



What if I don't want to tell someone? A guide for help-seeking

If you are experiencing or have seen bullying or other harmful behaviour, and you have not told anyone yet, you're not alone. This is more common than you might think.

There are lots of reasons people may not want to talk about it. This resource looks at some of the worries you might have. It also helps you get the support you need.

You might not be ready to tell anyone yet. That's okay. But it is still important to keep a record of what is happening and to talk to a trusted adult and get help when you are ready.

Barrier

I am worried I will get in trouble.

A different perspective

Something might have happened somewhere you weren't supposed to be. Or maybe it happened while you were doing something you weren't allowed to do. You might feel like telling someone means getting in trouble.

But what happened to you or someone else still matters. You still deserve support, no matter where it happened or what you were doing.

Barrier

No one will know how to help me.

A different perspective

Trusted adults do not need to know everything to help you. That's okay. There is support available for them in the 'Parents and carers resources', which they can use to support you. If the first person doesn't help, tell someone else. Keep trying. You can also talk to someone at one of the support organisations listed in the 'Where to get more help' section at the end of this resource.

Barrier

They might tell someone else.

A different perspective

Trusted adults want the best for you. They have a duty of care, which means they are responsible for keeping you safe. This means they may need to share information in some situations to make sure you are safe. This should be done in a way that respects your privacy and choice wherever possible. Your safety is the most important thing.

Barrier

The problem might get worse if I tell someone.

A different perspective

This is a real and understandable fear. But not telling often means it keeps happening or gets worse. Telling a trusted adult gives you the best chance of things changing.

Barrier

People might think I am weak.

A different perspective

Asking for help takes courage. It is not a weakness and does not mean you are too sensitive. Asking for help is important to protect your safety and wellbeing. It can help you get support early and recover well.

Barrier

I don't know how to tell them.

A different perspective

There is no perfect way to start. Saying 'something has been happening and I need help' could be enough to begin the conversation. There is an email template below that you can use to ask someone for help.

Barrier

People might not believe me.

A different perspective

What happened to you deserves support. Tell a trusted adult. If they don't recognise the harm for what it is, tell someone else. Keep trying.

'There is no threshold of bullying being 'bad enough' to be acceptable.'

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Barrier

I don't know who is bullying me online.

A different perspective

You can still do something, even if you don't know who is behind the bullying or other harmful behaviour. You can still save screenshots and report evidence, even if you do not know who sent or posted it.

If you need more information about keeping records of harmful behaviour, go to the 'Connected resources' section.

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



Barrier

I can figure it out by myself.

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 at the end of this resource.



A different perspective

Some things might resolve without help, but you do not have to manage them alone. Having support can help things get resolved more safely and quickly, and it helps to protect your wellbeing along the way.

Barrier

Telling someone won't change anything.

A different perspective

Not every report leads to an immediate fix, but telling someone is still a very important step.

Note

Schools should make reasonable efforts to start responding within two school days¹ once they know about bullying or other harmful behaviours. This does not mean things will be fixed straight away, but safety and support steps can start to be taken.



¹ State, territory and non-government education sectors will reflect the expectations of the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian schools in their policies. By Term 1 2027, all 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. 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 and their local policies and school context.

Asking for help template

Have you decided to tell someone, but you're not sure how? This template can help.

You can use it for an email, text or online message. You don't have to use these exact words. Change it so it sounds like you.

Before you send it, you can show it to a trusted adult or use it to help with a conversation. You can also ask someone to help you fill it in. Try starting with: 'I've written something I'd like to show you.' You don't have to do this alone.

If the first person doesn't help, tell someone else. Keep trying until you get the support you need.

Email template

Subject line: *[Keep it simple, such as 'I need some help with something']*

Email body: To _____,

I am *[your name]*. I want to talk to you about something that has been happening.

[Short text, 1–2 lines]

Something has been happening that is making me feel uncomfortable, and I am not sure what to do. *[Short text, 4–5 lines]*

[You may like to include some examples of the bullying or other harmful behaviours.]

This has been happening online and/or in person. It has been happening for _____ *[how long.]*

It has been making me feel _____.

[This can include any feelings or impacts the harmful behaviour is having on you, like being worried, scared, upset, sad, frustrated or angry.]

I would like to talk to you about this. Can we make a time? *[Short text, 2 lines]*

From _____ *[your name and class]*

'A friend of mine in primary school was going through a tough time, having to deal with a classmate bullying her, someone who was a lot bigger, stronger and difficult to stand up to.

Reaching out to her teacher, a trusted adult, was a very brave thing for her to do. She found it difficult to be vulnerable, to open up and to "risk being a snitch"; in primary school, something as simple as reporting something wrong can be seen as a betrayal to your peers.

Being able to reach out and ask for support allowed her to get through this tough time, proof that even the simplest act of courage, asking for help, can make a huge difference.'

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Connected resources

- ◉ Who's in my corner?
- ◉ What happens next?
- ◉ Keeping a record: What to save and why

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.

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