

# Conflict with friends

Finding out about what bullying is and the effects of bullying can help you understand what you might be going through. It can also help to know why people bully and what to do if you are being bullied. Getting help is a really important step in feeling better about your relationships, and might help with resolving the conflict you are having.

## Toxic friendships

If you're having a hard time with friends because they are calling you names or spreading rumours then you need to think seriously about whether these people are really friends.

Bullying is 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.

## What is bullying?

Bullying is not the same as conflict between people (like having a fight) or disliking someone, even though people might bully each other because of conflict or dislike.

Some repeated behaviour that can be considered bullying includes:

- > *keeping someone out of a group (online or offline)*
- > *giving nasty looks, making rude gestures, name calling, being rude and impolite, and constant negative teasing*
- > *spreading rumours or lies, or misrepresenting someone (eg. using their Facebook account to post messages as if it were them)*
- > *harassing someone based on their race, sex, religion, gender or a disability.*
- > *intentionally and repeatedly hurting someone physically*

Bullying can happen anywhere. It can be in schools, at home, at work, in online social spaces, via text messaging or via email. It can be physical, verbal, emotional, and it also includes messages, public statements and behaviour online intended to cause distress or harm (also known as cyberbullying).

## What's the effect of bullying?

Bullying affects everyone in different ways. But there are common feelings that come up when you are being bullied. These include feeling:

### This might help if...

- > *You're having a fight with friends*
- > *You think you might be being bullied*
- > *You're not sure what to do about your group of friends*

### Take action...

- > *Get more info on bullying and the law*
- > *Build your self-confidence*
- > *Talk to someone you trust – it's important to have support*

- > *guilty, like it is your fault*
- > *hopeless and stuck like you can't get out of the situation*
- > *alone, like there is no one to help you*
- > *like you don't fit in*
- > *depressed and rejected by your friends and other groups of people*
- > *unsafe and afraid*
- > *confused and stressed out wondering what to do and why this is happening to you*
- > *feeling ashamed that this is happening to you.*

## Why do people bully?

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People bully for different reasons. Those who bully persistently are likely to do so in order to dominate others and improve their social status. They may have high self-esteem, show little regret for their bullying behaviour and not see bullying as wrong.

Other people may bully out of anger or frustration, they may struggle socially and could have also been victims of bullying.

## What you can do to stop bullies

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If you are being bullied, you should talk to someone you know well and trust; they will give you much needed support and will often have suggestions you hadn't considered for helping with the situation. You might feel more comfortable taking someone with you when talking to the friend who is bullying you, or when seeking help. If you feel you might get too nervous to speak, write down what you'd like to say on paper or in an email.

None of us want to lose friends, and often people don't think their behaviour through properly, so it's usually a good idea to try and talk to the person if you can. If you feel safe and confident, you should approach them and tell them that their behaviour is unwanted and not acceptable, and talk to them about how it has affected you. However, if they don't change their behaviour, then maybe they aren't a real friend – and you should let them go.

## Getting help

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You should always seek help if you need it. If you don't have someone you can talk to, or it hasn't helped you work through the problem, contact a support service who have qualified people that can help you talk through it. Check out the Getting help section on ReachOut.com for information on who can help.