

# FINDING HUMANITY

A PODCAST SHARING TRUE STORIES OF COURAGE AND PURPOSE

## FINDING HUMANITY PODCAST EDUCATION TOOLKITS Season 2: Seeking Justice on the Frontlines

### EPISODE 2

## How A Bullying Survivor Found His Voice | Brandon Farbstein

[Listen to Episode](#)

Finding Humanity is a production of **Humanity Lab Foundation** and **Hueman Group Media**. This educational toolkit was created to help inspire additional learning and engagement around critical social justice and human rights topics surfaced the Finding Humanity podcast. The goal of the toolkit is to provide insight into the political, social, legal and economic systems that hinder our progress on solving complex social and political problems.

Our goal is to share our insights, research, policy analysis and key findings with hopes to inspire continued engagement and learning around the podcast episodes and the substantial content and topics unearthed in each episode.

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### About the Finding Humanity Podcast | Season 2:

For some, fighting for change means risking it all, one's own life. As history has taught us, fighting grave injustice requires courage, perseverance and grit. In season 2 of Finding Humanity Podcast, we unpack the stories of people on the frontlines of change. People who put their bodies on the line to create an equitable and just world. [Learn More](#)

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## EPISODE INFORMATION

**Main topics in Episode:** Fighting Bullying and Teen Suicide

**Short Description of Episode:** This episode highlights the issue of the impact of bullying and youth suicide. Bullying, although universal, is understood and experienced differently depending on the specific cultural and national context. What may be considered acceptable in one culture and country may be considered unacceptable in another. How countries respond, in terms of both their laws and the implementation of laws, is indicative of their view of the issue. This episode focuses on the role of schools and society in fighting bullying and the resulting impact, which at the extreme end can lead to youth suicide. Through the interview with Brandon Farbstein, the episode seeks to understand what is and isn't protected under law, to what extent laws reflect social norms, and how bullying can be challenged.

**GUEST BIOGRAPHIES CAN BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE TOOLKIT**

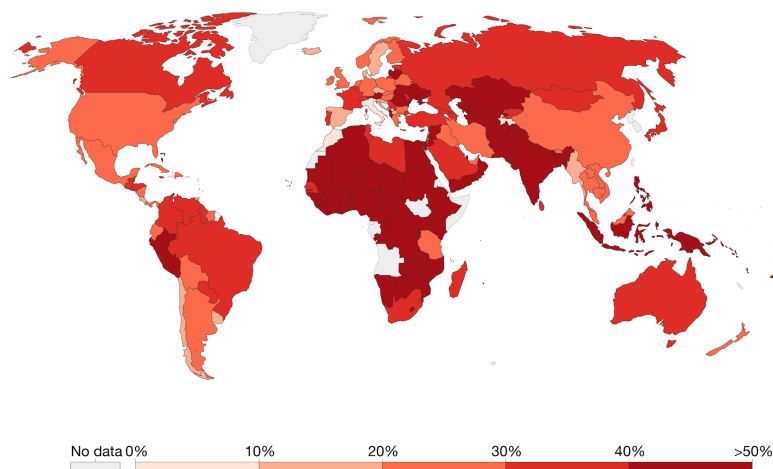
## Bullying: a global phenomenon

### Share of children who report being bullied, 2015

Percentage of children aged 13-15 who reported being bullied at least once in the past couple of months.



Image source: [ourworldindata](https://ourworldindata.org)



Source: Know Violence in Childhood Report (2017)

[OurWorldInData.org/violence-against-rights-for-children/](https://OurWorldInData.org/violence-against-rights-for-children/) • CC BY

### Overview:

**Bullying among children is a global challenge,** with numerous detrimental side effects that have broader societal implications. Both victims and perpetrators of bullying suffer across various dimensions, including personal social development, education, and health, with negative

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effects persisting into adulthood. Bullying is also a serious concern for policymakers and child practitioners. High rates of bullying amongst children should raise warning flags regarding child rights' failings. Moreover, due to its damaging effects on learning and behaviour, bullying in schools could reduce the effectiveness of public investment in children's education and may incur costs through riskier behaviour in the future. Experiencing some form of bullying at least once in a couple of months is most common amongst school children in poorer countries.

By region, **South Asia and West and Central Africa experience most bullying.** Countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States experience the lowest rates of bullying. Although there are differences in how bullying manifests in regions, physical bullying is the most common and sexual bullying is the second most common type of bullying globally. **In Europe and North America, psychological bullying is the most common.** Physical appearance is the most common cause of bullying, followed by race, nationality and color.

School violence and bullying can be devastating for the victims. The consequences include children and youth finding it difficult to concentrate in class, missing classes, avoiding school activities, playing truant or dropping out of school altogether. This has an adverse impact on academic achievement and future education and employment prospects. An atmosphere of anxiety, fear and insecurity is incompatible with learning and unsafe learning environments can, therefore, undermine the quality of education for all learners.

Source/Extracted from:

UNICEF, Bullying: a global challenge, [link](#)

UNESCO, Behind the numbers, Ending school violence and bullying, [link](#)

## Glossary

**Hate speech** - speech that attacks a person or a group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Bullying**- repeated actions or threats of action directed towards a person by one or more people who have (or are perceived to have) more power or status than their target in order to cause fear, distress or harm.

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**Blackmail** - a crime involving a threat for purposes of compelling a person to do an act against his or her will, or for purposes of taking the person's money or property.

**Hazing** - any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.

**Coercion** - the practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats

**Cyberbullying** - occurs when someone harasses, torments, threatens or humiliates someone else through the use of technology — including text messages, social media sites, email, instant messages and websites. Like face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying can manifest itself in several different kinds of behaviors. The following are some common examples of what cyberbullying looks like.

**Flaming** - when people post derogatory comments on someone's web or social media page or through instant messages, emails or chat rooms. This generally occurs during an online fight, and the communication is usually filled with angry and foul language.

**Outing** - this type of cyberbullying involves sharing someone's private information in order to publicly humiliate him or her. Outing can include posting photos, emails, text messages or videos on the internet or forwarding them to other people.

**Impersonation** - works a few ways. A cyberbully can use a false identity (for example, on Facebook) to torment their victim, thus covering their own tracks. Or, a cyberbully can impersonate someone their victim knows, perhaps to damage relationships or wheedle information out of their victim. Or the cyberbully can impersonate their victim in order to ruin a reputation.

**Cyberstalking** - when someone uses technology to repeatedly harass, intimidate and threaten someone. Cyberstalkers may keep tabs on their victims and make attempts to meet them. Many cases of cyberstalking involve adults grooming teenagers to have sexual relationships with them.

**Catfishing** - when someone pretends to be someone they are not and sometimes assumes another person's identity online, including the identity of the victim," says Jennifer Ponce,

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prevention education manager with Laura's House. "They might do this to post inappropriate content or manipulate and hurt other relationships the victim has online."

**Harassment** - involves the constant sending of malicious, abusive or threatening messages to an individual or group online. This can be done to the victims in public or private.

**Trickery** - louting, trickery involves revealing private information about another person. When someone engages in this type of cyberbullying, the person befriends someone and gains his or her trust with the specific intention of sharing that person's embarrassing information online.

**Denigration** - this occurs when someone posts rumors and gossip about someone online. Cyberbullies use denigration in order to ruin the target's relationships and reputation.

**Troll** - term for a person, usually anonymous, who deliberately starts an argument or posts inflammatory or aggressive comments with the aim of provoking either individual or group into reacting

**Doxxing** - when someone researches and broadcasts private information about a person or organisation. In the context of cyberbullying, it involves finding out a person's private accounts and online activities and then making them public. For example, a gay teen may post on an LGBT forum under a username they keep secret. A cyberbully could figure out the username and then publish it widely.

**Blackmail** (extortion) - unlawful exaction of money or property through intimidation. It may include threats of harm to a person or their property, threats to accuse them of a crime, or threats to reveal embarrassing information.

**Coercion** - threat or use of punitive measures against groups or individuals in order to force them to undertake or desist from specified actions.

Sources/Extracted from:

Addressing Cyberbullying, Prevention and support, [link](#)

Cyberbullying, Forms of cyberbullying, [link](#)

Bullies out, Trolling, [link](#)

Hazingprevention, Hazing and Bullying, [link](#)

Britannica, Coercion, Extortion definitions, [link](#)

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## Quick Facts & Data

### BULLYING - FACTS

- $\frac{1}{3}$  of youth globally experience bullying in school. [1]
- Boys experience slightly higher rates of bullying than girls overall, but in countries where bullying is most pervasive, girls are more vulnerable. [1]
- Low socioeconomic status is the main predictor of whether young teens in wealthy countries will experience bullying in schools. [1]
- Immigrant youth in wealthy countries are more likely to experience bullying in schools than locally-born youth. [1]
- 17.4% of students said they were a target of cyberbullying in 2019, compared to 16.5% in 2016 [2]
- Middle school students were more likely to be bullied than high school students. Nearly 40 percent of middle-schoolers said they'd been bullied; 27 percent of high-schoolers said the same [3]
- Most bullying happens in person, with the majority of students saying they'd been verbally harassed. [3]
- Most students who were bullied said it was because of how they looked. Sexual orientation and race were the next highest reasons. [3]
- Higher rates of bullying were reported at majority white schools. Students of color in these schools experienced a steeper increase in bullying over last year. [3]
- Not only students suffer from bullying or school harassment - teachers are also targets of bullying at some point in their careers. Between 24% and 46% of teachers surveyed admitted being bullied and harassed at some point of their careers. [4]
- The most common type of bullying (67- 75%) is the "top-down" type, i.e., the job harassment that senior administrators inflict upon lower-ranking workers. [4]

### CYBERBULLYING:

- Cyberbullying affects as many as one in ten children. [5]

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- Data from Europe show that the proportion of children aged 11-16 who use the Internet and who had experienced cyberbullying increased from 7% in 2010 to 12% in 2014. [5]
- Older children appear to be more at risk of cyberbullying than younger students. [5].

## MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

- Experience of bullying and cyberbullying are also associated with the development of low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, family problems, academic difficulties, delinquency, school violence, and suicidal thoughts/attempts. [6]
- Approximately 1 in 5 children and youth in the US experience serious mental health concerns associated with trauma, social isolation, and bullying, yet only 20% of them receive the help they need. [6]
- Research has found that about 90% of individuals who die by suicide experience mental illness, one of the greatest risk factor for suicide. [6]
- Students who experienced bullying or cyberbullying are nearly 2 times more likely to attempt suicide. [6]
- Current research suggests that suicide ideation and attempts among adolescents have nearly doubled since 2008 (Plemmons et al., 2018), making suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for individuals 10-34 years of age. [6]
- Approximately 1 in 20 adolescents experience a suicide in single year. [6]

[1] UNESCO, Data on bullying, [link](#)

[2] Cyber bullying, School rates, [link](#)

[3] YouthTruth, Student Feedback, [link](#)

[4] Observatory, Teachers suffer from bullying, [link](#)

[5] UNESCO, Behind the numbers, [link](#)

[6] Megan Merier Foundation, Bullying, Cyberbullying and Suicide Statistics, [link](#)

## Topical Background Information & Context

### SCHOOL VIOLENCE

School violence is widespread, occurs in all countries and affects a significant number of children and adolescents. It is mostly perpetrated by peers but, in some cases, is perpetrated by teachers and other school staff. School violence includes physical,

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psychological and sexual violence. Physical violence includes physical attacks, physical fights, corporal punishment and physical bullying; psychological violence includes verbal abuse, emotional abuse, social exclusion and psychological bullying; and sexual violence includes completed and attempted non-consensual sex acts, unwanted touching, sexual harassment and sexual bullying. *Image source: [UNESCO](#)*

## BULLYING

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- **an imbalance of power:** Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people;
- **repetition:** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

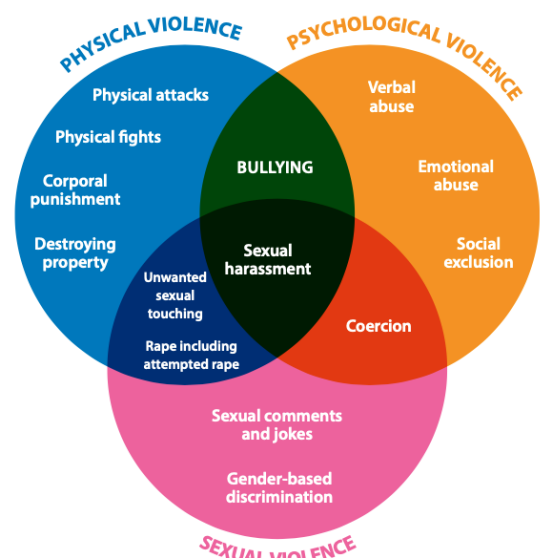
Sources/Extracted from:  
Stop bullying, Bullying, [link](#)

## TYPES OF BULLYING

There are numerous forms of bullying however it's not always easy to determine bullying behavior.

1. **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:

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- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm

2. **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:

- Leaving someone out on purpose  
*Image source: [Observatory](#)*
- Telling other children not to be friends with someone
- Spreading rumors about someone
- Embarrassing someone in public

3. **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:

- Hitting/kicking/pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping/pushing
- Taking or breaking someone's things
- Making mean or rude hand gestures

## CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok
- Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile or tablet devices

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- Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet
- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards, such as Reddit
- Email
- Online gaming communities

With the prevalence of social media and digital forums, comments, photos, posts, and content shared by individuals can often be viewed by strangers as well as acquaintances. The content an individual shares online – both their personal content as well as any negative, mean, or hurtful content – creates a kind of permanent public record of their views, activities, and behavior. This public record can be thought of as an online reputation, which may be accessible to schools, employers, colleges, clubs, and others who may be researching an individual now or in the future. Cyberbullying can harm the online reputations of everyone involved – not just the person being bullied, but those doing the bullying or participating in it. Cyberbullying has unique concerns in that it can be:

**Persistent** – digital devices offer an ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day, so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to find relief.

**Permanent** – most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed. A negative online reputation, including for those who bully, can impact college admissions, employment, and other areas of life.

**Hard to Notice** – because teachers and parents may not overhear or see cyberbullying taking place, it is harder to recognize.

## POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

National, regional and local governments develop and enforce laws and policies that protect children from all forms of violence in and around schools, including online. Bullying, including cyberbullying, is a serious impediment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Bullying has documented impacts on educational access and mental health, with victims at greater risk of depression and suicidality in particular.

## International framework

During the last few years, the UN and partners have developed conceptual frameworks to improve understanding of school violence and bullying, and of effective responses, including what should be the guiding principles or key elements of a comprehensive

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response to school violence, based on existing evidence. These elements are described, for example, in the Global Guidance on School-Related Gender- Based Violence (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016), the Global Status Report on School Violence and Bullying (UNESCO, 2017), the global report on education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression (UNESCO, 2016), or in reports published by the Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (UNGA, 2016 & 2018).

## In the USA

The history of the anti-bullying movement in the US began in 1999 after the Columbine school shooting. Within a month, one state passed anti-bullying legislation, and eventually, every other state followed and currently all states have laws requiring schools to respond to bullying. As cyberbullying has become more prevalent with the use of technology, many states now include cyberbullying, or mention cyberbullying offenses, under these laws. Schools may take action either as required by law, or with local or school policies that allow them to discipline or take other action. Some states also have provisions to address bullying if it affects school performance. You can learn about the laws and policies in each state, including if they cover cyberbullying.

It is important to understand how children are cyberbullied so it can be easily recognized and action can be taken. Some of the most common cyberbullying tactics include:

- Posting comments or rumors about someone online that are mean, hurtful, or embarrassing.
- Threatening to hurt someone or telling them to kill themselves.
- Posting a mean or hurtful picture or video.
- Pretending to be someone else online in order to solicit or post personal or false information about someone else.
- Posting mean or hateful names, comments, or content about any race, religion, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics online.
- Creating a mean or hurtful webpage about someone.
- Doxing, an abbreviated form of the word documents, is a form of online harassment used to exact revenge and to threaten and destroy the privacy of individuals by making their personal information public, including addresses, social security, credit card and phone numbers, links to social media accounts, and other private data.

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## Social media platform policies

Cyberbullying policies are enforced through self-regulatory mechanisms that social media companies have in place to address incidents on their platforms. These mechanisms can include reporting tools, blocking and filtering software, geofencing, human or automated moderation systems such as supervised machine learning, as well as anti-bullying educational materials. Companies tend to provide tools for their users to report a user or content that they find abusive<sup>1</sup>.

For example, Facebook has a set of community standards that they adhere, which states that they do not tolerate:

- Pages that identify and shame private individuals,
- Images altered to degrade private individuals,
- Photos or videos of physical bullying posted to shame the victim,
- Sharing personal information to blackmail or harass people and
- Repeatedly targeting other people with unwanted friend requests or messages.

Read more on how to report bullying or abuse on different social media platforms [here](#).

*See: Toolkit on Freedom of Journalism featuring Jason Rezaian (Season 2- Episode 1) to learn more about hate speech v freedom of expression to learn more.*

## GROUPS AT RISK

No single factor puts a child at risk of being bullied or bullying others. Bullying can happen anywhere—cities, suburbs, or rural towns. Depending on the environment, some groups—such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth, youth with disabilities, and socially isolated youth—may be at an increased risk of being bullied.

Generally, children who are bullied have one or more of the following risk factors:

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<sup>1</sup> From an article: T. Miloscevic, Social Media Companies' Cyberbullying policies, IJC, 2016, read [here](#).

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- Are perceived as different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses or different clothing, being new to a school, or being unable to afford what kids consider “cool”
- Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves
- Are depressed, anxious, or have low self esteem
- Are less popular than others and have few friends
- Do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonize others for attention

## Youth with disabilities and special health needs

Children with disabilities—such as physical, developmental, intellectual, emotional, and sensory disabilities—are at an increased risk of being bullied. Any number of factors—physical vulnerability, social skill challenges, or intolerant environments—may increase the risk. Research suggests that some children with disabilities may bully others as well. Children with special health needs, such as epilepsy or food allergies, also may be at higher risk of being bullied. Bullying can include making fun of kids because of their allergies or exposing them to the things they are allergic to. In these cases, bullying is not just serious, it can mean life or death.

## Immigrant students

Immigrant students are more likely to be bullied than their native-born peers. Data from Europe and North America show that immigrant students are more likely to be bullied (33%) than their native-born peers (26.3%). Immigrant students are also more likely to experience cyberbullying by messages (14.2%) than their native-born peers (9.4%),

## LGBTQ youth

Students viewed as gender non-conforming are at higher risk of school violence and bullying. This includes students who are, or are perceived as, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), and those who do not conform to stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, such as boys viewed as ‘effeminate’ or girls viewed as ‘masculine’. Data from New Zealand show that lesbian, gay and bisexual students were three times more likely to be bullied and transgender students were five times more likely to be bullied than their heterosexual peers; and in Norway, 15%-48% of lesbian, gay and bisexual students reported being bullied compared with 7% of heterosexual students (UNESCO, 2016). In the USA, a large national school-based survey found that 11.2% of students identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual or were unsure about their sexual orientation, and that they were significantly more likely to be bullied at school, cyberbullied, and involved in a physical

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fight at school than students who identified as heterosexual. In a study in Australia, 60%-70% of LGBT youth reported experiencing bullying due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (Hillier et al., 2010). In Thailand, the prevalence of bullying among LGBT youth due to their sexual orientation or gender identity was 55% (UNESCO, 2014). Other data suggest that one in three non-LGBT students who do not conform to gender norms experience school violence and bullying.

## **Race, nationality, color and religion**

Bullying based on race, nationality or color is the second most frequent reason for bullying reported by students. Across all GSHS regions, 10.9% of students (11.9% of boys and 8.9% of girls) who had been bullied reported that this was based on their race, nationality or color. The highest rates were reported in the Pacific (14.2%) and sub-Saharan Africa (13.5%). In Europe, 8.2% of students who have been bullied reported that this was based on their race, nationality or color.

Compared to other factors, religion is mentioned by far fewer students as a reason for being bullied. Across all GSHS regions, 4.6% of students (3.8% of girls and 5.4% of boys) who had been bullied reported that this was based on their religion. The highest rates were reported in the Pacific (6.3%) and sub-Saharan Africa (8.8%). In Europe, 3.6% of those bullied reported that this was based on religion.

## **CAUSES OF BULLYING**

There are two types of kids who are more likely to bully others:

- Some are well-connected to their peers, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity, and like to dominate or be in charge of others.
- Others are more isolated from their peers and may be depressed or anxious, have low self esteem, be less involved in school, be easily pressured by peers, or not identify with the emotions or feelings of others.

Children who have these factors are also more likely to bully others;

- Are aggressive or easily frustrated
- Have less parental involvement or having issues at home
- Think badly of others
- Have difficulty following rules
- View violence in a positive way

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- Have friends who bully others

## CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING

Being bullied as a child is a cause of long-lasting and significant damage. Victims of childhood bullying are at increased risk of poorer health, wealth and social relationships in adulthood. More effective intervention to prevent bullying could reduce long-term health and social costs for individuals and society. Being bullied in childhood has long-term adverse consequences for health, academic achievement, social relationships, jobs and wealth. It increases the risk of developing psychiatric problems including depression, anxiety and psychotic experiences in early adulthood. Bullied children are at higher risk of self-harm and suicide.

### Physical effect

The physical effects of bullying can be obvious and immediate, such as being injured from a physical attack. However, the ongoing stress and trauma of being bullied can also lead to physical problems over time. A child who is bullied could develop sleep disorders - such as difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep - stomachaches, headaches, heart palpitations, dizziness, bedwetting, and chronic pain and somatization (i.e., a syndrome of distressful, physical symptoms that cannot be explained by a medical cause).

Being bullied also increases cortisol levels – a stress hormone – in the body, which typically happens after a stressful event. Stress from bullying can impact the immune system and hormones. Imaging studies show that brain activity and functioning can be affected by bullying, which may help explain the behavior of children who have been bullied.

### Psychological effects

The psychological effects of bullying include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-harming behavior (especially for girls), alcohol and drug use and dependence, aggression, and involvement in violence or crime (especially for boys). While bullying can lead to mental health problems for any child, those who already have mental health difficulties are even more likely to be bullied and to experience its negative effects. Cyberbullying has also been linked to mental health problems. Compared with peers who were not cyberbullied, children who were cyberbullied report higher levels of depression and thoughts of suicide, as well as greater emotional distress, hostility, and delinquency.

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## SUICIDE

Suicide is associated with several risk and protective factors. Suicide, like other human behaviors, has no single determining cause. Instead, suicide occurs in response to multiple biological, psychological, interpersonal, environmental and societal influences that interact with one another, often over time. The social ecological model—encompassing multiple levels of focus from the individual, relationship, community, and societal—is a useful framework for viewing and understanding suicide risk and protective factors identified in the literature. Risk and protective factors for suicide exist at each level. For example, risk factors include:

**Individual level:** history of depression and other mental illnesses, hopelessness, substance abuse, certain health conditions, previous suicide attempt, violence victimization and perpetration, and genetic and biological determinants

**Relationship level:** high conflict or violent relationships, sense of isolation and lack of social support, family/ loved one's history of suicide, financial and work stress

**Community level:** inadequate community connectedness, barriers to health care (e.g., lack of access to providers and medications)

**Societal level:** availability of lethal means of suicide, unsafe media portrayals of suicide, stigma associated with help-seeking and mental illness.

**Suicide is connected to other forms of violence.** Exposure to violence (e.g. bullying, peer violence) is associated with increased risk of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, suicide and suicide attempts.

Like most public health problems, **suicide is preventable.** While progress will continue to be made into the future, evidence for numerous programs, practices and policies currently exist, and many programs are ready to be implemented now. Just as suicide is not caused by a single factor, research suggests that reduction in suicide will not be prevented by any single strategy or approach. Rather, suicide is best achieved by a focus across the individual, relationship, family, community and societal-levels and across all sectors, private and public.

## BULLYING AND SUICIDE

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According to a [report](#), bullying behavior and suicide-related behavior are closely related. This means youth who report any involvement with bullying behavior are more likely to report high levels of suicide-related behavior than youth who do not report any involvement with bullying behavior. However, we don't know if bullying directly causes suicide-related behavior. We know that most youth who are involved in bullying do NOT engage in suicide-related behavior. It is correct to say that involvement in bullying, along with other risk factors, increases the chance that a young person will engage in suicide-related behaviors.

However, attention focused on the relationship between bullying and suicide is positive and helpful, because it raises awareness about serious harm that bullying does to all youth involved in any way, highlights the significant risk for most vulnerable youth (with disabilities, LGBTQ youth) and it encourages conversation about the problem of bullying and suicide and promotes collaboration around prevention locally and nationally.

Nonetheless, framing the discussion of the issue as bullying being a single, direct cause of suicide is not helpful and is potentially harmful because it could perpetuate the false notion that suicide is a natural response to being bullied, which has the potential to normalize the response and thus create copycat behavior among youth. It can also encourage sensationalized reporting and focus the response on blame and punishment which misdirects the attention from getting the needed support and treatment to those who are bullies and those who bully. Additionally, it takes attention away from other important risk factors for suicidal behavior that need to be addressed (substance abuse, mental illness, disease/disability, family dysfunction etc.)

*Continued on the next page...*

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 <b>Preventing Suicide</b>	
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Approach</b>
<b>Strengthen economic supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen household financial security</li> <li>• Housing stabilization policies</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen access and delivery of suicide care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coverage of mental health conditions in health insurance policies</li> <li>• Reduce provider shortages in underserved areas</li> <li>• Safer suicide care through systems change</li> </ul>
<b>Create protective environments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce access to lethal means among persons at risk of suicide</li> <li>• Organizational policies and culture</li> <li>• Community-based policies to reduce excessive alcohol use</li> </ul>
<b>Promote connectedness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer norm programs</li> <li>• Community engagement activities</li> </ul>
<b>Teach coping and problem-solving skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social-emotional learning programs</li> <li>• Parenting skill and family relationship programs</li> </ul>
<b>Identify and support people at risk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gatekeeper training</li> <li>• Crisis intervention</li> <li>• Treatment for people at risk of suicide</li> <li>• Treatment to prevent re-attempts</li> </ul>
<b>Lessen harms and prevent future risk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postvention</li> <li>• Safe reporting and messaging about suicide</li> </ul>

Image source: [CDC](#)

## PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

The findings of this report on the status of school violence and bullying, and the evidence from case study countries about factors that contribute to success in reducing the prevalence of school violence and bullying, reinforce the recommendations of the 2016 and 2018 Reports of the UN Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly on Protecting Children from Bullying. In line with these recommendations, there is a need to:

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- ensure that legislation is in place to safeguard the rights of children and to underpin policies to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying;
- improve the availability of accurate, reliable and disaggregated data and implement evidence-based initiatives that are informed by sound research;
- train and support teachers to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying;
- promote whole-school approaches that engage the wider community, including students, teachers, other school staff, parents and local authorities;
- provide information and support to children to enable them to speak up and seek support;
- promote the meaningful participation of children in efforts to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying;
- give priority to children who are especially vulnerable, as a result of race, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexual orientation;
- establish child-sensitive reporting, complaint and counseling mechanisms and restorative approaches.

Parents, school staff, and other caring adults have a role to play in preventing bullying. They can:

- Help kids understand bullying. Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is unacceptable. Make sure kids know how to get help.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Check in with kids often. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.
- Encourage kids to do what they love. Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help kids make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.
- Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

Kids who know what bullying is can better identify it. They can talk about bullying if it happens to them or others. Kids need to know ways to safely stand up to bullying and how to get help.

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- Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report bullying if it happens.
- Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying "stop" directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don't work, like walking away
- Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.
- Urge them to help kids who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.

Research tells us that children really do look to parents and caregivers for advice and help on tough decisions. Sometimes spending 15 minutes a day talking can reassure kids that they can talk to their parents if they have a problem. Talking about bullying directly is an important step in understanding how the issue might be affecting kids. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is important to encourage kids to answer them honestly. Assure kids that they are not alone in addressing any problems that arise.

Sources/Extracted from:

CDC, Preventing Suicide, A Technical Package of Policy, Programs, and Practices, [link](#)

Stop bullying, Bullying and trauma, [link](#)

Stop bullying, Disabilities, [link](#)

End violence, Safe to learn: call to action, [link](#)

UNICEF, Bullying: a global challenge, [link](#)

Guide to Worldwide Bullying Laws, [link](#)

UKRI, Long-term cost of bullying, [link](#)

CDD, The relationship between bullying and suicide, [link](#)

Study, History of the anti-bullying movement, [link](#)

## Proposed Discussion Questions

- In your opinion, what should be included in an anti-bullying policy?
- How can children be helped against bullying when there is no adult in sight? What about bullying carried out by adults against adults or children?
- Is the direct approach to reducing bullying always the best? If no, what other preventative measures are more effective, in your opinion?
- How do you think bullying affects the life of those who bully (in person or online)?
- What responsibilities do social media platforms have to prevent cyberbullying?

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- How can we prevent cyberbullying individually to stay cyber-safe?
- Where is the line between freedom of speech and bullying? Is there a line?

## Additional Reading & Follow up

### Brandon Farbstein:

- His book, Ten Feet Tall, Step into your truth and change your freaking world, [link](#)
- Profile, Big speak, [link](#)

### Ilann M. Maazel:

- Profile, ECBAWM, [link](#)

### Ellyson Stout's work:

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center at EDC, [link](#)

### Bullying prevention:

- UNESCO, Behind the numbers: Ending the school violence and bullying, [link](#)
- RISE, International Anti-Bullying Campaign, [link](#)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center, [link](#)
- Hazing Prevention organization, [link](#)
- End violence against children, Safe to Learn: Call to Action, [link](#)

### National help centres:

- USA, Stopbullying.gov, [link](#)
- USA, Stomp out bullying, [link](#)
- Australia, National Centre Against Bullying, [link](#)
- UK, Bullying.uk, [link](#)
- Canada, Cyberbullying, [link](#)

### Suicide prevention:

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center, [link](#)
- HelpGuide, Suicide Prevention, [link](#)
- US National Institute of Mental Health, [link](#)
- US National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, [link](#)
- Australian Suicide Prevention, Beyond Blue, [link](#)
- UK, Papyrus - Prevention of young suicide, [link](#)
- Canada, Suicide prevention, [link](#)

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## Episode Speaker Biographies

**[Storyline Guest Biography] Brandon Farbstein** | Empowerment Speaker & Gen Z Activist, Ten Feet Tall LLC

Brandon Farbstein is a 21 year old renowned speaker, Gen Z activist, and author. He inspires millions of people across the globe with his universal message of living life on your own terms and building the framework for self-acceptance. Diagnosed with a rare form of dwarfism at the age of 2 (metatropic dysplasia), Brandon has turned his life experience of suffering, isolation, and victimhood into empowerment, impact and influence. After a severe battle with cyberbullying in high school, he decided to share his story- to both offer hope and to enact change. Brandon was the driving force behind two new pieces of legislation that were signed into law in Virginia, one on bullying prevention and the other requiring empathy and emotional intelligence to be taught in all K-12 classrooms across the state. Whether sharing his message with thousands of students at a time, empowering readers with his book Ten Feet Tall, or working with Fortune 100 companies like Facebook, HP, and Marriott, Brandon consistently delivers tools to audiences of all ages to shatter limiting beliefs, elevate their mindset, and create an amplified life. Brandon continues to break barriers and pave the way for people who often feel invisible. He was named in Instagram's #19under19 as one of the 19 most influential teenagers in the world with his mission to elevate empathy. In 2020, Brandon made his runway debut at NY Fashion Week wearing Tommy Hilfiger Adaptive and has become a sought-after voice for inclusion. [Twitter](#): @farbstein

**[Expert Biography] Ilann M. Maazel** | Civil Rights Lawyer, Partner, Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Mazel

Ilann is a civil rights lawyer, partner at Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel (U.S. News & World Report's 2013 Civil Rights "Law Firm of the Year"), Civil Rights Litigation Columnist for the New York Law Journal, writer, pianist, and composer. Ilann helped save the High Line in New York City, and has brought class actions on behalf of hundreds of disabled preschool children in New York City, thousands of inmates in New York City prisons, and millions of Americans surveilled by the National Security Agency. Ilann has represented Martha Stewart, the NAACP, the Children's Aid Society, the New York City Council, and thousands of civil rights plaintiffs in cases involving police and prison misconduct, disability abuse, discrimination, wrongful death, bullying, and children's rights. He also represents a number of institutions and individuals in complex commercial and intellectual property disputes, and counsels high-level executives in compensation and employment matters. Ilann is a "Super Lawyer," Legal Services Pro Bono Leader, Legal Aid Society Pro Bono Publico award winner, Coro Leadership fellow, and recipient of an Echoing Green Public Service Fellowship, awarded to "outstanding individuals who are committed to public service work." [Twitter](#): @imaazel

**[Expert Biography] Ellyson Stout** | Director, Suicide Prevention Resource Center; Managing

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## Project Director, EDC

Ellyson Stout, a public health expert and senior manager, specializes in suicide prevention, social marketing, and health promotion with diverse populations. In her current role as director of the federally-funded national Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) at EDC, she leads a team providing resources and support in developing, implementing, and evaluating strategic, comprehensive programs to prevent suicide across the United States. SPRC offers tailored supports to state and local leaders, health and behavioral health organizations, federal suicide prevention grantees, national stakeholders, and the general public, bringing the latest science and best practices to support suicide prevention to diverse populations, settings, and professional roles. With over 13 years of experience in the public health approach suicide prevention, Stout brings expertise in dissemination and implementation science, public health approaches, safe and strategic communication, and state suicide prevention policy. She has extensive experience in capacity building for suicide prevention practitioners in state, tribal, community, and higher education settings, building capacity and infrastructure to support broad, data-driven, and culturally appropriate suicide prevention efforts. She presents regularly on suicide prevention around the country, and has co-authored articles published in *Journal of Primary Prevention* and *Journal of Rural Mental Health*. Prior to joining EDC, Ms. Stout consulted on numerous health communication initiatives for refugee and immigrant populations in the Boston area. As a Program Manager for Population Services International, she oversaw strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation of social marketing programs for health in a number of countries in Asia and Africa. Ms. Stout holds an M.S. in Health Communications from the Tufts University School of Medicine, and a B.S. in International Relations, Law, and Organization from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. [Twitter](#): @EDCtweets

## **[Host Biography] Hazami Barmada** | Founder & CEO, Humanity Lab Foundation; co-Executive Producer & Host, Finding Humanity Podcast

Hazami is a social entrepreneur, thought leader, and public affairs and social impact expert recognized by Forbes as an “inspirational agent of change.” She has consulted for many leading global brands including the United Nations, United Nations Foundation, Aspen Institute, and the Royal Court of the Sultanate of Oman. Among her posts at the United Nations, she served as the Coordinator for the United Nations Secretary General's World Humanitarian Summit, an Advisor to the first-ever United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Envoy, as a member of the United Nations SDG Strategy Hub for the launch of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Hazami has a Masters from Harvard University where she was an Edward S. Mason Fellow in Public Policy and Management. She studied social and public policy at Georgetown University and has a BA in Anthropology and Sociology. [Twitter](#): @hazamibarmada

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## PODCAST PRODUCTION ORGANIZATIONS & TEAM

**Humanity Lab Foundation** is a disruptive empathy-driven movement at the intersection of public policy and people power. As a collective of enablers, the Humanity Lab facilitates public engagement and social innovation to drive progress on human development and create an equitable and just world. Through a diverse portfolio of programs and initiatives, the Humanity Lab enhances global development systems by convening, connecting and collaborating with everyday people to solve complex challenges and drive social change. The Humanity Lab aims to: unlock human potential, break down barriers, provoke thought-leadership and knowledge sharing, facilitate partnerships, catalyze action, and democratize access to the power that shapes the world. The Humanity Lab has collaborated with a large array of partners including the Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Office of Partnerships, United Nations, Qualcomm, The Elders, Warner Music, MTV and the Washington Diplomat.

**Hueman Group Media** (“HGM”) is an award-winning podcast company for social change. HGM produces impactful and high-caliber podcasts for leading nonprofit organizations, purpose-driven companies and thought leaders, amplifying conversations around today’s most important causes and issues — including gender inequality, climate change, racial injustice, and mental health. HGM podcasts cater to diverse, socially conscious, and deeply curious audiences. With the power of storytelling and expert-driven conversations, HGM activates listeners to take action and make a positive impact in their communities. HGM has worked with notable organizations including UN Women, The Elders, SAP, GoDaddy, CORE Response, and MIT Solve.

### Podcast Production Team:

**Ayesha Amin**, Fact-Checking, Policy, Research  
**Maverick Aquino**, Mixing, Editing, Music  
**Hazami Barmada**, Co-Executive Producer & Host  
**Diana Galbraith**, Assistant Producer & Research

**Camille Laurente**, Co-Executive Producer  
**Karolina Mendecka**, Fact-Checking, Policy, Research  
**Fernanda Uriegas**, Associate Producer

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