



ENJOY THE POPCORN

Helping your child
RE-SCRIPT
THE BULLY HORROR SHOW

Lim Kok Kwang, PhD,
Wong Mei Yin, DPsych (Clinical)



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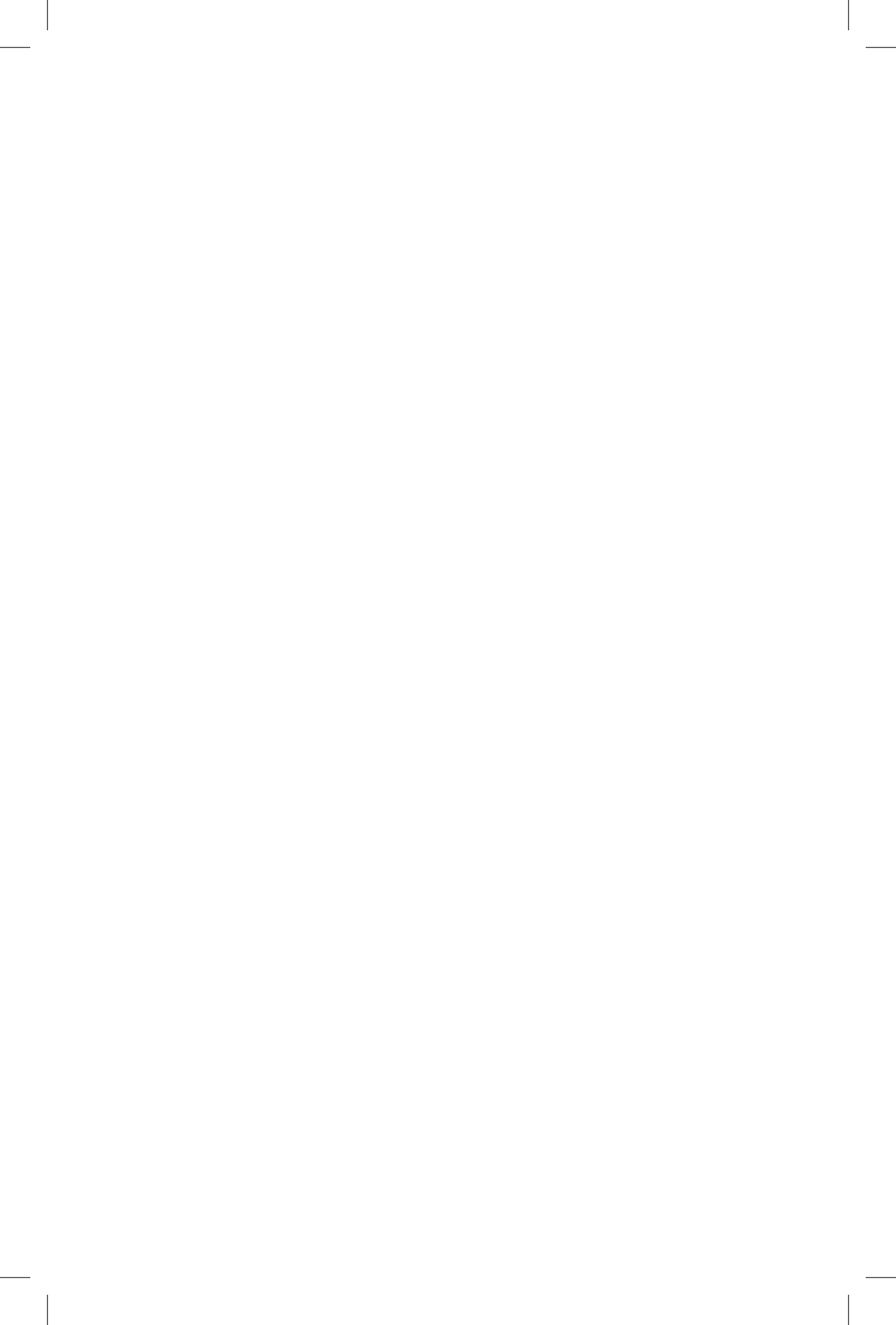
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*To our parents who have taught us
inner peace in the face of tragedy and given us
the fearless gifts of faith and foresight.*



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Preface to the Third Edition

Getting bullied is horrible! The victim feels intimidated, petrified or even powerless. When the bullying is prolonged, the victim can feel helpless and hopeless eventually. If your child is a victim, he knows how lousy it feels to be pushed around, rejected or ridiculed. This book is written for you. Good news: Your child can begin to change all that. He can not only understand why certain people act like the bully, but also discover a toolbox of skills for his own protection from the bully.

Real change begins with knowledge. Know the bully. Know his tiresomely predictable moves. Know oneself. Know countermoves that neutralise the impact of the bully's moves. This book expands your child's ability to see and do things with new skills that create new possibilities. With stronger emotional self-defence and problem-solving tactics, he can be safe and strong again. He can take back his power from the bully.

From the first edition of this book (*Bully-proof Your Child: Mind-body tactics for outsmarting the bully*), extensive counselling with children, adolescents, parents and caregivers as well as consultations with our mental health colleagues have given birth to this third edition with a fresh title. A thread that weaves through the three editions is that bullying is social performance. As terrifying as bullying often seems to be, it's really a display of behaviours that follow rigid rules as if the victim and the bully were locked in a prearranged drama and obligated to act out its fixed script. The stage could be the classroom, the playground or cyberspace. In truth, both the victim and the bully can free themselves from this repeated show by revising the scripts that

limit their beliefs about what they are able or unable to do. Helping the bully to change himself would be the topic for another book. Here a core strategy and its applications for the victim are drawn from the simple insight that “the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without even fighting” (from *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu). It’s more powerful for the victim to pursue an exciting life with supportive people and interesting goals than to keep on confronting the bully with a wish to change his habits. During a scary or boring part of a show, diverting our attention to our own tasty popcorn will weaken the impact of that annoying part of the show. When the bully tries to act out a bully show, your child can then watch it dispassionately or with amusement and respond creatively, while concentrating on how he can create more positive people, activities and goals in his life. Your child can enjoy the popcorn while re-scripting the bully horror show.

Parents and caregivers who are concerned about the recent rise in cyberbullying can help the child reduce the impact from it with the principles and tactics in this book all the same. Cyberbullying is different from face-to-face bullying in that the act of bullying could be taken to a seemingly unsalvageable extent, e.g., threatening messages being circulated on the Internet for everyone to see constantly. Further, since the sources of such messages could be concealed and untraceable, the victim wouldn’t be able to ask the sources to remove those messages. This highlights the preventive importance of parents and caregivers keeping track of the child’s Internet activities (websites, online “friends” etc.) and providing limits or guidance with foresight. To deal with Internet bullying, the child can block the nasty communications, refuse to pass along any bullying messages and use the same ideas in this book to focus

on creating the life he desires which can then make those negative messages trivial and uninteresting.

For easy reading, this book uses “he” whenever a singular pronoun is called for and also the bully and the victim to refer to all bullies and all victims respectively. The creation of the third edition of this book reminds the co-authors about the tremendous blessings given to us. We especially thank all the children and teenagers who have shared with us successful strategies in managing the bully. YOU have inspired this book.

As peer influence is one of the most powerful forces on earth, we hope that our parent and caregiver readers will continue to extend help to your friends (parents and caregivers of the victim or the bully) with the tested, creative and practical strategies in this book.

Lim Kok Kwang & Wong Mei Yin

May 2016



About the Authors

Dr Lim Kok Kwang is a Lecturer (clinical psychology) at JCUS, where he teaches and supervises master's and doctoral trainees in child and family therapy as well. He is a former President of the Singapore Psychological Society and the Singapore Society of Clinical Hypnosis. Commissioned by Singapore's previous Ministry of Community Development, he coauthored *Practical Tips for Parents* during the time he served as the Director of two voluntary welfare organisations. He is also a Registered Supervisor with the Psychology Board of Australia; a Chartered Psychologist and Associate Fellow with the British Psychological Society; a Fellow with the International College of Psychosomatic Medicine and a Diplomate with the International Academy of Behavioural Medicine, Counselling and Psychotherapy. He holds a Diploma of Clinical Hypnosis from the Australian Society of Hypnosis and is a recipient of the *Award for Outstanding Contribution to Psychology* in Singapore from the Singapore Psychological Society.

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