



Q & A

Q: My friend is being bullied online. I'm so upset and want to protect my friend, that I respond by saying I will hurt this guy for what he's doing. I know I'm defending my friend, but am I being a bully also?

A: Responding to negative comments with negative comments tends to fuel the fire, not put it out, and often draws others into the conversation. Don't react, respond with anger and threats, or comment on posts that may be offensive or upset someone. You could also potentially become a target. The best way to help is to support your friend and tell a trusted adult.

Q: Last year I received threatening texts from a girl at school. I told my parents and they filed charges, but she has started sending them again. Now I don't want to tell them, because there is nothing else for them to do, especially because it didn't help the first time.

A: Let your parents know! The burden is too big for you to handle alone, and you will feel better when you are supported by people who love you. Don't give up! There's always more that can be done, like working with school officials or going back to the police. Your bravery in coming forward can change your situation and the lives of others!

Online Resources:
 Find us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/GOYAministry
 National Bullying Prevention Center: www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org
 Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>
 Join the *Don't Stand By—Stand Up!* Campaign: <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/>
 Join Teens Against Bullying on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PACERTab>

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If you or someone you know is being bullied, don't ignore it! You can make a difference in that person's life. Don't try to take it on by yourself, it may not be safe. Let an adult, your parents, a teacher, or your parish priest know what's happening, especially if the situation is threatening or dangerous.

GET THE FACTS

Bullying is when someone uses physical force, insults, or threats to ignore or hold power over someone else. It's more common than you think. 71% of students say that bullying is a problem at school, and 160,000 students miss school every day because they fear an attack. Some people are also at a higher risk, like those with disabilities, those questioning their sexuality, and those with low self-esteem or poor social skills.

Types of Bullying: *Physical* (using violence to dominate another person); *Verbal* (using words to humiliate someone, usually in front of others); *Social* (spreading rumors, making someone feel isolated or not included); *Cyber* (using digital media to embarrass and make threats).

Cyber bullying is especially damaging because the bully can remain anonymous, it can happen at any hour, you can't respond immediately, and it can reach a large audience. Around half of teens say they've been the victim of cyber bullying, and 1 in 10 have had damaging pictures taken of them with cell phones.

NAVIGATING THROUGH YOUR TEEN YEARS: BULLYING

DEALING WITH IT

Responding to Bullies: Don't react or fight... bullies love when you get upset. Try staying close to friends, as there is always safety in numbers, and when possible, steer clear or ignore. Most importantly, make sure to tell someone—never keep it a secret.

Responding to Cyber Bullies: Change your privacy settings and click the "report abuse" button or flag. Make sure to save messages, emails, and social media conversations, especially if they are threatening. Most importantly, never share anything that you would not like to be public—things sent or posted electronically are never secure!

THE CHURCH SPEAKS

You Have the Power! God is on YOUR Side!

Even when it seems like everyone is against you, the Lord is always on your side. "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them: for it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you" (Deut. 31:6). This doesn't mean that bullying will go away if you ignore it. It means that God will give you the strength to come forward. Do the right thing...saying something will help change your situation AND might help others who are also being bullied by the same person!

The Golden Rule

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). Sound familiar? As early as elementary school, we are taught the *Golden Rule* which lays out the basics of respect and love for ourselves and others (friends, strangers, classmates, family, etc.). It is important to remember that we are accountable to God every day for all of our thoughts, words, and actions. Make it a priority to think about the "Greatest Commandment" from Christ, to love one another, with the knowledge that hurtful words or actions can have devastating consequences for others.

Break the Cycle

Often times, those who are bullied end up bullying because they want to be accepted by others. Instead of perpetuating the cycle of violence and hate, think of St. Paul's words, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). The next time you find yourself reacting in anger, challenge yourself to respond like Christ, with love instead of revenge. If you aren't sure where to start, use these words from the prayer of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, "Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that come to me throughout the day with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Your will governs all. In all my deeds and words, guide my thoughts and feelings."