



A guide to **DEALING WITH BULLYING**

Developed as part of
ICMR's Multistate Implementation Research Study on Improving
Mental Well Being Among School and College Students



Let's talk about **Bullying**

Bullying is an act of aggressive physical or social behaviour which is commonly seen in schools, colleges as well as workplaces.

Bullying is often intentional and may happen repeatedly. Bullying involves actions by an individual or a group aimed at causing harm or discomfort to another person or group. It often involves an imbalance of power between the person who is bullying and the one getting bullied.

Did you know?

There are two broad modes of bullying:

Direct: Happens between two people who are involved in a given situation. Like two classmates present in the same corridor during lunch break.

Indirect: Happens in the form of passing insulting comments or spreading rumours about someone, damaging their social reputation, peer relationships, and attacking their self-esteem.

Individuals who engage in bullying may use different methods. Some may employ direct tactics, while others might use more subtle and indirect strategies, such as spreading rumours and socially isolating others.

Whether direct or indirect, bullying has been categorised under **4 distinct types**:

**Physical**

It includes fighting, kicking, pushing, slapping, spitting, damaging belongings, and other harm to the body.

**Verbal**

It includes abusing, writing, or speaking cruel words to others, name calling, making fun of others, taunting, and teasing.

**Psychological**

It includes spreading rumours, destroying social relationships, social exclusion, and intimidation. Emotionally hurting the person and their sentiments also comes under this category. It is also known as social bullying.

**Cyber**

Cyber Bullying includes the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. It can also include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

Perpetrator, Victim and Bystander? Who are these?

Irrespective of the type of bullying experienced, there are three main roles at play in any bullying situation:

- The perpetrator of the bullying
- The victim
- The bystanders

So, what do each of these roles mean?

Perpetrator of Bullying: A person who targets others to make them feel bad or weak, often to feel more powerful or in control.

Victim of Bullying: Someone who is repeatedly hurt or made to feel inferior by others, often feeling scared, upset, or isolated.

Bystanders: People who witness bullying but are not directly involved. They can choose to support the bully, help the victim, or ignore the situation.

Remember, an individual playing the role of a perpetrator of bullying may not be an inherently bad person, but may be showing certain behaviours that may be harmful to others. Hence, all three - the perpetrator of bullying, the victim and the bystanders deserve help and support.

Why do some people bully others?

Bullying is often driven by a **need to feel powerful**, which is achieved by making others feel insecure. Perpetrators usually need an audience to show their dominance. Bystanders can either support the bully, stand up for the victim, or do nothing, and each choice affects the bullying situation.

Research shows that a perpetrator often acts this way because of a possible experience of being bullied themselves or having experienced abuse at home, which affects their own sense of power and security.

Why are we told not to call someone a “Bully”?

Labelling someone as a “bully” can be counterproductive because it **reduces their actions to a fixed identity, stigmatises the individual**, and potentially hinders their ability to change and grow.

Instead of focusing on labels, it is important to show empathy while



Source: Pngtree.com

addressing the specific behaviours an individual may display. We can try to help the individual understand their underlying challenges and promote opportunities for change and personal growth.

What happens when someone experiences bullying for a significant amount of time?



Source: pnggg.com

When someone is being bullied, it can impact various aspects of their life:

Emotional Distress: Someone being bullied can often feel anxious, scared and sad when faced with repeated bullying.

Academic Performance: Bullying can make it hard to focus, leading to lower grades and losing interest in school.

Social Isolation: Someone being bullied may avoid meeting friends and engaging in activities, feeling lonely and may have trouble making new friends.

Physical Health Issues: Stress from bullying can cause headaches, stomachaches, and trouble sleeping.

Behavioural Changes: Someone being bullied might act differently, like becoming angry, withdrawn, or harm themselves.

Decreased Self-Esteem: Being bullied can make someone feel less confident and less sure of their abilities.

Increased Absenteeism: Someone being bullied might skip school more often to avoid bullying.

Disruption in the Learning

Environment: Bullying can make the school or college environment uncomfortable for everyone, making it hard to learn.

Impact on Bystanders: People who see bullying may feel anxious or guilty and might not speak up or help.

Did you know?



Source: Freepik.com

Similar to bullying, cyberbullying can also take different forms such as:

Flaming: Having fights or arguments online, using messages or comments that have vulgar or aggressive language, images or graphics.

Harassment: Constantly/repeatedly sending insulting, mean messages, which can also be sexual or explicit.

Cyberstalking: Repeated and intense harassment, usually across multiple modes of online communication, that includes insults, threats and creates fear that the stalking may convert offline and lead to physical danger to the individual.

Denigration: Spreading rumours online about a person with the intent of damaging their reputation or relationships.



Source: Aura.com, *10 Warning Signs of Cyberbullying (& What To Do)*

Impersonation/Masquerading: Pretending to be someone else and posting content/sending messages to get that individual into harm or danger, or to damage their reputation. This may be done by creating a fake social media profile and harassing someone, which can also lead to theft or blackmail.

Outing: Sharing personal or embarrassing information or images.

Trickery: Tricking an individual into revealing personal or embarrassing information and then sharing it online.

Online Grooming: A predator may build a relationship with a minor online by giving compliments, emotional support or sending gifts, to build trust, in order to gain favours later which may be materialistic or sexual
Exclusion: Intentionally excluding someone from online groups; an online version of relational aggression.

Each of these forms of cyberbullying can also occur by **proxy**, implying that the perpetrator may get someone else (or a group of people) to perpetrate the bullying, or provoke the victim to lash back in order to get them into trouble.

Does this mean once we experience bullying, we will always have to go through it?

No. There are ways in which we can make the bullying stop.

If you are being bullied you can:

Talk to Someone: Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, or counsellor to share your experience and get support.

Document the Bullying: Keep a record of incidents, including dates, times, and descriptions. This documentation can be helpful when reporting the behaviour.

Report the Bullying: Inform school or college authorities about the bullying. Schools and colleges often have policies and resources to address such issues.

Stay Safe: Avoid situations where you might be alone with the perpetrator. Stick with friends or seek out safe spaces in the school or college.



Develop Assertiveness: Learn and practise assertive communication to express your feelings and set boundaries. This doesn't mean being aggressive but being clear and confident.

Seek Professional Help: Consider speaking with a mental health professional or school counsellor to work through any emotional impact and develop skills to manage such difficult situations.

Source: Freepik.com

Build a Support Network: Surround yourself with supportive friends and family who can provide encouragement and help you feel less isolated.

Know Your Rights: Familiarise yourself with your rights and the anti-bullying policies at your school or college. Understanding these can empower you to advocate for yourself and others effectively.

Did you know?

In India, both bullying and cyberbullying are addressed through various laws and legal provisions.

Bullying

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012: This act provides protection to children from sexual offences, which can include forms of bullying that involve sexual harassment.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS): Various sections of the BNS (formerly called the Indian Penal Code) can be used to address bullying if it involves physical violence, threats, or harassment. Based on these, a formal police complaint can be filed according to the extent and nature of bullying.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: Provides for the care, protection, and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law and those in need of care and protection. Bullying that involves severe harm or abuse could be addressed under this act.

Cyberbullying

Information Technology Act, 2000: This act addresses various cybercrimes, including those related to cyberbullying. Different sections under this act address issues like the sending of offensive messages through communication services, the violation of privacy, including the publication or transmission of intimate pictures without consent.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS): Certain sections of the BNS also cover aspects of cyberbullying that highlight defamation laws, which can be applicable if cyberbullying involves defamatory statements and also addresses stalking, including online stalking.

The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal: Managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, this portal allows victims of cyberbullying and other cyber crimes to file complaints online.

If you are experiencing cyber-bullying, try to:

Not Respond: Avoid replying to negative messages or comments.

Block and Report: Use platform tools to block the perpetrator and report their behaviour.

Save Evidence: Keep screenshots or records of bullying incidents for future reference.

Tell Someone: Share what's happening with a trusted adult or friend for support.

Protect Privacy: Adjust privacy settings to control who can see your information.



Source: Freepik.com

HELP ME

REACH OUT TO SOMEONE FOR HELP.

National Cyber Crime Helpline Number - 1930

As a bystander, what should I do if I see someone else being bullied?

Very often, when we witness someone around us being bullied, we may feel scared, confused or concerned for the person's safety. Though we may feel empathy and concern for the one being bullied, it can be difficult to take a stand against the perpetrator because of fear for our own safety. It is natural to feel scared and think that you might be targeted for standing up against a perpetrator and might be bullied next.



Source: Adobe Stock

Who is an 'Upstander' and how can I be one?

Being an upstander means taking action to stand against bullying and support those who are being targeted. Here are some ways to be an upstander:

Try to speak Up: If you see someone being bullied, let the perpetrator know that their behaviour is unacceptable. Use a calm and firm voice to express that bullying is wrong.

Support the Victim: Show kindness and solidarity to the person being bullied. Let them know you're there for them and that they're not alone.

Report the Bullying: Inform a teacher, counsellor, or another trusted adult about what you've witnessed. Schools and colleges often have procedures for handling bullying.

Encourage Others: Encourage your friends and classmates to join you in standing up against bullying. Create a supportive community that rejects bullying behaviour.

Use Your Voice Online: If you see bullying happening online, try to speak out against it. You can report it to the platform and support the victim.

Get Involved in Anti-Bullying Programs: Participate in or start anti-bullying campaigns or clubs at your school to raise awareness and create positive change.

Educate Yourself and Others: Learn about the effects of bullying and share this knowledge with your peers to help them understand why bullying is harmful.

Be a Role Model: Demonstrate positive behaviour in your own actions. Treat others with respect and handle conflicts in a calm and constructive manner.

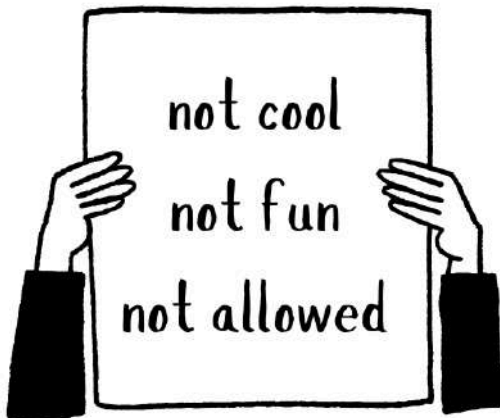
By taking these steps, you can do your part in creating a safer and a more supportive environment for everyone.



Source: British International School, *Illustration by student Viviana Nguyen*

Bullying

IS



IF YOU ARE FACING OR HAVE
SEEN SOMEONE ELSE FACING

Bullying

know that it is an offence

that needs be reported

National Anti-ragging Helpline - **1800 180 5522** (available 24x7)

National Anti-ragging Helpline Email - helpline@antiragging.in

National Cyber Crime Helpline Number - **1930**



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