HOW TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

As well as being deeply hurtful, bullying can leave anyone feeling frightened, angry, depressed, and totally undermined. Whether you’re the one being bullied, or you’re a teacher, a friend or a parent who believes that there is someone being bullied or engaged in bullying behavior, there are steps you can take to deal with the problem. Bullying should never be tolerated.

What is bullying?

Bullying is repeated aggressive behavior that can either be physical or verbal and can be confronting or concealed. It is commonly understood that boys frequently bully using physical threats and actions, while girls are more likely to engage in verbal or relationship bullying. The results however, are similar:

- The victims are made to feel hurt, angry, afraid, helpless, hopeless, isolated, ashamed, and even guilty that the bullying is somehow your fault. You may even feel suicidal.
- The victims’ physical health is likely to suffer, and you are at a greater risk of developing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, or adult onset PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).
- The victims are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school to avoid being bullied.

The most damaging aspect of bullying is its repetition. Bullying behavior is often relentless and ongoing; and lasts for long periods of time. Those being harassed may live in constant fear of where and when the perpetrator(s) will strike next, what they’ll do, and how far they’ll go. The main thing we would like to stress, is not to label a person as a ‘bully’. Labeling someone a “bully” will cause him or her to act to fit the label- one of the most important steps in becoming a bullying person is being labeled as one.

<table>
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<th>Types of Bullying</th>
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<td><strong>Physical bullying:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Hitting, kicking, or pushing someone...or even just threatening to do it</td>
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<td>- Stealing, hiding, or ruining someone's things</td>
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<td>- Hazing, harassment, humiliation. Making someone do things he or she doesn't want to do.</td>
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<td><strong>Verbal bullying:</strong></td>
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<td>- Name-calling</td>
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<td>- Teasing, taunting</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Insulting or otherwise verbally abusing someone</td>
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<td><strong>Relationship bullying:</strong></td>
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<td>- Refusing to talk to someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Excluding someone from groups or activities</td>
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<td>- Humiliation. Spreading lies or rumors about someone</td>
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<td>- Peer group pressure. Making someone do things he or she doesn't want to do.</td>
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Why someone might get targeted

While there are many reasons why people who bully may be targeting someone, the main reasons are usually: physical appearance or social standing within a peer group.

Perpetrators tend to pick on people who are “different” or don’t fit in with the mainstream. It may be because of how a person dresses, acts, or because of race or religion. It may simply be that someone is new to the school or neighborhood and haven’t made friends yet.

If you are being bullied, remember:

- **Don’t blame yourself.** It is not your fault. No matter what someone says or does, you should not be ashamed of who you are or what you feel.
- **Be proud of who you are.** Despite what anyone says, there are many wonderful things about you. Keep those things in mind instead of the messages you hear from those harassing you.
- **Get help.** Talk to a parent, teacher, counselor, or other trusted adult. Seeing a counselor does not mean there is something wrong with you.
- **Learn to deal with stress.** Finding ways to relieve stress can make you more resilient so you won’t feel overwhelmed by bullying. Exercise, meditation, positive self-talk, muscle relaxation, and breathing exercises are all good ways to manage the stress from bullying.

Tips for dealing with, and overcoming bullying

There is no single solution to bullying or best way to handle this anti-social behaviour. It may take some experimenting with a variety of different responses to find the strategy that works best for your situation. One thing is for certain, to defeat bullying, you need to retain your self-control and preserve your sense of self-worth.

**Tip #1: Understand the truth about bullying**

- **Walk away.** People doing the bullying want to know they have control over your emotions so don’t react with anger or retaliate with physical force. If you walk away, ignore them, or calmly and assertively tell them you’re not interested in what they have to say, you’re demonstrating that they don’t have control over you.
• **Protect yourself.** If you can’t walk away and are being physically hurt, protect yourself so you can get away. Your safety is the first priority.

• **Report the bullying to a trusted adult or someone on your network.** If you don’t report threats and assaults, a bully will often become more and more aggressive. In many cases adults or friends can find ways to help with the problem without letting the perpetrator know it was you who reported them.

• **Repeat as necessary.** Like the bully, you may have to be relentless. Report each and every bullying incident until it stops. There is no reason for you to ever put up with bullying.

**Tip #2: Reframe the problem of bullying**

By changing your attitude towards bullying you can help regain a sense of control.

• **Try to view bullying from a different perspective.** The perpetrator(s) may be unhappy, frustrated and may want to have control over your feelings so that you feel as badly as they do. Don’t give them the satisfaction.

• **Look at the big picture.** Bullying can be extremely painful, but try asking yourself how important it will seem to you in the long run. Will it matter in a year? Is it worth getting so upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.

• **Focus on the positive.** Reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. Make a list and refer to it whenever you feel down.

• **Find the humor.** If you’re relaxed enough to recognise the absurdity of a bullying situation, and to comment on it with humor, you’ll likely no longer be an interesting target for a bully.

• **Don’t try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control—including the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react.

**Tip #3: Find support from those who don’t bully**

Having trusted people you can turn to for encouragement and support will boost your resilience when being bullied. Reach out to connect with family and real friends (those who don’t participate in bullying) or explore ways of making new friends. There are plenty of people who will love and appreciate you for who you are.

• **Find others who share your same values and interests.** You may be able to make friends at a youth group, book club, or religious organization. Learn a new sport, join a club, or take up a new hobby.

• **Share your feelings.** Talk to a parent, counselor, coach, religious leader, or trusted friend. Expressing what you’re going through can make a huge difference to the way you feel, even if it doesn’t change the situation.

• **Boost your confidence.** Exercise is a great way to help you feel good about yourself, as well as reduce stress. Go for a run, or take a kick boxing class to work off your anger.

• **Don’t beat yourself up.** Don’t make a bullying incident worse by dwelling on it or replaying it over and over in your head. Instead, focus on positive experiences you’ve had.

**Tips to help parents and teachers to identify a bully and stop bullying**

Teachers and parents of both the bullied and the bullying can play a crucial role in preventing, identifying, and stopping it. Creating safe, stress-free environments at home and at school can help prevent the tension and anxiety that can lead to antisocial behaviours.
Despite how widespread the problem has become, many parents and teachers still have some misconceptions about bullying.

**Tips to help parents and teachers to identify a bully and stop bullying**

Teachers and parents of both the bullied and the children who bully can play a crucial role in preventing, identifying, and stopping the behaviour. Creating safe, stress-free environments at home and at school can help prevent the tension and anxiety that can lead to bullying.

Despite how widespread the problem has become, many parents and teachers still have some misconceptions about bullying.

**Tip #1: Spot the warning signs that a child or teen is being bullied**

It may not be obvious to a parent or teacher when a child is being bullied. Most bullying occurs away from adults, when kids are alone in hallways or on the way home from school, for example. Perpetrators to bullying tend to be adept at hiding their behavior from adults and victims will often cover up evidence because of a sense of shame or stigma associated with being persecuted.

**Tip #2: Take steps to stop bullying**

- **Talk to kids about bullying.** Just talking about the problem can be a huge stress relief for someone who’s being bullied. Be supportive and listen to a child’s feelings without judgment, criticism, or blame.

- **Remove the bait.** If your child is targeted for his or her lunch money, phone, or iPod, for example, suggest your child packs a lunch for school and leaves the gadgets at home.

- **Find help for a child who’s afraid of a bully.** Make sure other teachers, coaches, and counselors know the child is being bullied. No child should have to handle bullying alone.
Help the bullied child avoid isolation. Kids with friends are better equipped to handle bullying. Try to find ways to increase their social circle.

**If your child is bullying someone**

It can be difficult for any parent to learn that their child is bullying others. The sooner you address the problem, though, the better chance you have of avoiding the long-term effects this behavior can have on a child. People who bully others:

- Have a higher risk of abusing alcohol and other drugs in adolescence and as adults.
- Are more likely to get into fights, vandalize property, and drop out of school.
- Are twice as likely as their peers to have criminal convictions as adults and four times more likely to be multiple offenders.
- Are more likely as adults to be abusive toward their own partners, spouses, or children.

**Bullying is often a learned behavior**

Aggressive and anti-social behavior is mostly learnt from experiences at home. Research suggests that some kids and teens may become more aggressive by playing violent video games. While it’s a controversial subject, parents should monitor the amount of violent and insular content their children are exposed to via TV, movies, or video games.

As a parent, you may be setting a bad example for your kids by spanking or otherwise striking them, verbally or physically abusing your spouse, or by displaying bullying behavior such as:

- Abusing your child’s sports coach, umpires and referees, or members of the opposing team.
- Swearing at other drivers on the road.
- Humiliating a waitress, shop assistant, or cab driver who makes a mistake.
- Talking negatively about other students, parents, or teachers so that your child thinks it’s acceptable to use verbal abuse to intimidate others.

**Tips for parents dealing with a child who is bullying others**

- **Learn about your child's life.** If your behavior at home isn't negatively influencing your child, it's possible his or her friends or peers are encouraging the bullying behavior. Your child may be struggling to fit in or develop relationships with other kids. Talk to your child. The more you understand his or her life, the easier you'll be able to identify the source of the problem.

- **Educate your child about bullying.** Your child may have difficulty reading social signs or may not understand how hurtful and damaging their behavior can be. Foster empathy and awareness by encouraging your child to look at their actions from the victim’s perspective. Remind your child that bullying can have legal consequences.

- **Manage stress.** Teach your child positive ways to manage stress. Your child’s bullying may be an attempt at relieving stress. Or your own stress, anxiety, or worry may be creating an unstable home environment. Exercising, spending time in nature, or playing with a pet are great ways for both kids and adults to let off steam and relieve stress.

- **Set limits with technology.** Let your child know you’ll be monitoring his or her use of computers, email, and text messaging. Limit the amount of time they spend playing video games and watching TV. Numerous studies reveal that many popular TV shows and violent video games celebrate negative values, reduce empathy, and encourage aggression in kids.
• **Establish consistent rules of behavior.** Make sure your child understands your rules and the consequences for breaking them. Children may not think they need discipline, but a lack of boundaries sends a signal that the child is unworthy of the parents’ time, care, and attention.

### Moving on after being bullied

Bullying can be a traumatic event for anyone. Even when the bullying stops, you may be left with feelings of fear, helplessness, anger, or anxiety. Your first instinct may be to withdraw from others. However, isolation will only make things worse. Connecting to others who don’t participate in bullying will help you heal. Make an effort to maintain your positive relationships and avoid spending too much time alone.

• **Give yourself time to heal from the trauma of bullying.** Don’t try to force the healing process and be prepared for difficult and volatile emotions. Allow yourself to feel whatever you’re feeling without judgment or guilt. Talking to a trusted friend, family member or school counselor can help.

• **Overcome feelings of helplessness.** You can foster a sense of hope and control by reaching out to others who are being bullied, being active in your school’s campaign to stop bullying, writing thank you messages to people who have helped you, or by volunteering in some other way. As well as helping other people or animals, volunteering for charity groups can even help to put some of your own problems into perspective.

• **Manage anger in positive ways.** Don’t let your anger lead you to seek revenge or target others. Instead, find healthy ways to manage your anger and learn safe ways to cool down.

• **Take care of yourself.** Eat right, exercise, and get plenty of sleep. A healthy body increases your ability to cope with stress from the trauma of being bullied.

### More help for dealing with a bully

Whether you’re the abused, the abuser, or a concerned friend or family member, it’s important to know that there is always help available.

Some helpful websites include:


[http://www.bullying.co.uk/](http://www.bullying.co.uk/)