

## Teens and Bullying

Bullying is when a person is picked on over and over again by an individual or group with more power, either in terms of physical strength or social standing. Two of the main reasons people are bullied are because of appearance and social status. Bullies pick on the kids they think don't fit in, maybe because of how they look, how they act (for example, kids who are shy and withdrawn), their race or religion, or because the bullies think their target may be gay or lesbian.

Some Teen bullies attack their targets physically, which can mean anything from shoving or tripping to punching or hitting or even sexual assault. Others use psychological control or verbal insults to put themselves in charge. For example, people in popular groups or cliques often bully people they categorize as different by excluding them or gossiping about them (psychological bullying). They may also taunt or tease their targets (verbal bullying). Verbal bullying can also involve sending cruel instant or email messages or even posting insults about a person on a website - practices that are known as cyberbullying.

One of the most painful aspects of Teen bullying is its relentlessness. The seemingly never-ending nature of bullying can put a person in a state of constant fear, and guys and girls who are bullied may find their schoolwork and health suffering. One Bullied Teen began having stomach pains and diarrhea and was diagnosed with a digestive condition called irritable bowel syndrome as a result of the stress that came from being bullied throughout ninth grade. Other Teens have spent their afternoons hungry and unable to concentrate in class because he was too afraid to go to the school cafeteria at lunchtime.

Studies show that people who are abused by their peers are at risk for mental health problems, such as depression or anxiety. They may also think about suicide more.

Teen Bullies are at risk for problems, too. Bullying is violence, and it often leads to more violent behavior as the bully grows up. As many as one out of four elementary school bullies have a criminal record by the time they are 30. Some teen bullies end up being rejected by their peers and lose friendships as they grow older. Teen Bullies may also fail in school and not have the career or relationship success that other people enjoy.

### Who Bullies?

Both guys and girls can be Teen bullies. Bullies may be outgoing and aggressive. Or a bully can appear reserved on the surface, but may try to manipulate people in subtle, deceptive ways, like anonymously starting a damaging rumor just to see what happens.

Many Teen bullies share some common characteristics. They like to dominate others and are generally focused on themselves. They often have poor social skills and poor social judgment.

Although most bullies think they're hot stuff and have the right to push people around, others are actually insecure. They put other people down to make themselves feel more interesting or powerful. And some bullies act the way they do because they've been hurt by bullies in the past - maybe even a bullying figure in their own family, like a parent or other adult.

Some teen bullies actually have personality disorders that don't allow them to understand normal social emotions like guilt, empathy, compassion, or remorse. These people need help from a mental health professional like a psychiatrist or psychologist.

### What Can You Do?

For younger kids, the best way to solve a teen bullying problem is to tell an adult. For teens, the tell-an-adult approach depends on the bullying situation. One situation in which it is vital to report Teen bullying is if it threatens to lead to physical danger and harm. Numerous high schoolers have died when stalking, threats, and attacks went unreported and the silence gave the bully license to become more and more violent. Adults in positions of authority - parents, teachers, or coaches - can often find ways to resolve dangerous bullying problems without the bully ever finding out how they came to know about it.

If you're in a Teen bullying situation that you think may escalate into physical violence, try to avoid being alone (and if you have a friend in this situation, spend as much time as you can with him or her). Try to remain part of a group by walking home at the same time as other people or by sticking close to friends or classmates during the times that the bullying takes place.

Here are some things you can do to combat psychological and verbal bullying. They're also good tips to share with a friend as a way to show your support:

Ignore the bully and walk away. It's definitely not a coward's response - sometimes it can be harder than losing your temper. Teen Bullies thrive on the reaction they get, and if you walk away, or ignore hurtful emails or instant messages, you're telling the bully that you just don't care. Sooner or later the bully will probably get bored with trying to bother you. Walk tall and hold your head high. Using this type of body language sends a message that you're not vulnerable.

Hold the anger. Who doesn't want to get really upset with a bully? But that's exactly the response he or she is trying to get. Teen Bullies want to know they have control over your emotions. If you're in a situation where you have to deal with a bully and can't walk away with poise, use humor - it can throw the bully off guard. Work out your anger in another way, such as through exercise.

Don't get physical. However you choose to deal with a bully, don't use physical force (like kicking, hitting, or pushing). Not only are you showing your anger, you can never be sure what the bully will do in response.

Talk about it. It may help to talk to a guidance counselor, teacher, or friend - anyone who can give you the support you need. Talking can be a good outlet for the fears and frustrations that can build when you're being bullied.

Find your (true) friends. If you've been bullied with mean rumors or gossip, all of the above tips (especially ignoring and not reacting) can apply. But take it one step further to help ease feelings of hurt and isolation. Find one or two true friends and confide that mean gossip has hurt your feelings. Set the record straight by telling your friends quietly and confidently what's true and not true about you. Hearing a friend say, "I know the rumor's not true. I didn't pay attention to it," can help you realize that most of the time people see gossip for what it is - petty, rude, and immature.

If You have a teen Bullying problem, either if you are being bullied or you realise that you are a teen bully and want to mend your ways:- why not anonymous tell us your story and our readers will offer you their advice... What you do with that advice is up to you.

### About the Author

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