

Ryan's Story Family Discussion Guide

Key Points from John Halligan's Presentation

- Ryan Halligan died by suicide at the start of 8th grade.
- He was bullied from grades 5 through 7.
- At first, Ryan confided in his parents, but shame and embarrassment silenced him later.
- A girl named *Ashley* pretended to have a crush on Ryan as part of a cruel prank.
- A peer bully targeted Ryan for years, eventually spreading damaging rumors.
- After Ryan's death, Mr. Halligan uncovered online messages and firsthand accounts that revealed the full extent of the bullying.
- Mr. Halligan met with Ashley and chose forgiveness. She later shared her story to help others.
- He also faced the bully with his parents present, using the moment to show the true impact of the bully's actions.
- Mr. Halligan urged students to apologize where needed and become **"upstanders"** – those who intervene against bullying.
- He now dedicates his life to promoting kindness, empathy, and mental health awareness in schools.

Home Discussion Starters

Use these questions to spark meaningful conversations:

- What story from Ryan's life impacted you most?
- What were the different factors that led to Ryan's decision?
- Mr. Halligan mentioned a "time machine" – what could different people have done differently?
- What emotions has Mr. Halligan had to work through since Ryan's passing?
- How did forgiveness play a role in his healing?
- What does the phrase **"You can always turn an ink blot into a butterfly"** mean to you?

- How can “just joking” sometimes cross the line and hurt others?
- What can you do if you witness bullying or exclusion?
- Why might words feel more hurtful online than in person?

Memorable Quotes to Reflect On

- “Ryan felt the need to ‘handle things on his own,’ and didn’t share the big things going on with his parents.”
- “You are loved beyond belief. Don’t ever think you wouldn’t be missed or that you don’t matter.”
- “You did a mean thing, but you’re not a mean person.”
- “When kids intervene with other kids, it is more powerful than when adults give the same message.”
- “The biggest mistake you can make is to not ask for help.”
- “When you bully someone, you’re bullying their entire family.”

Visit [Ryan’s Story Website](#)

Includes resources for parents, educators, and students.