

Bullying and Teasing

A guide for children and young people



The Child & Family Psychology and Therapy Service

Introduction

The aim of this leaflet is to provide information to help children and young people you are dealing with bullying and teasing. We hope this leaflet will help you feel more confident to tell an adult about what is happening and stop the bullying.

This leaflet will include some tips and coping strategies, including how to be assertive and positive self-talk. Don't forget that if you are being bullied, it is not your fault! It's the person who is doing the bullying that needs to change, not you!

If, after reading this leaflet and trying out the strategies suggested, you feel that you need additional help and/or advice, we have included a list of resources that might help on the last page.

Why do others bully?

Most people experience a little bit of teasing or jokes made about them — often we can laugh too. But sometimes it gets to a point where it stops being funny and it starts to hurt. This is when it has to be stopped. It is normal to feel scared, sad and embarrassed. But it is important to remember that you are not alone!

Bullying can happen in different ways. Here are some examples:

- Hurting someone else physically;
- Calling them names; leaving them out
- Giving them bad looks
- Spreading mean rumours about them.

Bullies pick on people for lots of different reasons. They might have low self-esteem and/or feel powerless. They might take out their angry feelings on others. It might be because they want attention from others. But the one thing bullies want is to get a reaction!



Some General Advice

Talk to someone – This is often the easiest way to make it stop. Bullies often warn that if you ‘tell’ they will make things worse. But teachers and parents need to know about the bullying to make sure things are sorted out, and they can do this without letting on they know what’s been happening.

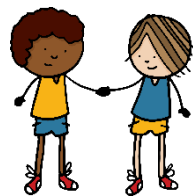


Keeping a diary – Keeping a diary can sometimes help teachers understand what you are facing. The law says that your school has to have a special policy about bullying, so with your parents’ help you can ask to see it and ask what the school are going to do to stop the problem.



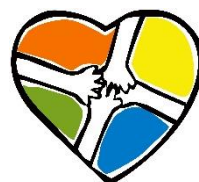
Making friends – Being with a group of friends can sometimes be enough to stop a bully being nasty, but friends are also important at reminding us about the good things about ourselves and keeping the fun in life.

Clubs and activities are good ways to get to know new people. You can use the Kidscape website for ideas about how to start up a conversation and make friends.



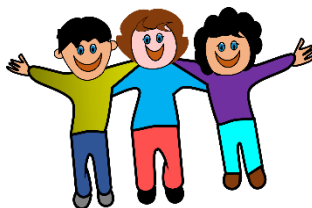
Keep yourself safe – It is important to involve an adult, especially if you are at risk of harm. Make sure you seek help as soon as you can. Here are some tips to keep safe:

- Try to stay in safe areas of school where there are lots of other people
- On the school bus sit near the driver or by other adults.
- If you walk home then try to walk with other people.



No one has a right to hurt you. If someone tries to hurt you, seek help. If the person you talk to doesn't listen or take you seriously, don't blame yourself. Find someone who can help!

Know your friends – Make sure you only hang around with people that make you feel good about yourself. If someone makes you feel sad, scared, or makes you do things you don't want to do they are not your friend.



Being assertive

Being assertive can help you explain how you feel and what you need, without being rude or aggressive. These skills can help you stand up for yourself and still treat other people with respect.

Being assertive can help lots of situations, not just when standing up to a bully.

5 ways to be assertive:

- Practise what you want to say first, or write it down to prepare yourself
- Act calm and confident by standing up straight
- Make eye contact
- Say what you want, clearly and politely
- Don't apologise when asking for something you need

There are different ways to be assertive when dealing with negative comments, and some may be more appropriate than others depending on the situation. One way is by pretending to agree in a really calm voice. This makes the person feel there's no point carrying on with their comments and they'll get bored.

For example:

Someone bullying you: “Your new hair looks really rubbish.”

You: “Yeah... OK, you might be right.”

Someone bullying you: “Didn't you hear me? I think you look like a loser.”

You: “Maybe... you might think so.”

Someone bullying you: “Whatever...”

It is very difficult for a bully to argue with someone who is agreeing with them!

Another way is to turn an insult into a compliment:

Bully: “You are so stupid!”

Person: “Thank you!”

Bully: “Nobody likes you!”

Person: “Well I think you must like me because you keep talking to me all the time”

Another way of dealing with bullies is to ask them questions. Some-times bullies act out of habit instead of really thinking about what they are doing. By asking questions you are making the bully think about what they are saying and doing which quite often, doesn't make sense.

Bully: “You are so ugly!”

Person: “Why would you want to tell me that?”

Bully: “Because I don’t like you”

Person: “Then why are you speaking to me? Why don’t you just ignore me?”

Bully: “I’m going to fight you after school”

Person: “Why would you want to do that? Have I done something to upset you?”

Bully: “No, but you deserve it”

Person: “Do you think hurting me when I have done nothing to you will make you feel good about yourself?”

Examples used from:

Kate Cohen-Posey (1995) How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies: A Book that Takes the Nuisance Out of Name Calling and Other Non-sense. Rainbow Books, Inc.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/being-assertive/>

Ignoring a Bully

If possible, walk away from the bullies and find somewhere where teachers or other adults are around. Don't worry if people think you are running away. Someone walking away with their head up and looking confident is less fun for the bullies than someone getting up-set or angry



If it is not possible to walk away, here are some strategies to try to make it easier to take your mind off what they are saying:

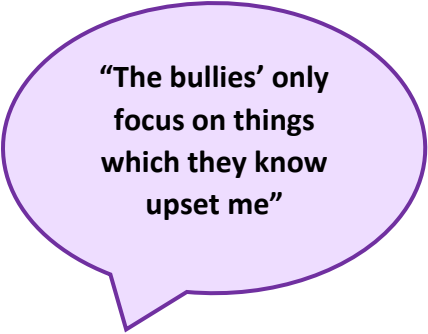
- Imagine a shield or bubble around you with mean comments bouncing off the outside
- Think about something you've enjoyed or are looking forward to
- Think of positive things about yourself

Some bullies find it no fun anymore when they are being ignored, and stop. Other begin to try a bit harder, but eventually when they still don't get a reaction they stop.


You can also ignore a bully by changing the subject.

Positive self-talk

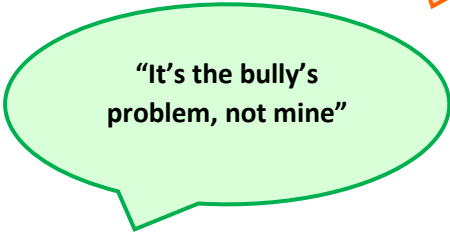
Thinking positive thoughts about ourselves and our situation can help us to cope. This is called 'positive self-talk'. Here are some examples of 'positive self-talk' that can help you to cope when faced with difficult situations:



"The bullies' only focus on things which they know upset me"



"I have ways of dealing with the bullies"



"It's the bully's problem, not mine"

Loving yourself

When you are bullied it can make you feel sad and lonely and bad about yourself. **You are amazing and wonderful and life will get better!** Do things that make you feel good about yourself, like playing with a pet, sports, singing, watching funny videos. Thousands go through bullying every day, **you are not alone!**

When I feel hurt I will...

Tell someone.

Be still.

Know it's okay to cry.

Rest.

Try to calm my mind and relax my body.

Ask for a hug.

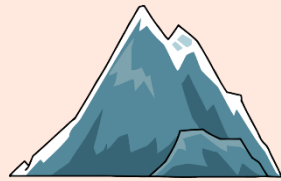
Be gentle on myself.

Remind myself that my feelings matter.

Repeat to myself: "I am safe, I am loved, I am held"

Extract from *Stand Tall Like a Mountain* by Suzy Reading

(chartered psychologist)



You can also think about creating your “self-motto”. Thinking about your special and unique qualities can make you look confident by changing the way you walk, talk and stand.

A “self-motto” is a special phrase or group of words which describes the best and brilliant things about you. To help create your self-motto, write a list of all the great things about yourself. (e.g. “I am a caring and fun-loving person who is really good at...., “I am a fantastic friend who is great at making up funny jokes”).



This can feel really difficult at first, but remember that it can be any-thing, big or small. Try adding one thing to the list every day. You can even get your friends and family to help. They are sure to have plenty of good things to say about you!

“The bully is calling me names because he is unkind”

“There’s lots of things I am good at, like maths, art and swimming”

“My friends and family like me the way I am”

What is cyber-bullying?

Cyber bullying is when people are nasty or threaten someone by phone or computer. It can be through:

- **Email** – abusive emails sent by an individual or a group
- **Phone** - nasty text messages or phone calls
- **Social networking sites** – e.g. leaving upsetting messages/DMs on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc
- **Abusing personal information** – e.g. posting photos or other de-tails about you online without your permission.



What can I do about cyber-bullying?

- Get an adult involved
- Never reply to any messages you receive – this will only act as encouragement to the bullies. Keep a copy of the abusive messages as evidence.

- Block email from abusive senders. Also, internet service providers will have contact addresses for complaints about email and this will usually be, for example, abuse@hotmail.com, abuse@gmail.com, abuse@btinternet.com etc.

If you are being targeted on a website you can report abuse to the website host via email. You can get your parents to do this for you or you can email help@bullying.co.uk and they will contact the host for you on your behalf. On social networking sites make sure your profile is on the highest security setting and block bullies from viewing your account. Alternatively, you could just delete your account.



Resources

To speak to someone over the phone you can call the National Bullying Helpline on 0845 22 55 787 (Monday to Friday 9am—5pm).

You can also call the 24 hour Childline helpline (under 18s) on 0800 1111 or get in touch online. If you are over 18 you can call Samaritans on 116 123, which is also available 24 hours.

The following websites have advice, information and resources available for anyone to use:

- www.childline.org.uk
- www.kidsscape.org.uk
- www.themix.org.uk (under 25s)
- www.youngminds.org.uk

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