

CHOICES

Scenario 14

Kings of the Hill

You and your friends have lunch every day on 'the hill', a little mountain at the end of the playground.

It is your special place. You each have a rock to sit on. Brad sits on the top rock, looking down on his little band of supporters.

When the sun is shining it's a great place – the best spot of all. Like sitting on top of the world.

All the other students know not to come near. Some have tried, but Brad knows how to deal with them.

One day however, a new boy comes to the hill. He has just arrived at school. His name is Jimmy. He doesn't know the rules.

You all look up from your lunch and watch him. He is coming towards the hill.

"What do you want?" yells Brad.

"I want somewhere to sit and eat my lunch."

"Can't come here," yells Brad. "There's no room."

"What about that little rock there?" says Jimmy.

"That's reserved," says Brad. "Off you go." He stands up. "Or else!"

"Surely we can let him sit here just once," you say to Brad.

"No. This is our place. He can get lost."

What should you do?

A You say, "That's not fair. He just wants to eat his lunch." You walk down to Jimmy and beckon for him to sit with you on the little rock.

What next?

You're not sure how this is going to work out. Brad is not someone to cross.

But you're beginning to wonder why you hang around with Brad and the boys. Let's face it, they're bullies.

You sit with Jimmy. He eats his lunch in silence. He looks around nervously.

"Did I do something wrong?" he asks.

"No. Brad likes to throw his weight around. You're fine." And you pat him on the shoulder. "I'll protect you."

Jimmy offers you a chocolate cookie.

"Gee, thanks. Tell me about yourself, Jimmy. What do you like doing?"

"Well, I play the guitar," he says. "Rock guitar."

"Wow. That's fantastic."

"I can show you one day, if you like."

Brad and the boys go by. Brad is in a terrible mood. But he says nothing.

You sit until the end of lunch with Jimmy. It seems you have made a new friend.

Think about it

In a playground, there are lots of situations where people try to control other people. It's sometimes called the 'pecking order' – from the farmyard, where a dominant hen pecks others to remind them of their place.

Boys do it. Girls do it. People go around in groups, and most groups have a leader – the king pin or the boss girl. All of this natural.

However, when it threatens to turn into something like bullying, things have taken a turn for the worse.

If Brad had threatened to enforce his power over Jimmy by pushing or hitting him, that would be bullying. If it had been girls on the hill, and the boss girl said horrible things to the newcomer, that would be bullying too.

In this scenario, befriending Jimmy, and being nice, can have unexpected and good consequences.

Mother Teresa said, "Help one person at a time, and always start with the person closest to you."

Do you want to look at another scenario involving bullying? (Go to 21)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 14)

B You say, "You're right. Get lost!" You take a small stone and make as if to throw it at Jimmy. He runs away.

What next?

You all sit around, still kings of the hill.

A few minutes later a teacher appears.

"Did any of you boys throw a stone at Jimmy?"

You duck your head in shame.

"Who did it?"

Brad points at you.

"Come with me, young man."

You follow him back to the principal's office.

Inside is Jimmy.

He has been crying.

Think about it

It may look like just staking out their territory – but the boys on the hill in this story are acting like bullies.

Bullying is when individuals with more power take advantage of those with no power. It can be physical (throwing a stone) or verbal (name calling) or mental (making someone feel bad). It has serious consequences. Studies have shown that 65% of those bullied suffer mental health problems – depression, anxiety and feelings of no worth.

Most interesting is that the bullying behaviour also affects the bully. Studies around the world have shown that boys who bully are more likely to get into trouble.

As a great thinker said: "No one helps himself by wounding another."

Do you want to look at another scenario involving bad behaviour at school? (Go to 8)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 14)