



## 1. Stand in Your Confidence (Even If You're Shaking Inside)

Bullies look for weakness — or what they perceive as weakness. They push harder when they sense fear, uncertainty, or self-doubt.

You don't need to feel confident to sound confident.

A steady tone. A calm breath. A simple, direct sentence.

These are kryptonite to a bully.

Try phrases like:

- "I'm not available for that."
- "That's not appropriate."
- "We're not doing this today."

You're not fighting. You're not explaining. You're not defending.

You're simply refusing to collapse.

## 2. Stay Connected — Isolation Is a Bully's Playground

Bullies want you alone. They want you doubting yourself. They want you believing no one will back you.

Connection is protection.

Reach out to:

- a trusted colleague
- a friend
- a mentor
- a union rep
- a therapist
- a coach



You don't need a crowd — you just need one person who sees you clearly. When you're connected, you're harder to break.

### **3. Use Clear, Unemotional Language**

Bullies want drama. They want you flustered. They want you reactive. A calm, neutral response cuts off their oxygen supply.

Try:

- “I’m not engaging with that.”
- “Please speak respectfully.”
- “That comment is not acceptable.”

Short. Steady. Unemotional.

You’re not giving them the performance they’re trying to provoke.

### **4. Set Boundaries — And Hold Them Firmly**

Boundaries are not confrontational. They are protective.

You can be polite and still be immovable.

For example:

- “I won’t continue this conversation if you raise your voice.”
- “I’m ending this meeting now. We can revisit when communication is respectful.”
- “Do not speak to me that way again.”

Practice your boundary statements ahead of time. Rehearsal builds muscle memory. Muscle memory builds courage.

### **5. Act Early — Don’t Wait for It to Get Worse**

Bullying rarely starts at full volume. It begins with:

- subtle digs
- dismissive comments
- eye rolling
- exclusion

- “jokes” that aren’t jokes

If you let the early behaviours slide, the bully interprets it as permission. Address the behaviour when it’s small. It’s easier to stop a spark than a wildfire.

## **6. Respond When You’re Calm — Not When You’re Triggered**

You don’t have to respond in the moment. In fact, it’s often better if you don’t.

Step back. Take a breath. Let your nervous system settle.

Then respond with clarity instead of adrenaline.

Bullies often self-destruct when you refuse to play their game. Their behaviour becomes obvious to others. Their patterns reveal themselves. Their power weakens.

Sometimes the smartest move is to let them expose themselves.

### **Here’s the truth you need to hear**

You don’t have to match a bully’s aggression to protect yourself.

You don’t have to become hard to stay safe.

You don’t have to lose your softness, your kindness, or your integrity.

**You just need tools that keep you in control.**

**You are not powerless.**

**You are not alone.**

And you are not someone who has to tolerate cruelty to keep the peace.

You get to choose how you respond. You get to choose what you allow.

You get to choose who has access to you.

**That is your power — and it’s stronger than any bully.**



## **A Gentle Invitation**

If this article helped you feel steadier or gave you language you've been missing, you're welcome to reach out when you feel ready. You don't need perfect words — just honesty. I read every message myself, and I respond with care, not pressure. When the moment feels right, you can send me a note and I'll meet you there.

## **References**

Malcolm Gladwell (2013) *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*

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