

# Bully Nation: Why America's Approach to Childhood Aggression is Bad for Everyone

Susan Eva Porter, Ph.D., 2013

## Project Prevent and Address Bullying (PPAB)

for students with disabilities

BOOK  
REVIEW

Northern Illinois University | School Psychology Program

**COST:** \$16 on Amazon

**PUBLISHER:** Paragon House, 2013

### Description:

*Bully Nation* is a 188-page book that explains why the approach to bullying that is typically being taken in America is failing. The author strongly disagrees with the usage of “bully language” and zero tolerance bullying policies. This book discusses that the way that we address bullying and talk about it inhibit resilience in children. Then, Porter discusses her idea to address bullying: the GRIT model, which stands for:

- Growth mindset.
- Responding versus reacting.
- Interventions.
- Teach your children well.

### Strengths:

- Porter acknowledges that a zero tolerance policy for bullying in schools will not be effective. She does a good job of explaining why zero tolerance policies rarely work. While research studies were not cited, there is a body of research suggesting that zero tolerance policies are ineffective.
- Porter's unique GRIT approach to bullying is interesting. It would be helpful to parents and teachers to keep them mindful about the ways that they talk to children and how our responses affect our children's responses to bullying.

### Limitations:

- This book has a lack of empirical evidence. Many of the examples are anecdotal from Porter's time as a school social worker. Prominent bullying researchers, such as Espelage, Olweus, etc. are not mentioned. The most scientific research that is utilized is from government websites, like [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov).
- Does not acknowledge the role of bully/victims, defenders, reinforcers, etc.
  - For example, when describing the ineffectiveness of bully labels, Dr. Porter states that people often say “Here's the bully, here's the victim, here's the bystander...” (page 14) without actually acknowledging the complexity of these roles and that there are more roles than bully, victim and bystander.
- The most up-to-date definition is not used. The author talks about how the definition of bullying has become broad, but never actually cites the CDC definition of bullying.
- Seemed to state that bullying eventually helps children and potentially minimizes victimhood.
  - Porter states that “This is what kids are being taught in the expanded definition of bullying: 1. Potential for victimization is everywhere. 2. Your pain and insecurities are probably the result of the meanness of others. 3. You should never have to feel this way — life should be smooth sailing from 10 to 20. 4. You can/should hold onto your pain — there is no statute of limitations on claiming victimhood.” (page 56)
  - Statements like these came across as blaming the victims of bullying for being too sensitive and instructing them to power through in order to become resilient. While resilience is a good concept, we must also make sure that students feel safe at the school that they go to.

### Audience:

- Educators and parents.



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