

YOUNGMINDS

The voice for young people's mental health and wellbeing

BULLYING



WHAT IS BULLYING?

**BULLYING IS
WHEN ONE PERSON
INTIMIDATES,
UPSETS OR
EXCLUDES ANOTHER
WITH THE INTENTION
OF BEING HURTFUL.**

**CHILDREN, ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE CAN
ALL BE BULLIED BUT IT IS PARTICULARLY
COMMON AMONG SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN.**



BULLYING CAN TAKE MANY FORMS

- It can include name-calling, teasing or saying untrue things about the person.
- It can also be physical, for example pushing, hitting or kicking, and can include serious physical violence.
- Some bullies use their mobile phones to hurt others, by sending unkind texts, or by filming or taking photos of the person they are bullying.
- Cyber-bullying is bullying on the internet, using email, instant messaging or social networking sites to intimidate, expose or spread rumours about others.

IS BULLYING NORMAL?

All children and young people fall out with their friends and classmates at times, and some teasing and name-calling may also be part of their normal friendships. But if the teasing is persistent and upsets the person it is aimed at, or if it tips over into harassment or physical violence, it can be very damaging and needs to be stopped.

Many children get involved in bullying at some time during their schooldays – they may be bullied themselves, they may bully someone else, or they may see a friend being bullied.

WHY DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BULLY?

Children and young people who bully others may be doing it for a variety of reasons but often the root cause will be their own unhappiness or feelings of powerlessness.

- They may have experienced bullying or abuse at home or in another situation, and be inflicting this on others in turn
- They may be feeling stressed, depressed, or rejected by family or friends, and using the bullying to make up for these feelings.
- They may have low self-esteem and use the bullying to give them a sense of power – they may enjoy the attention the bullying gives them from friends and those they bully.
- They may not understand the effect of their actions, for example if they have learning or behavioural difficulties

WHO GETS BULLIED?

Any child or young person can end up being bullied – it depends on who they happen to meet or go to school with, and what is happening in their lives. But some children and young people are more likely to become victims, as it may be harder for them to ‘fit in’ with the crowd:

- Those with physical disabilities or differences
- Those with learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties or behavioural issues
- Those who are very shy or have low self-esteem
- Those with mental health difficulties
- Those who have difficult or unusual home situations such as a parent in prison
- Those who are from a different area, ethnic group or social group from the majority, or who speak a different language

WHAT HARM DOES BULLYING DO?

It can sometimes be difficult for adults to understand the distress and misery bullying causes, especially if the bullying is ‘only’ teasing or name-calling. But bullying can be very upsetting and can affect children and young people for a long time.

A child or young person who is being bullied may come to believe they deserve it. They can feel isolated, anxious and angry. Bullying can lead to depression, self-harm and eating problems. If the bullying is happening at school they may make excuses so they don’t have to go to school, or get so anxious they cannot go in. This can affect their school work, friendships, and even their future prospects.

Being bullied regularly can be associated with problems later on in life as well. Some adults who were bullied when they were young can suffer from depression, anger problems and low self-esteem.



MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED - WHAT CAN WE DO?

For a parent, finding out your child is being bullied can be difficult and stressful. Supporting them can be challenging, as you go through your own feelings of fear, anger, sympathy and protection.

If your child has told you or someone else that they are being bullied, then they have taken an enormous step and will need support and encouragement to get through the situation. It is important to listen supportively, without offering opinions or judgement, and only try to stop it when they are ready to go through the process.

AT SCHOOL

If your child is being bullied at school, their teacher needs to be informed. Every school has to have a policy on bullying behaviour and you can ask for a copy of this. The teacher should take steps to address the bullies' behaviour and protect your child. If you feel the issue is not being taken seriously you can ask to discuss it with the head teacher. It may be useful to put things in writing so there is a record of what has happened.

OUTSIDE SCHOOL

If the bullying is taking place out of school it may be harder to sort out, as you may not know the bullies or have any way of dealing with them. You can think with your child about ways in which they can protect themselves and keep themselves safe. For example, by always going out with a friend, by changing their social activities or thinking of things to say to the bullies if they do meet.

CYBER BULLYING

If your child is being bullied by mobile phone or online, there are a number of very useful websites with advice on how to deal with cyber-bullying, see the organisations overleaf. It is important to make sure your child understands the importance of keeping their details private, to keep themselves safe online.

AFTERWARDS

When bullying stops some children feel better immediately. Others go through feelings of anger, anxiety and upset and it can be a while before they feel better and are able to move on. It is important to give them time to get over it and not to push them to talk about it, but also to be there if they want to discuss it.

Some children and young people are so badly affected by bullying that they need counselling or psychotherapy to help them get over it. If you think your child needs this kind of help, your GP should be able to make a referral, or phone YoungMinds Parents Helpline for advice.

MY CHILD IS A BULLY – HOW CAN I STOP THEM?

If you find out that your child is a bully it can be very shocking and can cause difficult feelings. However, it can often be the opportunity to help your child and change whatever is causing their behaviour.

You will need to talk to your child and to the school, if that is where it is happening. Try and work together with the school and resolve the issues in a positive way. It is important that the behaviour is taken seriously and that your child knows what will happen if it continues.

Your child may need some counselling or psychotherapy, as described above, to help understand their own behaviour and to help them deal with angry feelings.

WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS BE DOING TO PREVENT BULLYING?

Schools can do a lot to stop bullying happening and should have a clear, well publicised policy on bullying. When everyone involved in the school – teachers, pupils, parents and non-teaching staff – takes a strong and open stand against bullying, it is far less common.

It must be made clear that everyone should be respected – and pupils have a right not to be bullied. It is especially important that schools encourage pupils to accept that it is not wrong to ‘tell’. Children also need to be sure that something will be done to stop the bullying, otherwise they might not tell. A whole school policy on bullying is the best way to do this.

Schools can also help young people learn skills of mediation, conflict resolution and support. Befriending and ‘buddying’ schemes can also play a useful part.

**TRY AND WORK
TOGETHER
WITH THE SCHOOL
AND RESOLVE
THE ISSUES.**

USEFUL INFORMATION

BULLYING UK

Provides practical information and advice to young people and parents via their website.

Website:..... www.bullying.co.uk

KIDSCAPE

Provides information on dealing with bullying for young people, parents and professionals. They also run workshops for children who have been bullied and training in best practice approaches for teachers tackling bullying.

Website:..... www.kidscape.org.uk

Email info@kidscape.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7730 3300

ACE EDUCATION

Provides comprehensive information on state funded education for children aged 5-16 years in England including bullying on their helpline.

Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

Helpline: 0300 0115 142

Mon to Wed 10am to 1pm (term time)

CORAM CHILDRENS LEGAL CENTRE

Provides free legal advice and information on all aspects of English law and policy affecting children, young people, their families, carers and professionals.

Website:..... www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Helpline : 0300 330 5480

Mon to Fri 8am-6pm

