

understanding bullying

(it's never OK)

Bullying involves people repeatedly and deliberately doing things that leave another person upset, afraid or hurt. It can increase the risk of developing mental health problems for everyone involved, including those doing the bullying.

Bullying can take place anywhere. It can happen at home, at work, in school, at TAFE/uni, online or over the phone.

Bullying is not just 'playing around' or harmless fun. It happens when someone has (or thinks they have) more power than someone else. This could be:

- power in numbers
- being older or stronger
- popularity
- being in the majority.

Types of bullying

Verbal

(e.g. putting someone down or threatening to cause harm)

Physical

(e.g. contact that hurts someone or breaks their things)

Social

(e.g. spreading rumours, excluding someone, embarrassing someone in public)

Cyberbullying

(e.g. sending harmful messages, pictures or comments online)



Almost a quarter of young people aged 14–25 reported being bullied in the previous 12 months.

Why does bullying happen?

People who bully may have experienced bullying or violence themselves. They might use bullying because they feel peer pressure, and are trying to feel more secure, more powerful, look cool in front of others, or feel better about themselves. This may be their way of coping if they haven't learnt better ways to cope or aren't getting the support that they need. Bullying behaviour can also happen because of jealousy, lack of knowledge, fear or misunderstanding.

What are the effects of bullying?

Anyone who has experienced bullying knows how upsetting it is. They might feel:

- alone
- unsafe
- afraid
- stressed
- humiliated
- angry
- ashamed
- rejected.

Sometimes a person might believe some of the awful things said about them, which can impact their sense of self. They might do things to fit in, like changing their appearance or acting differently.

Experiencing bullying can also increase the risk that someone will develop depression and anxiety in the future, and also may increase the risk of self harm, suicidal thinking and suicide.

Young people say one of the worst parts of bullying is feeling like they're going through it alone, which is why it's so important to support anyone going through a rough time – or reach out if you're struggling yourself.

What can you do about bullying?

If you're being bullied, try to follow these steps:

- stay calm
- don't fight back
- try to ignore the bullying
- try to avoid the person who is bullying you or ask a friend to stay with you when they're around
- tell a trusted adult what has happened straight away
- get some more information from school or your workplace.

If you're being bullied online here are some things you can do:

- report any bullying to the site where it is occurring
- keep everything that is sent to you, like screenshots or messages, as proof
- if after 48 hours the image or content has not been removed by the site, or if you're feeling afraid or threatened, contact the eSafety Commissioner
- try not to respond, an emotional response can fuel further bullying
- talk to friends you trust and let them know how you're feeling and that you need their support and advice
- ask your friends to stand up for you
- talk to your parents, carer, teacher or another trusted adult about what's happening
- block the person or people from being able to contact you
- delete your current online account and start a new one.

Here are some ways you can support someone who is being bullied:

- ask them what's happening
- listen to what they say and let them know they're not alone
- reassure them that they can get through this and that they don't need to do it alone
- support them to seek help
- make sure they're safe
- keep checking in with the person about how they're going.

It's important that everyone feels comfortable standing up for one another in ways that won't put them at risk.

Who is a bystander?

Someone who sees or knows about bullying is called a bystander. It can be hard to step in, but a bystander can have a big effect on whether the bullying continues or not. They also have the ability to help someone who has been targeted see that they have people who support them and care for them.

What can I do?

- Carefully think about your safety before you try to stop the bullying, and if you can't safely take action yourself, report it to a trusted adult.
- Try to step in and speak up against the bullying in an assertive, but not an aggressive way.
- Encourage others not to support the bullying by looking on and doing nothing. Laughing at the person being bullied, or 'liking' or sharing hurtful photos or posts online, may make it worse.



For more information about bullying check out these websites:

- Bullying. No Way! – bullyingnoway.gov.au
- The Alannah and Madeline Foundation – amf.org.au
- Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner – esafety.gov.au
- Friendly Schools – friendlyschools.com.au



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au



If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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