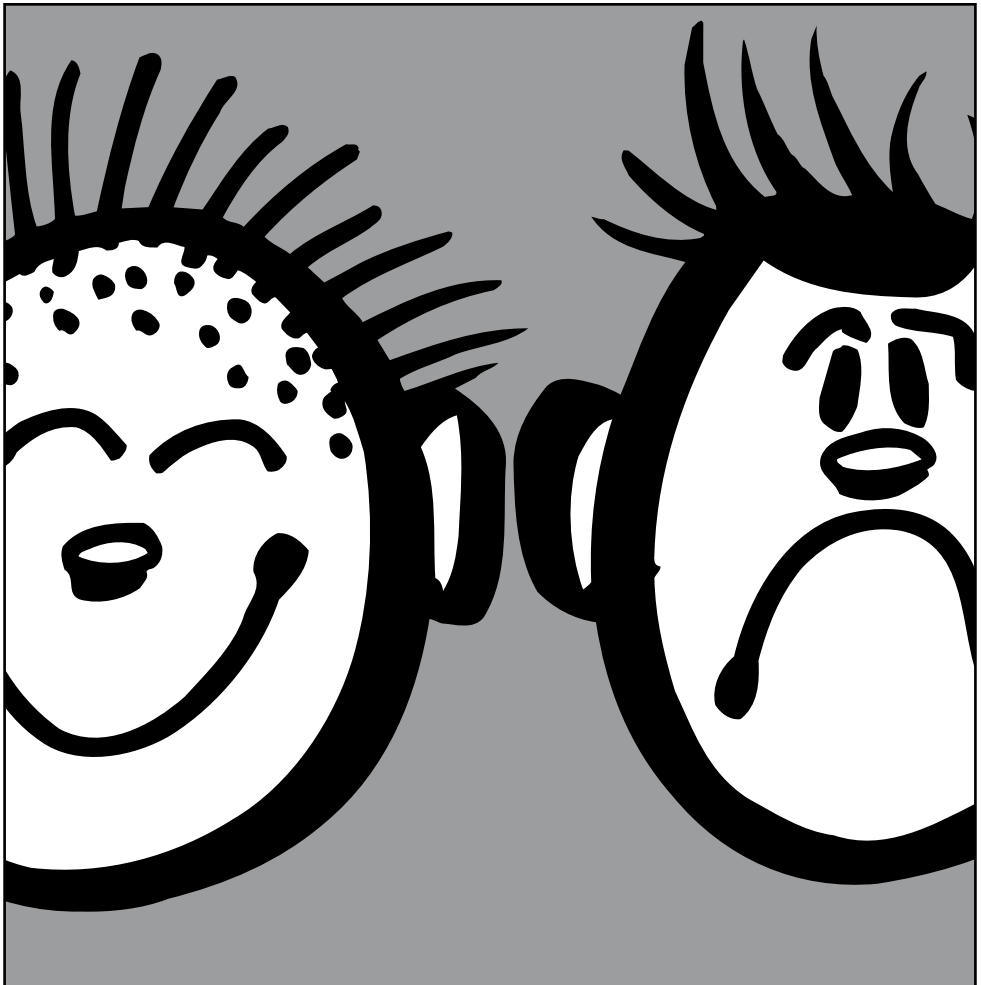


The Spires Cleft Centre

Bullying and Teasing

Guide for children and young people



Bullying and teasing

Lots of young people worry about being bullied. These worries can be even bigger if you feel there is something different about you that other people might notice. The good news is that lots of young people born with a cleft don't have any problems at school and have plenty of friends. But sadly, for some people there can be more difficult times and other people can be very nasty. If you are being bullied, we hope this leaflet will help you feel confident to tell an adult about what is happening and stop the bullying.

Am I being bullied?

Most people get a little bit of teasing or jokes made about them – often we can laugh too. But sometimes it can carry on to the point when it stops being funny and really starts to hurt. This is when it has to be stopped.

Bullying can happen in different ways, here are some examples:

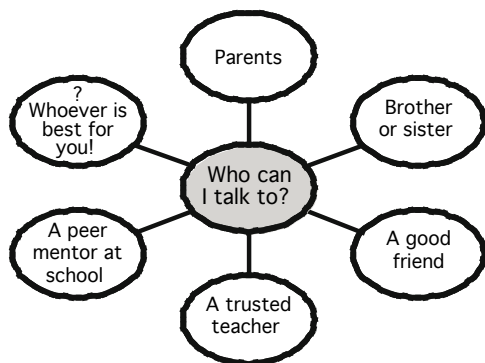
- Hurting someone else physically
- Calling them names
- Leaving them out
- Giving them bad looks
- Spreading mean rumours about them

Bullies pick on people for lots of different reasons – but the one thing bullies want is to get a **reaction**.

What can I do about it?

Get Support by...

- Talking to someone



Getting bullying to stop is often easier if you have other people to help and support you. Bullies often warn that if you 'tell' they will make things even worse. But teachers and parents need to know about the bullying to make sure things are sorted out and they can often find

ways to do this without letting on how they know what's been happening.

- **Keeping a diary** of what's been happening can sometimes help teachers realise what a big problem you've been facing. You can find a good bullying log which you could use on the Childline website – www.childline.org.uk.

The law says your school has to have a special policy about bullying, so with your parents' help you can ask to see it and ask what the school are going to do to stop the problem.

- **Making friends.** Friends are one of the best defences against bullying. Being with a group of friends can sometimes be enough to stop a bully being nasty, but friends are also important at reminding us about the good things about ourselves and keeping the fun in life. Clubs and activities in or out of school are good ways to get to know new people, and the Kidscape website has lots of ideas about how to start up a conversation and make friends.

Don't give the bully the reaction they want by...

- **Building your self confidence (your "self motto").**

Bullies love to kick someone when they are down. Looking confident makes you less of an easy target for someone looking for a cheap dig. Thinking about all your special and unique qualities will make you look confident by changing the way you walk, talk and stand.

A "self motto" is a special phrase or group of words which describes the best and brilliant things about you. To help create your self motto, write a list of all the great things about yourself.

e.g. "I am a caring and fun-loving person who is really good at swimming."

e.g. "I am a fantastic friend who is great at making up funny jokes"

- **Ignoring them.** Bullies keep on picking on people because they like the reaction they get. Ignoring what's happening is easy to say and hard to do! Here are some ideas to make it easier to take your mind off what they are saying...

- ▶ Imagine a special shield or bubble around you with mean comments bouncing off the outside.

- ▶ Think about something you've enjoyed or are looking forward to.

- ▶ Think about all the great things about you (your "self motto").

Some bullies find it no fun anymore when they are being ignored, and stop. Others begin to try a bit harder, but eventually when they still don't get a reaction they stop.

- **Changing the subject.** Changing the subject is another way of ignoring: you ignore the negative comment but you don't completely ignore the bully. They may give you a strange look, but it will throw them off because you have said something unexpected!

e.g. Q: "What's up pizza face!"

A: "Did you see the match last night?"

- **“Fogging”** Other young people have tried a strategy called “fogging”. If someone makes a comment, look as bored as you can and answer back in a very neutral (not cross or scared) voice something like:

e.g. “You could be right”
“So you’ve noticed”

If you can keep doing this, whatever you say, they’ll probably try a bit harder to upset you (and test how good you are at staying neutral) before getting bored. Remember, bullying is no fun for them if they don’t get a reaction!

- **Humour.** Sometimes people think of a ‘clever’ reply for the nasty comments people make:

e.g. Q: “Got any sweets?”
A: “Yes, but I’ve licked them already!”

This can be quite tricky to carry off unless you’re feeling super-confident inside; practicing with a friend or brother or sister beforehand can help. Another way is to make a joke at your own expense:

e.g. Q: “Have you always looked that stupid?”
A: “No, I’m just experimenting with this look for the maths test!”

Explaining

Sometimes other people’s comments are because they don’t understand or feel uncertain about something new. If you are being bullied or picked on because of something to do with your cleft, like your lip, nose, jaw or talking, explaining why you look or sound different can sometimes help. Practise saying a simple statement like:

“I was born with a split in my lip. The surgeons fixed it when I was little.”

What is cyber bullying?

Cyber bullying is when people are nasty or threaten someone by phone or computer. It can be through:

- Email – abusive emails sent by an individual or a group
- Phone – nasty text messages or phone calls
- Instant messages and chatrooms – e.g. threatening messages on MSN
- Social networking sites – e.g. leaving upsetting messages on Facebook, Bebo, MySpace etc.
- Abusing personal information – e.g. posting photos or other details about you online without your permission.

What can I do about cyber bullying?

Online Bullying

- Get an **adult** involved.
- **Never reply** to any messages you receive – this will only act as encouragement to the bullies. **Keep a copy** of the abusive messages as evidence.
- **Block email** from abusive senders. Also, internet service providers will have contact addresses for complaints about email and this will usually be, for example, abuse@hotmail.com, abuse@gmail.com, abuse@btinternet.com etc.

If you are being targeted on a website you can report abuse to the website host via email. You can get your parents to do this for you or you can email help@bullying.co.uk and they will contact the host for you on your behalf.

On social networking sites make sure your profile is on the highest security setting and block bullies from viewing your account. Alternatively you could just delete your account.

Mobile Phone

- Get an adult involved.
- Don't reply to any messages you receive and keep a copy of the messages as evidence.
- Never answer any calls from a number you don't know.
- Change your mobile number by getting a new SIM card and only give it out to close friends.
- If the problem is serious, tell the police. Making abusive phone calls is a criminal offence.

Further information / useful organisations

There are lots of different websites with ideas to help stop bullying. You might want to try Kidscape, Childline or Changing Faces. A book called "Help! I'm being bullied" by Dr Emily Lovegrove is specially written for people at secondary school and has lots of really practical ideas to help. The strategies were tested out by real people in real schools who know how awful bullying can be, to make sure they work. You can buy the book for about £8 from bookshops or through the internet.

Dr Louise Dalton (Oxford) and Dr Jane Lewendon (Salisbury) are the Clinical Psychologists with the Spires Cleft Centre. Psychologists are part of the team to make sure you are feeling happy and confident in all the different parts of your life. They are happy to help with worries about bullying; you can see them when you have a clinic appointment, or make a separate time to talk by calling the Cleft Centre office.

Websites

The ideas in this leaflet come from lots of different groups who are all trying to stop bullying and help kids cope. You might like to look at some of these websites:

www.clapa.com

www.changingfaces.co.uk

www.kidscape.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.childline.org.uk

www.bullying.co.uk

How to contact us

The Spires Cleft Centre

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www.spirecentre.nhs.uk

Tel: 01865 234 252

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.

Dr Louise Dalton, Lead Clinical Psychologist
Dr Loretta White, Locum Clinical Psychologist

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Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust

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www.oxfordradcliffe.nhs.uk