

Dealing With Bullying

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone is picked on by a person or group. Bullies might make fun of people who they think don't fit in.

Bullies might make fun of others for many things, including:

- appearance (how someone looks)
- behavior (how someone acts)
- race or religion
- social status (whether someone is popular)
- [sexual identity](#) (like being gay, lesbian, or transgender)

Bullying can come in different types:

- Physical bullying is when bullies hurt their targets physically. This might be shoving, tripping, punching, or hitting. Any form of touching that a person does not want can be bullying and possible [sexual assault](#).
- Verbal bullying is taunting or teasing someone.
- Psychological bullying is [gossiping](#) about or excluding people to make them feel bad about themselves.
- [Cyberbullying](#) is when bullies use the internet and social media and say things that they might not say in person. This can include sending mean texts, posting insults about someone on Twitter, or making rude comments on their Instagram pictures. Cyberbullies also might post personal information, pictures, or videos designed to hurt or embarrass someone else.

What Are the Effects of Bullying?

Bullies often pick on people over and over again. This can make teens:

- feel afraid, [stressed](#), [depressed](#), or anxious
- have thoughts about suicide or hurting themselves
- have trouble with their schoolwork
- have problems with mood, energy level, sleep, and appetite

What Kind of People Are Bullies?

Both guys and girls can be bullies. Bullies may be:

- outgoing and aggressive. This kind of bully might make fun of you to your face or physically hurt you.
- quiet and sneaky. This kind of bully might try to manipulate in secret. They might anonymously start a damaging rumor just to see what happens.

- friendly and fake. This kind of bully might pretend to be your friend so that you tell them things, but then do hurtful things behind your back.

Many bullies are a lot alike. They:

- like to be in control of others
- are focused on themselves
- have poor social skills and have a hard time getting along with people
- might not care about people, or lack empathy
- are often insecure and bully others to make themselves feel better

Some bullies don't understand normal social [emotions](#) like guilt, empathy, compassion, or remorse. These people need help from a mental health professional like a counselor, social worker, psychiatrist, or psychologist.

What Can I Do?

There are many things that you can do if you're being bullied or know someone who is. You can:

Tell a trusted adult. Adults in positions of authority, like parents, teachers, or coaches, often can deal with bullying without the bully ever learning how they found out about it.

Ignore the bully and walk away. Bullies like getting a reaction. If you walk away or ignore them, you're telling them that you don't care.

Walk tall and hold your head high. Using this type of body language sends a message that you're not vulnerable.

Don't get physical. You're more likely to be hurt and get into trouble if you try to fight a bully. Work out your anger in another way, such as exercising or writing it down (make sure you delete or tear up any emails, posts, letters, or notes you write in anger).

Try to talk to the bully. Try to point out that his or her behavior is serious and harmful. This can work well if you notice that a member of your own group has started to pick on or shun another member.

Practice [confidence](#). Practice ways to respond to the bully verbally or through your behavior. Practice feeling good about yourself (even if you have to fake it at first).

Talk about it. It may help to talk to a guidance counselor, teacher, or friend — anyone who can give you the support you need. Talking can be a good outlet for the fears and frustrations that can build when you're being bullied.

Find your (true) friends. If you've been bullied with rumors or gossip, tell your friends so that they can help you feel safe and secure. Avoid being alone, especially when the bullying is happening a lot.

Stand up for friends and others you see being bullied. Your actions help the victim feel supported and may stop the bullying.

Join your school's bullying or violence prevention programs. Peer mediation is another way you may be able to work things out with a bully. If your school doesn't have these programs, start one of your own.

What If I'm the Bully?

Some people bully to deal with their own feelings of stress, anger, or frustration. Bullies might also have been bullied and now want to show their power by bullying someone else.

If you have bullied someone:

- Try talking to a trusted adult to talk about why you have become a bully. Ask them for some advice on how you could change.
- Try thinking of how the person being bullied feels. Imagine how you would feel if you were the target.

Even though people are different, it's important to treat everyone with respect.

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