

Road Sign 4: Social Exclusion and Chronic "I Don't Care" Language (8-12 Years)

The part of the brain responsible for the motivation to care is now turned off in both the bully and the victim, so there is no punishment or reward that will help them. When children say, "I don't care," their brains are saying, "I don't feel cared for by anyone." Rewiring both the bully's and the victim's systems can only occur through intense connection with others.

Road Sign 5: The Brain's Empathy System is Offline (Teen Years)

At this age, the bully may join a gang of tough guys or hook up with a clique of mean girls. They perfect their craft through cyber bullying, spreading rumors, physical action and day-to-day threats. At this point, the bully is a dangerous teenager whose brain has changed in two very significant ways:

- The brain has become programmed to biochemically experience pleasure from hurting others. The bully's internal pharmacy provides him with opioids that act like morphine to deaden the pain of his life journey. The teenager is literally addicted to causing others pain.
- The brain is immune to rejection and ostracism. This teenager no longer feels a need to belong or care. Empathy is completely offline.

Our victim, on the other hand, lacks the internal pharmacy that a bully has to provide himself with relief. The teenage victim is prone to suffering quietly and then exploding. The pain can become so intense that he may commit suicide or kill others, as we have seen play out in school shootings.

Bullying a bully with tough measures and excluding him with zero tolerance policies compounds the problem. We are systemically applying the exact treatment that created the bully and then expecting it to help. Bully prevention must start in the early childhood years. It involves creating a School Family, and teaching the self-regulation and social skills necessary to get along with others. None of this is possible unless we use all of our Conscious Discipline skills to help children access an executive state. Specifically, the Skill of Positive Intent will help us see the best in others so they can see the best in themselves. Watch videos of interventions for each road sign on your portal.

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Reframing Our Intent From Negative to Positive

Committing ourselves to view the world through a different set of lenses doesn't mean we will automatically be successful. We will need to consciously choose to reframe situations over and over again until this new perspective becomes our pattern. Whenever we are upset, we are focused on what we don't want and have attributed negative intent. The easiest way to know if we need to reframe a situation is to ask ourselves if we're upset. If the answer is, "Yes," then it's time to reframe it:

- Notice if you are upset. Actively calm yourself. (S.T.A.R., "I'm safe, keep breathing, I can handle this," and wish well.)
- Focus on what you want to happen. Shift your attention and your intention will follow.
- Change your beliefs about the other person's motives from negative to positive.