

Silent Witness
Discussion Questions

Opening

1. What is the main reason bystanders do not do anything when they witness bullying?
2. Some of the teenagers defend or explain bystander behaviors by saying, “That could be me if I tell,” or “They don’t want their friends to get in trouble and blame them for it,” or “It’s almost like excitement—everyone rushes over,” or “I wish I could stand up for the person, but it’s always easier to just NOT.” Do the statements sound familiar? Why or why not?
3. What is the difference between “standing by” and “standing up?”

Part I

1. Describe Kyle Finn’s story. What did kids do to him? Why? What did his friends do? Why?
2. What is the typical appearance of a victim?
3. How do bullies sense fear in a prospective victim?
4. What “differences” make kids targets of bullies?
5. What is Asperger’s Syndrome? Why would it make somebody an easy target for bullying?
6. What is perhaps the hardest part of being a parent of a bully? Explain your answer.
7. How would you feel if Kyle’s experience was yours?

Part II

1. The counselor asked the students, “What is the difference between tattling and telling?” What would your response be?
2. Describe Stanzi’s illness and how it led to being bullied.
3. How did Stanzi’s parents help change things around?
4. What are some steps kids can take to avoid being bullied?
5. What is the role of courage in changing the attitudes toward bullying? Explain your answer.

Part III

1. Describe Bill Ehrenreich’s story. What was the event that changed his mother’s life?
2. How did Bill’s mother talk to the school district? Did it work? Would it be effective in your school district? Why or why not?
3. How did the Fox School District make anti-bullying a priority? What were the steps they took?

Close

1. What is “social improvisation” or “social theatre?” Do you think it is a positive step toward changing attitudes toward bullying? Why or why not?

2. Agree or disagree with the following statement: “Students are learning about the power they have to stop bullying and learning how telling not only protects victims, it can protect them, too, from one day becoming victims themselves.”
3. Mary Ann Byrne, Counselor, says, “There’s not a person in this country that’s not involved in [bullying]. You’re either the bully, the victim, or the bystander. And we’re all affected by it.” Respond to this quotation and explain your answer.