

I Used to Be Bullied for Having Autism: Here's When it Stopped

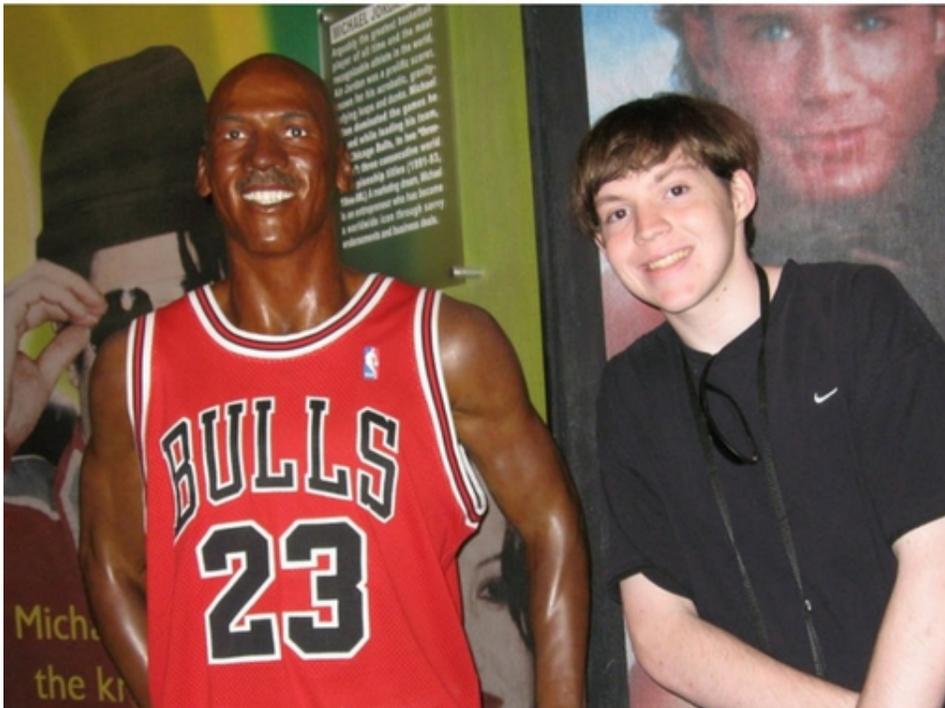


By, Kerry Magro

National Autism Conference
Hilton New Orleans Riverside
September 11, 2016

Overview

- ◆ What is bullying and how does it affect our community?
- ◆ My personal experiences with bullying and how I overcame it.
- ◆ 7 steps you can take to take a stand against bullying TODAY!



Inspiring stories of people on the autism spectrum



The Letter I Would Have Written for My Parents When I Was Still Nonverbal

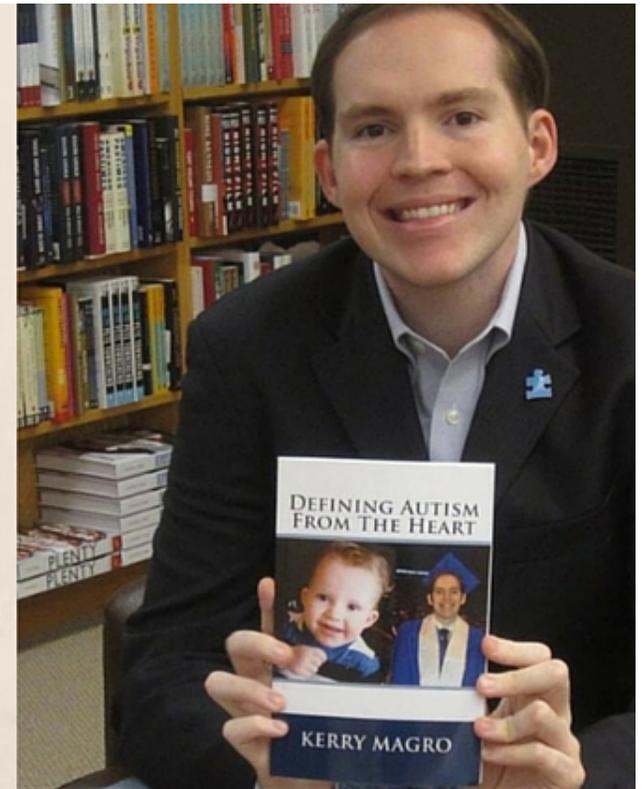
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- **Today I have 6 jobs...**
- **Producer of Social Media and Digital Content at Autism Speaks**
- **National Speaker**
- **Best-Selling Author**
- **Movie Consultant**
- **Non-Profit Founder**
- **Host of my own Cable TV Show**



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Bullying is...

- ◆ Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.



What is considered bullying?

- ◆ Unwelcome conduct
- ◆ Graphic or written statements
- ◆ Threats
- ◆ Physical assault
- ◆ Other conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful or humiliating



What causes bullying?

- ◆ Ignorance: fear of what these students don't understand
- ◆ Not enough awareness
- ◆ Not enough education of the harmful effects of bullying on students
- ◆ When a peer intervenes in a bullying situation it's more likely to stop than when a teacher does.



The majority of the time bullying stops completely when a peer intervenes and says, “What you are doing is not ok.”

Amanda Todd's Bullying Story

Watch the video and share
with families at
<http://bit.ly/BullyingHurts>

10 Reasons Bullying Needs to Stop in Our Schools

- ◆ A child is bullied in school every 7 minutes. 60 percent of students with disabilities and 25 percent without have been reported being bullied. Last academic school year 3.2 million students were victims of reported bullying.
- ◆ Bullying affects a student's ability to learn.
- ◆ Most bullying is unreported because it's done while the teachers/adults are not watching.
- ◆ Bullying leads to an increase in dropout rates and absenteeism. 1 in 10 students drop out of school because of repeated bullying.
- ◆ Bullying on average leads to a decrease in grades/loss of interest in academic achievement.

10 Reasons Bullying Needs to Stop in Our Schools

- ◆ Bullying is the most common form of violence.
- ◆ Victims of bullying are 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide than students who are not bullied.
- ◆ 1 in 7 students from grades K-12 are either bullies or victims of bullying.
- ◆ There is no current Federal anti-bullying law. Although 49 states have anti-bullying legislation, bullying is not illegal.
- ◆ Harassment and bullying have been linked to 75% of school-shooting incidents.

My personal experiences with bullying

- ◆ Diagnosed with autism at 4
- ◆ Started when I was in Pre-K
- ◆ Got kicked out of 2 preschools because they said they didn't know how to control me
- ◆ Limited speech made me have an inability to speak out to teachers about the impact.
- ◆ Could always understand that I was being bullied.



Bullying continued through public school

- ◆ Bullying continued into public school
 - ◆ In a multi-handicapped classroom
 - ◆ People called our class the “retarded class”. Seen as outsiders compared to the rest of the school
- ◆ In 4th grade bullying reached such a critical level that I was having a difficult time succeeding in my academics



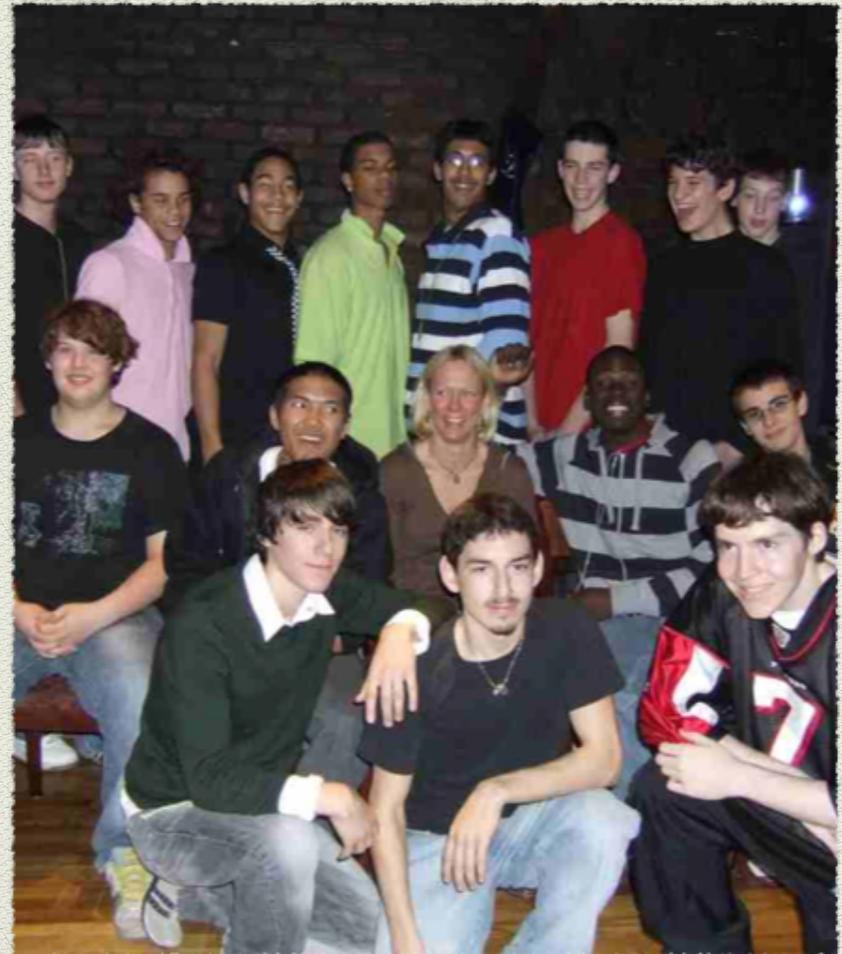
A difficult moment...

- ◆ Felt like no one understood me
- ◆ Wanted friends but was very shy so making lasting connections was difficult
- ◆ Limited funding and teacher support made bullying only one of my problems



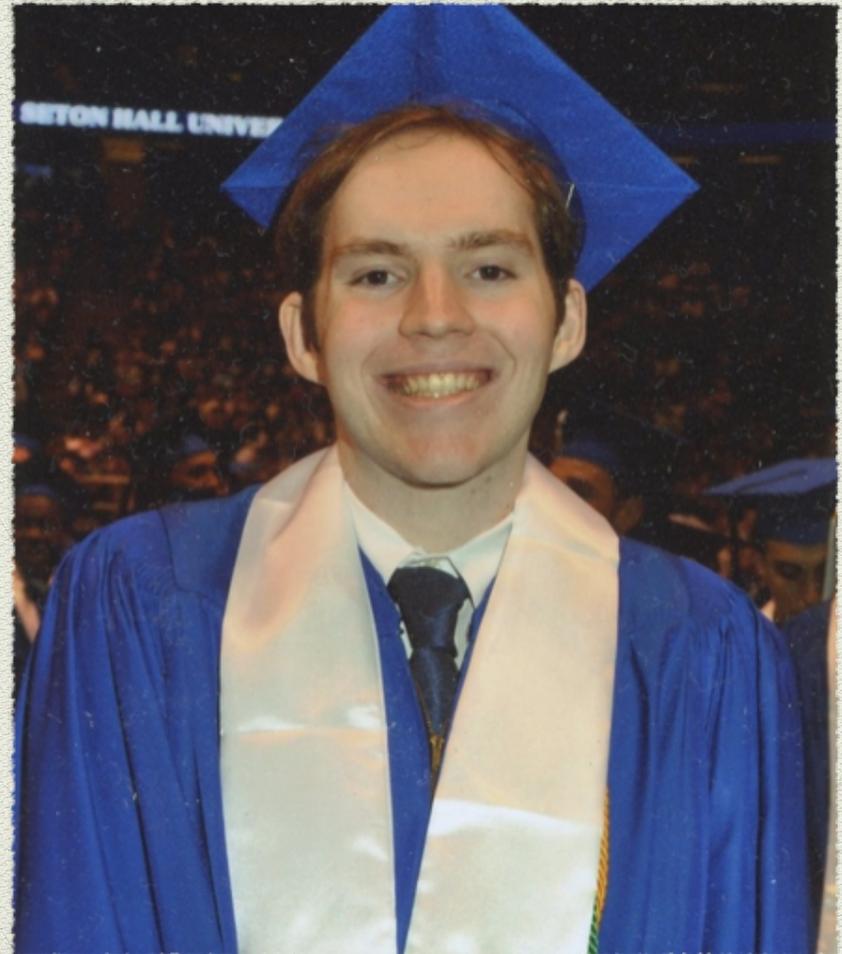
Bullying stopped

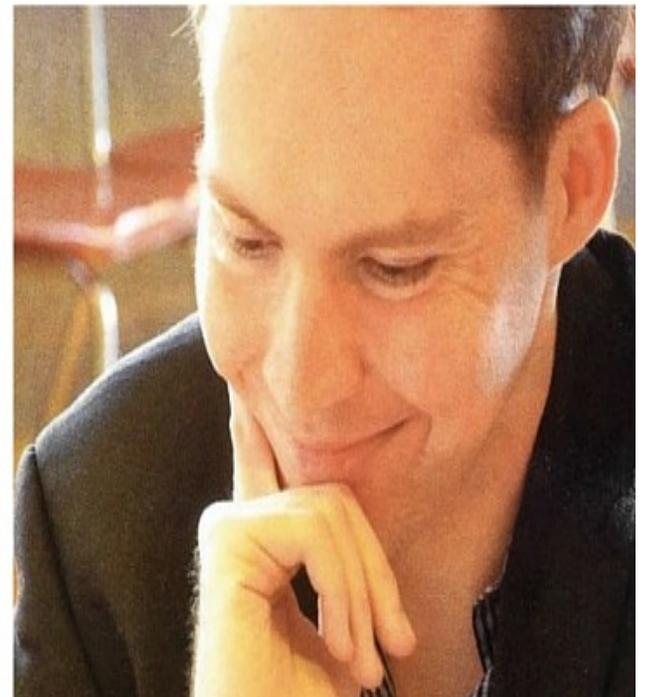
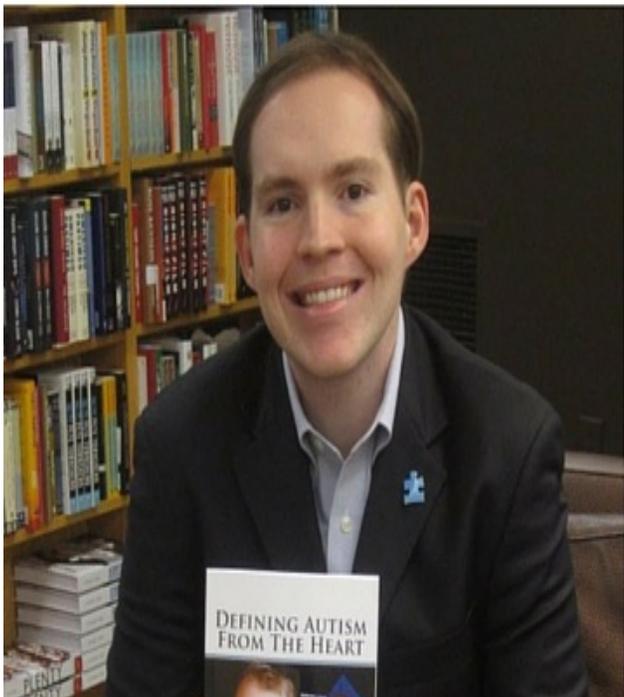
- ◆ Was able to progress while at the same time finding out more about my autism diagnosis
- ◆ Moved from Community Lower School to Community High School.
- ◆ Was able to become more of an advocate. Maintained an A average and got into all the colleges I applied to



College

- ◆ Was rarely bullied ever again.
- ◆ Came out to my peers about having autism for the first time
- ◆ Become a speaker, author, movie consultant, autism advocate & anti-bullying activist





7 Steps to Take a Stand Against Bullying

Read more about these steps at

<http://bit.ly/7StepsAntiBullying>



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#1: Start the Conversation

- ◆ Because individuals with autism may not realize that they are being bullied or may be unable to communicate what is happening at school or in the community, the first step is to get the conversation started so they understand what bullying means and why it is not okay. Teach your child or your student to know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate treatment from classmates. Make sure your child feels comfortable telling you when he or she feels bullying may be happening. Encourage him or her to talk to you about his or her feelings at school. Be supportive.
- ◆ Check out resources for learning how to talk to your child about bullying here:
www.specialneeds.thebullyproject.com/bullying_roles

#2: Develop a Plan

- ◆ Your child's IEP is a great resource you can use to combat bullying. You can work with your team to map out precautions to put in place to prevent bullying, as well as procedures to stop it if it does happen. The IEP should include mechanisms to keep your child safe based on his or her unique abilities and challenges.
- ◆ Learn tips on how to use your IEP plan as an anti-bullying tool here:
www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-4.pdf

#3: Teach Tolerance

- ◆ It is of utmost important for educators and administrators to teach tolerance in schools. The environment at school sets the tone for how potential bullies behave and how safe students who may be bullied feel. Develop lesson plans to teach students about the importance of tolerance and the effects bullying can have on individuals. Bring in speakers so students can learn more about celebrating differences like disabilities.
- ◆ Learn how to teach tolerance at school here:
www.specialneeds.thebullyproject.com/teaching_tolerance
- ◆ Learn how to set up a zero-tolerance policy here:
www.specialneeds.thebullyproject.com/zero_tolerance

#4: Increase Awareness and Acceptance

- ◆ One good way to increase awareness and acceptance at school and in the community is by educating the students and staff members. Though some parents may not feel comfortable doing so, others have found that teaching classmates about their child's disability has helped prevent bullying, as well as made their child feel more accepted by his or her peers. It can help to work with your child's school on this as well.
- ◆ Tips on how to talk about disabilities in your school are available at www.specialneeds.thebullyproject.com/talking_about_disability

#5: Encourage Self-Advocacy

- While parents and educators can put plans and supports in place to prevent bullying, it is also very important to teach students to advocate for themselves to the best of their abilities. Once they learn how to spot bullying when it happens to them, they need to learn how to put a stop to it.
- It is essential to teach your child or student how to advocate for him or herself, especially when it comes to bullying. Help him or her understand why it is important to stand up for him or herself and communicate in his or her own way in order to stop the bullying and prevent it from happening again.
- Learn more about how to start a self-advocacy action plan at www.pacer.org/bullying/pdf/StudentActionPlan.pdf

#6: Learn Your Rights

- ◆ Most states have laws about bullying, and some have specific laws relating to bullying of children with special needs. It is important to know your rights and your child's rights when incidents of bullying take place. According to stopbullying.gov, state and local lawmakers have taken action to prevent bullying and protect children. Through laws (in their state education codes and elsewhere) and model policies (that provide guidance to districts and schools), each state addresses bullying differently.
- ◆ Find out how your state refers to bullying in its laws and what they require on the part of schools and districts at...
www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html

#7: Speak Up!

- ◆ Whether you are a parent and you know your child is bullying, a teacher who sees that bullying is happening at school or a student who feels that you are being bullied, the first thing you should do is speak up! Let school administrators know about what is happening and tell them that bullying is a violation of the individual's rights, as well as his or her IEP. If the school isn't doing enough to stop the bullying and prevent it from happening again, you can reach out to an advocacy organization for assistance.
- ◆ When you are reporting incidents of bullying, it is important to have the information in writing.
- ◆ Learn more about how to write a letter to notify them about bullying at <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/publications/#disability-info>

Conclusion

- ◆ Bullying is a lifelong issue for those with developmental disabilities
- ◆ Through services and awareness efforts we can stop bullying at its core
- ◆ Parents, educators, and other adults are the most important advocates that a student with disabilities can have. Be these kids greatest advocates!





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Award-Winning Speaker
Best-Selling Author
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