



Australian Government



Year 6 and 7 students

Rebuilding trust and safety

It is normal for things to feel different after bullying or other harmful behaviours have happened. This tool will help you explore what the next steps could be when you feel ready.

It is okay if things feel different

It is common to feel anxious, unsure or less confident after bullying or other harmful behaviours have happened. It does not mean things are going to feel wrong forever. Rebuilding takes time. There is no set timeline.

'Recovery isn't just about what happened in the moment. It's about whether the world around you feels safer the next day.'

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT
ROCKIT NATIONAL
YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Rebuilding confidence

Bullying and other harmful behaviours can really affect your confidence. It can take time to get this back. Don't rush yourself, but know that you are worth the effort.

A good place to start is with the people, places or activities where you already feel comfortable and safe. This might be doing a hobby, playing a sport or spending time with a community or a friend.

For example, do you have a team where you feel comfortable and happy? A friend you enjoy spending time with? A place like the skate park or something you love doing, like drawing, writing or playing video games?

Focus on what is already working for you and look for ways to do more of it. You don't need to do everything at once. Small steps are enough. Build them around what already feels safe. A trusted adult can help you think through what this might look like in your situation.

Navigating the relationship where harm occurred

It can be hard to be around the person or people who caused you harm. In some cases, you can avoid them, but in other situations, you may have to interact with them.

You don't owe anyone forgiveness or your friendship. What matters is that you feel safe.

If the harm was connected to a part of who you are, like your background, identity or appearance, rebuilding trust and safety may feel harder. Put your safety and wellbeing first. This is true even if you feel pressure to 'get back to normal'.

Sometimes you cannot avoid the person who caused you harm, like when you are in class or at lunch. But there are things that can help. You can ask a trusted adult to help you, for example, with seating, group assignments or where you sit at lunch. You do not have to manage this alone. If the first person doesn't help, tell someone else. Keep trying.

Sometimes a school may suggest a 'restorative process' – a chance to talk things through with the person who caused harm. The idea is for everyone to understand what happened and what needs to happen next. This is entirely your decision. It should only happen if you genuinely want to take part. It's okay to say no or to wait until you feel ready.

'The worst part of bullying isn't always what happens in the moment ... it's how long it takes to believe you deserved better.'

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT
ROKIT NATIONAL
YOUTH COLLECTIVE

When to seek more support

Sometimes worry, sadness or distress do not get better over time. If this happens, talk to a trusted adult like a parent, carer or another family member, your family doctor or a counsellor. If the first person doesn't help, tell someone else. Keep trying.

Note

Go to the 'Connected resources' section for more support if you're not sure who to talk to. You can also talk to someone at the support organisations listed in the 'Where to get more help' section.



You can report harmful behaviour online to the **eSafety Commissioner** at esafety.gov.au/report.



If you have been bullied or harmed because of who you are, such as your race, gender, disability or any other identity-based factor, go to the **Australian Human Rights Commission** at humanrights.gov.au to learn about your rights and find support.



If you have caused harm to someone else

Rebuilding trust after causing harm can be possible. But it takes time and real effort. It is a good start that you are thinking about how your actions have affected others.

Here are a few starting points:

- ◉ First, acknowledge to yourself what happened. Then, when the time is right, and if the other person is willing, talk to them.
- ◉ Genuinely apologise for what happened. Saying sorry, and meaning it, is a good thing to do. An apology is a start, not an end. What matters more is changing your behaviour over time.
- ◉ Give the other person space. Repair happens at their pace, not yours. They may not want to continue a friendship with you, and that is okay.
- ◉ Talk to a trusted adult about what happened and what you can do differently. If the first person doesn't help, tell someone else. Keep trying.
- ◉ Go to the 'Connected resources' section for more information, or talk to someone at the support organisations listed in the 'Where to get more help' section at the end of this resource.

Connected resources

- ◉ What is harmful behaviour and how to make things better
- ◉ What do I need? Supporting yourself and self-care

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au. Free, confidential counselling for bullying and other harmful behaviours, school issues, online harm and wellbeing, available 24/7.

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au. Mental health support for stress, anxiety or overwhelm, available 24/7.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au. Crisis support and counselling if things feel overwhelming, available 24/7.

Dolly's Dream Bullying Support Line: 13 36 55 (13 DOLLY) or dollysdream.org.au. Counselling and guidance for children and young people experiencing bullying and other harmful behaviour, available 24/7.

headspace/ehespace: 1800 650 890 or headspace.org.au. Mental health, wellbeing and early intervention support, available 9 am–1 am daily.

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 or 1800respect.org.au. Sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for anyone who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault, available 24/7.

13YARN: 13 92 76 or 13yarn.org.au. Culturally safe 24/7 support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

QLife (LGBTIQA+ young people): 1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au. Free, anonymous peer support and referral service, available 3 pm–9 pm daily.

eSafety Commissioner: esafety.gov.au. Report cyberbullying, get advice and request content removal support.

Australian Human Rights Commission: humanrights.gov.au. Support for cases involving discriminatory harm. Reports can be made via their website or by emailing infoservice@humanrights.gov.au.

State, territory and non-government education sectors will reflect the expectations of the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian schools in their policies and procedures by Term 1 2027. This includes making reasonable efforts to initiate a response to bullying and harmful behaviour within two school days, recognising that further time may be required to fully address the issue. By Term 1 2027, all schools will also publish or link to policies and procedures that align with the National Framework (or equivalent contemporary jurisdiction specific Frameworks) and their local policies and school context.