

You can beat bullying

A guide for young people

DON'T
TRY TO
COPE
ON YOUR
OWN

A solid orange silhouette of a person with their arms raised, holding up the bottom of the text above them.



INTRODUCTION

All of us are bullied at some time. If you are being bullied you may feel scared and vulnerable and quite alone, but you owe it to yourself to try to sort out the situation so that the bullying stops. Remember, no one deserves to be a victim of bullying.

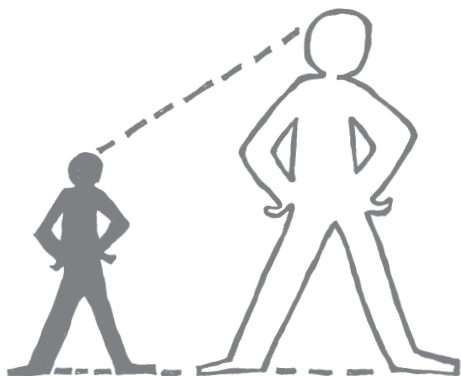
It may be surprising to learn that all sorts of people who are now very successful adults were bullied. It is encouraging to know that it is possible to succeed in spite of being tormented at school. All of these well-known people were bullied when they were young:

- Tyra Banks
- Victoria Beckham
- Barack Obama
- Robert Pattinson
- Rihanna
- Nicola Roberts
- Chris Rock
- Justin Timberlake
- Gok Wan
- Emma Watson

For some, the bullying went on for years. It wasn't their fault, but the fault of bullies who target victims. We choose to use the term 'target' instead of victim because we want to make it clear that the bully is responsible.

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

Being bullied	4
What can I do if I am being bullied?	4
Bullying by groups	5
The importance of telling	6
Bullying in schools	7
What if the teacher is a bully?	8
Dealing with cyber bullying	9
Parents and carers	9
Changing schools	9
Home education	10
Building self-esteem	10
Those who bully	12
Why do people bully?	12
Am I a bully?	13
Changing your behaviour	15
Assertiveness skills	17
Making requests	17
Saying no	17
Dealing with insults	18
Dealing with anger	19
Organisations that can help	20

BEING BULLIED

THEY
CAN'T BULLY YOU
...IF YOU DON'T
CARE

Page 4

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM BEING BULLIED?

If your school ignores bullying, don't become resigned to being a target. You can use strategies to try to stop the bullying:

- Tell a friend what is happening. Ask them 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 off. 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 targets. If you fight back, you could make the situation worse, get hurt or be blamed by the school 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. Test your ideas with someone else – you don't want to make a situation worse by using challenging words or sarcastic tones.

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.

- Try to avoid being alone in the places where you know the bully is likely to pick on you. You may change your route to school, or avoid parts of the playground, or only use the toilets when other people are there. It's not fair that you have to do this but it might put the bully off. Most bullies are just looking for an easy target, with their followers as the audience.

Reese, 14, “I was always bullied about my glasses. By the time I was 13 things had got really bad. Mum helped me make up some funny replies. It felt stupid saying them out loud at home and I didn’t think it would work. The first time I tried one of them out the bully was so surprised he backed off. Everyone else laughed at him...”

Leila, 14, “I was paired with one of my bullies for a school project. At first I was dreading it, but away from her group she wasn’t as bad. We’re not exactly friends, but things got much better after she realised how much her behaviour had upset me.”

- Stick with a group, even if they aren’t your friends. Bullies tend to pick on people who are on their own.
- Sometimes asking bullies 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 to and this gives you some control of the situation.
- Practise ‘walking tall’ in a mirror. 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 tall inside.
- Try some of the assertiveness techniques on page 17.
- Keep a diary about what is happening. Write down details of the incidents. When you do decide to tell someone, a written record of the bullying makes it easier to prove what has been going on.

BULLYING BY GROUPS

Bullies depend on bystanders, either their associates, or simply those who like to watch an attack – or are afraid not to. Often a bully’s friends may join in to keep on the leader’s good side. They wouldn’t go along with the bullying if they had a choice. Sometimes talking to one of the group alone might persuade him or her to stop, or you might be able to get help together.

Bullies are often brave in front of friends, but not on their own. If you think the bully might be more reasonable without those ‘friends’, try to get the bully alone. You may be able to stop the aggression by talking to or even confronting them, but only if you feel it is safe.



THE IMPORTANCE OF TELLING

Usually it's difficult to sort out the bullying on your own or even with the help of friends. Think seriously about telling an adult. It's the most direct way to get the bullying stopped. A parent or carer can work with the school to turn the situation around.

Don't be embarrassed about asking. Everyone needs help sometimes, and getting help to stop bullying doesn't mean that you are weak or a failure. You have the right to be safe from attacks and harassment. No one should be silent when 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 targets.

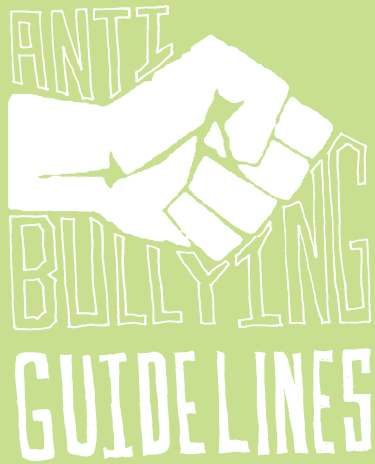
Even if the bully does find out, it is better to have the situation out in the open. Bullies thrive on secrecy.

Nobody can do anything to help you unless the bullying is recognised.

Kieron, 15, "I was bullied by a group of about four or five boys who used to corner me in the changing rooms. I was scared for months. Then I met the leader on his own outside school. He made some sarcastic comment and I went berserk. 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 later with his friends but I wasn't putting up with it anymore as I'd seen through him."

Una, 13, "I told a girl in the sixth form that no one would talk to me. She said it had happened to her too. She and some other sixth formers talked to the bullies. I was scared of what the bullies would do but they'd obviously scared them off. The bullying died out after that."

ANTI BULLYING GUIDELINES



Page 7

BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Every school has an anti-bullying policy and procedures in place for dealing with bullying incidents. Some schools may have:

- Ways for students to describe what is happening anonymously.
- Student meetings, circle time or student councils where problems like bullying are dealt with.
- Specially trained peer supporters or teachers who help others with their problems.

If you are not sure how your school's anti-bullying system works, talk to your form tutor or Head of Year. If you are unsatisfied with the way your school deals with bullying, get some friends and parents together to petition for change.

- Remember there are other people in the school who might be able to help such as the Head of PSHE, school nurse, secretary or anyone you particularly trust.
- Make an appointment with your Head of Year to discuss what is happening and who is involved. You might want to take a friend with you for support, especially if they have witnessed the bullying.
- If you feel uncomfortable telling a teacher or Head of Year, keep a log of each bullying incident to give to your parent or carer. They can refer to this when talking to the school.

Keep a diary for reference. Take detailed notes of how the school has promised to help, and any progress or further bullying incidents.

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 as everyone knows the consequences are severe."



- 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. If the bully makes threats or physically assaults you, this is a matter for the police.
- Staff members 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.
 - the school finds effective, safe methods for reporting incidents.
 - the school provides a peer support network where students help each other to overcome bullying.

You may have your own ideas.

WHAT IF THE TEACHER IS A BULLY?

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 member of staff 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, Head of Year, school nurse, or Headteacher what is going on. Don't try to cope on your own. Keep a diary of occasions when the teacher bullies you and a list of witnesses. Write down what happens and how you feel. Tell your parents and ask them to talk to the Headteacher.

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."



DEALING WITH CYBER BULLYING

Bullies use the internet and electronic devices to bully people 24 hours a day, which makes those targeted feel even less safe. Try to:

- Change the passwords to all your online accounts such as email addresses, social media, gaming sites and forums.
- Only give your contact details to trusted friends.
- You may wish to change your mobile number. Contact your service provider to see how they can help.
- Never respond to cyber bullying, but keep a copy of everything. Do not delete messages or emails and take screen shots of incidents that take place on social media and online forums.
- Block numbers, email addresses, social media profiles and other online accounts known to be used by the bully.

PARENTS AND CARERS

- Talk to your parents or carers about the bullying. There is a great deal they can do to support you.

- Parents can talk to the Head of Year or Headteacher. Most schools take what has happened very seriously – in fact, by law they are required to keep students safe.
- Bullying at school is not the target's issue: it is a school discipline problem, and the school should be prepared to take positive action to stop it.
- The school is required to give you and your parents a detailed outline of its anti-bullying policy; they are required to have one.
- 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.

Parents can download *Preventing Bullying* from the Kidscape website for more ideas.

CHANGING 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.

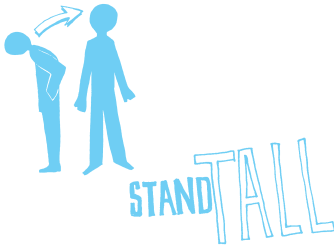


HOME EDUCATION

The law says that you have to be educated, but this doesn't mean that you have to go to school. Some families opt for home education. This gives young people a break from the bullying and it also means that they can keep up with course work and studying.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

- Make a list of all the good things you can think of about yourself. Don't say you haven't any! Everyone has talents so think about what you do best. The next time you feel down, think about the good things on your list. When people say nice things about you or praise you, write them down. You don't have to record only bad things in your diary.
- Learn to talk to yourself in a positive way: instead of saying "I am rubbish at maths", say something like "Maths isn't my strong point, but at least I can use my calculator."
- If you have a particular interest, develop your skill. Whatever it is, find out if there are local courses available or if there is a club or society you can join.
- Think about getting a part-time job: doing something different and earning your own money will make you feel better about yourself.
- Do some voluntary work. Charities need volunteers and helping other people is a good way to forget about your own problems. Look online for volunteering opportunities or details of local interest groups you may like to join.
- If you are interested in a particular cause, whether it's politics, the environment, or animal rights, find out about joining a group. They will welcome young supporters.
- Join a youth club, religious group or other organisation. If you have interests outside school and meet more people, you will realise how much you have to offer and how narrow minded and limited bullies are.



- Think about going to self-defence classes – not to kick bullies into submission, but to increase your self-confidence. Learning how to defend yourself makes you feel less helpless – less like a victim. Your local leisure centre or youth club will have details.
- Practise assertiveness tips (page 17). They really can help you to feel more confident. See if there are any assertiveness training classes held locally. Also check out our ZAP workshops on the Kidscape website.
- It takes time. Once the bullying stops, many victims say that they don't feel brilliant immediately. It takes time to get over bullying – you will feel better eventually. Some adults who were bullied as kids have told us that they think the bullying made them determined to succeed – to prove how wrong the bullies were.

Ali, 22, "I was bullied the whole time I was at school. Sometimes I felt so bad I wanted to die. I fought it by becoming determined to do well. I got a good education and I am now happy and in a great job. I know that two of the boys who bullied me have already messed up their lives. That's not going to happen to me."



WHY DO PEOPLE BULLY?

People become bullies for lots of different reasons. For example they may:

- have family problems
- have been bullied themselves
- be selfish or spoilt and always want to get their own way
- have no friends and feel lonely
- feel bad about themselves so they want to make others feel bad too
- be taking out their own frustrations on others
- feel insecure and unimportant – bullying gives them power
- want to look 'big' in front of others
- have been coerced into joining a group of bullies and have gone along with things just to keep on their good side
- not understand how victims feel
- feel it gives them status
- keep getting away with it, so continue to do it

Whatever the cause, bullying is usually a signal that the bully needs some help.

Bullies need people to target. The bully will always be able to find something about a person to focus on: being too intelligent, too attractive, wearing glasses, having 'big ears', being in a wheelchair, being good at exams, or too small and shy, too fat, too thin, too creative, or being the 'wrong' colour or wearing the 'wrong' clothes.

Bullies use 'differences' as an excuse for their bad behaviour. But it isn't this 'difference' which causes the problem – it's the bullies who have the problem because they are:

- afraid • jealous • envious • cruel
- angry • insecure • unhappy
- arrogant, self important

BULLY



Differences make people interesting and unique.

All the famous people who were bullied that were mentioned in the Introduction were 'different' – they turned out to be more talented and successful than any of the people who bullied them. Wonder what happened to the bullies...?

Jake, 18, "There was one boy who really annoyed me – he was clever and did well in school. We hid his stuff and alienated him so nobody wanted to talk to him. We just did it for a laugh. I suppose he must have hated us. I wouldn't blame him."

AM I A BULLY?

Most people have bullied someone at some point in their lives, but they usually feel sorry about it afterwards and try not to do it again. However, if you are constantly picking on people and you don't care how angry or upset you make them, then you've got a problem.

Admitting that you sometimes bully other people can be hard but we all have to face up to what we do and how we make others feel. No one really likes bullies. If you want to be liked for yourself, then you should try and change the way you treat other people. Bullies might frighten people into being nice to them but this isn't friendship – bullies are usually lonely and unhappy.

If you are a bully, then you can change – even if you like yourself as a bully!

First of all, try and work out why you bully others.

- **Do you intend to upset or hurt others?**
When you talk to people do you want them to feel small and intimidated?
- **Do you know when you are bullying** or is it the reactions of others which tell you that you have done something wrong?
- **Is something making you miserable?**
A problem at home or at school?
- **Do you feel left out or lonely?**

Daryl, 17, "I remember messing around most of the time at school. I had a couple of mates and we used to make the younger kids pay us every week or we'd beat them up. We must have been pretty frightening."



Page 14

- **Is someone picking on you?** A teacher, another adult, someone in your family, another pupil? How does this make you feel? Do you take your feelings of anger out on someone else? Could you try to talk to this person to see if you can sort out the problem yourself? Could someone else talk to them for you?
- **Is there a particular person whom you pick on?** Why do you target him or her? Are you jealous? Do you think this person is a wimp? If there is someone who really annoys you, try to stay out of their way. If you can avoid them, you won't have a chance to wind them up.
- **Do particular situations irritate you** so that you take out your feelings on others? Can you pinpoint exactly what annoys you the most – could you change whatever it is? Think of ways to avoid these situations in future, or make up your mind to walk away before you say or do anything you might regret.
- **Does something (a lesson or task) make you feel angry or frustrated?** Do you find some subjects really hard? Can you talk to someone about the problem?
- **Do you feel that you are letting someone down** by not being clever enough, or talented enough, or polite enough? Sometimes families or teachers can set such high standards of achievement that we feel we can never match up to what they expect of us. This can be totally demoralising. Often these people don't realise that they are laying such a burden on us. If you feel like this, talk to them and explain how you feel.
- **Do you go round with a group that bullies people?** Why do you stay with them? Do you really want to be with people who are always picking on others?
- **Do you get a thrill from hurting other people** or taking their things? Does this make you feel powerful?
- **Are you bigger and stronger than other people your age?** Do you use your size and strength to intimidate others?
- **Do you identify with violence and cruelty?** Why? Were or are you the victim of violence? If so, you can break the cycle of violence and make sure no one has to suffer like you did.

Priya, 18, “We thought one girl in our year was fat – she probably wasn’t really, but we went on and on at her about it. She suddenly started to lose weight and then we found out that she had become anorexic. In the end, she had to go into hospital. I feel ashamed about it now.”



Is there someone you trust that you could talk to about the problem? Discussing things with someone else often helps to make things clearer. It can be hard to change ingrained habits, and having someone on your side will make things easier.

CHANGING YOUR BEHAVIOUR

- **Apologise to your former targets if possible.** Do it privately and don't be too upset if they are still suspicious – they just need to get used to the “new you”.
- **Try to make amends or at least be pleasant to those you bullied.** It might take them some time to trust you if you have hurt them, but keep on trying.
- **See if you can help new pupils in your year** – they may feel isolated. They won't know so much about your bullying past and might be glad of your friendship.
- **Get a job or do voluntary work** – people outside school won't know that you have been a bully and won't be put off by your reputation.
- **Visit a local youth club** – if you can make friends outside school, you won't feel so insecure and lonely.

- **Pursue any other interests you may have or develop new ones.** Join a local club or society that sounds interesting.
- **Take up a sport** if you have lots of energy and find it difficult to sit still all day in school – your local leisure centre or football club will have details.
- **Take up judo or karate** if you are aggressive and find it hard not to lose your temper, these martial arts teach you how to control negative emotions and how to use your strength positively.

Khalid, 17, “I get really mad if someone disrespects me. I can't think straight. Sometimes I hit people and get into fights.”

- **Learn how to control your anger and aggression.** See page 19 in the Assertiveness Skills section. Angry, aggressive, unpredictable behaviour puts people off.
- **Set yourself goals** (“I won't bother Sally this morning, or push Tony at lunch”, or “I'll try and be nice to Zeinab today.”) It might sound stupid but it does work!



Page 16

- **If you have a friend you trust, you could ask them to help.** They could step in when they see you start to bully someone or become aggressive.
- **Talk to someone at school about the problem** and ask them if there is somewhere quiet you could go when your feelings are getting the better of you. Getting away can help you get control of yourself.

Don't get disheartened if you find yourself slipping back into bullying in spite of all your good resolutions.

You won't become perfect overnight – changing behaviour takes time. After a setback, you have to pick yourself up and try again.

Getting rid of the bullying habit and learning how to make friends means you are taking positive steps to help yourself.

Adults who were bullies as children often end up with all sorts of problems – failed relationships, few friends, frequent job changes, even prison records because they still think that being aggressive is the only way to behave. Save yourself future problems by stopping bullying now.

Mel, 22, “ I never had a feeling of power but I seemed to get satisfaction from beating up other kids. Inside I was scared. I thought nobody liked me. I had a big nose and I thought I was ugly. People used to tease me about it. I felt very insecure.”

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS



Page 17

If you have been bullied or if you bully other people, practising some basic assertiveness skills can help you feel better about yourself. Assertiveness training can also teach you different ways of responding to difficult or upsetting situations.

There are three response styles:

- passive
- aggressive
- assertive

Passive people behave as if other people's rights matter more than theirs.

Aggressive people behave as if their rights matter more than those of others.

Assertive people respect themselves and others equally.

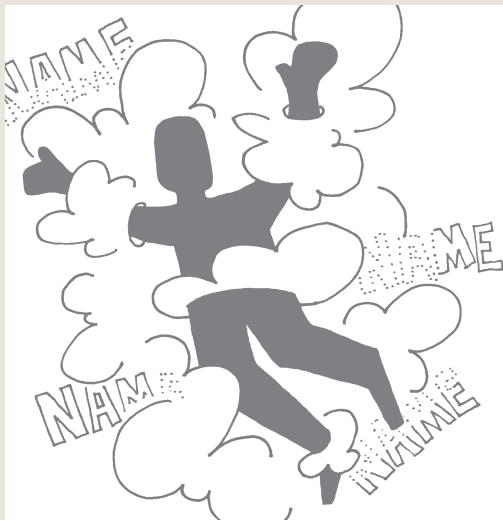
Roughly, people who are bullied tend to be passive and people who bully tend to be aggressive. **Here are some suggestions on how to change your behaviour from passive or aggressive to assertive.**

MAKING REQUESTS

- **Be clear about what you want.**
- **Plan ahead and practise.**
- **Make your request short and precise** ("That is my pencil and I want it back").
- **Decide what you want to say and stick to it** ("I would like my pencil back"). You don't have to be rude but don't get sidetracked.

SAYING NO

- **When you say NO, say it firmly.** This can include saying "No, I am not going to bully anyone" as well as saying no to those who bully.
- **Listen to your body and to your feelings** about the best way to stay safe in the situation.
- **Try not to get caught up in arguments** and don't become angry or upset if you don't get your own way.
- **If you don't want to do something, don't give in to pressure.** Be firm, say NO.



- **If you are not sure and somebody is pressing you for an answer**, say “I need more time to decide” or “I need more information”.
- **Don’t make excuses**: keep your body posture assertive (don’t stand all hunched up) and calmly look the person in the eye. The other person will know from the decisive way you are speaking and standing that you mean business. (If you find looking people in the eye hard, practise keeping eye contact within your family.)
- **Offer an alternative**: “No, I don’t want to play football. Let’s go for a walk instead.”

When we say “No” to someone, we are only refusing the request. We are not rejecting the person.

DEALING WITH INSULTS

Fogging: if you respond to insults with more insults, the argument can build up and up until violence occurs. Nothing is resolved.

Try ‘fogging’ – a way to stop a verbal assault and protect yourself.

How it works: when other people make hurtful remarks, don’t argue and try not to become upset. Imagine that you are inside a huge, white fog bank: the insults are swallowed up by the fog long before they reach you. Nothing touches you.

Reply to taunts with something short and bland, and in a voice that displays no emotion, just calm: “That’s what you think.” “Maybe.” Then walk away.

This might seem very strange at first and can be very hard to do, but it does work and it will help you blot out insults.

Practise by thinking of the worst things the bully says to you and pretend that you are inside your fog bank – nothing reaches you. You can practise this at home with your family. You can choose your own protective layer – rubber, chocolate, feathers – anything that helps you visualise an impenetrable barrier.



DEALING WITH ANGER

If you lose your temper or become violent and aggressive easily, you need to practise controlling these feelings. It is not necessarily wrong to get angry but it is wrong to take out your anger on others.

- **Learn to recognise the signs that you are about to 'explode'.** Work out what you are going to do next time you feel that you are losing your temper.
- **Get away from the situation or the person making you angry.** This is the best way of keeping yourself and others from getting hurt either through a fight or through arguments and name-calling.
- **Take several deep breaths and count to ten.**
- **Exercise helps you let off steam.** Go for a run, a swim, a long walk or take up a sport you like.
- **Practise simple relaxation exercises.** Anger, stress and anxiety are often related and if you can learn how to relax, it will be easier to control your temper. Tense every muscle in your body and then slowly relax each individual muscle, starting with

your toes. If you can, find a place to be by yourself, and think of an image that makes you calm – the beach, your bed, the top of a mountain.

These steps may feel strange at first, but with practice you will learn to deal with anger in a positive and assertive way. You may also wish to try an anger management class. Uncontrolled anger can harm you as well as other people.

ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP

Kidscape

Kidscape has useful information for young people, parents, carers and professionals.
www.kidscape.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education

Education advice. www.ace-ed.org.uk

ChildLine

Provides a confidential free 24 hour helpline for children in trouble or danger 0800 1111.
www.childline.org.uk

Coram Children's Legal Centre

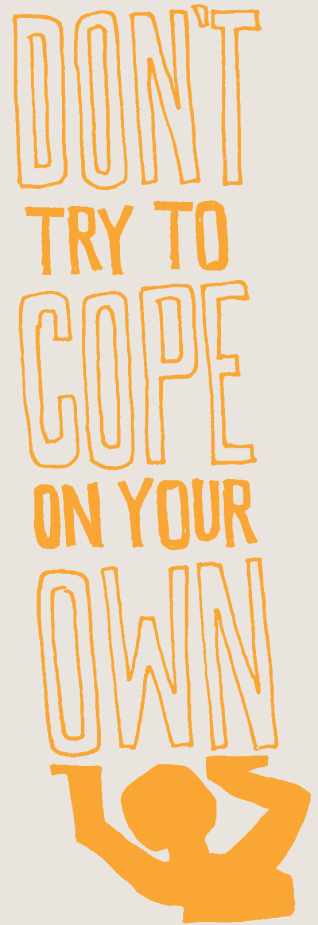
Child law advice. www.childrenslegalcentre.com

British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy

Provides a register of accredited counsellors and psychotherapists. www.bacpregister.org.uk

Stonewall

Working for equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. www.stonewall.org.uk



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