

STOP BULLYING

Help! I think I'm being bullied...

We all need a little help sometimes, especially when life gets tough, as it so often does.

When life throws us a challenge we can usually deal with it and then move on to new experiences and adventures. But, if you find yourself being bullied, facing constant abuse at school, home or work, it can leave you feeling isolated and worried about the future.

Signs of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms. These are some common ones:

- being treated unfairly
- being picked on by someone
- having malicious rumours spread about you
- being undermined by a colleague
- being denied training or promotion opportunities

Some forms of bullying are illegal and should always be reported to the police and include:

- repeated harassment or intimidation
- theft
- physical assault
- hate crimes

Why do people get bullied?

People are bullied for all sorts of reasons but it's a mistake to assume that weakness is the thing a bully is looking to target. To the contrary, a bully will try to put down and attack someone who they believe is a threat to them in some way: perhaps the victim is more popular with people, more competent at exams, delivers super quality work on target. Sometimes, a bully feels threatened just because someone else is *different*.



Being the victim of bullying because of someone else's intolerance to difference can lead to feelings of isolation, despair and suicidal feelings.

If you feel like this it is essential to get help (see below).

In relation to gender variance and transitioning, research has discovered that a disproportionate number of young trans people attempt suicide: A 2014 survey of more than 2,000 people in England, conducted by Pace, a mental health charity for LGBTQ people found that 48% of trans people under the age of 26 said they had attempted suicide, while 59% said they

had at least considered it¹. This compares to around 6% of all 16- to 24-year-olds who say they have attempted suicide, according to the Adult Psychiatry Morbidity Survey.

Juliet Jacques, a writer and activist who wrote about her transition in a blog for the Guardian newspaper from 2010 to 2012, said: “Many young trans people experience discrimination, intolerance, bullying, rejection and violence from several spheres. First at school, a place where gender norms are enforced and policed, where you’re told by teachers and other pupils that boys do x and girls do y. Within the family there can be rejection, verbal and physical abuse, and then also at street level, in the media and in the workplace. Together this can render people unable to see a future for themselves. It is no wonder suicidal thoughts are so common”².

Role models



You’re never too old or young to learn from a great role model. Learning how someone else has been through the same as you and not only survived but continues to thrive can be of great comfort and help. Which role model appeals to you is a personal thing: most people feel drawn to someone with whom they feel a natural affinity. This could be someone famous or in the local community.

Occasionally, a role model will have universal appeal because they are so inspirational. Caroline Cossey is one such person, a unique trans woman who trail-blazed her way through turbulent times to find success as a model and activist, as well as lasting happiness with her husband of 25 years.

In a recent interview with Essex policewoman Gina Denham³, herself an inspirational trans woman and campaigner, Caroline points to the loneliness and isolation that a trans person can experience, and how you can feel like a lost soul if you don’t conform or fit in. Caroline believes that support is crucial for development and champions the notion that not only is everyone uniquely special but that diversity needs to be embraced and celebrated.

Support

transpire

Based in Southend, 'Transpire'⁴ is a support group that believes nobody should feel isolated and which aims to facilitate discussion and networking for all members of the trans community, of all ages, whatever their gender identity and whatever stage in their transition they have reached (if at all). Transpire also embraces family and friends of trans community members who perhaps want to get a better understanding of how it feels to be a transperson, or just simply offer their support.

The Transpire Facebook group is a dedicated safe space and, therefore, a closed group but anyone, anywhere, can apply to join. The group holds regular 'meet and eat' evenings, as well as arranging other social opportunities and support events⁵.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/19/young-transgender-suicide-attempts-survey>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/19/young-transgender-suicide-attempts-survey>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqVfUG7qI9c>

⁴ <http://transpiresouthend.org/>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/891240910995191/>

If you're not local to Southend, the national organisation Stonewall offers 'acceptance without exception' and can help you find support groups in your area⁶.

Bullying for any reason is never acceptable. When someone is bullied because of their gender variance it constitutes a hate crime and should be reported to the police, or you can report anonymously at a third party safe place⁷. Victims of hate crime can get help and support from Victim Support⁸ and in Essex can also contact project worker Neil Monk⁹, who works alongside the Strategic Hate Crime Prevention Partnership for Victim Support.

The really important thing to remember is that you're never alone.

Other help and advice



By law, all state schools must have an anti-bullying behaviour policy and follow anti-discrimination law. This means staff must act to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation within the school. Many schools also have dedicated support networks for young people who may be questioning their gender identity and will be able to provide whatever help, advice and support you need.

If you're under 19 and do not have access to support at school, or you are suffering in isolation at home, ChildLine¹⁰ offers confidential advice and support, as does the Anti-Bullying Alliance¹¹.

In the workplace, employers are responsible for preventing bullying and harassment, and are liable for any harassment suffered by their employees. If you are unable to talk to your manager or HR department, the Citizens Advice Bureau¹² can help you to make sense of your situation and find out what support is available. ACAS (The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)¹³ sets out employer obligations in terms of policies they must provide by law, and provides free information and advice to employees.

In all situations, if you feel in immediate danger contact the police on 999.

24 hour confidential support is available at the Samaritans: freephone 116 123



About the author

Claire Gaskin B.Sc (Hons) is an accredited clinical hypnotherapist, advanced psychotherapist and advanced practitioner of BWRT®. Claire works with all age groups and with most mind-related matters, including identity issues, lack of confidence and all kinds of anxiety. She is also an experienced, qualified youth worker, and specialises in working with young people.

You can find out more here: <http://www.benefittherapy.co.uk>

⁶ <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/whats-my-area>

⁷ <http://www.stopthehate.org.uk/hircs/>

⁸ Victim Support free helpline number: 08 08 16 89 111

⁹ neil.monk@victimsupport.org.uk T: 01277 357568, EXT 2578

¹⁰ <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/>

¹¹ <http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>

¹² <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

¹³ <http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/o/c/Bullying-and-harassment-at-work-a-guide-for-employees.pdf>