

# Bullying is Not a Joke!

Written and illustrated by Shamsa Almarri





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Not a Joke!

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## Let me tell you a story about a little girl who was bullied...

There once was a girl called Alia, she loved going to school.

Alia enjoyed learning interesting facts and having fun with activities.

She was 11 years old and a little bit smaller than her classmates.

In her school, the students were always reminded there was "no tolerance for bullying!" but somehow those words always seemed to evaporate into empty promises.

In school, Alia liked to play with a group of four girls; Afra, Hind, Shamsa, and Salama. The group was always in search of trouble. They wanted to seem stronger than everyone else, so they found someone small to pick on.

... they found Alia.



Little Alia didn't understand what was happening at the time. When Alia wasn't around, the girls talked behind her back. They spread nasty rumors, causing other students to stay away from her.

Alia was devastated and confused when she heard some of the rumors.

She kept asking herself, "Why would they do this to me? Is there something wrong with me? I thought we were friends. Why would friends say such things?".

Alia asked herself the same questions every day. She never really got an answer.

Alia didn't have anyone to play with because of the rumors. Sadly, she felt that she had no choice but to stay with

the four girls who treated her so badly. It was a choice between spending her days alone or sticking around with the mean girls.



Alia was terrified, reminding herself daily to accept everything.

She made sure to say to herself each morning "I can't tell anyone about this, my friends will leave, and I will be left all alone!"

Alia was naturally very shy and modest, she genuinely believed that she couldn't do anything to change the girls' behavior. She never liked changes, finding it very difficult to adjust to them. So instead of risking a big change, she stayed with familiar people, even if it meant living through pain.

Unfortunately she didn't realize that this would grow to be a much bigger problem in the future.



Years passed, Alia and the group of girls are now 14 years old. Yet, nothing has changed.

Alia is still getting picked on. She is purposely excluded from group projects. Her things are taken without permission, among other acts of torment.

Alia endured it, thinking one day it would end. Her fear of being alone kept her from doing anything about it.

So it kept going on.



Now that Alia's older, she blames herself for everything.

She believes that any negative treatment towards her is her fault – which makes her wish she had told an adult about the bullying when it all started.

Alia developed anxiety and finds it difficult to trust friends, even as an adult.

Due to the trauma of being bullied, she still thinks every new friend she makes will do the same.

She often convinces herself that a person doesn't really like her.



What Alia wants us to learn from her story is that it is difficult to handle situations like these by ourselves, especially when we are young.

There are many reasons why bullying starts; it may be as simple as a person seeking to feel stronger in class. But, whatever the reasons, bullying is **WRONG**.

It is the parent's role, as well as any adults present, to notice what is happening and to spread awareness on the negative impact of bullying. Impacts reaching even beyond childhood.



## How can you avoid bullying?

Children must know that they have the right to voice their concerns. They should be encouraged to be an up-stander, and never a bystander.

They should be reminded constantly to be brave and stand up when they see others being hurt.

Children who stand up for friends that are being bullied can affect positive change and encourage others to do the same.

Be the voice of those who are afraid to speak!

Children should seek help from an adult as soon as possible. Remember, if the teacher can't do anything, inform a parent.



I hope this simple guide teaches everyone that bullying is not a joke.

Alia advises all children to be kind and compassionate.

Speak up.

And be an up-stander if you see anyone being bullied!

Look after your friends and ask about their day during school.

Make sure that no one you know is being bullied.

You can make all the difference in someone's life.



Spread love.  
Be mindful.

"My name's Shamsa Al Marri, I'm fifteen years old. With my hands and my magical pens I create a world of wonder; art!

This story was inspired by a personal experience and has shown me that art makes it possible to share your stories with everyone."

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