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How Can I Help Someone Who's Being Bullied?

A girl in my class is overweight and other kids constantly make fun of her and try to push her lunch tray out her hands. Is there anything I can do help her?

– Diana*

To the girl being bullied, just knowing that someone else is on her side can make a big difference. It can also help if you and your friends hang out with her, especially during times that she has problems — like lunch or free time. Bullies often bother people when they're alone. And having people to hang out with can help your classmate feel confident and accepted.

Talk to an adult at school about what's going on. The adult can help stop the bullying by dealing with the bullies directly. If it hasn't completely stopped, get advice from the adult on the best ways you and the girl who is being bullied can react. For example, things like calmly telling bullies to stop, walking away, ignoring them, or using humor often discourage bullies because no one seems upset or intimidated by their actions.

Speak up if you hear others bullying your classmate. Stand up for her by telling them that the way they're treating her is wrong and what they're doing is not funny. But do it in a way that's calm and firm, rather than dramatic, sarcastic, or emotional.

Don't let things escalate into arguing, planning revenge, being mean, or resorting to violence. These things usually don't help, and can make a bad situation even worse. Bullies often are encouraged if they see people are upset and if they sense their intimidation is working. You can help prepare by talking to adults or friends and rehearsing how you'll act and what you'll say.

If the bullying involves violence or threats, or if you think your classmate is in danger of getting hurt or harming herself, talk to an adult about it right away.

**Names have been changed to protect user privacy.*

Note: All information is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

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