

BULLYING - YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Ways to Help Cope

Nearly everyone is bullied at some time in their lives: by brothers and sisters, by neighbors, by adults or by other children. If you are being bullied, you may feel scared, vulnerable and quite alone but you owe it to yourself to try and sort out the situation so that the bullying stops. Remember, no one deserves to be bullied.

It is surprising that all sorts of people who are now very successful adults were bullied when they were young. It is encouraging to know that it is possible to succeed, in spite of being tormented at school. All of these well-known people were bullied at school: Phil Collins, Harrison Ford, Mel Gibson, Tom Cruise, Michelle Pfeiffer, Frank Bruno and many others.

For some, the bullying went on for years; for others it was less frequent. All of them feel that bullying is wrong and that it was not their fault, but the fault of the bully looking for a victim.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM BEING BULLIED?

Your school may already have a way of dealing with bullying. For example, some schools have anti-bullying guidelines and procedures for dealing with incidents encouraging anyone who is being bullied or has witnessed bullying to tell someone about it, have 'bully boxes' where people can leave notes about what is happening, have student meetings or even 'courts' where problems like bullying are discussed and dealt with, have specially assigned students or teachers who are there to help.

- If your school has an anti-bullying system, use it to get help. If you're not sure how it works, then talk to a teacher. Some schools ignore bullying, but don't become resigned to being a victim. You can still help yourself and ask others to help you.
- Tell a friend what is happening. Ask him or her to help you. It will be harder for the bully to pick on you if you have a friend with you for support.
- Try to ignore the bullying or say 'No' really firmly, then turn and walk away. Don't worry if people think you are running away. Remember, it is very hard for the bully to go on bullying someone who won't stand still to listen.
- Try not to show that you are upset or angry. Bullies love to get a reaction - it's 'fun'. If you can keep calm and hide your emotions, they might get bored and leave you alone. As one teenager said to us, 'they can't bully you if you don't care'.
- Don't fight back if you can help it. Most bullies are bigger or stronger than you. If you fight back you could make the situation worse, get hurt or be blamed for starting the

trouble.

- It's not worth getting hurt to keep possessions or money. If you feel threatened, give the bullies what they want. Property can be replaced, you can't.
- Try to think up funny or clever replies in advance. Make a joke of it. Replies don't have to be wonderfully brilliant or clever but it helps to have an answer ready. Practice your responses in the mirror at home. Using prepared replies works best if the bully is not too threatening and just needs to be put off. The bully might just decide that you are too clever to pick on.
- Try to avoid being alone in the places where you know the bully is likely to pick on you. This might mean changing your route to school, avoiding parts of playground, or only using common rooms or lavatories when other people are there. It's not fair that you have to do this, but it might put the bully off. Sometimes asking the bully to repeat what they said can put them off. Often bullies are not brave enough to repeat the remark exactly so they tone it down. If they repeat it, you will have made them do something they hadn't planned on and this gives you some control of the situation.
- Keep a diary of what is happening. Write down the details of the incidents and your feelings. When you do decide to tell someone, a written record of the bullying makes it easier to prove what has been going on.

WHO CAN I TELL?

- Usually it's difficult to sort out the bullying on your own or even with the help of friends. You should think seriously about telling an adult. It's the only way to get the bullying stopped.
- If you need help, don't be embarrassed about asking. Everyone needs help sometimes and asking for help to stop bullying doesn't mean that you are weak or a failure.
- Telling about bullying isn't 'telling tales' or 'grassing'. You have the right to be safe from attacks and harassment and you should not be silent when you are being tormented and hurt.
- Often, people don't tell about bullying because they are afraid the bully will find out and things will get worse. This is a natural fear but schools can put a stop to bullying without the bully learning who told, especially if the bully has several victims.
- Even if the bully does find out, it is better to have things out in the open.

The above information is an excerpt from Kidscape,

a registered charity in the United Kingdom,
committed to keeping children safe from harm and abuse.