



Celebrities Help Prevent Bullying by Sharing Their Stories

By [Steve Breakstone](#)

Co-Author: Michael Dreiblatt



Bullying is a hot topic these days, and stories of celebrities who have been bullied are even hotter. Olympic champ Michael Phelps talked about his experiences being bullied and his story generated international interest.

Victoria Beckham (aka Posh Spice, one-fifth of hit pop music group The Spice Girls) has talked openly about being bullied in school. Recently she said, "People would push me around, say they were going to beat me up after school, chase me. It was miserable, my whole schooling, miserable. I tried to be friends with people, but I didn't fit in. So I kept myself to myself." There is value to these conversations because it shows that even a beautiful, famous and talented celebrity was tormented in school. If she can be bullied, anyone can.

And even Presidential candidate Barack Obama talked about bullying in his presidential nominee acceptance speech, elevating bullying education to a national platform.

Why are people fascinated with discovering that celebrities were victims of school bullying? Is it comforting for bullying victims to know that someone else (and a celebrity, no less!) shared their fate, i.e., misery loves company? Or maybe it's nice to know that someone successful had been beaten down and yet rose beyond the experience. In other words, maybe bullying victims really can have the last laugh.

Actress Rosario Dawson said that one of her worst memories was getting all dressed up for a school activity and having the girls "pick on me because I was flat chested." Her admission about her experiences with school teasing brings more awareness to the issues of how to stop bullying and social aggression.

Discussions about formerly unmentioned topics can result in major cultural changes. For instance, weeks after Betty Ford became First Lady, she underwent a mastectomy for breast cancer - and discussed it publicly. Later, she talked about her alcoholism and drug addictions. In the 1970s and 80s, sharing these issues with the public was considered very risky. Her openness about previously taboo topics made headlines, and the public decided that she was incredibly brave and heroic. As the First Lady, she demonstrated that she was as vulnerable as the rest of us. Because of her openness, it became acceptable for "average people" to discuss these issues and get help.

Years later, Oprah Winfrey talked openly about being sexually abused as a child. She even discussed being impregnated by an abuser when she was fourteen (the child died shortly after birth). People admired her for bringing these once-shameful admissions out in the open to help others avoid the same fate. Child abuse, sexual and otherwise, is now discussed openly and honestly, and victims of abuse now know where to seek the support they need.

A few years ago, baseball great Joe Torre talked to reporters about his experience with domestic violence. His father, a respected NYC police detective, was a physically abusive husband and an emotionally abusive father. Fans and non-fans were fascinated with this aspect of this athlete's life. Joe wasn't the first athlete to experience such abuse but it was Joe who used his status and resources to create the Safe at Home Foundation, whose mission is to end the cycle of domestic violence. The public was interested in this sports legend's experience with bullying (domestic violence is a type of bullying), and Joe was instrumental in publicizing the issue and working to end it.

So when we hear about Chester Bennington, of the rock group Linkin Park, say he was, "knocked around like a rag doll at school for being skinny and looking different," we know that his message will resonate with many kids, who may be bullying or being bullied themselves. It's another reminder that bullying hurts and it's not cool.

Supermodel Tyra Banks has publicly addressed the issue of bullying and reminds young people that gossiping, deceiving, taunting and manipulating are very unfashionable. She tells people that "If you're pretty but you're ugly inside, you're ugly outside too."

Schools and parents need to impart many bully prevention strategies to stop kids from abusing others, including looking to today's celebrities to help deliver key messages about bullying. Pop culture heroes have incredible influence over young people, so when these celebrities talk about the effects of bullying, it's an opportunity for adults to reiterate the importance of respect and tolerance for all.

Steve Breakstone and Michael Dreiblatt are the co-founders of Balance Educational Services, a company that promotes pro-social behavior and bullying solutions through interactive presentations for students, educators and parents. They are also the authors of *How to Stop Bullying & Social Aggression: Elementary Grade Lessons and Activities That Teach Empathy, Friendship, and Respect*, which will be released in August of 2008.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Steve_Breakstone