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- Discussion Guide -

# Saving Sadie

An Anti-Bullying Film



## Saving Sadie, the movie, is a metaphor about bullying and renewal.



### The story of Sadie is true.

Upon first viewing, most people see an abused dog struggling to stay alive and the redemption and transformation that comes through the love of a friend.

But the story has a deeper meaning, and the film can become a catalyst to help children and adults discuss the darkness that bullying can cause as well as the hope and happiness that can be a result of overcoming it.

### The film has two main characters, Sadie and Joal.

Sadie, the dog, represents anyone who has or is being bullied. Joal represents the good in all of us, and shows us that by being an upstander instead of bystander, there can be hope and transformation.

### Upstander

An **upstander** is an individual who sees wrong and acts.  
A person who takes a stand against an act of injustice or intolerance

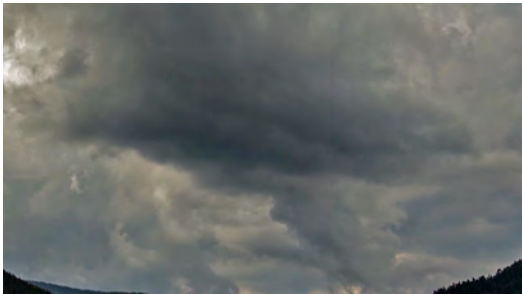
### Film Narration:



*The other day I heard someone talking about how lonely they were. They said they were sad because people were making fun of the... saying really bad things about them. Things that weren't even true. Things that hurt... a lot.*

### Insights / Metaphors

- At the beginning of the film, people believe it is Joal who is telling us how so many people struggle with being bullied.
- It's important for children who are being bullied to understand it's not because they have a problem, but because the bully has a problem. Bullies may be insecure, have a violent home life, or they themselves were bullied.



*They said it had gotten so bad that they didn't see the point in living anymore. And that probably no one would care if they were around anymore or not. So why not just end it.*

- The storm clouds are symbolic of the darkness that many children are going through as a result of being bullied.
- 16% of students seriously consider suicide, 13% create a plan, and 8 percent have made a serious attempt.
- Suicide is third leading cause of death among middle and high school aged students.



*I just wanted to shout out... "don't let them get to you, you're too important to the rest of us" But I can't....I'm a dog.*

*I'm Sadie, and my story begins right after I had just given birth to a litter of puppies when my owner, who didn't care how bad he hurt me*

- Children need to be encouraged about how valuable they are and how important their life and friendship is to the rest of us who care about them or love them.

- At this point in the film we discover that the voice of the narrator is actually the point of view of the dog, Sadie.



*took me into the woods up in the mountains of Kentucky ... and shot me.*

- Hurtful words are like bullets, once they are said, they can't be taken back. They can injure people and even cause the victim to give up and take their own life.

- Words need to be used for encouragement and good, not as evil.



### **Film Narration:**

*Once in the head, and once in the back.*

*He's what people call a bully.*

*I remember feeling totally alone. Abandoned.*



*I didn't understand how someone could be so mean to me. I hadn't done anything to him. How could someone be so hurtful. It was getting darker, and colder....and even though I didn't want to leave, I could feel my world slipping away. I started feeling sad thinking about all the things I would miss if my life ended that night.*



*What I didn't realize was there were people who heard the shots and came running to see what was wrong. Came to see if they could help me. They didn't want the bully to have the last word.*



*I don't remember much about the next couple of weeks. I heard the word 'bullets' a lot and 'shrapnel', and 'we don't know if she'll live.' But I wanted to...and although I couldn't feel my hind legs, I could feel that people cared...and they didn't want me to give up.*

### **Insights / Metaphors**

- Often times, when the cruelty of bullying is happening to someone else, our first instinct might be to flee out of fear that we may get hurt as well.

- Or maybe we flee because we don't want to get involved.

- Bullying doesn't make sense...there's no logical or justifiable reason for it.

- Victims need to understand that the problem isn't with them, the problem is within the bully.

- The people who heard the shot and came running are like children who hear or know of the bullying and take it upon themselves to come and see how they can help. This is what we mean by becoming an upstander, not a bystander.

- Children who have been hurt and damaged by bullying are experiencing an emotional deficit. They crave someone to recognize they are in pain and care about them. To stand up for them. To protect them. Or simply to encourage them to keep going....that it can get better.



### Film Narration:



*I was sent from Kentucky to a nice place in Wisconsin. One day, a woman came in to drop off blankets for us and I thought, "that's a nice thing to do." Her name was Joal, and she asked if she could take me with her. She smiled a lot and made me feel good, so I figured it was OK.*

### Insights / Metaphors

- There are good people in the world who want to help. You just have to be open to finding them or letting them reach out to you.



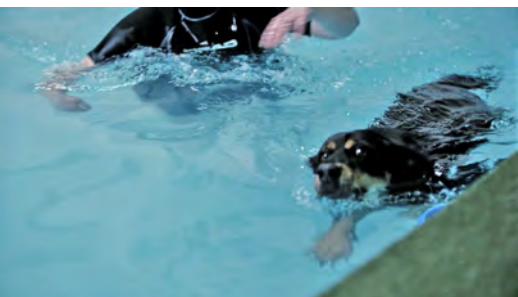
*Joal took me to meet a doctor. And then another one. And then another one... who finally said, "let's give her a chance."*

- You might not find help from the first person you approach. But don't give up. Keep looking. Keep talking to people about what you are experiencing. You will find someone who wants to help you....wants to be your friend.



*Joal let me stay in her house. She made me a bed...made me food...made me happy. She made me believe in myself again. I've learned that encouragement is one of the best things that friends can give to each other.*

- Choosing to become an upstander means you want to take action to stop the bully in their tracks and then show the victim you care about them as a person. Sit with them at lunch, walk with them in the hall, tell them you like being their friend.



*Now I go to therapy almost every day. I get to swim. Sometimes I pretend I'm a fish...sometimes a duck....but most of the time I just like being a big wet dog. I get massages. I get treatments...and I especially like that I get lots of treats.*

- The metaphor for the therapy pool is that water makes you feel lighter. It takes some of the weight off. Friendship is like therapy to a bullying victim....it takes some of the emotional weight off and lightens their load.



*I even scored a wagon and another set of wheels so I can get around easier.*

- The journey back to renewal will be made easier by finding new coping mechanisms.



**Film Narration:**

*These days we don't just go to therapy. We go everywhere, telling people about how bad it is to abuse others, and how you gotta stop being a bystander to all the bad stuff that people are doing to one another and be what we call an upstander, standing up to the bullies and let 'em know that they need to cut it out.*

**Insights / Metaphors**

- Sadie and Joal use the empathy that they've gained from being bullied and fighting back to find their own joy and self-worth to encourage others and became upstanders themselves.



*And then you have to love one another. Help each other out.*

- Children need to be encouraged to love, not hate. Help, not hurt.



*Tell your parents or teachers or someone you trust if someone else is trying to hurt you.*

- Encourage children to find someone they can trust, and share their fears, hurt and anger.



*And remember, if something awful happens to you, something good can be just around the corner.*

- Being a victim is horrible, but it doesn't have to be forever. The sooner they seek help, the sooner they can stop feeling the pain and start enjoying life again.



*You just have to believe that there are more people who care about you, than people that don't. More people who want to love you than want to hurt you. And far more people who would miss you if you weren't here.*

- If you are thinking about ending your life to get away from the pain of being bullied, please don't.
- You are important and loved by so many people.
- There are lots of people who care, and will stand by you if they know you need their help.



### Film Narration:



*When I look back at what happened to me, I don't think I'll ever understand how people can hurt others so easily for no reason.*

### Insights / Metaphors

- Being bullied is a terrible thing to have to deal with. It doesn't make sense and it hurts. But you don't have to live with it, and you don't have to go through it alone.



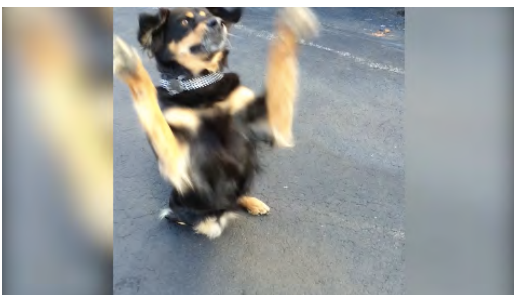
*It's not fair. It's not right. But it's real. So the rest of us will just have to decide to love and respect one another, and work together to end bullying.*

- Unfortunately, bullying is real. It's a bad thing that happens to a lot of good people.
- You are not unusual because you're being bullied. It happens all the time at this age and even into adulthood. But you can take steps to make it stop.



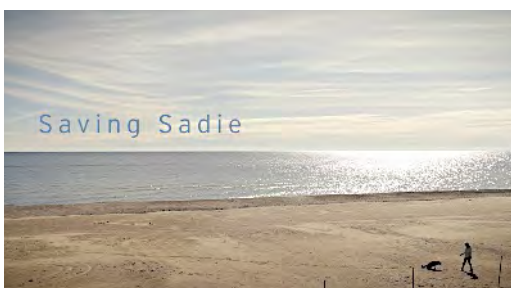
*I survived because people stood up for me and loved me. If I would've given up, I would have never known how much joy I could bring to others and how much love they have for me.*

- Don't give up. You have no idea all of the good things life has in store for you and how you will positively impact the world.



*Life can turn out really good. But it may take some work. Don't be afraid to try. Surround yourself with people who care, and stand up to those who want to bring you down.*

- Living the life you want can be a lot of work. But it will be worth it.
- Find good people to share your journey with.
- Don't let the bully defeat you. You are way too important to the rest of us...and to yourself.



*You have something important to share with the world. Stand up for others, and stand up for yourself...and you will see, the world will be a better place because of you.*

- Love yourself.