



Supporting Young People to Take Charge of Their Mental Health

Bullying

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 us happening over weeks, months or even years. Bullying can happen to us anywhere and at any time, including:

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

Bullying can take many forms – if we are being bullied we might experience:

- Being teased and called cruel names
- Lies being spread around by our peers about us
- Being purposely excluded or left out
- Physical assault – being pushed, pulled, hit, kicked, spat at
- Having our belongings or money stolen from us
- Getting threatened and intimidated
- Receiving offensive texts from bullies
- Receiving repeated silent nuisance or abusive phone calls
- Being humiliate and filmed by our bullies, and then having this spread around
- Being cyber-bullied (social media, email, text messages)

Why are we bullied?

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

- how we look
- dress
- behave
- our taste in music
- illnesses we may suffer from

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- disability
- our families
- how we are doing in school
- how popular or unpopular we are

None of these are acceptable reasons to be bullied, as it's great to be our own person and do our own thing, but bullies can be closed-minded and even jealous enough to want to make us suffer for them.

As painful as it is, bullying can sometimes happen to us for no real reason at all beyond a bullies' apparent desire to be cruel and make us feel worthless. This can feel really upsetting, as whilst they might be getting a kick out of their actions, our lives can feel as if they are 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
- **Sizest bullying** - being bullied because of our 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 our sexual orientation, mostly if it is different to that of our bully
- **Sexual bullying** – can include a range of behaviour from name calling and rumour-spreading of a sexual nature about you, to serious physical sexual assault and rape

What impact can bullying have?

Bullying can have a massive impact on us, often more than we think or are able to admit to anyone. If we are bullied we may:

- be so afraid or humiliated by our bullies that we stop going to school or going out at all
- become incredibly upset
- feel hurt – physically and/or emotionally
- become isolated from our peers
- feel constantly lonely
- feel worthless and believe the negative things we are being told about ourselves by our bullies
- lose confidence and suffer from low self-esteem
- develop depression
- suffer from anxiety

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- develop self-harming issues as a coping method to deal with our pain – including eating issues, cutting and scratching, drug and alcohol dependency
- in some serious cases, bullying has led to the victim taking their own life

What can we do if we are being bullied

The most important thing to try to remember about being bullied is that it's not our fault, and we did nothing to bring it on ourselves. Also, ignoring or pretending that we 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 us and others. However painful it is, if we or someone we know are being bullied we really must try to:

- tell someone what's going on – confide in a friend, teacher, parent/carer, or other trusted individual in our lives who can help us take to next steps of reporting our bully
- keep telling people until the bullying is stamped out
- if we are experiencing cyber-bullying or witness worrying content online, we 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 us feel more in control when doing so. It can also help us offload, and we can even show it to someone if we feel unable to physically talk about what's going on
- if relevant, ask for help to report a crime suffered through bullying to the police
- don't suffer in silence – people WILL and CAN help, but they can't if they don't know it's happening

Getting further help

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the effects of bullying can overwhelm us and we need more help with managing it. We can:

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

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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 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 11-25. Come and talk to us – counselling is about listening to, and helping YOU to work through your problems and find more effective ways of dealing with life's issues, in a caring, trusting environment.

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