

# YOUNG MiNDS



## Bullying

Your guide to spotting it,  
stopping it and providing  
support to your child

# 1 million

young people are affected by  
bullying every week



**YM**

[youngminds.org.uk/bullying](http://youngminds.org.uk/bullying)

# Bullying

Bullying is a common experience for children at school, whether they're being bullied or they're bullying someone else.

It takes many forms and can have a lasting impact on the emotional wellbeing of those involved, including siblings and parents.

In this booklet, you'll find information on why people bully, the effects it can have and what you can do to support your child whether they're being bullied or becoming a bully themselves.

“The bullying became so bad that I was physically attacked many times. I was terrified the bullies were going to kill me but I was too scared to tell anyone because I was scared the bullies might find out and make it worse.”



# What is bullying?

Bullying is when one person intimidates, upsets, physically injures or excludes someone with the intention of being hurtful. A degree of teasing or name-calling may be a normal part of friendships at school or out in the community, but when it becomes persistent or upsetting it's bullying. It can take many different forms, including:

- Calling people names
- Spreading lies about people
- Teasing
- Hitting or kicking
- Mocking
- Taking someone's money or things
- Deliberately excluding someone
- Threatening or intimidating behavior
- Sending horrible emails, texts or messages
- Posting nasty messages or videos on Facebook and other social media

# Why do children and young people bully?

There are a number of reasons why a child may bully another and it's often a way of compensating for their own unhappiness or feeling of being powerless. Bullying is about power, attention-seeking, feelings of inadequacy or lack of understanding. A bully may:

- have had their own experiences of bullying or abuse
- be stressed, depressed or feel rejected
- have low self-esteem
- not realise what they are doing, for example if they have learning difficulties

It may even happen for no identifiable reason at all – just that the victim was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Bullying can be a one-off or it can go on for a long time. And bullying can happen to anyone.

“When you’ve experienced it with your own child, the one thing I would always say to parents is: just get that help straight away - talk to somebody.”



# What harm does bullying do?

Bullying in any form is hurtful and can make someone's life miserable.

Whatever form the bullying takes, it can lead to young people developing problems like:

- depression
- anxiety
- low self-esteem
- eating disorders
- self-harm or drug use
- paranoia
- anger
- regression

It can also be so terrifying that young people stop going to school, so it can have an impact on their future prospects too.





More than 16,000 young people are absent from school because of bullying.\*

\*Source: NSPCC 2011

# What you can do to help a child who's being bullied

It's normal to feel anger when you hear your child is being bullied and your instinct will be to protect them.

But it's important to listen first. It's a big step for them to tell you what's happening, so stay supportive, go at their pace and only try to intervene once they are ready.

Make sure you are supported too, share your concerns with someone you trust and ensure you are eating, sleeping and looking after yourself



**If the bullying is happening at school** tell their teacher. The school will have a policy in place for dealing with bullying.

**If it happens outside school** talk to your child about how to tackle it - it may mean changing social plans to keep them safe, making sure they always go out with a friend or thinking of things to say to the bullies if they meet.

**If it happens online** make sure you report it to your child's school. There are also a number of organisations that can help. See the info section at the back of this booklet.



# Schools and Bullying

Your child's school will have a clear, published policy on bullying. You can ask to see it at any time.

When the whole school – teachers, pupils, parents and non-teaching staff – work together to combat it, bullying is much less common.

It's important that the school lets children know that 'telling on' a bully is not wrong and that when they do speak out, action will be taken.

If you've raised bullying with your school and you feel it's not being taken seriously, you can arrange to discuss it with the head teacher.

It's a good idea to put things in writing too, so you have a record of what has been discussed, agreed and carried out, as well as being able to track improvements.

# After the bullying stops

When bullying stops, the problem can go away immediately.

But for some, the feelings of being anxious, angry or upset continue until they're able to move on.

So make sure to support your child afterwards and give them time to continue working through how they feel.

In some cases, children may need counselling or therapy to help them deal with it.

If you're worried about your child, visit your GP – they may be able to make a referral to a counsellor or therapist. Or, you can talk to our experts on the Parents Helpline by calling **0808 802 5544** (Mon-Fri 9:30am – 4:00pm).

# My child is a bully: what can I do?

To find out your child is a bully can be as worrying as hearing they're being bullied. Your immediate reaction may be to get angry and demand they stop.

But talk to them. Try to get to the bottom of it – why are they bullying and how can you help to change their behaviour?

Involve the school and make a plan together to resolve the issue in a positive way. Make sure they know the consequences if it continues to happen.

It can be useful to get counselling or therapy to help deal with any issues that are causing them to be a bully, so discuss your concerns with your GP.

# Where to go for help

## [youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)

Support and advice for parents worried about a child or young person.

**Helpline:** 0808 802 5544

*Mon-Fri 9:30am - 4pm*

---



## [bullying.co.uk](http://bullying.co.uk)

Practical information and advice, working with schools, youth organisations, police forces and health trusts.

---

## [kidscape.org.uk](http://kidscape.org.uk)

Information and advice on bullying and online bullying for parents, teachers and young people with a bullying helpline for parents too.

**Helpline:** 08451 205 204



YoungMinds  
Fourth Floor, India House  
45 Curlew Street  
London SE1 2ND  
**Telephone** 020 7089 5050

[yomenquiries@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:yomenquiries@youngminds.org.uk)

**[youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

Registered charity number: 1016968

Company limited by guarantee number: 02780643

Thank you to Dr Andrea Gnanadurai and her colleagues at the Child and Family Public Engagement Board, Royal College of Psychiatry for fact checking this booklet.