



Bullying – A guide to helping young people

What is bullying?

Bullying can be described as repeated behaviour done so with the intention to hurt someone emotionally or physically. Bullies may act alone or as part of a group to single out a person to treat in a negative or derogatory way. Bullying can happen over short periods and time and on random occasions, or be a long and enduring campaign against a person, happening over weeks, months or even years. Bullying can happen to young people anywhere and at any time, including:

- At school
- On the street
- On the bus
- At work
- Within the family or at home
- Within friendship groups

Bullying can take many forms; if someone is being bullied they might be experiencing:

- Being teased and called cruel names
- Having lies spread around their peers about them
- Being purposely excluded or left out
- Physical assault – being pushed, pulled, hit, kicked, spat at
- Having their belongings or money stolen
- Getting threatened and intimidated
- Receiving offensive text messages from bullies
- Receiving repeated silent nuisance phone calls or abusive calls
- Being humiliated and filmed by their bullies, and then having it spread about online by them
- Being cyber-bullied; receiving horrible messages, emails and posts from bullies through social media networks like Facebook

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Why are people bullied?

Bullying is a frightening and isolating experience, often leaving a young person asking “why me”. The truth is anyone can become a victim of bullying. People might bully others about perceived differences, including:

- How they look
- Dress
- Behave
- Their taste in music
- Illnesses they may suffer from
- Disability
- Their families
- How they are doing in school
- How popular or unpopular they are perceived to be

None of these are acceptable reasons to be bullied, as it's great for young people to be who they are and do their own thing, but bullies can be closed-minded and even jealous enough to want to make others suffer for them.

As painful as it is, bullying can sometimes happen to people for no real reason at all beyond a bullies' apparent desire to be cruel and make them feel worthless. This can feel really upsetting, as whilst they might be getting a kick out of their actions, the victims' life can feel as if it is being destroyed by them.

There are other more specific types of bullying that can occur:

- **Sexist bullying** – bullying with a focus on gender and negative gender stereotypes
- **Sizeist bullying** - being bullied because of size and/or weight; being called 'fat' or 'anorexic'
- **Racist bullying** – bullying due to the colour of our skin, using derogatory names and racial slurs about our race to hurt and humiliate
- **Homophobic bullying** – being bullied for one's sexual orientation, mostly if it is different to that of the bully
- **Sexual bullying** – can include a range of behaviour from name calling and rumour-spreading of a sexual nature about the victim, to serious physical sexual assault and rape

What impact can bullying have?

Bullying can have a massive impact on young people, often more than we think or they are able to admit to anyone. If someone is being bullied they may:

- be so afraid or humiliated by their bullies that they stop going to school or going out at all
- become incredibly upset
- feel hurt – physically and/or emotionally
- become isolated from their peers
- feel constantly lonely
- feel worthless and believe the negative things they are being told about themselves by their bullies

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- lose confidence and suffer from low self-esteem
- develop depression
- suffer from anxiety
- develop self-harming issues as a coping method to deal with the pain – including eating issues, injuring through cutting and scratching, and drug and alcohol dependency
- in serious cases, bullying has led to the victim taking their own life

What can we do if we know someone is being bullied?

The most important thing is to reinforce that it's not their fault, and they did nothing to bring it on themselves. Ignoring or pretending that they are not being bullied will not make it go away. Bullying is a serious issue and it is also worth remembering that hitting, physical harm, unwanted sexually-orientated touching, and harassment are crimes and are illegal – they must be dealt with to help them and others. However painful it is, if someone you know is being bullied you really must try to help them to:

- tell someone what's going on – confiding in you or in a friend, teacher, parent/carer, or other trusted individual in their lives who can help them take to next steps of reporting their bully
- keep telling people until the bullying is stamped out
- if a young person is experiencing cyber-bullying or witnesses worrying content online, they can use the CEOP button (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) where listed on websites to report the issue, and also use report buttons available on social media sites
- keep a diary of events – this can be useful when reporting bullying and help them feel more in control when doing so. It can also help them offload, and be used to show what is going on with them if they feel unable to physically talk about the situation or finer details
- if relevant, support them to report a crime suffered through bullying to the police
- don't let them suffer in silence – let them know that people WILL and CAN help, but they can't if they don't know what's going on

Getting further help

Sometimes, despite a person's best efforts, the effects of bullying can overwhelm them and they need more help with managing it. You can:

- help them to speak to their doctor about their feelings
- Be referred for counselling or other appropriate talking treatments – counselling is confidential and they'll work with a trained counsellor to look at their issues and work through them in their own time and in a safe environment. No one needs to know they are attending counselling if they don't wish them to

How can No5 help?

Learning to effectively deal with the emotions that bullying can bring up for us is important, as becoming isolated and having our self-esteem damaged can lead to depression and physical health problems. These can become longer-term issues so it is important for young people to talk to somebody about it if things are becoming too much to handle. Here at No5 we offer free, impartial and confidential support to young people aged 10-25. Come and talk to us – counselling is about listening to, and helping young people to work through their problems and find more effective ways of dealing with life's issues, in a caring, trusting environment.

Ways to contact us:

Counselling Phone: 0118 901 5668

Admin Phone: 0118 901 5649

E-mail: info@no5.org.uk

Address:

No5 Young People's Counselling and Information
2-4 Sackville Street
Reading, RG1 1NT

Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/no5youngpeople>

Twitter: @no5youngpeople

Our Opening Hours are:

Monday	16:00 – 21:00
Tuesday	10:00 – 13:00 and 16:00 – 21:00
Wednesday	16:00 – 21:00
Thursday	16:00 – 21:00
Friday	16:00 – 21:00
Saturday & Sunday	Closed

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