

A group of cheerleaders in pink and blue outfits performing on a track. They are wearing pink crop tops with white fringe, blue pants with pink side panels, and blue pom-poms. They are in a dynamic pose, with one cheerleader in the foreground smiling and looking towards the camera.

A forum for empowerment and change

Empower you

Issue 2

April/May 2010

An Actionwork Magazine

Learning to love your looks

Living with epilepsy

The psychology of bullying

Drive for peace

Getting bullied to experience empowerment



actionwork

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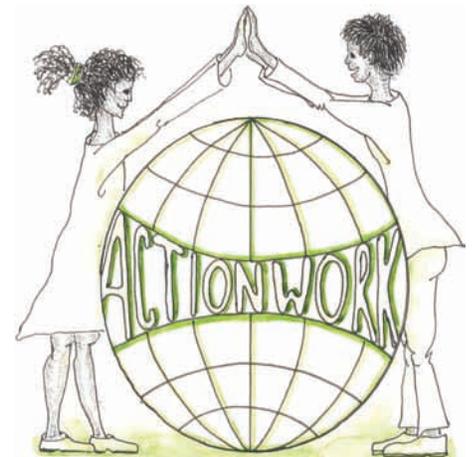
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Mpower You

A forum for empowerment and change

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Note from the Editor:

Welcome to the second issue of Empower You. I must start with a special than-you to our our Contributions Manager, Rebecca, for doing more than her normal workload in this issue while I try to finish my PhD thesis and complete a new book on dealing with bullying.

In the UK, parliamentary elections are looming, as we can see with the televised debates. Despite the hype they are turning out to be sanitised and safe. None of the main parties have so far agreed to make anti-bullying training for teachers a core part of teacher training, despite petitions, letters and cross-party agreed parliamentary motions. I will continue to press for basic skills training to be offered to students including rights awareness, assertiveness skills, body language knowledge and confidence building.

In this issue we have some fabulous contributions, resources and stories to help empower you and those around you. We have some very personal stories of growth and a whole load of tips to help make you feel good.

Empowerment training can have a funny twist to it; once people have become empowered the trainer is no longer required, is surplus to requirements. In a strange twist the empowerer becomes redundant. How's that for empowerment!

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What's On

Coming up in the months ahead; music, theatre, art, peaceful protests, eco friendly events, dance, workshops, conferences, films, adventure walks & more.

April

1st Timmy Mallet Knighted

Today the Queen dubs children's entertainer, Timmy Mallet, for outstanding contribution to children's television.



1st – 30th Autism Awareness Month

With figures growing to one in ten children living with some form of autism, use this month as an opportunity to spread the word and explore the answers. Info: autism-awareness.org.uk

1st – 30th Actionwork Anti-bullying Workshops

Taking place all over the UK, members of the Actionwork team come to your school/event and run fun, interactive workshops on a range of topics. Info: 01934815163/actionwork.com

1st-17th Juliet and her Romeo

From the co-directors behind War Horse and Every Good Boy Deserves Favour, the BOV hosts a classic turned on its head by casting the lovers in their 80s and has their children, not parents, seeking to prevent the match. Info: 01179877877/bristololdvic.org.uk

2nd World Autism Day

You can Stand up for Autism too, by uploading your photo and message - and help us create a truly global message for World Autism Awareness Day. Info: worldautismawarenessday.org/ autistica.org.uk

2nd – 5th Good Friday to Easter Monday

Public holiday for the UK, traditionally the Christian celebration of the resurrection of Jesus... and possibly his love of chocolate and bunnies if supermarkets are to be believed.

3rd Oxbridge Boat Race

The long running grudge match between the UK's top two universities takes place once again on the River Thames. No points for giggling every time someone says, "cox".

Info: theboatrace.org

3rd-9th Inspired Action: Changing the world from the inside out

Seven days of conferences out in the country focusing on helping the environment and making your life more ecofriendly. Info: findhorn.org/inspiredaction

3rd – 17th Edinburgh International Science Festival

Blood, comedy and computer games kick off the 22nd Edinburgh Science Festival! Join the search to make artificial blood, see live comedy with Robin Ince and even watch an autopsy on a cow. Info: sciencefestival.co.uk

6th – 7th The Game of Love

Max Theatre brings you a naturalistic drama from the 60s and follow Carol on her emotional journey through drugs, abuse and a life working the streets. Info: 01170735171/almataverntheatre.co.uk

7th World Health Day

A global event that seeks to make polluting cities around the world, healthier. Info: who.int

8th Family Bushcraft Day

Inigorating day for all ages to try out outdoor skills. Info: [Mount Pleasant Eco Park, Cornwall. 01209891500/mpcopark.co.uk/courses](http://MountPleasantEcoPark,Cornwall.01209891500/mpcopark.co.uk/courses)

10th Encourage a Young Writer Day

Encourage your young writer to put pen to paper today. Also an ideal opportunity to encourage those who have little love for writing. Go to the info link and search for 6 Ways to Encourage Young Writers for tips. Info: scholastic.com

11th Holocaust Remembrance Day

Also known as Yom Hashoah, a day to remember the millions of Jewish men, women and children, whose lives were lost during the Holocaust.

11th Cornish Theatre Collective Spring Clean Auction

The Cornish Theatre Collective will be auctioning items from their substantial stock of costumes, props and memorabilia. collectivearts.cornwall@googlemail.com

12th TEDxEuston

Our Destiny is in Our Hands – How new ideas are shaping our interaction with Africa. Info: tedxeuston.com

14th TEDxCardiff

In the spirit of ideas worth spreading TEDx is a program of local, self-organised events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. At the Cardiff event video and live speakers will combine to spark deep discussion. Info: Tedxcardiff.wordpress.com

16th Wild Foods by Canoe

Travel through River Dart in Devon by canoe and seek out inaccessible and secret wild places to find edible and useful plants. Info: 01803868269/wildwise.co.uk

22nd Earth Day

Events taking place all over the world will focus on Earth Net's campaign for a carbon-free future. Info: earthday.net

22nd – 25th Shrewsbury International Cartoon Festival

An annual event that attracts full-time professional artists and caricaturists from the UK and abroad. This year's theme is magic, myth and mystery. Info: shrewsburycartoonfestival.com

23rd – 25th Machynlleth Comedy Festival

Fantastic comedians from all over the UK are travelling to North Wales to perform in Wales' most historic town. The tickets are dirt cheap and amazing value for money. You've just got to get there and learn how to pronounce Machynlleth! Info: machcomedyfestival.co.uk

23rd – 25th Global Youth Service Day

Annual campaign to celebrate and mobilise young people who improve their communities by learning and providing services.

Info: gysd.org

25th Dirtbox

A mixture of sketches, stand up, short films and live animation with some topical, bitingly satirical posters, all down at the Cardiff Arts Institute. Come and take a look into the Dirtbox.

Info: dirtboxcomedy.tumblr.com

26th Unsigned Comedy Award – Round 2

In NosDa in Cardiff, unsigned comedians of varying degrees of experience try to impress a judge of experts, including Rhod Gilbert. The winner gets to perform in the Cardiff Comedy Festival in July and wins £1000.

Info: cardiffcomedy.co.uk

27th – 28th Wild Walk – Edible Seashores

Join John Wright, River Cottage foraging expert, on an edible adventure along the beautiful Jurassic coastline of the South West.

Info: rivercottage.net

28th – 29th Stratford-Upon-Avon celebrates Shakespeare's Birthday

An event held since 1769, Stratford-upon-Avon celebrates the Bard on the nearest Saturday to his birthday every year. No confirmation on an exeunt, pursued by bear this year.

Info: stratford-upon-avon.co.uk

29th The beautiful game? You're having a laugh!

Discussion at Intelligence Squared focuses on the game that is modern football.

The once 'beautiful game' represented something special about British culture, but is now all about money, violence, hate and cheating.

Info: events/intelligencesquared.com

May

1st May Day

Known for its protests, May Day is a busy day for activists and police alike, as the passionate and unheard take to the streets to make people take notice of their causes.

1st – 31st Actionwork Anti-bullying Workshops.

Taking place all over the UK, members of the Actionwork team come to your school/event and run fun, interactive workshops on a range of topics.

Info: 01934 815163/actionwork.com

3rd Early May Bank Holiday

On the first Monday in May, pupils and teachers get a day off to enjoy the early days of Spring.

3rd Panel 9 from Outer Space

Comedy panel show that tests the contestants' nine levels of intelligence. Are you worth abducting?

Info: thelanesbristol.co.uk / 8.30pm

7th Babies

Opening in cinemas nationwide, documentary 'Babies' follows four different babies from different corners of the world during one year of their life.

Info: imdb.com/title/tt020938

12th AVL@SL Anti-Bullying for Parents, Guardians and Youth Workers

The Anti-Violence Campus set in the virtual world of Second Life hosts this workshop session, which aims to help those who work with young people deal with bullying, all through the medium on your avatars. Free to attend.

Info: antiviolencecampus.org

19th AVC@SL Echo-Play and Empowerment with Dr. Sue Jennings

Dr. Sue Jennings takes workshop participants through the concept, techniques and ideologies behind Echo-Play, set within the virtual world of Second Life, all through the medium of your avatars.

Info: antiviolencecampus.org

22nd – 23rd Radio One's Big Weekend: Bangor.

Radio One takes the tenth biggest free European music festival to North Wales, with top music acts. There are 40,000 tickets available and they're all FREE. Just register online to be in with a chance to win. Info: bbc.co.uk/radio1

23rd Dirtbox

A mixture of sketches, stand up, short films and live animation with some topical, bitingly satirical posters, all down at the Cardiff Arts Institute.

Info: dirtboxcomedy.tumblr.com

25th – 28th THE SECOND UNESCO WORLD-CONFERENCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION

In Seoul/South Korea: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=39674&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

27th Obama's foreign policy is a gift to his enemies

Debate at Intelligence Squared. Speakers for the motion; Fouad Ajami, General Jack Keane and Bill Kristol. Speakers against the motion; Phillip Bobbitt, Bernard-Henri Levy and Simon Schama.

Info: events.intelligencesquared.com

28th Night paddle on the River Dart

Canoe journey by night on the River Dart, Devon.

Info: Wildwise.co.uk/nightpaddle. 01803 868269

28th – 20thStrummercamp

Non-profit event in honour of the late great Joe Strummer, set in Cheshire. Tickets on sale now.

Info: strummercamp.co.uk

29th – 31st Wychwood: Cheltenham racecourse Gloucestershire.

Delivers best acts of the day and up and coming music, mixed with some out of the ordinary acts. World, roots, contemporary and new collaborations.

Info: wychwoodfestival.com

31st World No Tobacco Day

A yearly celebration that informs the public of the dangers of tobacco.

Info: who.int/tobacco

31st Spring Bank Holiday

The last Monday in May, it's officially Spring. Enjoy your day off, if you get one!



Top Ten Pick Me Ups

1. Cooking from scratch

There's nothing quite as satisfying as creating a delicious home-cooked meal by yourself. It tastes much better than a ready meal or a take away, is surprisingly cheap once you do it regularly and it's a great distraction from the blues.

2. Exercising

The more active you are, the more endorphins are released into your body and the better you feel. Fact. If the idea of going to the gym or for a run is a bit boring, just put on your favourite music and dance like no one's looking. Extra pick me up points if people are actually looking.

3. Declutter and recycle

Feng Shui, the art of rearranging your furniture in such a way that it will improve your life ("don't put that foot stool there, you'll trip over it and hurt yourself") suggests that a clear space equals a clear mind. Be ruthless, get rid of the stuff you haven't used for six months and have no particular affection for. Take your recycling down to your nearest recycling centre. Hearing all that glass smash in the bottle bin is always really satisfying.

4. Cup of tea and a biscuit

Feeling low? Treat yourself with a cup of tea and a biccys. Put a dollop of honey in your tea and get some custard creams on the go. A yummy quick fix.

5. Sing!

Even if you can't hit the notes and are completely tone deaf. You're not auditioning for XFactor, you're just cheering yourself up. Volume up, deep breaths and belt it out. "DOON'T STOP! BELIEEVING!..."



6. Looking at old photos

Oh my God! Look at your hair! Aaaaah, how cute were you? Take out the old photo albums, or that box of pictures you keep meaning to sort out but never do, and take a smile-filled trip down memory lane.

7. Read a good book

If the world you're currently sat in is bringing you down, get lost in another one and escape for a while. Everyone's got a book that never fails to enthrall. Better yet, get a mate to recommend their favourite book.



8. Hugs

There's some scientific research somewhere that says the more hugs you have a day, the happier you'll feel. All that human contact perks you up and reminds you that you've got lots of loved ones around.

9. Laughter

Watch a film, call up your mates, go to a comedy club, take a trip down memory lane... whatever makes you belly laugh so hard that you can't breathe and your stomach muscles ache.

10. Friends

In the toughest times of our lives, they come up trumps and show us why they're brilliant people. Your true friends will listen to your problems, make you laugh, bring you tea and biscuits, give you a hug and do anything they can to let you know how important you are.



Readers Letters Page

Letter of the week

Hello Charley,

I'm having some trouble with a friend at the moment. I feel like they always take me for granted and never listen to me. They cancel on our plans, turn up two hours late when they don't cancel, and assume I'll just pick up the pieces if things fall apart. I've known them for a long time and don't want to lose their friendship, because we are close, but at the same time I'm getting fed up with being treated like this. What should I do? From: Fed up of Birmingham.

Hi Fed Up!

I'm sorry to hear that there's a bit of an imbalance in your friendship. You say that you're close, so I will take your word for it that it's a friendship worth saving. If you are good enough friends then they will understand when you talk to them about how they've treated you. Don't go in with guns blazing and feeling angry otherwise they might get defensive and it could turn into an argument. Tell them you really need to talk and that it's really important to you. Explain how it feels when they treat you a certain way and what their behaviour does to your opinion of them. Tell them that your friendship is important, which is why you're bringing this up before things get worse. I can't stress enough how crucial it is to talk about things before they escalate, rather than bottling them up and hoping they'll go away, or worse, cutting the person out of your life altogether. They may not have a clue that what they're doing is hurting you! I hope this helps, let me know. Charley

Dear Charley,

What would you suggest to someone who is dealing with bullying in the workplace? There is a peer of mine in the office who is aiming for the same promotion that I've shown interest in. We used to get along alright. We'd chat about our weekends and that but since I've mentioned I'm going for the same position, they've been treating me differently. They undermine me in meetings, claim my ideas as their own, and deliberately don't pass on important messages. One time they didn't hold the lift for me when I was running late. I know

that sounds silly but it's all built up and I have no idea what to do. I've thought about taking them aside and confronting them but I reckon they'll just deny everything. I don't feel as though I can talk to our manager because I'll look like a wimp who's hardly promotion material Any suggestions? (Name withheld).

Hello and thanks for getting in touch.

I can see you're in a tough situation here. Do you tell on the bully and risk looking unprofessional and cost yourself the promotion, or do you confront the bully and

just make things worse?

I'm tempted to say neither at this point, because it seems as though what you're suffering from is a lack of confidence, which this person has identified and is using to their gain. Perhaps they have realized that because you're not likely to speak up, they can get away with passing off your ideas as their own or undermining you in front of staff. Some workplaces are competitive by nature. Ask yourself if you really do want this promotion. If the answer is a resounding yes, then perhaps it's time to stand up for yourself and the job you want. If you deserve it, then prove it. Speak up and appear to be more confident, even if you're not feeling it. A handy tip for faking confidence is to look to someone's eyes when they talk and use open body language. If looking into someone's eyes seems daunting, look at the piece of skin between their eyebrows and above their nose. It's hard to tell that you're not looking in their eyes. For more information on confidence, go see Issue 1 of Mpower via Yudu.com, or for more on workplace bullying, check out direct.gov.uk's pages on bullying in the workplace. Good luck with the job!

Hi Charley,

What should I do about all the people telling lies about me on Facebook? People at school are sending each other private messages about me, saying I've been talking about people behind their back and that I'm a slag. I know it's a fact that they've been doing it as well because my best friend gave me her password so I hacked into her account and saw what they emailed her about me. What should I say? Betrayed, London.

Hi there,

Finding out that people are talking about you behind your back is a horrible feeling, but I'm not sure if you have gone about dealing with it in a very good way. Firstly, did you ask your friend permission to go into her account and read the emails that weren't meant for your eyes? Even if they are saying mean things about you, it's not right to go behind your best friend's back and use her trust that way. You also need to ask yourself if this is bullying? Has it been going on for a long time or is this quite a recent occurrence? Has anything gone on between you and the other people in school that has caused them to say these things? If you are still struggling with what to do, I suggest you speak to a teacher or a friend that you can trust about it. They will know the situation much better than I do and can help you. Finally, can I suggest that you tell your best friend that she should change her password? Even if you are the closest of the close, knowing each others' passwords can lead to difficult situations. Best be safe and change them without telling each other what they are.

I hope some of this helps, Charley.

Learning to love your looks



They say that nobody's perfect. Is that really true? Aren't we all perfect in our own way? There are no two identical people in the world but we all seem to share a common

need to want to fit in; to want to be the same as everyone else in one way or another.

"Her hips are perfect." "I want his muscles." "Her face is flawless." "She has such a thin waist." "I want her boobs."

No matter what we look like, there's always going to be someone who is that much closer to perfection than us. But what is perfection? Perfection means fitting in, being popular, getting the girl or guy of our dreams, being constantly adored by everyone. Doesn't it?

Unfortunately, this is the message that is being sent across to adults, teenagers, and children alike every day. Only, not many people seem to realise that this idea of perfection only exists in fairytales or worlds where heavy airbrushing, clever make-up and soft lenses reign supreme. Where has this idea of perfection come from and why are we allowing it to warp the minds of young people so much that extreme outcomes like eating disorders are now being found amongst children as young as seven and eight years old?

It's unfortunate that we have to put the majority of the blame on the media but the facts can't be denied. The rise in celebrity culture means that we now turn to our beloved movie stars and singers to gossip about. As the gossip grows, so

do the amount of candid photographs taken by the paparazzi, and the celebrities began to notice that without their makeup artist, they look 'normal.' Normality does not a superstar make so the celebs soon realise that the weight has to come off and the botox be applied by the week.

The fight to become thinnest is the main issue that's taken over the world. The more protruding bones onscreen, the better. Every week, more magazines are printed with images of slender celebrities sprawled across the covers, sharing their secrets on how they unnecessarily lost "two stone in three weeks!" Is it any wonder that insecurities begin to fall upon so many young people when this sort of message is coming straight at them from these magazines every week? There are no 'plus-size' role models for young people to look up to



these days. Back in the '50s, young girls wanted to be like Marilyn Monroe or Sophia Loren: women who'd be considered too 'rotund' for today's standards. And with the added technology of airbrushing - a technique that has the tools to alter a person so much, they become unrecognisable - now being

used in every single media source, teenagers are also looking at an image that is actually physically impossible to attain. Emma Thayer, the head of drama at Broadoak Mathematics and Computing College in Weston-Super-Mare, has witnessed firsthand the affect this world of celebrity has had on the teens she teaches: "The media have so much sway with teenagers and what they consume, how they behave and how they view themselves and others. Since I've been teaching, I have noticed comments from girls and boys alike to be far more concentrated on the 'perfect' aesthetic and the fear of weight gain."

So what can we do about this? It is teenagers that are the first to get affected by this. Their doubts and insecurities are doubled by the magazines they read. They're brainwashed into thinking there's a certain way they have to look and,

with these doubts, come the eventual spiral into eating disorders and bullying - two devastating problems that have grown rapidly in the last ten years. Luckily, these affects haven't gone unnoticed.

Last year, nearly 50,000 people joined together and petitioned for the government to take more action against the escalating problems. They suggested that an extra hour of PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) a year dedicated to positive body image could help begin to tackle the confidence issues many young people face, and reinforce a positive attitude on how they view themselves.

Some of the lesson plan material being suggested is making teens fully

aware of the techniques magazines and fashion houses employ to make celebs appear perfect; inventing challenges to help the teens not to obsess so much over their outside appearance; and having talks held by outside professionals and experts.

To everyone's delight, rather than ignore the petition, the government were quick to count themselves on board, and announced they were currently legislating to ensure that PSHE lessons would become compulsory from September 2011, and that they'd be taking a careful look on what young people learn on the subject of body image. They ensure that these PSHE classes would include "a personal well being study programme that deals with body image, and ... the role of the media in these issues."

How can we not look to this as a positive result in trying to raise awareness for the issues hundreds of people face?

"If teens understand the way the magazines work in swaying their opinions and making them feel bad then they can develop a healthy outlook on themselves and take the harmful images of airbrushed celebrities with a pinch of salt," says Emma. "Training them to view themselves more positively at this early age lays the ground work for their mental growth and self-esteem as an adult."

It can't be denied that the government's enthusiasm to help tackle issues of body image is an exciting one. You can almost hear the sighs of relief from people who've been fighting to take a stand against this unhealthy obsession. But the question remains: Are we too late?

Fifteen-year-old Rhiannon James from

Bridgend, South Wales, has endured bullying in the past and, in spite of having a close circle of friends, says that at times she finds being around so many of her peers at school a painful experience. "Everyone knows that models are airbrushed in pictures but you're still left feeling horrible at school because all the popular girls look like that. The boys are more likely to ask them out and they're the girls everyone wants to be like. You can't help but think that life would be much easier if you were a bit thinner." Currently, the UK's national average dress size for woman is a size 16. Though collectively Rhiannon and her friends are between sizes ten and 12, all of them believe they would be happier if they lost more weight.

Emma Thayer comments, "I think the affect [of more lessons dedicated to positive body image] would need to be assessed in the short and long term. It would be very difficult to challenge the mighty force of the teenage magazines with a handful of PSHE lessons but a teacher who has and displays the positive body image to their students will hopefully become a good role model for them. The government's decision is a good one, providing that the funding is available for teachers to be trained to deliver this aspect of PSHE effectively. Teachers are often thrown into a situation where they are delivering topics

which need to be handled with care."

Emma's right. While the government's promise to carry on trying to tackle the UK's issues with body image brings a new wave of hope to a generation lost, it is naive to expect immediate results without real dedication to attacking the root of the problem.

Teenagers need to be taken through every detail of what a magazine goes through to obtain that perfect shot. They then need to be shown the meaning of real beauty: the beauty that shines through each person and makes them unique in their own way. For every girl unhappy with her curves, there's one who wishes she had some. If these PSHE lessons can bring about a new awareness on how manipulative the media can be and how brainwashed we've become, devoting ourselves to their every word, there's hope that teenagers will gain a better understanding of how beautiful everyone is in their own way, and pass that message on to their own children.

The media's idea of perfection doesn't really exist. In reality, everyone's perfect at being themselves. We're all different and that gives us something to be proud of and show off. Let's hope that this is the new lesson the UK is about to learn.

Words: Ceri Padley

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Empowerment through the experience of being bullied

I have been told that there was a time when bullying was considered a positive experience in life - it helped build our strength and our characters. We now have a massive turnaround in public opinion, so much so that in 2010, it has been suggested that just being 'offended' by someone can be considered tantamount to bullying.

As a parent, experts tell me that I should not wrap my children up in cotton wool ... they need to be able to make mistakes, have accidents, and learn to deal with the difficult situations that life will inevitably bring their way. Some of these difficult situations in life will be bullying or potentially of a bullying nature.

So does that mean that those who considered experiencing bullying to be a good thing, were right? Does that suggest bullying should be overlooked, or even encouraged in schools to help build the characters of our future generations? No! Of course not. I can see no way or no reason why we should ever consider that path again. Why? Because bullying is hurtful ... some people experience bullying so badly that they feel the need to take their own lives.

In 2006 researchers told us that over half of British schoolchildren had been bullied. In 2007 that number appeared to go down when a national children's charity stated that only a third of children in the UK had experienced bullying. This year, in 2010, I read that another organisation was suggesting that over three quarters of British children have been bullied. Statistics eh! How can we ever believe them?

To date, there have been no national, longitudinal, systematic, validated studies in the UK on the prevalence of bullying in schools or of bullying in the workplace. Why not? The truth is that there is no truth in bullying. Indeed, what is bullying?

In a recent paper, I presented 25 different definitions of bullying that I found from prominent researchers all over the world. These definitions ranged from 'Repeated

aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others'. Through to 'The incivilities that disturb school life'.

It is not only researchers that cannot agree on a definition of bullying. As a community we have many different ideas about bullying, on what bullying is, and how it fully affects our lives.

There are also many different solutions to bullying - many different ways suggested at how we are best able to deal with it. Hence why we need a wide range of strategies available for us to use. So maybe there is a truth in bullying: we all experience bullying in different ways ... and therefore how we deal with bullying is probably going to be a bit different for all of us too. What is bullying for one may not be bullying for another! If we experience bullying in different ways, it follows that how we deal with bullying is going to be different for all of us too. Whatever bullying means to us we have a responsibility to take bullying seriously and we have a responsibility to deal with it rigorously.

That can be an easy thing to say but if we can't define it, then how can we possibly deal with it? Just more questions.

There can be a fine line between banter and bullying, or playful rough and tumble and bullying, or even a robust management style and bullying. Where is this line? Some people suggest that Sir Alex Ferguson is the best football manager ever to come out of Britain. Other people say he is just a big bully! We cannot say that everything is bullying! If we are not careful we could blur the meaning so much or expand the meaning so large



that all meaning will be completely lost.

Most of my work comes from a creative source. I use the techniques of theatre, film, games, ritual, improvisation, role-play and drama to explore:

- anti-bullying strategies,
- definitions of bullying, and
- how we can best support those that have been bullied.

I call this social theatre, and I feel that the creative techniques of social theatre promotes sharing and co-constructive learning.



I see my job as creating a safe space where groups feel able to share their ideas with each other without fear of retribution or ridicule. I do this within the powerful medium of social theatre.

One of the bedrocks of social theatre is distancing. By distancing ourselves from individual stories of bullying and putting them in to 'group stories', we actually, through this distance, allow people to get closer to the problem they want answers to. The paradox of social theatre is that distancing actually brings us closer!

Social theatre allows people to experience real feelings and find solutions to real problems in a safe and secure environment. Not only do participants in social theatre sessions expand knowledge and help educate each other ... they do it while having a lot of fun!

One social theatre technique that most people have heard of is 'role-play'.

Role-play is about taking on a role that is not your own. You could for example take on the role of someone else in real life or take on the role of a fictitious character.

If someone says hurtful things to you in a role-play session, the character you are playing may well get upset. What we need to remember is that although you may be experiencing the feelings of your character, the hurt, the pain ... you should not take what is said personally - after all, it is not you - it is your character.

This is another example of distancing. Role-play has many uses. It can help people understand other people's intentions, thoughts or feelings ... it can help people appreciate empathy - how do people feel when they are bullied ... how do people feel when they bully others?

Role-play can help people identify and try out various strategies in a safe space - this way people can try out ways of dealing with bullying ... what might work for them and what will not. Role-play is also a useful

tool in demonstrating anti-bullying support mechanisms such as those found in schools peer support services.

Role-play is about playing with roles. Taking roles to their limits and helping us see and experience things from many different points of view. Role-play allows for alternative points of view, it allows for the fact that we experience bullying in different ways. It even allows for alternative interpretations of bullying.

So getting back to my earlier question about the benefits of experiencing bullying in helping to build our characters.

One of the amazing possibilities of role-play is that it will actually allow us to experience bullying ... in a safe way ... and thus helps us to find solutions. It enables us to learn techniques and to find ways of dealing with bullying.

Social theatre practitioners draw on many techniques, including those from the theatre of the oppressed through to traditional theatre. We also make use of rituals, customs and celebrations, games, playful activities, dance, song, music and even film.

Role play, along with a whole host other social theatre techniques can help build people's confidence, while also helping them to share solutions, ideas, techniques, definitions, and skills. Social theatre provides a fresh and dynamic approach for us to use in schools, and with other groups of young people and adults.

Using social theatre in schools, can help teachers become empowered through the use of a flexible and powerful set of teaching tools, and students become empowered through inclusion and a whole series of techniques that allow for a dialogue between all the parties concerned. Social theatre really can give us a theatre of empowerment.

Words by Andy Hickson.

If you have problems with bullying did you know that you can call Childline for free on 08001111?

Mini play for teachers to use in class.

The following play is a short script suitable for Year Five and up. Be aware of one instance of bad language and one illusion to a bad word (replace as you see fit!).

Note: Anything in brackets are stage directions. Don't say them out loud.

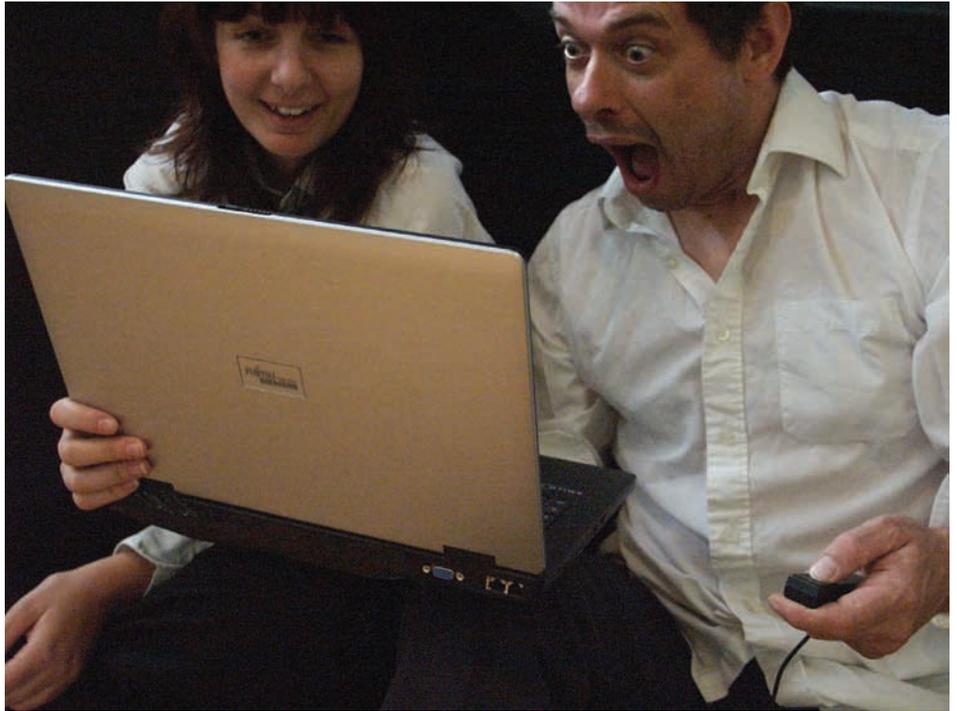
Characters:

Parent and a their teenage child.

"Cyberbullying"

Written by Rebecca Brynolf.

Based on the play "Cyber Scream" by Andy Hickson and Rebecca Brynolf



A teenager is on their laptop. Their parent starts reading over their shoulder.

Parent What's LOL again?
Teen It means laugh out loud.
Parent But you didn't laugh out loud.
Teen SO?! I found it funny!
Parent (Pointing at the screen) What's that?
Teen A smiley.
Parent I don't get it.
Teen You wouldn't. (keeps typing)
Parent What does wutuf mean? (meaning WTF)
Teen You don't want to know.
Parent What's OMG?
Teen Oh my God!
Parent Sorry I'm just asking...
Teen No that's what it means, OMG stands for Oh my God.
Parent I don't know how you do it. It's like learning a new language.
Teen Can I have a bit of privacy now?!
Parent: Alright! Sorry. (exits)

(Teen's phone beeps with a text message).

Teen "Check out this website. You might recognise someone." That's weird... (goes to the website address).

Teen What?... That's me!? Who took those pictures?! ... "This person is a tramp. Call them on 07..." That's my number!!

(Teen's phone beeps again).

Teen Hey mate, just saw the website. I think it was sent to everyone in our year. I know who did it. It was Sam. You OK?

Teen Sam? I can't believe this. We're supposed to be friends... really good friends. I don't know what I've done to deserve this... I've been really nice to her while she's been off ill... but fine, that's how she wants it.

Teen Hmm... I think Sam needs a facebook page dedicated to her. This website is all about Sam Glankin. She's been off sick from school for the past few days, but the real reason she's taking time off is because she's an alcoholic who's about to have a baby. She's been hiding it really well for months but the bump was getting harder to cover up. She doesn't know who the father is because she cheats on people and can't be trusted, she's a complete back stabber. She's slept with so many people that even Russell Brand said, "What a slag. Right, Google images..." "ugly tramp". Haha! Yea, these are perfect pictures for Sam. Maybe I'll photo shop them a bit, put Sam's face on there. Sorted. I think the link to this site could be sent to everyone in school, but from a new made up email address so that NO ONE knows it was me. It's amazing what you can do with technology these days.

The End.



AVC@SL
Anti Violence Campus @ Second Life

The Anti Violence Centre in Second Life invites you to visit our virtual island and help us explore issues of violence, bullying, xenophobia and racism. Participate in: Meetings, Research, Exhibitions, Training, Workshops, Films and Shows. Welcome.

Now showing: Exhibition of paintings and photographs by artists from around the world representing peace and empowerment. Includes the special exhibition of paintings by German children: "Wer, wenn nicht wir".

Where: The AVC Creative Arts centre (The Arc) on the AVC@SL

More information here: www.antiviolencecampus.org

Each issue we'll aim to provide you with two new lesson plans that you can keep for your own use. We accept lesson plans from teachers and youth workers too, so if you have some great ideas, please get in touch at questions@mpower.eu and there's a good chance we'll feature your lesson plan!

Something For The Teachers

Lesson Plan 1: Cyberbullying

Start off with a mind map to establish what 'Cyberbullying' means to the class. Sometimes younger pupils have trouble separating this from physical and verbal bullying, so create three columns on a flipchart/white board, and without labeling them, decide which represents physical, verbal, and cyber bullying. Place each suggestion in the corresponding column. When you have plenty of suggestions, ask the class which column represents which sort of bullying. Then tell them that you will focus on cyber bullying.

Play a game of chinese whispers to show how easily things can change and be manipulated once they're out of your control. Write down a sentence on a piece of paper and put it in an envelope. Whisper the phrase to someone and let it spread around the class (you can split that class into smaller groups to do this if you like). Have the last person call out whisper (or whispers) and reveal what the original sentence was. Ask the class why they believe they played that game, and what it has to do with cyber bullying. When it comes to technology like mobile phones and the internet, once you have sent something out into the ether, it's impossible to remove it from cyberspace or control how it is used. Words can get twisted and images can be altered or used without your permission.

Have the class stand on one side of the space and allocate three areas in the room to the following statements; Agree, Disagree, Not sure. After you make one of the statements below about cyberbullying, the class must stand in the area that they feel corresponds with what you have just said.

Ask some people why they've chosen to stand in certain spots.

- o People who cyberbully are bullies in the real world.
- o People who cyberbully are victims in the real world.
- o Girls are more likely to be cyberbullies.
- o There's no way to be safe from cyberbullying.
- o Parents and teachers don't know as much about computers and mobiles as I do.

End with a mindmap of the different strategies to deal with cyberbullying. Take suggestions from the class, don't treat any as silly or invalid, even if they may seem it on the surface. Treat everything as an opener to a discussion. If someone says, "send them a virus" or "smash up their computer/phone", take it as an opportunity to mention the need to consider the consequences when dealing with cyberbullying.

Here are some suggestions to get going;

- Don't talk to anyone you don't know. They might say they're a 15-year-old student but they might be a 45-year-old weirdo.
- Save texts and emails as evidence of cyberbullying.
- Press the Prnt Scrn button on a PC or 'cmd, shift, 3' on a Mac to take a screen grab, which can help you save any evidence of cyberbullying.
- Don't put personal information on the Internet such as your real name, age, address, phone number, school, school timetable, job, etc.
- Don't click on links from people you don't know, it could lead you to a virus that completely messes up your hard drive.
- Tell people if you think you're being cyber bullied, they might be able to give you some advice.
- Warn other people if you know of a cyber bully so that they can protect themselves.
- Promote Internet safety! The more you talk about it, the more likely it is that others will talk about it.
- Talk about how your whole family can be safe on the Internet and show your parents that you can be trusted on the computer.
- Listen to your parents; you might know more about how to use the Internet but they know a lot about keeping you safe from harm.
- Don't give any clues about yourself in your online name or avatar, like 'Rachel1995' or "Bristol_Danny".
- Ask the permission of other people in the photos and videos you're thinking of posting online. If you have posted pictures and videos without their permission and they want you to take them down you should respect their wishes and do as they ask.
- Not convinced that cyber bullying is that serious? Do a search for 'victims of cyber bullying' and think about what this father victim of cyber bullying said after his son committed suicide; "...don't destroy the lives of your mother, father, brothers or sisters. Mostly think of the people who will be putting flowers and cards on the gates of your school and trying to make sense of a pointless waste of a life."
- Change your email address if your account is hacked or a cyberbully keeps sending nasty emails to you.
- Change your mobile number if a cyberbully keeps sending you nasty texts and picture messages.
- If you're not sure about a certain website or someone who wants to add you as a friend, ask your parents first.

Something For The Teachers

Each issue we'll aim to provide you with two new lesson plans that you can keep for your own use. We accept lesson plans from teachers and youth workers too, so if you have some great ideas, please get in touch at questions@mpower.eu and there's a good chance we'll feature your lesson plan!

- If you're unsure of which wireless network is safe, ask your parents first.
- Privacy! Privacy! Privacy! Closely monitor your privacy settings for your social networking profile and blog. If you only want your friends to see your pictures or information then keep on top of those privacy settings and double check them every now and then.
- Keep the computer in a room where everyone in the house can see it at any time, this will prevent temptation to talk to strangers, send nasty emails, and promote Internet safety.
- Change your password regularly and make sure it contains both capital and lower case letters and both numbers and letters. This makes it VERY hard to hack into your accounts. You can tell if you have a good password when you change it as the website will have a 'password meter'. This tells you if your password is weak, medium or strong. Try something like 'Example10' or '3x4mp1E10', as an even stronger example of a password.
- Don't respond to flaming or trolling if someone does it to you. Just save the evidence and keep it in a folder. If it happens more than once you can report it to the website's moderators and you will have proof.
- A bystander can easily become a perpetrator. If you've been sent something nasty about someone else, don't pass it on. Report it.
- Don't send photos of yourself in compromising positions or without any clothes on.
- Review your schools anti-bullying policy. Does it deal with cyberbullying? If so, how? And if not, why not?!
- Find out how the IT office in your school makes sure that you stay safe when you're online in school.
- Most importantly, treat your password like your toothbrush; don't share it with anyone.

Lesson plan 2: Global Economics

For this lesson you'll need lots of coloured paper, scissors, pens and pencils, rulers, rubbers, sharpeners and possible protractors. You, the teacher, will need a flipchart/white-board and coloured pens. You will also need 'money', which you'll be calling global dollars. Make sure you have plenty of it (you can just write on rectangular pieces of paper) that comes in the amounts of; 1GD (global dollar), 50GC, 100GD, 1,000GD and 1millionGD.

Set up your classroom/space so that there are five separate

groups and give each group a country; United Kingdom, USA, Russia, China, Zimbabwe, etc.

On each table will be all of the materials needed to make different coloured shapes, however, each group will begin with a different amount of materials. Some will have more than others, some will have less than others.

The teacher will draw a shape on the board, state which colour it needs to be and how much it is worth, e.g. Blue Circles = 1,000 Global Dollars each. Each group will then need to make them as quickly as they can before selling them to the Global Bank (you, the teacher) in order to make money. However, the market is always changing, so just as a group has finished making 10 blue circles, by the time they get to the bank, their value could have diminished to 1GD each because there are now too many in circulation.

Groups can trade/buy more materials from you if they need to. They can also trade/buy from other groups. Trades can be rejected if the products do not meet the descriptions.

You must always clearly state the value of a shape and which colour it needs to be on the board. You can be as specific as you like (Pink Isosceles Triangles) depending on the ability of the groups.

When you feel they have gone as far as they can with this activity (traded, bidding wars, haggled, negotiated, created sub-companies within their groups, etc) bring the exercise to an end and ask who made the most/least money.

Discuss with the class why they believe one country did particularly well and why another country may not have done particularly well. Was it down to the amount of materials at the start? Did the teams with protractors and rulers make better products than those who didn't and therefore make more money? Was one country particularly good at trading? Was one country really organised? What has this exercise taught the class about global economics?

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I was a teenager when I had my first seizure.

I remember it well. Or rather, I remember NOT remembering it, as I was too busy convulsing.

I got up really early to catch the bus to the Download festival. I expected to nap on the bus and awaken to the sounds of Rawk but instead I awoke in hospital with wires attached to me. Instead of longhaired moshers with piercings, there was my dad, with grapes.

He explained what had happened. I had walked into the kitchen, all colour had drained from my face as I collapsed onto my knees, slumping forward like a character from a film, shot in the back by the villain he had took for dead.

After resting awhile I was sent home and told to come back in a week's time for tests.

When I returned, they glued wires to my head and flashed lights at me for what seemed like an eternity. I remember thinking 'what an absurd thing to do to a suspected epileptic'.

After sifting through the information

garnered from my brain, they concluded that I had Grand Mal epilepsy. Nowadays it's called Tonic Clonic, but I've always preferred Grand Mal. Big Bad Epilepsy.

I now had a label: "Dan Mitchell-epileptic"

I was put on medication with limited success. Sure, I didn't have any more fits for a while but as they put it, "that could just be coincidence". They admitted that they weren't entirely sure what caused my epilepsy, as each case was different, so they kept testing drugs on me until they found one that didn't make me too nauseous or sleepy.

I was worried by the fact that they couldn't just cure it and I started to crawl into my shell a bit. I didn't like

the idea of not being in control of my own life. So I wore my label, using it as an excuse for not doing things, for being lazy and, at times, just plain weird.

I got depressed, blaming all my problems on my 'condition', conveniently removing all responsibility for my own shortcomings.

It was getting to the point where all my friends were learning to drive. I wanted to do the same but thanks to the epilepsy, I couldn't.

This was the final straw. I had tried it the doctors' way, taken their drugs, submitted to their tests and still I had fits. Still I was not in control of my own life, so I decided to take control.

Only not in a good way.

I started staying out late, partying too hard, not taking my medication and totally disregarding everything my doctors had said. I was like a man raging against a storm in the hope that by sheer willpower alone I could quell it. But epilepsy, much like a storm, doesn't care, so I kept having fits.

Eventually I realised that it was the wrong approach. I would have to take responsibility for my own actions and stop using epilepsy as a crutch. I stopped

hoping for a magical cure and started living with it. I began to look for a pattern in my seizures, working out what I could do to reduce their frequency. It didn't take long to discover that every fit I'd had was after being woken from a deep sleep, or from not sleeping properly for a several days. My brain, much like the rest of my teenage self, wanted to stay in bed.

So I started pacing myself. I knew that if I was getting up early one day then I shouldn't stay out late the night before. It was simple logic. I could still have a good time, still do everything I wanted but I just had to be sensible about it. It worked.

The number of fits I was having fell dramatically. I still had them, but they were more predictable now and I could make sure I was somewhere safe. I was no longer Dan Mitchell-epileptic but Dan Mitchell, who happens to have epilepsy.

It was then that I noticed how other people reacted to my condition. My dad admitted that when I had my first seizure, he'd never been so scared. People close to me didn't know how to react and strangers, upon hearing about it, had fear in their eyes.

So I decided to do something about it. I started doing stand up comedy and incorporated epilepsy into my act. I created a new label for myself. I had epilepsy and I had specs so I became 'a specileptic'.

By making people laugh at some of epilepsy's absurdities, I removed the fear of it. People came up to me after the shows and asked me questions about it, questions that they were too afraid to ask before.

Epileptics have come up to me and told me they loved my act and that it made them proud to be epileptic. I have also had complaints from people who believe you shouldn't talk flippantly about such a serious topic. I have told them that if they wish to hide behind a label, that's up to them, but don't expect me to.

I may be epileptic but I'm also a hell of a lot more.

Dan Mitchell is Welsh stand up comedian, cartoonist and culinary wonder. He runs a number of comedy nights in Cardiff.

For more info see panel9fromouterspace.com.

Given the depressing number of bullies to be

found in the world, and the wide variety of situations in which bullying can occur, it would be extremely difficult to try and briefly explain why bullies do what they do in one short article.

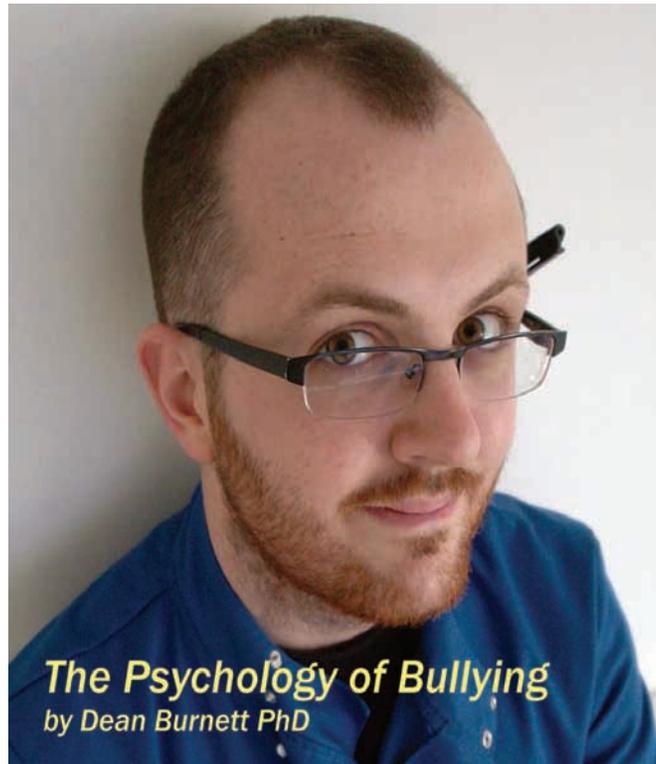
Still, I'm going to have a go.

When you consider the action of bullying, it's useful to consider the background to human development. It's a cliché that 'people are people' (as well as a logically obvious and pointless statement), but why, in a psychological sense, are people people?

Humans evolved and developed in groups, from pack, to social group, to tribe, to community, to society, to civilisation; people have always stuck together in increasingly large groups. But, in order to get anything done in a useful amount of time, our groups have always had a pecking order, or hierarchy. And on many levels, we still respond to this, and we judge our sense of self worth by our position in the group.

In the animal kingdom, an individual's place in the group is almost always determined by their physical characteristics and abilities; males who are the best at beating up other males are in charge, the females who are the most sexually appealing get to mate with the male in charge, so are in charge by proxy. It's not really bullying in the animal kingdom, it's normal. Our closest cousins, the chimpanzees, are known to be one of the most aggressive and violent of all animals, and can barely mingle in groups of more than five without resorting to extremely vicious scraps to determine who's boss.

Humans are not so different. To a certain extent, we all judge our worth by our position in our social groups and to what extent we dominate or are dominated by others. It is important to remember, though, that we are not like animals. Humans are the most social creatures on Earth, some of our cities are more densely populated than the most numerous insect colonies. Our intelligence and capabilities allow us to move beyond simple physical force as a controlling



factor, but also unfortunately allows for different types of bullying. We can add mental, verbal and now online bullying to our delightful list of abilities that other creatures don't share. But the end result is the same.

With this in mind, it's easy to view bullies as more simple creatures. They measure their position in the group; be it school, workplace or anything else, and find it lacking. They see someone smarter, prettier, more popular or just better in some noticeable way, and they don't like it. They feel envy, or resentment, or both. But it's very difficult to become smarter/prettier/better just by wanting it, so a bully has to show their 'superiority' by other means; physical or mental attacks, aimed at those who won't respond. As long as they can prove themselves better in some ways, even if those ways are meaningless, they reduce their insecurities. We all know that being a bully is a bad thing; there's no such thing as a pro-bullying movement, but all things being equal, a bully only views things from their own perspective; they feel better, so it's justified. They know other people don't approve, that's why nobody will ever admit to being a bully if accused; they know they're wrong, and bullies, by and large, aren't respected.

Of course, there's always the possibility that a bully doesn't think they're inferior but thinks they're better than others, and

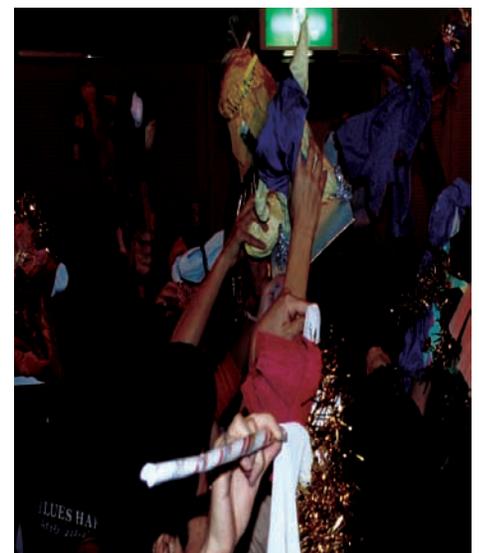
have to demonstrate this by bullying. A big guy knows he's big, a pretty girl knows she's pretty, but they can really emphasise these properties by using them against someone who cannot claim the same. It's also sad how people who do this always seem to obtain 'cronies' quite easily. This is itself suggestive of a survival trait; what better way to ensure your survival when you're a 'weaker' specimen than by latching onto the dominant one.

Although probably of little help to their victims, it's important to remember that bullies are resorting to behaviour that we, by and large, have grown beyond as a species. You could argue that bullying is 'natural', but then so is walking around naked and eating raw meat with our bare hands. These things aren't right in the modern world, we know better

now. So whatever the reason or impetus that makes someone think it acceptable to bully someone else, they are, all things considered, on the same level as a dog that bites people; it has its own reasons for doing so, and from the dog's perspective they may be valid and even make it feel better. But its behaviour is still intolerable. Bullies are just like this, the only exception is that the biting dog has an excuse; it's a dog, and therefore can't know any better. Bullies can, and should.

Dean Burnett PhD, is a Welsh stand up comedian and neuroscientist. For more, see his blog at:

sciencedigestive.blogspot.com



Not your typical family roadtrip

Rebecca Brynolf talks to an intrepid family of explorers at the heart of an ambitious expedition; three and a half months to get to Mongolia and back, all the while delivering a message of peace.

In your typical quiet West Country village, green with trees and plant life, birds singing from the roof of the church, children playing on the swings in the park, squirrels running to and fro, neighbours wav -
vvvvvvVVVVVVRRRRMMMMmmmmm

Roaring from the driveway of the Hickson House is something you wouldn't normally expect to see in a Somerset village. It's an enormous, multicoloured truck. To be more specific, it's an ex-army communications vehicle. A 1969 forward control series two Land Rover, a rare machine and probably the only one of its kind in such good condition in the country. It turned heads when Andy Hickson first drove it through the country lanes, but now it's drawing even more attention. "We got two graffiti artists to come down from Birmingham and do some funky artwork", smiles Andy. "Basically, with it being an army truck, and what we're doing being all about peace, there's a big contrast. I wanted it to be made to look as unlike an army vehicle as possible. You should see some of the looks we get driving down the street."

And it does get some looks. Covered in smile-inducing graffiti of cartoon children from all corners of the world, holding hands right the way around the vehicle against the backdrop of green grass and blue skies, it does stand out a bit. As I take a ride in the passenger seat I can't help but notice school children waving and pointing, white van man drivers beeping, and when I disembark (not an easy task, considering the size of the wheels), a smoker gestures towards it and says, "That is awesome."

So what exactly is all this in aid of? Well, over a fifteen-week period this summer, Andy, his wife, Cath, and their two daughters will be calling this colourful truck their home as they set out on an



expedition across Europe and Asia, all in the name of peace. Andy explains, "Drive for Peace is not just about driving. It is about striving for peace. It's about finding ways that we as a community, and I'm talking 'the world community', can cross boundaries, to try and find ways where people can share ideas with each other and can work with each other."

"I really believe that if everyone in the world had the possibilities of travel within their own and other countries, communications and understanding between cultures could be helped. Drive for Peace is about people who have that energy, taking action. It's not just sitting around and thinking or just talking about it. It's action, it's doing stuff."

The family are intending to be very active during the expedition, linking up with schools, youth groups and communities, and working with them to promote peace through creative workshops.

"The workshops are creatively based using theatrical skills and techniques. We encourage groups to work creatively together to help solve a variety of problems. What I'd like to do is create an ethos of peace with the people we meet and my family. We'll also be doing some voluntary work in Mongolia, helping out where we can." Mongolia, one of the coldest countries in the world, is currently suffering one of their worst natural disasters; a 'Zud', where over 2 million animals have frozen to death. "This makes getting to Mongolia and helping where we can all the more important now", says Andy.

That is, of course, if the truck is finished in time. "I can see myself on the journey working on it" laughs Andy. The truck has been what he's described as 'something to love and something to cry over'. Such an old vehicle is a dream for Landrover enthusiasts but a nightmare for anyone tasked with fixing it up. Is it likely to cause you problems on the trip? "I hope not! I hope it's gonna behave itself."

The trip itself has been in preparation for over three years and in that time Andy and Cath have done a great deal of research into the potential perils of overland travel. It seems that one they may have to face is that of the discerning 'foreign traveller tax', issued by border officials who can spot vulnerability and take advantage. Luckily, the truck is so distinctive and unusual that no one, no matter how stern or officious, can fail to smile when it comes roaring towards them.

"Somebody from Land Rover Magazine came up to feature the vehicle", says Andy, "His two comments were; 'Nobody's gonna steal that truck!' and 'You're gonna make everybody smile! That's what you want in some of the countries where crossing borders could be potentially difficult, but already we're gonna have them on side. They're gonna see the truck and they are gonna smile! If they're smiling and they're a bit happy then they're much more likely to deal with us in a reasonable way."

It sounds like an ambitious and potentially gruelling trip already, what with the distance, and then the truck still in the

process of being worked on ("It's hard to find friendly mechanics who know what to do with it!"). There is, however, another element to the expedition that could cause problems; Mir and Kaia, Andy and Cath's daughters, are quite young. Young kids, plus a longer than average journey in the close quarters that are the truck, for most parents seems like a nightmare, but Andy reassures that with a little forward thinking, this won't be a problem.

"The girls are six and ten and most long journeys with them so far has been fraught with difficulties; they get bored easily, they want to go to the rest room, stretch their legs, they want to know when we'll get to a place so we can do something. So, I do envisage difficulties but we're going to make it as child friendly as we can. We've spoken to other families who have made similar trips with young children, and from that we've made the decision not to drive for hundreds and hundreds of miles each day, and although we've got a route and destination, we don't have a strict day-to-day itinerary. We've got the freedom to stop if we see something we like or if we want to stay somewhere for two or three days."

Cath is looking forward to the rare opportunity that's been afforded her and her husband. "It's exciting to spend so much more time with them. When they're at school you just get part of your time with them, just the evenings and weekends, so I feel in a way that we're so privileged to spend so much time with our kids... I may well change my mind about it on the way along!"

With the girls as young as they are, and time being taken off school on either side of the summer holidays, there was some worry about how the schools would react, but both girls' schools are

on board with the idea. Sounding a little surprised but mostly relieved, Cath says, "The schools have been fine! They've been really supportive so that's a great relief to us. And obviously we're going to be teaching them while we're away. Both schools have mentioned the educational benefits to the trip and I think they feel we're doing a good thing. I think it'll be great."

The educational benefits for young children on such a trip are outlined on the Drive For Peace website, which include languages, basic mechanics and navigation. The website is just one of the ways in which interested followers can keep up to date with the trip and get more information should they be contemplating a similar expedition themselves. Alongside the website, there'll be their daily blog which will be updated by everyone on board the truck, there are the social networks to check in on such as Twitter and Facebook, and then there's the possibility of a satellite tracker, which they could use to link up with Google Maps and offer people the chance to see exactly where they are.

So now with just three months to go until they set off into the sunset, how does everybody feel? The word, it seems, is excited!

"I am excited", says Cath, smiling as she glances up at the world map on the living room wall, on which a trail of footprint stickers mark the route from England to Mongolia. "I'm definitely more excited now that it's nearer and it feels more real. I think when we were just talking about it, it was just a plan, but now that we're actually, physically, ordering visas and getting injections and talking to schools about work for the children, it feels much more exciting."

Andy, an experienced traveller, is looking forward to seeing the trip through his daughters' eyes. "I'm anticipating the looks on my daughters' faces when they come across certain things when we're actually on the road. I'm really looking forward to seeing how they're going to react to the whole experience and what they get out of it."

And what about the littlest Hickson?

"I'm really looking forward to meeting new people" says Kaia (aged 10), "and my Dad said he would let me drive the truck in Mongolia" she adds smiling. The things that Kaia is not looking forward to are the injections (she's just had a painful one), and saying goodbye to her friends.

"Well, there is some reasons that I don't want to go" offers six year old Mir, eyes to the heavens and with a thoughtful expression on her face, "and that's cause I'll miss all my friends and I'll miss the house. I'm excited though because we're gonna meet new people and we're gonna live in the camper van and it's gonna be really fun."

Mir pauses for a moment to consider the most exciting aspect for any school pupil. "And, also cause I don't have to go to school! I get a big big big big break from school."

"We're gonna teach you some lessons on the way though", offers Andy.

Mir ponders this notion for a couple of seconds.

"Well... I'll be glad there's no head teacher."

Website: driveforpeace.com

Blog: actiontrip100.blogspot.com

Twitter: @actionwork

Truck artwork: graffiti4hire.co.uk



Dealing with 'Transitional Blues'

Waiting for The Next Big Thing™ isn't easy. Whether it be a job, a relationship or any significant milestone that doesn't seem to be on the horizon just yet, going through periods of transition can feel demoralising and never ending.

I first felt this way after achieving the triple whammy of no longer being a student, going through a painful break up and moving back in with my Mum. Over the following year I watched my friends start amazing new careers, get married, have kids, buy houses and generally glide through life. In the meantime I remained single and on my Mother's living room floor. I was keeping myself busy too; I had a full time job that I really enjoyed and had lots of freedom to do what I love, which is being creative. Strangely, though, there was a sense that my friends were gradually losing interest in my apparent 'lack of success'. Because I hadn't immediately stepped onto what they recognised as a career ladder, I wasn't 'striving for success'.

I had become the unspoken 'low benchmark' of the group. As long as you weren't doing as badly as I was, then you were fine.

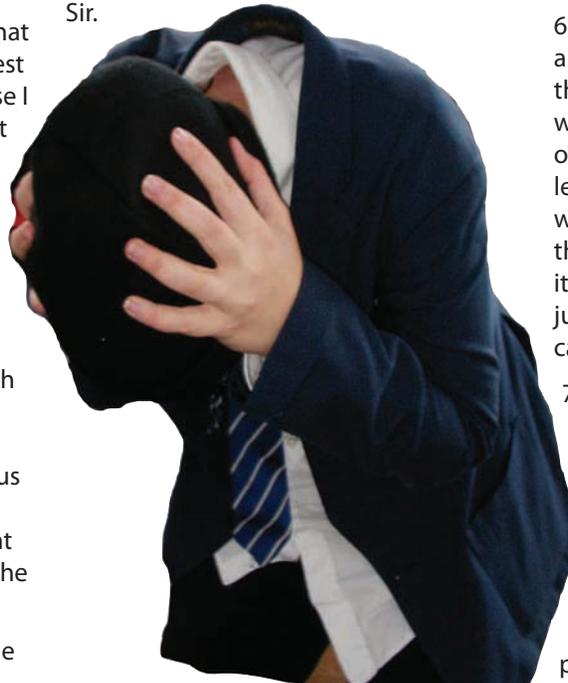
It's odd because if I'm really honest with myself, I didn't feel unsuccessful until my friends implied it. Once that seed had been planted, alongside the various other factors that meant I apparently wasn't doing as well as my peers, I went into a bit of a downward slump. I had the Transitional Blues.

If I were writing this six months ago, the following tone would have been very different, very negative. I was a fully paid up member of 'The Cynic's Club' and no matter what the situation, the glass was always half empty... with urine... and the glass had been dirty in the first place. I hadn't always been that way, but spending a year with no money, no love life, no place to call my own, and friends quietly deleting me from their social networks, was chipping away at my ability to look on the bright side of life. Fortunately over time I've found ways get out of the slump and to realise that even if everyone around me is moving faster than I am, I've been afforded with a rare opportunity to enjoy what's happening around

me. Rather than moan about what I might be missing, I'm enjoying what I've got. And guess what? The Next Big Thing™ appeared on the horizon not too long ago, so I'd better enjoy this moment of peace before things start moving at a rapid pace.

So, some tips on how to ease yourself through this awkward period.

1. **Save Your Pennies.** The Next Big Thing, whatever it is, is not at the bottom of a glass. It is not a stack of new DVDs. It is most definitely not an expensive new outfit. Trust me. This comes from a person who wasted valuable pennies on a ridiculously expensive dress. Have I worn it out yet? No. Am I in any way better off than I was before for owning it? Heck no, Sir.



2. **Keep At It.** Whatever it is that you want to achieve, to the best of your abilities and current limitations – keep at it. Even if it just means reading textbooks or practicing or talking to others and networking. Keep your skills up to scratch and your eyes on the market so you're ready when opportunities present themselves.

3. **Do Something Productive.** Don't spend your free time sitting on your backside and surfing between Facebook and Lolcats. Go for a run, a walk, cook something, sell something on eBay, tidy the house, organise your paperwork. Just

make sure that you're not doing something that eats up your time and results in nothing. For example...

4. **Get Creative.** As a shining example of what happens when you combine #2 and #3, go to katederrick.co.uk. Kate Derrick is using her artistic talent and current status of unemployment to make a funny web series outlining the trials and tribulations of being an unemployed graduate. Look through the film section and commence giggling.

5. **Set The World To Rights With A Friend.** They're probably just as bewildered/confused/blue about something themselves and, honestly, knowing that someone out there feels the same can be an odd comfort. Hooray for schadenfreude.

6. **Stop Dwelling.** The transitional blues are a magnet for past regrets to creep to the front of your thoughts. OK, so you wish you hadn't gotten that tattoo now, or that you hadn't taken that course, or left that job, or that you hadn't broken up with that person. Unless there's something you can actively do about it, knock it off. Besides, anyone who's looking to judge you on those decisions probably can't afford to cast stones anyway.

7. **Permit Me To Slap You Round The Face With My Words.** SNAP OUT OF IT. You're probably better off than most and things could be much, much worse.

8. **What Do You Want?** Is your life about achieving a higher status or about learning something new each day? Just because it looks as though people are 'moving on' around you, doesn't necessarily mean they think you're standing still. For all you know they could be of the opinion that you've got a rare opportunity to enjoy yourself.

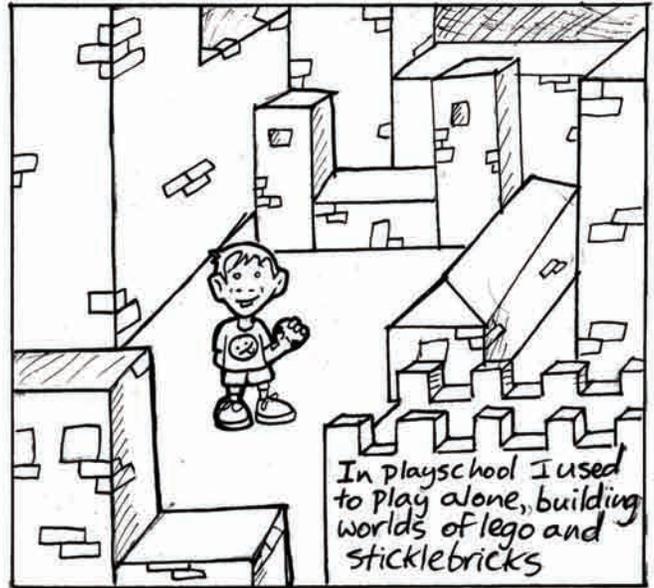
9. **Don't Listen To Other The Haters.** If you've got someone looking down on you and comparing themselves favourably, they're not worth your time. People who do this tend to do so because they just want some relief that what they're doing with their lives is the 'right thing'. For all the times you wish you could be a bit more like them, deep down, they're probably wishing they could be a bit more like you.

Words: Rebecca Brynolf

Even as a little kid I knew
I was different



so did everybody else



In playschool I used
to play alone, building
worlds of lego and
sticklebricks

When you play
alone it leaves
you vulnerable
to bullies



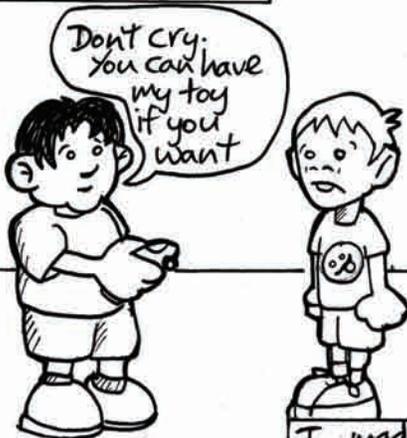
I lost my
favourite toy that
day

But that's not what
upset me most



It was the feeling
of helplessness
and that I
had no one to
turn to

And then something
unexpected happened

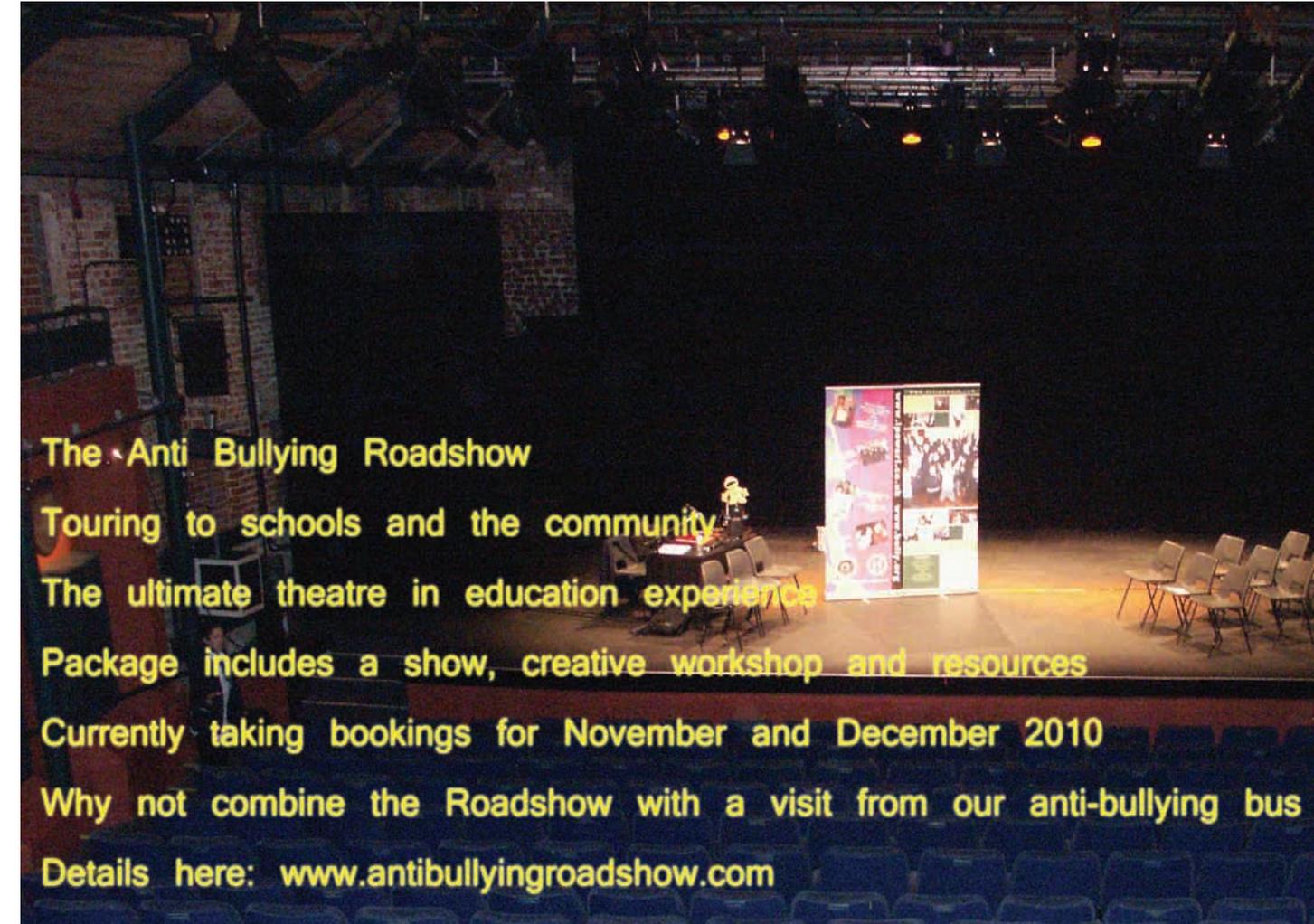


I made a
friend

We found we had
something in common



And that made
us both stronger



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Crying for the Children

The killings in Russia, Sudan and Palestine,
The murders in Iraq and all over the earth.

I cry for the kids

The boys and the girls

I cry for the babies, les enfants, los niños.

I cry for the kids, the little ones, and

Los bebés, our offspring, our brood,
our fruits and our wards.

I cry for i bambini, as crianças, and die Kinder,

I cry for the kodomo, the pups and the tots

I cry for as crian, de kinderen, τα παιδιά.

I cry for děti, the bambino, mga bata, our
young.

I cry for our gifts, the cubs and the spawn.

The Nippers, the young, the infants, the youth.

The Sprouts and the brats, our fry and our
flocks.

I cry for the minors, the tiddlers, the tykes.

The bairns and the rascals, the scallywags and
tots.

Je pleure pour les enfants

Yim yarp ma kwairs

I cry for the imps, the toddlers the waifs.

The lads and the urchins none of them are safe.

I cry for our children.

I feel like going down

To the bottom of the sea

Where there is no sound, no light, no power
nor greed.

And yet my children are happy, are playing are
safe.

We cannot lose hope and yet

I cry for the children.

Look out for more interviews with
inspirational people and leading sports
personalities in future issues of Mpower
You magazine

Q: What is your name?

A: My name is Danny Grewcock.

Q: What are you best known for?

A: Playing rugby. I currently play for Bath Rugby Club.

Q: What might not a lot of people know about you?

A: I enjoy cooking, shooting and fishing

Q: Who has inspired you?

A: My mum was very inspirational.
At Saracens I was inspired by Philippe Sella and Michael Lynah. They were very down to earth people and good role models who set high standards. I tried to follow their lead.

Q: What have you been up to recently?

A: Looking after my wonderful children and doing a bit of shooting.

Q: What will you be doing next?

A: Getting myself up to full strength, training hard and getting fit for the latter part of the season.

Q: Who or what keeps you going each day?

A: I enjoy my job and want to do well so this makes me do better. I am highly self-motivated and Bath Rugby Club has excellent coaching staff that keep us going.

Q: What's your favourite joke (keep it clean!)?

A:

Q: Do you have any regrets?

A: Not really. Mistakes happen but I believe it is important to move on and try not to repeat them. So as long as you learn from your mistakes you cannot regret them.

Q: If you had three wishes, what would you ask for?

A: Health and fitness for all the family. Winning the lottery.

Q: If you weren't doing what you do, what would you be doing?

A: I think I would be a teacher.



**5-minute
interview**

**Danny
Grewcock**

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