

Title: Empowering Change Through Awareness
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“Bullying is a national epidemic. Every Day, thousands of kids are afraid to go to school because of bullying. We need to put an end to it.” -Katherine Jenkins.

Bullying not only causes immediate emotional and physical harm, but it also creates permanent wounds that may have long-term negative effects on a victim's mental and general wellbeing. My approach to combating this issue involves creating a student podcast to highlight the importance of support from peers and administrators, outline the potential costs of producing the podcast, and share my personal insights on bullying as a teenager.

Bullying can take many different forms, such as physical assault, verbal harassment, or social exclusion. It is defined as when someone consistently uses words or acts to harm, intimidate or control another person. It's problematic since it can seriously injure the victim's physical and mental health, resulting in problems like anxiety, sadness and poor academic achievement.

To address this problem, a student-led podcast would be played in school classrooms every morning. This podcast would be 10 minutes long, engaging enough to maintain interest without causing boredom. Each school day would feature a different theme to help students learn something new about bullying. Mondays would discuss various forms of bullying, share a story, and explore its impact on victims. Tuesdays would allow students to share their stories and receive advice from their peers. On Wednesdays, a school counselor, psychologist, or anti-bullying activist would provide more information about bullying. Thursdays would be dedicated to answering student-submitted questions or discussing requested topics. Lastly, Fridays would encourage positive behavior by sharing stories of students being kind to others. At the end of the podcasts, there will be a QR code for students to scan if they are being bullied and need help from a school counselor or administrator. Overall, this podcast will spread awareness about bullying, promote self-awareness, and support students who are being bullied.

The support of the administrators and students are important because they can influence the success of anti-bullying. To gain their support, I would ensure students that their voices would be heard, involve the administrators and parents, and highlight the benefits of the podcast. Their involvement is important because if they take the anti-bullying campaign seriously, other students are likely to follow. For example, if a student stands up for another student being bullied, their peers will see this and may begin to do the same. Conversely, if students act indifferent or even laugh about one of their classmates being bullied, their peers won't take bullying seriously. Ultimately, the support of the administrators and students could make or break an anti-bullying program.

Since the anti-bullying program will be a podcast, the only significant cost would be a camera. To cover the cost of the camera, the school would do anti-bullying fundraisers and accept donations. A good quality camera to last a school can cost from around one thousand to two thousand dollars. However, there are many non-costly items that

contribute to this project. These include at least 2 students to speak in the podcast; a student counselor, administrator, or a volunteer anti-bullying activist to participate; a student or administrator that knows how to edit videos; and students that would volunteer to speak up and tell their story of how they got bullied. Overall, this project isn't very costly.

I have never personally encountered bullying but I have experienced its effect on the victim. I took JROTC with my friend Sierra* and we have the same class next, so we would walk together. During the passing period, the hallways are always crowded, and she mistakenly bumped into another girl but immediately said 'excuse me'. The girl responds sarcastically and, when Sierra rolled her eyes, it agitated the girl to the point that she picked on Sierra for the next week. After a week, Sierra told me she was tired of the girl addressing the incident and planned to confront her. I agreed that it was a good idea. While we were eating lunch, the girl approached our table and accused Sierra of giving her a dirty look. Sierra calmly asked her to leave her alone, but the girl turned physical. In self-defense, Sierra pulled out a knife and cut her face and arm. Blood was everywhere, including my lunch and lunch box. This was the worst outcome of bullying I had ever personally seen and I never want to see something like this happen again.

This incident shows how bullying can push victims to harmful actions. It's crucial to address bullying to create a safe and supportive environment where all students can thrive. In conclusion, my approach to combating this issue involves creating a student podcast to highlight the importance of support from peers and administrators, outline the potential costs of producing the podcast, and share my personal insights on bullying as a teenager. Speak up, provide victims your support, and make the place safe for everyone. By working together, we can make a difference and ensure that no one endures bullying!

**Not the friend's real name – replaced by the Be A Friend Project*