



These things are normal when you are bullied





and these also ...





Being Bullied

Bullying is a traumatic experience that leaves impressions on our brains by storing unpleasant memories. The intention behind this leaflet is help you, the reader, identify bullying behaviour, provide some ideas as to why you may be the target of a bully and some tips and professional advice on how to combat it. When we feel empowered and have knowledge about how to solve a problem, we start to bounce back and regain control of our lives. Take a look at this statement and reflect on which it means to you.

Our lives are not determined by what happens to us, but how we react to what happens; not by what life brings to us, but by the attitude we bring to life. A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst, a spark that creates extraordinary results. (Anon)

Bullying isn't something that just happens to children. It can occur in relationships, in your church or voluntary organisation, in social settings or in the workplace. Research has shown that **bullying is likely to thrive in stressful dysfunctional environments**. It takes different forms – physical, emotional and sexual harassment. Bullying shapes lives and affects our development. Bullying isn't the odd unkind remark or thoughtless action. Nor is it a single outburst of anger. Instead it is behaviour that is repeated, intended to hurt someone physically or emotionally through intimidation, criticism, control and misuse of power, which is persistent. It has been said that bullying is a conscious desire to hurt another person and put them under stress.

Do any of these statements describing bullying resonate with you?

Bullies intimate people

A bully is mean and tries to demean others

BULLYING IS WHEN PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO FEEL INFERIOR OR DOMINATED BY AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP

Bullies taunt, tease, spread rumours and set people against you

Bullies set out to physically and mentally hurt you

Anxiety levels go through the roof in the presence of a bully

Bullies twist words to make their target look stupid in front of others



And the automatic emotional response is?

I am not good enough

There must be something wrong with me

I must try harder to please them and fit in

I am weird and odd. It is my fault; I deserve this treatment

I am not worthy

The truth is, none of these statements are true.

You are good enough. **There is nothing wrong with you.**

Be yourself and no more. **You are not weird or odd;**

You DO NOT deserve to be treated badly. You are worth it.

Whether it is carried out maliciously or not, bullying is abuse. Anyone can be a target of bullying, but we don't have to be a victim.

Who can Become a Bully?

There are many different types of bullies and many operate under the disguise of care. Bullies can be; peers, siblings, parents, educators, colleagues, friends, bosses, neighbours

What is the Function of Bullying Behaviour?

There are common characteristics in people who bully, both in children and adults. If you think you are being bullied, talking to a counsellor can help you identify and explore some of those characteristics that will help you become more aware of the people around you that have the potential to be bullies. Similarly, they can help you in identifying those characteristics that make you attractive to a bully. People who have been bullies at school may attempt to bring this pattern of behaving into their workplace.

Factors that cause people to become bullies include personality, family and community issues. All behaviour has a function. Through our behaviour we are transmitting signals to those arounds us.



Possible reasons for those that bully are:

- It's a way of dealing with problems at home.
- wanting to be seen as 'cool' and accepted into a group
- Wanting to be 'top dog' within a group
- Trying to get a laugh
- *using a put down to gain popularity*
- Learnt behaviour - bullies think that it is acceptable to relate to others in this way because that's how they have been treated at home and school.
- The bullying behaviour has appeared to go unnoticed and unpunished, so it must be acceptable.

Adult Bullying is generally more complex than childhood bullying. As well as the bully seeking out someone they can dominate, there are often hidden agendas and mind games at play. Envy and resentment are often motives but the driving force can usually be summed up as a need for power and superiority. Bullies will latch on to vulnerabilities in others such as; emotional dependence, low self-confidence, naivety, over-intellectualisation, *sensitivity*, desire to please people, **easily intimidated**

Types of Bullying

First experiences of bullying tend to occur in childhood when our brains are still developing hence that is why bullying shapes lives and affects our sense of identity. When subjected to physical violence, name calling and social exclusion we naturally retreat inside ourselves and the result is isolation, detachment and the belief that there is something wrong or different about us that others do not find acceptable. Psychological intimidation includes group exclusion, ostracising, starting rumours, sexual gestures. Verbal abuse includes name calling. Physical abuse involves hitting, kicking, inappropriate touching.

Just as there are many types of bullying there are many types of bullies. Some are obvious in their bullying tactics while others are much harder to identify due to their more subtle way of operating. On the surface they appear to be cooperative and civil while at the same time doing everything in their power to undermine their target. So, in summary, the bully can be: easily noticed by their angry, aggressive, threatening and blaming behaviour or difficult to spot because of their undermining, passive and subtle behaviour.



Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the use of electronic or online communications such as email, mobile phone and other mobile devices, instant messenger/chatrooms, social networking sites and instant gaming with the intention of intimidating and threatening another person. For children especially, cyberbullying is said to be worse than other forms of bullying and this could be because the online world is their social world. Cyberbullying can include;

Outing - sharing someone's secrets, images and sensitive information

Flaming - online fights using abusive language

Exclusion - excluding people, intentionally from online groups

Harassment - repeated insulting, nasty, mean messages

Impersonation - taking on someone else's identity to post and send material with the intention of causing trouble for someone

Denigration - sending/posting gossip and rumours about a person to damage their reputation.

Trickery - lulling someone into a false sense of security to get them to disclose private information about themselves and then sharing it online

Cyberstalking - repeatedly harassing and threatening someone online

Health Ramifications of Bullying

Bullying affects physical health, mental health and general well-being. Let's look at what can happen when you are bullied;

social isolation, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, absent at work, self-harming behaviour, impaired performance (low or over achieving), susceptible to peer pressure, unhappiness, gastrointestinal problems, homicidal ideation, self-medicating (drugs, alcohol), suicidal ideation, medication for anxiety; depression, sleep problems, promiscuity, suicide attempts.

Looking after yourself when others are treating you badly is a good start. Later in this leaflet are ideas on how to respond to being bullied and how to look after yourself.



The Impact on Adult Life and Relationships

The very first relationships we ever make are with our primary care givers. It is a natural human instinct to love and want to be loved as this is part of our survival mechanism. We are driven to connect throughout our entire life. How we formed early attachments in childhood, has bearing on bullying. A secure attachment style evolves from feeling protected by care givers and knowing that we can depend on them. An insecure attachment style (could be avoidant, ambivalent or disorganised) evolves from repeated failed emotional communications and often the bond is contaminated with fear. These early experiences are imprinted on our brain and influence how we form adult relationships. It is said that infants who have developed an insecure attachment style are likely to end up with a belief that they are unlovable. Furthermore, research into bullying indicates that victims of childhood bullying frequently have insecure maternal attachment. Attachment styles can be altered through conscious effort, seeking therapy and having relationships with others that are capable of secure attachment.

The consequences of having been bullied usually means that there is a lack of trust in relationships, making and maintaining friendships can be a struggle, poor self-image, shame, feelings of helplessness and adult post bullying syndrome.

Positive Aspects of Being Bullied

In the mid 1990's psychologists Calhoun and Tedeschi developed the theory of Post Traumatic-Growth. A theory that highlights positive transformation taking place following trauma. In the case of bullying there have been reported cases of: people finding their inner strength, overcoming their sense of helplessness, learnt to take control of their own lives, developed empathy for themselves and others and a commitment to doing something important such as a career choice.

Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying and harassment as defined by the government is '*behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended. Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010*' The examples they give for bullying and harassment are: spreading malicious rumours, picking on or regularly undermining someone or denying someone's training or promotion opportunities. Bullying and harassment can happen face-to-face, by letter, by email, by phone.



Bullying itself is not against the law, but harassment is. This is when the unwanted behaviour is related to one of the following: age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation.

The Brutal Facts About Workplace Bullying

Take a moment to look back at the first two pages of this leaflet. You will notice that there is a lot to deal with when you are bullied and the consequences are that it may affect your job performance or you may want to quit or have a high absence level. When potentially destructive actions are present at work it can seem really daunting to think about how to protect yourself from being bullied. Some organisations work hard to prevent bullying by providing information, e.g. in a staff handbook on how they define bullying and what to do if you find yourself in that situation. Every case of workplace bullying is different. It will depend on several factors. How you deal with bullying will depend on your work environment, the nature of the bullying and what, if any procedures are in place. Further challenges may be present depending on the relationship you have with the bully, e.g. a colleague or your manager.

Even if bullying lasts a relatively short time, the physical and emotional effects can last for years. They weaken the person's ability to cope and damage their trust in people. It is often difficult to recognise what is happening to us particularly if it is of a subtle nature.

Targets of bullying in the workplace suffer:

threats, **intimidation**, humiliation, disparaging remarks about their work, verbal abuse, **RUMOURS**, aggression, false accusations of mistakes at work, discounted ideas, vicious rumours/gas lighting, harsh criticism, screaming, tantrums

Employers have a responsibility for preventing bullying and harassment. They also have a duty to protect and support the mental health of their employees. If you are subjected to workplace bullying you are advised, in the first instance, to see if you can sort out the problem informally. If this is not possible then speak to your manager, human resources (HR) department and/or trade union representative. There is always the option to make a formal complaint using the employer's grievance procedure. For external advice there is Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) who have an advice helpline - Telephone: 0300 123 1100, Textphone: 18001 0300 123 1100.



Impact of Being Bullied

There are lifelong consequences of being bullied. Ask anyone who has been bullied and they will probably be able to describe the traumatic event(s) vividly. The bullying memories are recalled easily. Some people will move on with their lives, but others do not. Bullying affects adult development, mental health and the way we relate to others in adult life.

Most of us will remember from our childhood days the old saying ‘sticks and stones may break your bones but names will never hurt you.’ **This is not true!** Words can and do inflict far more pain than the biggest stick or the heaviest stone. Words have power. What we say and how we say it as well as what we mean by it will affect us.

For some the bullying experiences in childhood impairs our capacity to build healthy adult relationships. We may be drawn to bullying traits in people because it is familiar to us and we know how to form relationships with those types of people. For others it may put them off having relationships such as friends and partners for fear of being betrayed and hurt. Mistrust can run deep and is profound. There may be an expectation to be betrayed or hurt in relationships. Dealing with conflict is difficult. Relationships are abandoned completely if conflict arises. Emotional distance is kept to preserve safety. The capacity to fully commit is impaired. Infidelity. A dislike of becoming dependant on the other.

What can you do? Some tips

- Don't take it personally and try to remember that bullying behaviour is about the bully, not you.
- Keep an eye out for anyone else who may also have experienced bullying in the workplace and look to see if there is a pattern.
- Keep a record of the bullying: the place, dates, times, those who were present including those who were involved. Note also what was said or done.
- Try to stay unemotional. Remember that being emotional is attractive to the bully.
- Try to avoid being alone with the bully. Bullies try to alienate targets so make the effort to speak with colleagues.
- Be aware of how you come across. An anxious and negative attitude will exacerbate the problem. Whenever possible, try to keep your feelings about the bullying outside of the workplace and remain positive while you are at work.



- Be careful not to share too much personal information. Information about your life gives the bully power.
- When the bullying does occur, try to distract them by finding something that needs to be done or someone that needs to be called. If it becomes too difficult, give a valid reason for leaving the room ensuring that you do not appear to be ‘running away.’
- Check whether your employer has a policy and a complaint resolution procedure for workplace bullying.
- Seek advice from your HR officer, grievance officer or whoever is responsible for staff welfare. If you are aware that others are being bullied, try to make a joint complaint. If the person who is bullying you is involved in the complaints procedure, seek external advice, e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau.

Towards Recovery

Start with being kind and compassionate to yourself and do not believe anything the bullies say about you. Take back control. Tell someone, do not suffer in silence. Do not accept that you are to blame for someone else’s bad behaviour. Be assertive. Stand up for yourself. Do not make yourself small. Take up martial arts to enable you to protect yourself in a controlled and disciplined way. Express your emotions in healthy ways to those people that are kind and respectful to you. Have clear boundaries. Believe in yourself. Make the most of your talents. Engage in activities that make you make happy. Seek counselling.

Have positive mantras: ‘I am not going to put up with being bullied’ ‘I am not going to let this effect my whole life’ ‘I have choices and will speak out against being bullied’ *‘I am going to do whatever I can to end this bullying’*

No one should be bullied. Bullying has the potential to zap your zest for life and destroy your self-belief. Speak out. Use your support network. Take action. Never give up believing in yourself.



Useful links

<https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment>

<https://www.acas.org.uk/media/306/Advice-leaflet---Bullying-and-harassment-at-work-a-guide-for-employees/pdf/Bullying-and-harassment-at-work-a-guide-for-employees.pdf>

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/bullied-work-dont-suffer-silence>

http://www.endbullying.org.uk/cyberbullying-different-face-face-bullying/?gclid=CjwKCAjw3c_tBRA4EiwAICs8CqGx-1FdOCU_k6G36fDkuT7oxZiWy2lc8EnooNNPOYcMhHhIAV17GxoCLXIQA_VD_BwE

https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/cyberbullying/?gclid=CjwKCAjw3c_tBRA4EiwAICs8Cg58A_d6QciloleD-yZ2el_Wkzo9wrxYulvlHUGph3YilJD0p78aXxoCFvsQA_VD_BwE

https://www.antibullyingpro.com/support-centre?gclid=CjwKCAjw3c_tBRA4EiwAICs8Ck_S46DcQTOSexJAKI-zBkYCicguSlOelJDqS7s2YmazyZGZssiCKhoCQG_sQA_VD_BwE

<https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=797>

<https://www.bullying.co.uk/bullying-at-work/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/bullying-at-work/>

<https://www.giveusashout.org/get-help/>

<https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk>

<https://actagainstbullying.org/>

COUNSELLING

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/about-therapy/how-to-find-a-therapist/>

<https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/>