Anyone can be bullied – and about almost anything. Often people are bullied because other people think they are different, it might be because of the things they like, what they wear, where they are from or even the way they act. Whatever the reason, bullying can seriously affect a person’s self-esteem and confidence. Bullying is not OK.

Fifteen-year-old Emma has been fighting with her best friend Caitlin. Caitlin has started sending Emma threatening text messages and recently logged into her Facebook page and deleted all her friends. Emma’s other friends have been getting involved too and are posting nasty rumours about her on their Facebook pages.

Does this sound familiar?

What is bullying?

Bullying isn’t just a one off thing. Bullying is when someone is being teased or threatened often and over a period of time.

Types of bullying are:
- name calling or putting someone down
- teasing
- using racist remarks
- sexual harassment
- homophobic bullying
- physically hurting someone, such as hitting, punching or kicking
- threatening someone
- saying or writing nasty things about someone on the internet, in an SMS or email
- ignoring or leaving someone out.

Bullying doesn’t just happen at school. It can also happen at work, home, online or in public places like a shopping centre or sports club.

Why do people bully other people?

This could be for a range of reasons, but people who bully often do it to look tough, feel powerful, get attention or make people afraid of them. Some people who bully have problems themselves.

Sometimes people who bully might not understand the distress their bullying is causing.

What to do if you’re being bullied

Here are few things to remember when being bullied or harassed:
- It’s NOT your fault.
- Be confident – people who bully tend to pick on people they think are weak. If possible, stand up to them.
- Ignore people who bully – they may be playing up to impress his/her friends. By showing that their bullying has no effect and by not reacting, they may stop.
• **Hang in a group** – this doesn’t mean getting together against the bully! It means, keeping your friends around you to keep you safe.

• **Tell someone** – an adult or teacher may be able to help. Even if you think you have sorted out the issue yourself, it’s better if an adult is aware of what has happened.

Christie thought that Georgia and Brit were her friends. But one day she got a text from them saying that they wanted to bash her up because she was fat and ugly. At school they call Christie names, like loser, and make jokes about her weight. She puts up with the name calling because she doesn’t know what to do. She doesn’t want to tell anyone, not even her mum. Christie feels alone. Now she doesn’t want to go back to school.

What should Christie do?

What to do if the bullying is online, via text or email

• **Don’t reply** – ignoring messages means that the bully doesn’t get what they want – a response.

• **Tell someone** – if someone is bullying you or you feel threatened tell someone such as a teacher, family member or school counsellor. If it’s serious, you can also go to the police.

• **Block the messages or emails** – sometimes email, social networking sites or phone security settings can block certain numbers or profiles. Contact your phone or internet provider if you’re not sure how to do this.

• **Change your details** – get a new mobile number or email address.

• **Keep any texts, emails or online conversations** – try to keep things that have been sent by the bully even if it’s painful. These can be used to show an adult to help stop the bullying.

Do you bully others and want to stop?

If you bully others, you can change your behaviour. You can:

• apologise to people and make amends

• pursue new interests, such as joining a sport or youth club, to make friends

• ask for help from an adult or teacher.

Tips and hints when communicating online

Sometimes people might not think what they are doing is bullying when communicating online.

When communicating online remember:

• Things can be misinterpreted - when writing online, in an email or via text remember that the other person can’t see facial expressions or hear the tone of your voice. Always think about the different ways a message can be read.

• Check if it’s OK with friends before posting any photos or videos of them.

• When posting comments or hitting ‘reply all’ in an email, think carefully about who might be reading posts/emails.

Places to go and people to talk to

...speak to a counsellor

Kids Helpline (24 hours 7 days)
t: 1800 551 800  www.kidshelpline.com.au

Lifeline (24 hours 7 days)
t: 13 11 14  www.lifeline.org.au

...for more info

www.youthbeyondblue.com
www.headspace.org.au
http://au.reachout.com
www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au

Looking for something local?
See the Useful Contacts Help Sheet.