

# Seven signs your teen is being bullied online

Teens often don't tell their parents when something goes wrong online. But if we keep an eye out for changes in our teens' behaviour, we can learn to spot when something seems 'off' and step in to support to them.

## Why don't teens tell their parents about problems online?

Only around **half** of teens who've been online bullied tell their parents about it. Some teens don't tell because they're embarrassed. Some keep quiet because they're afraid their parents will take their devices away or go up to the school and make a scene. Some just don't think their parents will understand.

Some teens hide their experiences of online bullying so well that their families have no idea anything is wrong. But many others show warning signs, including these ones.

### 1. They become upset or anxious when using their devices.

Parents might also notice that their teens don't want to talk about what's happening online or hide their screens when their parents are around.

Teens who are being bullied online might start using their devices more than usual or using them late at night. This might be because they are anxious about what people might be saying about them online, or because they are upset and reaching out to friends for support.

### 2. They suddenly stop using their devices.

Teens who are being bullied might also delete their social media accounts or stop playing their favourite online games. Sometimes when a teen is being bullied in person, their tech devices might get stolen or broken by the students responsible. If your teen's device is missing altogether, it's important to find out why.

### 3. They become upset after using the internet or their phones.

Teens being bullied online might also seem irritable or distracted, express low self-esteem, or lose interest in the things they used to enjoy.

#### 4. Unexpected changes in friendship groups.

Teens don't always use the word 'bullying', especially if the person hurting them is someone they consider a friend.

Instead, they might complain about friendship dramas or hurtful behaviours like being teased, ignored, left out of things or called names. They might also mention people spreading gossip about them, sending them unwelcome messages, or posting things about them online without permission. They might avoid things like parties or gatherings with other teens.

#### 5. A decline in school work.

Teens who have been bullied might find it hard to concentrate in class, or they might start to show behaviour problems at school.

They might also say negative things about school, like "I hate school", "I don't expect to do well in school", or "the teachers don't care about me".

#### 6. Avoidance of school or clubs.

Most teens who've been bullied online have also been bullied in person, and school is the most common place this happens.

If teens are being bullied, their parents might notice that they don't want to go to school or ask to come home early, sometimes complaining of headaches, stomachaches, back pain or dizziness.

Teens who are being bullied might get upset at the end of weekends and school holidays. They might also change the way they get to school in order to avoid someone, such as walking a different route or no longer taking the bus.

#### 7. Avoiding other teens or seeming lonely, depressed, sad or anxious.

Teens who have been bullied online are at higher risk than their peers of feeling distressed or developing mental health problems such as depression, especially if the bullying is also happening in person.

## Remember...

These warning signs do not necessarily mean that a teen is being bullied online. There could be something else wrong. Talk to someone who will support you, such as a parent, GP or mentor.

You can speak to a mental health professional for free on the Dolly's Dream support line – 0488 881 033. For a full list of support services [click here](#)



We must also remember an upsetting truth: that some teens who have been bullied online become aggressive and even bully other people online. This is confronting for parents, but we must take action to keep everyone safe. Teens who bully others – and who are also bullied – are especially vulnerable to wellbeing problems, so it's important they get help early.

Finally, we must remember that some teens who have been online bullied won't show any of the signs on this list. Some might show other changes, such as sleeping problems or drug and alcohol use, but others won't show any signs at all. This is why we must keep talking to all our teens about what's happening online.