

JUST BE COOL

A 2ND STORY STUDY GUIDE
INSPIRED BY THE ORIGINAL STORY BY
CP CHANG



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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Welcome to our study guide.

2nd Story is a collective of story-makers and story-lovers committed to building a more empathetic world by sharing one great story at a time. We believe in the unique power of sharing one's personal story.

This guide takes a closer look at a true story told by a real person.

CP Chang's *Just Be Cool* is a story of how often bullying extends beyond the schoolyard, and how it can be challenging to step up in these situations, especially when we need to stand up the most.

Inside this study guide, you will find activities, an interview with CP, and contextual information on bullying, its effects, and what we can do to stop it. We hope this content will add to your understanding of his story. On our website, you can find additional resources and related learning standards.

To use this guide in any capacity, please start by listening to CP's story, available on the 2nd Story website at 2ndStory.com/studyguides.

Happy listening! Happy learning!

The 2nd Story Collective

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START TALKING.

2nd Story uses **true, first-person stories** as an entry-point for conversation. After listening to CP Chang's "Just Be Cool", use the following questions for a guided discussion.

GROUP AGREEMENTS

When sharing personal narratives, stories, and sensitive information, we begin by establishing the following agreements with participants. Before beginning your discussion, we recommend going over the following group agreements. When finished, ask, "Do you agree?" and then have participants collectively and vocally respond with "I agree."

1. What is learned here leaves here. What is said here stays here.
2. Take care of yourself.
3. Practice equity by sharing the floor.
4. Replace judgment with curiosity.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What moments in this story feel familiar to you and your life? Why?
- How does CP's relationship to bullies and bullying change throughout the story? How do the bullies change?
- What do you notice about reasons why CP (and others) are picked on in this story?
- How does the "Just Be Cool" motto help CP throughout the story?
- How do people react to bullying in this story? What do their reactions tell you?

WHY DO PEOPLE BULLY?

It would be close to impossible to create a full list of all the reasons why people bully others. However, there are trends and patterns that can predict those who are more likely to do so. Unsurprisingly, those who feel more supported by and safe in their communities are less likely to bully others.

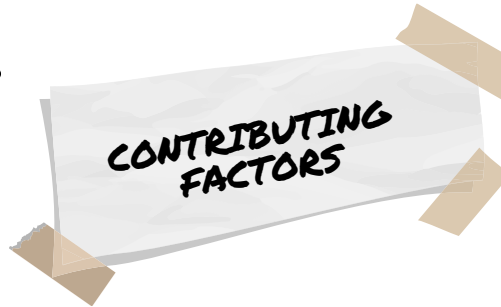
PEER FACTORS

The bully attempts to improve (or keep) their standing and popularity.

The bully acts out of a desire to control or exclude peers.

SCHOOL FACTORS

The bully may feel excluded or ignored at school. This can be exacerbated if the school does not actively combat all types of bullying.



FAMILY FACTORS

The bullying is an extension of bullying/violence experienced at home.

The bullies' families or guardians do not provide support, are dominating, or are absent either physically or emotionally.

EMOTIONAL FACTORS

Bullies often have been bullied themselves and do so to keep it from happening to them.

They may have a lack of emotional control or social skills.

HOW CAN WE STOP BULLYING?

The steps below are geared towards people who are witnessing bullying (the bystanders). If you yourself are being bullied, the most important thing to do is make sure you're safe and tell someone you trust.

→ COMMUNICATION IS KEY

- All research shows that communication, both with the bully and with the person being bullied, is one of the best ways to stop bullying. For bullies, the opportunity to openly process their emotions can provide necessary help and clarify why they bully in the first place. For bullied people, it is important that they feel comfortable telling trusted adults (or peers) so that the bullying is known.

→ STEPPING UP

- It's easier said than done, but fighting the urge to stand by is one of the most powerful ways to stop bullying. Bullies thrive on feeling powerful; seeing their peers collectively disapprove of their bullying can serve as an important lesson.
 - This is important for bystanders of all ages. It may be easy for an adult to say, "kids will be kids," but the risk of intervention for an adult is much lower than for a peer who could become the recipient of the bully's attention.
 - You can learn ways to be an upstander in our article, "The Bystander Effect," and get additional resources on p. 5.

→ CHECKING IN AFTERWARDS

- If you realize a friend of yours is bullying others, you have the ability to significantly influence their behavior. Have the awkward conversation with them - give them a chance to talk to someone openly, and discourage the harm they might be causing others.

WHAT ABOUT CYBERBULLYING?

- If you're on the receiving end of cyberbullying, one way to stop it is to block the senders - whether a phone number, email address, or online account - they can all be blocked. Most sites also have a way to report or flag accounts as abusive - doing this can help get cyberbullies off platforms they use to cause harm.
 - This is a band-aid on a larger problem, but the more distance between you and the bully, the less likely they are to pursue you directly.
- If this is happening to you, or you see this happening to a friend or peer, it may be worth documenting the abuse via screenshot, and bringing that evidence to a shared authority (teacher/coach/etc). Cyberbullying is easy to erase, but bringing it to light is the easiest way to ensure people get the support they need.

BUT, LIKE, WHAT IS A BULLY?

Dictionary.com defines “bully” as “a blustering, mean, or predatory person who, from a perceived position of relative power, intimidates, abuses, harasses, or coerces people, especially those considered unlikely to defend themselves.”

This definition highlights a key aspect of bullying – it is performed by someone with perceived (or actual) power against someone who is perceived without power. The nature of this abuse of power can take many forms.

PHYSICAL BULLYING

Often the easiest to spot, physical bullying includes any form of physical violence towards a person or their property.

CYBERBULLYING

Referring to any form of bullying that happens through computers/phones/etc, Cyberbullying generally mimics Verbal and/or Social Bullying, but is done through an electronic medium. It can also involve the creation or posting of derogatory/harmful videos or pictures, as well as sharing personal information or imagery without permission.

The potential for anonymity that the internet creates means that Cyberbullies may direct their harm towards people they don't know at all, and/or keep their identity hidden. This distance often leads to people saying/doing things they would not otherwise do if in person, face-to-face.

Consider the prevalence of “internet trolls” – there are entire communities online of people who take joy solely out of attempting to annoy/anger strangers.

VERBAL BULLYING

This refers to any use of spoken language meant to cause harm – it can take the form of more casual name-calling, or be as overt as slurs and other derogatory language. While it may appear less immediately harmful, verbal bullying has the potential to cause serious harm to an individual's mental health.

SOCIAL BULLYING

This is also referred to as “covert bullying,” as it often takes place in such a way that it is hidden from the bullied person. While Verbal Bullying actively insults, Social Bullying specifically targets the bullied person's reputation or social standing.

This includes subtle actions, such as unkind gestures/faces made behind a person's back, or more aggressive ones, like lying, spreading rumors, or actively excluding someone from social events.

BULLYING BETWEEN ADULTS

While we tend to associate the term “bullying” with actions between children or teens, the truth is that bullying does not end with adulthood. Certain actions, such as aggressive physical bullying, tend to simply be reclassified into “assault” or “harassment.” Others can continue unabated – cyberbullying has no age limit.

WORKPLACE BULLYING

Bullies in general thrive on perceived power imbalances. However, once in the workplace, these power structures are solidified – adult bullies will take advantage of the actual power they have over coworkers or employees. This can take the form of any of the listed forms of bullying, but with the added pressure of financial control. Also referred to as “Tangible/Material Bullying” this can extend to any scenario where the bully holds active legal control over the bullied person. A bully might wield their ability to fire someone as leverage to keep their target quiet. Outside of the workplace, a partner or family member may use the fact that they share a bank account or lease in a similar way.

THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE, AND OTHERS, CHOOSE TO STAND BY?

The APA (American Psychological Association) defines Bystander Effect as “a phenomenon in which people fail to offer needed help in emergencies, especially when other people are present in the same setting.” In simplest terms, we are less likely to provide help when in larger groups. Throughout CP’s recollections in “Just Be Cool,” there are moments that illustrate how people subconsciously avoid standing up in situations where others need help.

• **WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?**

- When surrounded by people, we subconsciously expect other people to help instead of us. We also might assume that, if help was truly needed, someone else in the group would have already offered help.
- Depending on the circumstance, we may stay inactive because of the fear that acting will put ourselves in danger.

• **EXAMPLES OF BYSTANDER EFFECT:**

- Bystander Effect can occur in many sorts of situations, from the safe and everyday to the intense and dangerous.
 - People drive by a stalled car on the road and they don’t stop to help.
 - We hear a car alarm go off at night and assume it’s accidental.
 - In a public place, people stand by when witnessing a medical emergency because they assume others are more qualified or able to help.
 - When seeing bullying happening, people don’t step in or intervene because other peers could just as easily do so instead of them.
 - If an act of violence takes place, people might film or photograph it rather than taking action to stop it.

• **WHAT STEPS* CAN I TAKE TO COMBAT THE BYSTANDER EFFECT ?**

- **Notice An Event Is Occurring**
 - Ask yourself: “Is something out of the ordinary happening?”
- **Determine If Help Is Required**
 - Ask: “Does someone need help?”
- **Assume Personal Responsibility**
 - If someone needs help, act as if you are the only person who can help them.
- **Determine Way To Help**
 - Ask: “What is the best way to help? Do I need to step in directly, or should I go get help from someone else?”
 - The anti-harassment non-profit organization Right To Be (featured in “What Can I Do? Anti-Bullying Resources”) developed the 5D’s – five ways for bystanders to intervene in situations where someone is being bullied, harassed, or harmed.
 - **Direct:** Directly intervene in the situation. Speak up to the person causing the harm. Be firm and clear. This method has risks because the aggressor could turn their attention to you.
 - **Distract:** This is a subtler way to intervene. Interact with the person who is being targeted or bullied – distracting attention away from the person causing the harm. This also offers a chance for the bullied person to move away from the aggressor.
 - **Delegate:** Get help from someone else. Take stock of the situation and determine the best way to help. Then, delegate tasks to those around you.
 - **Delay:** You might not have been around when the situation occurred. It is still helpful to check in with a person after they have been bullied/harmed to see if they need any additional support.
 - **Document:** If someone is already intervening, or if you feel unsafe intervening directly, another helpful tool is to document the situation. Always ask the person who experienced the harm what they would like to do with the documentation, and never share the information without their consent.
- **Provide Help**
 - After determining what you should do, take that action.
 - During each of these steps there can be a point that we fail at intervention; something stops us from stepping up.
 - For example, if the emergency is medical, it might be difficult to determine a way to help, but it may be as simple as calling an ambulance.
 - Bystander effect also causes issues because the more other people there are that could help, the less likely we are to think that we, specifically, need to help.
 - Being the first person to take a step forward and intervene, especially in stressful situations like bullying, is difficult. However, every time someone steps up, it gets easier for the next person to do so.

*These steps were proposed by Darley & Latane in their studies on bystander effect in the late 1960s–early 70s.]

THE POWER OF THE PEN

A CONVERSATION WITH STORYTELLER & SOFTWARE ENGINEER CP CHANG

CP Chang is product director for a health insurance company and a company member of 2nd Story. He received his M.F.A from Columbia College of Chicago. His short fiction, poetry, and narrative nonfiction has appeared in *Briefly Knocked Unconscious: Stories from 2nd Story*, *Upstairs at Duroc*, *Atlanta Review*, *Word Riot*, *Immigrant City - Chicago*, and other publications. He is blessed to be married to Jessica Young, who teaches him a little more about yoga, spiritual care, and love each day.



So, tell me a little about yourself. Where are you from? What do you do?

After being born in Michigan, I lived outside of Chicago briefly as a child, and I went to high school in central Ohio. I consider myself to be a Midwest boy, though I've been lucky enough to live on both coasts and even in Germany for a brief

time in my twenties. But I've come back to Chicago time and again as an adult, and even though I'm about to move from Boston to Raleigh, my heart is still with Chicago. My undergraduate degree was in math and computer science, and that allowed me to get a software job that paid the bills after college, but I always loved writing and eventually went back to school for a master's degree in fiction writing. But the bills kept coming, as they do, and I'm back in the corporate world working in health insurance.

How do you identify as an artist?

I want to make art that is arresting, in the sense that it causes one to pause and hold in their daily life and re-consider (or consider for the first time) a possible truth they did not know. Writing poetry and fiction were my first loves, but non-fiction storytelling and performance have come to be just as integral to my artistic self. I consider myself to be a novice in the visual arts, but the physical aspects of painting and sculpting thrill me. Making art (and engaging in art made by others) feels like spiritual work to me, not just that it is fulfilling, but because art is cut from the same fabric as Meaning.

What role does story and storytelling play in your life?

Crafting real stories - the stories of my actual life and the person I believe myself to be - is an intensely vulnerable act for me (and for loved ones who appear in my stories, too!), and yet at the same time it feels like a necessary way of living in community with others. Building a good story gives me great satisfaction, and when other people connect with my story, I feel like I've done something worthwhile.

Why did you want to tell this story?

As someone who was bullied, I wanted others to understand what it was like but also to understand that we can be complicit just by the lack of inaction. On top of that impulse, I've always felt vulnerable about talking about bullying, and that's how I knew there was a story there worth telling. It was a complicated feeling, about both being the target of bullies but also being a contributor, and I wanted to explore it through this story. One of the beauties of telling real stories is that we don't have to have all the answers.

How have you seen the power that bullies wield evolve in the different stages of your life?

Bullies seem to exist wherever there is power disparity. In middle school and high school, that power was sometimes physical, because kids could still get away with assaulting each other, and it was sometimes social, using mockery to isolate other people. By the time I went to college, physical assault had real legal implications, and I didn't witness physical bullying, but emotional and social bullying were still common. Being out from under the eyes of adults led college students I knew to solidify their social power by picking on students with less social standing. And in the corporate world, where structures of power are everywhere, bullying continues to be common, as the powerful demean and debase others just to reinforce their own power.

What tactics do you use to keep yourself calm after confrontation? How do you shake it off?

I wish I had a great answer for these questions! I'm still learning the best ways to keep calm and shake it off. The hardest but probably noblest method is to find compassion for the bullies themselves. They have fears and vulnerability as well and may have been bullied at home or previously. I mention briefly in my story seeing a middle school boy who bullied me getting physically pushed around by a group of bigger boys. Knowing that bullies have their OWN bullies helps me release the negative energy after a confrontation. But mostly, I return to an inward-looking state, reminding myself that I am calm, I am safe, and I am beloved.

Do you feel that any aspects of your identity led to you being targeted by bullies? Did that change in different stages of your life?

I absolutely felt that my identity was the reason for my bullying, and the idea that others also feel that their identity is responsible for their pain....that idea makes my heart break. When you can't discern any other rational reason for being picked on, it's easy to say, "It's because of who I am." For me, it was about being Chinese, or the bowl cut hair I had as a child, or my name, or the clothes I wore. But as I got older, I could see that bullies picked on whoever they could, as long as they felt they could away with it. Sure, there are bullies who are racist or homophobic or otherwise hateful to a group of people, but it seemed to me that there were bullies of all types that would find any reason to torment someone else - it didn't matter what the identity of that someone else was.

"WHEN THE STORY WAS FIRST TOLD, I ALMOST FELT LIKE "BULLY" WAS AN ANTIQUATED WORD, BUT SINCE THEN, BULLYING HAS BECOME A MORE COMMON WORD, AS BULLYING HAS BECOME MORE PREVALENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA, IN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL POLITICS, AND EVEN ON OUR STREETS. BUT THE IDEA OF "JUST BE COOL" ISN'T ABOUT RAGING AGAINST THE BULLIES OF THE WORLD; IT'S ABOUT DEVELOPING THE HABIT OF RECOGNIZING WHEN WE'RE THE ONES WITH POWER."

So much has happened in the world since you first wrote and told this story. How do you "just be cool" in the wake of current events?

It has been a wild time in the world. When this story was first told, I almost felt like "bully" was an antiquated word, but since then, bullying has become a more common word, as bullying has become more prevalent in social media, in national and global politics, and even on our streets. But the idea of "just be cool" isn't about raging against the bullies of the world; it's about developing the habit of recognizing when we're the ones with power (in any of its various forms), or influence on those with power, and being thoughtful about how we wield it. Am I mocking someone, just to get a laugh from my friends? Am I denigrating others just to ensure my own social standing? And just as critically, am I justifying my actions to myself because "they don't deserve any better"? And if I can influence others to tamp down their use of power, that's a good start.

What do you hope students take away from your story?

Anytime I write and tell a story, my greatest hope is for a listener to see themselves represented in the story. I hope that people of any age can recognize their humanity in my stories, whether it's in similarity to me or to any other person who appears. For this story in particular, for those students who have suffered bullies, I hope they hear me say, "I see you." But I also hope that everyone can see their own potential as an ally. Each of us has some sort of power or influence that can allow bad behavior from others or can deter it. And deterring bullying doesn't mean putting yourself into conflict; it can be as simple as a little nudge. Hopefully these nudges add up to make the world a little bit better.

PUT YOUR PEN TO PAPER

At 2nd Story we believe that sharing first-person, true stories has the power to change hearts and minds, and we want to know what stories are living inside of you.

We invite you to share your story. Below are several writing prompts that you can use to share a story from your own life that parallels the themes and ideas from CP's story. Select a prompt and begin writing on the next page!

SHARE A MOMENT WHEN:

- YOU FELT UNFAIRLY PICKED ON BY PEERS? BY AN ADULT?**
- YOU BULLIED SOMEONE? WHY DID YOU FEEL THE URGE TO DO SO?**
- YOU BENEFITED FROM REMEMBERING TO "JUST BE COOL"?**
- YOU WERE GRATEFUL FOR SOMEONE ELSE STANDING UP FOR YOU?**
- YOUR WORK WAS DISMISSED OR IGNORED?**
- YOU STEPPED IN TO HELP SOMEONE WHO WAS BEING BULLIED?**

WHAT CAN I DO?

ANTI-BULLYING RESOURCES

Are you a student or teacher who has noticed an increase in bullying at your school? Do you know somebody who has been or is being bullied, or are you being bullied yourself? Below are some resources that can help you combat bullying in your community.

- **StopBullying.gov**
 - <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>
 - StopBullying.gov is the United States government's resource for information on stopping bullying and cyberbullying. This website includes various resources and articles on the warning signs, effects, and prevention of bullying and cyberbullying. It also has resources to support students who may be bullied for their specific identities (i.e. race, religion, ability, LGBTQIA+, etc.).
- **National Centre Against Bullying**
 - <https://www.ncab.org.au/bullying-advice/>
 - The National Centre Against Bullying is an Australian organization comprised of experts that "advise and inform the Australian community on the issue of childhood bullying and the creation of safe schools and communities, including the issue of cyber safety." Their site offers a variety of research-based bullying advice and resources.
- **The Bully Project**
 - <https://www.thebullyproject.com/>
 - The Bully Project is the coinciding site of resources connected to the 2011 documentary Bully. "Filmed over the course of the 2009/2010 school year, BULLY opens a window onto the pained and often endangered lives of bullied kids, revealing a problem that transcends geographic, racial, ethnic, and economic borders."
 - You can learn more about the film and the social action campaign inspired by the film and get access to tools and toolkits in English and Español at the site.
 - Stream Bully for free at Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqFWteTKt0w>
- **National Association of People Against Bullying (NAPAB)**
 - <https://www.napab.org/>
 - The National Association of People Against Bullying is a non-profit foundation that provides direct anti-bullying services, education, and support to students, families, and school administrators.
 - Cool 2 Be Kind
 - <https://www.napab.org/cool-2-be-kind>
 - NAPAB oversees Cool 2 Be Kind - a network of student-led anti-bullying clubs. Check out the link above to start a Cool 2 Be Kind chapter at your own school.
- **Right to Be**
 - <https://righttobe.org/bystander-intervention-training/>
 - Right to Be (previously known as Hollaback!) is a non-profit organization that provides training and resources to empower people to stand up against harassment. They want to "build a world where everyone has the Right To Be who they are, wherever they are. A world that's free of harassment and filled with humanity."
- **Know Your Rights**
 - Illinois General Assembly Public Act 098-0669 requires that every school in Illinois have an anti-bullying policy, which must include information about how bullying should be reported and investigated at the school and that bullying incidents must be reported to the parents of those involved.

WHAT CAN I DO?

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

- **NAMI Chicago**

- NAMI Chicago Helpline: 833-626-4244
- <https://www.namichicago.org/>
- NAMI is a mental health support network for the Chicagoland area that also advocates for mental health policies at the governmental level. In addition to their Helpline, NAMI helps community members get access and referrals to mental health clinicians. They also offer:
 - Peer-led support groups and classes
 - Workshops and training on de-escalation, mental health signs and symptoms, and workplace wellness.
 - Community outreach

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

- English: 1-800-273-8255
- Español: 1-888-628-9454
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 1-800-273-8255
- Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 or text 838255
- Disaster Distress Helpline: Call or text 1-800-985-5990
- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/>
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a free, 24/7, confidential phone line that connects individuals in crisis with trained counselors across the U.S. People do not have to be suicidal to call – reasons to call include: substance abuse, economic worries, relationships, sexual identity, illness, getting over abuse, depression, mental and physical illness, and loneliness.

- **Crisis Text Line**

- Text HOME to 741741 to reach a volunteer Crisis Counselor.
 - You can also message them on WhatsApp.
- <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- Crisis Text Line is a non-profit organization that provides a mental health support resources for people in crisis. They help texters go “from a hot moment to a cool calm” using techniques in empathetic listening. Crisis Counselors are trained volunteers, not professionals. They can provide support but not medical advice.

- **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance - Greater Chicago**

- Crisis Helpline: 1-800-273-8255
- Crisis Textline: Text DBSA to 741741
- <https://www.dbsa-gc.org/>
- The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance - Greater Chicago (DBSA-GC) is a self-help non-profit organization offering support and education to those with mood disorders, their families, and friends. They are an affiliate of the national Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance organization. They also have online and in-person support groups for people who live with mood disorders.

**"I HANG UP THE PHONE THINKING
THAT SOMEONE... MAYBE ME,
PROBABLY ME... SHOULD HAVE
SAID SOMETHING."**

CP CHANG



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