

Mindfulness is a powerful tool once we know how to use it effectively. Dr Valery Mason-John has some valuable tips to remember when you're experiencing bullying in-the-moment and how to minimise its effects in the aftermath...

When you are mindful, you learn to breathe fully into the body, you learn to become aware of sensations in the body. You also become aware of your thinking and learn to love yourself. Believe it or not, mindfulness can protect us from the effects bullying.

Don't worry if you don't know where to start, here are some tips to get you going:

1. Be assertive with breath

Focus on your breathing to assert your boundary. You may have to walk away with them calling you horrid names, and this may feel unpleasant in your body, just keep on walking, breathe and know that it *will* pass.

2. Become aware of your alarm bell

If your breath becomes ragged, hands become sticky, your tummy gurgling, body shaking, teeth chattering, these are warning signs to tell you that you are feeling uncomfortable. Leave, remove yourself at the first possible moment. Remember to listen to your body when it's telling you something's not right.

3. Thoughts

If you miss the unpleasant feelings in the body you may hear yourself thinking strange thoughts. Again, remove yourself at the first possible moment. You don't have to be the target of

someone's bullying behaviour. You could even try an app, such as [Headspace](#), to help ease these thoughts.

4. Your phone

If you receive an unwanted text. Breathe, and report it. Gossiping about it and sharing it with others allows it to take up too much space in your mind and will make matters worse. Find out how you can be more mindful whilst on your phone [here](#).

5. The home

If you are at risk at home, it can be hard to find an environment to be mindful. Tell a teacher, ask for help, and keep on telling someone until they listen.

6. Love

Learn to love yourself. When you practice mindfulness it will become easier to find the good in yourself. This will make it much harder for bullying to affect you in the long term.

7. Threats

Don't let threats stop you from telling someone what's going on. Threats make you feel horrible in the body, nervous and scared. This is normal. Sure, it's unpleasant but all the more reason to speak up and report it.

8. Repercussion

Sometimes it seems like when you do speak up, it can make matters worse. Maybe you have received more threats since you told someone and it's normal to be scared of the repercussions. Remember that it will pass. Don't let the fear be a reason not to speak up – overcoming bullying is a process and it won't stop overnight, be patient.

9. Become aware of your body

Remember to stand tall, this doesn't mean you have to be physically tall or big. It means you need to breathe, be confident, take up your space, and try to be assertive. Understand that you don't deserve to be treated badly and it is never your fault. Believe in yourself.

Dr Valerie Mason-John M.A (hon.doc) is one of the new leading African descent voices in the field of Mindfulness. She is also a performance Poet-activist. Hear her [TEDx](#) talk and visit her website www.valeriemason-john.com