

## **HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM**

This program was produced for use in classrooms, libraries, community centers, social service agencies, youth organizations, camps, teen groups and parent education centers, or for viewing by parents and teens together at home. Although its target audience is Middle School students & their parents, anyone who has regular contact with and a commitment to young people can benefit from this video as well. It is meant to be used as a part of a learning experience that begins before viewing the program and extends beyond the classroom walls. The discussion questions and follow-up activities are intended to enhance this learning experience. Educators and counselors planning to show *Ghosts in the Hall* to teens may want to view the video in advance so that they can adapt their program follow-up to best suit the needs of their group. It is suggested that teens view the video under adult supervision.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- \* To spotlight & better recognize the signs of teen bullying and depression.
- \* To explore the impact that bullying has on a teen's mental health and overall well-being.
- \* To examine what peers, educators and parents can do to reach out to a teen they feel may be the victim of a bully and/or struggling with depression.

## **SYNOPSIS**

The second episode in the award-winning 'Maple Ave' series focuses on teen bullying and the tragedies inherent when parents as well as their teens unfairly label one another. Jim has reached the edge of violence after being the victim of incessant bullying. Unfortunately, Jim's family doesn't help him cope with his problems and things get progressively worse. In contrast, Jenny's family engages in healthy confrontations as they cope with their concerns following Jenny's period of depression (see 'Jenny's Reasons').

**FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES' STOP BULLYING NOW! CAMPAIGN...**

## Why Should Adults Care About Bullying?

There are a number of reasons why adults should be concerned about bullying among children and youth.

1. Many children are involved in bullying, and most are extremely concerned about it.

- Studies show that between 15-25% of U.S. students are bullied with some frequency ("sometimes or more often") while 15-20% admit that they bully others with some frequency.
- Not only is bullying prevalent, but children and youth report being extremely concerned about it. In a 2003 Harris poll of 8-17 year-old girls, commissioned by the Girl Scouts of the USA, bullying topped girls' list of concerns regarding their safety. When asked what they worried about the most, the most common response was being socially ostracized-being teased or made fun of. [Feeling Safe: What Girls Say by Judy Schoenberg, Ed.M., Toija Riggins, Ph.D., and Kimberlee Salmond, M.P.P. (New York, N.Y.: Girl Scouts of the USA, 2003). 114 pp. (Executive Summary, 23 pp.)]

2. Bullying can seriously affect the mental health, academic work, and physical health of children who are targeted.

- Children who are bullied are more likely than other children to have lower self-esteem; higher rates of depression, loneliness, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Recent studies indicate that there may be reason to be concerned about the school attendance and academic work of children involved in bullying.
- Research on the health-related effects of bullying indicates that victims of frequent bullying are more likely to experience a variety of health problems, including

headaches, sleeping problems, and stomach ailments.

- Some emotional scars can be long-lasting. Research suggests that adults who were bullied as children are more likely than their non-bullied peers to be depressed and have low self-esteem as adults.

3. Children who bully are more likely than other children to be engaged in other antisocial, violent, or troubling behavior.

Findings from research in the U.S. and abroad indicate that children who bully are more likely to:

- \* Get into frequent fights
- \* Be injured in a fight
- \* Steal, vandalize property
- \* Drink alcohol
- \* Smoke
- \* Be truant, drop out of school
- \* Report poorer academic achievement
- \* Perceive a negative climate at school
- \* Carry a weapon

4. Bullying can negatively affect children who observe bullying going on around them—even if they aren't targeted themselves.

- Children who are bystanders to bullying can feel fearful ("Maybe I'll be targeted next!"), guilty ("I should do something to stop this, but I'm afraid to."), and distracted from school work.
- Bullying can contribute to a negative social climate at school.

5. Bullying is a form of victimization or abuse, and it is wrong. Children should be able to attend school or take part in community activities without fear of being harassed, assaulted, belittled, or excluded.

*(For more information please visit  
<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov>.)*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TEENS & PARENTS**

1. Do you personally know of a teen who has been the victim of bullying? If so, what are the parallels between their story and 'Ghosts in the Hall'...?
2. What do you imagine happened at Jim's last school that led to his being bullied in the first place? Also, why do you think he continues to be bullied at his new school?
3. Do you think that Jim's Dad is providing the best guidance for his son? Also, are Jenny's parents doing the right things to help her recovery from her clinical depression?
4. Why do you think Tanya was able to successfully talk Jenny out of attempting suicide and getting help?
5. What do you think happens after the film ends? How might the rest of the story play out...?

## **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

1. Invite a local mental health professional to talk to your group about the long term psychological impact bullying has on its victims; how its scars haunt them throughout their lives.
2. Role play a scene where two students are bullying another student, both verbally and physically (perhaps at a lunch recess or near the lockers). For each actor have a 'shadow actor', who represents their inner selves, standing next to them. These shadow actors do not interact with one another, they simply express the true and sometimes surprising motivations of each of the three 'real world actors' involved in the scene.
3. Write and perform a short sequel to 'Ghosts in the Hall', creating at least three alternate endings. Afterwards, discuss these same endings in the classroom and then have students vote for the 'best ending'. On their (secret?) ballot, each student must write a short paragraph explaining why they chose a particular ending. After the results are tallied, an informed follow-up discussion is strongly recommended.