



# How to Be an Upstander: What to Do When You Witness Bullying

It can be upsetting to witness bullying. If someone you know is being bullied, you might be wondering: how can I help them? Sometimes, it's difficult to know what the next right step is. But there are many ways that you can be an **upstander**: someone who gets involved and makes an effort to stop bullying when they see it happen. Here's what you can do if you see someone being bullied.

- **Offer your support to the person who is being bullied.**

Don't underestimate the power of kindness! Reaching out to the person who is being bullied can help them feel less isolated. You can ask if they're okay and offer to go with them to find an adult who can help. If you don't feel comfortable approaching the person who is being bullied, you can always send them a message and let them know that you're there for them if they need to talk.

You can also offer helpful resources to the person who is getting bullied. **Bullying Canada** and **Stomp Out Bullying** both have confidential chat services where kids and teens can talk to a counsellor and get the support they need. Share these links with them if they are open to reaching out for help!

- **Intervene in the moment**

In more than half of the cases, bullying behavior ends within 10 seconds if someone intervenes. **If it's safe for you to do so**, you can intervene by telling the bully that what they're doing isn't okay. You may also remove the person who is being bullied from the situation, or distract from what is going on to turn attention away from the bully. For example, you can ask the person who is being bullied a question, or say that you are going to a different location and invite them to join you. If you see bullying happen online, you can report the bully's behaviour on the social media site they're using.

Keep in mind that you should only intervene if you feel comfortable doing so. Your wellbeing matters, too. If you're concerned for your safety, it's best **not** to get involved in a real-life situation.



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- **Don't fuel the bullying**

Bullies might feel empowered to continue their behaviour if they have people around them who are watching or laughing along with them. Don't stand by and watch bullying happen! If you're not comfortable intervening, it's better to walk away and find an adult who can get involved. Don't participate in spreading rumors about the person being bullied, and don't interact with bullying behaviour online unless you are standing up to the bully.

- **Report bullying to an adult you trust.**

If you witness bullying, you can reach out to a parent, teacher, or any adult who can help. Sometimes, it can be hard to tell an adult about bullying in person. If you would find it easier to tell them in writing, you can fill out this letter from PrevNET to explain what's been going on, print it, and give it to your trusted adult. It's also helpful to report the bullying incidents you see so that you have a track record to share with an adult who can help! To do this, you can use the Bullying Incident Report tool from Kids Help Phone to keep track of incidents, then give the report to an adult.

To be an upstander, you can reach out to the person being bullied, intervene when you see bullying happen, and report incidents to an adult you trust. Never participate in bullying by watching, laughing, or spreading gossip about the person being bullied. Finally, remember to **take care of your own mental health**. Do self-care activities you enjoy, like exercising or journaling. Monitor how you're feeling, and don't hesitate to reach out for help or talk to people you trust about how witnessing bullying has affected you.