

# UNDERSTANDING BULLYING

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Bullying is an increasingly relevant issue to many people in our society. Whether it be in the school setting, home or wider community, many people find themselves either being bullied or themselves using bullying behaviour.

Children and adults with disabilities are a particularly vulnerable group and a recent national survey found that more than 56 per cent

of students with disabilities had experienced bullying over a 12-month period.

The reality is, any case of bullying is about two people who are experiencing their own difficulties in life and both the "bully" and the one being "bullied" require support.

**Why are some people more likely to be targets to bullying?**

A bully will seek out people they see as weaker than them or they see as a threat in some way. Being 'weaker' than the bully doesn't necessarily mean physically – it's often how you feel about yourself that counts. If you feel and come across

to others as self-confident and happy with yourself you are less likely to be a target. Bullies seek out those who come across as weak, easily controlled by another or are vain and big-headed; i.e. those who display victim-like behaviour.

**Why do some people bully?**

Bullies often feel as though they are not totally equipped to respond to parts of their life.

For example, some who bully may feel:

- Unstable at home / or have unmet needs from key people in their life.



## TIPS TO REMEMBER:

1. We are all responsible for our own behaviour choices. We are unable to change the behaviour of any other person (i.e., the person bullying) but we can change our own response and behaviours we choose to use.
2. Reacting to another person by attacking them back is allowing them to see that they are successfully impacting you – you are presenting as a victim and giving them the outcome they wanted – a reaction. The bullying behaviour wins this round and the target 'loses'.
3. Most importantly, you are an awesome, amazing lovable being – no words or actions from any other person can EVER change that. Stay connected to this and you will feel no one can influence you and how you feel about you.

- Like they are struggling and feel like a failure with their school work.
- Like they want to have friends but keep getting rejected. They then develop a pattern of behaviour leading to guaranteed rejection ... this way rejection is within their control as they have ensured it WILL happen by their behaviour choice!
- Like the target is a threat or competition to them in some way. For example:
  - you might take my friend away from me or you're better at school work than me, you always beat me at running etc.

A bully bullies in an attempt to regain control over something or anything in their life. If they can control your emotions, feelings or behaviours, they feel like they have got some control back!

It's important to note that this is not an excuse for bullying behaviour, rather an understanding of WHY someone is bullying.

### How to spot a bully

Bullies look just like everyone else! They can be small or big, tall or short, quiet or loud

- the only thing they all have in common is that they're trying to get a reaction from another person. They may be trying to control your emotions and reactions by hurting you in some way – either physically or emotionally. If someone is doing things on purpose to try and make you angry, sad, frustrated, it is likely they are trying to bully you.

### How do I know if someone I care about is involved in bullying in some way?

It's important that there's an honest and open relationship between adult and child so that they are comfortable talking about what's happening in their life. Being non-judgemental is crucial here. Without this environment a child is less likely to open up.

Keep an eye out of changes in behaviour that might indicate the child is struggling with something. Signs may include:

- Any behaviour that is not this person's norm.
- Feeling sick before going to a place where bullying behaviour might be.
- Withdrawn and held back.
- Intense emotional responses to things that don't seem a "big deal".

When changes in behaviour occur, we need to foster a supportive environment to help understand from the child's perspective what is going on in their life.

## STOPPING THE BULLYING - DOS AND DON'TS

### DO

- Offer zero response to the bullying behaviour
- Always go away from the bully behaviour - it's easier not to respond when you

are not around it

- Always seek out another person - one of your peers or a trusted adult. This way you are not alone with the bullying behaviour
- Keep telling an adult until you get the right help
- Act "self-assured" and "confident" - Remember you are an awesome, amazing, lovable being. No one can ever change that.

### DO NOT

- React to the bullying behaviour in any way. This gives them what they want – a reaction from you
- Stay with the bullying behaviour
- Go to an isolated place (toilet blocks, oval, bushes)
- Keep your bullying experience a secret
- Do not act "cocky" or "unsure"
- Don't believe the message that the person is sending via their bullying. This is only a reflection of them and how they feel about themselves.

*Adapted from the Understanding Bullying Factsheet from Fabric. Fabric is a Multi-Disciplinary Behaviour Specialist Centre that offers a complete range of services to support children, teenagers and adults to develop the understanding and life skills required to live their full potential. In addition to in-person workshops and sessions, Fabric's services are predominately available online so are available to all no matter where you are. Call 07 5530 5099 or visit [www.fabric.com.au](http://www.fabric.com.au)*

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