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Dealing with teasing and bullying (children 10+)

The Welsh Centre for Cleft Lip and Palate

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www.wales.nhs.uk/cleft-team

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Bullying is wrong

This leaflet is designed to give you some tips on dealing with teasing and bullying. It also talks about how your feelings can be affected by bullying and ways to cope with this.

Bullying can include teasing or calling people names and making fun of them. It can also include hurting people physically, breaking their things or telling lies about them. Bullying is wrong. All kinds of bullying are unacceptable and should be dealt with by adults such as your parents or a teacher.

Bullies pick on things that people get upset about. For example, looking or sounding different because you have been born with a cleft. Bullies may think that upsetting someone and getting a reaction makes them look tough. Usually they do not think about how it feels to be bullied or how wrong their behaviour is.

What can you do?

There are techniques that you can use when faced with bullies. Thinking about and practising these techniques beforehand can make you more prepared and able to deal with the bullies.



Keeping yourself safe

All bullying should be handled by an adult, and this is especially important when bullying involves you or someone else being hurt physically. Some people find it helpful to keep a diary of bullying, so that they can show an adult when and where the bullying is happening and who the bullies are. Here are some other tips on keeping yourself safe:

- Try to stay in safe areas of school where there are lots of other people.
- On the school bus sit near the driver or by other adults.
- If you walk home then try to walk with other people.

Getting help from a psychologist

Psychologists in the cleft team can help with all of the strategies mentioned in this booklet. This includes helping with techniques to deal with the bullies, with ways of coping and with helping to make a plan to tackle bullying jointly with your school.

The following can be helpful for coping with these feelings:

- Talking to someone about how you are feeling. This can be a friend, a family member, a teacher or a member of the cleft team.
- Having a coping technique prepared can help you to feel less worried about what will happen if you see the bullies.

Thinking positive thoughts about ourselves and our situation can help us to cope. Here are some examples that can help you in difficult situations:

- “My friends and family like me the way I am.”
- “It’s the bully’s problem not mine.”
- “I have ways of dealing with the bullies.”
- “The bully is calling me names because he is unkind.”
- There’s lots of things that I’m good at like maths, art and swimming.”
- “The bullies only focus on things that upset me.”

Thinking of replies in advance

Having replies prepared when a bully calls you names can help because the bully might not be expecting a quick, clever or funny response. It can be a good idea to think of replies that show the bullies that you are not upset by what they are saying. One way to do this is to turn insults into compliments.

Bully: “You are so stupid!”

Person: “Thank you!”

Bully: “Nobody likes you!”

Person: “Well I think you must like me because you keep talking to me all the time.”

Another way of dealing with bullies is to ask them questions. Sometimes bullies act out of habit instead of really thinking about what they are doing. By asking questions you can make them think about their behaviour.

Bully: “You are so ugly!”

Person: “Why would you want to tell me that?”

Bully: “Because I don’t like you.”

Person: “Then why are you speaking to me? Why don’t you just ignore me?”

Bully: “I’m going to fight you after school.”

Person: “Why would you want to do that? Have I done something to upset you?”

Bully: “No, but you deserve it.”

Person: “Do you think hurting me when I have done nothing to you will make you feel good about yourself?”

The third approach you could try is simply agreeing with the bully. The bully is hoping to upset you and get a reaction. To make sure the bully does not get the satisfaction of starting an argument or upsetting you, try agreeing. It is very difficult for a bully to argue with someone who is agreeing with them.

Person: "I've heard this song before."

Bully: "No you haven't."

Person: "Well, I thought I had but maybe I haven't."

Bully: "You are so stupid! You can't even get one question right."

Person: "Yeah, I did get that one wrong. Thanks for noticing; I guess I'll have to work on that in the future."

If you do not feel confident to speak back to the bullies, you could always try some of the techniques on the following pages.

Examples used from:

Kate Cohen-Posey (1995) How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies: A Book that Takes the Nuisance Out of Name Calling and Other Nonsense. Rainbow Books, Inc

Acting calmly

It is normal to feel upset, worried, scared or angry because of bullying, but it can be a good idea not to show the bullies this.

If you show bullies that their insults do not bother you, your reactions will no longer be entertaining. Bullies usually get bored if they are not making someone angry or upset. Replying to the bully calmly is a good way to show that they are not upsetting you.

It is hard to feel calm when you are being bullied, but the key is to look calm, even if you don't feel calm. Keeping your head up, breathing slowly and speaking directly to the bully can help you to appear calm and confident.

Walking away

If possible, walk away from the bullies and find somewhere where teachers or other adults are around. Do not worry if people think you are running away. It is less fun for the bully when people walk away with their head up rather than getting upset or angry.

Bullying and your feelings

Bullying can affect your confidence and how you feel about yourself. This is because sometimes it is easy to believe the insults or think that you are not as good as other people when you are being bullied. Bullying can also make you worried about going to school or sad if you feel like you cannot change what is happening. These feelings are all normal responses to bullying.