

In school, we come across the word ‘banter’ often when people talk about conflict in a relationship. One person’s perceived ‘banter’ could be another person’s misery & can lead to long term fallouts & even reluctance to come to school or be in the same area as those giving it.

List examples of ‘banter’ that you have heard or experienced.

Everyone has experienced banter. However, what exactly is banter? Why is it different to bullying? Imagine you are describing the word ‘banter’ in a new dictionary. How would you describe the word?

What is Banter?

Banter is teasing or joking talk that is amusing and friendly. It is not targeting, or singling out a person who is not a part of the joke or to offend upset or discriminate against a person.

Imagine a jug of water & a bottle of ink. If you put a drop of ink into the jug of water what will happen?

This is similar to the one nasty comment, maybe meant as banter within your group of friends. The comment can affect others and change the whole attitude of the group not just the perpetrator and victim.

Look back at your list of examples – are they still banter? List below those that are banter & those that are bullying.

Banter:

Bullying:

Have you been the victim of bullying from someone? Think back to how it made you feel.

Below are some of the feelings experienced by the targets of bullying.

Frightened.

Angry.

Ashamed.

Confused.

Can you add any more?

What types of bullying have you personally experienced, be it towards you or witnessed on others?

If asked to draw your typical bully, 9 out of 10 people would sketch a picture of a tough boy who threatens to punch you & takes your lunch money. You know the type, the kind of boy in Year 10 / 11 who kicks off with teachers, truants, smokes & hangs around in the tough gang at school.

That may be a bully for some people, but not always for girls. Most of the time, the people that bully a girl will be her close or even best friends. They will not do it physically. It will be subtle, through put-downs and hot-and-cold moods.

Girls will behave differently to boys and will more likely behave aggressively in ways that are more indirect rather than the traditional physical aggression portrayed by boys. This is not to say that girls will not partake in physical aggression, as they sometimes do, but that they will find subtler forms to intimidate others.

It is normal for boys and girls to form social groups, and close bonds with certain people and only have connections with others. However, when these groups use their influence and power to intimidate, exclude and isolate others it becomes bullying.

Girls use a variety of tactics to intimidate, harass and humiliate others; these are often covert and indirect behaviours, which can be difficult to define. Some tactics girls use to bully others are:

- Anonymous prank phone calls or harassing emails and dummy accounts.
- Playing jokes or tricks designed to embarrass and humiliate.
- Deliberately excluding others for no apparent reason.
- Whispering in front of others with the intent to make them feel left out.
- Name calling, rumour spreading and other malicious verbal interactions.
- Being friends one week, then turning against them the next week with no reason for the exclusion.
- Encouraging other peers to ignore or pick on a specific child.
- Inciting others to act out violently or aggressively.
- Dirty looks.

Have you experienced any of the above? Place a tick next to them, how many have you experienced ___ / 9.

Too many people put up with bullies in a friendship group, because “they’re my friends” but just because they are your friend does not mean they are not your bully too. Keep a diary of all the stuff that happens with your friends, that bothers you. Write down what happened, when, where, who was there, all those details. You may even want to write a few sentences about how you felt in the moment (use emotion words if you can – they are much more telling about what is going on for you than words like “bad” or “like crap”).

Activity – Friendship Diary

After the week is up, read over your list. Then ask yourself this: if you had a best friend who showed you this diary, what advice would you give her? Would you tell them they were in a toxic friendship? To get out or stick with it?