

A STREETWISE GUIDE TO COPING WITH BULLYING



How do I know I am being bullied?

They get me on my own, going home from school!

How can I spot that someone else is being bullied?

Bullying: how can you tell?

Bullying can be obvious - someone hitting you or threatening you - but it can also be harder to pin down. Bullies will often claim that what they are doing is a joke or a game. If in doubt ask yourself:

1. If it is a joke, is everyone laughing?
2. If it is a game, is everyone enjoying it?
3. If it was an accident, is anyone trying to help?

Having fun at someone else's expense is bullying.

Why do people Bully?

Bullies are not special, not strong, not tough. In fact they usually need to appear powerful because they are secretly feel weak. They may be: jealous of other people; unhappy with themselves; insecure; bullied at home; afraid of being unpopular; unable to show their feelings. They may also be adults. Bullies often try to make it seem that the bullying is the victim's own fault. This is **NEVER** true.

You are in the middle of a group of people, all laughing at your clothes or hair style. You start off by laughing too but you feel more and more miserable and embarrassed. You try to tell them it's not funny any more but they go on laughing.

Are you being bullied or is this just a joke?

You are being bullied. This laughter is at you, not with you. Do not feel you have to go along with it.

Who is bullying you - everyone in the group? The person who started it? The person laughing loudest?

It may feel as if everyone is bullying you but most people in the group are just following the ringleader. Do not play the bully's game by concentrating on him or her. Try to pick the weakest member of the group, look them in the face and ask why they are going along with it.

What can you do to stop it - walk away? Hit the ringleader? Yell 'shut up'? Go on laughing?

Do not hit out - you are outnumbered and may be blamed for starting a fight. You are not amused, so why laugh? You can try yelling, but you must make it a loud, angry yell and then walk away at once. Try just walking away.

You try to walk away, they block your path and start pushing you. What do you do?

Be careful how you defend yourself - you do not want to make things worse. You will need to judge the situation: sometimes you can wait these things out by trying to attract attention meanwhile. The best bet might well be to shout loudly, then get away as soon as you can.

Do you tell anyone?

Yes - always tell someone. Go to a sympathetic teacher, explain what happened and identify the bullies. Teachers are now trained to tackle bullying. Tell your friends too - and if they were involved, ask them separately why they did it.

School is out . . .

Bullying sometimes happens on the way to and from school. If this is happening to you, tell a teacher. Their interest in you does not stop at the school gate and they may be able to help. Tell a police officer too - the police are always keen to stop bullying, wherever it happens.

Let them go.

If you are bullied for possessions like money, personal stereos, clothes, food or computer games, do not try to hold on to them at all costs. Give them up rather than put yourself in danger, get away as soon as you can. Tell an adult at once. Report it to the police.

Face to face.

Bullies often work in groups. Sometimes people who have been friendly to you before will turn on you when they are in a group. Try to find them alone (but in a public place) and ask them each, face to face, why they need to gang up on you. You might prefer to ring them up and talk to them by phone. You might be able to shame them into stopping.

Ways of coping with bullying.

1. Ignore nasty comments, insults or teasing. Do not be drawn into arguing.
2. Try not to show you are upset. Do not think of yourself as a victim - you deserve better than that. You have a right to put a stop to this.

3. Tell a sympathetic adult, parent, teacher, relative or friend. Ask them to help.
4. There is safety in numbers. Stay with your friends, or if that is not possible, with groups of people.
5. Shout 'NO' and mean it. Practise in front of a mirror.
6. Walk tall and confidently, even if you feel scared.
7. Do not fight to keep possessions. Your safety is more important.
8. Find out about self defence classes in your area. These teach you how to respond to different situations and give you confidence.
9. Think before you fight back. You may be making things worse.
10. Get away as soon as you can.
11. If anyone tries to make you feel bad about your race, sex or appearance or abilities do not listen. They are just showing how ignorant they are.
12. It is good to be an individual. If you are different in some way be proud of it.

Things to notice

Do you know someone who is suffering because of bullying? If you have a friend, brother or sister who:

- hates going to certain places
- is unhappy or feels ill at the same time every week
- keeps losing their money or possessions
- has mysterious cuts and bruises
- has become quiet and nervous
- cries at night or in secret

then this person might well be being bullied. Ask them sympathetically what is wrong and tell an adult you trust about your worries.

Could you be going along with bullying? Could you even be leading it, perhaps without realising? Stop and think - do not make someone else's life a misery.

If you are being bullied, ALWAYS tell someone. You can do it quietly picking your moment. By telling someone, you can help yourself and possibly help stop other people being bullied.