

Name: Megan Schoeff

Grade: 8

School: Marine View

Whether it's verbal, social, or physical, bullying can really take a toll on one's mental and physical health. Personally, I don't think people are born callous, but factors such as an unstable family life or self-doubt can lead someone to believe that his or her only option in order to be accepted by peers is to target a victim with a weakness and bully them. Making the victim feel unimportant or ridiculous makes the bully feel powerful. Not, surprisingly, the victim will eventually seek out someone else with a weakness, and become a bully himself. This begins a continuous cycle of harassment and animosity. Why are we letting this happen? When most people witness one of their peers bullying someone, they refrain from taking action in fear that they too will become a bullying target. Besides, as long as no one is getting physically hurt, kids are just messing around...right? What most people don't realize is that seemingly harmless jokes and insults can shatter one's confidence and self-respect. Victims of even minor bullying can become depressed or anxious, and they sometimes resort to drastic actions, such as injuring themselves or even committing suicide. Despite good intentions, according to StopBullying.gov, an official U.S. government website, even if a witness reports a bullying incident, adults will only intervene four percent of the time if the bullying occurs outside of the classroom. It seems as though we, the peers are the ones who can create the deepest impression in the fight to stop bullying. In fact, we have the power to solve the massive bullying issue peacefully. When you really consider it, everyone just needs a friend or mentor to feel self-assured and confident. If the child with the unstable family life or insecurity had someone to talk to and support them, they might not feel as though they need to abuse someone else. In order to stop bullying, we, the witnesses, the victims, and even the bullies need to take a stand and break the bullying cycle.