

# FACT SHEET #5: ABOUT BULLYING



## What is bullying?

It isn't uncommon to hear someone say something insensitive or mean to someone else. Although these comments or actions are not okay, bullying has some specific features that make it much more serious and harmful.

- Bullying is deliberate – harming another person intentionally
- Bullying involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- Bullying is usually not a one-off – it is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time
- Bullying involves behaviour that can cause harm – it is not a normal part of growing up ([Bullying-Free NZ Week website, 2017](#)).

## What does it look like?

Bullying can be:



### PHYSICAL

- hitting, tripping up



### VERBAL

- insults, threats



### SOCIAL

- spreading gossip or excluding people



### CYBERBULLYING

- bullying online, via the internet, mobile phones and social media. It's a common form of bullying, especially amongst young people (Steiner-Fox, 2016).

## Why do some people get bullied?

We know people are more likely to be bullied if they seem different from their peers in some way.

This might include being clever or popular, differences in race, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, disabilities and abilities, weight or height.

That's why it's so important to celebrate diversity and embrace our differences – we aren't all the same and that's a great thing! ([Bullying-Free NZ Week website, 2017](#)).

It's really important to remind people that it's okay to be different from others and it's not okay to bully people just because they are not the same as you.

## Why do some people bully others?

Just as there are many reasons someone might experience bullying, there are also many reasons why someone might bully someone else.

- They feel unhappy
- They have been the target of bullying themselves
- They want to feel important or powerful
- They don't realise how their behaviour harms others
- They believe being different is a bad thing.

Labelling someone who bullies as a "bad person" isn't right or helpful. While the bullying behaviour isn't okay, someone who bullies others often needs our help and support too.

## Is bullying harmful? Why prevent bullying?

- Many studies show that rangatahi who are bullied are more likely to experience mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety and even suicidal thoughts.
- This can impact on their learning, relationships and ability to feel good about who they are.
- Bullying harms the person being bullied, the person doing the bullying and can also harm those who witness it (bystanders).
- Rangatahi who bully others, or are bullied (or both), are more likely to skip classes, drop out of school, and perform worse academically than schoolmates who have no conflict with their peers (OECD, 2015).
- In Australia, by the time each student cohort has completed its schooling years (generally this is 13 years), the people experiencing the bullying, the people doing the bullying, their families, schools and the community will have experienced an estimated \$525 million in costs associated with bullying (PwC).
- In Australia, after school completion, the consequences of bullying continue and are estimated to cost \$1.8 billion for each single cohort of students over a period of 20 years (PwC).
- By taking bullying seriously and celebrating the diversity of taura/students, all rangatahi can feel safe and supported, and flourish at your school!

**59%** 

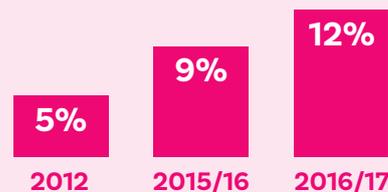
59% of New Zealand children and young people say being valued and respected for who they are is important to having a good life ([Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki, 2019](#)).

**17%** 

17% of New Zealand children and young people say having a good life means feeling safe (including from bullying), valued and respected and being healthy (including mentally healthy) ([Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki, 2019](#)).

**4x**

High school students who had been bullied weekly or more often were four times more likely to experience significant depressive symptoms than students who had been bullied infrequently or not at all (Clark, 2009).



The number of 15 to 24 year olds struggling with mental health issues has been steadily increasing (Ministry of Health, 2017).



The number of young people experiencing anxiety or depression has increased in the past year (Ministry of Health, 2017).



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