



Let's talk about: bullying

What is bullying?

Bullying is the deliberate act of hurting somebody physically or emotionally. It can happen anywhere from school, work, online and even at home. It can happen just once or over a longer period of time and can take many forms including:

- Physical bullying - physically hurting somebody in any way
- Verbal bullying - name calling or saying mean things to or about someone
- Cyber bullying - targeting somebody online with abusive messages or by impersonation (when someone pretends to be someone else online to ridicule them - E.g. This could be when someone sets up a fake profile of somebody else)
- Threatening behaviour - being threatening or intimidating towards someone (sometimes this is unspoken and can be in the body language directed at somebody which can sometimes be just as hurtful as saying or doing something physically to somebody)

'There was a girl at school who would just stare at me - it was frightening but because she didn't actually say anything to me, I didn't tell anyone' ~ Meera, 15

Who can it happen to?

Bullying can happen to anyone of any age, gender, social background, race or culture.

What feelings might be triggered for those being bullied?

Being bullied can have a huge effect on the way you feel about yourself and can cause many difficult feelings including:

- Anger - with the bully, yourself and even other people around you if you feel they haven't done enough to help you (sometimes it may feel safer to take our anger out on ourselves or others than with the person we are angry with).





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- Sadness - where you feel unhappy, emotional, and have a lack of motivation to do things you'd normally enjoy.
- Anxiety - When we feel unsafe, our body reacts which can cause us to experience anxious feelings such as increased heart rate, racing thoughts, difficulty focusing on tasks and even sleep and appetite changes.
- Fear - where you feel scared about what's happening and worry about seeing that person and what they might do next.
- Shame - this may cause us to feel like we are somehow to blame for the way we are being treated.

How our difficult feelings might affect what we do and how we might behave

When we feel all these difficult emotions, it might even impact how we behave. Of course, everyone is different but this could be anything from; avoiding answering questions or getting involved in group discussions in class, pretending to be sick so you don't have to go to school, or even avoiding places and activities you might see your bullies - causing you to stop doing the things you enjoy because of fear or shame perhaps. Sometimes, these feelings might also impact on how we act with other people, such as getting annoyed with our family, or not wanting to see our other friends.

'I was teased because my trainers weren't as new as everyone else's - it made me feel really ashamed but I was too embarrassed to tell anyone and instead made excuses not to do PE even though it was my favourite subject. To my teachers, they didn't understand it and I was a real problem, but actually inside I was dealing with my own shame because of what was happening and that was really painful for me' ~ TJ, 13





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What should I do if I'm being bullied?

Any form of bullying is unacceptable and getting it to stop can be difficult by yourself. If you are experiencing bullying, telling somebody you trust might really help.

Taking the first step of reaching out to a friend, family member or someone you live with or even a teacher at school may also help you feel less alone. If this is happening to you, it's important to remember that it is not your fault and nobody deserves to be bullied.

If it's happening online: Of course, bullying online can be slightly different, especially if you don't know who the person is. As social media is often such a big part of life for many young people now, it's not surprising that there has been a huge rise in bullying behaviour being reported online. This can be anything from receiving abusive messages or posts to somebody impersonating you. If this is something you are experiencing, social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram do not tolerate bullying of any form and so we really encourage you to report anything you are not happy with to them directly.

If you are unsure of how to report on a particular platform, asking someone you trust how to go about doing this could be helpful.

What can I do if my friend is being bullied?

It can feel so difficult to see a friend in pain and while it's not your responsibility to solve the problem, there are some things you can do to help a friend in need.

- Encourage them to seek help - either reaching out to a teacher, an adult they trust or even somebody here at Kooth!
- Get some help from someone you trust - if you are worried then it could be useful for you to reach out too so someone else can support your friend as well as you.
- Be supportive - being kind, warm, encouraging is often a great reminder of genuine friendship for those who feel isolated and upset because of bullying.

