

KEEP A JOURNAL – OUTSMART THE BULLIES!

By Wendy Soria

Hey kids, here is some helpful advice for those of you who have been bullied. A bully is usually a bigger kid who tries to make life miserable for other kids. Sometimes bullies run around in groups, and many things they do are against the law. There are some things you can do to keep from being bullied, but if you want to stop bullies, you must have proof. One cool way to gather evidence anonymously is to keep a journal. If you've ever been harassed by a bully, or have witnessed others being bullied, you can begin taking notes today like a *detective!*

A good detective keeps his eyes and ears open and looks out for the little guy. He works to make things better for everybody. When there is trouble, he collects evidence, and writes the details in his notebook. He may never use his notes as evidence, but if he ever needs to report a 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', or 'why' as proof of misconduct, he'll have it recorded in his journal.

Here are some ways you can use a journal to collect facts about a bully's actions against you or someone else, without him/her knowing anything about it:

Stay Alert!

Look around. It won't take long before somebody says or does something mean. Don't misunderstand – anyone can have a bad day, but bullies are usually 'repeat offenders', and most kids know who they are, and are afraid of them. One thing most bullies like to do is brag about the bad things they've done. They won't do this in front of a teacher or a regular student, but they'll boast about it to their buddies. If you put your ears into 'detective mode', you may overhear a conversation like that. Bragging is like a confession, so you'll want to secretly jot down the details (who, what, when, where, and why) in a notebook or piece of paper, and put it inside your journal. If these misguided kids begin paying the consequences for breaking the law, they might stop hurting or harassing other kids – especially you. *** You must report threats of a future planned act of violence against a school, student, teacher, or a parent! This could save lives!*

Are you a bully's victim?

If you've been a bully's victim, here are some things you should do:

1. Write truthful details in your journal – exact date, time, what happened, etc.
2. Report to your teacher, parents, or a trusted adult – this takes guts.
3. Avoid secluded areas at school.
4. Walk with a friend or a group as much as possible.
5. When you see someone else being bullied, quickly get an adult.
6. You may choose to submit a warning to school officials anonymously.

If a bully confronts you, decide now to do the following:

1. Stand up, stay calm, and try not to show fear.
2. Don't say anything or react to a threat – leave if you can.
3. If you can't leave, avoid getting into a fight; you'll get in trouble, too.
4. If a bully physically hurts you at school, go to the nurse or an official.
5. You can submit information anonymously in a note or letter to a trusted adult.
6. Enter a truthful, detailed and accurate account of the incident in your journal.

Have you been a victim or witness to a crime?

Crimes must be reported. Keeping a journal is a very handy tool if you are asked to fill out a police report. Since you've been taking notes, you may have already recorded some of the following things detectives look for when investigating a crime:

1. First and last names of the instigators – including nicknames
2. Type of crime: theft, drugs, abuse, tagging, stalking, harassment, assault, etc.
3. Exact time the crime took place
4. Where it occurred – the exact location or address.
5. First and last names of the victims
6. First and last names of any witnesses
7. Detailed description of the criminal(s)
 - . Approximate age, race, size, and build
 - . Color of eyes, hair, and skin and complexion
 - . Any distinguishing marks such as scars, tattoos, piercings, etc.
 - . Unusual hairstyles
 - . Detailed description of clothes, style of shoes, type of hat, logos, etc.
 - . If there is a group, who actually committed the crime?
 - . Note the type of language used: profanity, threats, gang lingo, hate, etc.
8. If a car was involved, describe it the best you can.
9. If a weapon was used, describe it. What happened to it?
10. If crime was a theft, list and describe the stolen items, worth or cost, the last time you saw the items(s), and time you discovered it/them missing. ***If an adult's checks or credit cards were stolen, they must be told immediately so the accounts can be closed.*

Meeting the challenge of stopping unlawful activities at home, school, or the workplace is everyone's responsibility. Bullying is against the law. As a brave young person, you can make a big difference by deciding to address these challenges by becoming a good citizen. Keeping a detailed journal is a great way to protect yourself and others. Truth is power! YOU can outsmart the bullies!

See my prompt journals for youth, teens and adults on www.wendysoria.com.