

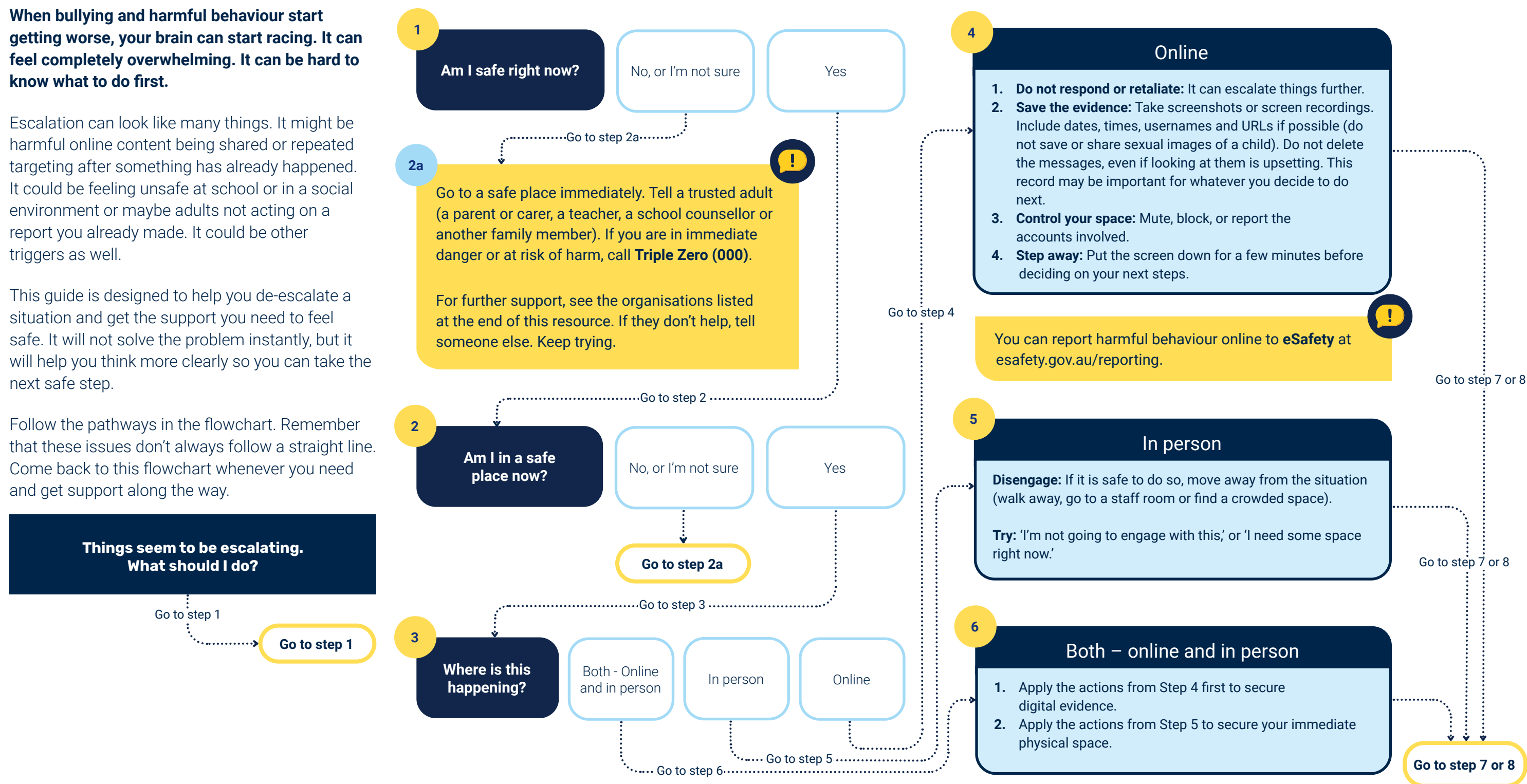
Things seem to be escalating. What should I do?

When bullying and harmful behaviour start getting worse, your brain can start racing. It can feel completely overwhelming. It can be hard to know what to do first.

Escalation can look like many things. It might be harmful online content being shared or repeated targeting after something has already happened. It could be feeling unsafe at school or in a social environment or maybe adults not acting on a report you already made. It could be other triggers as well.

This guide is designed to help you de-escalate a situation and get the support you need to feel safe. It will not solve the problem instantly, but it will help you think more clearly so you can take the next safe step.

Follow the pathways in the flowchart. Remember that these issues don't always follow a straight line. Come back to this flowchart whenever you need and get support along the way.



7

Is the harm related to my identity?

If the harm involves content or behaviour targeting your identity, such as your race, sexuality, disability, religion or gender, this is discriminatory harm.

Go to step 9

9

If this is happening at school

Use your school's formal reporting process. Ask to speak directly to someone in leadership, such as a year level coordinator or assistant principal.

Go to step 10

10

Have I told anyone?

Yes

No

Go to step 12

Go to step 11

11

No

Think of one person who you feel safe with. It could be a friend, a family member, a teacher or a school counsellor.

If you don't know what to say, try: 'Hey, something is happening and it's getting out of hand. I don't know what to do and I need some help'.

For further support, see the organisations listed at the end of this resource.

Go to step 12

12

Has anything changed since I told them?

Yes

No

Go to step 13a

Go to step 13b

13a

Yes

For further support, go to the 'Support systems' resource or see the organisations listed at the end of this resource.

13b

No

Repeat steps 10–12 as often as you need until the situation has de-escalated and you feel safe. You have the right to feel supported and safe.

8

Have I caused harm?

If you're reading this and wondering whether you've made a situation worse, see the 'Connected resources' listed at the end of this resource to find information about accountability.

End



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.

For more information about identity-based harm, see the connected resources listed at the end of this resource.

Note

Schools are expected to make reasonable efforts to initiate a response within two school days¹ of becoming aware of bullying and other harmful behaviours. Further time may be required to fully address these issues.

If the first person you have told has not helped or believed you, tell someone else. Keep trying.

For further support, see the organisations listed at the end.



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

'Sometimes being brave just means walking away from the people bullying you.'

– YOUNG PERSON, 13, PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH COLLECTIVE

'Don't be afraid to speak up – change only happens through action. Try and try again, because eventually your actions will make a difference in changing the culture around bullying.'

– YOUNG PERSON, 13, PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidsline.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.

Connected resources

- ◉ Support systems
- ◉ Identity-based harm
- ◉ Accountability – I've been called out for my behaviour

¹State, 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 2 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.