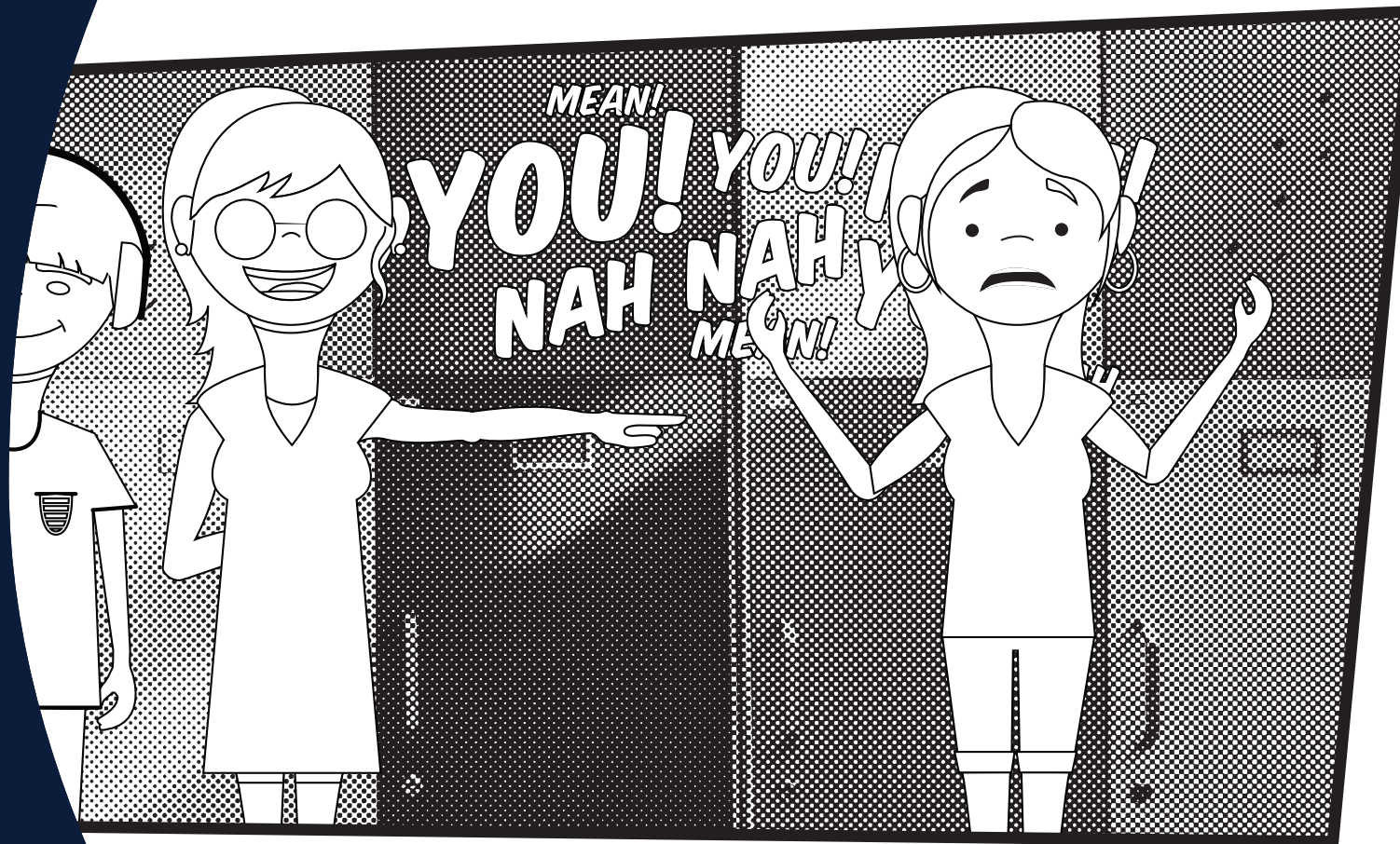


# What is bullying and what to do about it



## **What is bullying?**

Bullying is when someone with more power than you deliberately and repeatedly tries to upset or hurt you. They might repeatedly try to hurt you physically, socially isolate you, or say and do mean or humiliating things to you.

## **What is this story about?**

This story will help you to recognise what bullying is (and what bullying isn't).  
This story will also give you some strategies for coping, and for getting help.

## **What if someone is upsetting or hurting me, but it isn't bullying?**

There are some behaviours that may not be bullying, but are never okay. Your school can help you understand when to seek immediate support.

If you can't talk to someone face-to-face, you can contact Kids Helpline.  
You can call them for free on 1800 55 1800.

Friendships can sometimes be complicated in high school.



Friendships in high school are a lot of fun when things are going great, but if things aren't going so well, it can be really confusing and upsetting.



When things aren't going too well with friendships, it can help to know what to do and how to cope. This is especially important if bullying is occurring.

Sometimes friends fight and say things that aren't so nice.



Or maybe a friend might say something unkind behind your back. Or be inconsiderate and boast about something when they know you're not as good as them at that. Or maybe they'll invite some friends over, but not include ALL of their friends.

These things might hurt a little but if it's a one-off or only occasionally happens then while it may not be particularly kind...

**IT ISN'T BULLYING.**

Bullying is when another person, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly hurt someone by saying mean things about them, threatening physically hurting them, isolating and excluding them, or spreading rumours about them.



Repeated jokes that humiliate or upset someone are also bullying. Jokes about a disability are never ok.

Bullying can be done in person, behind someone's back, or online.

Bullying can really hurt. It can be particularly difficult if you have a disability, or if you don't have friends at school who can stick up for you or support you if you are bullied.

You might feel really alone when being bullied.

You might feel like there is something wrong with you. That somehow you're different to everyone else and that's why you're being treated that way.



When you have a disability it can feel like people don't like you because of that disability. Like you just don't fit anywhere. It can feel like there's no one like you, and you will never have real friends.

You might feel scared, or very sad and down and isolated

This is a normal reaction to a difficult and wrong situation. Friendships can sometimes feel like the most important thing during the teenage years. Bullying disrupts friendships and threatens wellbeing, so it is only natural for your body to react with a range of emotions.

Sometimes it can feel like the bullying will never end. No matter how alone you might feel, or how frightened or sad, there are always people out there who can help, and things you can do.



Tell the person or people who are bullying you that what they are doing is not right. Don't retaliate, but make it clear to them that their actions are not right. This can take a lot of courage, but sometimes speaking up is all it takes to stop them from doing it again.

If you're being bullied online, switch the device off, and walk away.

Ask for help. It can be really scary to ask for help when you're being bullied. You might be scared that it will make things worse. But bullying is never ok. It's ok to protect yourself from bullying. Plus if someone is bullying you, then they are likely to bully others... if not now, then later down the track. By letting a teacher or trusted adult know what is happening, you are protecting yourself and protecting others from going through the same thing you're going through.



If you are feeling isolated and alone at school, there are a few things you can do. You can see if there are any lunch time clubs you can be involved in, or other groups you can be involved in.

You can ask a teacher or year advisor for support in making friends.

And you could also get involved in after school activities. Building friendships outside of school can be a nice reminder that there is also a world out there beyond school!



If you're feeling sad and alone, talk to someone you trust. There are also special helplines for teenagers with people who can chat to you about your experiences so you don't feel so alone. Or, maybe you can connect with others who also have a disability, and have faced the same things you are facing.

Do things to look after yourself. Listen to soothing music that you like, have a bath with extra bubbles, go for a run, play with a pet... do something each day to help yourself relax and help your body unwind a little from dealing with all those emotions and stresses!



Challenge negative thoughts. Often when we are stressed or upset we can take one little truth (e.g. this person isn't nice to me) and turn it into something bigger (no-one will ever like me because I have a disability).

If you find yourself thinking "I will never have friends" or "things will never get better" or seek a different perspective to assess how true it is.



For example, change those negative thoughts to "right now I'm struggling a little with friends, but that doesn't mean I'll never have friends. It just might take me a bit longer to find 'my people'. Things are difficult now, but they can get better, and who knows what great things might be in my future!"

Remind yourself that bullying happens to many different people - celebrities such as Ed Sheeran, Jackie Chan and Rihanna say that they were bullied at school! Bullying is not a sign that there is something wrong with you.

**REMEMBER,**

bullying is never ok. Your teacher wants you to have positive experiences at school in which you learn and grow as a person. If you are experiencing bullying, reach out.



## **About this story:**

Bullying can have significant effects on a teenager's wellbeing. Students with disability are more likely to be bullied at school because they may look or act differently to other students.

This comic/story is designed for teenagers without intellectual disability, and includes information to support them in defining what bullying is, and evidence-based strategies for how to manage bullying if it happens to them.

Common emotional reactions to bullying are acknowledged and normalised, and practical responses to stop bullying from continuing are identified. Further, a range of positive coping strategies such as activating social supports, engaging in self-care and challenging cognitive distortions are described.

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