

For Kids

Dealing With Bullies

Have you ever met a bully? A bully is a boy or girl who acts mean or hurtful to others. Bullies pick on someone else as a way to get power, or to get their way, or to feel important.

Bullies sometimes hit, kick, or push to hurt people, and they sometimes use words to call names, tease, or scare them. A bully might say mean things about someone, grab a kid's stuff, make fun of someone, or leave a kid out of the group on purpose. Some bullies threaten people or try to make them do things they don't want to do.

Bullying Is a Big Deal

Bullying is a big problem that affects lots of kids. Being bullied can make kids feel scared, sad, worried, or embarrassed. The stress of dealing with bullies can even give kids a stomachache!

Having bullies around can take the fun out of school. Some kids feel afraid to go to the lunchroom, the bathroom, or the playground because of bullies. It's hard to keep your mind on schoolwork or enjoy your friends when you're worried about how you're going to get around the bully near your locker. Bullying bothers everyone — and not just the kids who are getting picked on. No one likes a bully.

Why Do Bullies Act So Bad?

Some bullies are just looking for attention. They might think bullying is a way to be popular or to get what they want. Most bullies are trying to make themselves feel more important — when they pick on someone else, it makes them feel big and powerful.

Some bullies come from families where everyone is angry and shouting all the time. They may think that being angry, calling names, and pushing people around is a normal way to act. Some bullies are copying what they've seen someone else do. Some have been bullied themselves.

Sometimes a bully knows that what he or she is doing or saying hurts other people. But other bullies may not really know how hurtful their actions can be. Most bullies don't understand or care about the feelings of others.

Bullies often pick on someone they think they can have power over. They might pick on kids who get upset easily or who have trouble sticking up for themselves. Getting a big reaction out of someone can make bullies feel like they have the power they want. Sometimes bullies pick on someone who is smarter than they are or different from them in some way. Sometimes bullies just pick on a kid for no reason at all.

What to Do About Bullying

Bullying can be a big pain, but you don't have to let bullying get the best of you and your buddies. Here are some things to try if you're bothered by a bully:

- **Act brave.** When you're scared of another person, you're probably not feeling your bravest. But sometimes just acting brave is enough to stop a bully. If you walk by as though you're not afraid and hold your head high, a bully may be less likely to give you trouble.
- **Ignore a bully.** Simply ignoring a bully's threats and walking away robs the bully of his or her fun. Bullies want a big reaction to their teasing and meanness. Acting as if you don't notice and don't care is like giving no reaction at all, and this just might stop a bully's behaviour.
- **Stand up for yourself.** Kids can stand up for themselves with words by telling the bully to stop it, and then walk away. Kids also can stand up for each other by telling a bully to stop teasing or scaring someone else, and then walk away together.
- **Tell an adult.** If you are being bullied, it's very important to tell an adult. Teachers, principals, parents, and lunchroom helpers at school can all help to stop bullying.
- **Be a buddy.** Kids who are being bullied can use the buddy system. Make a plan to walk with a friend or two on the way to school or recess or lunch or wherever you think you might meet the bully. Offer to do the same for a friend who's having trouble with a bully.
- **Don't bully back.** Don't hit, kick, or push back to deal with someone bullying you or your friends. Fighting back just satisfies a bully and it's dangerous, too, because someone could get hurt. It's best to stay with others, stay safe, and get help from an adult.

What Happens to Bullies?

In the end, most bullies wind up in trouble. If they keep acting mean and hurtful, sooner or later they may have only a few friends left — usually other kids who are just like them. The power they wanted slips away fast. Other kids move on and leave bullies behind.

Some kids who bully blame others. But every kid has a choice about how to act. Some kids who bully realize that they don't get the respect they want by threatening others. They may have thought that bullying would make them popular, but they soon find out that other kids just think of them as troublemaking losers.

The good news is that kids who are bullies can learn to change their behaviour. Teachers, counsellors, and parents can help. So can watching kids who treat others fairly and with respect. Bullies can change if they learn to use their power in positive ways.

Some bullies realize that they need to change their behaviour if they want to earn more respect and have more friends. Some bullies need to learn how to control their own angry feelings. In the end, whether bullies decide to change their ways is up to them. Some bullies turn into great kids. Some bullies never learn.

But no one needs to put up with a bully's miserable behaviour. If you or someone you know is bothered by a bully, get an adult to help. No one deserves to be bullied and there are plenty of ways to get a bully to buzz off!

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For more information visit: www.CanadianCRC.com/Bullying.htm