

Mobile phones and bullying

what you need to know to get the bullies off your back

Having a mobile phone can be fun. It's a gr8 way 2 tlk 2 friends, and an xlnt way of letting mum & dad know when you need a lift home ;)! Unfortunately, some people are using mobiles to bully others by sending insulting or threatening SMS or using their mobiles to spread nasty rumours.

Bullying is not acceptable. If you or your friends are unlucky enough to be picked on, remember:

- it's not your choice, it's not your fault
- you're not alone
- and, most importantly, there is something you can do about it.

Prevention's better than cure

1. Protect your number.

Do what you can to stop anyone sending you nasty or unwanted messages in the first place. If they don't have your mobile number, they can't send you messages. So:

- Only give your phone number to your friends
- Don't leave your mobile where someone can see your number
- Consider using caller ID blocking to hide your phone number when you call someone.

If you do get unwanted calls/SMS:

2. Don't respond

People who bully get their kicks from knowing they've upset their victim. Don't let them know they've upset you, and you've taken away half their 'fun'. Easier said than done when it's face-to-face, but if it's on your mobile — easy!

If you get an insulting message (or just one you don't want) don't respond. Keep the message (and time and date it was sent) as evidence, and tell your parents, teacher or another adult.

If you decide you want to respond, wait until you're no longer angry or upset. Give yourself time to calm down. A calm, considered and delayed message from you won't 'reward' the bully like an immediate and upset response would.

3. Don't know (or want to know) the caller? Don't let them know who you are.

Unless you are sure you know—and want to know—the caller, don't give anyone any information about yourself, including your name.

Similarly, don't leave your name on your voicemail. This confirms to the person doing the bullying that they've called the right number.

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4. Turn your phone off

Remember that your phone doesn't have to be on all the time. Turn it off sometimes. Give yourself a break from seeing/hearing from the bully.

5. Stealing: safety first

It's best not to flash your phone around and let others know you've got one. If you are physically threatened by someone wanting to nick your phone, don't fight to keep it. Your safety is more important than your phone.

If your phone is stolen, remember that you can block it — which means the thief can't use it. For more information on security issues, see www.mindyourmobile.com

6. You can get help. The law is on your side

People who use mobile phones to bully do so because they believe their actions will be anonymous—that they can't get caught. They're wrong. It's a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace or harass or offend another person. And almost all malicious calls can be traced.

Report the basic details of the call (keep the message, record the time and date) to your school or parents. Don't think that just because they may not understand mobile phones as well as you that they can't help. They can.

Free professional help is also available. Kids Help Line provides a counselling service that is accessible by all Australians aged 5–18 years. **Just call 1800 55 1800.**

Your phone company may also be able to help. They may be able to stop certain numbers calling you, or provide you with a new phone number. See the 'company care numbers' below and ask for their help if you need it.

If you feel physically threatened, the police in your state or territory may be able to assist.

Useful numbers:

For general support and assistance, call Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

For technical assistance (eg on how to use features your phone or phone service) call your mobile company's customer care number:

"3": 133320

AAPT: 138 886

Optus: 1300 300 937

Orange: 133488

Telstra: 125 111

Virgin: 1300 555 100

Vodafone: 1300 650 410

Or for handset-related issues:

Motorola: 1300 138 823

Nokia: 1300 366 733

Sony Ericsson: 1300 650 050

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Useful websites:

Kids Helpline: www.kidshelp.com.au

Cybersmart Kids Online: www.cybersmartkids.com.au

Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association: www.amta.org.au