

# Supporting teens who've been bullied

We suggest combining these tips with our factsheets on reporting online bullying and working with your school.

## 1. Stay safe

If anyone is in immediate danger, call triple zero (000).

## 2. Have a good talk

- Find a comfortable place where you won't be interrupted.
- Stay calm. If you're feeling overwhelmed, step away and collect your thoughts.
- Encourage your teen to tell you the whole story. Let them take their time.
- Listen carefully, without interrupting.
- Sum up the story to check you've understood.
- Reassure them that you're glad they told you and they don't deserve to be bullied.
- Show them empathy, eg. "I can see this has been really hard on you".
- Don't be judgmental or dismissive. Avoid saying things like "why didn't you stand up for yourself?" or "everyone gets bullied, it's no big deal".
- Ask what end result they want. They might just want the bullying to stop.
- Promise you'll do everything you can to find a solution with them.
- Remind them that lots of people recover from bullying and go on to live happy lives.

## 3. Get organised

- Help your teen make a record of what happened – where, when, who was involved, who witnessed it, how your teen responded, and screenshots or pics of evidence.
- Talk about how you could tell the school without causing your teen stress. For example, you could talk quietly with the teacher when no students are around.
- Explain that you'll be guided by what your teen wants as much as possible, but your first priority is keeping them safe.

#### 4. Talk tactics with the school

Some teens manage to shut down social or verbal bullying by the following.

- Acting unimpressed, bored, sarcastic or nonchalant.
- Saying neutral things like “whatever”, “OK”, or “that’s what you think”.
- Using confident voice and body language.
- Distracting people, eg. with a joke or an unexpected question.
- If it’s safe, calmly confronting the person, eg. “don’t speak to me like that”.
- Moving to a part of the school that’s safer and more supervised.
- Telling someone sympathetic, eg. a peer mentor, school nurse or sports coach.

#### 5. Support your teen’s wellbeing

- Encourage regular sleeping patterns, regular exercise and healthy eating habits.
- Help your teen to identify things that help them to calm down or cheer up, eg. playing music, keeping a diary, running, looking after pets – and do them each day.
- Explore age-appropriate programs or apps about mindfulness and meditation such as [headspace.org.au/blog/how-to-meditate/](https://headspace.org.au/blog/how-to-meditate/)

#### 6. Talk to someone who will support you, such as a parent, GP, or mentor

You can speak to a mental health professional for free on the Dolly’s Dream support line – 0488 881 033. For a full list of support services [click here](#).

#### 7. Be smart about tech

- Don’t force teens to give up their devices, as this might make them keep secrets from you in the future.
- Talk with your teen about how to manage their tech use to reduce stress. For example, you might agree as a family to stop using tech at bedtime, stick to online spaces that are friendly and positive, or take a break from tech on certain days.
- Check your teen knows how to mute, block, unfollow, unfriend, hide content, or take a break from people online. See [esafety.gov.au/key-issues/esafety-guide](https://esafety.gov.au/key-issues/esafety-guide)
- Report serious online bullying to the website and, if that doesn’t work, to the eSafety Commissioner: [esafety.gov.au/report](https://esafety.gov.au/report)
- Remind your teens not to retaliate with their own negative posts. Encourage them to put the tech down, calm down, talk to someone, then decide what to do.
- If the negative messages are coming from someone your teen knows in person and wants to stay friends with, encourage them to talk calmly in private, face-to-face.

## 8. Strengthen your teen's friendships

- If your teen has caring friends, encourage them to spend time together.
- If not, help your teen identify people they might make friends with, eg. new students, students who share their interests, or students who are friendly and kind.
- Ask the school if they offer organised lunchtime or after-school activities.
- Find opportunities for your teen to meet people and build skills and confidence, eg. volunteering, part-time jobs, sport, art classes, Scouts, adventure activities, mentoring programs, or martial arts classes with a focus on peace and wellbeing.

## 9. Keep your family strong

- Eat together regularly and celebrate things like birthdays and cultural festivals.
- Do fun things together, like going to the beach or the park.
- Encourage your family to reflect every day on something that went well, something they're proud of, and something they're grateful for.
- Encourage your teens to solve problems and make decisions. Praise their successes and help them see the positive impacts of their actions.
- Make sure family rules are clear, consistent and fair. Use reasonable supervision.
- Encourage siblings to spend positive time together and help each other out.
- Remind your teens of their good qualities and why you're proud of them.

