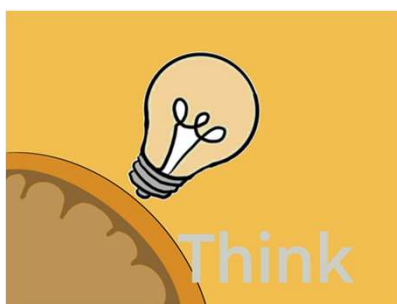


Bullying (adult)

Autistic adults are vulnerable to bullying just like autistic children are. Bullying occurs when one person harms, intimidates or coerces another person repeatedly over a period of time. The person being bullied tends to belong to a vulnerable or stigmatised group. Bullying may include threats, teasing and name calling as well as actual physical assault such as hitting, kicking or spitting. Cyber-bullying is bullying that takes place online or on your mobile phone via social media, email or messages. Bullying at work may be direct (like threats) or indirect like teasing or belittling in front of colleagues, persistent criticism of your performance or leaving you out of social events. An autistic adult may also be bullied at home by their partner, this is known as domestic violence or coercive control.



There may be a number of signs that suggest a person is being bullied. An autistic adult who is being bullied may become withdrawn, isolated and fearful. They may or may not recognise the fact that they are being bullied. They may not know who they can ask for help. They may feel ashamed and blame themselves for the fact that they are being bullied.



The effects of bullying can be devastating and long-term. Autistic adults may have to deal with the added pressures of masking and understanding the complexities of social interaction. It may be difficult for an autistic adult to admit that they are being bullied, even if it is obvious to a friend or family member.



Autistic adults may need support to identify and report bullying. In the workplace, employees are protected by the Equality Act (2010). Employers can provide training for staff teams so they are supportive to their autistic colleagues.