

10 Ways to Respond to Bullying

If you've experienced bullying, you're not alone. There are people who can help and actions you can take to make things better. **Bullying** is when a person or a group makes someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed on purpose and repeatedly. Whether it's physical, verbal or emotional, bullying hurts. If you've experienced bullying, it's not your fault. So don't go it alone—reach out and try taking these steps to improve the situation.

In the Moment...

1. **Walk Away:** If possible, remove yourself from the situation immediately.
2. **Say "Stop:":** If it feels safe, tell the aggressor to stop in a firm but calm way. If you feel confident to do so, use humor or a clever response to weaken the effect of the mean behavior.
3. **Keep Cool:** Try to control your emotions in the moment. Showing fear or anger may egg on the aggressor.
4. **Don't Fight:** Try not to fight or bully back in response—this may just continue the cycle of bad behavior.

After the Incident...

5. **Tell a Friend:** Don't keep the bullying a secret. Tell a friend and ask for support. You will feel better, and your friend can help you decide what to do next and go with you to get assistance.
6. **Report to an Adult:** Tell a trusted adult what has happened. Remaining silent will not make things better and may worsen the situation. Reporting a serious problem is not the same as "tattling." Adults need to know about bullying behavior so they can support you and take action to stop it.

Over Time...

7. **Find Safe Spaces:** Try to avoid "danger zones" where bullying is likely to take place and where there are few adults who can help. Try to surround yourself with supportive friends or classmates whenever you can.
8. **Practice Responding:** Reflect on how you might react to bullying in the future and rehearse those responses with a trusted friend or adult. Think about what strategies have worked or fallen short, and don't give up if your first response is not successful.
9. **Express Your Feelings:** Keep a diary or journal—written, electronic or video—where you can record your private thoughts and feelings. It is important to express yourself, especially when you are going through a tough time.
10. **Reach Out:** Find new friends, hobbies or interests that occupy your time in positive ways and make you feel good about yourself. Avoid spending too much time on your own.

Bullying can also happen online or electronically. If you are the target of cyberbullying:

- **Save Evidence:** Keep copies or take screen shots of bullying texts, emails and other communications.
- **Don't Respond:** Do not communicate with aggressors. If necessary, an adult can reply with a strongly worded message warning them to stop.
- **Report:** Tell an adult about the incident and, if necessary, contact the Web site, Internet service provider and/or law enforcement officials.
- **Block:** Guard against future bullying by blocking aggressors from your social networking pages and email, and by changing your email address, screen name, phone number and passwords as needed.
- **Find Supportive Groups:** Find new online groups and games in which the people are friendly, positive and supportive; quit groups in which mean or aggressive behavior occurs often.