

Laugh & Learn®

# Bullying Is a Pain in the Brain



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Trevor Romain • Illustrated by Steve Mark

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by Trevor Romain

Illustrated by Steve Mark

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## Dedication

Dedicated to my late grandfather Teddy  
Tanchel, the best hugger in the world.

## Acknowledgments

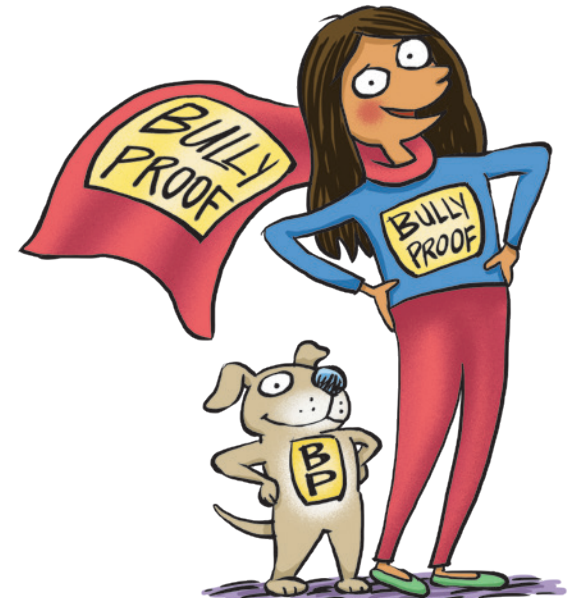
I would like to thank Judy Galbraith, Margie Lisovskis, Elizabeth Verdick, Eric Braun, and the entire Free Spirit crew who not only encouraged me to find my self-help wings but helped me soar.

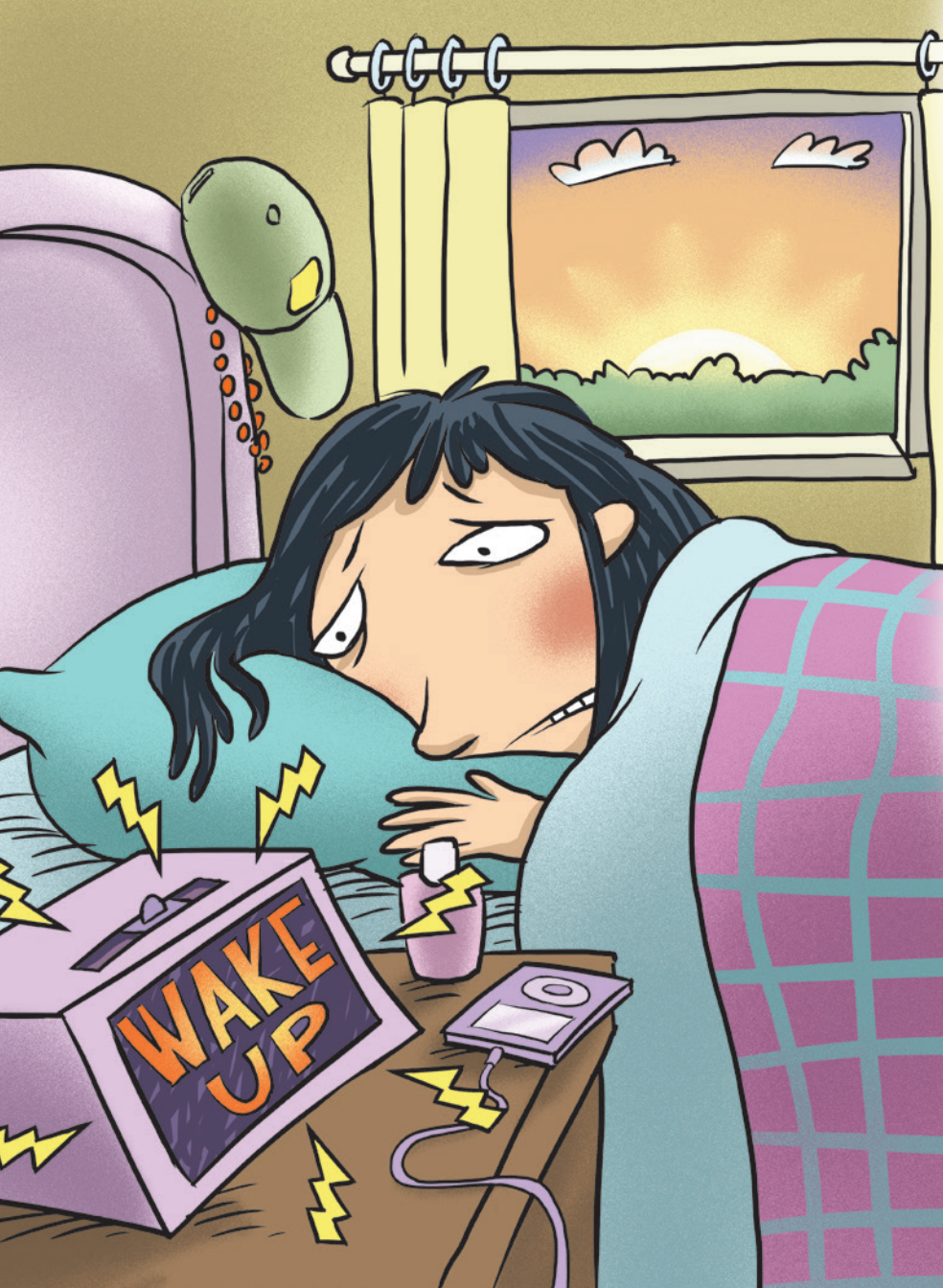
A big thank you to all educators, especially teachers and special education teachers. As a kid with dyslexia and ADHD, I would not have reached my dreams if it weren't for you.

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## Chapter 1

# Do You Have a Problem with Bullying?

The alarm clock buzzes and you slowly crawl out of bed. Another school day, and you're miserable. For the past few weeks, a kid in your class has been picking on you, pushing you when the teacher isn't looking, calling you "Dog Breath" (or worse), putting your photo on social media with embarrassing captions, and generally getting on your nerves. You didn't do anything to provoke this behavior, and you're wondering why he has chosen *you* for a target.

You get your lunch money from your mom and hide it in your shoe, hoping that kid won't try to take your money today. Then you go wait for the school bus. When it pulls up, you see him staring out at you from the back of the bus with a mean grin. "Uh-oh," you think. "How am I supposed to handle this today?"

**Does any of this sound familiar?**

If you're trying to cope with a bullying problem, here's the first thing you need to know:

## You're not alone.

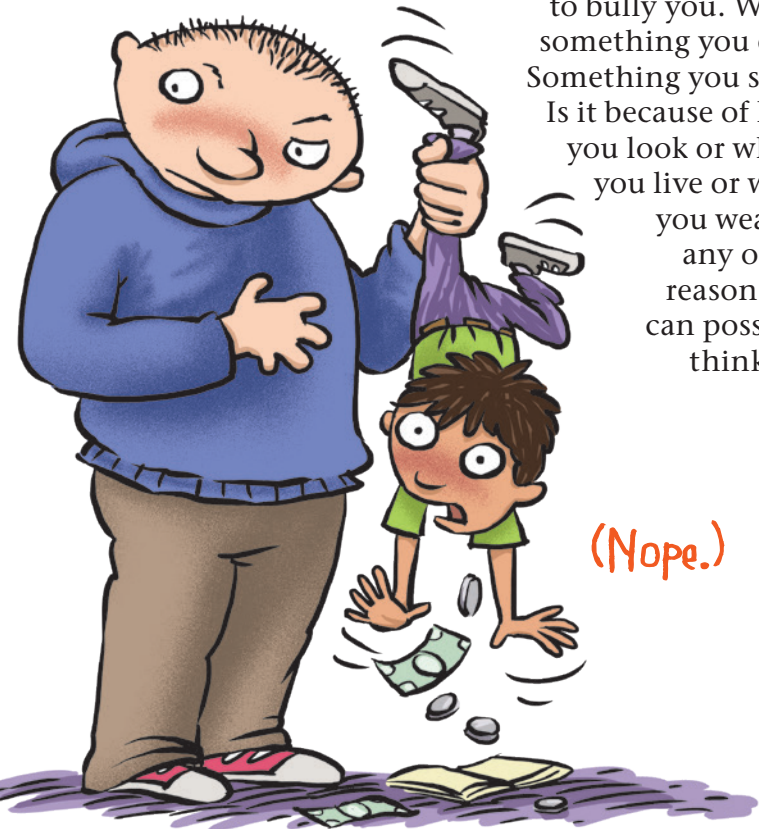
Everyone has been bullied at some point. Other kids in your school or neighborhood are probably dealing with bullying problems similar to yours. The trouble is, a lot of times people keep bullying a secret. They feel ashamed or scared to talk about what's really happening. They think that if they ignore the situation, it will go away.



Here's the second thing you need to know about your bullying problem:

## It's not your fault.

You're not doing the bullying. Someone else is. You didn't ask to be bullied. Someone else decided to bully you. Was it something you did? Something you said? Is it because of how you look or where you live or what you wear or any other reason you can possibly think of?



## A Message for Teachers and Parents

Most of us can recall a time when we've been bullied. But today bullying is more serious. Kids have taken desperate measures, such as using a gun in self-defense or committing suicide, to deal with their bullying problems. Many children are afraid to go to school. When they do, they avoid areas perceived as dangerous, such as restrooms and secluded hallways.

Since this book first came out in 1997, people have become much more aware of the dangers of bullying. New laws protect kids from bullying based on race, sex, and ability. Many schools have antiviolence and conflict-resolution programs that help the kids involved in bullying find ways to get along. We know that bystanders have the most power to end bullying—even more than adults—and many schools are working to empower them to do just that.

It's important to implement system-wide efforts and strategies to continue to curb bullying. For example, targets need to feel confident that if they report a bullying problem to school officials, something will be done. Everyone needs to understand that bullying behavior won't be tolerated.

If you're a teacher, you can take steps to curb bullying in your classroom and beyond:

1. Find out how common bullying is in your school. Create and distribute an anonymous questionnaire, or talk privately with other teachers, your students, and their parents.
2. Set firm rules against bullying in your classroom. Make sure everyone sees and knows the rules.

3. Be aware of incidents of aggression that take place in the restrooms, on the playground, in the lunchroom, and in hallways. Monitor these areas to ensure a safer school environment.
4. Keep a written record of bullying incidents, including the names, dates, times, and circumstances. Submit the reports to the principal.
5. Give students a chance to talk about bullying and its effects. Hold workshops or class discussions.
6. Get administrators and parents involved in reinforcing good behavior and supporting victims of bullying.
7. As much as possible, monitor computer use in your class, and pay attention to what kids are doing on their devices.
8. Encourage everyone to stand up to bullying, even kids who are not directly involved. Teach kids that bystanders can stop and prevent bullying when they stand together.

If you're a parent, you may not be aware that your child is being bullied. Many kids are afraid to let an adult know what's happening. They feel embarrassed and think they have to handle the situation on their own. Have you noticed any of the following signs in your child?

- Skips school or is often too sick to go to school
- Has unexplained bruises
- Has experienced a slip in grades
- Is reluctant to talk about school
- Hides social media profiles from you, or worries a lot about what kids are saying online
- Is missing belongings
- Suddenly has fewer friends (or no friends)