

*"Someone is picking on me."*

# Bullying and Harassment

## ■ What is it?

Bullying is when one person hurts or threatens someone else physically, verbally, or in writing. The bully may choose a victim who is smaller or younger than they are, or who is from a different race or culture, or they may pick on someone who is different in some other way. The bullying might happen once or over and over again. Bullying can include pushing, shoving, kicking, hitting, teasing, or writing mean or threatening notes.

If the bullying or harassment gets so bad that it physically harms you or your property, makes you feel intimidated or afraid to go to school, or causes disruptions at school, it is probably against school rules and may also be against the law. Check with an adult in your school to find out more.

**Assault** and **theft** are always against the law. So if a bully physically attacks you or steals something from you, you can report this to the police. If an assault or attack takes place at school or on a school bus, you can also report it to the principal, and the school should take action to confront and/or discipline the bully.

Anyone can be a bully. Girls and boys tend to bully in different ways, though. Boys are usually more physical when they bully—shoving, pushing, and hitting. Girls, on the other hand, tend to use words

more than physical force. Girls often bully by spreading rumors, taking part in gossip, or threatening someone.

## ■ If you are a victim of bullying, you might...

- Feel angry, sad, lonely, or depressed.
- Feel like you have no friends.
- Find that you are always getting into fights.
- Want to hurt someone else or yourself.
- Feel like taking steps to defend yourself.
- Feel helpless to stop the bullying.
- Feel hopeless that anything can be done.
- Be afraid to go to school, or feel anxious all the time.
- Feel badly about yourself.

## ■ You're Not Alone

- 3 out of 4 students report that they have been bullied at some time while they were in school.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.4% of high school students (about 864,000 teens) report staying home at least one day a month because they fear for their safety.<sup>2</sup>

## ■ Get Help

Being bullied is not your fault, and it is

wrong. Nothing you say, the way you look, or what you believe in gives anyone else the right to make fun of you or hurt you.

- Tell your parents, and talk with them about ways that they can help you to be safe.
- Tell a teacher, counselor, or your school's principal. They can take action to stop the bullying.
- Most schools are required to have a policy on dealing with bullying. If you feel that nobody in your school is helping you, see if you can find out what the policy is, and talk with the principal about how the policy applies to your case.
- If there is no policy in your school, talk with friends, a teacher, or the principal about creating one.

### ■ Help Yourself

- Try to walk away from the bullies.
- Sit near the bus driver on the school bus.
- Take different routes to and from school. See if you can get a friend or two to walk with you.
- Do not bring lots of money or expensive things to school.
- Try to stay in areas where other students

and teachers are around.

- Try not to be in a bathroom or locker room by yourself.

### ■ Help Someone Else

If you see bullying happening in your school, you can help put a stop to it.

- Refuse to join in if a bully tries to get you to tease someone.
- Get a teacher, parent, or another adult to come help. You won't be snitching; you'll be taking a stand against bullying.
- Talk to the person being bullied and try to get them to talk to an adult. Offer to go with them.
- Report the bullying to an adult you trust.

### ■ If you want to read more...

- ...about crimes that happen in schools, read our **GET HELP** series bulletin on school crime K-12, *or*
- ...about people being targeted because of their race, religion, national origin, ethnic identification, gender, or sexual orientation, read our **GET HELP** series bulletin on hate crimes at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

<sup>1</sup> Hoover, J.H., Oliver, R., & Hazler, R.J. (1992). Bullying: Perceptions of adolescent victims in Midwestern USA. *School Psychology International*, 13, 5-16.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2004). Surveillance Summaries. *MMWR* 2004:53. No. Ss-2.