you can beat bullying!
A Guide for Young People
Introduction

Nearly everyone is bullied at some time in their lives: by brothers and sisters, by neighbours, by adults or by fellow pupils. If you are being bullied, you may feel scared and vulnerable and quite alone but you owe it to yourself to try and sort out the situation so that the bullying stops.

Remember, no one deserves to be a victim of bullying.

It is surprising that all sorts of people who are now very successful adults were bullied when they were young. It is encouraging to know that it is possible to succeed in spite of being tormented at school. All of these well-known people were bullied at school: Phil Collins (singer), Harrison Ford (actor), Mel Gibson (actor), Daryl Hannah (actor), Tom Cruise (actor), Michelle Pfeiffer (actor), Dudley Moore (actor), Neil Kinnock (politician), Frank Bruno (boxer), Janice Long (DJ), Amanda Ross (TV presenter), Duncan Goodhew (Olympic swimmer), Michael Grade (Head of Channel 4 TV), Sir John Harvey Jones (industrialist and TV presenter), Ranulph Fiennes (Polar explorer).

For some, the bullying went on for years: for others it was less frequent. All of them feel that bullying is wrong and that it was not their fault, but the fault of the bully who was looking for a victim.

If you ever bully people, then think seriously about trying to change your behaviour. Nobody really likes bullies. They may be able to frighten people into being nice to them but usually they are unpopular and quite lonely. If you break the bullying habit, you will find it much easier to find good friends.

Contents
This booklet has three main sections: Bullies, Victims and Self-assertiveness Techniques. Bullies and victims sometimes have similar problems so you might find helpful suggestions in all the sections.

1. FOR VICTIMS OF BULLYING .............................................. 3
2. FOR PEOPLE WHO BULLY OTHERS .............................. 12
3. SELF-ASSERTIVENESS NOTES ........................................ 17

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM BEING BULLIED?

Your school may already have a way of dealing with bullying.

For example, some schools:
• have anti-bullying guidelines and procedures for dealing with incidents
• encourage anyone who is being bullied or who witnesses bullying to tell about it
• have ‘bully boxes’ where students put in a note about what is happening
• have student meetings, circle time or ‘courts’ where problems like bullying are discussed and dealt with
• have specially trained students to help each other or teachers who are assigned to help

If your school has an anti-bullying system, use it to get help. If you’re not sure how it works, talk to your teacher or Year Head.

If your school ignores bullying, don’t become resigned to being a victim. You can still help yourself and you can ask others to help you.

• tell a friend what is happening. Ask him/her to help you. It will be harder for the bully to pick on you if you have a friend with you for support.
• try to ignore the bullying or say ‘No’ really firmly, then turn and walk away. Don’t worry if people think you’re running away. Remember, it is very hard for the bully to go on bullying someone who won’t stand still to listen.
• try not to show that you are upset or angry. Bullies love to get a reaction – it’s ‘fun’. If you can keep calm and hide your emotions, they might get bored and leave you alone. As one teenager said, “They can’t bully you if you don’t care”.
• don’t fight back, if you can help it. Most bullies are stronger or bigger than their victims. If you fight back, you could make the situation worse, get hurt or be blamed for starting the trouble.
• it's not worth getting hurt to keep possessions or money. If you feel threatened, give the bullies what they want. Property can be replaced - you can't.

• think up funny or clever replies in advance. Make a joke of it. Replies don't have to be wonderfully brilliant or clever but it helps to have an answer ready. Practise saying them in the mirror at home.
Using prepared replies works best if the bully is not too threatening and just needs to be put off. The bully might decide you are too clever to pick on.

  Phil. 14. "I was always bullied about my glasses. By the time I was 13 I was desperate. Then Mum helped me think up some replies. It felt stupid saying them out loud at home and I didn't think it'd work. The first time I tried one of them out, Paul - the bully - was so surprised, he backed off. Everyone else laughed."

• try and avoid being alone in the places where you know the bully is likely to pick on you. This might mean changing your route to school, or avoiding parts of the playground, or only using the common room or lavatories when other people are there. It's not fair that you have to do this but it might put the bully off.

• stick with a group, even if they are not your friends. Bullies tend to pick on people when they are on their own.

• sometimes asking bullied to repeat whatever they've said can take the wind out of their sails. Often bullies are not brave enough to repeat the remark exactly so they tone it down. If they repeat it, you will have made the bully do something they hadn't planned on and this gives you some control of the situation.

• practise 'walking tall' in a mirror (see page 18 on Assertiveness). Bullies tend to pick on people they think are weak or timid and they often think shy, quiet people make easy targets. If you look positive and confident, the bully will find it harder to identify you as a target. Pretend - even if you only feel two inches high inside.

• try some of the assertiveness techniques on pages 17–19.

• keep a diary about what is happening. Write down details of the incidents and your feelings. When you do decide to tell someone, a written record of the bullying makes it easier to prove what has been going on.

• tell your parents or other adults - you need their help. Don't suffer in silence.

GANG BULLYING

• if you are being bullied by a gang or if you've been sent to Coventry, get the weakest member alone or phone him/her at home and ask why you are being bullied. This is easier if you know the person and have some sort of relationship with them.
• ask them how they would like being treated as badly as you are
• ask why they are joining in
• say you know that they are really not cruel underneath - appeal to their good side.

Often members of a bully gang join in to keep on the gang leader's good side. They wouldn't go along with the bullying if they had a choice. If you talk to the nicer gang members on their own, you might be able to persuade some of them to stop, or you might be able to get help together.

  Leila, 14. "I was really scared before I rang the girl I know in the gang. We talked a bit and then we met some of the others. I thought they all hated me but they said they felt bad about all the things they'd done. Things got better after that."

Some bullies are brave in front of friends but on their own they feel weak and uncomfortable. If you think the person bullying you needs a gang for support, try and get them alone - they are likely to be much less aggressive and you might be able to talk about how to stop them picking on you.
Robert, 15, “I was bullied by a boy called Pete – he had a gang of about 4 or 5 and they used to corner me in the loos or changing rooms. I was scared for months. Then I met Pete on his own outside school. He made some sarcastic comment – I went berserk. I yelled at him. Seeing him on his own gave me the courage I needed to say all the things I’d wanted to say for ages. He tried to ambush me with his gang in school after that but I wasn’t having it – I’d seen through him.”

WHO CAN I TELL?
Usually it’s difficult to sort out the bullying on your own or even with the help of friends. You should think seriously about telling an adult. It’s the only way to get the bullying stopped.

If you need adult help, don’t be embarrassed about asking. Everyone needs help sometimes and asking for help to stop bullying doesn’t mean that you are weak or a failure.

Telling about bullying isn’t ‘telling tales’ or ‘grassing’. You have the right to be safe from attacks and harassment and you should not be silent when you are being tormented and hurt.

Often people don’t tell about bullying because they are frightened that the bully will find out and things will get worse. This is a natural fear but schools can put a stop to bullying without the bully learning who told, especially if the bully has several victims.

Even if the bully does find out, it is better to have the situation out in the open. Bullies depend upon secrecy.

Nobody can do anything to help you unless you tell them about the bullying.

Tracy, 13, “I told a girl in the Sixth Form that I had been sent to Coventry. She said it had happened to her too. She and some other Sixth Formers talked to the bullies. I was scared what they would do but they’d obviously been told they were well out of order and the bullying died out.”

PARENTS AND CARERS
Mark, 17, “My life was literally hell for three years. I don’t know why I waited so long before telling my Dad about the bullying. He really made the school sit up and take action.”

- talk to your parents or carers about the bullying. They may have sensed that something is wrong already, or they may have noticed that your possessions or money keep vanishing. There is a great deal they can do to support you.
- parents can talk to the Head of Year and Headteacher. Most schools take what has happened very seriously.
  - Bullying at school is not the victim’s problem: it is a school discipline problem, and the school should be prepared to take positive action to stop it.
  - The school should also be able to give you and your parents a detailed outline of its anti-bullying procedures.
  - Insist on knowing what the school is going to do to protect you from the bully.
- if the bullying continues, your parents can make a formal complaint to the school Governors or to the local education authority.

Preventing Bullying is a booklet for parents. It is available free from KIDSCHAPE.

TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS
Your school should have an anti-bullying policy which tells you how to report bullying. If you are not sure, ask your teacher or Head of Year.

(KIDSCHAPE has a model anti-bullying policy which anyone can get by sending in a large self-addressed envelope to the address at the back of this leaflet.)

Dan, 14, “We have assemblies about bullying every term and we do lots of stuff about it in class. Not much bullying goes on here now – everyone knows it’s a waste of time.”
• if you don’t want to talk to your teacher, there are other people in the school who might be able to help: Year Tutor, Head of PSHE, nurse, secretary, or any member of staff that you like.

• write it all down in a letter if you can’t face telling someone. Send or give the letter to them with your diary and keep a copy for yourself.

• explain what is happening and who is involved. You might want to take a friend with you, especially if they have witnessed some of the bullying incidents. Show the diary.

• make sure you explain how bad the bullying is making you feel. Sometimes people don’t understand how hurtful name-calling and verbal abuse can be. Make it clear that you are extremely upset by it and want it to stop.

• school staff have a duty to make sure that pupils are safe when they are in school. Find out how they are going to help. You could suggest that students have lessons about bullying, or that teachers introduce bullying boxes for reporting incidents or specially trained students other pupils can talk to. You may have your own ideas.

Change Schools
• if the bullying is unbearable and the school can’t or won’t do anything about it, think about going to another school. Discuss this idea with your parents. Never feel that staying put is the only option.

Home Education
The law says that your parents have to educate you but this doesn’t mean that you have to go to school. If the bullying at school becomes too much and you can’t face changing to a different school, it is possible for you to be taught at home. Many victims of school bullying who end up hating school decide to have home teaching. This gives them a break from the bullying and it also means that they can keep up with course work and studying.

An organization called Education Otherwise gives information, advice and support about home education. See back page.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM BEING BULLIED BY A TEACHER?

Jenny, 14, “My Maths teacher always used to ask me questions when he knew I couldn’t answer. He’d laugh when I didn’t know and everyone else joined in – I cried after every lesson.”

Teachers and members of staff are there to help you learn and to support you. If you are a constant nuisance, disruptive or inattentive, teachers will tell you to stop. This is part of their job.

However, if you are doing your best and a teacher or other member of staff continually picks on you, humiliates you in front of others, or taunts you, then you are right to complain. Tell your parents or carers, another teacher, the Year Head, the school nurse, or the Headteacher what is going on. You should not cope on your own with a teacher who constantly picks on you.

• keep a diary of occasions when the teacher bullies you and list the names of witnesses. Write down exactly what happens and how you feel. If you can, tell your parents and ask them to talk to the Headteacher.

Corporal Punishment

In state schools in this country corporal or physical punishment is banned and no teacher should smack, hit or beat you. If they do, you should tell someone immediately what has happened.

In a few public schools, corporal punishment is still permitted. If you go to one of these schools, teachers may beat you as a punishment for breaking rules. If this happens or you are afraid it might happen, you could ask your parents to forbid the school to punish you physically.

However, even in public schools where corporal punishment is still allowed, it is usually a last resort when teachers feel that other forms of non-physical punishment have failed. If a teacher hits or beats you frequently, you should certainly tell another member of staff about it.