

## There's A Bully in You, A Bully in Me, A Bully in Everyone: What We Need to Do About It

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Do we know what bullying is — breadth and depth?

Once a bully was someone who pulled a girl's pigtails or called a rival's mother a name. That is bullying, but what was below the tip of the iceberg is now showing: The Columbine and Virginia Tech massacres occurred in response to bullying, yet both were also extreme bullying.

**Intense feelings are triggered in the one bullied and the witnesses.** But bullying is also triggered by some of those very same feelings — like hurt, fear, anger, powerlessness. Particularly powerlessness. And a ravenous hunger for power as a way to defend against powerlessness.

A boy, degraded when crying for help, is told "You're acting like a baby. You're a little sissy!" He grows up, demeans somebody else who needs help. Perhaps his own son. His aged father. . . the very person who debased him when he was a toddler reaching for daddy's help.

A girl crying in pain, is humiliated, "All you ever do is cry! Stop crying or into the trash can!" She grows up and humiliates somebody else crying in pain — her child, student, or patient, if she's a parent, teacher, or doctor.

**Where does bullying come from?** No one helped us build the capacity to bear our feelings as children and even adults. As a result, we found and developed ways to defend ourselves against those young, vulnerable feelings, or even to escape from them.

Terrified of feeling, our society relentlessly defends against feelings. Food, cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, exercise, sex, work, television, computers . . . are all used as defenses. And all have painful consequences. Murder, suicide, and other violent crimes are extreme and dangerous forms of defense and escape from feelings. Bullying now fits into this category.

What do our children see when they look at their world and see bullying?

- **In families: domestic violence in all its forms.**
- **In schools: teachers bullying students, under the guise of discipline.**
- **In houses of worship: priests molesting children in their care.**
- **In communities: parents threatening coaches in sports or teachers who don't give their children the grades the parents want.**
- **On the job: bosses bullying employees, employees bullying each other, everyone going home and bullying their spouses, children, elderly parents, and pets.**
- **In our country: candidates bullying each other in campaign ads and interviews filled with lies and mudslinging; people prevented from voting on election day.**
- **In our world: bullying all over the world through war!**

Did you ever realize the extent of bullying in our world? It's a small word for huge, destructive, brutal actions. Because of what our children see and experience, they consider bullying an option. Because bullying has become normalized in our world, our children deem it a socially acceptable form of both defense and escape. Odd, isn't it? We bemoan bullying and seem to fight against it, yet at the same time normalize and make it socially acceptable!

**Bullying is not simply an individual issue. It's also a global issue.**

There's a bully in each of us . . . even if we don't know it. Even if we try to pretend it's not true — to others and ourselves. Even if we don't want to know it. As with everything else within us, if we bury the bully within, it comes back to haunt us, and those around us. Eventually it makes itself known somehow . . . both in our inner and outer worlds.

We all need to explore, find, and heal the bully in us . . . to its roots. As the adults in the world, it is our responsibility to do this purposefully, consciously, and safely, and to teach our children to do the same by modeling it and helping them as part of daily living.

Most of all . . . who do your children see when they look at you? Do they see you bullying? Normalizing and feeding bullying in our world? Or do they see you taking responsibility for the bully in you — in action, thought, and feeling — and healing the bully in you? Can they truly depend on you to be part of the healing?

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*Judith Barr has been a depth psychotherapist in private practice for over 30 years. Her unique and innovative work helps people make a connection between our own individual relationships and experiences, and the state of our nation and our world. Judith has helped many see how their relationship with such things as money, power, fear, elections, grief, healthcare, themselves and others has had not only an impact on their own lives, but also a communal impact greater than they ever imagined. She offers her healing expertise in an array of formats: working with individuals, groups, workshops, consultations for the public, and training and supervision for healing professionals. Through her book "Power Abused, Power Healed," her dozens of articles for both professionals and the general public, her blog PoliPsych, and her speaking engagements, media appearances and teleconferences, Judith teaches about how we can help heal the misuse and abuse of power in all arenas of life — from the inside out — and how we can help to create sustainable safety in our world. For more information, please visit <http://www.PowerAbusedPowerHealed.com> or email Judith at [JudithBarr@PowerAbusedPowerHealed.com](mailto:JudithBarr@PowerAbusedPowerHealed.com).*

*To learn more about how what we bury can come back to haunt us from our underground, please see chapter 6, I'm Positively Not Gonna Deal with The Negative, of Barr's book "Power Abused, Power Healed."*



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