

Ben Short (1)

Hi! My name is Ben, Ben Short. My dad told me to introduce myself like that. He reckons it sounds better and that by repeating the first name it makes sure people remember my name. I think he thinks it sounds a bit like James Bond in the movies. Y'know like 'Hi I'm Bond, James Bond!' ...I saw him saying that to himself in the mirror when he was brushing his teeth. Me and mum burst out laughing 'cos the mirror got splattered with slimy toothpaste. He got told off for that.

I am 9 years old. I have an older sister Emma who is 12...but she thinks she is 16 already because she has a boyfriend. We live with our mum, dad and two cuddly, soft puppies. They are black Labradors Poppy and Penny. I have a goldfish that lives in my bedroom called Scar, he is big and black not like any goldfish you have ever seen with a scar down one side where our old smelly cat tried to get him. Tommy is dead now. He was the cat. Dad buried him in the garden behind the wooden shed.

I am just a normal kid like you but I do have a few 'issues'. Mum prefers it if I say issues instead of problems. She says it helps to look at things more positively. Problems are a problem while issues can be fixed she says. Not sure but I think she learnt that on one of her courses because she says it all the time now, especially to dad.

One of my 'issues' is that I get angry at school sometimes and a couple of weeks ago I broke a chair when I kicked it. Got a detention for that and mum grounded me for the rest of the week, good job it was Thursday. I was not happy to talk about what happened with the teachers or with mum. I knew I had my reasons but it was embarrassing, so when mum kept on asking me I kept it to myself and just tried not to get angry again. I did tell Scar. He always listens and doesn't ask questions.

Well on Monday I had my first fight at school. I say it was my first fight at school it was really my first fight any where unless you count beating up my sister Emma to get the remote control. It was not good because I didn't know what to do. I just pushed Pavlov really hard and he fell over. And it was not good because I lost. And it was not good because Pavlov gave me a black eye. I felt it like a thud followed by a searing pain and a rush of noise. I bit my lip until I could taste blood like metal in my mouth, I held my breath and tried not to cry but it really hurt and I cried in front of everybody which really was not good. I pretended to everybody that he had deliberately stuck his finger in my eye and tried to take my eye out. When you are in danger of looking seriously uncool sometimes you just say the first thing you can think of don't you? At least Pavlov ripped his trousers when he fell over and got a nice big green grass stain on his back side.

The good thing for me was that the teachers got involved real quick. I say it was a good thing because Pavlov is a lot bigger than me and I think I might have got hurt a lot more. We both had to see the headmaster and say sorry to each other in front of him. He even made us shake hands. You could see that Pavlov felt as stupid as I did. But his hand was still sore and bleeding from punching me so I squeezed extra hard. He didn't like that. But we both got detentions for the rest of the week and a letter sent home to our parents.

Mum was furious, dad was furious and Emma thought it was hilarious. Mum said it was about time we sorted out my 'anger issues'. She asked in her shouty voice what made me so angry but I just stayed quiet and said 'Nothin'.' It can't be just nothing' she said, 'I am going to take you to a

counsellor and get to the bottom of your anger issues'. That didn't sound like something I was going to enjoy.

So that's what happened today after school. I met a counsellor. Now I wasn't sure what to expect, I didn't even know what one of those counsellor thingy's was. But he was OK.

First of all he spoke quietly to me and mum together. Mum told him how I had been nasty at school and had a fight. She talked in her fast urgent voice like she does when she is nervous. I think she said I was 'aggressive' and that I had anger issues. To be honest I was a bit fed up of hearing about 'issues'. No one really knew what was going on apart from me and Scar and everybody was getting on at me. The counsellor was really keen to ask me my side of the story and kept checking that I agreed with what mum was saying or asking me what I thought. After a while he told mum he had heard enough and would like to talk to me on my own for a while. I was cool with that because he seemed like a good bloke, a bit like my uncle. I think mum wanted to stay but she went out anyway.

When we were on our own it suddenly seemed very quiet and I could smell mum's perfume. I was really nervous, my stomach was doing somersaults and I had sweaty palms. The counsellor told me he was a big fan of Stoke City. He had spotted the Arsenal sticker on my school bag he said. We spent ages talking about football. He knew all the players and reckoned he had met Arsene Wenger once. Not sure about that as my dad can't even get tickets to go see a game.

He talked about a famous goalkeeper Gordon Banks who played for Stoke City and for England in the 1966 World Cup and how his football days had come to an end because of a terrible car crash. He lost the use of one eye. He told me how he would have had a right to be angry when he lost his job as a goalkeeper and was unable to play the game he loved anymore. He explained that most people have a reason for being angry even if it is not a very good one and he asked me what my reason was.

I found myself telling him all about how Pavlov kept calling me names. I explained that it was not just the names he called me it was the way he said them. Pavlov spat them out in a nasty voice, you could hear the spite in his words. I hadn't told anybody apart from Scar. You see, I am very tall and skinny. My school trousers are always too short and Mum has even taken me to the doctors because she thinks I am growing too tall too fast.

Pavlov calls me 'Bean pole' or 'Beany'. He spits out stuff like 'What's the weather like up there today Bean pole?' or 'Do you know any other ugly giants Beany?' and stuff like that. I hate him. And he makes me really angry. Really, really angry I said to the counsellor. He asked me to explain what this anger feels like, so I told him. It is like a boiling in my blood, my ears get so hot, my stomach churns and all I can see is what has made me angry, my eyes shut out everything else. I can't help it I just react, strike out at what has made me so angry.

I was a bit surprised when he said that was ok. He understood and could help me to control or he might of said 'channel' the anger. I'm not sure what he said or what he meant but I feel good for talking to him. It was even better than talking to Scar, who is a great listener but he can't really help 'cos he is a goldfish. The counsellor called mum back in and they discussed some stuff and mum made another appointment for me to go back. Sounds good to me even though he is a Stoke fan. I must remember to ask him if he has any photos of Arsene Wenger to prove he met him.