

## Bullying

### What do we mean by bullying?

Bullying is the persistent demeaning and degrading of students or staff through words, actions and communications which erode self confidence and undermine self-esteem. The effects of bullying behaviour on the recipient cause a range of negative physical and emotional symptoms and problems.

Bullying often involves a misuse of power by someone in authority. However it can also occur between students and students or staff and staff on a similar level or even students bullying staff.

Bullying behaviour includes:

- Being shouted at
- Personal insults or name calling
- Public humiliation
- Deliberately withholding information so someone feels undermined
- Belittling someone's opinion
- Constantly excluding or ignoring someone
- Trivial criticism of work done which erodes self confidence
- Unfair blaming for mistakes
- As students work in groups on assignments and presentations, bullying can sometimes take place as one or two people try to dominate the group. As well as being very unpleasant, such an approach is unlikely to lead to a good grade, as the whole group will not be working well together towards success.

These are just examples of some of the bullying that can be found and this can happen by one person to another or by a group of people to one person; it can be in person or via email, phone or through social networking sites.

### Effects of Bullying

The effects on the recipients of bullying vary from individual to individual. While this list is not exhaustive, it does give an indication of the symptoms that may occur:

- low self esteem/ lack of confidence
- loss of appetite
- feeling isolated
- anxiety: you may in certain circumstances have anxiety or panic attacks
- migraine / severe headaches
- stomach problems
- sleeplessness
- depression
- use of harmful coping mechanisms, such as drug taking, excessive drinking and eating disorders.
- mental health problems

You may feel you have left behind friends and family when coming to university and in unfamiliar surroundings you may feel lonely and lost leading to a feeling of vulnerability. Situations which you may have dealt with easily in the past may now feel personal and insurmountable - e.g. a critical comment by a tutor commenting on your work.

Alternatively the feelings you are experiencing may be reminiscent of much earlier feelings from your childhood and it may be difficult to think about such painful times repeating themselves now you are an adult.

### What you could do about it yourself

You might feel embarrassed or ashamed that you are being bullied and talking about it may feel difficult, but finding the courage to talk to someone about what is happening to you and how you are feeling will help you feel you are not alone in dealing with this problem.

Knowing this can make you feel it is not only you who is experiencing this. This could be a friend, family member or personal tutor, someone you feel you may be able to talk to. It may be that others are having the same difficult feelings which may make you feel less alone in dealing with the situation.

Differences in culture and attitudes may mean the person who is bullying you may not be aware of the effect of their behaviour. However the defining factor is the effect their behaviour has on you and how that makes you feel.

Finding strategies to cope with and hopefully end the bullying in a way that you are capable of can be discussed with your friend/ relation, if however this is not working for you perhaps you need informed help.

### Finding help

Any student who feels they may have been subject to bullying or harassment are encouraged to get in touch with our Cause for Concern Team. This is confidential and you can contact them on [cause4concern@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:cause4concern@mdx.ac.uk). Please visit [unihub.mdx.ac.uk/cause-for-concern](http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/cause-for-concern) for more information.

Alternatively you can contact MDXSU who have officers who deal with student welfare who can give you support and act as mediators with other students or staff. Please contact [www.mdxsu.com/advice](http://www.mdxsu.com/advice)

If the effects of the bullying are such that it is making you feel acutely anxious, depressed or affecting your health then it is time to seek more specialist help and you need to speak to a counsellor in the Counselling Service.

### How to contact the Counselling and Mental Health Service

The UniHelp Desk will be happy to tell you where to find the Counselling service or you can contact us at: [cmh@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:cmh@mdx.ac.uk)

Please see website for up-to-date service details and contact numbers: <http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/cmh>

### Further leaflets in this series:

- Abuse
- Addictive behaviour
- Anxiety and panic
- Bereavement and loss
- Coming to Britain to study
- Coping with trauma
- Depression
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