



Help With Bullying

Feeling happy, feeling safe

A Kidscape guide to bullying and friendships

Introduction

This guide has been written to support you with bullying and relationships so you can feel happy and safe in school, the community and online. There is a section at the back that you can also share with your parent or carer.

For further advice visit www.kidscape.org.uk



Bullying

STOP

Several – Times – On – Purpose

What is bullying?

Bullying is when one person or a group of people, deliberately hurt another person, more than once. Sometimes we use the acronym **STOP** to help spot a bullying situation (**Several Times On Purpose**).

Bullying can be....



Verbal

name calling, unkind comments, spreading rumours, laughing at someone, forcing someone to do or say something, encouraging someone to hurt themselves.

Emotional

Leaving someone out, unfriending, pressurising someone.

Physical

hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, burning, touching us anywhere we do not want to be touched.

Cyber

messages, posts, videos that are intended to hurt or cause harm, pretending to be someone else

It is often targeted at perceived 'difference' and may be driven by prejudice and harmful attitudes towards others. For example, bullying behaviour can be targeted at someone's race, faith, disability, sexuality, gender, age, appearance and social status. If you are bullied, it is never your fault. It is the person or people doing the bullying that need to change and take responsibility for their actions.



What is Bullying?

Is bullying against the law?

While there is no specific law against bullying in England and Wales, all schools have a legal duty to keep you safe from bullying and harm, and some bullying behaviour may be criminal (e.g., if someone physically assaults you or threatens to cause you harm).

What is the difference between 'banter'/teasing and bullying?

Teasing and banter between friends can be fun, and when everyone is in on the joke and enjoying themselves.

It can move into bullying when someone is upset, hurt, or offended, and the other person refuses to stop. For example, if someone keeps teasing you about something even if they can see you are no longer finding it funny, it is moving towards bullying behaviour.

Another form of banter that can move into bullying behaviour (and sometimes prejudicial behaviour and even harassment) is when friends pick on a physical trait or a characteristic of someone in the group and use this as a focus of jokes or comments (e.g., someone's weight, skin colour, ethnic background, religion, sexuality, gender). You may feel under pressure to laugh, but these types of comments or jokes (even if you are not personally offended), create an environment where bullying is more likely to happen.



What is the difference between conflict and bullying?

Conflict happens in all relationships. We all have arguments and fall outs with other people at times. Conflict moves into bullying if we are using our power to try and force someone else to agree with us, or if we are repeatedly picking an argument or fight with someone else, or refusing to end a disagreement.

Why do people bully others?

People bully others because they want to feel powerful and in control.

They may do it to feel more popular (for example, by making other people laugh or getting other people to be on their side) or to stop getting hurt themselves (for example, 'If I bully others people will know they can't mess with me').

It can also be because:

- They do not know how to manage their own thoughts and feelings (e.g. they often hit and hurt others)
- They have been bullied or hurt by other people themselves
- They are experiencing violence at home
- They fear being hurt by other people
- They are jealous of other people
- They feel like they are not good enough
- They have negative beliefs about people who are different
- They are experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety



What is Bullying?

What can I do if I am being bullied?

Most studies suggest at least 4 in 10 children will experience bullying in a year. This means nearly half of all children experience bullying. You are not alone even though it may feel like it when you are in a bullying situation. Anyone can be bullied, so it is important to recognise when a bullying situation is developing and get help:

1

Share your concerns with someone you trust Explain that you need their help to talk through the situation and to come up with a plan so that the bullying situation stops. This may be a family member, a friend, a staff member from your school, or an adult in the community who you trust. Tell them how long it has been going on, who has been involved and how it makes you feel. If you are very nervous, write everything down and show them, or ask a friend or family member to join you.

2

Report the bullying situation to the school You can either report directly to your teacher or have your parents or carers do so on your behalf. It is the school's responsibility to keep you safe from bullying, so there will be procedures in place to support you. It will help the school if you can share what has happened, with who, and the impact it is having. You can also suggest actions that may help.

3

Talk to a friend Surrounding yourself with good friends is one of the best ways to prevent bullying.

If you already have a group of friends that are supportive and trustworthy, that is great. Confide in them about what is happening and ask for their help. If you need help to make friends, see our advice section on 'making friends'.

4

Learn assertiveness skills. Using an assertive style of communication in a bullying situation can make a big difference, as you are standing up for yourself, showing that you respect yourself and others equally, and that you will not let the situation continue.

5

Always put your safety first. If someone has hurt you or is threatening to hurt you then get help. Get out of the situation as soon as you can. Look for an adult who can help and find a safe place. **Dial 999.**

What are assertiveness skills?

You can be assertive with your voice and your body. It is a superpower we can all learn over time with a bit of support, even if we find communication difficult.

There are three styles of communication:

Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
Behaving like someone else's rights matter more than yours	Behaving like your rights matter more than someone else's	Behaving like your rights matter equally

Bullying behaviour can take us all by surprise, and often we respond by being passive, and sometimes even aggressive. When bullying others, people are nearly always being aggressive.



Your assertive voice

Your assertive voice is one which sounds strong, calm, and confident. Take a deep breath before speaking and do not let others rush you. You may want to practice in front of a mirror.

Start by practicing saying

It is a short word, and it is a very useful one when someone is pressuring you to do something you don't want to do or doing something, you'd like them to stop. Say it with strength in your voice, clearly, and loud enough to be heard.

"NO"

"no"

"no"

"no"

"no"

Have some back up phrases

Once you're getting good at saying "no", try other phrases to stop bullying behaviour in its tracks, for example:

or

"stop now – I don't like it"

Sometimes in a bullying situation you might need to repeat yourself. Keep saying the same thing again in your assertive voice until they get the message!

"that's mine, you can't have it"

"that's mine, you can't have it"

"that's mine, you can't have it"

"stop now – I don't like it".

"stop now – I don't like it".

Fog it out

If someone is saying an insulting comment, picture a protective fog around you which swallows up the words before they get to you. Your fog can be anything: some people imagine an animal, others a blanket, and others a marshmallow fortress – pick something that makes you feel safe. As your fog catches the bad words, acknowledge the comment with something like:

or

"that's your opinion"

"you noticed"

"that's your opinion"

"that's your opinion"

"you noticed"

"you noticed"



Assertive body language

Your body communicates more than your voice, so back up your assertive voice with assertive body language.

Hold your body in a way that makes you feel strong and powerful. Practice a “power pose” at home to help you get a feel for it. Hold your head high and relax your shoulders.

Make and maintain eye contact. If eye contact is difficult for you, try looking at the tops of someone’s ears or in between their eyes!

Fake it till you make it! You might not start to feel more confident immediately, but you will look it. It will soon start to come naturally to you.

The power of music It can even help if you’re going into a difficult situation – whether at work, school or home – to listen to music that helps you feel strong and powerful.



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Feeling happy, feeling safe



Practicing assertiveness

Using your assertive voice and body language helps you respond to bullying in a safe effective way. Communication skills are a life skill, taking time and practice. To help it come more easily, try practicing somewhere you feel safe, with someone you trust.

Mirror practice. Get in front of the mirror and practice your body language and voice.

The human mirror. Ask a trusted friend or family member to mirror your body language. How do you think they appear? If they are not looking assertive, try shifting your body language.

Look at characters on TV or in films. Watch their body language and their voices. Are they being passive, aggressive, or assertive?

Role playing. Ask a trusted friend or family member to role play scenarios with you. Think about what a bully might say to you and try out your assertive responses. Return the favour and help them be more assertive, too!

Practice with Kidscape. Our free ZAP workshops help you explore and unlock assertiveness in a safe setting with other young people who have experienced bullying. For more information visit the Kidscape website.

Be assertive as much as you can, not just when you are being bullied. Showing the world that you respect yourself and others is something you can do all the time – and the more you practice it, the easier it comes. For example, when was the last time you sent back a meal that wasn’t cooked properly, or told a friend or family member that as much as love them, what they said upset you? Always stand up for yourself, and eventually, it will be part of your life!

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A Kidscape guide to bullying and friendships

What can I do if I am being bullied on the journey to or from school or in the wider community?

You have a right to be safe from bullying wherever you are. This includes on the journey to and from school, in clubs and in the wider community.

Bullying on a school journey or in the wider community might include things like name calling, being pushed around, tripped over, hit and hurt, sexual comments or touching, having your belongings taken or destroyed, people taking photos or videos of you in order to make fun of you or being forced to hand over money.

Bullying can become criminal behaviour if you are physically or sexually assaulted or threatened – whether face to face or through mobile phones. This means you can contact the police or your local authority for help.

If you are in immediate danger, then do what you can to get out of the situation and get help. If that means getting off the bus early, running to a safe place, yelling, or asking a stranger to help you then do it. If you, or someone around you is at risk of being seriously hurt then dial **999**.

If you are being bullied, or you see it happening to other children then it is important you get help. Follow the steps above for what to do if you are being bullied – tell someone what is happening. If the bullying is in a club, they will also have a legal duty to keep you safe from all forms of bullying or harm.

In the short term do what you can to stay away from the people doing the bullying. Sit, stand, or travel to school with people you trust. If they are calling you names remember that there is nothing wrong with you. It is the people doing the bullying that have the problem, not you. It can help to repeat a sentence in your head that makes you feel safe or strong. For example;

'I am not alone. I am stronger than this and will get through it'.

Look out for other children that might be being bullied. Sit, stand, or walk with them. You will need to decide whether it is safe to say something to children that are bullying or hurting others but make sure they can see you are not joining in or finding it funny. Let the school know if bullying is happening and ask what you can do together to make it stop.



Keep a diary of events. It can help the school or police if you keep a record of when and what is happening.

Bullying can make you feel sad, anxious, scared, and lonely. That is totally understandable, but you are not alone.

What can I do if I am bullied online?

Most of us will be on the receiving end of unkind comments or posts online at some point. This turns into a bullying situation when the behaviour is deliberate, it is repeated, and it is having a negative impact on how we feel. Here are some ways you can handle unkind comments or bullying behaviour online:

1

It is nearly always better not to respond. The person probably wants a reaction of some kind and the less you give them, the more likely they are to move on. We once heard it described as being like an 'ice mountain' where you give them no footholds and they slide off!

2

If you do not know the person, it is usually better to unfriend or block them from your account. If you know them and you do not want to take that action, you can sometimes mute the person or the comments to give you a break.

3

If you know the person and it feels safe, you may want to contact them away from the platform to ask them to remove the comments or posts. Sometimes people are not aware of how they have made you feel.

4

Get help. If the situation continues, follow the other advice in this guide and get help from someone you trust. It can be helpful to keep evidence of what has happened – such as screen grabs. Schools should take online bullying seriously – particularly if it involves children from your school or is impacting how you feel during the school day.

5

Know when to contact the police. If someone is threatening you with harm, is encouraging you to harm yourself, has shared private images of you, or is using hate speech against you (e.g. is targeting your race, faith, sexuality, age, disability or gender) then contact the police.

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Who else can help If you are under 18 you can also contact Report harmful Content who assist with cyberbullying issues and removing harmful content <https://reportharmfulcontent.com/>.

Are there ways I can keep myself safe online – so bullying is less likely to happen?

While we are not in control of what others do online, there are ways we can help to protect ourselves;

Do not share your passwords with anyone.

Set the highest levels of privacy on your online accounts to protect who can see your information.

Consider limiting your friends and followers to people you know and trust.

Think before you post – be careful not to respond to posts when you are feeling tired or angry.

When you are sharing personal information about yourself keep in mind that you will not be able to control how others respond. It may be better to share big worries or concerns offline with a friend or family member.

Remember you are worth more than a social media post! Sometimes we put ourselves under pressure to be popular online and to have lots of likes but this does not determine our worth. It is better to have a few good friends who truly know us and love us than lots of followers who only see a small part of our lives.

What can I do if I see someone being bullied?

Most children do not bully and hurt other people. It is vital therefore that we all learn to be upstanders, protecting others when we spot a bullying situation – whether face to face or online.

Here are some key actions you can take to be an upstander:



I am worried I might have bullied other people. What can I do?

We all make mistakes and hurt other people. We may even have bullied others or got caught up in a bullying situation. If you have hurt someone, or got involved in a bullying situation, it is important to take the following actions:

- 1** Understand that bullying behaviour can cause serious harm.
- 2** Recognise when you have hurt someone else or your behaviour has gone too far.
- 3** Stop. Stop saying or doing things that hurt other people. If you can, say sorry and do what you can to make the situation better.
- 4** Ask for help. If you find it hard not to say or do things that hurt others, if you are hurting yourself, then ask for help.

Relationships

How can I handle peer pressure?

We all face pressure from other people – the people with the most influence over us are usually our friends, family, and classmates.

It is an important skill to learn to **‘stand up for yourself’**. This means knowing what matters to you (**your values**), what you will and won’t do (**your boundaries**), and how to use your assertiveness skills to manage any situation where you feel under pressure.

Your values are unique to you and help guide the decisions you make.

Look at this list of words and circle those that mean the most to you. You may even want to add your own! Whenever you feel under pressure, think about whether you are acting according to your own values, or being pressured **by someone else**.



Relationships

Practice using your assertiveness skills to say calmly and firmly **'no'** to someone putting you under pressure. It can also help to give yourself time to consider a situation and the action you want to take. For example, simply state that you need time to think about it, then ask people you trust what they would do in the same situation.

You may want to create your own list of words that mean the most to you.

How do I make friends?

It is important for all of us to have friends; people who care about us and make us smile. Whether you are feeling lonely, starting a new school or just open to exploring new friendships, here is some tips for making new friends:

Meet other people

Joining a club, youth group, online forum or getting involved in an activity you enjoy is a great way of meeting new people. It is also a boost to your confidence to do something you love! Do some research about what is available in your area and choose something that interests you. If you are unsure of where to start, ask someone to help you, or ask others for ideas.



Help other people

Volunteering in your local community can be a great way to meet other people.

Be a great listener

Introduce yourself to new people, ask questions about them, really listen to their answers, and look for common ground.



Show you are open with your body language

If you look like you are trying to make yourself as small as possible, or you look threatening, people might not want to talk to you. Our tips on being assertive can help you practice your body language to show others that you're open to talking and friendship.

Be a good friend

Be a good friend to your new friends. Be trustworthy, listen to them, be respectful and supportive. Read **"What makes a good friend"** for tips on good friendships.



Make an effort

Do not wait for others to arrange something. Ask your new friends if they would like to hang out! Invite them to take part in activities with you.

Choose good friends

If you look like you are trying to make yourself as small as possible, or you look threatening, people might not want to talk to you. Our tips on being assertive can help you practice your body language to show others that you're open to talking and friendship.

How do I spot a frenemy?

Sometimes people who claim to be your friends can show bullying behaviour. These are sometimes called a **'frenemy'** or **'frenemies'**.



This is not the sign of true friendship and you may want to think carefully about ending the friendship, making new friends, or gradually spending less time with the person or people.

How can I feel better if a friendship has ended?

It really hurts when a good friendship comes to an end. It is okay not to feel okay, and it is okay to miss the other person, and take time to feel better again.

Here are some actions you can take:



- Accept that not all relationships last forever. Think about everything good you can take away from your time together and what the relationship has taught you about yourself.
- Accept that the relationship is different and move on. Do not try to force someone to be your friend or be unkind to someone who is no longer your friend. Make sure you do not share private information about the other person or encourage others not to be their friend.
- Look to the future. You will make new friends. Smile knowing you had good times together, but that good times with other people lie ahead. Hold your head high, be kind, and be open to new friendships.

How can I help resolve a disagreement?

We all get into arguments from time to time or may be a bystander when others are having an argument. It is important to learn how to quickly resolve arguments, so they do not turn into bullying situations.

- 1** Stop feeling like you must be right. There are no winners or losers, just different points of view.
- 2** Change the subject. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to agree to disagree and change the subject.
- 3** Take some time out. It may be better for everybody if you agree to all take some time out until you feel calmer, then come back together once you are ready to talk.
- 4** Do not encourage other people to argue or fight. Instead, encourage them to walk away, play a different game, or have a different conversation. If the debate is happening online, do not reshare or comment. It may be better to leave the conversation and come back at another time once things have calmed down.

Who else can help?

It is important to think about the different people in your life who may be able to give you support and advice in a bullying situation. This may be someone in your family, a parent or carer, a friend, or another adult you trust. If you are struggling to think of someone who can help you may find the following organisations helpful:

Kidscape
www.kidscape.org.uk

The Mix
www.themix.org.uk

Childline
www.childline.org.uk

Ditch the Label
www.ditchthelabel.org



Advice for parents and carers

If your child is going through a bullying situation and you need help or advice, Kidscape is here for you. Kidscape is a bullying prevention charity working across England and Wales, that supports hundreds of families and thousands of children each year.

Kidscape runs free ZAP assertiveness workshops for children and families, as well as a Parent Advice Line.



For more details visit
www.kidscape.org.uk



If you would like further information about our work,
please email: **info@kidscape.org.uk** or visit kidscape.org.uk

In the bottom right corner of the page, there are several overlapping, curved lines in various colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) that create a dynamic, abstract graphic element.