



being bullied?

Most people who've gone to a school, a university, who go to work, who have brothers or sisters or who are part of a sports team or club will have seen some form of bullying.

It might have been that there was one girl in your class that you'd never speak to, it might've been that you were always called names, or that you've noticed that rumours about a workmate are spreading through the office.

It's sad but true; bullying happens in all areas of our lives. And, if we don't deal with it as soon as we can, it can result in us not coping at school, university or work, losing self-esteem and, in some cases, developing depression or anxiety.



"I'm 20 years old now, but I feel much older. I have suffered depression most of my short life..."

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying isn't a one-off incident—a friend being in a bad mood one day, calling you a name and then apologising later. It's when the name-calling or the hitting or the threats go on for some time that it becomes bullying. There are many forms of bullying. Some examples are:

- People calling you names, starting rumours about you or making up things to get you in trouble.
- People making abusive phone calls, sending mean or rude text messages to your mobile or posting insulting material about you on the Internet.
- People stealing your money or things you own, or intentionally leaving you out of group activities.
- People hitting, pinching or pushing you or threatening you with weapons.

Often bullies can work out what to say to make you upset. They might put you down because of your weight, your looks, your work. People mainly get bullied because they're different—it might be because they do well, or have a disability or a different religion or culture, or are older or younger than their classmates or workmates.

Being depressed, scared or sensitive can also make you a target for bullying.

"I'm 20 years old now, but I feel much older. I have suffered depression most of my short life.

I was always more introverted than the other kids. I liked to be by myself and was extremely emotional. All through primary school I felt different... My twin brother and I were bullied quite horribly through our school lives. They started bullying me because I was too quiet—then they continued because I was too loud, too outspoken. I didn't belong anywhere and I still feel that way very often.

Nicole, age 20."

WHY DO WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT BULLYING?

Bullying's a serious problem. It disrupts your life and may cause ongoing physical and emotional health problems. 'Sticks and stones' can break your bones but words can harm you too, causing you to:

- Hate your school, university or workplace, not turn up or drop out.
- Lose self-esteem.
- Develop depression or even contemplate suicide in more severe cases.

Bullies themselves often have problems that lead to them acting the way they do. They may need to talk to someone about what's going on in their lives as well.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU'RE BEING BULLIED?

If you're being bullied, let someone know. Tell a friend, a teacher, a lecturer, a supervisor or your parents. If you don't want to talk to someone face to face, you could try writing a note or an email to someone you trust which lets them know what's happening and how you feel.

Sometimes it's easier to talk to someone you don't know and that's where services like Kids Help Line and Lifeline come in handy. We've included phone numbers for these services in the box below.

If you're being bullied, you probably don't want the bully to know you're telling someone about them. It's best to choose a time and a place where the conversation won't be noticed by others. You might want to go into a private office, or stay behind after class to talk to a teacher or tutor.

Stick to areas where you feel safe and hang out with people you trust. Bullies won't normally pick on you as much when there are other people around.

WHAT CAN I DO IF SOMEONE I KNOW IS BEING BULLIED?

It's important to listen to them and encourage them to talk about what's going on without blaming them for it. Find out when and where they're being bullied so you can offer better advice about how to avoid it happening in the future.

If you think they might have anxiety, depression or an emotional problem which is causing or resulting from the bullying, they may need to see a counsellor, a doctor or another health professional (see the help is out there factsheet which lists the types of services that are available).

If the bullying is occurring at school, you should discuss the problem with the school authorities such as the senior teachers, year level coordinators or a school counsellor and work with them to find a solution. If bullying is happening to someone you know, it's likely that it's happening to others as well.



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If you want to talk to someone about what's going on, you can call:

Lifeline 131 114

Lifeline is a national 24-hour counselling service for all ages. [www.lifeline.org.au]

Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800

Kids Help Line is a national 24-hour counselling service for children and young people (under 18). There is also an online chat-based help service on their website. [www.kidshelp.com.au]

MORE INFORMATION

The OzHelp Foundation

1300 OZHELP (1300 694 357)

www.ozhelp.org.au

BeyondBlue

For information about depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* info line on 1300 22 4636

For further bullying links and resources, visit

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/bullying/reslinks.htm> For further information about depression and anxiety, visit <http://www.ybblue.com.au>

SOURCES

Bullying Online [www.bullying.co.uk] Kids Help Line [www.kidshelp.com.au] Rey J. (2002). More than just the blues: Understanding serious teenage problems. Rigby K. (1997). What children tell us about bullying in schools. Children Australia.