



Tackling bullying

A guide to understanding and combating bullying.

Bullying can happen anywhere and in different forms, including physical, verbal, social and online through cyberbullying. It's an important issue for people of all ages, but particularly for Autistic people who are more likely to experience bullying than non-Autistic people.

Autistic individuals might be more likely to be targeted by bullies due to their unique, and often misunderstood, ways of communicating and behaving. It's essential to know about these challenges to help prevent bullying and support those who might be affected.

What is the impact of bullying?

Emotional struggles: Autistic individuals who experience bullying may have heightened anxiety and depression.

Wellbeing: The stress from bullying can deeply affect Autistic people's overall mental and emotional health.

Avoiding social situations: After being bullied, some Autistic people might shy away from interacting with others, leading to more social isolation.

Self-perception: Ongoing bullying can harm how Autistic people see and value themselves.

Traumatic effects: In certain situations, the impact of bullying can be so severe that it leads to trauma-related symptoms.

Why does bullying happen?

Being misunderstood:

Autistic individuals may find it hard to understand social cues. This can sometimes make them stand out to bullies.

Unique behaviours or interests: An Autistic individual's special interests or ways of doing things might set them apart, but that should be celebrated, not targeted.

Not enough understanding: Whether it's at school or work, if people don't understand autism, it can lead to some Autistic people feeling left out or bullied.

Learning the wrong Lesson: If a person on the autism spectrum has seen or been through bullying before, they might think it's okay to do it too, which is why it is important to stop this cycle in its tracks.

Our purpose
a different brilliant®

Understanding, engaging
and celebrating the strengths,
interests and aspirations of people
on the autism spectrum.

Understanding and combating bullying



How can we address bullying?

Promote autism awareness: Actively participate in and support initiatives that educate about autism across various settings, like schools and workplaces. This can help build a better understanding and acceptance of autism, which is crucial in educational environments to mitigate bullying and enhance mental wellbeing.

Inclusive policy development: Work towards creating and advocating for policies in educational, professional and community spaces that are inclusive and safeguard the rights of Autistic individuals, ensuring these policies are well-known and accessible.

Empowerment through self-advocacy: Encourage learning and teaching of self-advocacy skills, focusing on effective communication of personal needs and rights. This empowerment is vital for fostering confidence and autonomy in handling bullying situations.

Accessible reporting mechanisms: Advocate for, and support the establishment of, clear and safe reporting channels for bullying, promoting a culture that values speaking up and respects those who do.

Tailored support options: Seek and recommend specialised support services, such as counselling or peer support groups, to assist those impacted by bullying. These services should be personalised to meet the diverse needs of Autistic individuals.

Building social connections: Facilitate or join inclusive social groups and events that foster understanding and collaboration. Offer support in understanding social scenarios, including recognising healthy relationships and friendship dynamics.

Digital safety awareness: Prioritise educating oneself and others about responsible online behaviour, emphasising the importance of digital literacy and the creation of secure online spaces.

Wrapping up

Addressing bullying in the context of autism is not just about awareness; it's about active engagement and meaningful action. By embracing the unique perspectives and experiences of Autistic individuals, we can foster a more inclusive and understanding society. The steps outlined here offer practical ways to make a positive change, from promoting autism awareness to developing inclusive policies and building supportive communities.

Useful Resources

Web

kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/bullying

raisingchildren.net.au/autism/behaviour/common-concerns/bullying-asd

theconversation.com/kids-on-the-autism-spectrum-experience-more-bullying-schools-can-do-something-about-it-184385

autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/bullying/bullying/parents

attwoodandgarnettevents.com/autism-and-bullying/

humanrights.gov.au/our-work/employers/workplace-bullying-violence-harassment-and-bullying-fact-sheet

esafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/cyberbullying

Together, we can create environments where Autistic individuals feel valued, understood and safe, at every stage of life. Let's commit to this change, for a kinder, more inclusive world.

Aspect offers a comprehensive approach, based on the idea of a **different brilliant**[®], that:

- Respects difference and diversity
- Builds a person's skills based on their strengths, interests, aspirations and support needs
- Develops autism-friendly environments
- Supports others to understand and embrace autism and to develop respectful supportive interactions.