


# Big Bad Bully:

By Charlotte Tallman

## When hurtful words go too far



**PHOEBE PRINCE**, Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, Montana Lance, Megan Meier and Ryan Patrick Halligan have several things in common, but the central similarity is the fact that they all died too young by their own hands because of incessant bullying by their peers.

At the start of 2010, Phoebe, a 15-year-old newcomer to a small suburban community in Massachusetts, walked into her closet and hanged herself. Following her death, classmates began to tell school officials that Phoebe had been teased incessantly in person, by text message and through her Facebook page. In nearby Springfield, Carl, 11, hanged himself in 2009 with an extension cord after bullies repeatedly taunted him, implying he

was gay. The end of January brought grief to the Texas family of 9-year-old Montana when he hanged himself in a school bathroom after continually hearing hurtful words. In 2006, 13-year-old Megan hanged herself in her bedroom closet after the mother of a former friend created a fictitious profile and cyber-bullied her and in 2003, 13-year-old Ryan hanged himself after nonstop bullying online.

What caused these youth to take their lives when others suffer through bullying is unknown, but much of it depends on their self-image and psychological mood. The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center estimated that nearly 30 percent of American youth are either a bully or a target of bullying, and the Yale School



of Medicine found signs of an apparent connection between bullying, being bullied and suicide. The U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported there were 33 suicides among children ages five to nine between 1999 and 2006, and because youth bullying and suicide increases are catching the attention of many schools and states, 37 states are taking action on bullying.

While suicide is a tragic end (to what some say is a harmless practice) it has highlighted a new form of harassment – something that has always been around, but which is occurring at an alarming rate with new forms of media like Facebook and cell phone texting.

According to Kidshealth.org, bullying is anything that can make someone feel

hurt, uncomfortable or afraid and is done more than once and over and over again for an extended period of time. Physical bullying includes hitting, kicking or pushing someone (or threatening to do it); stealing, hiding or ruining someone's things or physically making someone do things they don't want to do. Verbal bullying includes name-calling; teasing and insulting. Relationship bullying includes refusing to talk to someone; spreading lies or rumors about someone and making someone do things they don't want to do.

While bullying is constantly being researched, one thing for sure is it can cause a lot of negative changes in youth. Events that were fun and exciting at one point can become a living nightmare if a child knows they will have to face a bully. Those being bullied might not want to

attend school, or eat in the lunchroom where everyone else is. They might quit hanging out at the mall or even a trip to the park can cause trepidation, and the effects can reach far into adulthood.

“Being targeted from a young age can cause girls to automatically assume the role of a victim, placing themselves at risk for receiving violence throughout their lives,” Cheryl Dellasega, Ph.D. says in her book *Mean Girls Grow Up*. And men who are targeted can have tendencies to resort to violence more and more.

Sometimes there is no rhyme or reason a bully is a bully, but oftentimes they pick on someone they think they can have power over, including someone who gets upset easily or who has trouble sticking up for themselves. To a bully, a reaction is

an ideal outcome because they have power, and power makes them feel they're better than another person. Power also gives them a lot of attention from adults and their peers.

To the right are recommendations for anyone who is being bullied, but the list is not extensive as bullying varies from person to person. Parental involvement and understanding is ideal, and above all, bullying should always be taken seriously. //

### Is your child a bully?

Ask yourself the following questions about your child, or have them answer the questions themselves. Sometimes, a bully is a bully without even knowing it. If you find your child is a bully, seek help through the school or a counselor.

- Does your child feel good when they hurt people by words or actions?
- Does your child care about how people feel when they know they are scared, angry or hurt?
- Does your child feel like they get their way because they are bigger and stronger than others?
- Has your child been bullied and feel others deserve the same treatment?

### information

If your child needs to speak to someone because they are being bullied or are a bully, encourage them to call KidTalk at 575.636.3636 or Children's Miracle Network at 915.532.5437 where someone will listen and offer unconditional support.

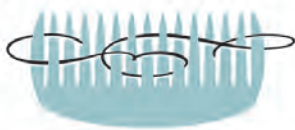
The national suicide prevention lifeline number is **800. 273.TALK.**

### Dealing with a bully

- **Report a bully.** Keep track of events, messages or calls in which you are being bullied. When the time comes to report the bully, it is best to have ample evidence so the seriousness of the matter can be seen and appropriate actions can be taken.
- **Understand a bully is a bully for a reason.** While they target people with low-self esteem or those who are quiet, they likely deal with their own insecurities. This does not, in any way, excuse bullies or their actions, but it might help to see that they are dealing with their own issues in a cowardly way.
- **Feel good about yourself.** If you believe in yourself, no matter what type of bullying you are facing it won't undermine your own self-esteem.
- **If possible, ignore a bully's threats.** Engaging in an argument on Facebook or actively seeking out a bully for a confrontation will make the bully feel like they are getting a reaction. Acting as if you don't care about them or what they say might stop their behavior.
- **Stand up for yourself.** Standing up to a bully might be hard, but it can ultimately keep a bully from bothering you. Bullies typically bully someone who won't stand up for themselves, but be sure not to bully back.
- **Try to maintain your feelings.** Again, another hard thing to do when someone is tearing you down, but planning ways to distract yourself from your feelings might help. Counting backwards from 100 or thinking about your favorite memory can keep the tears, yelling and anger at bay until you are somewhere safe to let go.

"One of the 200 fastest growing Salons in the nation" ...Salon Today Magazine

Spa. Because You Can.



WEST END

hair company + day spa



An AVEDA concept salon

2626 N. Stanton St. Mon - Sat: 9am-7pm

915.833.4050



The U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported there were **33 suicides among children ages five to nine between 1999 and 2006**, and because youth bullying and suicide increases are catching the attention of many schools and states, 37 states are taking action on bullying.

## Pediatric & Adolescent Dentistry

"For Special Care, See the Specialists."

John N. Conniff DDS, MSD  
Laurie A. Gormley DDS

**New Patients Welcomed!**  
"We'll File the Claim For You"

- Delta Dental, Tricare, & United Concordia Providers
- Medicaid Providers



**575-522-8229**

[www.kidspecialists.com](http://www.kidspecialists.com)

2701 Missouri Ave., Las Cruces, NM

**Patty Olson**<sup>®</sup>  
Associate Broker

Your Source for Information  
on Doña Ana County

Education • Business • Leisure • Medical • Military  
New Construction, Residential, Investment  
and Commercial Opportunities

For all your Real Estate Needs Search Up-to-Date  
"MLS" Listings @ [www.lascrucesexit.com](http://www.lascrucesexit.com)

**MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR PRODUCER**  
575-532-5678 • Toll Free 866-532-5678  
3529 Foothills Rd. Las Cruces, NM 88011  
[pattyolson@exithorizons.com](mailto:pattyolson@exithorizons.com)

**575-649-3175**