

understanding bullying

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

This could be:

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

Bullying can increase the risk of developing mental health problems for everyone involved, particularly those experiencing the bullying.

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

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 on social networking sites, like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok or Snapchat)

This type of bullying can be anonymous and posted online where it can be seen by lots of people. And it can go on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so people don't get a rest from it. Bullying can also be done secretly, like doing or saying something behind someone's back. This can be harder to see, but it's no less damaging.

Bullying is not OK. It's not simply 'a normal part of growing up', and help is always available to make things better.

Unfortunately bullying is common. If you're having problems with bullying, it's important to build your supports and know you're not alone. Building a support network of family, friends, Elders, staff from school or work and/or mental health professionals is important to get support and put a stop to bullying as quickly as possible.

Why does bullying happen?

There are many reasons why someone might use bullying behaviour. People who bully may have experienced bullying, trauma or violence themselves. It's still important to remember though, this doesn't make it OK. People 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 healthier 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.

It's important to know that bullying is very complex, and it can change depending on the situation or who's around. A person might use, experience or be a bystander to bullying behaviour. Each of these different roles can have a negative impact on mental health and can make experiencing mental health problems more likely.

What are the effects of bullying?

Anyone who has experienced bullying might feel:

afraid	alone	unsafe
angry	stressed	humiliated
ashamed	rejected	

Sometimes a person feels there is no escape and does things to 'fit in', like changing their appearance or acting differently. They may believe some of the awful things said about them, which can impact their sense of self. Sometimes they might want to hurt others, or themselves, because of it.

Being bullied can affect a person's performance at school, uni, TAFE or work, and can continue to affect them through adulthood.

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

Young people report 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 tough time, or reaching out if you're struggling yourself.

What can you do about bullying?

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

- **Stay calm.** Try focusing on your breathing as a way to stay calm. Staying calm and not showing that you are overwhelmed can help you to feel better.
- **Don't fight back**, as this can make the situation worse, get yourself hurt or blamed for starting the trouble.
- **Try to ignore the bullying** by calmly turning and walking away. If the person doing the bullying tries to stop or block you, try to be firm and clear. Having friends to stand with you or walk you away is a great idea in these moments.
- **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. They can support you and help you find ways to get the bullying to stop.
- **Get some more information.** Schools, universities, TAFES and workplaces have anti-bullying policies that can help you to find out what you can do.