

How can your child deal with in-game bullying?

In-game abuse is a common form of cyberbullying, with gamers being harassed and intimidated by other players, known as 'griefers'.

This abuse can happen either while playing on online gaming websites and social media, or while interacting through gaming consoles like Playstation and Xbox.

Dealing with in-game abuse can be extremely upsetting, distressing and draining.

Liam Hackett, founder and CEO of the anti-bullying charity Ditch the Label , gives advice on what your child should do if they are being subjected to in-game bullying.

At Ditch the Label, we define cyberbullying as 'the use of digital technologies with an intent to offend, humiliate, threaten, harass or abuse somebody.'

It is often hard to know what to do to address and alleviate such a situation. With this in mind, here is a short list of dos and don'ts that you can discuss with your child should they be at the receiving end of in-game abuse'.

1. Don't respond with aggression

Often reacting in an aggressive manner can make the situation worse and put your child at risk of further abuse.

If it's the first time that a particular gamer has said anything that has upset or offended your child, and they feel it is a safe and appropriate action to take, they could try calmly communicating with the person who is doing the cyberbullying.

Your child should remember to challenge the behaviour, not the person – so instead of accusing the person of being a 'bully', they should explain why their actions or words are causing distress.

For example, instead of saying, 'You're upsetting me', they could say, 'What you said/did has upset me'. If the bullying persists after taking this action, see point 2.

2. Block/report the person that is cyberbullying you

Your child can block and report the users who are bullying them at any time - remember that these options are in place to support and protect gamers from abuse.

The type of gaming environment your child is in will determine which course of action is best to take. They should speak with other gamers that they also know offline and check their headset to see if they can activate options to mute/disable audio chat and turn off the screen text.

They could also contact the game administrators or moderators and report the user.

3. Never give away personal information

We recommend that your child keeps their privacy settings high and doesn't connect with anybody they do not know offline. People may not always be who they say they are and your child could be putting themselves and those that they care about at risk.

Advise your child to never give away personal details like their full name, telephone number, school, home address etc.

If somebody is exhibiting threatening behaviour, or has your child's personal information and is giving them the impression that their safety might be at risk, they should contact the police or a trusted adult immediately.

4. Don't take it personally

Your child should remember that the person who is abusing them in-game is the one with the issue, **not them**. More importantly, it is very likely they don't even know them!

What your child is experiencing is in no way their fault; people experience bullying not because of their sexuality, gender identity, race, appearance, disability or any other unique factor; it is because of the attitude towards

that factor. The only thing possible to change is attitudes – your child doesn't need to change the way they are.

5. Don't seek revenge

Gandhi once said 'An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.' Remind your child to think about the repercussions of their actions - what can really be gained by seeking revenge? They might even get themselves in trouble with the game's moderators.

It is far better that they save themselves from the possibility of further trauma and focus on the good things in their life. They should try to look at how they can move forward in a positive way, putting the person who is cyberbullying them firmly in the past.

6. Don't isolate yourself from friends and family

A common, sometimes unconscious reaction to being bullied is to shut down and withdraw from your loved ones. We begin to distance ourselves both emotionally and physically from the very people we need support from.

Depriving yourself of any sort of support or friendship certainly won't do anything to resolve the issue.

We know it might feel like the best thing to do, but it will only make things worse in the long run by silencing your child and reducing their self-esteem.

Advise your child to try to keep up with their normal social life and activities they enjoy – the distraction will help lift their spirits and remind them of the positive things in their life.

7. Tell somebody you trust

Even if your child doesn't want to report it, it is important that they tell somebody they trust what they're going through. Dealing with it alone is extremely stressful, and can be emotionally draining and taxing.

This stress can have impact on all areas of their life, including their mental wellbeing, ability to communicate with others, performance in school, self-esteem etc.

It is therefore incredibly important that they tell somebody. It doesn't even have to be an adult – it could be a friend or somebody at Ditch the Label.

It is vital, during this time, that your child has a support system and people who they can rely on when they are feeling low, or unable to cope.

8. Keep a record

Keeping a record of all interactions with griefers is very important.

Your child should be vigilant from the beginning and take a screen shot of anything offensive. This can be used as evidence when talking with game administrators.

Your child has a responsibility to themselves and other gamers - you never know who you might inadvertently be protecting from future abuse by being proactive right now.

9. Take some time out

When players are immersed in a game it can feel all-consuming – in a good way! However, when an unexpected griefer is thrown into the mix, it can quickly become a very negative and overwhelming experience.

Advise your child to take some time out, step away from the game and remove the cause of stress. Give themselves a chance to see things a little clearer – that way they can decide what the best plan of action is.

It is important during this time to take good care of your child's health and mental wellbeing.

Little things like eating a balanced diet, exercising, getting a good night's sleep, relaxing and having quality time with friends and family can really improve physical and mental health, which will in turn, reduce stress.

Reductions in stress can increase your clarity of vision, allowing for better analysis of difficult situations, which will make them much easier to deal with.

For more advice and resources on cyberbullying visit the [Ditch the label support hub](#) .

