



Safe
Strong
Free

Support & guidance on bullying behaviour

for children and
young people

What is bullying?

Bullying is both behaviour and impact. It involves both the actions someone takes and the effects those actions have on you, affecting your sense of safety and self-control.

Bullying can occur both face-to-face and online and may include:



Being called names, teased, or made fun of



Being hit, pushed, or kicked



Being humiliated

Having your belongings taken or damaged



Receiving abusive messages or nasty comments



Being ignored, excluded, or having rumours spread about you

Being targeted because of who you are or how others perceive you

These actions can cause physical or emotional harm. Even if the behaviour is not repeated, the fear or worry that it might happen again can be very real.

Bullying can also look like this:



**Cancelling
and avoiding**

**Fleeting or
dirty looks**

**Selectively
greeting
people**



**Removing and
adding people
to group chats**

**Being
overly
critical**



Manipulation

How might bullying make you feel?

It doesn't matter what colour your hair is, what shoes you're wearing, how you speak, walk, or talk – if you are bullied, it is not your fault. Our differences are what make each of us unique and amazing. Regardless of whether you are a boy or a girl, old or young, big or small, bullying can make you feel terrible, and it's completely okay to feel upset about it.

I don't know why they are picking on me. I wish I could make it stop but I don't know how

I have nightmares and can't sleep because I feel worried and frightened

I'm afraid to tell in case things get worse

Some days my stomach feels sick, and I get headaches from thinking so much

I feel angry some days. I even think of hurting the person who is bullying me

Things that used to be fun aren't fun anymore because of the bullying

I'm too embarrassed to tell anyone about it

I try my best to be brave but sometimes the bullying makes me cry

It's my own fault

I can't concentrate in school because I am busy worrying about the bullying

My parents will be mad at me

I feel lonely



Why do people bully?

- Maybe they are being bullied at home or by someone else and they think it is okay to bully.
- Maybe they feel small and think that by hurting others they will feel big.
- Something may have happened to them that makes them angry, so they take it out on someone else.
- They don't understand how other people think or feel.
- They don't realise that bullying is wrong and hurtful.
- They've started bullying and don't know how to change even though they know it's wrong.
- Maybe things are happening in school or at home and they feel like things are out of their control. When they bully someone else, they feel good because it is something or someone they can control.
- It could be that they don't know how to resolve conflict fairly.

No matter the reasons behind it, bullying is always wrong and unfair. It is never acceptable to bully others or to be bullied!

I am being bullied. What can I do?

When dealing with bullying, there isn't always one 'right' answer. Telling someone or seeking help can often make you feel better, even if it doesn't immediately stop the bullying. However, what works for one person might not work for another. Trust your instincts about what feels right for you and your situation. You might need to try several different strategies to find one that works for you.

Tell a trusted adult

You could tell an adult, and in most cases, this is good advice. But does it feel right for you and your situation? Maybe you're worried about an overreaction or being labelled a 'snitch'. For some, these concerns can seem worse than the bullying itself. However, telling the right adult can really make a difference. Talk to someone you trust – a parent, teacher, sibling or youth worker. It doesn't matter who they are, as long as you trust them to listen and support you.

Pretend it doesn't bother you/ignore it

Walking away from bullying or acting like it doesn't bother you can be a good coping mechanism, showing others that you're confident and capable of handling the situation. However, it's not always easy to pretend you're okay when you're not. Even if you manage to hide your feelings, they still exist, and you need to address them.

Ask them to stop

If you feel able to, try asking the person to stop – they might not realise how their behaviour is affecting you, and it could lead to a change in their actions. However, some people may not be approachable, and you might not have the confidence to speak to them, or you could be concerned about potential repercussions. If you think this might make things worse, it's best to consider another approach.

Block online users!

Online, you can instantly block someone who is being nasty to you or delete or hide their comments. Social media platforms, like Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok also allow you to report offensive or aggressive language and behaviour. Often, blocking someone is sufficient, and you might not feel the need to report them, but every situation is different, and it depends on your situation and what makes you feel better.

Have a clever comeback



Some individuals are naturally witty and confident enough to counter bullying with a clever response, but not everyone will feel comfortable doing so. Assess the situation carefully and anticipate potential reactions. No one wants to feel embarrassed in front of others, which could provoke a more aggressive response. Consider whether this approach might escalate the situation before proceeding.

Keep a diary



Keeping a diary may not be suitable for everyone, but jotting down your thoughts can be a valuable way to manage your emotions, especially if you're not yet comfortable discussing them with someone else. Keeping a record of incidents can also be helpful if you later decide to confide in someone, and it can serve as evidence if others need to intervene. Likewise, if you're experiencing online bullying, it's important to keep copies of any texts or messages you receive.



We do not recommend that you hit back!

Children and young people often hear this advice, but it isn't always helpful! Responding with violence can result in serious harm to you or others. If someone uses violence against you, it constitutes assault rather than bullying, and involving the police may be necessary.

How do I cope if I'm being bullied?

Everyone responds to bullying differently, but there are positive ways to cope that can help you manage your emotions, even though they will not make the bullying stop.

Talking to friends or family members, doing activities you enjoy, like listening to music, playing games, or staying active, are all healthy ways to take care of yourself. On the other hand, arguing, taking out your anger on others and skipping school are not healthy ways to cope. These actions don't address the bullying or help you feel better in the long run.

To take your mind off things, you can try:

Creative Activities

Drawing, painting, or writing can be a therapeutic way to express your feelings and distract yourself.



Physical Exercise

Going for a walk, playing a sport, or dancing, can help boost your mood.



Mindfulness or Relaxation Techniques

Try deep breathing exercises, meditation, or listening to music to relax your mind and body.



Volunteering or Helping Others

Helping someone else can shift your focus away from negative thoughts and give you a sense of purpose and accomplishment.



Remember, tough times will not last forever, and things can improve. Building healthy coping strategies and seeking support are important steps toward feeling better and overcoming challenges.



What should I do if I see someone else being bullied?

You can play a crucial role in supporting someone who is being bullied. Here are some constructive ways you can help:



Be a Friend

Offer friendship and support to the person who is being bullied. Sometimes, simply being there to listen and show kindness can make a big difference.



Speak Up

If safe to do so, speak out against bullying behaviour when you see it happening. Stand up for the person being bullied and let the bully know their behaviour is not acceptable.



Offer Encouragement

Encourage the person experiencing bullying to talk to a trusted adult about what they are going through. Offer to go with them if they feel scared or unsure.



Include Them

Include the person experiencing bullying in activities and friendship groups to help them feel supported and less isolated.



Report It

If you witness bullying at school or online, report it to a teacher, leader, parent, or another trusted adult who can intervene.

What if you are the one showing bullying behaviours?

It's important to understand that bullying is never acceptable, and there are better ways to handle any issues or frustrations you may have. If you find yourself being mean to someone, it's important to stop and think about how it might make others feel. Imagine if someone said or did something mean to you. It would make you sad, scared, or upset. That's how bullying can make others feel too. It can hurt their feelings and make them feel bad about themselves.

What can I do to stop?

Talk to someone you can trust

Your parents, your teacher, or an older brother/sister. Your parents care about you a lot and they will need to know if there is a problem. Once you start to talk about it, they can help you.

Think about why you have been bullying

Do you have a problem that makes you feel angry or scared? Is someone else bullying you? Think about how the other person feels.

Make a list of acts of kindness

Set a goal each day like 'Today I won't call anyone names.' Be proud when you do this.

Apologise to whoever you have upset. They may feel hurt to listen at first. That's why you need to show you are sorry by stopping the bullying.

If you bully others, there can be serious consequences. Your friends might start feeling scared of you, even if they don't say it. They might not see the nice things about you anymore because they see you hurting others. By choosing to be kind and understanding, you can make the world a better and happier place for everyone.

Friendship Matters



Here are some tips for making and maintaining friendships:

Be Kind and Respectful

Treat others with kindness and respect. Being nice and considerate goes a long way in building positive relationships.

Golden Rule

Treat others the way you want to be treated. This means being fair, understanding, and supportive.



Honesty and Kindness

Treat others with kindness and respect. Being nice and considerate goes a long way in building positive relationships.

Resolve Conflicts

If you have an argument with a friend, apologise sincerely if you're in the wrong. If your friend apologises and means it, accept their apology, and let them know it's okay.

It's normal for everyone to have disagreements and arguments sometimes. When these situations arise, it's important to handle them calmly and respectfully.

Here are some steps you can take to resolve conflicts peacefully:



- Try not to get angry. Take a deep breath and stay calm. Say what the problem is and why it's a problem for you, like 'If you don't take turns then that's not fair.'
- Listen to what the other person or people have to say and ask them to listen to you.
- Suggest that you come up with a new idea or ways to solve the problem together. Listen to all the ideas in the group until you figure out how to solve the problem.

Useful links

For further information visit

www.safestrongandfree.org.uk

Contact us info@safestrongandfree.org.uk

Childline

Childline is a free, confidential helpline for children and young people in the UK. You can call them at **0800 1111** to talk about any problem, including bullying. They offer support and advice 24/7.

Police Scotland

In serious cases of bullying, especially if it involves threats or physical harm, you can contact the police for assistance. Dial **101** to reach Police Scotland's non-emergency number.

Young Minds

Young Minds offers practical advice for parents on creating safe and nurturing environments, while providing children and young people with tools to manage their mental health, build self-esteem, and form positive relationships.
www.youngminds.org.uk



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