

## Bullying – An Autistic Guide

*Autistic people of all ages are prime targets for bullying and verbal abuse.*

*Bullying is intended to be harmful and usually happens within a relationship that involves a power imbalance. It is also known as “Peer Victimization,” as it commonly occurs within peers.*

*A person can only be a victim of bullying if they allow it. They do not speak up, do not set boundaries, often freeze, do not have the confidence to confront, or might go along with it to avoid negative attention.*

### Risk Factors of Victimization

1. Emotional and social deficits increase the risk of bullying.
2. People on the Spectrum may be more vulnerable to narcissistic abuse and manipulation because of naive want to trust.
3. Bullies look for those who stand out from the norm- most Autists are a target due to:

1. Social isolation
2. Social rejection
3. Lack of support or protection of friends
4. Odd behavior
5. Socially awkwardness
6. Lack of setting boundaries
7. Generally trusting
8. Inclined to accept excuses and lies even after betrayal



4. Being bullied does not stop as one gets older. *An Autistic person continues to have trouble understanding social situations, speaking up, and setting boundaries as they age.*
5. Chronic bullying may lead to depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicide.

### **Call 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline to talk or chat with someone**

6. Autists that go above and beyond at work are often victimized due to jealousy from the attention, unintentionally making others look bad, and being more productive than coworkers.
  1. The ‘Get Smarty Pants’ phenomenon is well documented in both school and work for over-achieving Autists.
  2. Autists focus on work performance rather than social connections.
  3. Bluntness and odd communication is often perceived as rude or weird.

## Risk Factors of Victimization (continued)

7. Teasing often turns into bullying, especially if one does not set boundaries or speak up.
  1. Not setting boundaries and not speaking up are cornerstone traits of Autism.
8. Self-regulating emotions and masked behaviors slip over time.
  1. Peers notice the difference and start mocking.

<b>Non-Physical Bullying Includes</b>	
1. Purposefully excluding from activities.	6. Telling lies or stories about others.
2. Talking behind the back. Bad-mouthing.	7. Making fun or mocking.
3. Manipulation to get to do something	8. Sexual preference victimization.
4. Social Media – Rumor spreading.	9. Disability mocking deficits.
5. Racial or ethnic mocking traditions.	

## Signs of Being Bullied

*Children and adults may hide that they are being bullied due to shame or embarrassment. It may manifest in different ways depending on age and severity of cruelty. Ten percent of children who were bullied were affected by chronic or ongoing bullying.*

1. Sudden crying for no reason.
2. Constant mood swings.
3. Always on edge, anxious or agitated.
4. Onset of nightmares.
5. Angry all the time.
6. Prefer to be alone more than usual.
7. More stimming and/or repetitive behavior.
8. Doesn't want to talk about obvious issues.
9. Avoiding school or work.
10. Grades or performance drops.
11. Might be mean and start bullying.
12. More Autistic meltdowns.
13. Suicidal idealizations.



## Suggestions for Dealing with the Bullying *IF you feel safe*

*It is difficult to regulate emotions and respond properly in the moment.*

*It might be better if the incident is discussed after everyone calms down.*

1. **Do not let them affect you.** *You are the victim.*
2. Stay calm. Stay respectful.
3. **Be confident** (bullies usually do not bother confident people.)
4. Go public if possible— outdoors, another room where people are around within ear shot. Speak **loudly**. Ask, “Are you mocking me?”  
Ask someone else, “Did you hear that?”
5. Tell someone else – a friend, family, authority, teacher, police.
6. Do not remain silent about it. It will not go away.
7. You are not alone.
8. Visit [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)



Leave or get help if you feel threatened or at risk of becoming out of control.

Call 911 for help if it gets physical or you feel threatened.

Call 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline to talk or chat with someone

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[www.autisticnow.com](http://www.autisticnow.com)