

## **“Strain” Letter Exercise**

*Film and activity developed by Yin Chang and STRAIN Producers, (C) LeliMelo Productions, Inc*

**Directions:** Whether this is happening to you now or it has happened in the past, write a letter. It is entirely up to you if you want to keep this letter private or if you want to read it out loud to your group.

- **If you are/were a target**, write a letter to the bully and/or bystanders expressing how you feel.
- **If you ever bullied**, write an apology letter to the victim.
- **If you are/were a bystander** and have witnessed someone getting hurt but didn't do anything to help, write a letter to the victim or the bully expressing how you feel about the situation. Will you write down a promise of never allowing yourself to stand by and let the bullying happen again? The choice is yours.

A letter from, Yin Chang, the director of "Strain":

Dear Friends,

When I was twelve going on thirteen, I pretty much had enough of the bullying that accumulated in elementary school and middle school. My self-esteem hit its lowest point, consuming everything in my life. I remember sitting in the guidance counselor's office with my mom because the counselor had heard I wanted to take my own life. It was true what they had heard. Then in high school, I ditched several friends for a chance to be seen with the "cool crowd". I tried my best to prove that I could be just as mean, or even meaner.

As someone who was bullied, I should have known better. I should have stood up for those who were picked on, whether by stepping in to stop the confrontations or by reaching out to a trusted adult. Though I can't go back in time, I know that I can still do my part by sharing my experiences with you.

To anyone who's ever hurt someone, take it from me; the guilt will catch up with you. It's not too late to stop. I was hurting inside and verbally taking it out on those around me. To be honest, it was easier for me to put others down to make myself feel better. It was wrong of me. I didn't have the courage to seek help to face my own insecurities and tackle my own issues. Talk to someone to see how you can heal yourself from the inside out.

To anyone who's ever witnessed someone being bullied and ignored it or took part by laughing or spreading rumors, from today onwards you can put an end to bullying. Tell the bully that it's not cool what he or she is doing. Or pull the victim away and let them know they're not alone, or get a trusted adult to help.

To anyone who's ever been bullied, you are not alone. Trust me, I've been there. I'll be the first to admit that it's scary. You deserve happiness. Believe in yourself and stay strong. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to get help and talk to an adult that you trust. Your future is bright and filled with opportunities; give yourself a chance to shine. You are all unique in your own ways--gifted, talented, courageous and brave; you owe it to yourself to stay strong and get through the tough times.

No matter who you are, remember that hurting others or yourself is never the answer. Do something about it and speak up, you have the power and the right to put an end to bullying.

Xoxo

Yin Chang