

Bullying & peer pressure

The real story

Bullying at school, can often be things like name calling, hitting, happy-slapping or stealing someone's things. It also includes stuff that's less visible, like sending nasty texts or spreading gossip about someone.

People get picked on for lots of reasons. Being bullied can make you dread going to school and can also make you feel depressed, lonely and even suicidal.

If you're being bullied, you're not alone. You might feel that there's no way out but there are lots of ways to get help.

“If people are making nasty remarks about you then it may be because they are jealous.”

Perhaps you're better looking than they are, work harder or perhaps the teachers like you better. One way of dealing with remarks is to simply ignore them each time so that you show them that it isn't having the effect of upsetting you in the way they think.

The bullies will have worked out what buttons to push to make you upset. Don't try to hide it or ignore it - tell a friend, tell a teacher and tell your parents/carers. It won't stop unless you do.

Spotting the signs

Signs someone's being bullied:

- They become unhappy or withdrawn.
- They start missing school.
- They've got physical injuries they don't want to talk about or try to hide.
- They pretend to be ill.

Are you being bullied?

- It probably won't stop until you tell someone you trust.
- Act confidently to send out the message that you're not afraid.
- Stay with others - you're more likely to be picked on if you're on your own.
- Keep a diary and save all text messages as evidence.

Is your friend being bullied?

- Take their worries seriously.
- Stick up for them.
- They might want you to be with them for support when they tell their parents, carers or teacher.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying by text, instant messaging or email messages. It can be making insulting comments about someone on the internet through a website or through social networking sites. It can also be the uploading of embarrassing videos or photographs by people you trusted on the internet or distributing them by mobile phones. This is called 'sexting'.

Do not respond to the messages, save them or take a screen shot as evidence. There are 'report abuse' facilities on many websites.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure is when you think you should do something because other people your age say you should, or because you think everyone else is doing it too. Sometimes people do things because they want to be liked, or they worry that they'll get teased if they don't follow the crowd.

Some of the things you might feel pressure to do now or in the future:

- Wear the same clothes as your mates.
- Drink alcohol, smoke or take drugs.
- Commit a crime.
- Change your friends because your other mates don't like them.
- Skip school.
- Have a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Start having sex.

"It's normal to want to fit in with everyone else, but in the end people will think you're a lot cooler if you learn to make your own decisions."

Just because people say they are doing something, doesn't mean that they are.

Are you feeling peer pressure?

- It's hard if you're the only one saying 'no' but be brave.
- If your friends want you to do something, ask yourself how you really feel about it, and stick to what you believe in.
- If you say 'no' to something, real friends should respect your decision. If they don't, maybe you need to find new friends.
- It's better to have a few friends than lots of friends who try and make you do things you don't want to do.

Is a friend of yours feeling peer pressure?

- If your friend doesn't want to do something either, back them up. This can really help them, and make peer pressure easier to resist.
- Help them to make their own choices - they will gain confidence.
- Don't put pressure on your friends.