


a n i n s t a n t h e l p b o o k f o r t e e n s

coping with cliques



a workbook to help girls deal with **gossip, put-downs, bullying** & other mean behavior

✱ **stick up** for your rights

✱ find supportive **friends**

✱ deal with **cyber-bullying**

✱ overcome **social isolation**

SUSAN SPRAGUE

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Distributed in Canada by Raincoast Books

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Instant Help Books
A Division of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
5674 Shattuck Avenue
Oakland, CA 94609
www.newharbinger.com

Cover and text design by Amy Shoup

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Printed in the United States of America

CIP data on file with publisher

10 09 08

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

First printing

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introduction

Do you miss out on being invited to the right parties with the “in crowd”? Do your classmates make fun of you on MySpace? Have you been threatened on AIM by someone you don’t know? Or are you having trouble finding friends who will stand by you when the most popular girl at school picks on you?

If you’ve answered yes to any of these questions, know that you’re not alone. Adolescence has always been a time when girls draw lines in the sand, and when those lines are drawn, you may feel like you’ve been left out in the cold. This book will help you know:

- What to do if someone calls you names
- What to do if someone insults you in an e-mail
- What to do if someone makes fun of you online
- How to keep from being the object of gossip
- How to tell when teasing has turned into harassment
- When to ask for help with bullying
- How to deal with hurt feelings and anger
- How to find friends who will be just that—friends

When you finish it, you’ll be amazed at how powerful and confident you have become. You’ll be able to dish it out without stooping to the level of dirt, and inside you’ll have that warm, glowing feeling that comes from being true to what you believe in.

Here’s a biggie: In some of the activities, you’ll be writing about real people—in your own clique or others. The activities are yours to complete privately, but stuff happens, so take care not to use actual names. You’ll avoid hurting anyone else, and you may find that you feel freer to say what you really think.

part 1



sticks and stones can break my bones ...

You've probably heard that old saw before and know how it ends: but names can never hurt me. The truth is, words can hurt. And while they don't physically break bones, they can damage your spirit. Picture this: It's the first day of school. You've chosen your clothes carefully, gotten a new hairstyle, and chatted with your BFF for an hour the night before, filling her in on the details. The next day when you're walking down the hall, BFF takes one look at you and says loudly, "Where'd you get that? The thrift shop?" Everyone looks at you, and you feel your ears burn with humiliation. Before you can answer, the bell rings and you're left there alone.

At times like that, you need to identify what you're feeling instead of heading for the refrigerator or teasing your little brother, or worse, getting on the phone and widening the circle of gossip and outrage. Not until you can identify what you are feeling and how you should react can you go on to become the strong, confident girl you want to be.

1 aww, poor baby— recognizing hurt

starting off ...

Friendship is what makes life super fun and interesting. But what happens when your BFF says something that destroys your self-confidence? Can you reconcile the hurt you're experiencing with the feelings of friendship you have for her? The answer is yes. You can begin the process by freely acknowledging those hurt feelings and not shoving them back down into yourself.

Without friendship, you may wake up in the morning when the alarm goes off and think only of the daily grind of stuff you have to do—yuck. Friendship helps you think about what else will fill the day besides school, homework, and activities. In fact, friends give you that extra push out the door because you know that you will share, giggle, and listen.

But it's not always laughs. Picture a group of friends sitting in the cafeteria, talking about the cute guy in science, when suddenly Brianna says to Emily, "You might have a chance with him if you had hair like Kelly instead of such thin hair." Everyone turns to look at Kelly, whose thick, blonde hair, without a split end in sight, is the envy of the entire school. How can Brianna say that? Just last night Emily slept over at her house, and they stayed up until two o'clock talking about her crush. They've been friends since kindergarten and they've always shared secrets and supported each other.

As Emily sits there, unable to respond, she goes through a torrent of emotions: disbelief, amazement, jealousy, and anger. But she doesn't say anything. When the bell rings, signaling the end of lunch, everyone picks up their backpacks and leaves.

At home after school, Emily is no longer angry, but she feels depressed and sad. She throws herself into her favorite chair in front of the TV and starts watching a soap opera. Its complicated plot is so over the top that by the time dinner rolls around, she's feeling better.

...and more to do!

Think back to a time when one of your close friends hurt you, either intentionally or accidentally.

Describe where you were.

What was the first feeling you had?

What did you say?

What did you do when you were alone?

How did you feel about the incident the next day?

2

catch those feelings— recognizing sadness

starting off ...

Whether deliberately or unintentionally, other girls sometimes make chance remarks that upset you. Often you don't know what to make of these verbal jabs, yet you're left with feelings of sadness that you might try to ignore. After all, friends are never supposed to hurt each other's feelings, right? Wrong! Whether it's a girl from another clique or one of your own friends, you've been subjected to insults. It's important to recognize what you are feeling instead of denying it. Admit what it is and you're on the first step to dealing with it.

It's Friday night, and Shauna is at Jessie's house. It makes Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago look like a dump! As they say in the car ads, it's fully loaded: a home theater, an in-ground swimming pool, and four bathrooms. Even Jessie's room looks like a magazine picture, with a canopied bed, window seat, and walk-in closet.

Shauna? Well, she has to share a bedroom with her bratty eight-year-old sister—and she's lucky to even have a house since her parents divorced.

As she stands gaping at the aqua and brown decor, she says wistfully, "What a fab room. Did you get to pick out the colors and shop for the accessories?"

Jessie just looks at her and says, "No, Mom uses the decorating firm in town." She pauses slightly and then adds, "It must be hard for you to have to share your room, but I guess it's nice that you got to decorate it with your mom's old beanbag chairs."

The look on her face is sympathetic, but the words shoot through Shauna. Jessie is her friend. They've been in school together since third grade, and Shauna has listened and supported her through really tough times. Now this?

Face it. Jessie may be her real true friend, but what she said has hurt Shauna and made her sad.