

BAILEY BEAR BOOKS

Discussion Guide for Parents & Educators

Talking About Bullying, Courage, Fairness, Belonging, and Standing Together



What this guide is for

A companion to Bailey Bear and the Big Bully.

Designed first for teachers leading SEL discussions about bullying and difficult situations—and also helpful for parents and caregivers at home.



How to Use This Guide

Bailey's story does not have just one lesson, and children will not all notice the same things. One child may focus on Bailey being scared. Another may notice his friends standing beside him. Someone else may notice Barnaby taking over—or Kona deciding she does not have to keep following along.

Start with what children noticed. Ask one or two open questions, then listen. You do not need to use every prompt or finish every section.

“What stood out to you?”

“When did something start to feel wrong?”

“How do you think Bailey felt?”

“What changed?”

“Who made a choice that surprised you?”

Quick SEL discussion routine for teachers

1. Revisit the moment in the story you want to discuss.
2. Ask one open question and give children time to think, turn-and-talk, or share.
3. Name the skill: getting safe, finding support, fairness, using your voice, or telling a trusted adult.
4. Close with one practice phrase or one “what could you do?” example.

Bullying, Conflict, and Unkind Behavior

Not every disagreement or unkind moment is bullying. Bullying usually involves hurtful or aggressive behavior, an imbalance of power, and behavior that happens again—or is likely to happen again.

But children do not have to decide whether something “counts” as bullying before asking for help.

“I don’t like this.”

“I feel scared.”

“Please stop.”

“I need help.”

For adults: respond to the child’s safety and distress first. Definitions, patterns, policies, and consequences come after that.



1. Feeling Scared & Getting Safe

Bailey's belly tightens. His paws freeze. His heart pounds. Those body clues do not prove exactly what is happening—but they are worth noticing.

Ask: What was Bailey's body telling him? Have you ever had butterflies in your belly or frozen for a moment when you were worried? Can someone feel scared and brave at the same time?

Bailey does not run toward Barnaby or try to fight him. He gets somewhere safer. That matters.

Key idea

Walking away can be brave.

Getting help can be brave.

Staying beside someone can be brave.

Speaking up can be brave when it feels safe.

No child has to fight back or confront someone to prove they are brave.

2. Big Doesn't Mean Bad — Power Is About Choices

Barnaby is much bigger than Bailey, so his size gives him power in the story. But being big does not make someone mean. Kona is big too—and she eventually makes a different choice.

Ask: Was Barnaby mean because he was big—or because of what he chose to do? Can someone be strong and still be kind? Could a smaller person boss someone else around?

Power can come from size, age, popularity, having lots of friends nearby, controlling a game, or getting other people to follow along.

Big is not bad.

Small is not good.

Choices matter.



3. Playing Nice Isn't the Same as Playing Fair

Bailey begins by trying to be friendly. He invites Barnaby to play. He tries again. But being kind does not mean Bailey has to let Barnaby control the whole park.

Ask: Was Barnaby playing fairly? Can you be kind and still say “No”? What is the difference between sharing and someone taking control? What would fair play have looked like?

Fair play means...

everyone gets a voice;
everyone can say no;
one person does not get to make all the rules;
being stronger, louder, older, or more popular does not create extra rights.

A simple teaching idea: being kind means caring about other people. Being fair means their needs do not erase yours.

4. The Power of the Pack

Bailey's friends do not chase, bite, or fight Barnaby. They stay beside Bailey. That support tells him: “You are not alone.”

Ask: Why did having his friends nearby help Bailey? What could you do if someone were being picked on, pushed out, or left alone?

Safe ways children can help

stay beside someone;
invite them along;
say “Come with me”;
walk away with them;
get a trusted grown-up;
refuse to laugh or join in;
speak up if it feels safe.

What If You Don't Have a Pack?

Bailey has friends nearby. Children will not always. Ask: What could Bailey do if his friends weren't there? Who could he go to? Where could he move to feel safer?



“Something happened and I need your help.”

“I don’t feel safe.”

“Can I stay with you?”

A “pack” does not have to mean a group of best friends. Sometimes one safe person is enough.

5. Change the Game

Barnaby has the tennis balls. But Bailey and his friends discover that Barnaby does not have to control everything they do. They find another way to play.

Ask: What changed when Bailey and his friends found another way to have fun? Did walking away mean Barnaby won? What could “change the game” mean in real life?

Changing the game might mean...

walking away;

choosing another activity;

playing somewhere else;

joining different children;

inviting someone along;

asking a grown-up for help.

Changing the game is not giving up. It is deciding that someone else’s behavior does not get to control everything that happens next.

6. Finding Your Voice

Bailey is still shaking when he finds his big BOOF! A brave voice does not have to be loud.

“Stop.”

“That’s enough.”

“I don’t like that.”

“No.”

“I need help.”

Children should also know this: they never have to confront someone before asking for help. They can skip the words, move away, and go directly to a trusted adult.



7. Kona Makes a Different Choice

Kona begins on Barnaby's side. Then she decides she does not have to keep following along.

Ask: Why do you think Kona followed Barnaby at first? Could she have made a different choice sooner? What did she do differently? Why did it matter that she asked, "Can I play?" and waited for an answer?

Children sometimes go along with hurtful behavior because they want to belong, because their friends are doing it, or because they are afraid of becoming the next target.

You do not have to keep making the wrong choice just because you started there.

8. What Could Barnaby Do Next?

Barnaby's choices have consequences. By the end, the other dogs no longer want to follow his rules.

Ask: Did Bailey make Barnaby lonely—or did Barnaby's choices change how the other dogs felt? What could Barnaby do to start making things right? Does Bailey have to play with Barnaby right away?

Repair can include...

stopping the hurtful behavior;
listening;
respecting "no" and "stop";
asking instead of taking;
giving others space;
apologizing and showing different choices over time.

A child can learn two things at once: people can make better choices, and no one has to give up their boundaries before they feel ready.

Try It Together

Children remember skills better when they practice them. Keep role-play brief, calm, and optional. Do not ask a child to reenact a frightening personal experience.



Simple practice prompts

“Who are two or three trusted grown-ups you could go to if you needed help?”

“What could you do if a friend said, ‘I don’t feel safe?’”

“What could you do without starting a fight?”

Practice: “Something happened and I need your help.”

Practice: “My friend needs help.”

If the first adult doesn’t help? Answer together: “Tell another.”

Bailey’s Brave Moves

When something feels scary, unsafe, unfair, or wrong...

GET SAFE. Move away from danger or trouble.

FIND YOUR PACK. Stay near friends or someone you trust.

CHANGE THE GAME. Walk away, choose something else, or move toward safer people.

FIND YOUR VOICE. When it feels safe, use clear words.

TELL A TRUSTED GROWN-UP. Ask for help.

KEEP TELLING UNTIL SOMEONE HELPS.





When the Story Becomes Real

Sometimes a child may stop talking about Bailey and say: “That happened to me.” “Someone does that at school.” “I’m scared of someone.”

STOP THE LESSON. START LISTENING.

In the moment

Stay calm.

Thank the child for telling you.

Take what they say seriously.

Check whether they are safe right now.

Ask only what you need to understand how to help.

Do not make the child responsible for confronting or fixing the person who frightens them.

Follow your school or organization’s safety and reporting procedures when appropriate.

Check back afterward.

Helpful responses

“Thank you for telling me.”

“I’m glad you told me.”

“I want to help.”

“Let’s figure out what will help you feel safer.”

Quick Questions at a Glance

- When did Bailey first know something felt wrong?
- Was Bailey scared, brave—or both?
- Was Barnaby playing fairly?
- Does being bigger make someone mean?
- What changed when Bailey’s friends stood beside him?
- What could Bailey do if no friends were nearby?
- What does “change the game” mean?
- Why did Kona make a different choice?
- What could Barnaby do next?
- Who are two trusted grown-ups you could tell if you needed help?

Free Bailey Bear Playbook, printable classroom resources, activities, and additional Parent & Educator materials:
BaileyBearBooks.com