



EIGHT ACTIONABLE STEPS TO OVERCOME THE EMOTIONAL SCARS OF BULLYING

Introduction.

Hi and welcome, I hope you find this resource as helpful and as powerful as the intention I set for it to be. A little bit about me: My name is Kalyani Pardeshi, I am from South Africa (originally), but I have been living in Canada for a little more than a decade. Wherever I went, bullying seemed to follow me. Whether it was school, work or even family, I could never seem to find any kind of escape. I decided to turn my struggle into a strategy to combat bullying in any form, in any place, in order to spare others from having my experience.

If you have experienced bullying, then you know how it makes you feel. You possibly could be battling low self-esteem and low self-confidence; you may suffer from anxiety and even depression. There isn't much that can cheer you up because you are overwhelmed with negative words and thoughts that have been meted out to you.

So, how do you move past this? Here is what I did:

Pull out all stops.

What do I mean by this? Do everything in your power to put an end to the bullying. Seek help, keep seeking help until you get the results you want. It doesn't matter if doing so makes you feel like you are being a nuisance to those who can help you. No, you are not meant to figure this out for yourself. No, you are not meant to solve this problem on your own. If possible, collect evidence (witnesses, video - whatever you need) and present this to those in authority who have the power to help you. Your voice matters, your feelings matter and this needs to be heard. Please don't suffer in silence. If you are afraid of asking for help, remember that it takes an immensely strong person to ask for help. See yourself as that - a strong and courageous person who has every right to decide how they wish to be treated.

Be the victim. But put an expiry date on it.

You are allowed to feel sorry for yourself, you are allowed to validate yourself. Talk to supportive friends and family members. Feeling like a victim is normal but don't hang around victim mentality for too long. You will shun away those who have helped you in the past. Why? Because they will feel sorry for you but only for so long, after a while, they want to see you take action to come out of that victim mentality. Put an expiry date on victim mentality and make a list of actions you can take to move on. What actions? Read on.

The best form of revenge isn't self-improvement.

On the face of it, this is very appealing - improving yourself to silence your bullies. Here's the thing though - you should choose to improve yourself because you want to be a better person not because you wish to prove someone wrong. Why? It is all about the energy you are putting into that self-improvement. Think about it - when you are angry and hurt while working on improving yourself, do you think the end result will be one that feels blissful? Now consider this - if you put determination, desire and effort towards improving yourself because you want to, because you love yourself enough to wish to see a better version of yourself, what would the end results look like? I will let you ponder over that image.

Recognise that it isn't your fault.

"Why me? What have I done to deserve this? What is wrong with me? How did I bring this upon myself? What have I done wrong?" Have you ever asked yourself these questions? Welcome to my world. I drove myself insane with these questions. Let me tell you a secret – it is not about you. Hard to believe, right? Trust me, it is not your fault, you have done nothing to deserve this. It is not karma; it is not your destiny. You deserve better, you deserve love, acceptance and respect. But why is this happening? Let me explain.

Internalise that your bully is hurting too.

Bullying stems from either fear or hurt. Bullying is a power trip for your bully. Somehow, somewhere in their lives, they feel powerless, they feel they cannot control what is hurting them or they attack what they fear instead of trying to overcome the fear. Need proof? Look at how politicians sling mud at each other. Yep, that is fear.

Hurt is the other side of it, bullies may be hurting and can only give what they have. No, this doesn't justify what they do but it makes you realise that none of this is your fault so you can stop putting yourself down and blaming yourself. Understanding a bully's motive helps disempower them in our minds, they don't seem so intimidating when you think of them this way. Furthermore, does a happy person wake up in the morning and say, "Hey I am so happy, I am going to hurt someone today!" Sounds ridiculous, right? You are a far better person than your bully is because you choose not to make yourself look better by putting others down. That's right, it is a choice.

Avoid ego wars.

I found that trying to ignore my bully didn't help while trying to defend myself by counter arguing only aggravated their behaviour towards me. So, how do you deal with your bully? Disempower them. How? By responding in a way which shows them that their words have no effect on you. Need an example? As an adult, a bully who happens to be a family member was going off at me, putting me down for something trivial because that is his personality. He said to me, "You really know nothing, you are so dumb." To this, I said, "Sure, I don't know anything, perhaps I am dumb." He was speechless, totally gobsnacked. Take note, by agreeing with him, I wasn't accepting what he said as the truth, but I was disarming him, I took away the only weapon he had – his desire to put me down and his desire for me to apologise and defend myself. He got

neither out of me because “in a war of ego, the loser always wins.” Remember, what others say about you doesn’t become your reality unless you let it.

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Acknowledge your own value and worth.

Time to build your self-confidence and self-esteem. How? Write down what you believe to be true about yourself, what makes you a good person/friend/sibling/son or daughter? Ask your family or a good friend to help you if you get stuck with this. Keep it simple – I am a loyal friend, I always do my chores, I am a good student, I am good at sports/art/creative writing, I take care of my pets well, I am responsible. This is your reality, this is who you are, not what your bullies call you. Take this list and focus on nurturing every good quality you already have because this is where your strength and confidence will come from – improving what you are good at which in turn, will make you feel fantastic about yourself!

Get physical.

Sign up for any physical activity which will give you joy and boost your self-confidence: soccer, swimming, volleyball, tennis, badminton, hockey. The YMCA offers free membership to students in grade 6 – join a gym! This will not only boost your self-confidence but also make you feel happy. Exercise releases endorphins, a hormone that gives you a natural feeling of being happy, from within. I took up badminton in college and I was ranked 2nd. As an adult, I took up strength training which helped me find happiness during my darkest times.

I hope you have found this simple guide useful. Stay tuned, I have a few more free goodies coming your way!

See you in the next guide!

