

Strategies for tackling bullying



The world has come a long way in recent years, but unfortunately autistic children and adults still often experience bullying and discrimination. Though the Equality Act 2010 sets some great ground rules in terms of ensuring that autistic people receive adequate support, both at school and in the workplace, sadly not everyone adheres to them.

We take a look at some of the common types of bullying and discrimination autistic people face, and how you might go about dealing with them.



Different types of bullying and discrimination

Bullying and discrimination can take many forms, some more overt than others. Where autism is concerned, the Equality Act breaks these down into five key categories:

1. Direct disability discrimination

When someone is treated less favourably than others directly because they have autism.

2. Indirect disability discrimination

When a policy or practice puts an autistic person at a disadvantage.

3. Discrimination arising from disability

When someone is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their autism.

4. A failure to make reasonable adjustments

When a school or workplace won't make necessary changes to policies or environments to assist autistic people.

5. Harassment and victimisation

Behaviour that violates an autistic person's dignity or creates a hostile environment for them.

How to deal with bullying and discrimination

Dealing with bullying and discrimination is never pleasant, but it's important to catch issues as soon as possible. By doing what you can to resolve things early, you can prevent them from escalating. You can try:

Being direct

Have a conversation with the bully, or with their parent or guardian. Let them know that their behaviour isn't acceptable and offer to give them more information on autism if they'd like it. Understanding is often the key to acceptance.

Getting to the root of their problem

At its core, bullying comes from a place of fear and insecurity. Showing empathy and asking the bully what it is that makes them feel the way they do can reframe the situation. They are the problem, not the autistic person.



Involve an authority

At school, speak to a senior teacher or autism representative. At work, speak to HR. They should keep an eye on things and have measures in place to help alleviate them (e.g. safe spaces, buddy systems, or educational materials).

Remember, you are not alone and there are people and organisations who are there to help you.

