

Online Bullying: Help and advice for parents and carers

People are telling me
that they want me to die,
I think I want to die too.

#BedtimeStories

 **PAPYRUS**
prevention of young suicide

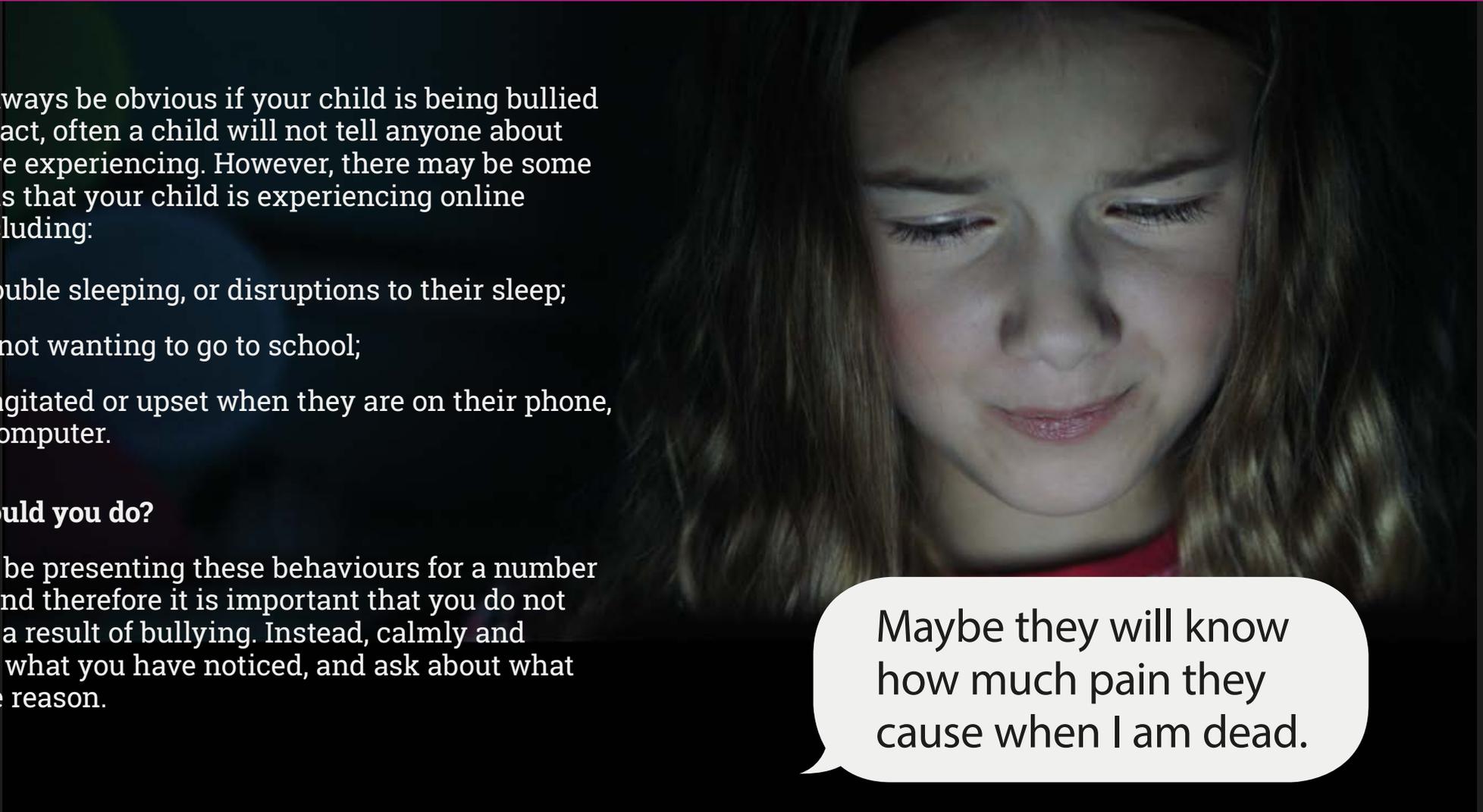
How do I know if my child is being bullied?

It may not always be obvious if your child is being bullied online – in fact, often a child will not tell anyone about what they are experiencing. However, there may be some tell-tale signs that your child is experiencing online bullying, including:

- Having trouble sleeping, or disruptions to their sleep;
- Suddenly not wanting to go to school;
- Seeming agitated or upset when they are on their phone, tablet or computer.

So, what should you do?

A child may be presenting these behaviours for a number of reasons, and therefore it is important that you do not assume it is a result of bullying. Instead, calmly and openly state what you have noticed, and ask about what might be the reason.



Maybe they will know how much pain they cause when I am dead.

What can I do if my child is being bullied online?

If you establish that your child is experiencing online bullying, here are six steps to help you act accordingly:

1. Actively listen

First and foremost, it is very important that you 'actively' listen to your child. This may be the first time they have ever spoken to anyone about what they are experiencing and the first time they have said these things out loud. Be respectful, pay attention and ask open questions without jumping straight into advice or judgement. This is a significant first step in allowing your child to heal.

2. Take your time

It is important that you, as a parent or carer, also take time to reflect on what has been said and don't act impulsively. Children and young people who are experiencing bullying can feel that all power has been taken away from them. Therefore, any immediate or public reaction can make the situation worse for them. Reflection on the situation is vital.

3. Look at the alternative

As the saying goes, there are two sides to every story. As a parent, ensure that you have tried to get as many different perspectives as possible to enable you to understand the 'full-story'. This will ensure that you have an appropriate understanding of the situation and the person who is carrying out the bullying.

What can I do if my child is being bullied online?

4. Involve your child

Someone who is experiencing bullying may feel weak, vulnerable and as though they have little control. And so, involving your child in every step is very important. Ensure that your child is comfortable with your actions and the next steps, as opposed to just telling them what is going to happen next.

5. Take appropriate action

You may wish to involve the school by reporting the bullying, or help your child to block accounts or people who are bullying them. However, make sure you keep any evidence of the bullying. Again, it is important that your child is happy with whatever action that will be taken to deal with the bullying – so simply banning your child from social media, or deleting their accounts, can have negative implications and can contribute to their feelings of being powerless or marginalised.

6. Build resilience

Building resilience can vary depending on each individual. Strategies may include focusing on positive emotion and self-recognition, looking into mindfulness (particularly before bedtime), providing social support, and teaching problem solving strategies.

What do I do if my child is bullying someone else?

If your child has been accused of bullying, it is important that you take similar steps to those outlined above. Often, there is much more going on than is shown on the surface. As a parent or carer it is important to:

1. Actively listen

Calmly question the situation and what has caused them to act this way. It may be a result of peer pressure, insecurity, retaliation or something else completely. It is therefore important to hear their story.

2. Take your time

Do not act impulsively. Think about your reaction and what you say carefully. Ensure that you have been patient, calm, and allowed your child to explain their side of the story fully.

3. Take appropriate action

Sanctions are an important way to teach your child their actions were wrong and that their behaviour is not acceptable. Addressing this in an appropriate way will allow your child to reflect on their behaviour and hopefully prevent this from occurring in the future.

4. Teach other coping strategies

There are many reasons a child may bully someone else. Being aware of this can allow you to help your child to manage their emotions in a different way – this is very much dependent on the individual. Similarly, there are many strategies on empathy which may be beneficial and help your child learn about the repercussions of their behaviour.

Getting support with suicidal thoughts

Getting support with online bullying

If you find that bullying is leading to thoughts or feelings of suicide, or you have concerns that a friend or family member is having thoughts of suicide, contact HOPELineUK by phone, text or email and talk to our suicide prevention advisors in confidence. Our advisors can provide short-term advice and support around staying safe from suicide, help you to work on a plan to keep safe for now, and look at ways to manage and cope with suicidal thoughts.

HOPELineUK

Call: **0800 068 41 41**

Text: **07786 209697**

Email: **pat@papyrus-uk.org**

Opening times:

Mon-Fri: **10am-10pm**

Weekends: **2pm-10pm**

Bank holidays: **2pm-5pm**

Bullying UK has a confidential helpline, online chat and email support service that you can contact for more information: **<http://www.bullying.co.uk>**

Kidscape works with families affected by bullying and cyber bullying to provide advice, information and support. **www.kidscape.org.uk**

