

Some Facts about Bullying

What is bullying?

The Australian Human Rights Commission defines bullying as “when people repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions against someone or a group of people to cause distress and risk to their wellbeing. These actions are usually done by people who have more influence or power over someone else, or who want to make someone else feel less powerful or helpless”.

Some people think that bullying is any aggressive behaviour and although aggression is a source of concern and needs attention, it is important to separate it from bullying. Bullying is not the same as conflict between people (like having a strong argument or disagreement) or disliking someone, even though people might bully each other because of conflict or dislike.

“Bullying” refers to a range of repeated behaviours that are unreasonable in whatever circumstances the person finds themselves eg in the workplace, in shared living situations, in places of learning or in social groups. It can be physical, verbal or emotional and includes text messages, emails or public statements and behaviour online that are intended to cause distress or harm.

Bullying behaviours include aggression, intimidation, coercion or threatening behaviours.

Examples of bullying include:

- Behaving aggressively either by direct physical abuse or indirectly, by giving nasty looks, making rude gestures, calling names
- Belittling or humiliating comments
- Spreading malicious rumours, or misrepresenting someone (such as using their Facebook account to post messages as if it were them)
- Repeated negative teasing or practical jokes that go too far
- Pressuring someone to behave inappropriately
- Excluding someone from a group (online or in person)
- Making unreasonable demands

Bullying is an abuse of your human rights. You have a right to be in an environment that is respectful, safe and free from violence. Bullying affects each person in different ways.

Common feelings include:

- Shame that this is happening to you
- Feeling hopeless and stuck
- That it is your fault
- Feeling alone, like no-one understands or wants to help
- Feeling unsafe and fearful
- Feeling confused and stressed – not sure what to do

You might feel miserable and powerless, but things can change.

Strategies to stop the bullying

No one deserves or asks to be bullied and telling someone or asking for advice is usually helpful. Even if you don’t want the other person to do anything, sharing your feelings can lighten the load. Talking to a counsellor can help you regain your confidence and self-esteem or assist to make a plan for managing the situation more effectively.

Some suggestions for dealing with verbal bullying (including text or email bullying):

If possible, ignore the bully by walking away when the person approaches you

BULLYING: It's not OK.

Being a supportive bystander

Bullying can have a negative impact on everyone, not just the victim and the bully. If you witness people being bullied you may feel angry, fearful, guilty and sad. You may also feel worried that the bullying could happen to you. When bullying isn't stopped or challenged by anyone it can create an environment where bullying is accepted and where everyone feels powerless to stop it. Bystanders can be either part of the bullying problem or an important part of the solution.

A supportive bystander will use words and/or actions to show respect and protect the rights of the person being bullied.

Some ways to take action include:

- Support the person who is being bullied to ask for help. Offer to go with them to report it, or encourage them to talk to a counsellor.
- Never stand by and watch or encourage bullying behaviour
- Don't harass, tease or spread gossip about others, including on social network sites like Facebook
- Never forward on, or respond to messages or photos that may be offensive or upsetting
- Question rumours when you hear them. Remember there are always at least two sides to every story.
- Make it clear to your friends that you won't be involved in bullying behaviour, including intentionally excluding someone from a social event.

Just as we all have human rights, we also have responsibilities to respect and protect the rights of others and ensure our living, learning and working environments are safe places for all.

Some useful resources:

The [Respect. Now. Always.](#) initiative at UNE provides support and guidance to all UNE community members concerned about threatening or inappropriate behaviour; and includes specific information about what constitutes [bullying](#).

The [UNE Student Grievance Unit](#) in particular can investigate allegations of bullying and assist with resolving concerns about bullying behaviour.

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/what-bullying-violence-harassment-and-bullying-fact-sheet>

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/cyberbullying-what-it-and-how-get-help-violence-harassment-and-bullying-fact-sheet>

<https://au.reachout.com/articles/2-ways-to-deal-with-bullying>

If you would like to talk to a UNE counsellor about any of the issues covered in this tip sheet please contact UNE Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) on 02 6773 2897, or email via AskUNE, to arrange a face-to-face or telephone session.

<http://www.une.edu.au/counselling>

BULLYING: It's not OK.

The support you need to succeed