



# Bullying



## Anti-Bullying

Bullying is a big problem. It can make children feel hurt, scared, sick, lonely, embarrassed and sad. Bullies might hit, kick, or push to hurt people, or use words to call names, threaten, tease, or scare them. A bully might say mean things about someone, grab a child's stuff, make fun of someone, or leave a child out of the group on purpose. Some bullies threaten people or try to make them do things they don't want to do.

## Bullying is a big deal

Bullying is a big problem that affects lots of children. Three-quarters of all children say they have been bullied or teased. Being bullied can make children feel really bad. The stress of dealing with bullies can make children feel sick.

Bullying can make children not want to play outside or go to school. It's hard to keep your mind on schoolwork when you're worried about how you're going to deal with the bully near your locker. Bullying bothers everyone — and not just the children who are getting picked on. Bullying can make school a place of fear and can lead to more violence and more stress for everyone.

## Why do people bully others?

Some bullies are looking for attention. They might think bullying is a way to be popular or to get what they want. Most bullies are trying to make themselves feel more important. When they pick on someone else, it can make them feel big and powerful.

Some bullies come from families where everyone is angry and shouting all the time. They may think that being angry, calling names, and pushing people around is a normal way to act. Some bullies are copying what they've seen someone else do. Some have been bullied themselves.

Sometimes bullies know that what they are doing or saying hurts other people. But other bullies may not really know how hurtful their actions can be. Most bullies don't understand or care about the feelings of others.

Bullies often pick on someone they think they can have power over. They might pick on children who get upset easily or who have trouble sticking up for themselves. Getting a big reaction out of someone can make bullies feel like they have the power they want. Sometimes bullies pick on someone who is smarter than they are or different from them in some way. Sometimes bullies just pick on a child for no reason at all.

## Who gets bullied?

Nearly everyone is bullied at some time in their lives: by brothers and sisters, by neighbours, by adults or by other children. If you are being bullied, you may feel scared, vulnerable and quite alone but you owe it to yourself to try and sort out the situation so that the bullying stops. Remember, no-one deserves to be bullied.

It is surprising that all sorts of people who are now very successful adults were bullied when they were young. It is encouraging to know that it is possible to succeed, in spite of being tormented at school. For some, the bullying went on for years; for others it was less frequent. All of them feel that bullying is wrong and that it was not their fault, but the fault of the bully looking for a victim.

### **What to do when being bullied**

- Tell a friend what is happening - Ask him or her to help you. It will be harder for the bully to pick on you if you have a friend with you for support.
- Try to ignore the bullying or say 'No' really firmly, then turn and walk away - Don't worry if people think you are running away. Remember, it is very hard for the bully to go on bullying someone who won't stand still to listen.
- Try not to show that you are upset or angry – Bullies love to get a reaction - its 'fun'. If you can keep calm and hide your emotions, they might get bored and leave you alone. As one teenager said to us, 'they can't bully you if you don't care'.
- It's not worth getting hurt to keep possessions or money - If you feel threatened, give the bullies what they want. Property can be replaced, you can't.
- Don't give the bully a chance - As much as you can, avoid the bully. You can't go into hiding or skip class, of course. But if you can take a different route and avoid him or her, do so.
- Stand tall and be brave - When you're scared of another person, you're probably not feeling your bravest. But sometimes just acting brave is enough to stop a bully. How does a brave person look and act? Stand tall and you'll send the message: "Don't mess with me." It's easier to feel brave when you feel good about yourself. See the next tip!
- Feel good about you - Nobody's perfect, but what can you do to look and feel your best? Maybe you'd like to be fitter. If so, maybe you'll decide to get more exercise, watch less TV, and eat healthier snacks. Or maybe you feel you look best when you shower in the morning before school. If so, you could decide to get up a little earlier so you can be clean and refreshed for the school day.
- Get a buddy (and be a buddy) - Two is better than one if you're trying to avoid being bullied. Make a plan to walk with a friend or two on the way to school or recess or lunch or wherever you think you might meet the bully. Offer to do the same if a friend is having bully trouble. Get involved if you see bullying going on in your school — tell an adult, stick up for the child being bullied, and tell the bully to stop.
- Try to think up funny or clever replies in advance - Make a joke of it. Replies don't have to be wonderfully brilliant or clever but it helps to have an answer ready. Practice saying them in the mirror at home. Using prepared replies works best if the bully is not too threatening and just needs to be put off. The bully might just decide that you are too clever to pick on.
- Sometimes asking the bully to repeat what they said can put them off. Often bullies are not brave enough to repeat the remark exactly so they tone it down. If they repeat it, you will have made them do something they hadn't planned on and this gives you some control of the situation.
- Keep a diary of what is happening - Write down what details of the incidents and your feelings. When you do decide to tell someone, a written record of the bullying makes it easier to prove what has been going on.
- Don't show your feelings - Plan ahead. How can you stop yourself from getting angry or showing you are upset? Try distracting yourself (counting backwards from 100, spelling the word 'turtle' backwards, etc.) to keep your mind occupied until you are out of the situation and somewhere safe where you can show your feelings.
- Tell an adult - If you are being bullied, it's very important to tell an adult. Find someone you trust and go and tell them what is happening to you. Teachers, principals, parents, and lunchroom helpers at school can all help to stop bullying. Sometimes bullies stop as soon as a teacher finds out because they're afraid that they will be punished by parents. This is not tattling on someone who has done something small — bullying is wrong and it helps if everyone who gets bullied or sees someone being bullied speaks up.

### **What Happens to Bullies?**

In the end, most bullies wind up in trouble. If they keep acting mean and hurtful, sooner or later they may have only a few friends left — usually other children who are just like them. The power they wanted slips away fast. Other children move on and leave bullies behind.

John lived in fear of Brian — every day he would give his lunch money to Brian but he still beat him up. He said that if John ever told anyone he would beat him up in front of all the other children in his class. John even cried one day

and another girl told everyone that he was a baby and had been crying. John was embarrassed and felt so bad about himself and about school. Finally, Brian got caught threatening John and they were both sent to the headmaster. Brian got in a lot of trouble at home. Over time, Brian learned how to make friends and ask his parents for lunch money. John never wanted to be friends with Brian but he did learn to act strong and more confident around him.

Some children who bully blame others. But every child has a choice about how to act. Some children who bully realize that they don't get the respect they want by threatening others. They may have thought that bullying would make them popular, but they soon find out that other children just think of them as trouble-making losers.

The good news is that children who are bullies can learn to change their behaviour. Teachers, counsellors, and parents can help. So can watching children who treat others fairly and with respect. Bullies can change if they learn to use their power in positive ways. In the end, whether bullies decide to change their ways is up to them. Some bullies turn into great children. Some bullies never learn.

But no one needs to put up with a bully's behaviour. If you or someone you know is bothered by a bully, talk to someone you trust. Everyone has the right to feel safe, and being bullied makes people feel unsafe. Tell someone about it and keep telling until something is done.

**Be strong, Be brave, Be confident.**

**To stop it NOW.  
Tell Someone Today!**