

## Bullying Survival Tips for Teens



Bullying is when a person is picked on over and over again by an individual or group with more power, either in terms of physical strength or social standing. Here are some things teens can do to combat bullying:

**Ignore the bully and walk away.** It's definitely not a coward's response — sometimes it can be harder than losing your temper. Bullies thrive on the reaction they get, and if you walk away or ignore hurtful emails or instant messages, you're telling the bully that you just don't care. Sooner or later the bully will probably get bored with trying to bother you. Walk tall and hold your head high. Using this type of body language sends a message that you're not vulnerable.

**Stay calm and cool.** Who doesn't want to get really upset with a bully? But that's exactly the response he or she is trying to get. When kids cry or look really scared or upset, bullies know they have control over their emotions. So, practice not reacting to bullies—it takes a lot of practice, but it's a useful skill for keeping off of a bully's radar. Sometimes kids find it useful to practice “cool down” strategies such as counting to 10, writing down their angry words, taking deep breaths or walking away. Sometimes the best thing to do is to wear a “poker face” until they are clear of any danger (smiling or laughing may provoke the bully). Work out your anger in another way, such as through exercise or writing it down (make sure you tear up any letters or notes you write in anger).

**Don't get physical.** However you choose to deal with a bully, don't use physical force (like kicking, hitting, or pushing). Not only are you showing your anger, you can never be sure what the bully will do in response. You are more likely to be hurt and get in to trouble if you use violence against a bully. You can stand up for yourself in other ways, such as gaining control of the situation by walking away or by being assertive in your actions. Some adults believe that bullying is a part of growing up (even that it is character building) and that hitting back is the only way to tackle the problem. But that's not the case. Aggressive responses tend to lead to more violence and more bullying for the victims.

**Practice confidence.** Practice ways to respond to the bully verbally or through your behavior. Practice different ways to firmly and clearly tell bullies to stop. You can also practice looking confident by standing tall, making eye contact with others, and talking loud enough to be heard. Even if it feels strange to practice these skills, just fake it at first and you'll start to feel more comfortable and confident with practice over time.



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**Take charge of your life.** You can't control other people's actions, but you can stay true to yourself. Think about ways to feel your best—and your strongest—so that other kids may give up the teasing. Exercise is one way to feel strong and powerful. (It's a great mood lifter, too!) Learn a martial art or take a class like yoga. Another way to gain confidence is to hone your skills in something like chess, art, music, computers, or writing. Joining a class, club, or gym is a great way to make new friends and feel great about yourself. The confidence you gain will help you rise above bullies and take some of the sting away when you get teased or picked on.

**Talk about it.** It may help to talk to a guidance counselor, teacher, or friend – anyone who can give you the support you need. Talking to someone you really trust can be a good outlet for the fears and frustrations that can build when you're being bullied. Other people may also have some useful advice on how to deal with bullies.

**Find your (true) friends.** If you've been bullied with rumors or gossip, all of the above tips (especially ignoring and not reacting) can apply. But take it one step further to help ease feelings of hurt and isolation. Find one or two true friends and confide how the gossip has hurt your feelings. Set the record straight by telling your friends quietly and confidently what's true and not true about you. Hearing a friend say, "I know the rumor's not true. I didn't pay attention to it," can help you realize that most of the time people see gossip for what it is — petty, rude, and immature.

