

UNIT 4: HITTING BACK?

TEACHERS' NOTES UNIT 4

HITTING BACK?

OBJECTIVE

To explore ways of preventing and responding to bullying.

SUGGESTED AGE RANGE

14-16 year olds

CURRICULUM LINKS

For use in PSE, English, Drama, Moral Education etc.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT

Working in pairs, students read through and answer questions on a case study (there are four to choose from) of a young person with a genetic condition who has overcome bullying or discrimination. Feedback is in the form of a structured discussion on bullying in schools. In the final activity, students are asked to invent the perfect verbal put-down.

TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

It is important to be aware of the fact that some students in the class may themselves have a genetic condition, or be a carrier, or have a relative who is affected. Sensitivity is required to avoid putting such students under stress.

You might like to read through the Notes for Teachers on the Case Studies on pages 48—50 before the lesson.

It would be helpful to be familiar with your school's anti-bullying policy. You might like to have a copy with you. If there is no formal policy, familiarity with how your school attempts to prevent and deal with bullying would be helpful.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Photocopies of the following:
- One copy per pair of students of the Case Studies you wish to use together with the appropriate Genetic Condition Card: Case Study A (Dianne) plus Genetic Condition Card: Galactosaemia Case Study B (Richard) plus Genetic Condition Card: Laurence-Moon-Bardet-Biedl Syndrome (LMBBS) Case Study C (Amit) plus Condition Card: Vitiligo Case Study D (Sonia) plus Genetic Condition Card: Achondroplasia.
- One copy per pair of students of Activity Sheet I and Activity Sheet 2.
- 'Post-its' or slips of paper for the optional follow- up activity.

WHAT YOU DO

- Explain that during the lesson you are going to look at case studies of young people who have been bullied at school or discriminated against. All these young people have a genetic condition which makes others perceive them as different. But why should people whose physical appearance or learning abilities differ in some way from that of the majority have to put up with bullying or discrimination? What can we, and they, do about it?
- Ask pupils to work in pairs. Give each pair a copy of the Case Study you have chosen for them plus the appropriate Genetic Condition Card and a copy of Activity Sheet I. Explain that each pair needs to read through their Case Study and the information on the Genetic Condition Card they have been given before working through the questions on the Activity Sheet together. Set a time limit for the activity.
- Come back together as a whole class to process the activity. You can use the Notes for Teachers on the Case Studies on pages 48—50 to help you. [N.B The questions in italics on Activity Sheet I ask students to think about bullying/discrimination within their own school and any procedures which may be in place to deal with it and/or prevent it from happening. You need to be familiar with how your school handles bullying in order to be comfortable with this part of the discussion.]

TEACHERS' NOTES UNIT 4

WHAT YOU DO continued

Explain that you are going to finish by thinking about snappy, one-line responses to verbal bullying or insults. Acknowledge that although bullying can be complex and take time to resolve, responding assertively is a skill which can be useful in other settings. Ask students to work in their pairs again. Hand each pair a copy of Activity Sheet 2 and make sure students understand that their task is to come up with assertive responses which defuse the situation rather than provoke further confrontation (it might help to clarify the difference between an assertive and an aggressive response). Confirm that physical violence and bad language are not allowed. Set a time for the activity.

Ask pairs to read out some of their responses and encourage positive feedback about any which students feel are particularly effective. If time is limited, you could stick the sheets up on a wall with Blu-tac so that students can read everyone else's responses.

Follow-up (optional)

Hand out a single sticky-backed 'post-it' or a rough slip of paper to each student. Anonymously (and in capital letters if they want to disguise their handwriting), ask all students to complete the following:

I like people saying I'm.....

but I hate it when people say I'm.....

Put all contributions up on a wall or large sheet of paper for everyone to read and reflect on.

CASE STUDIES

Case study a: Dianne

What genetic condition does the person in your case study have?

Dianne has Galactosaemia. This is an inherited metabolic condition in which the body lacks a particular enzyme needed to convert galactose into glucose. Galactose then builds up in the blood and can cause serious complications such as liver disease and cataracts. Dianne's Galactosaemia was not diagnosed until she was six weeks old by which time she was seriously ill. If diagnosis is made early and treatment (i.e. a galactose-free diet) started within the first few weeks of life, signs and symptoms should start to clear and permanent damage to the liver, eyes and other organs is less likely.

Might someone with this condition look different or have learning difficulties in school? (use the information on the Genetic Condition Card to help you answer this question). Yes. A person with Galactosaemia may be small for their age, experience delayed development at puberty and have poor vision. They may also have specific learning difficulties associated with the condition such as poor short-term memory and decision-making ability, and experience emotional difficulties and low self-esteem as a result of these. Dianne suffered at secondary school because she was labelled 'lazy, uncaring and stupid', yet she knew she was trying her hardest. She was 15 before her educational needs were formally assessed and recognised.

The person in your case study talks about being bullied at school or discriminated against. What form did this bullying/discrimination take?

TEACHERS' NOTES UNIT 4

Case Study A Dianne continued

In Dianne's case, the bullying involved name-calling and fights. Even her best friend turned against her because she was frightened of getting teased too.

Does Dianne suggest any ways of

- coping with
- stopping this kind of bullying/discrimination? Do you think her ideas would work?

Dianne feels that she should have stuck up for herself more. But she says she couldn't feel angry, only upset and depressed. She is ambivalent about fighting back. What could schools do to help someone like Dianne?

Case study b:Richard

What genetic condition does the person in your case study have?

Richard has Laurence-Moon-Bardet-Biedl Syndrome (LMBBS). This is a genetic condition which can lead to poor vision and blindness, obesity, extra fingers or toes, kidney problems, underdeveloped sex organs, and developmental delay.

Might someone with this condition look different or have learning difficulties in school? (use the information on the Genetic Condition Card to help you answer this question). Yes. A person with LMBBS may be overweight, have short arms and legs and poor vision and balance, which can make them appear awkward and clumsy. Delayed development at puberty can also be difficult for both girls and boys. Some people with LMBBS have speech defects associated with poor muscle tone, and may take extra time to 'decode' a question before they reply. This can lead to them being labelled 'slow', which can be very frustrating if, as in Richard's case, they have ideas and feelings which they want to communicate.

The person in your case study talks about being bullied at school or discriminated against. What form did this bullying/discrimination take? Richard says he is bullied because of his size (being overweight is a feature of LMBBS). Other students call him 'fat' and 'ugly'. Does Richard suggest any ways of a coping with, stopping this kind of bullying/discrimination? Do you think his ideas would work?

Richard says he tries to sort the bullying out, and that teachers tell people to leave him alone, but it soon starts again and then goes on and on. He suggests a No Bullying Day or a No Bullying Week with offenders' names being written down and perhaps read out in assembly. What do students think?

Case Study C: Amit

What genetic condition does the person in your case study have?

Amit has Vitiligo. Vitiligo is a skin condition where patches of skin turn white because the pigment cells have been destroyed. The condition is usually progressive (although repigmentation can sometimes occur) and sometimes affects the hair as well as the skin. The affected skin can burn easily even when only briefly exposed to the sun.

N.B. It should be stressed that Vitiligo differs from the other conditions mentioned in this Unit because although a gene (or combination of genes) may be partly responsible for the condition, Vitiligo is only inherited in about 5—6% of families. This means that about 1 in 20 people who have Vitiligo will have a brother/sister or child who also has the condition.

Might someone with this condition look different or have learning difficulties in school? (use the information on the Genetic Condition Card to help you answer this question).

- Vitiligo does not affect intelligence. But a person with Vitiligo may look different because of the patches of white skin.
- The person in your case study talks about being bullied at school or discriminated against. What form did this bullying/discrimination take?

TEACHERS' NOTES UNIT 4



Amit case study continued

Amit was called names like 'zebra boy' and 'skin-diseaser'. People spread cruel rumours about him bathing in acid and some parents wouldn't let their children near him in case they 'caught' Vitiligo (this is impossible as it is not contagious).

Does Amit suggest any ways of

a) coping with

b) stopping

this kind of bullying/discrimination? Do you think his ideas would work?

Amit overcame his problems through drama. Do students think that roleplaying/acting out situations can increase a person's confidence?

Case Study D: Sonia

What genetic condition does the person in your case study have?

Sonia has Achondroplasia. Achondroplasia is a genetic condition which affects bone growth and leads to short stature.

Might someone with this condition look different or have learning difficulties in school? (use the information on the Genetic Condition Card to help you answer this question).

Achondroplasia does not affect intelligence. But people with Achondroplasia have short limbs, a disproportionately large head and are of short stature, all of which can make them 'look different'.

The person in your case study talks about being bullied at school or discriminated against. What form did this bullying/discrimination take?

Sonia says she was never bullied because she is stubborn and stands up for her rights. But she has been discriminated against when applying for jobs. She says that if she puts 'Disabled' on the application form, usually doesn't hear any more, and if she gets an interview, she can see them thinking, 'Oh no, she's little!' when she walks in. After college, she was unemployed for nine months and all her college friends found work before she did.

Does Sonia suggest any ways of

a) coping with

b) stopping

this kind of bullying/discrimination? Do you think her/his ideas would work

LEGISLATION

Legislation can help in the battle against discrimination. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 affects any business (shop, hotel, insurance company etc.) or public service (hospital, library, place of worship etc.) which provides a service, offers facilities or supplies goods to the public, whether paid or free. It does not include the provision of education (except in requiring schools, colleges and universities to provide information for disabled people) or transport vehicles (except in allowing the Government to set minimum standards so that disabled people can use public transport easily). The aim of the Act is to tackle the discrimination which many disabled people face and to give disabled people new rights in the areas of employment, access to goods, facilities and services, and buying or renting land or property. Some of these rights were introduced from December 1996; others are being introduced over a period of time.

However, legislation alone cannot change attitudes. The interviewer does not ask Sonia if she has any ideas for overcoming the discrimination she has faced. What suggestions do students have for making sure that people like Sonia are not discriminated against when applying for jobs?

STUDENTS' ACTIVITY UNIT 4: SHEET 1



READ THROUGH THE CASE STUDY YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN. THEN TRY TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW TOGETHER.

Be prepared to:

- A. Talk about the person in your case study
- B. Sum up the main points of your discussion when you come back together as a whole group.
 - What genetic condition does the person in your case study have?
 - Might someone with this condition look different or have learning difficulties in school (use the information on the Genetic Condition Card to help you answer this question)?
 - The person in your case study talks about being bullied at school or discriminated against. What form did this bullying/discrimination take?

Does (s)he suggest any ways of

- a) coping with
- b) stopping

this kind of bullying/discrimination? Do you think her/his ideas would work?

- Imagine that someone you know is being bullied in school. Would you try to do anything about it? What could you do?
- Does your school have an anti-bullying policy? Does it work?
- What else could you/ your friends/ family/ staff at school/ the local community do to help stamp out bullying in schools?

CASE STUDIES FOR STUDENTS UNIT 4

CASE STUDY A

DIANNE

Dianne is 21 years old. She lives with her fiancé in Tyne and Wear. At the moment she is working in a care home for the elderly and is very happy there. Dianne has a genetic condition called Galactosaemia. No-one else in her family is affected. I was always being told that I was lazy, stupid and uncaring at school but they couldn't have been more wrong because I tried my hardest — I really, really tried — and what got me down was that no matter how hard I tried I was always getting put down. I know exactly what my problems are now but when I was at school I was bombarded with things and I thought, 'I'm lost, I don't know what's happening to me, I'm just stupid'. Everyone was calling me stupid so I immediately thought I was.

Q. Now you had a really hard time at school didn't you. What happened? What form did the bullying take?

Well name-calling — and fights, believe it or not.

Q. Because people went for you?

I had no choice. I don't like to think, 'Oh I was in fights' and that sort of thing. But when somebody either punches you or jumps on the back of you, you can't just sit there and take it.

Q. So did you hit back?

Well to be quite honest, I was really soft and I still am. I never hit back and I never touched anyone. I just let them basically lay into me. I don't know why but I just couldn't bring any anger out because there wasn't any anger in there. I was just so upset. Instead of being angry at them for bullying me, I thought, 'I deserve this'. I ended up seeing a psychiatrist because I was so upset and depressed. I don't want to give people the idea that hitting back is the right thing to do because it isn't, but when you're getting bullied and you're getting into fights you have to learn to stick up for yourself which I didn't learn.

Q. Do you think things would have been different if you had stuck up for yourself?

Maybe, yes, because they would have known that I wasn't going to put up with it.

Q. But look at you now — a really happy, outgoing person!

I know! But when I think of the way I was then, I was always depressed. And from 11-15 I was so shy, so timid. I look back and I think if only I could have been then who I am now! I'm living my life now the way I should have years ago. And yet when I left school, I had no friends.

Q. Why do you think that was?

Because at school you have this thing that if someone's getting teased nobody dare be their friend because they'll get teased. When I first started school, I had one best friend. She was brilliant, but because I was getting teased she turned against me because she didn't want to get teased. Anyway this best friend who turned on me, she was having difficulties at the time as well. When we'd left school, she actually came to my house and said to my whole family, 'I'm very sorry for the trouble and unhappiness I've caused Dianne, and I want to patch things up'. Well with me knowing her for so long, and her being the most caring person anyone could ever meet... She was such a great friend — no-one could ask for more.

Q. What about boyfriends?

When I was 12 or 13, everyone seemed to be talking about boyfriends, girlfriends, and I felt like I'm the only one who hasn't got one. I mean, a lot of the time at school they lie about it but you don't know that at that age. I remember saying to my mum one day, 'Am I hopeless, am I never going to get a boyfriend, am I ugly?' She says, 'Don't be so silly, one day you'll find someone who cares about you. No matter what you look like, no matter what you do, he'll love you for who you are...' And I have. He's someone who's always had confidence in himself and he's taught me to have confidence in myself. If I keep knocking myself, he'll tell me to stop.

Q. Did you find talking to the psychiatrist helpful when you were really depressed?

Oh yes, certainly, because you could talk with someone who you didn't know and they didn't know you and it wasn't like, say, if I was talking to my mum... I mean I get on great with my mother, I love her to bits, I love my whole family to bits, but I felt I was an embarrassment to them. You see my brother has a degree and I was always the slower one, so in a way I felt as if I was the let-down. I got so much kindness from my family — it was lovely. But it wasn't enough because with me feeling the way I did I thought, 'Well they're my family, they're bound to think nice things about me'.

CASE STUDIES FOR STUDENTS UNIT 4

CASE STUDY B

RICHARD

Richard is 15. He has two brothers aged 7 and 18. He goes to a residential special school in Coventry and comes home at weekends and holidays. He loves football, both as a player and supporter. He has a genetic condition called Laurence-Moon-Bardet-Biedl Syndrome (LMBBS).

Q. One thing I'd like to talk about is how people who are special or different in some way sometimes get badly treated by others. Has that ever happened to you? Has anyone ever treated you badly or bullied you at school or anything?

Yeah, because of my size.

Q. What do they say?

They call me fat...fat and ugly.

Q. And is that very hurtful?

In a way, yes it is. I mean, you can't help being different.

Q. How do you cope with it?

I try and sort it out. Normally the teachers tell them to leave me alone but it still carries on.

Q. What would you like to say to people who bully you and call you names?

Something like, 'Go away you stupid people!'

Q. Who do you think is responsible for stopping that sort of bullying?

The headteacher and teachers.

Q. Do you think there's anything you can do to stop it?

Not really.

Q. I think quite a lot of young people get bullied, don't you? And it would be nice if it stopped, wouldn't it, for everyone.

Yes. I mean, you sort it out, but it starts again and it goes on and on and on.

Q. And do you have friends who've been bullied at school as well?

Yes. If they're in wheelchairs they get bullied even more because they can't walk...And in the primary school, there are people who have to go in these frames to walk, like tiny zimmer frames.

Q. But it's crazy, isn't it, because everyone has problems of one sort or the other, yet bullying still goes on.

We need... ..a 'No Bullying Day', or even a 'No Bullying Week'.

Q. How could people make sure that no bullying happened during that week?

I suppose they could keep a record. You would have to go straight to a teacher and say, 'So and so did, or said, this', and what they could do is write down who bullied who and how many times in total.

Q. What could you do to stop them doing it again?

I don't know really. Read out the names in assembly perhaps?

CASE STUDIES FOR STUDENTS UNIT 4

CASE STUDY C

AMIT

Amit is 15 years old and lives in Surrey. He has a skin condition called Vitiligo. No-one is sure why some people develop this condition. Although the cause may be partly genetic, Vitiligo appears to be triggered by a wide range of physical and psychological events, including surgery, skin damage, accidents, hormonal changes and stress. You cannot 'catch' Vitiligo (it is not contagious).

My name is Amit and I'm 14 years old. I have had Vitiligo since the age of four. It all started when I had chicken pox. The scars started flaking away and tiny white dots appeared. Thinking nothing of it, I carried on with my life as normal. The dots started getting bigger and bigger until my family and I thought it was time to seek help. We went to see various dermatologists in London and found out that there was no cure. Like any other six year-old in the paddling pool kicking water about and enjoying myself. That evening my skin went tomato red and I realised my whole body was burnt. The next few days were very difficult. I was drifting in and out of consciousness. Blisters were forming all along the Vitiligo patches and the doctor diagnosed second-degree burns. I became bedridden for a month and nurses had to keep coming in to change my dressings. Once I recovered, I enjoyed life once more but I became very cautious about going out in the sun. School too had become a problem for me. I was bullied and called names such as 'zebra boy' and 'skin diseaser'. Cruel rumours were spread that I had bathed in acid and some mothers even told their children never to come near me in case their child caught Vitiligo. It was no use telling people that vitiligo is not contagious. In the end I realised that it was a waste of time trying to educate people who were ignorant about Vitiligo and didn't want to learn.

Because of being bullied so much about my Vitiligo, I lost all self-confidence and faith in myself. Then my parents put me in a drama school where I learned how to act. My newfound confidence began to shine in all areas of my school work. I played lead roles such as the Giant in a school production of Jack and the Beanstalk and even Macbeth in a shortened version of Shakespeare's play.

I manage my Vitiligo by rubbing a mixture of Indian herbs and oils onto the patches. I have also cut out certain foods (sugar, chocolate, Cheddar cheese and yellow food colouring) as I had developed a persistent allergic rash. The good news is that my Vitiligo patches have now stopped growing.

In my old school I was treated like a leper. No-one would come near me or be my friend. Now I have lots of friends and everybody treats me the same regardless of my Vitiligo. I would like to say to everyone who has been bullied because of how they look, 'Don't give up. We are all unique and should be accepted for who we are'.

CASE STUDIES FOR STUDENTS UNIT 4

CASE STUDY D

SONIA

Sonia is 21. She has a sister who is 24 and she lives at home with her mum. She has completed a college course in social care and worked as a nursery nurse but at the moment she is working in a factory. She would like to be a disabled rights worker. Sonia has a genetic condition called Achondroplasia. She is the only person in her family to be affected by this condition.

Q. What word or phrase would you like people to use if they need to refer to your height?

Well there used to be a great stigma against the word 'dwarf', but nowadays it's more relaxed. I don't mind if people call me a 'dwarf' but I don't like being called a 'midget' because I'm not a midget. A midget is someone who has not got a medical condition such as restricted growth or any abnormalities - they're just short. But 'short stature', 'restricted growth', 'little person', 'dwarf, whatever — they're okay. I'm more comfortable with 'dwarf' and 'little person' because they're not so formal.

Q. Do people's comments hurt you?

Not really. They say, 'Oh look at that person, isn't she funny, but it doesn't bother me because I think, 'You're the stupid one, you've got the problem not me'.

Q. Did it hurt when you were younger?

Very much so. When I was a typical teenager and my hormones were all over the place I thought, 'Oh no, she's just called me such and such...' and that hurt, but as you grow older you think, 'I've got to live this life, I'll live it as I want to and not how other people want me to'.

Q. Have you been bullied on account of your height?

I haven't been bullied so much because I've always been stubborn and stood up for my rights, but employment—yes, you definitely get discriminated against. I mean you go for an interview and it's like, 'Aagh-she's little!' when you walk in the door. If the application form asks, 'Are you disabled?', you think should I say 'YES' or should I say 'NO'? I've done both. More often than not if you say, 'Yes, I am disabled', you don't hear a word from them even though they say they're an equal opportunities employer. When I left college, I was unemployed for nine months. I kept in touch with all my college friends and I was the last person to get a job. Whether that was fluke or me being small I don't know. I think some of the time being small was something to do with it, but that's just life.

Q. When you're out and about, are there any problems for you because of your short stature?

Cashpoints — they're a nightmare! Nowadays you get some lower ones which are excellent, but you get the odd one which you can't reach and you can guarantee that it's in a place where there's no other cashpoint for miles and miles and you're really short of money! Everywhere else, like shopping round Sainsbury's, I just ask for help but with the cashpoint it would be a bit strange to say to someone, 'Can you just take that tanner out of the machine for me?'...

Q. And do people treat you as though you haven't got a brain?

Not any more, although at school that was a typical scenario. The teachers thought I was mentally handicapped and they would say, 'Oh, don't you understand?' and pat me on the head and I couldn't stand that. The other students were fine. But now I've left school, it's okay. At college they didn't treat me as any different whatsoever.

STUDENTS' ACTIVITY UNIT 4: SHEET 2

LOOK AT THE FIVE SITUATIONS BELOW. YOU WANT TO SAY SOMETHING WHICH WILL PUT THE SPEAKER IN HIS/HER PLACE WITHOUT USING BAD LANGUAGE OR PHYSICAL VIOLENCE. WRITE DOWN YOUR RESPONSE

A. Dianne is a good friend of yours.

Someone says: 'I don't know what you see in her — she's so stupid.'

YOU:

B. You are sitting in a cafe with Sonia, a good friend of yours.

She is smoking a cigarette. A young man sitting at a table nearby says: 'Don't you know that smoking stunts your growth?'

YOU:

B. Richard is a good friend of yours.

You are sitting next to him in the school canteen when someone comes up and says to him: 'Hi fatso — stuffing your face as usual.'

YOU:

E. You are walking to the local shops with Joanne, who is a good friend of yours.

Joanne is in a wheelchair and has her two year-old daughter on her lap. Someone you have never met comes up to her and says: 'Your sort shouldn't have kids.'

YOU:

C. Amit is a good friend of yours.

You are sitting next to him in assembly when someone says: 'I wouldn't sit next to 'zebra stripe' if I were you. Never know what you might catch.'

YOU: