

**For further information:**

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

respectme's website offers practical advice and guidance for adults on addressing bullying behaviour. There is also a section for children and young people offering practical advice on what to do if you're being bullied.

**[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**

ChildLine's website has a bullying section for young people.

**[www.sccyp.org.uk](http://www.sccyp.org.uk)**

Find out more about your rights and share your views with Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People.

**[www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk)**

Unicef seeks to change attitudes and generate support for children's rights through campaigns in the UK and other countries.

**[www.cybermentors.org.uk](http://www.cybermentors.org.uk)**

A social networking place where you can talk to mentors of your own age.

**[www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)**

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre is dedicated to making sure that young people are safe online.



**T: 0844 800 8600 E: [enquire@respectme.org.uk](mailto:enquire@respectme.org.uk)**



ChildLine is a service provided and funded by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). CHILDREN 1ST (RSSPCC) delivers the ChildLine service in Scotland on behalf of the NSPCC. NSPCC registered charity numbers 216401 and SC037717.

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# Bullying...

## What can I do?

Advice  
for children  
and young  
people

# Bullying...

## What can I do?

This booklet gives young people practical help and advice about dealing with bullying behaviour. It has been developed by respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, and has been put together in partnership with ChildLine and children and young people. It's designed to give you the confidence and skills to make better choices when dealing with bullying situations.

You won't read about 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels like this can stick for life and don't help anyone. We want young people involved in bullying to recognise that they can change their behaviour. And we want young people who are experiencing bullying to understand that things can get better and there are people who can help.

### So, what is bullying?

Bullying is never acceptable; it doesn't make you a better or stronger person, and it should never be seen as a normal part of growing up. Bullying is behaviour that can make you feel frightened, threatened, left out and hurt. The following advice is for children and young people who have felt like this and for those who might have made others feel that way too.

#### Bullying behaviour can be:

- Being called names, being teased or made fun of
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked
- Having belongings taken or damaged
- Being ignored, left out, or having rumours spread about you
- Receiving abusive text messages or emails
- Being targeted because of who you are or how people see you

Something only has to happen once to make you feel worried or scared to go to school or other places you enjoy going to.

People can get bullied just for being different – the colour of their skin, their accent, their beliefs, a disability or the clothes they wear. The truth is that **everyone is different in their own way**, but it can hurt because it's as if you're being bullied for just being you. This might make you want to act differently or change something about yourself just to 'fit in'. Remember – you have a right to be you! Being different isn't the problem – the problem is often other people's attitude towards what makes us different.

Cyberbullying happens online through social networks and instant messaging sites like Bebo, Facebook and MSN – or via mobile phones. Nasty or hurtful texts are sent or messages are posted online which can leave you feeling hurt, embarrassed or scared. These messages can be seen by a lot of people in a short space of time but, because it's not face-to-face bullying, people sometimes don't know who is targeting them. But cyberbullying is just as serious and can have the same effect as bullying in 'real life'.



# How do I know... if it's bullying?

Some people think it's only bullying if it happens more than once, and the other person means to hurt you. A lot of bullying does happen over and over again, and the person doing it knows it's having an effect, but that isn't always the case.

Something only needs to happen once for you to feel worried or scared to go to school or other places you enjoy going to. Just because someone doesn't realise how hurtful their behaviour is doesn't mean it's not bullying. What matters is how their behaviour makes you **feel**. If you are worried or scared, you might need help and support to deal with things.

At the same time, it's important to remember that fall outs and disagreements are a normal part of life for most people; we can't get on with everyone all the time and this isn't always bullying.

Even if you're just 'having a laugh' the other person might not see it that way – or it could be hurting them more than they're letting on.

If you're being beaten up, this is assault, it's not bullying. If someone is filming this to post online or share with other people, it can provide evidence that can be used by the police.

If you're being threatened in a sexual way or being pressured into doing something that you don't want to do, this is not bullying. There are laws to protect you from this type of behaviour.

Being forced to give things like your mobile or your money to someone else might be called bullying by some people, but it can also be called theft.

## Do you think you might have bullied someone?

### Consider these statements:

- Do you join in when others are being nasty to or about someone?
- Do you laugh at people or the stories about them?
- Do you send or pass on hurtful messages or images of people?
- Do you think it is okay to threaten or frighten people that you don't like?
- Have you ever made someone else feel scared, anxious, worried or left out?

All of these can be seen as bullying behaviour. Sometimes people don't realise the impact their behaviour is having and sometimes they do, so try to be more aware of what you're saying and doing and how it might be affecting others. Even if you're just 'having a laugh' the other person might not see it that way – or it could be hurting them more than they're letting on.

The consequences for bullying behaviour can be serious; you can be excluded from school, clubs and activities, it might affect how people think about you now and in the future, and you won't learn the skills you need to make good relationships. You need to know what's wrong with the way you're behaving and get help to see how you should behave instead.



We think this message helps:

**You don't have to play with me, agree with me or even like me... but you do have to respect me!**

You can't expect to 'like' everyone you meet, and that's okay, but turning that into actions, threats, shouting abuse or posting nasty comments is not okay.

Respecting people, even if you don't like them, means leaving them alone. If you don't like their style of clothes or music, choice of football team or where they come from, there is nothing you can or should do about it - let them be who they are and they should do the same for you.

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# 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. This includes your right to a childhood, an education, to be treated fairly, to be listened to, and to be as healthy as possible.

These rights are there to protect you, to give you a voice, and they apply to every single child and young person – that's you and the person who sits next to you in school, or the person who lives next door. Bullying behaviour can take some of these rights away from you so it's important that you are familiar with what they are:

- You have the right to think what you want without stopping someone else from enjoying the same right.
- You have the right to be safe but so does everyone else, so you also have the responsibility not to do something that might make someone else feel unsafe.
- You have the right to relax and take part in leisure activities and you have a responsibility not to behave in a way that stops other people from doing this.
- Adults have a responsibility to make sure you enjoy these rights at home, at school and in your community.
- You can find out more information on your rights at [www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk) or [www.sccyp.org.uk](http://www.sccyp.org.uk)



# Coping with your feelings

Everyone will deal with bullying behaviour differently. Some people can 'bounce back', but for others the feelings are harder to deal with.

We all need love, praise and recognition in our lives; we need friends and interests in and out of school and a place where we feel we belong. These things can give us confidence and help us to deal with problems. 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.

There are good ways and some not so good ways to cope with bullying behaviour. 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 behaviour stop, but they will help you to manage your feelings. Just being listened to can help you to feel better, more supported and less alone; just as listening to a friend can help them to 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 groups or clubs in your area or online, where you feel you can fit in better - such as groups for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender young people, groups for young people who care for sick parents, or groups that you feel represent **you**.

It is important to remember that feeling bad doesn't last forever and things can get better.

# So what can I do?

When it comes to bullying behaviour there's a lot of information out there telling you what you should do, some good and some not so good. There isn't always one 'right' answer. What worked for someone else might not always work for you, it will depend on your situation and what feels right, but you don't have to limit yourself to trying just one thing.

To help make sense of it all here's our guide to some of the common advice which is given about bullying...

## 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 remember that telling the right adult really can make a difference. Talk to someone you can trust. It might be 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 do the best for you.

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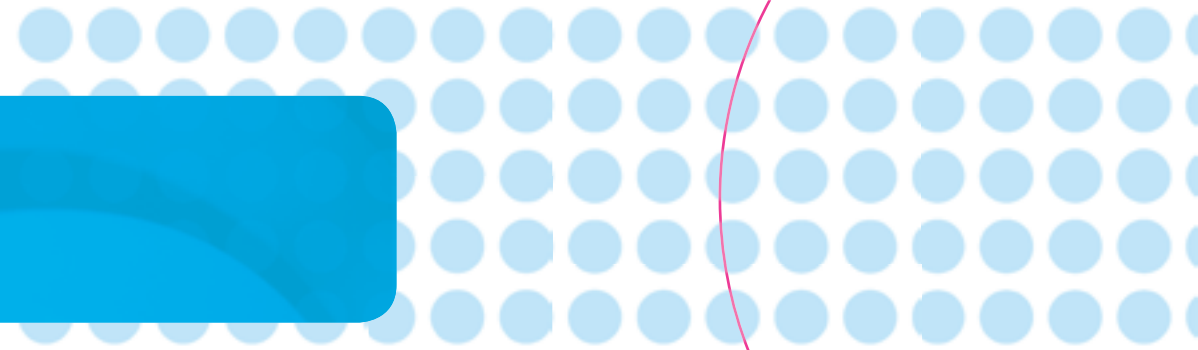
# Don't bottle things up

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 behaviour, you can still talk to a friend or someone else you trust about how you feel.

You might find it easier to tell a friend than an adult. A good friend will listen without judging or trying to fix the situation. If you do need adult help but find it difficult to approach someone, a friend can help by going with you or passing the information on. Don't forget there are lots of other ways to express yourself that can help with your feelings, like art, sport, music or drama.

You might also be able to get some support at school, online or at the other places you go to. Buddy systems, peer mentoring and counselling are there to help people find a way to deal 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 the **Bullying Line (0800 44 1111)** and speak to an adult in confidence.





## Ignore it/ Walk away/ Pretend it doesn't bother you

Being able to walk away 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 laugh off nasty comments or other types of bullying behaviour and pretend that you're okay when you're not. You might be able to hide your feelings from people, but those feelings are still there and you need to do something to help you deal with them.

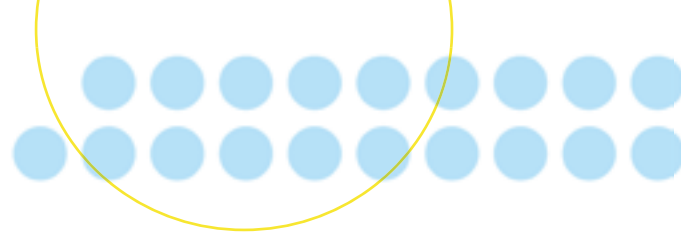
Walking away doesn't work so well when the bullying is happening online, at places you enjoy going to, or places that you might *have* to go to – like your school, your Church or your Mosque.

If you can try walking away, ignoring it or pretending it doesn't bother you then you should, but if it's not an option then you need to think about trying something else.

## 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 messages.



## Ask them to stop

If you can do this then try it – the person bullying you might not be aware of how they're affecting you, and this 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.



You might be able to hide your feelings from people, but those feelings are still there and you need to do something to help you deal with them.

## Use a witty/clever comeback

Some people are witty enough to respond to people who are bullying them with a clever comeback. But you have to be quite confident to do this; it's not something that everyone will be able to do, and you should weigh up the situation and be prepared for the reaction you might get. No one wants to be embarrassed in front of other people so it might make them react more strongly/violently than they did before. Try to judge whether you might make things worse before taking this approach.



# Get your own back

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 is violent towards you then this can be assault and it might 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.

But bullying behaviour isn't always physical. If you're being bullied online, it can be easy to send back nasty comments or spread rumours about someone else on your MSN or Facebook page, but again this is risky. There are also laws about cyberbullying and every online message or text can be traced. Despite what people think, responding to bullying with more bullying doesn't make it go away.



So there are lots of different options available to you if you're being bullied, and you might not know where to start! Whatever you decide, make sure it feels right for you. If it's all a bit much and you're not sure where to turn, it might help to talk to someone in confidence.

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# What can you expect from ChildLine?



When you are having a hard time it can help to talk to someone about what's happening. You can contact ChildLine about anything, no problem is too big or too small.

If you are feeling scared or out of control or just want to talk to someone, you can contact ChildLine.

When you call **ChildLine on 0800 1111** or contact us for a 1-2-1 chat online **www.childline.org.uk** you will be connected to a counsellor who will listen to whatever is concerning you. The counsellor won't judge you or put you down – they are someone you can trust.

**You can get back in touch with us at anytime, even if you didn't tell us anything the first time you contacted us.**

You don't need to give us your name or any details about yourself if you don't want to. We might ask you some questions to try and understand how you are feeling or to help you talk about it. You don't have to answer them if you don't want to but by contacting us you have taken the first step to changing things. We will help you think about what needs to change in your life and who might support you to make these changes. This might feel difficult at first but looking at what needs to be different is important to help stop what is happening to you.

You can get back in touch with us at anytime, even if you didn't tell us anything the first time you contacted us.

You can also contact us by sending and email or posting on the ChildLine message boards at **www.childline.org.uk**



# Case Study

Josh called ChildLine late one Sunday night, he wanted to ask what would happen if he didn't go back to school on Monday - "just tell me if I'll get into trouble" he said to the counsellor. The counsellor explained that because he was 13, he had to go to school but said that it sounded like he really didn't want to be there.

Josh said that he had been getting picked on by boys in his year. If he got a question wrong in class everyone would laugh at him and call him "thick", he got pushed around in the dinner queue and no-one spent time with him during breaks. It all started when Josh's mum got ill and he couldn't stay on the football team because he had to go home to look after her and his little sister. He was their best player and the team kept losing because he couldn't play. Josh said he didn't blame them for hating him.

The counsellor asked Josh about things he enjoyed at school and he talked about being really good at football and basketball - he enjoyed PE but couldn't go to class any more because the boys kept tackling him hard and pushing him when he got the ball. The PE teacher said it was a physical game and that Josh needed to toughen up a bit - "I have bruises all over my legs and arms - how tough do I need to be?" he asked the counsellor. Josh didn't want to go to school because on Monday he has PE and he couldn't cope anymore.

The counsellor listened to Josh and helped him think about what was happening and how he felt about it all. He was angry that he couldn't do PE because of the way they were treating him and angry with his teacher too for not helping him. The counsellor also talked to Josh about maybe needing some help to care for mum - he didn't like talking about it but admitted he was finding it very hard. With the counsellor's help Josh thought about what he could do to change things, starting with talking to his mum. Josh hadn't wanted to worry her but could see that she would want to know that he was having a hard time.

Josh said he knew it would all take time to sort out, but he felt better after talking to someone who believed him and wanted to help.

*This is an example of what might happen when you call ChildLine, not a record of an actual call. ChildLine is a confidential service for children and young people which means we don't share what you tell us with others without your permission.*

# Remember...



Bullying is never acceptable. It can make you feel frightened, hurt, threatened and anxious. Some of you will cope better with this than others. Some people will need to try different things before finding something that works - what works for one person might not work for you, but you have choices. When you're being bullied, it can be difficult to know what to do or where to turn to make it stop. Hopefully what you've read here can help you see that you do have choices and you don't have to go through this on your own.

All of the adults in your life have a responsibility to make sure you're safe. There are organisations that help them to understand bullying behaviour, the impact it can have and how to support you if you're having difficulties.

Relationships with your friends are incredibly important and what other people think about you can matter. No one expects you to be friends or get along with everyone; that's unrealistic. But not being friends with someone doesn't mean picking on them or singling them out, it means just leaving them alone.

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