself and the choices you made about what you said and did in response to a bully coming after you. Everyone, including you, will remember that you kept your cool, didn't take the bully's bait, and were nice to someone who was being mean to you. You're a class act. Just go into these situations planning to be that way."

"Okay," thought Big Emma, "I can do that." Little Emma screamed as she flew in front of the mirror and startled herself. Recomposed, she offered, "Finally, above all else think positive. Whenever you face a bully, keep telling yourself that everything is going to be okay and that if you stay calm you will get out of the situation feeling good about yourself."

"Have you noticed that there is one thing in common with all bullies?"

"What's that?" Emma was still thinking about how she might stay calmer next time.

"Bullies are always trying to impress someone

and if you can figure out who it is you might be able to get them what they want without them having to be a bully. Not a single bully holds themselves in very high regard. They're showing off to make themselves look better or feel better at the expense of someone they think is weaker."

"Jennifer doesn't act like she hates herself, as a matter of fact—she seems pretty confident that she's better and richer than everyone else and seems happy when she's insulting people."

Nodding, Little Emma interrupted her, "Yes, but have you noticed that she's rougher on Abby than she is on her friend?"

"You're right," Big Emma agreed, "why is that?"

"Well, Abby is the richest kid in school and doesn't laugh at Jennifer's jokes very often." Little Emma's wings were fluttering the pull-cord to the ceiling fan. "Whoa!" she said as she got tangled-up mid air.

Unwrapping her from the tangled mess, Big Emma was catching on to Jennifer's game. "So she feels threatened by Abby and lives to

impress the only two friends she has, right?"

"So, why is Jennifer that way?"

"Who knows?" Little Emma rolled her eyes.

"Some kids don't have many friends and push kids around to feel important or to get attention. Some kids have lots of trouble at home and are acting the drama out on the people they bully around. In Jennifer's case, you know that her parents give her more money and gifts than they give her their attention. She doesn't feel like anyone really cares about her."

Little Emma flew around the night stand frustrated that there wasn't another orange for her. "Who cares why bullies are the way they are? What you need to do is think about how to handle the situation with them and then, if you want to, try to show them how they can get what they want without being a bully, and help them get it. In Jennifer's case, she wants people to care about her, especially Abby."

"Wow," smiled Big Emma. "I honestly never thought about what a bully might want or that they might have some personal problem that makes them act mean. You're right. My dad mentioned the other night that he got in trouble with Jennifer's father who wanted my

dad to work late at the office on the night of my big volleyball game. When Dad told him 'No way,' Jennifer's dad said he couldn't believe my father would blow-off a big business project just to go to my volleyball game. So, I know Jennifer probably wishes her dad wanted to spend more time with her."

"Right," Little Emma smiled, "so now do you see how to plan for the first step, which is to stay calm?"

Big Emma just nodded, deep in thought about Jennifer's sad home life.

"The second step in how to C.O.O.K. a bully is "O," which stands for 'Okay to stand up for yourself.' This simply means correcting the record, if a bully says something that's not correct or true, it's okay to say 'My brother may not learn as quickly as you or me, but I love him with all my heart.' Which is better than saying something like 'He's not an idiot,' which sounds like you're arguing. Just correcting the record tells the bully and the bystanders that you plan to stay calm and not let lies remain unchallenged."

"I can do that," Big Emma said.

"There is an important key to standing up for yourself though," Little Emma said quietly. Big Emma leaned closer to hear the secret. "You have to ask yourself a question before you stand up for yourself. The big question is, 'Will what I'm about to say help the situation or make the situation worse?' If standing up for yourself will not help calm things down, or if what you say will make things worse, then move on to step three!"

"What's step three?" Big Emma raised her voice, then jerked her head towards the door afraid her parents might hear and come to check on her. "Oh my," she thought, "Dad would just freak right out if he saw this little fairy flying around my room."

"Step three is where I want you to focus your attention, because that's what will stop Jennifer. Step three in how to C.O.O.K. a bully is it's 'okay to stay quiet.'"

"What do you mean it's 'Okay to stay quiet?'"

"I mean that it is okay to have a thought and not say it. You have a very quick mind and you say funny come-backs, but it doesn't always help the situation. Like when Jennifer insulted you and you told her 'I see you're stringing words

into sentences now;' that did not help the situation. Do you think you could bite your tongue when what you are about to say does not help the situation?"

Big Emma liked the fact that she always had a quick line to react to her friends joking around with her, but she now saw how this talent did not serve her well in dealing with a bully. If she could only say things that would be positive for Jennifer, if possible, or stay quiet when she thought of things that would make Jennifer even madder, that would be much better. Emma nodded her head as she saw this strategy was a good one. "It's 'Okay to be quiet,'" she repeated to herself.

"One last thought," Little Emma flew off the night stand and fluttered like a hummingbird in front of Big Emma's face. "Abby is nice, but you see how Abby is tired of Jennifer. Why don't you make friends with Abby and then talk to Jennifer one-on-one about how being nice to Abby will make her a true friend, instead of being trapped as 'the bully's side-kick.'"

"I have to talk to Jennifer alone?" Emma whined.

"Yes," insisted Little Emma who hovered inches from her nose. "Bullies feel most threatened when they are challenged in front of an audience, but since most bullies are cowards, sometimes you can break through to them when you are alone with them. It's worth a try. When you do this just make sure people know you are alone with the bully and make sure the bully knows that everyone knows you are alone with them."

With that there was a big "POP" and Little Emma was back inside Big Emma's head. "Hmmm," she thought as she turned out the lamp and curled back into bed, "Stay calm, stand up for myself, and be quiet if I think of saying something that won't help the situation. I can do that and I'll talk to Abby tomorrow."

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A fire bell rang the next morning just after the daily school announcements were finished. Emma's science teacher groaned as he had to stop handing out his Pop Quiz. All together, the kids gave out a huge sigh of relief when he said, "It's probably just a fire drill and we'll probably just skip this quiz." As they all filed outside, Emma spotted Abby coming out of the

building.

"Hi, Abby," Emma smiled.

Abby grinned, "Guess we'll just have to miss a little school this morning, huh?"

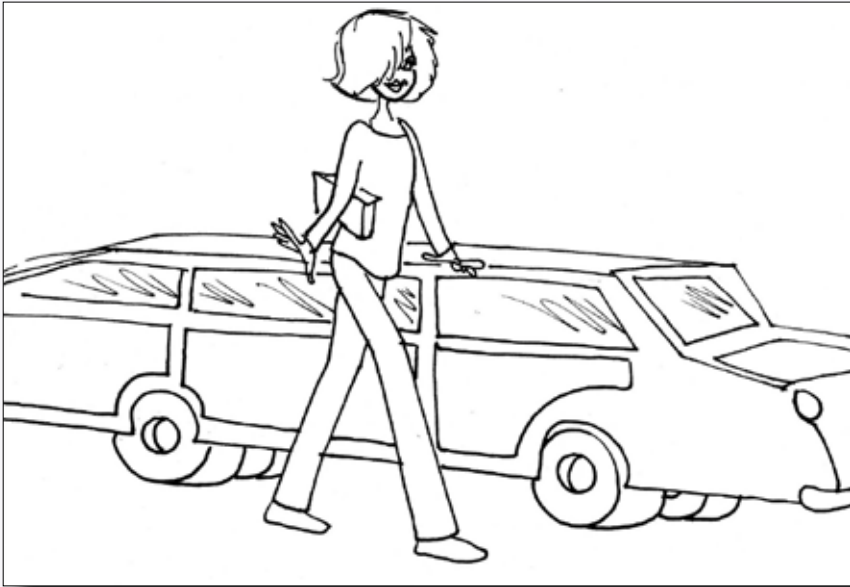
They both laughed. Abby's smile faded. "I'm sorry about Jennifer yesterday. She's always like that."

"I know." Emma paused, took a deep breath, and then began discussing her plan with Abby. They spoke until the bell rang to signal the all-clear and everyone went back to school. Abby and Emma hugged and went their separate ways back to class. Both were smiling as they turned one last time to wave.

After school, Jennifer was standing by her limousine as Emma walked up the driveway to Abby's home. Jennifer said, "What are you doing here? You must be from the shallow end of the gene pool. Don't tell me you want to try taking me on again?"

Emma could feel the urge to say "Are you always a witch, or just when I'm around?" But, she stopped herself. First, she knew the answer, and second she remembered what

Little Emma told her and decided that this quick come-back would hurt the situation and so she "bit her tongue."



Emma thought half a second and said, "No, Abby asked us both over and I wanted to talk to you."

Now, not many things stunned Jennifer, but this surprised her. She thought, "Abby invited Emma and me over? Together? Abby is my friend, not Emma's. I don't like this!" Jennifer began to fume.

"Hmmpfh," Jennifer said as she turned on her heel and marched toward Abby's front door.

They stood there awkwardly as Abby opened the door.

"Hi, Jennifer. Hi, Emma. Come on in." Abby was genuinely happy to see both of them.

"What's she doing here Abby?" Jennifer pointed to Emma.

Abby's smile faded and she measured her words carefully and kindly for Jennifer, "Emma's always been nice to me Jennifer and I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired all the time. I don't have many friends who treat me nice and make me feel special, but Emma always makes everyone feel special. It's just the way she is. We all need friends like that, Jennifer."

Not liking the sound of this, Jennifer weakly whispered, "I treat you nice Abby, don't I?" She knew the answer to that one.

Rather than insult Jennifer with a reply, Abby backed out of the room saying, "Emma asked me to let you two talk alone and I think you should listen to her Jennifer. I'll just be outside helping my mom prune the rose bushes."

As she backed out of the room the French doors closed with a firm click.

At a complete loss for words, Jennifer looked at Emma. Taking a deep breath, Emma started, "Jennifer, I know down deep you want to be friends with Abby, but she doesn't want to be around you anymore."

Jennifer couldn't believe what she was hearing, but her anger toward Emma was overpowering. "So, I see a thought crossed your mind? Must have been a long and lonely journey. Shock me, say something intelligent!"

"Listen to me, Jennifer. You have been picking on Abby ever since her family moved into town last year — and she's made the decision that from now on she's only going to hang around positive people — People who are nice to her and who she can be nice back to."

"Well, that's her decision," Jennifer snapped, "If she wants to stop hanging around us cool kids and be with all the losers, then I hope I never see her again."

"I don't believe that for one minute Jennifer. I think Abby is a friend of yours and you don't want to lose her. Am I right?"

Jennifer thought for a moment, looked at the floor, but couldn't bring herself to say anything.

"When you leave here, Abby doesn't want you to call her, come by her house, or approach her in school anymore."

Silence hung in the room as this sad reality sunk into Jennifer. This was not what she expected to happen today. Jennifer held back a tear as she wondered "How could Abby be so upset and I never knew?"

Jennifer flinched as Emma gently touched her shoulder, "Abby thinks it would be easier on both of you if you never spoke with each other again after you leave this room," Emma paused, "unless..."

Looking up to meet Emma's eyes, Jennifer quietly asked, "Unless what?"

Emma tenderly whispered, "Unless you start being nice to Abby and everyone else."

With that Jennifer began to sob. "I know I've been mean to a lot of people, but have I been that nasty to Abby, too?"

"Yes, Jennifer. You have. But the funny thing about Abby's personality is that if you had been unkind to her from time to time, but nice to everyone else, you would probably still be

friends with Abby. She just can't stand the embarrassment of being around you when you're cruel to other people."

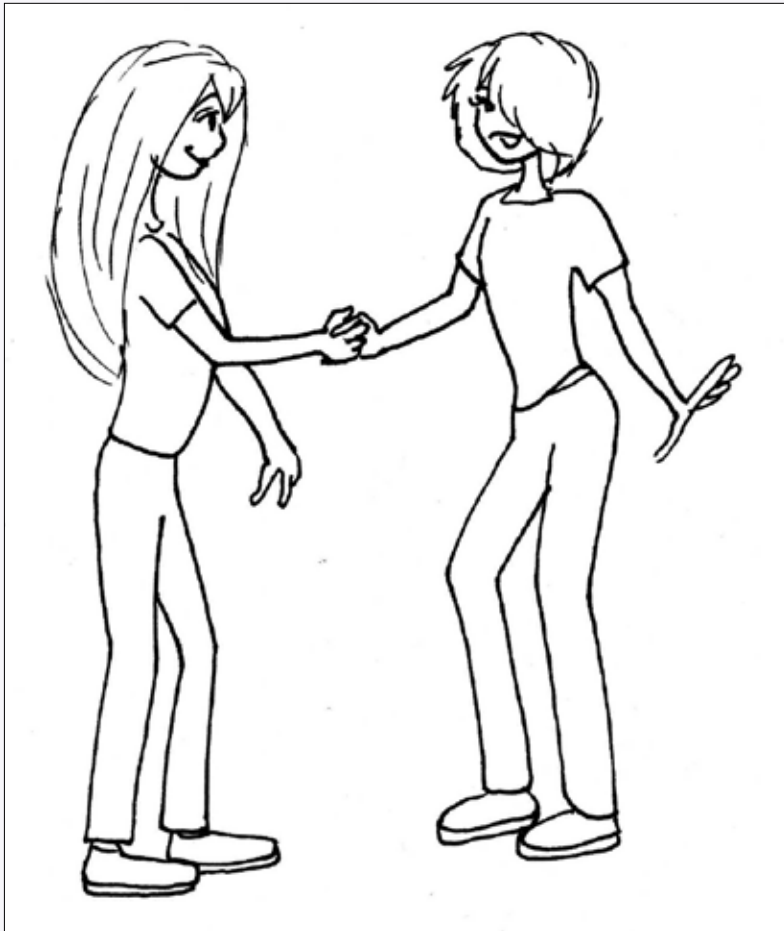
Jennifer took a deep breath and then decided to take a big chance, "Okay, Emma, what do I have to do to stay friends with Abby? Do I have to kiss your feet or something?"

"No, Jennifer, this has nothing to do with me. Abby was going to just stop hanging around you, but when I talked with her it seemed to me that if you were willing to drop your bad habit of bullying and try to make more friends that Abby would be happy to keep hanging around you. When I asked her, she said she would be willing to give you a chance. So you just have to ask yourself a question Jennifer. 'How's it working for you being a bully?'"

Jennifer thought for a minute, debating whether she was being manipulated by these two, but in the end she decided they weren't trying to manipulate her. Something in her allowed her to see this as an opportunity. The fact was that being a bully wasn't working very well for her, it had just become a bad habit.

She only had two friends in the world and if she didn't rethink the way she treated them, she would be losing Abby as a friend starting right now. Then it struck her, she had probably lost her as a friend a long time ago.

"Okay, Emma, tell me what I'm supposed to do?"



"It's real simple, Jennifer, just treat everybody the same way you would like to be treated in a similar situation. That's all."

All of this sank into Jennifer, and in the end she was willing to try. "Help me out, Emma. What do I say to Abby when she comes back in? I'm too embarrassed to apologize for treating her so badly."

"That's okay, Jennifer. Just start being nicer and your actions will speak louder than any words. My dad is coming over to pick us up. Abby is going to watch my volleyball game this afternoon. I mentioned that you would be here and he was excited to spend some time with you and Abby."

Jennifer shot her head up and said, "Your dad wants to talk to me?"

"Sure, my dad likes talking to all my friends. Why don't you come?"

—

Emma had a great volleyball game that day. She enjoyed glancing over at her family cheering in the bleachers. Abby and Jennifer were laughing a lot with her dad and she smiled as she saw Jennifer go out to buy her very special brother a bottle of water from the machine.

She was grateful for Little Emma and her advice to stay calm, stand up for herself, and she was especially thankful for the advice that it was okay to be quiet if she had a thought that wouldn't help the situation. That skill alone had helped Jennifer break through her tough shell.

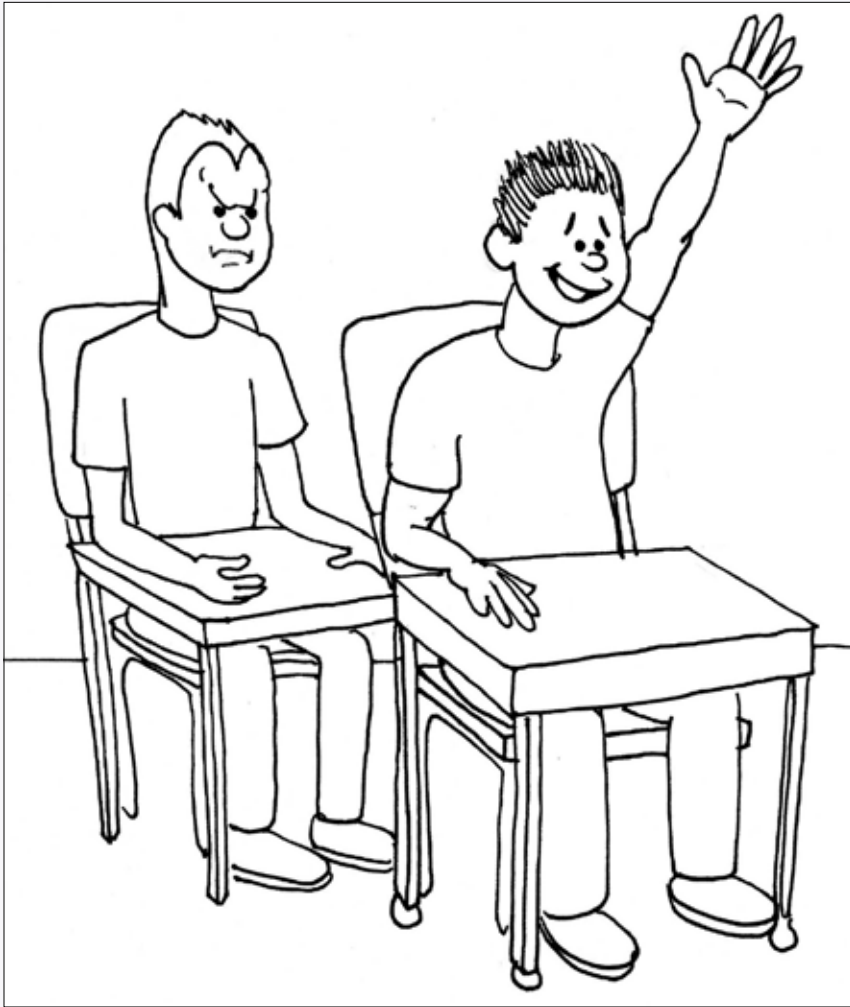
"I wonder what the 'K' stands for in 'How to C.O.O.K. a Bully?'" she thought as she spiked the ball down over the net for the winning point.

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4

"K" Is for
Keep It Safe



Jimmy shot his hand up to answer another question in 7th period. Everyone smiled waiting for his funny response to Mr. Crocker's question about what percentage of people in Europe ride bikes.

"Well," Jimmy explained, "39% of younger

Europeans ride bicycles, but then," Jimmy grinned, "82.7% of all statistics are made up on the spot." Everyone in class burst out laughing. Everyone, that is, except for Aaron, who glared angrily at Jimmy.

Even though Jimmy was on the 7th grade football team, the basketball players, which represented most of the class, thought he was hilarious. Jimmy was the smartest kid in Social Studies class, so Mr. Crocker put up with his jokes, and even laughed with everyone else. Drake was a starter on both the football and basketball teams and knew that Jimmy was an all-around great guy. Jimmy was both smart and funny.

Jimmy was almost as popular as Aaron, but Aaron was the best rebounder on the basketball team. It's just that, unlike Aaron, Jimmy was such a nice guy that everyone liked him. Aaron gave Jimmy an angry stare as he thought fast about how to get the attention of the class back. He hated when Jimmy got all of the attention and thought hard about how to get back the attention of the class. Without finishing his thought he eagerly raised his hand. Still laughing from Jimmy's joke, Mr. Crocker said, "Yes, Aaron."

"Well," Aaron stammered, "I have heard that there are less sunny days to go bike riding in Germany."

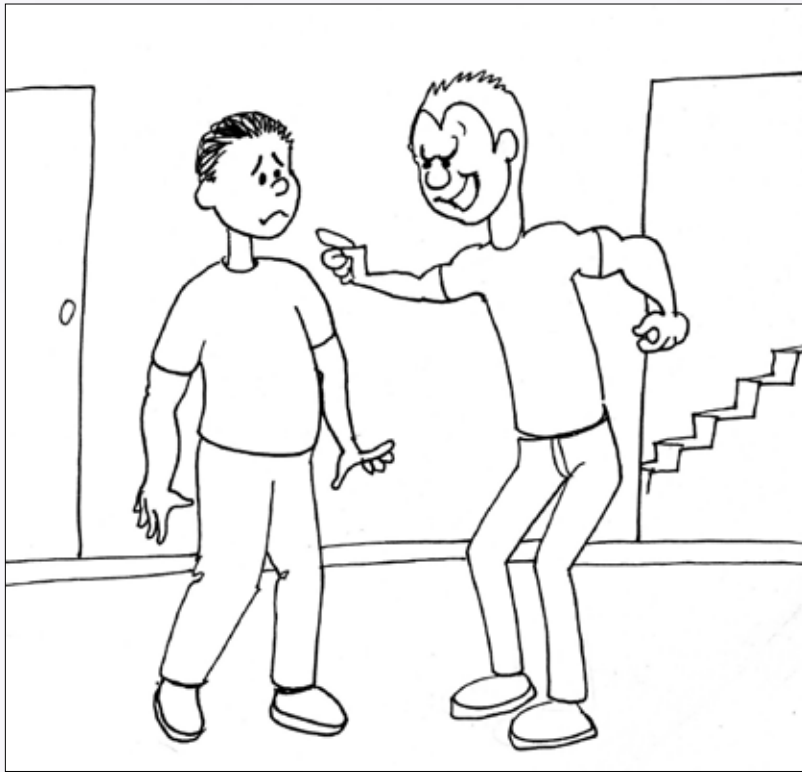
"Yes," said Mr. Crocker, waiting patiently for the point of the comment.

"Ummmm, well, you know what they say, a day without sunshine is like..." Aaron giggled nervously as he paused, desperately trying to think of a punch-line. He glanced around the room for help, "A day without sunshine is like..."

Jimmy, smiling as always, finished his line for him, "A day without sunshine is like... night!" Everyone in the class burst out laughing again. The bell rang and everyone filed out of the classroom laughing as Aaron made an angry bee line to Jimmy out in the hall.

"Hey, Fatso," Aaron called to Jimmy, "you think you're smart, don't you?" Jimmy spun around to see Aaron coming towards him with his finger pointed right at his face. Even though Jimmy played football, he had heard rumors about how dangerous Aaron was. Thankfully, he spotted his friend Drake standing right behind Aaron, ready to rescue Jimmy if needed.

"You have a big mouth, Mr. Football."



Jimmy blinked at Aaron, not quite getting the point.

"All football players are idiots."

"Yes, they are Aaron," Jimmy smiled, "and I'm their King."

Aaron glared; he hated how easy the funny comments came to Jimmy.

"Don't make me mad, Jimmy. I'm running out of places to hide the bodies."

Jimmy glanced over at Drake, wondering how dangerous Aaron really was.

"What's the matter, Aaron? I was just kidding around. No harm meant."

It was true Drake thought; Jimmy never made fun of anyone and never used his humor to insult anyone. Aaron just didn't like Jimmy getting all the attention, Drake thought.

Aaron pointed his finger at Jimmy's face again, "You are going to shut up in class tomorrow."

"I am?" Jimmy smiled.

"Yes, you are or I'm going to wipe that smile off your fat face," Aaron threatened.

"I'm not afraid of you Aaron." Jimmy stared calmly at the bully.

Aaron's face went red and you could almost see him trembling with anger. "You will keep your mouth shut around me from now on or else I'm going to tell Mr. Crocker that I saw you letting Drake cheat off your test yesterday."

"Wait a minute," Drake protested, "I don't need

to cheat off anyone and why pick on me?"

"Because you're always sticking up for him." Aaron looked back at Jimmy and warned, "Just keep quiet around me and you might stay safe. Otherwise I'll have to mop the floor with you." With that, Aaron walked past Jimmy nearly knocking him down in the process.

Drake watched Jimmy picking up his books from the floor and shook his head. "Jimmy, you should stay quiet around Aaron. He doesn't get enough attention when you're around and has hurt guys on our basketball team who got more attention than him."

"What do you mean, Drake? What has he done?"

"Well, remember that kid earlier this year that transferred to another school after he got hurt during basketball practice?"

"Yes, but I heard he hit his head slipping in the shower. Did Aaron have something to do with that?"

"It didn't happen in the shower. They were in the dressing room and Aaron had just told him to quit the team."

"Quit the team?" Jimmy wondered out loud,
"How come?"

"Well, he was getting more time on the court during games than Aaron and he wanted him to quit the team."

"So what happened?" Jimmy asked.

"Nobody saw it, but apparently the guy refused to quit so Aaron came up behind him in the dressing room and hit him with a trash can on the back of his head. He was knocked right out and an ambulance had to take him away. I never saw the guy again. I heard the next week that he transferred schools."

"So, Aaron's really dangerous?" Jimmy looked stunned.

"Yes, Aaron's really dangerous! ... And that's not the only story floating around about Aaron going after someone."

Jimmy wondered if it was really that hazardous to mess with Aaron.

"Just be careful around him, Jimmy. In basketball, we all think something's wrong with him. You know, mentally wrong."

"Hmmm," Jimmy thought as he walked down the hall with Drake. "He just seems like a bully to me. Great rebounder, but definitely `a bully."

The next day Mr. Crocker asked the class why kids in Europe often excelled in math. Jimmy stayed quiet so Aaron took his chance, eagerly raising his hand.

"Yes, Aaron." Mr. Crocker acknowledged the tall boy.

"There are three kinds of students in Europe." Aaron gulped as everyone leaned forward to hear the point he was making.

Aaron continued, "Yes, three kinds of students; those who can count and those who can't."

Everyone paused to let the comment sink-in and then a roar of laughter rang out in the class. Aaron sunk down in his desk chair as he realized the ridiculous comment he had just made.

Mr. Crocker tried to get everyone quiet by continuing his questioning of the class, "Do you think all the changes in Europe have helped or hurt students there over the past 25 years?"

Jimmy couldn't help himself; he raised his hand saying "Change is inevitable Mr. Crocker, except from the vending machine in the snack bar." Everyone laughed harder. This time even Mr. Crocker smiled.

"What makes students successful elsewhere is worth considering. Students, 'sticking with it' makes a big difference in school. In Europe, often times even if students don't do well on tests, they seek out teachers, tutors and other students to help them. They might ask to re-take a test, even if the grade doesn't count."

Again Jimmy raised his hand saying, "You know what they say, if at first you don't succeed," he paused for effect, "sky diving is not for you."

The class bell rang as the class erupted in laughter one last time. Smiling, Jimmy looked around class until he made eye contact with Aaron. The smile melted as he saw that Aaron had fire in his eyes and was coming towards him. They barely made it out into the hall when Aaron shoved past Jimmy, hitting hard against his shoulder. Nearly knocking him down, Aaron walked past pointing across the hall saying ominously, "Meet me in the boy's bathroom just after school."

Just then Drake walked up to Jimmy shaking his head, "You just couldn't resist could you?"

"What do you mean, Drake?"

"You just couldn't keep your mouth shut, could you?"

"Guess not." Jimmy stared down at his sneakers as he shuffled his feet embarrassed. "What do you think I should do Drake?"

"I don't know, but whatever you do, tell Mr. Crocker to go with you the boy's bathroom to meet Aaron this afternoon."

"You're kidding?" Jimmy's mouth dropped. "No way! I fight my own fights, and besides I'm not afraid of Aaron."

Drake put his hand on Jimmy's shoulder and looked him seriously in the eyes, "You should be my friend."

During last period, which was football, Jimmy stood alone looking at himself in the mirror as he combed his wet hair. "I'm just going to go into that bathroom after school and whatever happens, well, happens!" Adjusting his hair he thought, "If I end up having to fight Aaron, I

guess I will. I will never start a fight, though."

He was the last boy in the locker room and wondered out loud to himself, "What should I do?"

Deep in thought, Jimmy thought he heard a rumbling sound over his head. He looked up, but nothing was there. Shrugging he looked back into the mirror to comb his hair when over his head came a loud "Pop."



Looking up again, Jimmy jumped back as he saw a "Little Jimmy" flying around above his head. With wings fluttering, Little Jimmy asked, "What are you thinking?"

"What? Who? I mean, who are you and what do you mean?" asked Big Jimmy.

"Aaron is dangerous and you can't go into that bathroom alone. You have to let Mr. Crocker know what's happening."

"You've got to be kidding," Jimmy reacted to the idea, not knowing what to call this Little Jimmy flying around above him. "What do you know about it? If I tell Mr. Crocker then I'll get a reputation of not being able to stand up for myself. Then Aaron will never stop picking on me. He'll know I'm weak and that I run for help whenever there's trouble."

Little Jimmy rolled his eyes in frustration. "Normally that might be true," the remaining steam from the locker room shower was now forming swirling circles behind Little Jimmy's wings. "The situation with Aaron is different."

"How so?" Jimmy returned to combing his hair.

Little Jimmy didn't like being ignored and flew between Big Jimmy and the mirror. "Aaron is

dangerous and that means all other rules and logic about handling bullies goes away."

"You mean, if a bully makes threats I'm supposed to just take it?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean. If a bully is threatening, especially if they have a history of violence, then the most important rule in dealing with bullies comes into play."

"What's that?" asked Big Jimmy.

"The most important rule, and the last word in dealing with bullies, is to 'keep it safe.'"

"What do you mean, 'keep it safe?'"

"Well, there are many ways to keep it safe when you are dealing with someone threatening. The easiest is to just run away."

"Oh, please. Me, run away? I don't think so."

"Really? What if it was your little sister being threatened by Aaron? What if he threatened to corner her and beat her up after school?"

"That's different! She's three years younger than him and he's got 50 pounds on her. I'd

tell her to run away if he cornered her making threats."

"OK, so you agree that running away from dangers is not a bad idea."

"Well, I guess not. At least in some cases."

"Let's say that Aaron pulled out a weapon and came after you? What would your instinct be then?" asked Little Jimmy.

"I'd probably get away from him if he did something like that."

"Great, then we agree that there are times when it makes sense to get away. Then in this case, let's talk about the smartest way to 'keep it safe' with Aaron."

"OK, what do you think I should do?"

Little Jimmy grinned, "I thought you'd never ask. Since Aaron has a history of physical violence, the smartest thing to do is to let Mr. Crocker know what's happening."

"But then won't everyone think I'm a coward?"

Little Jimmy shook his head, "Your safety is more important. What if Aaron put you in the hospital? You might be hurt worse than you

think is possible and he could get arrested and kicked out of school. Nobody wins! But if you tell Mr. Crocker, then at the least he'll do his best to keep it safe."

Big Jimmy thought deeply about what Little Jimmy was suggesting. Still not sure, the final bell rang and it was time to either go meet Aaron or just go home.

"Think about it Jimmy. I know you'll do the right thing; you always do." With that Little Jimmy disappeared with a popping sound back into Big Jimmy's head.

Heading out of the locker room, Jimmy headed for the boy's bathroom to meet Aaron. Still puzzled about exactly what to do, he thought about his options as he approached the boy's bathroom. Just as he was about to go in, Drake came out of Mr. Crocker's classroom across the hall.

"OK Mr. Crocker, I'll finish that paper tonight and hand it in tomorrow in 7th period," Drake said, coming out of the classroom.

"Drake, come here." Jimmy whispered. Drake smiled as he spotted his friend who then realized what was happening.

"You're not going in there to meet Aaron are you?"

"Listen, Drake, go tell Mr. Crocker what's going on and then you guys come into the bathroom. I'm going in there to try and talk some sense into Aaron."

With that, Jimmy went into the bathroom winking at Drake. Troubled by the situation, Drake spun on his heels back into Mr. Crocker's class.



Slowly opening the bathroom door, Jimmy caught a glimpse of Aaron hiding something up on the high window ledge above the sinks.

"Uh oh," Jimmy thought. "Maybe he does have a weapon with him or something." Nervous now, Jimmy smiled, "Aaron, there should be nothing wrong between you and me, I've never said or done anything bad to you."

"Oh yeah?" Aaron turned to face him, "Well, who cares, I just want to beat that smile off your face and go home."

With that, Aaron made a fist and started moving towards Jimmy. Just as he pulled back his arm to strike his first blow on Jimmy, the bathroom door flew open. Drake ran in followed by Mr. Crocker.

"Boys, what's going on here?" Mr. Crocker exploded as he saw Aaron's fist aimed at Jimmy's face.

Aaron's face only became slightly less threatening as he debated whether to complete the punch or not.

Mr. Crocker grabbed Aaron's arm and said, "You

two are going down to the principal's office. You can explain to him what's going on here."

With that, the situation cooled down a bit. The mood was now broken and Mr. Crocker began moving the two boys out of the bathroom and towards the main office. He looked back at Drake saying, "You too, young man."

"What did I do?" Drake whined.

"You know something and need to explain what you know about all of this."

Drake sighed as he followed the three of them to the principal's office.

"Be quiet, Aaron," the principal pounded his desk. "I understand that you are telling me you didn't do anything wrong." He turned his gaze to Jimmy and asked, "What really happened, Jimmy?"

"Well, it really is my fault in many ways," Jimmy shook his head.

"Your fault?" the principal looked at him

doubtfully. Aaron's reputation as a hot head was well-known in the main office.

"Yes, I 'pushed Aaron's buttons' almost every day in Social Studies class. Every time he raised his hand to say something, I would come up with a wise crack or joke around."

The principal, still doubtful, asked Jimmy, "So you insulted Aaron and he picked a fight with



you?"

Jimmy thought for a moment and said, "No I didn't insult him, but I just wasn't very nice hogging the conversation in class."

More concerned about the potential for violence than anything else, the principal turned to Drake and asked, "Did Aaron threaten Jimmy?"

Put on the spot, Drake thought carefully before speaking, "Let me say this, both Jimmy and Aaron are okay guys, but I think they need an adult around when they're together."

The principal thought a long time before saying anything, but in the end gave Aaron, Jimmy, and Drake lunch detention in Mr. Crocker's classroom together.

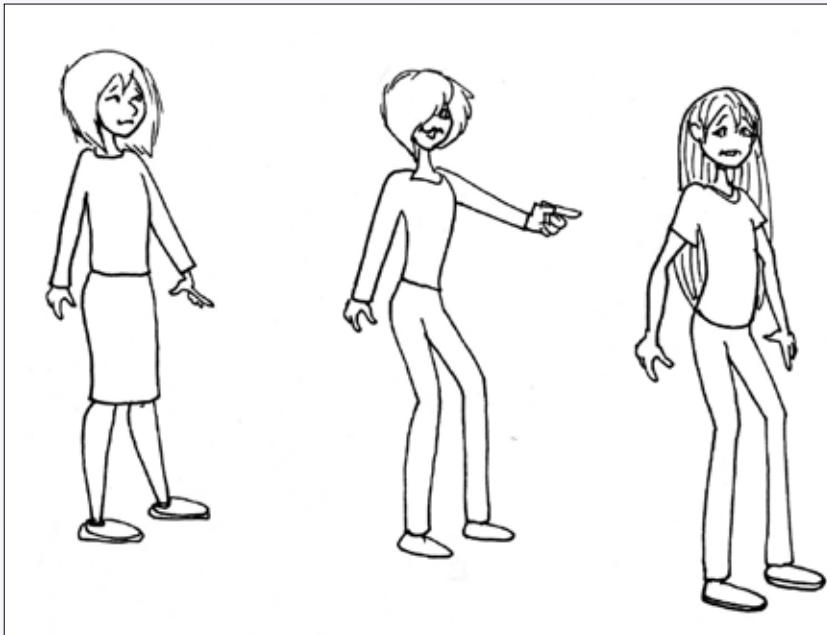
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At first they didn't talk much during detention, but after some time they discovered that there was one thing that all three had in common. Jimmy was a big football star in school and didn't play basketball. Aaron was a great basketball player, but didn't have much interest in football. The one thing they

all liked, however, was baseball. Jimmy's dad had season tickets for the pro-baseball team for their family and agreed to let Mr. Crocker take Jimmy and Aaron to a few games.

The two boys never became the best of friends, but Jimmy never regretted "Keeping It Safe" with Aaron. He saw flashes of unstable behavior with Aaron, and was always cautious around him. Things settled down quite a bit when Jimmy went to a few of Aaron's basketball games and cheered wildly with every spectacular rebound that Aaron made.

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Handling bullies is a tricky business and the final rule in how to C.O.O.K. a bully is the key. If there are any threats involved, either verbal or physical, then "Keep it Safe." The easiest and best defense is to get away. Just turn and walk (or run) in a safe direction. Find help fast; there's safety in numbers.

So let's walk thru the easy four-step process of How to C.O.O.K. a Bully.

1. **C:** Calm, be sure to stay calm. (Never say anything in anger to a bully.)
2. **O:** Okay to stand up for yourself. (It is all right to correct the record if someone is saying bad or wrong things about you.)
3. **O:** Okay to remain silent. (Especially if saying something will make the situation worse).
4. **K:** Keep it safe. (Get away from threatening situations fast.)

Armed with this simple, effective process, you at least now have some things to try that could relax the situation and change the mood in an otherwise uncomfortable situation. As always, sit down with people who are worthy of your

trust, especially your parents, for advice about what to do and say to people who say and do mean things to you.

Your experience with bullies will never be fun, but always remember that you're unique and of value, just like everyone else (even the bully). People are all special and valuable in some way.

Think about this: if I held up a \$100 bill right now and asked you if you wanted it, what would you say? I know, I know, you would say "yes." Well, what if I crumpled up the \$100 bill, jumped up and down on it and then threw it in the mud, would you still want it? Of course you would and I know why. **IT'S STILL WORTH \$100!** Even after you clean it up it's still valuable, right?

Well, you're the same way. No matter what bad things people say about you, always remember this: you're valuable! Nothing any bully can ever say to you will change that.

On that thought, also remember this, don't C.O.O.K. a bully too well-done, because down deep they're valuable, too. Sometimes it's very hard to see it, but always remember they're valuable too.

So, don't let their mean words turn you into being a bully back to them. Be a "class act" and just stay calm, stand up for yourself, but don't say anything that will make matters worse. You'll be happier.

What if ... you were in a horrible situation with a bully?

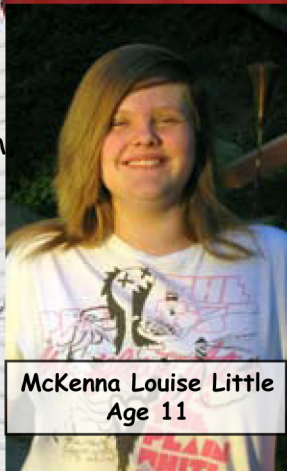
Hi, I'm McKenna Little and I wrote this book for middle school kids on how to C.O.O.K. a bully with simple ways to get out of traumatic problems such as:

- Dealing with verbal threats by bullies
- How to handle physical threats by bullies
- Coping with insults by bullies

The word C.O.O.K. stands for 4 simple strategies kids can easily use to deal with bullies.

So, stop being teased, picked on, shoved around and threatened.

Learn the four easy ways to C.O.O.K. a bully.



McKenna Louise Little
Age 11

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This book may rid your life of bullies forever!
It doesn't matter why a kid is a bully... this book deals with exactly what to do when a bully targets you.

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- Carole Lieberman, M.D.