Preface

While adolescent bullying remains a hot-button issue in schools and communities, adults tasked with addressing these behaviors continue to clamor for research-based guidance on exactly what to do. Those who experience bullying struggle emotionally, relationally, and academically (as do those who target them), and often feel helpless even though they are desperately looking for support. Frankly, we're all too familiar with the tragic stories of students who take the most extreme measures to escape the relentless abuse they face. Quite simply, more needs to be done.

We've devoted all of our professional lives to illuminating the causes and consequences of teen bullying. We've been studying these behaviors (with a particular emphasis on cyberbullying) since about 2002. As you can imagine, a lot has changed over that time. We've formally surveyed over 15,000 middle and high school students from schools large and small all across the United States. And we've sat down and chatted with countless others. We also work very closely with educators in school settings and parents in communities to keep informed on their experiences, successes, and struggles wrestling with the misuse of smartphones and social media.

As action researchers and writers, we aim that our work impacts the lives and efforts of those on the front lines. That is, we don't just publish academic articles in peer-reviewed journals for our university colleagues (though we do that too!). We write for educator and parenting publications. We've written several books for adults and students. But the book in front of you is something different than what we have typically written in the past. Like all of our work, *Bullying Today* is grounded in research and guided by the practical experiences of those who confront bullying on a daily basis. However, rather than providing you with six to eight long, dense chapters jam-packed with weighty information, we've created a collection of shorter chapters that all pointedly address a particular problem or perspective. Many began as blog posts on our website (cyberbullying.org), which have been updated and expanded while maintaining their succinctness and readability. Instead of comprehensive and formalized prose, we opted for easily digestible

informational nuggets presented in a journalistic, conversational style. In speaking with educators and others who follow our work all around the United States (and abroad), we've come to learn that they appreciate the way we write on our blog, and value our relatable and research-informed perspectives.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Our book is subdivided into five main sections. The first—*Defining Bullying: What It Is and What It Isn't*—presents a discussion of exactly what constitutes this misbehavior and, consequently, what does not. This is essential because labeling every instance of drama or conflict between youths as "bullying" is detrimental to our ability to devote time and energy to serious issues, and also preempts the opportunity to show kids how to solve some of their own relational problems. Next, we explore research in *Bullying by the Numbers: What We Know* to provide a baseline for what is known about bullying in order to clarify perspectives of its frequency and impact, and to correct misperceptions that affect the way society approaches and responds to it. The third subsection, *The Lowdown on Laws Related to Bullying*, focuses on the relevance of the law. With all 50 U.S. states having some kind of bullying statute in place, it is important for educators to know exactly what they need to consider when addressing these behaviors in their schools. Educators from outside the United States can also benefit from the legislative lessons learned here. Furthermore, it is useful to understand the limitations of law and formal policy in actually preventing repeated peer harassment among a population of vulnerable and impressionable youth.

The fourth and fifth sections of the book help equip school personnel with both the knowledge and the strategies to capably deal with bullying. In *Preventing Bullying Before It Starts: What You Can Do*, we discuss the role of student assemblies, student advisory boards, how to create a kindness movement to combat cruelty and hate among the student body, and other related programming educators can immediately implement at little to no cost. In *Rational Responses to Bullying: What Works and What Doesn't*, we cover a number of key subjects: for instance, we clarify how youth-serving adults can promptly address instances of online bullying through anonymous reporting systems, device policies, and formal or informal intervention.

Almost every single day, we are contacted by an educator, a parent, or another adult who works with youth and is looking for solutions to the bullying problem. While there simply doesn't exist a quick and easy fix, there are certain incontrovertible points that adults need to know when it comes to identifying bullying and reducing its negative impact. We've distilled those best practices for you in this book, and sought to present them in a

concise, memorable, and valuable way that you can reference as needed. We will continue to blog regularly about these issues at cyberbullying.org and hope that you'll follow our most recent musing there. Most importantly, we hope that you'll reach out if you need additional assistance (patchin@ cyberbullying.org or hinduja@cyberbullying.org). Our first and foremost goal is to be there for you, so that you can be there for others.