

# **THE TESSEN METHOD**

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## **The Art of Emotional Self-Defence**

**by  
MJ Kazmierski**



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# THE TESSEN METHOD

The Tessen Method is a new form of understanding and managing emotional violence.

All sorts of inter-personal abuse takes place in all sorts of environments. It can be found anywhere – in charities, relationships and sanctuaries – not just in playgrounds and corporations.

Tessen looks not just at “bullying” itself, but analyses its causes and reviews the long-term consequences, with the aim of helping everyone minimise the impact of emotional violence.

In all walks of life...

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# THE TESSEN PROJECT

***tessen – a Japanese defensive weapon in the shape of a fan.***

*Samurai could take these where swords or other weapons were not allowed. The tessan was also used for fending off arrows and darts, as a throwing weapon, and as an aid in signalling and communication.*



# WHAT IS PAIN TRYING TO TELL US?

There is an epidemic taking place in the Western world – people are taking massive amounts of pain-killers, both over the counter designer pills as well as prescription drugs.

The question is – why do we try to numb so much pain, rather than trying to cure what is causing it?

Are there lessons to be learnt in order to minimise the amount of harm we can do to one another?

Are there any new ways of looking at the problem?

And can the learning itself help?



# THE LANGUAGE OF VIOLENCE

**Bullying... Harassment... Victimisation... Discrimination...**

These words have become part of everyday speech in many professional environments, yet the conflicts they represent are not limited to workplaces and do not seem to be going away.

The Tessen Method uses 10 simple steps to help us understand where abuse comes from, how to understand its complex nature and how to deal with it so it does us and those around us no more harm.



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# THE TESSEN PROJECT

The TESSEN Project aims to address shortcoming in existing anti-bullying programmes and introduces an innovative, interactive and highly effective range of materials to help tackle all forms of unfair treatment in a range of social and professional settings.

Based on 10 easy to follow rules, it can be adapted for a range of learning styles, levels and educational environments.

Using the form of a Japanese samurai defensive weapon fan as a base for all educational materials, it is a truly mind-opening, game-changing approach to delivering bullying awareness training.

# THE TESSEN CHECKLIST

Before we proceed, go through this simple checklist and tick any of the statements which you think might apply to you.

Don't think at all about trying to explain or justify them – just try to answer honestly...



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**Are you ever given things to do which you cannot or should not have to do?**

**Are you ever taken by total surprise with an occasional gift or compliment?**

**Are there things you need to know but are not given that information?**

**Do you ever hear words or sounds which make you upset?**

**Do you find yourself having dark thoughts about work, school or home?**

**Are you criticised for things you weren't told how to do in the first place?**

**Are you excluded from activities others take part in?**

**Are you watched all the time for no good reason?**

**Are the things expected of you frequently changed around?**

**Are you ever picked on because of things which make who you are?**

**Are your requests for help and advice repeatedly ignored?**

**Are hints often dropped about changes which will affect you negatively?**

**Are you experiencing stress, anxiety, fear, confusion, diminished confidence, panic, guilt,  
anger???**

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# THE TESSEN CHECKLIST

Any of the above could be signs you are suffering from a real case of bullying...

Now, let's see what our TESSEN METHOD can do to help.



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# 1 / BULLIES HIDE BEHIND HUMOUR

鉄扇八寸



般若心經

## **PROBLEM 1 – Bullying is still seen by many as a playground joke**

Though it can occur anywhere – at school, at work, in the home, between lovers, web users, volunteers – bullying is still seen as something which is a minor problem we all grow out of.

But what if the harm we inflict on each other when kids has not gone away, but has simply become hidden in violence which is invisible, insidious and impossible to pinpoint easily?

In the US, recent research estimated a cost of  $\approx$  1.88 billion each year to the economy, plus the cost of lost productivity. Subjects of bullying are between 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide than non-subjects, according to studies by Yale University.

*Not funny at all, is it?*

## **SOLUTION 1 – TAKE BULLYING VERY SERIOUSLY**

Even though we live in a frivolous age when talking about feelings is hard and taking things seriously frowned upon, abuse is all about power, and the less we talk about it the more that power can corrupt.

“Almost half (46%) of children and young people say they have been bullied at school at some point in their lives.” (NSPCC 2013). A study in Britain found that at least half of suicides among young people are related to bullying.

Once you accept that bullying is commonplace and extremely harmful, you can start to do something about it.

Try to work out where and when in your life you have seen or experienced something like it. Try to see patterns in those experiences. In patterns hide answers.

Denial just makes the bully's job easier.

*And the pain of the person being harmed even greater.*

## 2 / BULLIES ROB YOU OF STRENGTH



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## **PROBLEM 2 – BULLYING STEALS THE ENERGY YOU NEED TO RESIST**

Your confidence is undermined.

Your strength sapped.

Guilty feelings.

Depression sets in.

Illness can follow.

Paranoia (is it just me?).

You start making mistakes you didn't before, making things even worse (you start believing the bully is right about you!). You worry over every tomorrow, your future, your sanity...

## **SOLUTION 2 – Get resilient and don't look for quick fixes**

Bullying is a process of abuse of power, from below or above, which takes place over a prolonged period of time. Challenging and recovering from it can also be a painfully long and hard process.

Try and step back from the situation, write an objective account of what is happening, speak to others you trust.

They will help you feel better, see clearer, think more effectively and help convince you that you are after all sane!

And be honest with yourself – sometimes it is more reasonable to walk away from a bullying environment than to try challenging the problem.

The odd battle can be won, but what if the bigger war is lost and you suffer more in triumph than you would by walking away from a bad relationship or quitting a bad job?

Bullying is a complex, long-term process – challenging it is too – and that, for someone worn right down by abuse may simply not be achievable...

## TESSEN 3 / BULLIES PLAY WITH YOUR MIND



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## **PROBLEM 3 – Bullying is not limited to playgrounds or corporations**

Much of the anti-bullying training employers provide has failed to reduce the amount of bullying in UK workplaces - why?

Most of it just states the obvious, insisting victims confront the perpetrators of abuse.

Employers often use training to “cover themselves” legally. Bullies attending the training ridicule or suck up to the trainers, making themselves look angelic or like “robust” managers. Or the courses are cancelled. Or your managers don’t send you when they are on!

But what causes bullying in the first place?

And what of its long-term impact on us, as individuals and as a society?

Do the training courses deal with that?

## **SOLUTION 3 – Your heart may be in pieces, but your head is the solution**

Remember – bullying can happen between individuals, in families, in workplaces, in charities... in fact, businesses know it is bad for business and often try hard to tackle it. It is in clubs, associations, community projects and creative environments where bullying can go unchallenged the longest – simply because everyone is expected to get on and bullies know that is a useful cover for them!

Bullying is the **abuse** of **power**, by individuals or groups, which takes place over a period of **time** and follows a **pattern**. Hence, it can happen between neighbours, friends, families even.

So, if bullying is an abuse of power and knowledge is power itself, learning as much as you can about the issues involved is your solution! Be sure to understand the language involved – e.g., what is the difference between bullying and harassment?

Take the time to read up and talk to others, become an expert, then work out your own strategies for challenging it – and always, always work with others! If any sort of abuse has made you feel isolated and lonely, it will be almost impossible to tackle it by yourself.

Look as long as it takes to find a source of support.

## TESSEN 4 / BULLIES MAKE YOU FEEL GUILTY



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## **PROBLEM 4 – Kind people tend to apologise for the abuse they receive**

We live in a culture where “turning the other cheek” is a good thing.

Bullies count on their victims being too nice and too timid to stand up for themselves, and they are often right...

Nice people always ask if there is anything THEY can do to make a bad situation better.

This is what bullies twist to their advantage!

## **SOLUTION 4 – Learn the benefits of the art of “fighting without fighting”**

Ask yourself – am I apologising for my bully?

Am I making their actions less harsh than they actually are?

If what is happening to me were happening to someone else, would I stand by and let it go on?

Bullying behaviours have been around since the beginning of time, and happen in all sorts of environments (not just corporations and army bases).

Doing the right thing sometimes means admitting to yourself someone has done you or another person wrong. And then doing something about it.

If a bully brings the fight to you, what else can you do but protect yourself?

Make more allowances?

Bend and bend and bend until you break?

## 5 / BULLIES GROOM THEIR VICTIMS



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## **PROBLEM 5 – Bullies tends to target certain types of people**

Bullies are choosy about who they attack.

Their strategy is always to go for those who are least likely to recognise and report the abuse.

This doesn't mean the quietest or shiest people are always targets. Surprisingly, it can often be those who are successful and popular, yet too kind to notice, who can suddenly find themselves the subject of complex patterns of harassment and abuse.

Bullies are driven by complex motives. Sometimes they pick on the strong as compensation for jealousy, loneliness or other pains. Absurd, but that is how bullying can happen from below – so not a manager bullying an employee, but vice versa. Or a woman bullying a male partner. Or a child an adult...

## **SOLUTION 5 – Focus on facts, even if they are hard to face**

Be aware of your own personality type, and of others.

Are you the kind of person a bully might pick on?

Or are you the kind of cocky sort who thinks they will never be bullied?

Wherever there are emotions, opinions and facts, always try to establish the latter.

Facts help you see things your heart wants to be in denial about...

## 6 / BULLIES WORK IN PACKS



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## **PROBLEM 6 – Bullies are cowards, and so they will hide behind others**

Bullies know they are doing wrong and often take steps to protect themselves – often by those with even more power than themselves.

In places where there are good relationships and a culture of respect, bullying tends not to happen. It just can't work!

But if the top management line is either involved or ignorant, that makes it so much easier for bullying to go on.

This makes it hard to challenge or report bullying and harassment, as you feel other managers and colleagues will not believe or further bully you if you complain – they know it's going on and will not help you stop it.

## **SOLUTION 6 – Never stand alone and never let yourself be overwhelmed**

Focus on facts, make a list of events and stick to them.

Do not let the noise of the crowd overwhelm these.

If you think those at the top know what is going on or, worse, are implicit, get out – challenging a hierarchy of abuse is often impossible to do without suffering more than it is worth in the process.

## 7 / BULLIES ABUSE



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## **PROBLEM 7 – Victims try to analyse, explain and excuse what bullies do**

In an age of psychoanalysis, we often end up making excuses for the perpetrators, confusing the act with the person doing it – acts can and must be judged objectively, but we are taught not to judge and generalise about individuals.

Bullies know they can blame their behaviour on their pasts, their childhoods, all sorts of background causes, and use those to get off the hook.

And those who turn the other cheek often let them...

## **SOLUTION 7 – Focus on yourself, no matter how unnatural it may feel**

Focus on your feelings, not those of the potential perpetrator.

If you are able to prove, at least to yourself, that someone is doing you wrong, get busy protecting yourself long before you start considering the ins and outs of the situation, what you may have done to contribute to the problem or what the perpetrator might be feeling.

If you feel anxious, frightened, angry or depressed about work, do not blame yourself and do not make excuses for the actions of others.

Feeling sorry for the bully is exactly what the bully wants you to do...

## 8 / BULLIES PLAY GOOD COP, BAD COP



## **PROBLEM 8 – Bullies use strategies to confuse and weaken us further**

Bullies which go from devil to angel and back again. By saying nice things once in a while, or buying cheap gifts, or making false promises, they fool us into thinking “They can't be that bad...”

This makes it hard to be sure that they are bullying.

Confusion sets in, another tool in the arsenal of the bully.

## **SOLUTION 8 – Form a complex picture, do not jump to conclusions**

Do not focus on the person or their overall image.

Focus on events and how they impact on you.

The bully may be on hell of a charmer, but it is their actions, not their charisma, or the force of their personality, which is important.

## **9 / BULLYING INVOLVES MASSIVE LIES**



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## **PROBLEM 9 – Bullies use knowledge, and lies, to their advantage**

All too often bullies are experts in playing the system and mega-confident.

They hide behind complex grievance and investigations systems, often having more experience of going through these than their victims, and believe they are “Teflon coated”.

By simply refusing to accept there is a problem they often wear opponents down and get away with wrongdoing.

Or sometimes they just brazenly lie and lie and lie until:

*“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.”*

(J. Goebbels, Hitler's Reich Minister of Propaganda)

## **SOLUTION 9 – Talk to others to dispel inner conflict and connivance**

There are many systems and sources of support.

Learn about these, call on your union or workplace colleagues for help, or external agencies.

It takes a lot of patience and resilience to evidence bullying – if it goes on for a long time, as it often will, so does the process of stopping it – don't be put off by this...

# TESSEN 10 / BULLYING IS AGAINST THE LAW



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## **PROBLEM 10 – We think feelings and perceptions are “inadmissible evidence”.**

We see bullying only as a conflict between individuals, and so difficult to challenge formally.

It feels like it all about personal experience and impossible to evidence beyond all reasonable doubt.

Unless we have witnesses or hard evidence, we believe it cannot be proved or stopped.

## **SOLUTION 10 – Feelings are facts and civil law is based on them**

Forget criminal courts and crime movies!

Bullying is covered by civil law, especially when combined with harassment and/or discrimination, all you need to prove is that it's more than likely abuse took place – talk to experts to get more info on this, they will help you see things straight!

Recording conversations or printing emails or building up other forms of evidence can be useful, but can also work against you, amplifying feelings of paranoia or guilt.

*Remember – just because you think you have been wronged does not make it so, but it does mean there is a problem to resolve.*

It is up to someone in your organisation, team or partnership to resolve it – dispute resolution is an art in itself.

# OK, TESSEN, WHAT NOW?

*We hope you found the 10 Tessen Keys illuminating and useful.*

*This presentation can't tell you what to do or how to do it, cannot support anyone through the actual experience of interpersonal abuse, cannot offer a remedy to the ultimate problem of bullying.*

***What it can do is make you THINK...***

*When confronted with an attack of any kind, we have two basic options: **FIGHT OR FLIGHT***

*But what if even the language of these simple steps is wrong?*

*What if we change the words for **ENGAGE OR EVADE**?*

*Are we being silly, picky or actually quite wise in swapping one set of terms for another?*

# ENGAGE OR EVADE?

*Few of us have what it takes to engage in any sort of fight with anyone. Especially when all the complex after-effects of being in the midst of a bullying scenario come into play and run us right down. On the other hand, we don't want to feel like flighty cowards when considering withdrawing from the field of bullying either.*

*By deciding to **engage** with a bullying problem and trying to resolve it, there is much we can achieve and fix, but in a lot of cases, this is too much to take on for the reasons outlined in the 10 Tessen Keys.*

*By deciding to **evade** the environment in which we are subject to abuse, we open ourselves to feelings of guilt and failure, but if we think of this not as fleeing, but evading, the difference can be decisive.*

***Ultimately, the decision which option to follow has to come from your own healthy, ordered and objective mind.***

# ***SAFE. STRONG. SANE***

*Remember, the original Tessen fans could only ever be used as a defensive weapon of last resort. It is much better to avoid any sort of attack than have to repel it. Therefore, even if you have been a victim in the past or have never experienced the abuse covered here, the Tessen Method can still help you avoid getting into negative situations and relations.*

*If, however, you have been unlucky enough to find yourself in an abusive scenario, follow these steps:*

**1 – GET SAFE ...** *First, get yourself into a position where you are protected from further abuse. Trying to do something about it while suffering further attacks will simply add to an already drastic problem. This may involve a short break, a long separation, or even total withdrawal. Whichever you choose, this is the essential first priority.*

**2 – GET STRONG ...** *Do what is necessary to recover all lost energies. Until all your physical, mental and emotional resources are restored you will not be best equipped to find the right path to follow out of trouble. This is the second essential step.*

**3 – GET SANE ...** *Finally, do what is necessary to get your head around what happened. This is the only way to put the past truly behind you and assure you that haunting histories will not be repeated. This is the last but far from least part of the process of recovery, and necessary to end it.*

# THE TESSEN PROJECT

*“Bullying can be a killer... Get safe,  
get strong, get sane...”*



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# **THE TESSEN PROJECT**

**Developed by MJ Kazmierski in 2011**

**when he was working for the UK**

**Ministry of Justice & Her Majesty's Prison Service**

**as a prison governor, trade union rep and Diversity Train The Trainer  
responsible for teaching 144,000 MOJ members of staff how to  
recognize and challenge bullying and other forms of abusive  
behaviour all across the UK**

**TESSEN is a simple set of 10 ideas**

**which can be used by any one in any situation where  
interpersonal relationships can involve profoundly harmful  
abuses of power - such as bullying, discrimination, harassment and  
all forms of overt and passive aggression**

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