

JACK SAYS NO TO BULLYING

Hello Susanne Gervay.

I am writing about a current book I have bought and read, I AM JACK.

I get bullied at school almost every day and it makes me sick. I just didn't feel like going to school. I pretended to be sick and stay home for the day. I've talked to the School Councillor, I've tried to tell my mum, I've thought of getting back at the bullies, but all these things don't seem to work. But I AM JACK inspired me to tell everyone that I am being bullied. It makes me feel great and today I treated my mother with respect (I wasn't doing that lately because I was fed up with everyone) and I think she knows there is something fishy going on.

I just want to thank you for what you have done and I think you are a great writer. I will enjoy reading all your other books.

Yours sincerely,

Susie (Real name withheld)

P.S. Please write back to email address provided.

Thankyou

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Children are different to adults. They so not have not the experience or communication skills to deal with issues such as bullying. Susie is a bright year 5 student, with a supportive school and loving mother. She is being bullied and in real crisis. Yet she cannot speak. She feels alone and powerless.

Books like 'I Am Jack' can give Susie and children like her a voice. Through story journey they can obtain insights into how bullying started and developed and some strategies to stop it.

'Relating to a story, or being emotionally engaged facilitates learning. Readers become fellow travellers in a story journey. Linning, Phillips and Turton (1997) in a literature based approach to bullying, rationalise that a story can allow the reader to empathise with situations that they may not have experienced, can provide the reader with reassurance that other people experience the same problems they do themselves, and can provide a situation where topics can be explored through a third party - the characters in the book.' (1)

Life Education Australia has endorsed 'I Am Jack'. Life Education applies the 'social competencies' or 'social influences' approach. This interactive approach uses the real social settings and experiences of students, schools and families, to teach and practice social skills in decision-making, communication, negotiation and peer resistance and refusal, as well as providing accurate information for safe choices.

By taking students on a journey with Jack, attitudes, feelings and strategies about bullying can be explored and discussed in a non threatening way.

When 'Bullying' is taught in classrooms, children will often give the 'correct' answers, then go out into the playground and bullying continues. They have not understood what bullying really is. They need to be involved emotionally and once they can empathise with the bullied they can begin the process of countering it.

'I Am Jack' places kids in a real bullying situation at school. Parents, teachers, the bullied, the bully, the other students can see themselves in Jack's story. 'I Am Jack' can be used effectively in the following steps in countering bullying

Bullying is about power imbalance and relationships. Most children will have experienced bullying or have bullied someone.

This does not mean that these children are weak or bad. School is the testing ground for relationships and social order. There needs to be an awareness that bullying happens and what everyone can do in stopping it from escalating.

Steps for Children in countering Bullying:-

1. Awareness of real Bullying
2. The difference between bullying and teasing
3. Insight in how bullying develops
4. Empathy for the bullied
5. Understanding the bullied, bully and the other children at school
6. Fears and difficulties when confronted with bullying
7. Strategies to counter Bullying

Steps for the School Group in countering Bullying:-

1. The group decides not to tolerate bullying in their school
2. Children who are NOT being bullied should report it to the teacher NOT just the child who is being bullied
3. The group invites kids who are alone to join a game or their activity
4. When a child is being bullied the group stands beside that child
5. The group is NOT telling on the bully, they are protecting the victim
6. Defending another person who is being victimised makes YOU a hero.

Steps for Teachers in countering Bullying:

1. Understanding what bullying really is
2. The difference between teasing and bullying
3. How to sight bullying
4. How teachers are manipulated by bullies
5. Teachers as the safe house
6. Strategies to counter Bullying
7. Strategies to rebuild self esteem in victims and change the behaviour of the bullies.

Steps for Parents and Adults in countering Bullying

1. Signs of bullying
2. Why many children do not tell
3. Parents as the safe house
4. Strategies to counter bullying such as participation in group activities, encouraging friendship groups, strengthening leaders in the school to act for social justice.
5. Strategies to rebuild self-esteem in victims and change the behaviour of bullies

Some anti-bullying practices which can scare children and need to be monitored:-

1. Conciliation where the bullied and bully are forced to face each other with a facilitator such as a teacher.
Conciliation can disempower children unless both children seriously CHOSE and are ready for conciliation.
2. Unmonitored play times. Teachers and parents cannot be there ALL the time leaving periods which can be even more 'dangerous' for the bullied, especially after adult intervention.
3. Identifying the bullied as a special case to all the school.
4. Too much discussion of anti-bullying practices and not enough concrete activities.
5. Empowering the bully by too much attention and focus
6. Setting children up to give the 'right' answers, often followed by even more negative behaviours.
7. Forcing the bullied to be proactive in joining groups who will in all likelihood reject him/her.
8. Artificially forcing students to welcome the bullied into their group.
9. Making announcements at school assemblies about parents and students involved in bullying.

'I Am Jack' is an effective way for students, teachers and adults to discuss bullying in a meaningful way.

(For Teacher's Notes and some lesson plans, go to www.sgervay.com
Press BULLYING in CONTENTS, then go into Teaching Unit.)

Internet Sites - Susanne Gervay

- **Susanne Gervay** - www.sgervay.com
- HarperCollins Publishers - website: www.harpercollins.com.au
- Lateral Learning Speakers' Agency - www.laterallearning.com
- Writers' events at The Hughenden - www.hughendenhotel.com.au
- Reading Notes www.harpercollins.com.au
- Life Education on "I Am Jack" – www.drugsafe.org
- www.eharold.net

Susanne's Titles

I Am Jack, HarperCollins Publishers *

Super Jack, HarperCollins Publishers *

Jamie's A Hero, HarperCollins Publishers

Next Stop the Moon, HarperCollins Publishers

Young Adult Fiction

1. *Butterflies* HarperCollins Publishers *
2. *The Cave* HarperCollins Publishers *
3. *Shadows of Olive Trees*, Hodder Headline Publishers

Audio

I Am Jack and *Super Jack* *

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* Available through all good bookshops and specialist children's bookshops.
