Stories of bullying

Whether you are verbally abused at school, tormented at work, or struggling to deal with the pain experienced by a distressed child, bullying is a painful and difficult ordeal. Through personal experience, we gain insights into bullying and its effects.



Cyber bullying victim, Hannah, shares her story:
I can feel their eyes on me as I walk to class. Everyone will have seen the pictures by now, and since they look real, no one believes that they that are digital creations. I can hear people whispering and snickering whenever I walk into a room. Text messages taunt me every day, and I think I know who is sending them, but without proof I feel helpless. The latest text says that I should expect more of the same if I don't do whatever they tell me to do. I'm scared to tell my parents because they might think the pictures are real, and I'm ashamed for them to find out what the other kids think of me.

While the social nature of the Internet can help to maintain friendships, it can also be a powerful tool for bullying. Humiliating pictures (whether doctored or genuine) can be sent to hundreds of students, faceless tormenters can send threatening emails, and social networking sites provide fertile terrain to exert peer pressure. Bullied children should consider speaking to a teacher, even if they cannot prove the identity of the cyber bully. Schools may have an anti-bullying policy in place to protect targets, and the police may become involved in serious instances. Alternatively, children who do not feel comfortable with the idea of approaching a teacher may want to confide in a trusted friend for advice.

Beth's experience as a parent of a bullied child:
I don't know what I should do to help my son. He has begged me not to report the bullying to his school; he believes everyone will find out and think he is weak. I desperately want to avoid betraying his trust, but I can see how this abuse is starting to destroy him. He used to be happy and outgoing, and now he is so quiet at home. He is almost unrecognizable to me, but when he first told me about being bullied, he made me promise not to discuss it with his teachers.

The right course of action is not always obvious to parents of bullied children. It makes sense to advise your child that seeking help is likely to have more positive outcomes than bad. A meeting with your child's teacher is a good starting point to discuss your concerns and provide specific examples. Avoid blaming, as the teacher may be entirely unaware of the bullying. Develop a sensible plan for dealing with the bully with an appropriate authority at the school.

Michael, a victim of workplace bullying:
I dread going to work and finding out the new ways in which she will try to destroy my credibility. She overheard a personal phone call, and now everyone in the building seems to know about my private life. She has reported me to my boss several times, blaming me for faults that were her own. I feel sick and frightened. What if I get fired? Everyone else seems to think this woman is hilarious and dynamic, so no one would believe me if I reported her cruel behaviour or the way she undermines my job performance.

Unfortunately, bullies are a surprisingly common feature of office environments, causing significant psychological trauma. If you are being bullied at work, there are several different things you can do. First, note that your workplace may already have an anti-bullying policy in place to support people in your situation. Make a discreet request to see this policy if it exists, or discuss your options with Human Resources. Second, look out for other people who may be victimized by the same bully and approach them to exchange notes and discuss possible strategies. Third, keep a detailed record of all of the issues you've experienced with the bully to make sure you can present a convincing case to your superiors if you decide to file an official report or complaint.