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# We Want You To Know: Kids Talk About Bullying



## Synopsis

Through her association with a community anti-bullying campaign launched in Haldimand, Norfolk, and neighboring communities in Southern Ontario, children's author Deborah Ellis asked students from the ages of nine to nineteen to talk about their experiences with bullying. The results are thoughtful, candid, and often harrowing accounts of "business as usual" in and around today's schools. The kids in this book raise questions about the way parents, teachers and school administrators cope with bullies. They talk about which methods have helped and which ones, with the best of intentions, have failed to protect them. And some kids reveal how they have been able to overcome their fear and anger to become strong advocates for the rights of others. This is a book for reading and sharing. Each interview is followed by questions that will encourage open discussion about the nature of bullying and the ways in which individuals and schools could deal more effectively with bullies and their victims. And additional comments from international students reveal how much kids the world over have in common in the way they experience and deal with bullies.

## Book Information

Paperback: 120 pages

Publisher: Coteau Books (September 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1550504630

ISBN-13: 978-1550504637

Product Dimensions: 10 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #1,185,158 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #72 in [Books > Teens >](#)

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-9—As part of her work with an anti-bullying campaign in her local Canadian community, Ellis interviewed young people between the ages of 9 and 19 about their experiences. In honest, straightforward prose, she shares their stories, many as targets and some as perpetrators or bystanders. The essays are loosely organized around a few themes, such as bullying based on some form of difference, whether real or perceived, and being targeted "just because." The final chapter, "Redemption," highlights those kids who have managed to rise above bullying and find strength. The selections in which students talk about experiencing repeated psychological and/or

physical abuse and educators who turn a blind eye to the problems or subversively encourage or participate in the behavior are particularly distressing. Each story is written from the first-person point of view, some with real names and photos, providing an intimacy and immediacy that are critical with these kinds of issues. Readers will find at least one or two stories they can relate to, and educators should be able to use many of the narratives to jumpstart conversation. A good choice for schools stepping up their efforts to address bullying. Jody Kopple, Shady Hill School, Cambridge, MA  
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In more than 30 hard-hitting profiles, teens talk about bullying: as victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. Accompanying each entry, there is a small portrait or sometimes just a glimpse of a kid huddling in a bathroom cubicle or alone on a school bus. Adam is beat up all the time. Amanda hides in back hallways during most of the school day to avoid the kids who punch her and call her fat and stupid. Katie stays home, unable to face the tormenting she experiences in junior high. Included are anonymous boasts: "We're the tough girls, the ones the other kids are afraid of." And one teen speaks about starting a hate Web site. In some stories, the victim becomes the bully. And bystanders speak out: Chelsea cannot forget doing nothing to stop bullies teasing a classmate with a speech impediment, but a few others are proud to redeem themselves and stop the cruelty. Ellis raises crucial questions: Why do many parents and teachers do nothing? What factors turn a kid into a bully? What makes a school a safe place? Shocking but never sensationalized, this is a great title for group discussion. Grades 6-10. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"We Want You to Know: Kids Talk About Bullying" is a collection of interviews of kids who have experienced bullying, both as receivers and aggressors by the Name It 2 Change It Community Campaign Against Bullying in southern Ontario, with additional supplemental writings from sources at Haldimand-Norfolk REACH, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Canadian International School in Tokyo, Raising Voices Uganda, and the international school in Antananarivo, Madagascar. The interviews are with children aged 9-19 and some of the bullying experiences they describe are hair-raising. "We Want You To Know" speaks in the actual voices of "kids who have been bullied, kids who have bullied others, and kids who found the strength within themselves to rise above their situations and to endure (p. 11)." Perhaps the single most important mission or teaching of "We Want You To Know" is that bullying practices must be clearly exposed and admitted in order for

change to occur, kind of a "bullying transparency" policy to encourage real problem solving and skill building in all communities where bullying exists. The author is careful to specify that each child who was interviewed for "We Want You To Know" voluntarily to tell their stories, and decided what things they wanted left out of their stories, including their photos and names. "We Want You To Know" ends with two crucial sections titled Redemption and Conclusions. Redemption "means reclaiming our lives from fear, from shame, from frustration (p. 114)." Redemption leads to questions about how to begin the process of change and growth beyond bullying. The Conclusion holds the single most important statement of the book: "Bullying is not inevitable. It doesn't have to be a normal part of childhood...Respecting others and respecting ourselves leads naturally to respecting the world and all who live in it. We don't have to settle for what we've learned so far. We can all learn more, reach further, and become the great people we were all meant to be (p.115)." "We Want You To Know" is a valuable resource for anti-bullying curriculum that is so crucial to all schools and communities, but it is more than that. It uses the painful heroic experiences of the bullied to begin to build windows to a better future. Additional resources for kids, for teachers, and for parents are listed at the end of the book. Many quotations taken from kids around the world who wrote essays on bullying are sprinkled throughout the text. These provide additional inspiration.

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