

What You Can Do About Bullying

Bullying is unacceptable behaviour and will not be tolerated.

If you have experienced or are experiencing bullying, this is a plan to help you stop the bullying and be safe again. It will give you ideas about who can help you and how to get help, and practical things that you can do which may help you to avoid being bullied.

Tell somebody

If you are being bullied it is really important that you tell someone.

Things that might stop you telling

You might be afraid that the bullying will get worse if the people doing it find out that you have told someone. This doesn't have to be true. Nobody needs to know that it was you who reported the bullying and if you don't tell anybody about it, it is likely to get worse because the person or people bullying you will think that they can get away with it.

Maybe you reckon that nobody can do anything to help? This isn't true either, and you have a right to get help to put a stop to the bullying.

People who bully rely on you being too afraid to tell anybody about the bullying and may threaten you to stop you from telling, or say that nobody will believe you or help you. **Don't believe them.** If they are bullying you, they are not your friends and do not have your best interests at heart, so why should you trust them? Especially when they are trying to stop you doing something about their bullying.

People who can help, how they can help and ways to tell them

1. Friends

A lot of people get bullied – usually when they are children or young adults and often when they are at school. Being bullied can make people feel very lonely. It is a good idea to tell a friend what is happening, if you can. They can give you support in talking to others about the bullying, and may stick up for you, which can help to discourage the people doing the bullying. It's a good idea to choose a quiet moment to

tell a friend about the bullying. Asking if they've ever been bullied or if they know anyone who has been bullied can be a good way to raise the subject.

2. People that you live with

Bullying can have a big effect on how you feel and this can change the way that you act at home. If they don't know what is causing you to act that way, this can make the people that you live with worried about you, confused and angry. If you tell them what is going on, they can support you and help you to stop the bullying and talk to teachers and/or youth workers if necessary.

People at home that you might want to tell could include your parent(s) or carer(s), brothers and sisters, other friends and relations that you live with, or a neighbour. If the bullying is happening at school or at a youth club, somebody from home could help you talk to the staff there about stopping it. Again, you might want to bring up the subject of bullying, by asking if they have ever been bullied themselves.

3. School staff and youth workers, etc.

Schools have a legal duty to protect their pupils from bullying. All school staff – including teachers, lunchtime supervisors, school nurses, school counsellors, caretakers and office staff – have a duty to listen to young people when they tell them about bullying, and to take them seriously. If you are being bullied at school, talk to a teacher or other member of staff that you trust. If you are worried about being seen talking to a teacher, you can pretend that you need to stay after class to talk to them about work and then tell them about the bullying once other pupils have left the room. If you are scared about the bullying getting worse because you have told, let the teacher know this so that they can make sure it doesn't happen.

If the bullying is happening at a youth club, you should tell a youth worker or volunteer about it. They will be able to help you stop it. Again, it is a good idea to try and speak to them in private. Going to see them in the office, or when they are having a break can be a good way to do this.

Other adults who can help and who you might want to tell include staff at your doctor's surgery, mentors, social workers, Connexions personal advisers, speech therapists and learning support workers.

4. The police

If the people bullying you are stealing your money or possessions, harassing you with bullying text messages or emails, threatening you with physical or sexual assault or if you have been assaulted, **DON'T BE AFRAID TO CONTACT THE POLICE**. In an emergency, call them on **999**.

Physical and sexual assault, theft and text and email harassment are all serious offences and if you are experiencing bullying that involves any of these things the police can help you to stop it.

What if you're not ready to tell someone face to face?

You could try writing a note to a trusted teacher, a youth worker, or someone at home. You could leave an unsigned note giving details of the bullying in the school or youth club office, or your school may have a Bully Box where you can post a note about the bullying that you are experiencing.

If you need help and advice, but are not yet ready to talk about the bullying face to face with somebody who knows you, you can call **ChildLine** on **0800 1111** to speak with a counsellor who will be able to offer you encouragement and support, suggest ways to access help and go through your options with you. **ChildLine** is a free telephone number, so you don't need to pay to call it, and you can speak to a counsellor 24 hours a day.

What details should you give about the bullying?

The most important thing is just to tell someone that you are being bullied. However, the more you can tell about the bullying the more information the person that you tell has to help you stop it. Details that will help them are:

- Where and when you are being bullied.
- How you are being bullied (this might be physical bullying or the threat of it; name calling; deliberately excluding you from games and activities; sending hurtful, threatening or offensive text messages, etc.).
- Who is bullying you (you don't have to give this information, but if you do it will make it easier for the person that you tell to help stop the bullying).
- Who, if anybody, witnessed the bullying including who, if anybody, stuck up for you or encouraged the bullies (again you don't have to give this information, but it can help).
- Any evidence of bullying (e.g. damaged property and/or clothing, copies of nasty e-mails, phone and text messages, notes/letters, etc.).

If you are being bullied regularly:

1. Try not to isolate yourself:

- If you are being bullied at school or at a youth club, try to hang around in places that are public or that are well-supervised by staff.

- If you are being bullied on the street, work out which are your safest routes to and from home, school, work, club, etc. and use them (for example, use busy, well-lit streets where possible, and know where payphones are along your route). Walk with a friend if possible.
- If you are being bullied on public transport on your way to and from school, try to sit near the driver/ticket conductor, or groups of adults. Again, sit with friends where possible.

2. Walk away from potential bullying situations:

- If you feel that you are in a situation that may lead to your being bullied, trust your instincts and try to avoid it by walking away. This doesn't mean that you are backing down and being weak, you are just choosing not to get involved and not to take stupid, hurtful and insulting comments seriously.
- Try not to let yourself be provoked into reacting with physical or verbal violence. This will just cause the situation to get more serious, which is often what the people who are bullying you want. If you react violently, you will be in the wrong as well as the people who are bullying you and you could get into trouble with teachers, youth workers, parents/carers and sometimes the police as a result.
- If you feel scared that a situation may lead to your being physically or verbally assaulted, again try to avoid it by walking away. If you are followed, move into a public space. If you are on the street, this may involve walking into a public building like a shop or a library. If the people who are following you will not leave you alone, or you are afraid that they may be waiting for you when you go back outside, ask an adult if you can phone a friend or relative to come and walk with you. If you can't get hold of anybody, ask if you can phone the local police station to report your situation.

3. What to do if you are physically assaulted

- If you are being attacked, run away towards a public place and try to attract attention by shouting for help, and banging on doors, dustbins, etc. to attract help and attention. If you are afraid that you may be physically assaulted, you could carry a whistle to attract attention.
- If violence is unavoidable, try to make yourself as small a target as possible – dive into a corner if you can and curl up into a ball, protecting your face and with your arms around either side of your head and your fingers entwined. Keep shouting for help.
- If you are injured go to a doctor or hospital for treatment and report what has happened to you. They will make a record of your visit and how you received your injuries and contact your parent(s) or carer(s) and the police for you.

4. What to do if you are being targeted in your home

- If you are being targeted by bullies in your home, lock your doors and windows, call the police or get an adult that you live with to call the police. Take pictures of any graffiti and keep any hate

mail to show to the police. Ask an adult that you live with to make sure that you have a smoke alarm fitted in your hallway (your local council or fire station can help you with this).