

The following article has been written alongside our antibullying ambassadors and is to give some advice to parents from their perspective. A special mention to Charley Lovis who has been responsible for editing.

How does it feel to be bullied?

There are many ways that students will feel when being bullied – it is different for everyone. However, some ways students have described being a victim to bullying is feeling weak, powerless, and like a shadow of yourself. Another student described it as feeling as though you are not even in the room; for most, it is hard to concentrate, as you are constantly mulling over the words that have been said to you.

Why don't students report bullying?

One antibullying survey found that 28% of young people who were victims of bullying didn't speak up about it. While this might be surprising, it is important to remember that the victim will think about:

- Fear of retaliation – reporting the bullying could make it worse
- Shame and embarrassment – sometimes students can feel as though it is weak, and asking for help is embarrassing (of course this is not the case) and it shameful to do so.
- Concern about being believed – some victims can feel as though they are not being listened to when speaking up about how they feel, and the fact that they are being bullied.
- Having their phone and other devices being taken away or restricted – when dealing with cyber bullying, students do not want to feel even weaker – taking away a phone could be like taking away a privilege

We have also discussed that being a victim of bullying can have a huge impact on self esteem. Some students want to be accepted, and they feel as though 'going along with it' will help with this.

How can you help your child if you think they are being bullied?

Opening a conversation is the best way to start. It is important to be there to listen – rushing in to past experiences, or judging them won't help – when people speak to someone about their queries, they just want someone to listen and support them – probably even you too.

It is also important to not be too intense about it – making it a big deal isn't calm, relaxing, and it certainly won't make your child feel as though they are being listened to. Offer to go somewhere more neutral e.g. Costa, whilst shopping, or even just in the car.

Another thing to consider is the possibility that they might not speak to you – speaking to a parent could feel more daunting than someone like an older sibling.

Listen to their experience

Like we said before, listening is the best thing to do – we can't stress this enough. Our advice is to not relate it to your experiences too much – everyone's experiences with bullying is different - there is a constantly evolving world out there and there are so many new ways that people can be bullied. It is also important to avoid saying things like, 'Why don't you just be a bit more resilient with it?' or, 'Get a grip'. Don't underestimate how mean kids can be to each other.

While listening to them is the best thing that you can do, reassuring them and making them aware of your support is very important to do as well. It doesn't have to be much – just a simple, 'I'm always here if you need me'.

Keep a log of the bullying

Bullying often takes place online. Have a conversation and look/ keep track of any evidence that you have together. It might be useful to have a shared note on your device, which you can use to keep track of any screen shots or incidences. Bare in mind that apps like Snapchat will notify the other user if a screenshot is taken in the app. Most kids (including ourselves) would be worried that our parents would take our phones away from us. It's good to make it an open conversation when possible – leaving your child out of it won't help. Most kids will want to feel included in dealing with the situation.

Make time to do fun activities

It is helpful to write down a list of things that they love and plan to do them over the next few weeks. It could be a sport, baking, crafting or even just sitting down and watching a film. Don't hide away from the situation, but help them take their mind off of it. This will help them to relax and make the situation less overwhelming.

Encourage them to spend time with peers who treat them well

Spending time outside of school with friends is a really good way to decompress. There might also be clubs at school which have like minded people or an opportunity to make new friends. Our advice is to not wrap us up in cotton wool. We need to try and rebuild who we are.

Take action to stop the bullying

- The SHARP system – this can be used to report bullying anonymously, and it's efficient. It is online, and sent straight to College Office, where the report will be read. Any necessary action will take place. Please take note that if the report doesn't contain the significant information, there isn't much that we can do about it. If you would like to use the SHARP system, then go to the school website and at the bottom of the page, you will find it there.
- Email – Email a member of staff e.g. Head of College, Form Tutor etc.

Please remember that experiencing bullying is different for everyone, and it is important to do what the victim feels comfortable with – listening is the best thing that you can do.

For further advice please use the following link

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/bullying/#:~:text=Open%20up%20a%20conversation,for%20them%20to%20open%20up>