

My First Martial Arts Book



by Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle

My First Martial Arts Book

Putting My Shoes by the
Door, Just So

by Terrence Webster-Doyle



First edition, 2001

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And as always to my wife Jean, who is the real creative force behind it all.



Today my friend and I are taking our first martial arts class!



We meet our teachers, who greet us as we enter. They show us around the school. It is very clean and orderly. There are beautiful and peaceful pictures on the walls.

The teachers give us martial arts uniforms. They show us how to tie our belts. The first belt a student gets is white.



The teachers take us first to a special room for new students. There we sit on the floor while they teach us about respect, which means treating each other with kindness.



They tell us that in the martial arts we show respect by bowing. We show respect to our parents, teachers, other students, and to the school. Bowing is like shaking hands and saying “Hello, nice to meet you.”

Our martial arts teachers tell us that respect is the most important thing martial arts can teach us. They tell us that respect is something that we want to do because it feels good inside, like when someone is nice to you and you want to be nice back.



We also learn that respect is having good manners, like opening a door for someone, or saying “Please,” and “Thank you.”

Then they show us how to put our shoes neatly in a row, just so. They tell us that putting our shoes neatly in a row teaches us to be orderly. It shows respect for the martial arts school.





We then go into the main room and join the other students. The teachers tell us that before they can show us physical self-defense moves, like punching and kicking, we have to understand that the martial arts is more than that. They tell us the correct practice of the martial arts is called the “3Ps,” which means “Prevent, Prepare, and Protect.”

Most people think that the martial arts teach us only different ways to fight. But the martial arts really teach us how to stop a fight before it starts, by using our brain instead of our fists.





Our teachers talk about being bullied. They tell us that we can use the martial arts to stop a bully from hurting us without fighting. The first way to stop being hurt by a bully is to Prevent it—the first P. Preventing it means being aware of a bully before he is aware of us.



We learn how to stop a bully from hurting us by learning to talk our way out of a fight before it happens. This is the second P, which stands for Prepare.



To help us Prepare, one of the students plays the bully and another plays the person being picked on. The one acting like a bully gets to be tough and say things to scare us. The person being picked on is taught to say things to make the bully stop picking on him. Doing this is called “role playing,” like being an actor in a play.

Some of the things we do to stop the bully are to make a joke, or to try and make friends with the bully or just to walk away. Our teachers know a dozen different ways to do this; they call it “12 Ways to Walk Away With Confidence.” A chart on the wall shows the 12 Ways, to help us remember them.





We each get a chance to play the bully. Our teachers tell us that it is important to understand how a bully feels and why the bully wants to hurt us. Playing the bully helps us be less afraid.

The third P stands for Protect, which means learning martial arts physical self-defense skills. The teachers tell us that these skills are to be used only after we have really tried the first two Ps—Prevent and Prepare.





The first self-defense skill we are taught is how to block. Blocking means stopping the bully from hurting us without hurting the bully.



We are also taught how to protect ourselves by moving out of the way. If the bully tries to hit us, we just step to the side and let the punch go past. The bully can't hurt us if we are not there.

A teacher then has us sit down in a circle and reads a Martial Arts for Peace story called “Do You Mind If I Warm Up?” It’s about a young martial arts student who is being picked on by a bully.



In the story the martial arts student has been picked on by a bully a few times but hasn't been hurt because he used the first two Ps. He used his head instead of his fists to stop a fight before it happened.

But one day the bully finally corners him in a dead end alley, and roars, “OK, Kung Fu fool, I’ve got you! Your big talk won’t work now.”





The young martial arts student calmly looks at the bully and says, "Yes, you've trapped me and there's no way out. So I guess we'll have to fight. But do you mind if I warm up first?"



The bully is so surprised by this request that he doesn't know what to say. The martial arts student steps back and begins punching and kicking the air with great skill and power.

Seeing that the young martial arts student really knows how to protect himself, the bully backs away. “You think you’re so tough. I’m not going to waste my time on you. I can get you any time I want!” the bully yells. The martial arts student just smiles. He knows who has won.



The teachers tell us that standing up to a bully and showing him that we are strong and confident can also stop a fight before it happens. Most of the time we can stop a fight by the first two Ps, but knowing the third P can work as a last resort.





They tell us that the highest goal of the martial arts is to stop a fight without fighting. We learn that using our brain to stop bullying is the real art of the martial arts. They tell us that stopping a fight without fighting shows respect because it means you care about other people and want to treat them with kindness.

We bow again at the end of our first class, which is like saying “Thank you,” and change out of our new martial arts uniforms. My friend and I are really glad that we are taking martial arts that are for peace. It is nothing like what we have seen on TV or in the movies where people are just fighting with each other all the time.



We can't wait to take more classes and practice defeating the bully, the smart way, without fighting, without hurting or being hurt. We also want to learn more about respect, which also means respecting the bully because we now know that a bully is just someone who was picked on and feels hurt inside.



What a great first day at our new martial arts school!



Note to Parents

The martial arts can be a fun, educational, and healthy way for children not only to keep physically fit but also to learn respect and how to understand and resolve conflict peacefully. But this can only happen when the martial arts are taught as a whole endeavor. Physical self-defense can only properly be taught in the context of self-understanding, that is, helping young people avoid and resolve conflict before it becomes a physical confrontation. These skills, of conflict avoidance and resolution, need to be taught together with conflict management, that is, mental self-defense together with physical self-defense. This enables young people to use their brains as a first line of defense to cope with being bullied, without having to resort immediately to physical means. Physical self-defense skills give the martial arts student the confidence not to fight and therefore to use mental skills first. Taught in this manner, the martial arts can be a valuable way for young people to acquire important social skills, skills that will naturally make for healthier and more peaceful relationships.

This book is for children ages 4 to 8. It is probably advisable to read this book to younger children, explaining some of the concepts. Older children can read the book themselves, asking questions of you if need be. Most important is that you both understand the difference between the often violent portrayal of martial arts in the popular media, and the true spirit and goals of martial arts practice. Moreover, if you decide that martial arts practice is right for your child, make sure you choose a school that reflects these higher goals. For help in doing this, please consult *Terrence Webster-Doyle's Martial Arts Guide for Parents*.

Want to get in touch with us? Then write, call, fax, or e-mail.

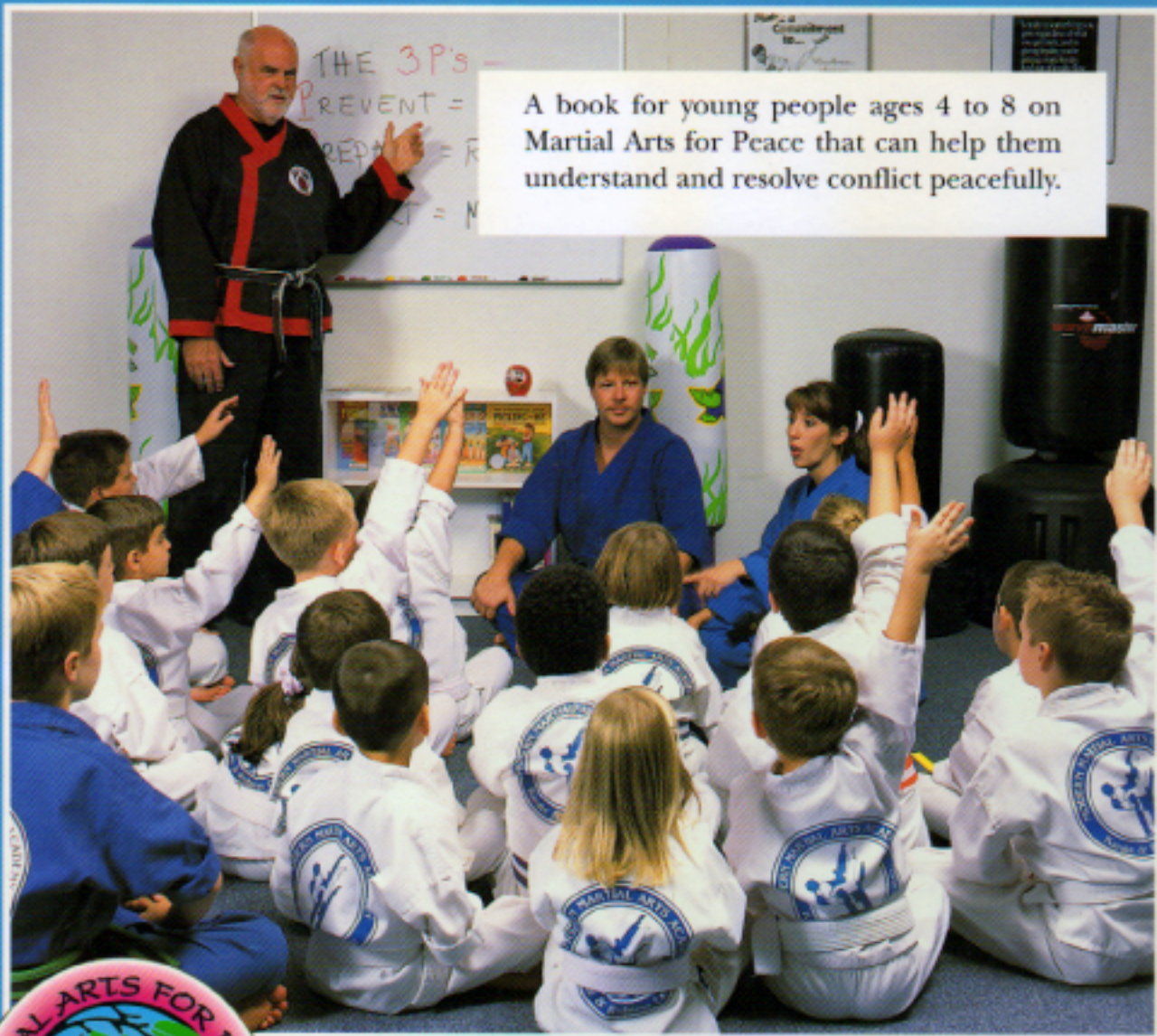
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A book for young people ages 4 to 8 on Martial Arts for Peace that can help them understand and resolve conflict peacefully.



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