



STAND FIRM

*TIMID? MAYBE.
INTIMIDATED? DON'T BE.*

Imagine you're walking down a busy corridor at a new school. Some older students are blocking the way. They're loud, confident and boisterous. You begin to worry that they'll laugh at you or make a nasty comment, so you take a longer route to class. Of course, the likelihood is that they'd have simply moved to one side, without a second thought, but you were intimidated – in this case, perhaps because you felt younger, outnumbered or had a previous negative experience of a similar situation. Intimidating behaviour can take many forms and makes people feel uneasy, uncomfortable or unsure of themselves. It's not always easy to explain why you feel this way – perhaps something about a person's stance, gestures or tone of voice seems threatening to you.

*DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING
SCENARIOS SOUND FAMILIAR?*

Two students always whisper at dance club and become quiet as I approach. I know they probably aren't talking about me, but it leaves me feeling uncomfortable.

I dislike working with a classmate. Their attitude makes me think that if I disagree with them or don't let them take charge, they'll turn others against me.

There's a new person at school. I'd usually try to make another friend but they seem so dismissive every time I start a conversation. I wonder what I've done wrong.

People might not be breaking any rules and it might not be obvious bullying, but some situations can still be intimidating and upsetting. Intimidating behaviour can include:

- Not listening.
- Taking charge or dominating.
- Talking over people.
- Standing too close.
- Using threatening body language.
- Talking in a condescending way.

Occasionally, you might encounter somebody who's deliberately trying to intimidate, but some people are unaware of the effect of their behaviour. Intentional or not, it isn't worth letting intimidating behaviour influence your feelings and actions. Talking to people who appear intimidating might seem a daunting task at first, but it becomes easier with practise.

THINGS TO TRY WHEN YOU FEEL INTIMIDATED

If a person appears confrontational or aggressive, don't respond with the same behaviour. Taking some deep breaths can help you feel calm and confident.

- Plan what you want to say and remain polite. For example, in the swimming pool, you could say: 'Excuse me, can I share this lane with you?'
- Maintain eye contact (without staring) and smile when appropriate. Be aware of your own body language – fidgeting too much can make you appear nervous.



- Don't take it personally. It's likely somebody's attitude isn't specifically directed at you. Try to see beyond their behaviour. It might be their way of covering up nerves.
- If a trusted friend or adult also witnessed the situation, ask for their perspective.
- Bullying behaviour needs to be reported to a trusted adult as soon as possible.

WRITE IT OUT

Describe a situation where you felt intimidated.
(Example: A classmate took control of a group project.)

Why did you feel this way?
(Example: I felt that nobody ever values my ideas.)

Could the situation have been interpreted differently?
(Example: I didn't say anything, so perhaps my classmate thought that I had no ideas to contribute.)

How could you respond differently?
(Example: I could make a polite statement, such as: 'Before we begin, why don't we check we've included everybody's ideas.')

THINGS TO TRY IF YOU THINK OTHERS FIND YOU INTIMIDATING

What if you're worried you unintentionally appear threatening?
Some signs can include being told that:

- You look unapproachable.
- You appear aggressive, insensitive or confrontational.
- Others didn't like you at first.
- Others don't want to work with you.
- Often, gaining awareness can mean that others will respond more positively towards you.
- Act on feedback. For example, if a number of people have said you stand too close, remind yourself to step back when interacting.
- Practise letting others speak first and really listening to what they say.
- Consider the impact of your words and actions on others. If you unintentionally upset somebody, explore how they might have interpreted the situation.
- Monitor your facial expressions and body language. You might not intend to be threatening, but your posture and attitude might signal something else.
- Give a simple and sincere apology when necessary.
- If you think your attempts to hide nerves or a lack of confidence are coming across as intimidating, seek more positive ways of coping. Ask for help from a trusted adult and work to identify your strengths.

For more support, try your school counsellor or services such as Kids Helpline at kidshelpline.com.au or by phoning 1800 55 1800