

My Bullying Story.

My name is Kat Lehmkuhl and I am a survivor of bullying.

I was blessed with private Catholic schooling from 1st grade through 12th. The education from books was good and, from that, I gained a love for all languages and literature.

Another thing I learned, how cruel others can be if their behavior is not regulated. Most of our teachers were nuns. Many were nice and caring. Some, however, were quick to turn their backs when bullies were acting out.

I was small and very skinny. I also had an upper overbite. I will give these kids credit for creativity at times. I was called "beaver", "woodchuck", "chipmunk", and The Beaver's brother, "Wally". See? Creative.

At the time, though, I only saw pain. I was ridiculed for being non-athletic and a slow runner. I was teased for my high-pitched voice and upper register singing voice. I was excluded from games on the playground and from sleep-overs with other girls. When I spoke up in class, I was mocked by the main ringleaders.

When I went home, I was greeted by a mother who was bipolar and had Narcissistic Personality Disorder. These conditions made her always angry and she had very low levels of empathy. I was terrified of her. If I brought up the teasing and bullying at school, I was told that it was my own fault. I was "too sensitive", "needed to grow thicker skin", or "needed a backbone". To say that my self-esteem did not exist would be an understatement. I felt defective, marred, shamed.

How did I survive this? I found my voice in singing. I found a few friends in the school plays and clung to them like velcro. I also began writing. Poetry was my muse.

I am still healing from this. Bullying is abuse, whether it is verbal, physical, social, or cyber. All are equally hurtful and bad. None is less harmful, as words stay in the victim's brain, programmed, long after the years have gone by. All types can be like a tender scab that takes very little triggers to reopen them and to bleed. This needs to stop!!

