

MINDMATTERS

Nurturing Minds, Elevating Lives

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How to Deal with Bullies No Matter Your Age

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It is also important to document everything, especially in the workplace. Keep written records of incidents, emails or messages that could support your case if formal action becomes necessary. Do not hesitate to seek help from a therapist or counsellor. Professional support can help you process what is happening, rebuild your confidence, and develop strategies to respond more assertively.

Lastly, build a strong support system. Surround yourself with people who treat you with respect and kindness. Healthy relationships reinforce your self-worth and make it easier to recognise when something is wrong. Whether at work, home or among friends, you deserve to feel safe, valued and respected. Bullying at any age is never acceptable.

When we think of bullies, we often picture schoolyard taunts or playground fights. But bullying doesn't stop after childhood. In adulthood, it simply takes on new forms, often more subtle, more calculated, and harder to identify. Adult bullying can appear as manipulation, exclusion, sarcasm, micromanagement or even public humiliation. It can happen in the workplace, in families, in romantic relationships, or within social circles.

Adult bullies may try to undermine your work, spread rumours, gaslight you into doubting your own memory or feelings, or deliberately isolate you from others. These behaviours are often disguised as strong leadership, tough love or banter, making them difficult to call out. Yet their impact is real and serious. Repeated exposure to bullying can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem, burnout, and even depression.

The first step in dealing with adult bullying is to recognise it. Once you start seeing the pattern, you can take action. Setting clear and firm boundaries is crucial. Let the person know calmly and confidently what kind of behaviour you will not tolerate. Avoid responding emotionally, as bullies tend to feed off reactions.



Leepile Thebe, a senior psychologist, explains that many adult bullying cases go unnoticed because the behaviour is masked as professionalism or hidden within power dynamics. Often, people dismiss it as someone simply being "difficult."

He stresses that adult bullying can be just as psychologically damaging as childhood bullying because it is rarely addressed openly, victims may suffer in silence, internalising blame and shame.

According to Thebe, one of the most harmful effects of adult bullying is the erosion of self-worth. Victims may begin to question their abilities, doubt their memories, and feel isolated. This makes it harder to speak up or ask for help.

He also notes that many victims fear the consequences of reporting bullying, especially in the workplace. Concerns about job security, reputation or being labelled as overly sensitive often keep people silent.

Thebe encourages anyone facing bullying to take their experience seriously. Seeking help from a psychologist or counsellor can be a vital step in healing.

Professional guidance can offer tools to set healthy boundaries, rebuild confidence, and begin recovering from emotional harm.

Client Testimony: One Woman's Journey Out of Workplace Bullying



At just 32 years, an anonymous woman thought stress was part of the job. It wasn't until it started affecting her health that she realised something deeper was wrong. What she hadn't realised was that she was being bullied at work.

Her manager's behaviour was subtle but relentless. He belittled her work in front of others, interrupted her during meetings, and regularly took credit for her ideas. "I felt invisible and defeated," she recalls. "I didn't even know this was bullying. I just thought I wasn't good enough."

Desperate for relief, she turned to the senior psychologist Thebe, whose therapy approach focuses on practical tools for empowerment. With Thebe's guidance, she learned to establish firm boundaries without guilt and apply the grey rock technique to remain emotionally detached from toxic encounters.

"We practiced assertive communication together, simple scripts that helped me speak up without fear. I started seeing myself not as a victim, but as someone taking back control," she says.

Puzzle Time: Find the Hidden Words!

Words to find: Respect, Courage, Boundary, Heal, Therapy, Calm, Worth

C	A	L	M	B	O	U	N	D	A	R	Y
A	S	S	E	R	T	R	U	T	H	I	Z
C	A	R	S	O	R	E	S	P	E	C	T
R	H	E	A	L	I	N	G	E	S	E	S
A	P	E	J	K	W	O	R	T	H	M	W
G	V	I	U	T	H	E	R	A	P	Y	K
E	S	C	O	U	R	A	G	E	D	R	E

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Thank you for being part of our community. Your journey matters, and we're honoured to walk it with you.

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