

One Book, One Community Guide

THE
SURVIVAL
GUIDE
TO
BULLYING

*Written by
a teen*

by Aija Mayrock

Meets Educator Standards including Common Core—SEE INSIDE

About This Guide to *The Survival Guide to Bullying*

The Survival Guide to Bullying is a useful resource in jumpstarting a community's conversations and planning toward a safe and supportive climate that helps prevent bullying. Schools, neighborhoods, and other community organizations can use the below discussion prompts to begin to build a plan to help ensure their children do not feel as Aija did—that “bullying [is] a dark cloud over [their] head[s]” (p. 1) and that there's nowhere to turn to for help (Chapter 4). Together, this one book and one community can help to change the lives of children forever.

Step 1: Defining the Problem

Consider the definition of bullying on pages 14 and 15—that bullying is aggressive behavior that is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time and is done in the context of a power imbalance. Do you agree with how bullying is defined here? How do you define bullying in your community?

Activities:

- **Story Collage:** Have members of the community write down an example of bullying they have witnessed or heard about on a sticky note. Remind them to keep things confidential and not to include real names. Cluster the sticky notes under headings listing different types of bullying (verbal, social, physical, cyberbullying) to help paint a portrait of bullying in your community. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4)
- **Seek Other Sources:** Where else is bullying defined in your community? Have members of the community look for other definitions of bullying to compare to the book's definition. These could include the state anti-bullying law (explore the StopBullying.gov policy map at <http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html>), school policies, posters and flyers, and/or media reports. How do these definitions differ from the definition in the book? What does it mean for definitions of bullying to vary? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9)

Consider the list of characteristics Aija suggests that kids have been bullied about on page 23. Why do you think kids in your community get bullied? Are there characteristics missing from this list? What can we do to help promote understanding of differences?

Activities:

- **Profiles:** Have community members split into teams of two. Have each team member interview the other and identify ways in which they are the same (e.g., same hair color, same religion, same taste in music) and ways in which they are different. Have each team member create a profile of their partner stressing the ways in which their partner is unique. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7)

In Chapter 6, Aija mentions several “hot spots” where bullying is likely to occur at school. Are these the same hot spots that exist in your school? What are some ways to make hot spots safer for all students?

Activities:

- **Collect Data:** Conduct a survey of students in schools to understand just how big of a problem bullying is and the types of locations that are hot spots in schools. A free resource, like this one from SurveyMonkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/endbullying/>), can be helpful. Have students analyze the data and create a report to summarize the findings. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5)

As Aija points out in Chapter 7, cyberbullying has its own set of issues, primarily because the online world is always active. On pages 102–103 Aija identifies several types of online bullying. Can you think of others? How can communities tackle cyberbullying in particular as well as other types of bullying?

Activities:

- **Heat Map:** Thirteen-year-old Viraj Puri has created a tool (a “heat map”) to track mentions of bullying on Twitter (<http://www.bullyvention.com/map-d-tweetmap/>). Use this tool to find out how often bullying is being mentioned in your community. How does this compare to other communities? How else can we explore this data?
(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5)

Step 2: Providing Support

In Chapter 3, Aija suggests several ways for kids to become comfortable with their “real you,” such as taking pride in their appearance, maintaining their health, embracing their intelligence, and doing what they love. What other ways can you think of to help kids become comfortable with who they are? Are there things the community can do to help support these efforts?

Activities

- **Community Events:** Have community members organize a community-wide event to help celebrate each individual’s uniqueness and support their efforts to focus on becoming healthier based on Aija’s suggestions. These could include a community-wide clothes swap, a “Let’s Move” event to encourage community members to get active, a poetry-reading event featuring original “roems” (see more below), or other events specific to the community. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1)

In Chapter 4, Aija describes why she often hesitated to tell her parents and teachers everything that was going on. Aija suggests kids keep reporting until they find their “hero teacher” (p. 67). Teachers are only aware of about one-third of bullying cases. How can we make every teacher a hero teacher? How can we support students to report what’s happening?

Activities

- **Teacher Campaigns:** Explore the websites for the two biggest teachers’ unions’ campaigns against bullying (<http://www.nea.org/home/neabullyfree.html> and <http://www.aft.org/bully>). Use the resources on these websites to generate a campaign to recruit teachers, school counselors, and other school staff to identify themselves as an ally against bullying. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8)
- **Conversation Starters:** Often, kids don’t talk to parents or other adults because they don’t know how to start the conversation. Consider the conversation starters available from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/15-Make-Time-To-Listen-Take-Time-To-Talk-About-Bullying-Conversation-Starter-Cards/SMA08-4321>) and have community members write their own conversation starters. Brainstorm where to place these conversation starters in order to maximize their visibility within your community. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5)

Throughout the book, Aija stresses the importance of creativity in overcoming bullying. She came up with her own form of spoken word poetry—a combination of rap and poetry, which she terms “roems”—to communicate her experiences. Have community members create their own roems to demonstrate how they feel about bullying in their community and have them perform their roems either within the group or to an audience (see Community Events above). By writing about their own experiences with bullying, community members can help make kids currently facing bullying not feel so alone. Watch Aija perform her own roems on her website (<http://ajamayrock.com>).

Aija Mayrock and the story behind *The Survival Guide to Bullying*



Aija Mayrock began writing *The Survival Guide to Bullying* at age sixteen after dealing with bullying in her own life for many years. She promised herself that she would publish it as her gift to the next generation of kids who are bullied. In the book, Aija Mayrock offers guidance as well as different strategies that helped her get through even the toughest of days.

The Survival Guide to Bullying covers everything from cyberbullying to dealing with fear to creating the life you dream of having. With inspiring “rooms” (rap poems), survival tips, personal stories, and quick quizzes, this book will light the way to a brighter future. This updated edition also features new, never-before-seen content, including a chapter about how to talk to parents, an epilogue, and an exclusive Q&A with the author.

Mayrock won the 2013 Silver Medal for Poetry in the Scholastic Art & Writing Award program, joining the ranks of celebrated creative leaders such as Andy Warhol, Truman Capote, Sylvia Plath, Stephen King, and Lena Dunham, all of whom won a Scholastic Award when they were teens. Mayrock is currently in college in New York City. Her dream is to give a voice to the voiceless through art.

About the Writer of the One Book, One Community Guide

Deborah Temkin, PhD, is the Program Area Director of Education Research at Child Trends, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization in Bethesda, Maryland. From 2010 through 2012, Dr. Temkin led the federal initiative on bullying prevention at the U.S. Department of Education, including leading the editorial board for StopBullying.gov. Recognized for her expertise in bullying and bullying prevention, Dr. Temkin is frequently invited to speak at high-profile events and to serve as a media expert for news outlets.

The Survival Guide to Bullying was vetted by Dr. Deborah Temkin, and also by psychotherapist Myrna Fleishman, PhD.

For more about Aija and *The Survival Guide to Bullying*, visit www.ajamayrock.com.

For more discussion guides, visit www.scholastic.com/discussionguides.

For more information about the audiobook and to hear samples of six of Aija’s rooms, please visit: www.downpour.com/the-survival-guide-to-bullying-1

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