



## Bangkok Post Learning: *Test Yourself*

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# Fighting against bullying

by Gary Boyle



Photo by Bangkok Post

Read the following story by Melalin Mahavongtrakul from the *Bangkok Post*. Then, answer the questions that follow.

The problem of bullying was in the news again recently after a 13-year-old boy shot his classmate, killing him at their school. The young shooter claimed that this attack was because of the bullying he had suffered from his dead classmate, who used to hit him and call him gay in front of others.

### NO WAY OUT

In another incident, an 11-year-old girl tried to commit suicide by hanging herself in the school toilet. Her father reported that she had been bullied and teased, sometimes violently, for being poor and having dark skin.

Many people still try to pass off bullying among the young, whether it be teasing or fighting, as just child's play. But, as can be seen from these two incidents which happened just last month, bullying can lead to devastating outcomes, especially when the problem is allowed to escalate without proper intervention from adults.

According to statistics, about one-third of children suffer bullying at school, says adolescent medicine specialist Dr Jiraporn Arunakul from Ramathibodi Hospital.

"Many children feel they have no way out, and the adults in their lives can sometimes be unreliable. Some fight back, even using weapons. Some choose to put up with it. But bullying doesn't just affect the victims. It also affects the bullies themselves," said Dr Jiraporn. One in eight bullies grow up to become criminals in adulthood, she explained.

## WHY BULLY?

A child may be bullied for many reasons: physical appearance, family background, gender identity and more. But what makes a child start bullying another?

"Some children enjoy bullying. They will have seen adults playing pranks or teasing children, then laughing, and think it's a fun thing that they can do too," explained Dr Jiraporn. "Some lack empathy and understanding of things like diversity. Society teaches them the standards they have to adhere to. Girls have to be white and pretty, for example, and if anyone strays from these standards, then children may see them as abnormal and different, and start teasing them as a result."

Dr Jiraporn continued that some kids may feel powerless and oppressed at home and so decide to exercise their power at school. They bully others to feel better about themselves. For others, bullying may stem from a child's personal or mental shortcomings, such as a short attention span, impaired social skills or lack of self-control. They don't know how to play or socialise with friends, and compensate by teasing.

When faced with school bullying, teachers and parents tend to respond with punishment. Dr Jiraporn says it generally doesn't work. Punishment may scare the bully into stopping their actions temporarily, but most will soon go back to bullying, some even more than before. This can then result in the victims being so scared that they stop telling others about the bullying for fear of making things worse for themselves.

"In that situation, teachers think the problem is solved. But in reality, the kids just don't dare to speak up anymore," she said.

## HOME LESSONS

So, it's not only victims that need help, but also the bullies. To really get them to change their behaviour, it is crucial to find what is causing it in the first place. This needs to start at home. Children must be taught to have empathy and respect for diversity and the rights of others.

"Bullying is a violation of people's rights," Dr Jiraporn stressed. "We need to teach children that if they bully a classmate, even though they enjoy it, the other person doesn't, and it is a violation."

Most of all, parents have to set an example and not be bullies themselves.

*[If you are being bullied at school, please tell a teacher or a parent about it]*

**Section 1: Read through the story and answer the following questions.**

1. One in three children are bullied at school. True or false? .....
2. Some bullies turn to crime as adults. True or false? .....
3. Some children are bullied because of the way they look. True or false? .....
4. Some bullies are copying the behaviour of adults. True or false? .....
5. Punishing bullies stops them from bullying again. True or false? .....
6. Some teachers think punishment works. True or false? .....
7. To reduce bullying, children need to learn to respect other children. True or false? .....
8. Who should teach children not to be bullies? .....

**Section 2: Underline the incorrect word in each sentence and write the correct word in the space provided.**

These are some suggestions by Dr Jiraporn for adults to help children cope with bullying:

9. Listen to what children has to say and how they feel. ....
10. Don't pass bullying off as a small issue or tell them to simply put on with it. ....
11. Always reassure them that they can rely with adults. ....
12. Ask them how they think they should handle the problem and allowed them to try their solutions. ....
13. Take the necessary actions when child can no longer feel they can handle it. ....

**Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.**

With schools being the places where children spend a ...14... part of their day and also where bullying usually ...15... place, they must play a leading role. ...16..., schools need to have a clear policy that they won't tolerate any form of bullying, with ...17... rules and guidelines in place to help troubled children. Students that bully others need to be assessed to find out ...18... they behave this way. There should be a system where victims or witnesses of bullying can ...19... report incidents to teachers.

- |                 |             |             |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| 14. a. major    | b. majority | c. majorly  |
| 15. a. took     | b. takes    | c. take     |
| 16. a. Ideally  | b. Only     | c. Entirely |
| 17. a. improper | b. properly | c. proper   |
| 18. a. who      | b. which    | c. why      |
| 19. a. safety   | b. safely   | c. safe     |

**Section 4: Find words that match the following definitions.**

- 20. extremely shocking to a person .....
- 21. people who have been attacked, injured or killed .....
- 22. the act of laughing at someone and making jokes about them .....
- 23. a range of many people that are very different from each other .....
- 24. the act of causing someone who has done something wrong to suffer .....

For the answers, find the story online at [www.bangkokpost.com/learning](http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning). If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at [garyb@bangkokpost.co.th](mailto:garyb@bangkokpost.co.th)