



# Streetwise

## A Do you need help?

**BOYZNGIRLZ.com**

**LOOKING FOR HELP? ASK AGONY AUNT or UNCLE!**

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Click on the photo of the Agony Aunt<sup>1</sup> or the Agony Uncle if you have a problem and send us an e-mail. We will answer you in a personal e-mail. We will also put your problem and other teenagers' answers online (in BOYZNGIRLZ ZONE).

**One word of warning:** Don't give real names, addresses or phone numbers in your e-mail! It can be dangerous. Please **do not** do this! If you need help urgently, call us on our Streetline number.

**Problem 78**  
Mon Jan 26, 4:34 AM

Dear Agony Uncle,

Writing about this problem isn't easy for me, but I really need your help! Jeff (not his real name) and I have been best mates since we were kids. We really liked hanging out together - watching football, playing computer games - you know - all the usual stuff. We went everywhere together. But everything changed when he told me he wanted to join a gang. He wanted me to join them, too. I tried - I was with them for one evening. But it wasn't my idea of fun: They started bullying someone in the street and insulting<sup>2</sup> him. They also enjoy stealing from kids at school and damaging things like bus seats and public phone boxes. Now Jeff never comes over to my house. He says that hanging out at his place is cooler. His parents are often not at home, so the gang meets there. They talk about all the stupid things they do and pretend they are fantastic and cool.

I tried talking to my mate but he just shouted at me. The others in the gang say I'm scared - but I'm not! I'm just not a 'gang person' - that's all! But because I was there at the beginning they think I know too much about their activities. Last week they beat up<sup>3</sup> someone who told a teacher about them! So now I feel lonely and bored and a bit scared and I've lost my best mate.

What should I do?!

Tom, 15

## B What you said about Problem 78 (Tom, 15)

Dear Tom,  
I can see what your problem is. It's hard losing your mate. But think about it the other way round: *He* has lost *you* as a friend! Tell him again: You're not interested! But if you get any real trouble from the gang, call a helpline right away. *Mista Mack, 16*

Hi Tom,  
What's your problem? Hanging out with a real gang can be tough. Thornton Toughs is the name of our gang. We show people who we are and we love seeing them run off scared! In a gang you're strong - alone, you're nobody. Be smart: join that gang! *TT*

<sup>1</sup>agony aunt/uncle [ˈæɡəni ɑːnt]/[ˈæɡəni ʌŋkl] – *Berater/in*, <sup>2</sup>to insult [ɪnˈsʌlt] – *beleidigen*, <sup>3</sup>to beat up [ˈbiːtʌp] – *verprügeln*

**1 Before you read: Gangs you know**

a) What gangs do you know about or have you heard about? Think about films, stories you have read, your school, your neighbourhood. Decide what is good or bad about them. Start a grid like this:

Name	Where	Good (✓) + reason	Bad (X) + reason
Rabbit's gang	Film '8 Mile'	✓ help Rabbit, encourage him	X violent
The Brushstroke Gang	English book	✓ help one another	...
...	...	...	...

b) Collect more examples of how gangs can be good or bad for young people. Think of kids who have problems (lonely, bullied, ...) or are bullies (violent, dangerous, ...).

**2 Tom's problem**

Read part A 'Do you need help?'

- a) Which of these does Tom have a problem with:  
 1. his parents?    2. his best mate?    3. his teacher?    4. his uncle?
- b) How does he feel:  
 1. tired?    2. strong?    3. frightened?    4. stupid?
- c) What advice would you give him?

**3 What should Tom do?**

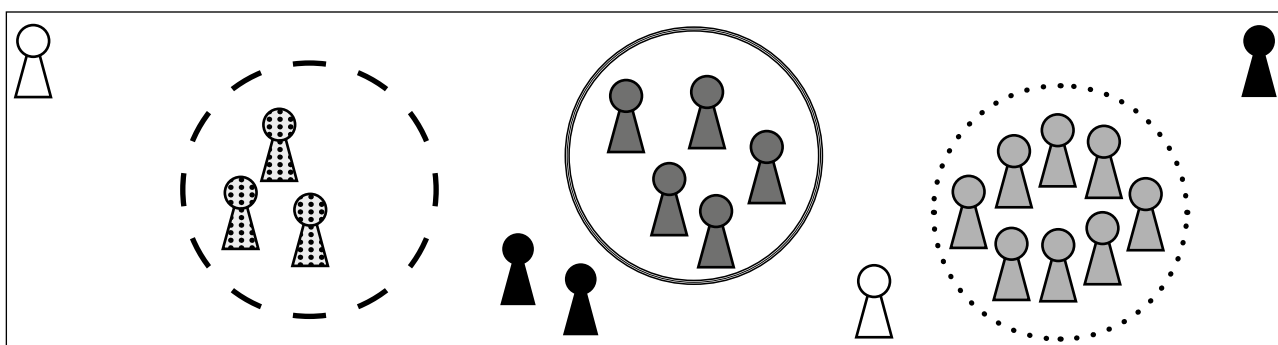
a) Read the e-mails from Mista Mack and TT. What advice do they give Tom?

- b) Which advice do you think is better? Why?  
 Start like this: I think what Mista Mack/TT says is/isn't very helpful, because Tom .../  
 I think/don't think that what ... said is useful/a good idea/sensible ... because ...

c) Tell the group what you think and listen to other ideas. Vote on the best piece of advice.

**4 Gangs for everyone?**

- a) Tom says "I'm just not a gang person". What does this mean?  
 1. He likes to be alone.    2. He thinks all gangs are bad.  
 3. He doesn't feel happy being in a gang.    4. He doesn't know what gangs do.
- b) What about you? Are you a 'gang' person? Find yourself in the diagram.



Lösungsvorschläge: Ex. 2 a): 2, b) 3; Ex. 3 a): Mista Mack suggests that he should think about his problem differently. He should tell his mate that he isn't interested and should call a helpline if he has trouble with the gang. TT thinks he should join the gang. Then he won't be lonely and he will be strong; Ex. 4 a): 3