

The FIPA Global Educational Series

THE RESPECT PROJECT

BOOKLET 3: PARENTS
AND STUDENTS



A Note on This Booklet

This is the third and final booklet in the Stop Bullying in Caribbean Schools series. Booklet 1 explained what bullying is, why it happens, and what the evidence tells us about its effects. Booklet 2 gave school professionals — principals, teachers, and guidance counsellors — the tools they need to build safer schools.

This booklet is for everyone else: parents, guardians, and students. It is written in two distinct voices. The first half, addressed to parents and guardians, is written in a direct and practical style. The second half, addressed to students aged twelve and older, speaks to you personally — because you are not simply the subject of this conversation. You are one of the most important people in it.

If you are reading this as a parent, please also read the student section. If you are reading this as a student, please share the parent section with the adults in your life. The more each side understands the other's experience, the better equipped every family will be.

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NOT FOR SALE

PART ONE

For Parents and Guardians

Chapter 1: How Parents Help

The parent who reads a book like this one is already doing something right. But not every parent has the time or the resources to seek out information — and yet they need it just as much. Please share what you learn here.

Parents are a child's first and most enduring teachers. What children learn at home — about respect, about conflict, about how to treat others and how to expect to be treated — shapes everything that follows. No school programme, however well designed, can substitute for the foundation that parents lay.

This chapter is realistic about the pressures Caribbean parents face. Many are young, some are single, many are navigating economic hardship, and a significant number are raising children while their partners live and work abroad. These realities do not diminish the importance of a parent's role — they make it more urgent that parents receive proper support, and that the information in this booklet reaches them.

The Case for Parenting Education

In countries including Costa Rica, Ireland, and Israel, governments actively invest in providing parents with the skills and knowledge to raise emotionally healthy children. The results speak for themselves: communities with stronger parenting support have fewer problems with youth aggression, substance abuse, and crime.

The Caribbean region has a large population of young parents. Teenage mothers are more likely to experience poverty, and poverty affects children's wellbeing in direct and measurable ways. Many fathers, despite a general trend toward greater involvement, are still not as consistently present in their children's lives as research tells us they need to be. These are systemic challenges — but they are not insurmountable. Good parenting is a learned skill, and it can be taught, supported, and celebrated.

Caribbean parents are encouraged to advocate publicly and loudly for parenting education programmes — through radio and television, through PTAs, through community organisations and churches. This is not a personal admission of inadequacy. It is an act of responsible citizenship.

The Home Environment: What Children Learn There

Children learn how to behave in the world primarily by watching the people around them. A home where conflict is resolved through shouting, threats, or physical force teaches children that these are the appropriate tools for dealing with difficulty. A home where disagreements are worked through with patience and respect teaches something quite different.

This does not mean that parents must be perfect. Every parent loses their temper sometimes. Every family has its difficult periods. What matters is the overall pattern: whether children see, most of the time, that adults can disagree without cruelty, that feelings can be expressed without harm, and that other people's dignity is worth protecting.

Even small, unintentional things can carry weight. One target who I spoke with seemed almost primed for her role by a nickname she had been given at home — a gently mocking name that her parents used affectionately, but that had quietly undermined her confidence over years. Parents should think carefully about the words they use to and about their children, even in jest.

Sibling Relationships Matter More Than You Think

Research has found that bullying between siblings creates emotional distress comparable to schoolyard bullying. A child who is regularly belittled, excluded, or physically hurt by a brother or sister is experiencing bullying — and experiencing it in the one place that should feel safest. Parents should not dismiss sibling conflict as simply 'what brothers and sisters do'. When it becomes persistent, intentional, and unbalanced, it warrants exactly the same response as bullying at school.

Helping Children Who Are Being Targeted

Many parents discover that their child is being bullied not because the child told them, but because they noticed something was wrong: a reluctance to go to school, sleep disturbances, a change in mood, unexplained injuries, money or belongings going missing.

When that discovery happens, the first and most important response is to listen — not to interrogate, reassure prematurely, or immediately promise to 'sort it out'. Children who are being targeted often feel ashamed. They may worry that telling someone will make things worse. They may have already decided, without saying so, that adults cannot help. Your first job is to make it clear that you hear them, you believe them, and you are on their side.

Suggested opening words (from Barbara Coloroso, adapted):

"I hear you. I am here for you. I believe you. You are not alone in this." After your child has spoken about how they feel, you can begin to gather the facts — who, where, and when. Jumping straight to the facts is to miss the most important part: what the experience has done to your child's sense of their own worth.

Once you have listened fully, work together on a response. Depending on the severity of the situation, this may mean speaking with the class teacher, requesting a meeting with the guidance counsellor or principal, or — in serious cases involving physical harm or threats — contacting relevant authorities. A parent who communicates with the school respectfully, specifically, and persistently is far more likely to get results than one who arrives in anger.

One practical solution: if a child is being bullied at a specific location — a bus stop, a canteen, a particular route home — consider whether there is a way to change the routine. This is not surrender. It is protecting your child while a longer-term solution is developed. A mother whose son was being extorted at the bus stop arranged for him to travel by taxi instead; the harassment stopped. Not every family can afford that particular option, but the principle applies more broadly — think creatively about what is within your reach.

Helping Children Who May Be Bullying Others

Discovering that your child has been bullying other students is a genuinely difficult moment. The temptation is either to defend the child or to come down on them very hard. Neither response is likely to help.

What is more likely to help: a calm, honest conversation about what has happened and why it is wrong, without shaming the child or labelling them permanently. Remember that perpetrators are almost always unhappy people. The child who bullies is often signalling, in the only way they know how, that something is wrong — at home, in their friendships, in their sense of their own worth. Understanding the source of the behaviour is not the same as excusing it.

Parents of perpetrators should take seriously any invitation from the school to meet with teachers or the guidance counsellor. These conversations, when conducted well, are not attacks on the family. They are attempts to help. Defensiveness or denial, however understandable, tends to prevent the kind of change that everyone — including the child — needs to see.

Helping Children Navigate Diversity

Caribbean societies are among the most diverse in the world — by ethnicity, religion, language, economic background, and cultural tradition. This diversity is a source of great richness, but it can also be a source of tension. 'You're-different bullying' — harassment rooted in what makes a student different from the majority — is especially common in plural societies.

Parents play a vital role in preparing children for this. Children who grow up hearing respect for difference modelled at home — in how their parents speak about people from other backgrounds, in the stories and examples they are given — are less likely to bully others for being different, and more resilient when they are targeted for it themselves.

Media, Screens, and Cyberbullying at Home

One of the most important things a parent can do in the current era is understand their child's digital life. A parent who does not know what platforms their child uses, who their child communicates with online, or what kind of content their child creates and shares is operating with a significant blind spot.

This does not mean surveillance or constant monitoring — that approach tends to destroy trust and simply drives behaviour underground. What it does mean is an ongoing, open conversation about online life: what is happening, what has been said, how things feel. Children who know they can come to their parents about something that happens online — without being punished for it — are far more likely to report problems early, before they escalate.

Basic practices every family should establish:

- Know what platforms your child uses and have at least a basic understanding of how they work.
- Agree on reasonable boundaries around screen time, particularly in the evenings and in bedrooms.
- Make clear that your child can come to you if something uncomfortable or frightening happens online.
- If your child is being cyberbullied, document it — take screenshots before blocking or deleting — and report it to the school and, if necessary, to the platform and to the police.
- Remind your child that nothing posted online is ever entirely private, and that digital footprints can last for years.

Conversations That Make a Difference: Role Plays for Parents

One of the most consistently effective things a parent can do is practise difficult conversations with their children before those conversations need to happen in real life. Role play may feel awkward at first, but children who have rehearsed how to respond to pressure, harassment, or temptation are significantly better prepared than those who have not.

The parent takes the role of the aggressor or the pressure-source first, modelling the kind of situation the child might face. The child then practises responding. The parent gives feedback and they try again. Below are three examples of conversations that Caribbean parents have used effectively — adapted from real accounts.

CONVERSATION WITH A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD BOY

Mother: "I am going to tell you a story about a big child at school who keeps pushing a smaller child around. What do you think the smaller child should do?"

Child: "Tell a teacher."

Mother: "What if the bigger child says 'if you tell somebody, I will hurt you even more'?"

Child: "Still tell the teacher."

Mother: "I agree. Do you see how that bully is actually afraid of the teacher? They want to do things in secret, because they are cowards. Has anything like this ever happened to you?"

CONVERSATION WITH A THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL

Mother: "You don't look your usual bright self today."

Child: "What would you do if somebody spread news about you that wasn't even true?"

Mother: "It hurts especially when it comes from someone you considered a friend. Real friends — the ones who stick around when things are hard — are harder to find than people who just laugh with you at a party. Would you like to tell me what happened?"

Child: "So what would you actually do if it happened to you?" Mother: "I would try to correct it wherever I could. If you would like me to help you, I need to understand the full picture first. Tell me everything."

CONVERSATION WITH AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD ABOUT CYBERBULLYING

Girl: "This girl has posted something awful about me on social media. I'm going to fix her."

Mother: "I hear how angry you are — that's completely understandable. But before you do anything, think: she may actually want you to retaliate. Your response could be seen by future employers, universities, anyone. Can you show me what she posted?"

Girl: "I beg you, don't make me wait too long. I want to respond to her right now."

Mother: "I am going to help you find out the best way to report and remove this — I know someone who understands these platforms. Give me until tomorrow. When you act in anger, you can make the situation a hundred times worse. I need you to promise me you'll wait."

In that last conversation, notice that the mother addresses the most urgent threat first — the risk of escalation — and then commits to helping. She does not dismiss the daughter's anger or lecture her about her behaviour. She acknowledges the feelings and redirects the energy toward a safer course of action.

What Parents Can Do at School

Parents who engage with the school community — beyond the annual PTA meeting — make a real difference to the school culture. Some practical suggestions:

1. Communicate with teachers and principals regularly, not only when there is a problem. A parent who is known and trusted will be taken more seriously when a concern arises.
2. Share effective parenting strategies with other parents, particularly very young parents, at PTA meetings and social gatherings.
3. Support the school's bullying prevention programme by reinforcing its messages at home.
4. Volunteer to help organise speakers on conflict management, emotional intelligence, or violence prevention. Many specialists will donate their time to schools that cannot pay.
5. If your child is involved in a bullying situation — as target, perpetrator, or bystander — approach the school with cooperation and empathy, not accusation. Teachers are managing large numbers of students and complex dynamics; they need parents as allies, not adversaries.

- ✓ The home environment is where children first learn how to treat others and how to expect to be treated.
- ✓ Sibling bullying is real bullying and deserves the same response.
- ✓ When a child discloses that they are being bullied, listen first — don't jump to the facts or to quick solutions.
- ✓ Discover your child's digital life through open conversation, not surveillance.
- ✓ Role plays prepare children for real situations more effectively than lectures.
- ✓ Parents who engage respectfully with schools are better positioned to protect their children.
- ✓ Advocate for parenting education programmes in your community — this benefits every family.

PART TWO

For Students

(Ages 12 and over)

"I think a hero is an ordinary individual who finds strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles." — Christopher Reeve

This section is written directly to you. Not to your parents, not to your teachers — to you. Because here is something that most adults will admit when they are being honest: students know more about what is happening on the school compound than any teacher or principal does. You see things. You hear things. You know who is being targeted, and where, and by whom.

That makes you one of the most important people in this conversation.

Chapter 2: If You Are Being Bullied

First, something important: you are not alone. People who have been bullied as young people include Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Rihanna, Michael Phelps, Emma Watson, Tom Cruise, Kate Winslet, Chris Rock, and Princess Toshi Aiko of Japan. Not only politicians and celebrities — many of the most respected and successful people in your own community were targeted as children. The experience does not define you. What you do with it can.

Why You Are Being Targeted Is Not Your Fault

Students are targeted for being academically strong, for being different, for being popular, for not being popular, for having more than others or less than others. Perpetrators will always find a reason. The reason is not really about you — it is about the perpetrator's own insecurity, envy, or need for power. That is a hard thing to hold onto when someone is making your life difficult, but it is true.

You do not have to prove that you do not deserve to be treated this way. Nobody deserves to be bullied. Full stop.

Tell Someone

This is the most important single action you can take. Tell a parent, a teacher, a guidance counsellor, a trusted relative — someone you believe can help. Many students do not tell because they are ashamed, or because they are afraid the bullying will get worse, or because they have decided that adults are useless.

Here is what is actually happening: perpetrators do not want you to tell anyone. They depend on your silence. When you tell someone, you are taking power back — and you are frightening the perpetrator, even if they do not show it. The boldest-looking bully is often the first to break down when faced by a real authority. I have seen it happen, many times.

If the first adult you tell does not help, tell another one. Keep telling until someone acts.

The Single, Double and Triple Attack

Understanding how bullying works psychologically can help you protect yourself from its worst effects. Think of it this way:

The Single Attack

The perpetrator attacks the target. This is the bullying itself — the words, the actions, the harassment.

The Double Attack

The perpetrator attacks the target, and then the target attacks themselves — by believing what the perpetrator says. "Maybe I am ugly. Maybe I am worthless. Maybe they are right." The target becomes their own worst enemy. This is what the perpetrator actually wants.

The Triple Attack

The target is so hurt and angry that they take it out on the people around them — snapping at a parent, picking on a younger sibling, withdrawing from people who care about them. The perpetrator has now damaged relationships the target actually values.

Your job — and it is not easy, but it is possible — is to refuse the double and triple attacks. You do that by placing the blame where it belongs: on the perpetrator, not on yourself. When you feel the urge to believe what the bully says about you, ask yourself: would I take relationship advice from someone who treats people the way this person treats me? No. So why would I take their assessment of my worth?

Your Inner Critic and Your Inner Coach

Everyone has an inner critic — a voice inside that says you are not good enough, not smart enough, not worth defending. The inner critic loves a bullying situation, because it has so much material to work with. It says: 'See? Even they think you are worthless.' It says: 'Don't bother telling anyone — nothing will change.' It says: 'Just accept it.'

Your inner critic is not your friend. It is not even telling you the truth.

You also have an inner coach — the part of you that knows your own value, that has seen you get things right, that recognises you are capable of more than you currently believe. The inner

coach says: 'This is not acceptable and I deserve better.' It says: 'I am going to do something about this.' It says: 'I can get through this.'

When you are under pressure, try this: imagine putting a gold frame around your thoughts — whatever is in your mind right now. When people visualise a frame around their thinking, they tend to start thinking more clearly and more kindly toward themselves. Try it.

Practical Things You Can Do

- Stay near people. Perpetrators choose isolated targets. Stay with friends or in visible spaces as much as possible.
- Avoid the places where the perpetrators tend to be, when you can do so without giving up something important.
- Walk tall. Research has confirmed what many of us already know intuitively: perpetrators select targets based on body language — slumped posture, downcast eyes, an air of disconnection. Standing straight, making eye contact, moving with confidence are genuine forms of protection.
- If someone verbally attacks you, try: 'I felt perfectly fine asking that question — I now know the answer.' Or: 'Let's agree to disagree. We both have more important things to focus on.' Or simply: 'I'll respond to you when your words show respect for both of us.' These are not weak responses. They are powerful ones.
- Do not neglect your schoolwork. Getting lost in learning — genuinely — is one of the best forms of resistance to bullying. It keeps your focus where it belongs: on your own future.
- De-stress regularly. Physical movement — exercise, dancing, sport — releases the tension that harassment creates. Breathing exercises also help (see Appendix B of the main volume). Do not let the stress sit in your body.

If You Are Being Cyberbullied

Online harassment is different from face-to-face bullying in one important way: it can feel inescapable. But it is not. Here is what to do:

6. Do not respond in the moment. Responding when you are upset almost always makes things worse, and can make you look like the aggressor.
7. Screenshot and document everything before you delete or block anything. You may need evidence.

8. Block the perpetrator on every platform.
9. Report the content to the platform — most platforms have mechanisms for reporting harassment and are required to remove content that violates their terms.
10. Tell a trusted adult. In serious cases — threats of violence, non-consensual images, sustained harassment — this should also be reported to school authorities and potentially to the police.
11. Remember that people who see posts like this are usually not as convinced as they pretend. Most people, when they see someone being piled on online, know it is wrong.

Transform Pain into Power

The most lasting thing you can do with the experience of being bullied is use it. Not to become bitter — that gives the perpetrator a permanent victory. Not to become a perpetrator yourself — that continues a cycle that harms everyone. But to develop a depth of understanding, empathy, and resilience that will serve you for the rest of your life.

Read about people who have gone through humiliation, loss, and injustice and come out the other side. Nick Vujicic was born with no arms and no legs and became an internationally respected motivational speaker. Many Caribbean leaders, athletes, artists, and intellectuals survived childhoods marked by poverty, exclusion, and cruelty — and those experiences sharpened rather than broke them.

One day — this sounds impossible right now, but it is true — you may actually find yourself grateful for what you went through. Not because it was good, but because of what it built in you.

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|---|
| ✓ You are not alone — many remarkable people were bullied as children. |
| ✓ Tell a trusted adult. Keep telling until someone acts. Your silence protects the perpetrator. |
| ✓ Refuse the double attack: do not let the perpetrator's words become your own self-criticism. |
| ✓ Your inner coach is right. Your inner critic is not. |
| ✓ For cyberbullying: document, block, report, and tell a trusted adult. |
| ✓ Use the experience to build depth and resilience — not to repeat the cycle. |

Chapter 3: If You Are Bullying Others

This chapter takes courage to read. If you are someone who bullies other students — or who has done so in the past — the easiest thing to do would be to skip this section. But if you are still here, something in you is willing to look honestly at what is happening. That is a strength, even if it does not feel like one.

Look at Your Good Points

Start here, not with the bullying. You have genuine strengths. Some of the students who give the most trouble in school are doing so because they are bored — because they are actually bright, and the school is not stretching them enough. Write down your good points. All of them. If your sister is going to giggle at the list, write it somewhere private. But write it.

Now hold that in mind as you read the rest of this chapter.

Be Honest with Yourself

You are harassing someone. Maybe you enjoy it in the moment — the feeling of power, the laughter of your group. But if you search deep enough, there is something else there too. An inmate in a correctional facility once told me: 'When I did bad things, I got excited — but deep down, I felt sick.' Most perpetrators know, somewhere below the surface, that what they are doing is wrong.

Ask yourself: Why this person? Why now? If you are obsessing over someone who is going about their own business and leaving you alone, what does that person represent to you? Very often, perpetrators target people who remind them of something they dislike — or fear — in themselves. It is easier to attack the thing outside than to deal with it inside.

Or perhaps it is envy. Envy is one of the most universal human experiences — virtually every person over the age of ten has felt it. We usually envy the people around us, not those far away. The boy in your class whose parents bought him a car for passing three CSEC subjects, when you passed six and got a handshake — yes, that stings. But making his life miserable will not get you a car. It will get you a reputation, a disciplinary record, and eventually consequences that will follow you.

Use the envy differently. Let it show you what you want, and then work toward it.

The Cycle of Abuse

Many perpetrators have experienced something difficult at home — verbal abuse, physical violence, being put down, feeling invisible. If that is your experience, it does not excuse what you are doing to others. But it does explain some of it. And understanding the explanation gives you the power to break the pattern.

You are not a robot. You are not condemned to repeat what was done to you. You are a thinking person who can make different choices — including the choice to get help. Your guidance counsellor is a good starting point. So is a trusted pastor or community leader. So is any responsible adult who has demonstrated that they actually care about young people.

The great thing — and it really is great — is that the decisions you make now, at this stage of your life, are not final. You have time to change direction. Many people who bullied badly as children have gone on to live decent, productive, and genuinely happy lives. It required work and honesty. But it happened.

A Word About Admiring People Who Bully

Sometimes students admire a particular athlete, musician, or older student who is aggressive — who 'runs things', who does not take anything from anyone. It is completely possible to admire someone for one quality — their skill, their confidence, their talent — without admiring them for another quality, such as how they treat people who have less power.

And as you grow older, you will notice something: the people who seemed so powerful and impressive at seventeen often do not look that way at thirty. The star athlete who bullied his classmates and never developed any other skills struggles when the games end. The person who commanded respect through fear finds that fear and genuine respect are not the same thing — and that one lasts, while the other evaporates.

You are smarter than that. Be strong enough to say: 'That is not who I want to be.'

✓ Acknowledge your strengths honestly — they are real.

✓ Be honest about why you are targeting this person. The answer is usually about something in you, not them.

✓ Envy is normal. Using it as fuel to improve your own life is the mature response.

✓ You are not obliged to repeat the patterns of your home. You can choose differently.

✓ Seek help — from a counsellor, a pastor, a trusted adult. The courage it takes to ask is the same courage you will need to change.

Chapter 4: If You Are a Bystander

Research consistently shows that most perpetrators will stop what they are doing within ten seconds of being told to stop by a group of bystanders. You have more power than you think.

Bystanders are the largest group of students affected by bullying. Most bullying episodes are witnessed by multiple people. And most of those witnesses do nothing — not because they are bad people, but because they do not know what to do, or they are afraid, or they have been taught to 'mind their own business'.

But here is the thing: watching someone be humiliated, hurt, or excluded and doing nothing is not a neutral act. It sends a message to the perpetrator — that what they are doing is acceptable. It sends a message to the target — that no one cares. And it sends a message to yourself — about the kind of person you are choosing to be.

One adult perpetrator told me plainly: 'I never had much respect for the bystanders. You know it's wrong. You're just standing there chatting your heads off and doing nothing. How can you respect someone like that?'

What Bystanders Can Do

- If it is safe, speak up. A clear, calm statement from a group of students — 'Leave them alone' — is genuinely effective. Most perpetrators stop almost immediately when they realise the group is against them.
- If direct confrontation does not feel safe — for example, if there are weapons involved — do not intervene physically. Get a teacher or other adult as quickly as possible.
- After the incident, check on the target. A simple 'Are you okay?' can mean more than you realise.
- Encourage the target to speak to a trusted adult. Offer to go with them if that would help.
- Do not share, like, or comment on cyberbullying posts. Every engagement amplifies the harm. Silence — and reporting — are the right responses.
- Never join in with perpetrators, even lightly, even as a joke. You know the difference.

The Students' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities

One of the most powerful things students can do — together — is to develop and adopt a Students' Charter: a shared statement of what you are entitled to and what you owe each other. The following is a starting point. Students should modify, debate, and own it themselves.

Students' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities

RIGHT The right to learn in a safe and welcoming environment.

RIGHT The right to grow and learn without harassment on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity, skin colour, physical characteristics, or economic status.

RIGHT The right to receive support from school personnel if any of the above rights are violated.

RESPONSIBILITY The responsibility not to use verbal, physical, or online abuse toward any other student.

RESPONSIBILITY The responsibility not to remain passive when bullying is witnessed — but to intervene safely as a group, or to alert an adult.

RESPONSIBILITY The responsibility to encourage any student being bullied to speak with a trusted adult.

RESPONSIBILITY The responsibility to understand the consequences of failing to meet these responsibilities — and to accept those consequences honestly.

A Charter only means something if students develop it themselves — debating the wording, arguing about the consequences, and signing their names to it. The process of creating the Charter is as valuable as the document itself. And students who help to make the rules are far more likely to uphold them.

✓ Bystanders are the largest group affected by bullying — and the group with the most collective power.

✓ Speaking up as a group is effective. Most perpetrators stop within seconds.

✓ If direct intervention is unsafe, get an adult immediately.

✓ Never amplify cyberbullying — report it instead.

✓ A Students' Charter, developed by students themselves, creates shared ownership of school values.

Chapter 5: The Refocusing Exercise — You and Your Nation Are Worth It

The energy that goes into being a perpetrator, a target consumed by pain, or a bystander who does nothing, is energy that could be building something. Let us redirect it.

Everything in this booklet — and in the whole series — comes down to this: you are worth more than any bullying situation you are in. Your community is worth more. Your nation is worth more. The Caribbean has produced Nobel Prize winners, Olympic champions, world-class scientists, artists, nurses, teachers, lawyers, and leaders — from tiny island populations, with limited resources, against considerable odds. You are part of that lineage.

Sidney Poitier, the first Black actor to win the Academy Award for Best Actor, was born in the Bahamas. St. Lucia — a country of under 200,000 people — has produced two Nobel laureates. The Caribbean punches far above its weight in virtually every field that matters. And the majority of the people who have achieved great things were not remarkable as children. They became remarkable through commitment, through the support of people who believed in them, and through the decision — sometimes made in very difficult circumstances — to keep going.

I first did the Refocusing Exercise with the young daughter of some friends who lived in Romania. She was troubled by the negative image her country was receiving internationally at the time. When I helped her discover what a rich and remarkable history Romania had — beyond its current difficulties — she visibly changed. She sat straighter. She spoke differently about her country and about herself.

The same shift is available to every student in the Caribbean. When you understand that you come from somewhere extraordinary, and that you have it in you to contribute something extraordinary, the temptation to waste energy on bullying — whether as perpetrator, target, or passive bystander — begins to look very different.

So What Do You Actually Do?

The Refocusing Exercise is about channelling your energy — the energy that might currently be going into harassment, or into surviving harassment, or into doing nothing when you know something is wrong — into something that builds you and your community instead.

Start small. Start with what you already have. Here are some possibilities:

- Become an active mentor to two or three younger students in your school or community.
- Develop a website, social media account, or podcast that shares something positive about young people in your country.
- Start or join a community project — environmental, cultural, educational, sporting.
- Read one book per month that teaches you something about business, leadership, or the world beyond your current experience.
- Research social entrepreneurship — starting something small that solves a real problem in your community.
- Write something — a blog, an article, an e-book — that shares what you know with others.

The Planning Questions

If you are working on a project — individually or as a group — these questions will help you think it through properly before you start:

| Question | Your answer |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| What do you want to do? | Describe it in 100 words or less. |
| What will it do for you personally? | How will this change or improve your life? |
| What are the benefits if you do it? | For you, for others, for your community. |
| What are your values? | How will those values drive the project? |
| What are your genuine strengths? | How do you know? Who has confirmed them? |
| What are your limitations? | How will you address them — or find someone who compensates? |
| Who will support and guide you? | Parents, teachers, mentors — not strangers. |
| How will you know when you are done? | What does success look like? |

SMARTER Goals

Once you have a clear idea of what you want to do, make your goals SMARTER: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-based, Energising, and Resource-based. Research how other people have used SMARTER goals to achieve things — there are many good examples online and in books. The key insight is this: big progress comes from small steps that you can see moving forward every day or every week. Do not wait until you can see the whole staircase. Just take the first step.

When the Inner Critic Gets Loud

You will have a great idea, feel energised about it, start — and then, about three weeks in, the inner critic will show up. 'Why did you start this? You knew you couldn't finish it. You always give up.' The inner critic feeds on the moments when things get hard.

Here is the counter-move: pick up your internal phone and call your inner coach. Your inner coach is the voice that wants you to plan properly, get good support, and see the project through. It is the voice that says: 'This is hard — that means it is worth something. Keep going.'

Reward yourself for each step, not just the final destination. You are doing something that most people never get around to doing. That deserves acknowledgement.

A Final Word to Students

Bullying is real, and its effects are real. But you are not defined by whether you have been bullied, or by what you did before you knew better, or by whether you stood by when you should have stepped in. You are defined by what you do next.

The Caribbean needs you at your best. Not in spite of everything you have been through, but — sometimes — because of it. People who have experienced difficulty and come through it tend to understand things that those who have had it easy never quite grasp. They have reserves of empathy, resilience, and determination that comfort alone cannot build.

Be bold. Be alive. Live up to your own expectations — not down to anyone else's.

✓ The Caribbean has produced extraordinary people from every background and every island. You are part of that story.

✓ The Refocusing Exercise channels energy away from bullying dynamics and toward something that builds you and your community.

✓ Start small, plan properly, and use SMARTER goals.

✓ Your inner coach is right. Your inner critic is not.

✓ You are not defined by what has happened to you. You are defined by what you do next.

Appendix: Calming Exercises

Anxiety and stress are normal responses to being in a difficult situation. These exercises can help reduce the physical symptoms of stress — the racing heart, the shallow breathing, the tight chest — so that you can think more clearly and feel more in control.

1. The 4-7-8 Breathing Technique (Dr. Andrew Weil)

This simple exercise can be done anywhere, in any position, as long as your back is reasonably straight. It is recommended twice daily, and whenever you feel anxious.

12. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge behind your upper front teeth. Keep it there throughout the exercise.
13. Breathe out completely through your mouth, making a quiet 'whoosh' sound.
14. Close your mouth and breathe in slowly and quietly through your nose for a silent count of 4.
15. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
16. Breathe out fully through your mouth, making the same 'whoosh' sound, for a count of 8.
17. That is one cycle. Repeat for four cycles in total.

2. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Make yourself comfortable — sitting or lying down. Take a slow deep breath. Starting from your feet, breathe a sense of calm into each part of your body in turn: feet, ankles, shins, knees, thighs, stomach, lower back, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, face. When you reach the top of your head, say silently to yourself: 'I am at peace.' Repeat for as long as you need.

3. Grounding Through Observation

Look at something in front of you for a few seconds — a pen, a plant, a picture on the wall. Close your eyes and hold the image in your mind. Then look at two or three things in your peripheral vision and do the same. Take slow breaths throughout. This exercise brings your attention back to the present moment, which is almost always calmer than whatever your mind was projecting.

Closing: A Note from the Author

This booklet, like the two before it, was written out of a profound belief in the potential of Caribbean people — our children especially. I have spent decades sitting with parents, students, teachers, and counsellors who are genuinely trying to do right by the young people in their care, often in circumstances that make that harder than it should be.

Bullying is not inevitable. It is not simply 'how things are'. It is a problem that human beings have created, and one that human beings — with commitment, with knowledge, and with courage — can substantially reduce.

Every parent who reads this booklet and changes one conversation with their child, every student who decides to speak up rather than stay silent, every bystander who chooses to act — these are the changes that add up. They are not dramatic. They are not televised. But they are real, and they matter, and they accumulate.

Bullying is a wrong we can set right. Thank you for being part of the effort to do so.

— End of Booklet 3 —

— End of the Stop Bullying in Caribbean Schools series —