



**respectme**  
Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service

# **Bullying...**

## **What are my options?**

# What is bullying?

Bullying is a mixture of behaviours and impacts; what someone does and the impact that it has on you, which affects your ability to feel safe and in control of yourself.

Bullying behaviour happens face to face and online and can include:

- being called names, being teased or made fun of
- being hit, pushed or kicked
- having your belongings taken or damaged
- being ignored, left out, or having rumours spread about you
- being humiliated
- receiving abusive messages or having nasty comments made about you
- being targeted because of who you are or how people see you

This can hurt you physically or emotionally and, although the behaviour might not be repeated, the threat or worry that it will happen again can be very real.

Bullying can also happen because of people's prejudices towards other people; because

they're different in some way or are perceived to be different. But being different isn't the problem – the problem lies in other people's attitude towards what makes someone different.

Some of the things that make us different are protected by law, to address the imbalance experienced by some groups over the years.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against a person due to the following, which are known as the 'Protected Characteristics':

- age
- being or becoming a transsexual person
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or having a child
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

This law also makes it illegal to abuse someone who

doesn't have any of these characteristics, but people may assume they have, or they associate them with someone who does; such as a friend or family member.

This means that it's never acceptable to use homophobic, racist or offensive language, or make fun of anyone's disability or their personal circumstances.

## What isn't bullying...

Some behaviours are classed as bullying when they're not and it's important that you know the difference.

When it comes to relationships, it's important that you're not forced into anything, or are made to do something that you don't want to do.

For example, for most young people 'sexting' – which includes sending intimate pictures to their boyfriend or girlfriend – is largely a consensual thing. But if someone forces you – or if you force someone else – to take and send naked pictures, this is not bullying! It is abusive and intimidating behaviour.

Threatening someone to do something sexual is not bullying – it is sexually aggressive behaviour. If someone touches or grabs you

in an inappropriate way, it's not bullying – that behaviour is a type of sexual assault. Sexually aggressive behaviour of any kind is never acceptable and, while bullying and abusive behaviour can be linked, they are not the same thing.

Similarly, if you're being forced to hand over your phone or money, or if there's the threat of something happening if you don't do it, this is not bullying. Blackmail, extortion and threatening behaviour online are often referred to as 'cyberbullying' but they're criminal acts.

If you're experiencing any of the types of behaviours mentioned above, you should seek help to make it stop. Confide in someone you trust, or talk to someone online if it's easier.



## What about my rights?

All children and young people have rights, which are listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, sometimes called the UNCRC.

- you have the right to think what you want without stopping someone else from enjoying the same right

- you have the right to privacy, but if you don't make what you say and do online 'private' the whole world can see it, copy it and share it

Adults have a responsibility to make sure you enjoy these rights, at home, at school and in your community.

## Dealing with bullying – what are my options...?

When it comes to dealing with bullying there isn't always one 'right' answer.

Telling someone, or getting someone else involved, can often help you to feel better – even if it doesn't make the bullying stop. But what works for someone else won't always work for you. You will know what feels right for you and your situation, but you don't have to limit yourself to trying just one thing; you might need to try a couple of different options to find one that works for you.

This information will help if you're being bullied, but

it can also help if you know someone who is being bullied and you're not sure what to say or do to help them.

### **Don't bottle things up**

If you're struggling it's important not to bottle up your feelings – this can make you feel worse. Even if you don't want help to stop the bullying, it can help to talk to a friend or someone else you trust about how you feel.

You might find telling a friend easier. If you are the friend it is important you listen – don't necessarily try to fix things straight away, but be there for them.

But if you do need adult help and find it difficult to approach someone, a friend can help by going with you or passing the information on.

You might also be able to get some support at school, online or at the other places you visit. Buddy systems, peer mentoring and counselling are there to help you find a way of dealing with problems like bullying, and the people involved are trained to listen and help you talk things through. This might be worth exploring.

If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone you know but you think it'll help to tell someone, you can call ChildLine (0800 1111) or go online ([www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)) and speak to someone in confidence.

### **You could tell an adult**

In most cases this is good advice. But does it feel right for you and your situation? Maybe you're worried about an over-reaction, being called a 'grass' or people finding out you've been bullied. For some people, that can seem worse than the bullying itself. But telling the right adult really can make a difference.

Talk to someone you can trust; a parent, teacher, brother or sister, football coach or a youth worker. It doesn't matter who they are, only that you trust them to listen and do their best for you. Let them know what you would like to happen and ask them to keep you involved throughout.

### **Ignore it/walk away/pretend it doesn't bother you**

Being able to walk away from bullying or act like it doesn't bother you is a good coping mechanism; it can show people you're confident and can deal with situations.

But it's not always easy to pretend that you're okay when you're not. Even if you can hide your feelings from people, they're still there and you need to do something that will help you deal with them.

Walking away doesn't work so well when the bullying is happening at places you enjoy going to, or places that you might have to go to – like your school, your church or your Mosque.

If you feel comfortable trying this then you should. But if it's not an option then you need to think about trying something else.





### **Block/report users online**

If the bullying is happening online, you can instantly ‘block’ someone who is horrible to you, or delete or ‘hide’ what they say, even though that won’t stop other people from seeing it. There are also steps you can take on social media sites, such as Facebook, where you can report language or behaviour which is offensive or aggressive.

Often ‘blocking’ someone is enough and you might not feel the need to report them but, again, everyone is different and it will depend on your situation and what will make you feel better.

If you’re new to social networking or online gaming, take things slowly. Start off with friends you already have, or people you already know. Find your feet and get comfortable with how relationships work online before venturing into new conversations or friendships with other people.

### **Keep a diary of what happens**

Keeping a diary doesn’t suit everyone, but writing things down can be a really useful way of coping with

how you’re feeling; especially if you aren’t ready to talk to someone about it.


Recording incidents can also make it easier if you do decide to tell someone and it can act as evidence if other parties need to get involved. Similarly, if you’re being bullied online, you should keep any texts or online messages you receive.

### **Ask them to stop**

If you can do this then try it – the person bullying you might not know how their behaviour is affecting you, and it might change the way they behave towards you. But some people aren’t so approachable and you might not have the confidence to speak to them, or you might be worried about what will happen if you do. If you feel this might make things worse then it’s best to explore another option.

### **Use a witty/clever comeback**

Some people are witty and confident enough to respond to people who are bullying them with a clever comeback – but it’s not something everyone will feel comfortable doing. Weigh up the situation and be prepared for the reaction you



might get. No one wants to be embarrassed in front of other people, and it might make them react in a more aggressive way than they did before. Try to judge whether you might make things worse before taking this approach.

If you use this option online, remember how easily comments can be misunderstood! Something that sounds funny or clever in your head might not come across that way online!

### **Get your own back/ stand up to them**

Children and young people tell us that this is a common piece of advice, but it isn't always helpful! It takes a lot of courage

to confront someone who is making you feel intimidated, scared, sad or lonely.

Violence can leave you and others badly hurt – or in serious trouble – and it can make you feel bad about yourself. If someone uses violence towards you then this is an assault – not bullying – and it may be a good idea to involve the police. Hitting back is a choice – but it's a risky one. Remember, if you hit someone back you could be charged with assault. (link to video)

Despite what people think, responding to bullying with more bullying doesn't make it go away.


## **Coping with your feelings**

We all deal with bullying differently. Some people can 'bounce back', but for others their feelings will be harder to deal with.

Some coping methods are better than others. Talking to friends or family, doing things you love, listening to music, playing games and

staying active are all positive things you can do for yourself. They won't make the bullying stop, but they can help you to manage how you're feeling. Just being listened to can help you to feel better, more supported and less alone; just as listening to friends who are being bullied can help them feel better.





Arguing, taking out your anger on others, doing things to hurt yourself, missing school, drinking or smoking, or stopping communicating with people may seem like ways to cope, but they are not healthy; they don't deal with the bullying or how it makes you feel.

If you don't feel there is anyone you can talk to, or anyone you can be yourself around, it might help to look for places locally or online, where you feel you can fit in

better – such as groups for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people, groups for young people with a disability, groups of young people who care for sick parents, or other groups that you feel represent you.

It is important to remember that feeling bad doesn't last forever and things can get better. Everyone in life has setbacks, and learning how to work through problems will make you more able to take control of your life.

## Staying safe online

Most bullying still takes place face to face, but it can happen online, or online and face to face at the same time. Although the behaviour and impact may be the same, regardless of where the bullying is happening, there are some things that you can do to help you to stay safe when you're online.

**Be aware of what you post and share online, and treat people with the same respect as you would if they were in the room**

Think about the impact your comments might have on them and how it might make them feel. It can be easy to get caught up in online gossip or 'banter', but think about what you're saying.



### **Be careful about the information you share online**

Never give away personal details, such as your address, phone number and email address – and don't share anyone else's private information either. Keep your passwords safe and, while it might be appropriate to share them with your parents/carers, don't share them with others, including friends and people you trust. Sharing passwords allows others to access your accounts, where they can change information or post messages in your name. You should also make sure that your social media settings are set to private, so that only people you know and trust can see your posts. Most of these

things are set up with public profiles, so be sure to check your settings and change them to protect yourself.

### **Everything you send and post online or through text message can be traced – including deleted posts**

Even if you give a fake email account and information, you will have a unique IP address from your service provider, which can be traced. Everything that's posted online can be viewed, copied and shared, and you never know who could read your posts. This goes for future potential employers and staff in colleges or universities you might be interested in applying to in the future, so be aware.

## **Remember...**

When it comes to dealing with bullying, what works for one person might not work for you, and what works for you won't always work for others.

Some of things you try might make the bullying

stop, or they might help you to feel better about things. Explore the options that you're most comfortable with. You might need to try a few different options, until you find something that works for you – and helps you to feel in control again.

## Get in touch:

**T:** 0844 800 8600

**E:** [enquire@respectme.org.uk](mailto:enquire@respectme.org.uk)

## Useful links

For more information, visit:

[www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk)

ChildLine provides a **free**  
24 hour service for children  
and young people.

**T:** 0800 1111