

6-12 Student Tips



Speak Up. Stay Safe. Be Proud of Who You Are.

What does it mean to be neurodivergent?



“**Neurodivergent**” describes someone whose brain learns or processes information differently. This includes students with formal supports and students without, who still experience other differences or disabilities. These differences **don’t** limit their strengths, potential, or right to a safe, supportive learning environment. Supporting students with neurodivergence means helping them succeed as they are, not trying to make everyone think, learn, or communicate the same way.

What is bullying, and what are the signs?



Bullying is when someone repeatedly and purposely hurts another person to have power over them. In 2025, nearly **1 in 4** middle schoolers and up to **1 in 6** high school students have been bullied. Bullying behaviors can be **direct**—such as *name-calling or pushing*—or **indirect**—such as *spreading rumors, leaving someone out, or sending hurtful messages online*.

Signs a student may be bullied:

- **Classroom cues:** declining academic performance or skipping school
- **Social cues:** “masking” to fit in; withdrawing from friends, avoiding social events, “acting out” behaviors
- **Physical clues:** unexplained injuries or lost/damaged belongings

Why is bullying of students who are neurodivergent different?



For students with neurodivergence, bullying can be a daily challenge that affects their learning, friendships, and safety. Students with disabilities are **3 to 4 times** more likely to be bullied than their peers.

When differences in learning, communication, or interactions aren’t understood, students with neurodivergence may face exclusion, teasing, or bullying for seeming “different,” even when no harm is intended. Bullying a student based on a protected characteristic, including a disability, is serious under the law, and schools must act when bullying affects a student’s safety or ability to learn.

What should I do if I’m being bullied or cyberbullied?



- **Don’t react** and do your best to act like it doesn’t bother you. Don’t argue, as it can make things worse
- **Avoid** the student as much as possible
- Talk to a **trusted adult**, such as a parent, teacher, counselor, or school administrator
- Ask supportive **friends** for help and stay with safe peer groups
- **Write down and screenshot** what happened if it happens online
- **Block** anyone who is bothering you

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What should I do if I see someone being bullied for being neurodivergent?



- **Stand by** the student's side so they know someone cares. Students who bully often back down when peers defend someone.
- **Include** the student being bullied. Invite them to hang out with you and your friends.
- **Listen** and keep it private. Validate their feelings and don't share their story with others.
- **Help them walk away** from incidents of bullying and check on them afterward.
- **Get help from adults** if it becomes a serious concern.

How can I protect myself from bullying and cyberbullying?



- Stay close to **friends you trust** and supportive **role models** so you don't feel alone.
- If you feel scared or unsafe, go to a **safe place at school**, like an office or a counselor's room, until an adult can help you.
- Don't share your **personal information** online, such as your address or phone number.
- Use **privacy settings** to keep your accounts safer.

Will I get in trouble for speaking up?



- **Peers** might get upset, but it's important stop bullying from continuing and causing further harm.
- **Adults** should not get students in trouble for reporting bullying.
- Schools have rules and responsibilities. to **protect** students who speak up and ensure no one is unkind to them for reporting bullying.
- In California, school staff must **take reports seriously** and **cannot punish** you for speaking up.
- By speaking up, being kind, and working together, students make schools **safer for everyone**.

Where can I learn more about neurodiversity and how to prevent bullying?



- **Your school or school website:** Under Senate Bill 939 (2023-2024), district or county offices of education must post resources on bullying and neurodiversity and provide support to students who are bullied for being, or being perceived as, neurodivergent.
- **Scan QR code for more resources:**

