

The Complete Guide to the Bully – Victim Cycle

From the Playground To The Battlefield

By Dr. Terrence and Jean Webster-Doyle

The Day of the Bee Sting

I remember what happened as if it were yesterday. I was running for my life. I knew he was right behind me and would catch me. I felt like an animal being hunted. I couldn't run faster; I was scared and out of breathe. He had only one thing in mind, which was to get me — again!

I felt humiliated and ashamed of myself as I ran. Two kids beat me up almost every day after school. There was nothing I could do. No one would stop it. Most of the adults said boys will be boys, and didn't think my problem was worth their attention.

I felt his heavy breath on my back. He caught me from behind, pulling me backward to the hard ground. My instincts were to try to protect myself from being hurt, and not to fight back. Fighting back would only make him angry and then he might really hurt me, like his brother did when he knocked out my front teeth with a rock the year before, and before that when he himself purposely ran into me with his bike. I ended up in the hospital that time with a severe head injury that has caused me problems to this day.

He pinned me down with his knees on my chest. Sitting on top of me, he began punching my face. I attempted to cover my face with my hands; that's all I could do. I felt so helpless!

All of a sudden, I felt a very sharp pain in my back as if I had fallen on a hot needle. I jumped up without thinking, yelling in agony. A bee had stung me! I stood there for a moment in shock, trying to reach the wounded area with my hand. Then I remembered what was happening just moments before the sting, and I felt an overwhelming sense of fear and dejection. But it suddenly ended when I realized that Danny, the bully who, along with his brother, had plagued me most of the way through elementary school, wasn't beating me up. In fact, he lay stunned on his back about ten feet away, where I had thrown him when I got stung.

I looked down at him and felt a sudden surge of power. I realized at that moment that I was strong and that I had let this powerful person

beat me up. It was an awe-inspiring feeling that changed my life from that time on. Danny never bothered me again.

I still remember that day clearly. I never wanted to fight and I wasn't a fast runner, so I let myself be beat up. Perhaps, looking back on it now, I could have used my brain to prevent myself from being bullied. Perhaps I could have tried to make friends with Danny and his brother or tried to reason with them. Maybe I could have called someone in authority to help me, or tricked him or her by saying that my uncle was a policeman or that I had an infectious disease and that they would get it if they came into contact with me. Maybe I could have used humor and made them laugh or perhaps I really could have stood up to them. It's hard to know what would have worked. But anything my creative imagination could have thought up would have been better than all the beatings I took."

I have written this book for adults who live or work with young people so that they can help young people to avoid the suffering I experienced early on in life with "playground bullying". I originally thought when I wrote the book *Why Is Everybody Always Picking On Me? A Guide to Handling Bullies* for young people that this was all there was to it. But then I began to think about it and realized that bullying had many faces, so to speak. I then wrote *Why Is Everybody Always Picking On Us? Understanding the Roots of Prejudice*. This then led to my creating curricula on what I now think is a full picture of all the "levels" of bullying — from the playground to the battlefield — for I now realized that what starts out on the playground with individual bullying is the starting point for group bullying in what we call war — that the very structure and nature of playground bullying is the same as in global bullying of war. And that if we are serious about preventing more global conflict we need to educate our children to understand and resolve it on the playground. And I don't mean just a remedial superficial approach that we are attempting today, if we are even doing that much. Preventing, resolving and managing bullying behavior is an education in itself just as we teach math or history or science; it is a subject that takes time to comprehend and it is this time that is absolutely necessary to give in order to end bullying behavior in our lives, for it is resolvable!

Thinking that bullying behavior, especially in war, is inevitable is a part of the conditioned thinking that creates bullying behavior in the first

place. “Boys will be boys” is a conditioned type of thinking that has let this happen. When we start to realize that this is only conditioned thinking and start taking this vital concern seriously will we then create real bully programs in our schools that explore bullying from the playground to the battlefield.

We grow up these days being taught that we need to be aggressive if we’re going to survive in this world. Teachers occasionally use their authority to bully. Parents sometimes aggressively pursue their own needs over the needs of the family. Political and military bullies get power hungry and want to dominate the world. Any conflict, any war starts with and is sustained by bullying.

The newest evidence says that babies, and all of us, are born prejudiced, **born bullies >>**. We then grow up and turn into the bullies we have been conditioned to be. When we’re afraid that people will take advantage of us, we take on the role of a bully to protect ourselves. As a bully, we control other people, telling them what to do. That way, we don’t have to do anything anyone else wants us to do. And much of the time, this is unconscious instinctual behavior.

Starting At The Beginning

So where do we start? The most obvious place is with “Why do we bully?” The basic structure and nature of bullying lies in the way we have been conditioned to think. The process and effect of “conditioning” is the primary factor in all bullying behavior so if we are to understand bullying we must fully understanding “conditioning” — what it is, how it works and the effects it has on us all— not only intellectually but actually — in our own moment-to-moment, day-to-day lives — without any judgment of it in any way. If we observe this, at the root of the behavior we can be free of it.

That may sound quite simplistic but as you will see it is a fact that conditioned thinking is at the root of all human conflict. I am not asking anyone to accept this but rather take it as a “working hypothesis” and find out if it is true or not. And if it is true, a fact, then it is not personal. In other words, the question of bullying is common to all of us. It is not “my problem” or “your problem.” It is THE problem. Actually it is not a “problem” at all. It is an occurrence that has to be observed as it is happening in the moment as it arises. It is awareness, insight that is the factor that can end bullying behavior at the source. Problem solving has a place in science and technology but in changing behavior it only creates conflict. This is a critically important fact in understanding human behavior. We want to change human behavior and we are questioning the conventional “method” of doing so. I think that this vitally important to understand before we go on with this exploration of human conflict.

I use the acronym the “3Es” to demonstrate how we need to approach changing human behavior, as I do later on in this text. The 3Es represent the learning process. This is what it means:

1. Explanation: is what I am doing right now. I am using thought to describe the learning process. If we both speak the same language and have had a similar background then what is being explained will probably make sense. The intent of this is to create a common definition of what is meant by the “learning process.” One can call this stage “foresight.”
2. Example: is the next step in learning. This is when one remembers something from their past that corresponds to the

Explanation. In this way one “personalizes” the explanation in that one now thinks “Oh, I know what he is describing for I remember when this happened to me.” For example, if I was explaining that the cause of bullying is conditioned thinking, one might see the truth of this in a past occurrence. This stage can be called “hindsight.”

3. Experiencing: is the stage that is not of thought. Thought is used to explain it, as I am doing here, but it is not thought that is Experiencing. In the example above of conditioning thinking, the actual awareness of the fact of conditioning as it is happening in the moment is Experiencing. This stage can be called “insight.”

The conventional process of changing behavior is through the first two stages, especially #1, the Explanation stage. We have been conditioned to think that thinking, since it can do so many amazing things, can resolve human conflict. The fact of the matter is that thinking is what caused conflict in the first place in the way we have been conditioned to think in a fragmentary, self-centered, divisive manner. Let’s look at this for a moment for if we don’t then reading this book or any book about human behavior will be a waste of time and only add more misery and conflict to the original situation.

If thought is the cause of conflict can thought resolve it? And if we use thought to change behavior what does it do? Thought, as it is used in science and technology, is essentially a mechanical process based on comparison. It is a tool of measurement. Height, weight, distance, etc. But when used in changing behavior it does what it is does — it measures, compares. In trying to change human behavior the first thing it does is to judge that behavior as “bad” and then it creates it’s opposite of “good.” It thinks that if the actual behavior needs to be changed it must be eliminated by this process of judgments and ideals, the ideal being the “good.” And this process is essentially the fundamental process of what we call “religion.” Religion is in the business of changing behavior through condemnation or judgment and affirmation or ideals. At its core what we call “religion” is very simple. It is a “mechanical” process of elimination of the “bad” and conforming to what we consider the “good.”

If we can look at this process mechanically, then we can see the way it creates conflict in the brain between what “what is” — the judged behavior that one wants to change — and “what should be” — the ideal behavior one wants to attain. In this “logic” the more one tries to be “good” the more one has to judge oneself as “bad” for they work equally together like a two-fold double sliding scale. If one were to try to become “perfectly good” one should have to eliminate the “bad” in oneself. But the “bad” is what one actually is. It is who I am. The ideal, or what is termed “good” is only an image, of what I should be. It is like the horse with the carrot dangling from a stick placed in front of the horse to keep it moving forward driven by the horse’s intent in the eventual hope of eating it. But as you can see the “carrot” like the “ideal” is always just out of reach. This is because what we call attaining “goodness” in this fashion, is always just out of reach, for it is always in the “future”.

There is a saying “*Demon es Deus Invertus*” which means the Devil is God inverted. What this means is that if thought is used to try to change human behavior through the comparison of “bad” and “good” we will get the opposite of what we want. By condemning behavior as “bad” or in the Judeo-Christian religious view “The Devil” and want to attain “goodness” or the opposite of the Devil, we end up with being really “bad.” If the attainment of the “good” in this process doesn’t work, which it doesn’t, unless one clings tenaciously to the ideal hoping that in the next life that “goodness” will prevail, then what we are left with is an intense self-loathing. This can be seen time and time again when someone explodes and an act commits violence towards themselves or others.

Let me give you a very dramatic illustration of this riptide effect of trying to change behavior through judgment and ideals. In my book *Growing Up Sane — Understanding the Conditioned Mind* I give the example of Charles Joseph Whitman, the All American boy, who was the first mass murderer in the Texas Tower killings in 1966 at the University of Texas at Austin who killed 14 people and wounded 34 others. Charles Joseph Whitman was an Eagle Scout at the age of 12, an altar boy at the local Catholic Church, a pitcher on the church/school baseball team, a newsboy with the biggest route in town. He was an exemplary marine, an straight A architectural engineering student, married to the Queen of the Fair of Needville, Texas, a “nice uncomplicated sort of guy,” fond of children, a scoutmaster. What happened to Charles Joseph Whitman is that in my view he suffered

from the pressure and hence conflict of trying to become “good” by the conventional process mentioned above.

Obviously most people don’t do what he did. But they suffer from it in many other ways that create conflict in their lives and the lives of others. What I am most emphatically trying to convey is that if we want to prevent, resolve and manage bullying behavior we need to be very careful about how we go about it. Again, I am not saying that you have to believe what I have just said about resolving bullying behavior through Explanations, through thought, in that it will create conflict through judgment and ideals. I am only putting it forward for you to find out the truth or falseness of it, for if it is true, a fact, then we can really approach resolving bullying behavior the correct way without creating more conflict in the process.

If we can hold this above premise in mind without concluding perhaps it will give us the capability to view what is written in the rest of this book with an open mind. For each and every one of us will most likely approach a book on understanding human behavior with a certain prejudicial, or conditioned view. It is very important to be able to suspend this view and be open to looking at something that may be new. That what the third "E" in the 3Es is all about. Can we look at our reactions as we read this book and see if they are conditioned or not. And if they are then we are becoming aware of them through “insight” and not by merely memorizing the text intellectually, thinking that this is the learning that is necessary to change human behavior.

There is one more very important, seemingly contradictory factor that needs to be explained before we go on and this is ChildSafe Martial Arts™ — Martial Arts for Peace (please also refer to Addendums Three through Eight). In understanding and resolving bullying successfully there is a primary biologically conditioned reaction that gets triggered in the human brain that underlies all human conflict and that is the biologically (Bio-reactive) driven freeze, fight or flight response system. This gets triggered two ways:

1. When there is a real threat to one’s survival.
2. When there is only a supposed threat to one’s survival.

When there is a real threat to one’s survival then the fight or flight system is a necessary biological survival mechanism designed to protect

us. But in the case of a child being potentially being threatened on the playground by a bully we don't want this mechanism to react prematurely before he or she (the "victim") has had a chance to first avoid conflict and then resolve conflict using their brains instead of their fists. Having two "lines of defense" that precede the need for physical self-defense the child is better equipped to handle the situation without getting hurt or hurting someone physically. Physical self-defense skills can give one the confidence to use their first two lines of defense — to prevent and resolve conflict — before having to resort to physical self-protection skills.

But I am not talking about conventional physical self-defense skills that are potentially lethal, age and situation inappropriate, developmentally unsound and questionably legal. What I have developed is ChildSafe Martial Arts™ that are nonlethal, age and situation appropriate, developmentally sound self-defense skills that do not incorporate any offensive skills at all. After over 40 years in the martial arts I have come to the realization that a child of 7, 8 9 or 10 does not need offensive martial arts physical skills to deal with a potential threat by a bully who is of the same age (see Addendum Five)

Having age and situation appropriate, defensive martial arts physical skills helps prevent the fight or flight system from reacting prematurely. When coupled with the first two lines of defense, of being able to avoid and resolve conflict nonphysically using their brains instead of their fists, the physical skills have a place. But it is the image of a supposed threat that is a more serious issue that needs to be looked at. I have attempted to explain that in Addendum Seven. This is perhaps the most important concern that needs to be addressed for it has kept prejudice active for thousands of years because this underlying biological survival system that is activated inappropriately is due to a conditioned image of the "ENEMY". It is the underlying factor that creates terrorism today as it has for millennia. For without understanding why and how the brain reacts to a supposed threat — a conditioned image — we will never get to the core of this urgent concern of conflict in relationship — the bullying from the playground to the battlefield.

Chapter 1

Why Do We Bully?

“We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.”

There is a bully inside us — telling us what to think and how to feel. When we have a thought such as “I’m no good,” or “I really messed up,” the thought races through our mind and begs us to identify with it. Thoughts like these can have a strong impact on us.

When an event occurs that disturbs us, automatic thoughts enter the mind. These mechanical thoughts happen so fast that one doesn’t notice them. And if we don’t notice them, we certainly don’t question them. Still, these thoughts affect our attitude, our mood, our body and our ability to function clearly — on our own, in our relationships, and in the world. Something this pervasive is too important to pass off as unworthy of evaluation, and that’s why this book has been written. It’s about why bullying exists and what we can do to stop it.

Most of us have a personal story about being bullied. When was first time? Even though it may have happened a while ago, do you still think about it? There’s no question that you were scared during the incident, and, after you survived the situation, you wished you could do something about it.

We all know about the terrible violence bullying has created — we’ve seen the escalating statistics; on television we’ve watched reports about shootings by children in schools. And we have read about children taking their own lives because they were “picked on” mercilessly and could no longer cope.

We have learned that abuse at home strongly contributes to bully behavior. Many studies have demonstrated that television, video games, and “action” films can contribute to violent thoughts and acts. So, we are

fully aware of the effects of bullying — in the lives of our children and in all of us — personally, domestically, socially and globally.

That said, why belabor what we already know? What we must do is take action to end this violence and the bullying that inspires it, and create successful programs that help everyone understand how to stop it — young people as well as adults. Many programs have been generated, but few are working. What we have now are programs that do not address the problem in a workable way, or solutions that come too late. This is why we continue to read articles on violence and bullying that repeat, again and again, what needs to be done. Rather than complain about the violence, *after the fact*, shouldn't we do something instead to *prevent* it? Doesn't it make sense to prevent violence than try to fix it after it's already exploded?

The first thing we need to do is to see that bullying is not my "problem" or your "problem;" it is THE "problem." It is more than this; it is a crisis! Yet we act as if it was just "boys being boys," as the saying goes.

The second thing is that bullying is actually not a problem to be solved. It is an act of conditioned behavior that needs to be observed. Thinking has created bullying mentality; thinking cannot resolve it by more thinking. In order to be free of the conditioned behavior of bullying one needs to be able to actually be aware of it as it is happening in the moment. And this means seeing the root of it, the fundamental cause of it in the way we have been conditioned to think and hence act. To understand this it is important to be able to understand how and why this starts.

Have we ever stopped to think about *why* a person turns into a bully? Consider this: Bullies become bullies because someone once bullied them. They were victims first. Bullies become bullies because they have been bullied. They learn to act tough, to threaten or intimidate others, in order to protect themselves from being victims again. This behavior has tied so many knots in their brains that they have forgotten how to act respectfully toward others — and toward themselves.

Knowing this, perhaps we can look at any bully we encounter through new eyes. Can we understand that the bullies became bullies

for a reason? This doesn't make them any easier to deal with, but this perspective puts us in a place of understanding, which is exactly where we need to be to learn how to prevent bullying.

What We Do When We're Scared

The best way to begin any level of understanding is to explore. When we explore, rather than assume that we know all the answers, we show that our mind is not stuck in one way of thinking, and that we are open to learning. Let's start our exploration with the following questions regarding fear. All humans get scared, so this is a good place to begin. Remember: this is a common occurrence for all people, not just "you" or "me." So we can understand the common condition of how bullying is created and the effects it has on us all? Being factually objective gives one the perspective necessary to understand the structure and nature of conditioned thinking that creates bullying in the brain. So what are the fundamental factors that create and sustain bullying? Let's us start with fear:

1. Remember the last time you had the thought, "I'm scared"? What were we scared of? Do you recall? Think about it for a moment.
2. How did your fear affect what you said or did next? For example, if, as a child, you saw a growling dog come toward you, and you thought, "I'm scared!" — how did you act? Did you cry? Get quiet? Scream? Run?
3. What's your state of mind when you're scared? What happens inside you? Do you feel anxious? Angry? Do you get confused? Do you forget what you were thinking before?
4. When you're frightened, does your pulse rate increase? Do you sweat? Does your blood pump quickly? Does your heartbeat become irregular?
5. Why do you think we get disoriented and confused when we get scared? Does this mean that we are weak? That we're cowards?

6. Does the body react in this way because of thoughts triggered by encountering someone or something that scared you in the past?
7. When you are scared, do you act or re-act? What is the difference?

Once any human being is bullied, there is a natural, biological response that comes from inside us. What happens is — we want to either fight the bully, or run away from the bully. This is a biologically conditioned response to the fear we feel when a bully threatens us. It's called the “fight or flight” syndrome.

Here's how it works. If we run away from a bully, we may feel good about escaping but, at the same time, we may feel unsatisfied, unresolved, even cowardly for having run away. The bully is still out there and we know we will encounter that bully again, so the fear is still alive. On the other hand, if we stay and fight the bully, we might get hurt. Plus, in a fight, there always seems to be a “winner” and a “loser,” and the loser always wants revenge. So, the battle goes on forever.

A scary thought has great power over us. It can drastically change our actions and affect our physical being. But what would happen if we said to our selves “this bully is scary!” — but we did *not* react in the ways mentioned above? What if we didn't fight, and we didn't run away?

For example, what if we saw a dog that reminds us of a dog we once encountered in our childhood, and we now have the thought “dogs like this are scary!” — but then we stop, right where we are. We become aware that “this dog is scary” is just a thought in the brain. There is no reason for one to be scared, because one can see that this dog just wants to be friendly.”

What if, right in that moment, we also said to ourselves, “This dog looks scary, because this dog looks a lot like a dog once bit me. But this dog is not *that* dog. This dog seems to be a friendly dog. So, I don't have to be scared. I don't have to run away from this dog, and I don't have to fight it. This fear I have about dogs is real — but it isn't true with this dog!”

All thoughts we have are real, they exist and therefore they are real — but they are not always *true*. When our mind has a thought that frightens us, we sometimes don't realize that it's not a fact. It's an automatic, *conditioned* reaction to something that happened before. Reactions such as these pop into the brain every day — and because we're not used to questioning them, we don't see them for what they are. A fear may be based on a real threat. In today's world, we all know that's true. But fear is based on a thought — sometimes a thought that isn't true!

Survival Is Our Goal

When we have a thought that's triggered by something that once frightened us, do we have the ability to recognize that this thought is only a memory of a past occurrence? Are we able to see that it's a distorted view of what's happening right now and therefore not true? Or, does the brain get tied into a knot so that we believe what we're seeing is actually happening?

Sometimes we identify so strongly with an unconscious thought, — such as “That's scary!” — that we never think about trying to understand it. We let it live inside us and become part of who we are. We say, “Dogs are scary”. That's how it is and how it will always be.” We never stop to question it, because we're convinced that we need that thought — to survive. Everything we think and do is, for the most part, based on our desire to survive.

Even though every human being experiences untrue thoughts every day and we all believe that we need these thoughts to be who we are — we don't! As a matter of fact, hanging on to these thoughts does us more harm than good. They cause us to look at everything through distorted lenses, and because they radically affect the way we think and act, they can negatively affect the way we live.

When, however, we become *conscious* of our distorted “reactive” thinking, right as it's happening, we experience an amazing phenomenon: nonjudgmental awareness. That is, we can see our brain twisting our thinking and stop it, right in its tracks. We become *aware* of our own thoughts. This is called “proprioception.” This means in the moment to suspend one's action based on conditioned reactive thinking long enough

to see it for what it is. In that stopped, aware proprioceptive moment, we can do something else amazing — we can look at our twisted thinking and *not* blame or judge ourselves for it. We can simply *recognize* it for what it is — a mechanical thought that popped into the brain because of something that happened in the past. From that nonjudgmental awareness comes “responsible” thinking. It is “responsible” thinking that comes from awareness that replaces “reactive” thinking — if even just for moment. As long as nonjudgmental awareness is active “reactive” conditioned thinking will not distort perception. When this happens we can think and act responsibly, intelligently.

Rather than *act* on conditioned reactive thoughts, we recognize, in the moment, that the right decision is to *not* act, because what we’re about to act on are thoughts that aren’t true. Recognizing our conditioned, mechanical thoughts as untrue — we reach a very wise insight — that, in this moment, inaction is the best action. When we recognize thoughts we have that are not true, we can stop ourselves from acting on them. Then, we can think and act in new, appropriate ways.

When we can recognize a thought we have as a conditioned, mechanical reaction, we understand immediately that we need not act on that thought — and in that moment of insight we will naturally act in a new way. Then our mind is clear to understand what the new course of action ought to be.

Here is the process, in brief form, with an example:

1. We recognize that a thought is a conditioned, mechanical thought.

Example: “There is something dislikeable about that new guy. He is bothersome.”

2. One sees that although the thought is real — based on something that happened in the past – it is no longer true.

Example: “I wonder if he reminds me of that kid who used to bully me in high school. He looks a lot like him.”

3. Since the thought is not true there is no need to act on it.

Example: “I should not act hostile toward this person. He is not the high school bully. I don’t even know this guy, and I’m already judging him.”

4. With our mind cleared of untrue thoughts, we can act in new ways — ways more beneficial to a harmonious life.

Example: “I’ve probably been frowning at him since he arrived! I have to remember to say hello the next time he comes around.”

Almost every thought we have is triggered by something that happened to us in the past. Thought triggers a reaction. In a state of panic, fearful thoughts run through the brain, old feelings arise and we feel out of control. These thoughts appear to be real because of the feelings we get from them, *but the feelings are based on the thought. If the thought isn’t true, the feelings that come from them can’t be true either.*

There is no shame, no blame in this situation. We must not blame ourselves or feel shame for these thoughts and feelings. This is not a moral issue or an ethical issue. *It’s a mechanical issue.* Whether we like it or not, these thoughts and feelings create a mechanical reaction. Understanding this we can be free to respond not react.

Our Conditioning Affects Our Outlook

All of us have been *conditioned* to think certain thoughts that lead us to act in certain ways. For example, we’ve all been conditioned to stop for a red light and move on a green light. This kind of conditioning is positive and helpful to us in our lives. It’s a safety issue that contributes to our survival.

Some of us have been conditioned to get scared when we hear an airplane go by, or when we hear a familiar, unwelcome voice. Some of us have been conditioned to do anything an intimidating person tells us to do. Others have been conditioned to get angry instantly at the sound of certain words. All of this conditioning can prove to be negative and detrimental to us in our lives — and affect how we survive.

We've all been conditioned in both positive and negative ways. The important thing is to be able to tell one from the other.

Those of us who've been bullied have been conditioned to get scared, which ties a fear knot in our brain. This knot — causing us to either want to fight whatever threatens us or run away from it — puts us into conflict. We believe that we have to do one or the other. The fact is that the way to resolve the conflict is to neither fight nor run away — but to *understand*.

Whether it begins inside us or outside us, bullying arises from conditioned thinking — thoughts we have on an ongoing basis every day — thoughts we rarely question. These initial conditioned thoughts set off a chain reaction instantly triggering fearful emotions and then triggering the biological conditioned response causing us to either want to fight or to run away — which produces a powerful feeling of conflict. This conflict brews *inside* us, manifests in our behavior toward other people, develops into conflict *outside* us, and puts us in disagreement and ongoing battles with other people.

While it's common practice in our society to “fix” things only after they're broken, this book focuses primarily on preventing conflict from happening in the first place, before it happens. By learning to recognize when we're experiencing a *false perception of reality*, we can prevent conflict — inside us in our heads, and outside us with other people. The result is that instead of reacting to a situation out of fear, we can act out of intelligence and understanding. That's the difference between reacting and acting. When we are afraid, we REACT to a situation based on our fear. When we are aware, we ACT based on our clear responsible thinking, beyond fear.

Once we develop awareness —insight – we will have the ability to recognize self-punishing behavior — right in the moment we're demonstrating it. Then we can stop that behavior immediately and think and act in new ways.

Chapter 2

The Bully Inside Us All

Are there times when you feel anxious? Worthless? Out of control? Ridiculed? Hurt? Ashamed? Humiliated? Insecure? Enraged? Rejected? Ambitious? Pressured to conform? Scared? Helpless? Powerless? Unfairly punished? Harassed? Vengeful? Angry? Frustrated? Lonely? Unloved? Violent? Greedy? Pressured to compete? Afraid of not “making it” — or not living up to the expectations of others?

We all have an “inner bully” — an inner voice that nags and intimidates us. This is often how bullying begins — from within. Look at the following questions and see if they are common to all of us:

1. Do we often blame ourselves for something we did not do?
2. Do we focus on the negative things we have done, and discount anything positive?
3. Do we assume that people don't like us, even though there is no evidence for this?
4. Do we look at the world in absolutes — do we see everything in black or white, good or bad, right or wrong — without any in-betweens?
5. Do we criticize ourselves with “shoulds,” and set impossible standards?
6. Do we compare ourselves with some ideal image we believe you ought to be?
7. Do we blow things out of proportion and berate ourselves in the process?

8. Do we identify with our shortcomings and tell ourselves that we are a failure, when all we did was make a mistake?

If we do any or all these things, then say hello to your inner bully — the one who lives inside our head and likes nothing better than to pick on us.

How does that bully get inside us? Are we born with it? Are we taught to bully ourselves? Who teaches us? Does it start at home when we're too young to know what's happening? Or on the playground when a bully picks on us? Does it begin because we're victimized by a group that is offended by something we say, something we do, or who we are?

Twelve Steps to Handle Your Inner Bully

We adults who are bullied when young — at home, at school, or in our community — develop a habit that's hard to break: We pick on *ourselves*. We do this even when a bully is no longer around. This "inner bully" stays and nags us, and when we don't know how to stop it from tormenting us, this bully begins to create deep-rooted problems in our lives, making us negative, insecure, fearful, and self-critical.

The best process for making peace with this inner bully — a process developed and utilized in many parts of the U.S. as well as around the world — involves a simple 12-step program. The best thing about this program is that it works. Depending on where and when you grew up, there may be some differences in how you apply this process, but the general structure of dealing with our inner bully is the same for all of us. We begin with this premise: What I do is bully myself mercilessly, and then wonder why I'm feeling awful.

If our goal is to put an end to bullying, we have to start with ourselves. You've heard the phrase "Charity begins at home"? So does resolving conflict. So, the first step in your process is to develop an awareness of your inner bully and understand how this bully thinks, acts and speaks. Understanding is the key to success.

We need to understand how our inner bully:

- Sees the world in black-and-white extremes
- Tends to see everything as less instead of more
- Notices the dark instead of the light
- Judges me guilty in the court of life

Why our inner bully operates in these ways isn't always clear. But the way we can stop this self-destruction is clear. Let's walk through the following 12 steps, and as we do, you'll see how conditioned thinking effects our lives in negative ways:

Cut Through the Knots in our Brain

We all have been conditioned to think thoughts that lead us to act in certain ways. Those of us who have been bullied have been conditioned to get scared, which is a natural human reaction. Fear ties a knot in our brain. As we've already learned, this knot causes us to either want to fight whatever threatens us, or run away from it. Is one of these responses better or worse than the other? The fact is — they're both unproductive.

As we learned in Chapter 1, when we're scared and, as a result, we bully ourselves into responding in a certain way, we react totally out of fear. But we don't have to. When we can see that we can *act* based on "responsible" thinking rather than *react* on fearful "reactive" thinking—there is freedom in that. When we're scared, we *react* out of fear. When we can understand our fear, we can *act* intelligently.

Knots in our brains can cause us to have thoughts that aren't true — thoughts that can condition us to think in ways that are not helpful to us in our lives. Can we cut through those knots in our brain? Are we able to recognize the thoughts we have that aren't true? Do we keep thinking we will never have thoughts that aren't true? Is this apart of "reactive" conditioned thinking?"

Step 1: Living in an "All or Nothing" World

When we aim to do something well and we don't succeed, are we hard on yourself? Does "not succeeding" at something make us feel unworthy? Incompetent? When we make a mistake, do we tear ourselves down? Why do you suppose we do this to yourself? Think

about this for a moment. When we are hard on ourselves, when we feel unworthy or guilty — *are these thoughts true?*

This thought process is called “black and white” thinking — everything either looks all good, or all bad. It’s human nature to think this way, but some of us do it more than others. Consider some all-or-nothing thinking you’ve done today. Perhaps you had the thought, “If I don’t do this perfectly, I will look like a fool.” Or, “I’m not very smart, and every time I open my mouth, I prove it.”

Step 2: We Think in Black and White

Think of one way you thought in black and white today. Did you put yourself down for making a mistake? What was it? Did you curse at yourself? Why? Did you forget something, lose something, say something that made you feel inadequate? What was it? Ask yourself:

- What black-and-white thinking did I do today?
- Did I catch myself doing it in the moment?
- What thoughts were racing inside my head?
- How long did it take me to realize this was a black-and-white thought?

Can we stop ourselves, right in the middle of our black-and-white thinking, and see that the brain was about to be tied in a knot? How does it feel to act from intelligence rather than out of fear? We all feel insecure about ourselves from time to time, but this is not an appropriate reason to put ourselves down. Instead, it’s a reason to *understand* where our insecure thoughts are coming from.

The reason we put ourselves down is that we are *conditioned* to do so. When we’re conditioned, we are *trained* or *programmed* to think and act according to what we’ve been taught. For example, we’ve all been told what to do — by parents, teachers, friends, family, or leaders in the community. Perhaps we were taught to not speak unless spoken to, or to respect our elders no matter what, or to always be kind to strangers. This training has conditioned us to think and act in certain ways — ways that are not always helpful to our ability to communicate, or that contribute to our safety in this world. Yet, we tolerate by this training, because it’s what you know.

Every day, we are conditioned by what we see, hear and learn from people around us. This conditioning has a major effect on what we believe and the opinions we develop. If we are conditioned to believe that we *never* do anything right, there's a good chance that we are going to have a hard time doing anything right!

Step 3. Assuming and Expecting the Worst

Have you ever assumed that everything you planned is going to go wrong? When did you last think that? When you were pressured at work? When you were planning a family event? After watching a few of your plans go awry? Just because we've made some mistakes in the past — we all make them — why would we *assume* that everything would go wrong, when there's at least a 50% chance that things will go right? Is our assumption based on fear? Why does that fear exist? What exactly are we afraid of? Questions help us see how our conditioning has affected the way we think.

We all have events in our past that trigger fear in the present. What's important to realize is this: ***The event is not what causes us to feel afraid. It's our belief about the event — the things we tell ourselves about the event — that causes the fear.***

It is the *belief* about an event that frightens us. Actually observing this as it occurs can dissipate the fear

Let's say a friend lied to you, and you felt hurt when you found out. Since that time, you've had a hard time making new friends, probably because you're afraid to trust anyone. Can you see how this belief affects you? Can you trust a new friend if you are conditioned to not trust because you have been lied to in the past?

These are the three steps in understanding your inner bully.

- We all have knots in our brains; observing them as they are happening in the present moment creates the possibility of being free of their influence

- When we catch ourselves living in an “all or nothing” world, we have the power to stop ourselves from “black-and-white” thinking.
- You are beginning to see that a remembered event is not what causes you to feel afraid, but your *belief* about the event that knots your brain.

Step 4: Focusing on Negatives

Have you ever had the feeling, after something negative happened, that if you find yourself in the same situation again, it’s going to happen the same way? Also, are there times when you assume that, because one person seems to not like you, *everyone* is not going to like you?

Do you think it’s dangerous to assume that if you’ve never had an accident or been hurt, that you never will? Isn’t that the same kind of thinking? There are times in all of our lives when things go wrong. It’s part of being alive. When things go wrong more than once, it’s natural to think: “I must have a cloud over my head. Things *always* go wrong for me.” But is this true?

This is our conditioning at work again. Are you influenced by people in your family, fellow employees at work, or TV news broadcasts? Feelings such as disappointment and guilt can create great pain and take a heavy toll on our thoughts. At times like these, it’s important to remember that we are all human. Human beings make mistakes, have accidents, and cannot always live up to the expectations of other human beings or ourselves.

Is it possible to separate the “negative” event from the thought? Think of the last time you had a negative experience — a time when something went wrong, and you didn’t feel good about yourself afterward. Can you remember one? Do you remember what happened? Can you see it in your mind? What happened?

Now, can you see that this was *one* incident in your life and that — even if you’re in the same place, with the same people — it will not happen again in the same way? We all have moments when we see

ourselves as mistaken, wrong, weak or inept. In these moments, it's good to stop, find a place to sit and be quiet – and let that thought go. Here's an exercise to help you do this. Read through it, and then try it.

Turn Your “Troubles into Bubbles”

- Close your eyes. Think of a negative experience.
- Breathe in and breathe out as comfortably as you can.
- Do not say a word — just relax. If thoughts creep into your mind, let them be there. Look at them, notice they're there, and then let them go.
- Let whatever thoughts you have float like bubbles to the top of your mind, and disappear. Any troubling thought you have is now a bubble, which you're going to let float away. Ready? Close your eyes and begin. Stay silent for a whole minute, or longer.

Whenever you're angry, disappointed, worried or sad — you can sit down, close your eyes and go to this peaceful place. This place helps you let go of painful thoughts and free yourself from feeling afraid, sad or angry. By letting go of thinking that makes you feel bad, you stop any conflict inside you— in an instant.

You may not be able to stop conflict in the world with this exercise, but you can certainly stop it inside *you* — which is the first step toward stopping conflict in the world. This exercise helps:

- Stop the conflict inside you.
- Find a place where you can turn your thinking around.
- Take a negative thought and free yourself from it.
- Figure out something good you learned from something that went wrong.

This week, see if you can catch yourself thinking a negative, scary or black-and-white thought. Once you catch yourself in the act, get yourself to see that it is only a *conditioned* thought, giving you a scared feeling. Turn it into a bubble and let it go!

Step 5: My Accomplishments Are Not Worth Mentioning

Is it difficult for us to give ourselves credit for something good we've done? What, for example? Why do we think it's difficult to take credit, even though we've done something that other people value? Many of us have been taught to not brag, boast or toot our own horn. Still, isn't it important to accept thanks when we've done something that someone is grateful for? Aren't you grateful when someone has done something important for you?

If we cannot agree that we've done something good, especially when we really have — that's a sign that it's hard for us to feel good about ourselves. When we have trouble taking credit or feeling good about ourselves, there's a good chance that we've been conditioned to feel that way. Perhaps when we were growing up, someone put us down and led us to believe that we were stupid, hopeless, or no good.

When we're verbally abused in this way, over and over again, we start to believe these accusations — even when they aren't true. Some of this conditioning is obvious and some of it isn't. For example:

Obvious Action: A bully — at home, at school, at work — calls us names and conditions us to believe that what the bully is saying is true. This is an *obvious* action by the bully — one that's easy to see. For example, someone we know says, "You'll never amount to anything. You're too dumb!"

Secret Action: Family members, teachers, co-workers, people in our community, even TV advertisements can condition us to believe that we are unworthy, sometimes without our knowing. This conditioning is *hidden* — we're *not aware* that we're being trained to believe what isn't true. For example, a teacher may heap praise on students in your class and never compliment you at all. That's going to have an effect. It could contribute to your having a negative image of ourselves. A television ad may work hard to convince us that we're going to be inferior unless we buy their product. This is what advertising is mostly geared to do.

Do you think sometimes people you know may have a hard time giving you credit for something good you've done, because they are envious, or angry that you've done something better than they did, or just not willing to give you credit because they're upset about something that has nothing to do with you? It happens! These all happen! But we are beginning to learn that these comments and accusations are not true! And since they aren't true, we don't have to believe them.

Step 6: Never Seeing the Whole Picture

Have you ever thought that everyone you know is smarter than you? More clever? Better looking? More popular? Better liked? Better off? Most of us think this way at one time or another, but can we see how this kind of conditioned thinking minimizes our view of ourselves? If we make ourselves smaller in this way, aren't we overlooking the big picture — who we actually are as a complete person? When we shrink the importance of who we are and what we do, we are so unfair to ourselves!

How we think determines how we act. If we think of ourselves as “less,” we act as if we are less. If we act as if we are less, other people respond to us as if we are less. We are what we think. When we think of ourselves in a positive way — not boasting or bragging — but confident in who we are, and what our skills and talents are, then can negative conditioned thinking take hold of us?

On the other hand, perhaps you're a person who does the opposite — you blow things out of proportion — overstate and distort what really happened. Why do you think we humans have this tendency — to make something that happened, or something we said or did, *more* than it was, or larger than life?

When we magnify everything that happens to us, it's usually because of a need to make our life seem more important. The problem is, people begin to see through our exaggerations. Eventually this causes them to stop believing anything we say. As a result, we get a reaction that's the complete opposite of what we want. Instead of getting the attention we crave, we are ignored.

Also, when we continue to magnify our lives over and over again, we start to believe what we're saying. At that point, we are unable to

see that what we are saying is not true! We lie to ourselves in order to feel better about ourselves, but again, it's the opposite that happens. We feel worse.

Some of us *magnify* what's happened to us to create a sense of importance — to get the consideration we crave. We think, "If I make this sound worse, it will have more meaning, and people will sympathize with me. It will make me a hero." Other people *minimize* what's happened to them to remove attention from themselves. "Yes, I saved that person's life, but it was nothing. I was lucky. There was no skill involved."

What do we accomplish by convincing ourselves that we didn't do anything worthwhile? Why wouldn't we want credit for doing something well? If someone else had done the same deed as well as us, wouldn't we give that person credit?

When we are conditioned to stop at a red traffic light, that's helpful. This behavior helps us to be safe in the world — and do what we need to survive. When we are conditioned to disrespect ourselves and other people, this behavior is not helpful. This behavior makes us think and act in ways that promote conflict — inside us, and outside us with other people.

When we fall short of perfection, we are not less of a person — we are simply human. When we act bravely and help others, we have done something worthy of acknowledgement. If our inner bully has been beating up on us, it's time for us to start seeing more instead of less.

When we can *look* at what our mind is doing to make us afraid, and see in the moment that it's playing tricks on us, we can *stop* and *observe*, "There is an awareness of what's going on here." This thought does not have to bully me."

The best way to change an anxious, fearful thought is to stop where you are and ask yourself: "Is this thought real, or is my mind creating it?" When we can stand "outside" ourselves and see that what we are thinking is merely an invention — alive only in our imagination — then it doesn't need to effect us.

Step 7: How I Feel Is Who and What I Am

Have you ever done something you regretted afterward and then said to yourself: “I feel like an idiot!”? When that happened, did you ask, “Why do I feel like an idiot? I know I’m not, but something made me feel like one!”

We all have “idiot” moments. When we do, we have a choice: Do I think of myself as an idiot, or do I look at what I did and learn something so I don’t make that mistake again?

Apart from the days when we have negative thoughts, are there days when we feel excellent, in shape, and extremely intelligent? What do you think makes the difference between a day we feel smart and a day we feel dumb, or a day we feel appealing and a day we feel ugly? Is it possible that the only difference is in our mind — that the only difference is how we think?

Thinking is a powerful force! In one moment, it can make us believe we’re the best, and in another, it can make us believe we’re the worst. Once we are aware of this, is it possible that our thinking will change? We don’t want to disillusion ourselves, or lie to ourselves about a real situation. All we want is the ability to see what’s true and what’s not — and to be able to tell the difference.

Step 8: Rules for Perfection Are Hard to Live By

What demands have we made on ourselves today? Have we demanded that we be stronger? Smarter? Quicker? Better? Better looking? That we never slip up or create a faux pas again? What demand have we made on the world today? That it gives us what we want, all the time? That wrong things never happen? That we must always be productive, happy and safe?

Why do we think we make such demands on ourselves, and on the world around us? What thoughts are bullying our brains?

We’ve all been conditioned to believe that our lives *should* go a certain way in order for us to be satisfied. The fact is that trying to be

perfect most often leads to disappointment. Consider the following statements and how they affect you:

What happened to me isn't fair! I should not have...

What happened to me isn't fair, but what I learned is...

Before I take any risk, I need to be absolutely sure that...

The reason I can't let myself mess up ever again is...

I should never, ever...

I hope to never make a mistake again, because...

The thing I really hate about mistakes is...

The reason I need complete control over my life is...

The reason I cannot show my feelings to others is...

A situation when I could have done more was...

What I learned from that situation is...

The worst mistake I ever made was...

The best mistake I ever made was...

Did we feel uncomfortable admitting our mistakes? Do we think, "I'm the only one who ever makes mistakes?" So many of us human beings are conditioned to be perfect creatures. Are we brought up that way? Why? Is it to make our parents look good? To help our parents live easier lives? To learn to live by rules that are supposed to help us but, in fact, may not help us at all? The truth is that it's not possible for us to be perfect. The best we can do is enjoy some perfect moments.

Step 9: Identifying with Weakness Instead of Strength

This step is about identifying with our faults, imperfections or shortcomings. Are we more aware of our shortcomings than our accomplishments? Do we think more about what we do wrong than what we do right?

Some of us have been conditioned to look at what we consider our faults more than what we consider our achievements — our weaknesses more than our strengths. Is this a bad thing? Not necessarily. Faults and weaknesses have a lot to teach us. We can turn them into positive learning experiences. But we have to remember to do that. Focusing on our weaknesses without exploring why they exist doesn't help us at all.

When you feel embarrassed about a mistake you've made, do we consider ourselves stupid, and move on? Do we stop to think about what we can learn from what happened? Could this be beneficial? There's at least one lesson in every mistake, and the way to strengthen the mind is to figure out what that lesson is, and learn from it.

Do we want to protect ourselves, or learn?

When we make a mistake, do we have choices? We can let our fears control us and attempt to defend ourselves from accepting responsibility for the mistake — or we can learn by accepting responsibility for the mistake and see what there is to learn. We can't do both places at the same time — that's just not possible. Do we have to choose one, or is there really no choice?

Fears: When I made a mistake at work, I thought I would lose my job if anyone knew what I'd done, so I didn't tell anyone.

Learning: I was scared at work, but I decided to admit what I'd done. My boss thanked me for admitting the mistake, showed me how to prevent making the mistake next time, and told me how I'd saved the company a lot of time and money by admitting the error early, before the mistake was multiplied over time. When we remember to ask ourselves "What's the intelligent thing to do?" we create an opportunity for understanding.

Step 10: Blaming Without Considering Responsibility

We have learned how we see the world in black and white, see less instead of more and notice the dark instead of the light. Our inner bullies provide us with many challenges.

Now we come to the section called “Judging Myself Guilty in the Court of Life.” When something goes wrong and we find ourselves tied up in this knot, we tend to blame ourselves even when we’re not responsible for what happened. When something goes wrong, there’s usually more than one reason why it happens — which is why it’s good to look at all sides of a situation before deciding where to place blame or, more importantly, whether placing blame does anything to resolve the situation.

Placing blame allows us to pass responsibility for an incident onto someone or something else, which doesn’t give us an opportunity to learn anything. Do you think, more often than not, that you are a person who tends to blame others, without taking the time to think about how your actions may have affected the situation by blaming it on others? When you do take the time to consider your part in an incident, do you blame yourself for not stopping to think about your behavior at the time — so you wind up blaming yourself again? If we were always able to *act* instead of *react* in situations, we would never blame anyone for anything. We’d be too busy acting responsibly!

If you are part of an event that turns out badly, and you accept responsibility for any part you played in that event, do you think you need to blame anyone for anything? When we stop to think about what went wrong in any situation and really look at the facts, what happens to blame? Where does it go?

Step 11: My Behavior Always Embarrasses Me

Do you think our brains get tied into mental knots, because more often than not we focus on what’s wrong instead of what’s right? Why do we do this? Why would we focus on something negative instead of something positive? Is this our conditioning? Does this conditioning create a strong attachment to a particular self- image, a pattern of behavior of suffering and unworthiness? Insofar as we believe that our identity is derived from our roles, our problems, our relationships, attachment to this negative behavior is reinforced by fear for personal survival. “If I give up my self-image, who and what will I be?”

Because family, friends, teachers, and people in our community sometimes judge us — we learn to judge ourselves. Feeling ashamed of our behavior, we judge ourselves. We can focus on what we did right instead of what we did wrong. If we focus on what went right, where does the blame go?

Does it seem logical that paying attention to what we do right helps us do the right thing more often? We don't need to ignore things that went wrong — that could be avoiding what's real. But being able to look at what went wrong without feeling embarrassed or ashamed frees us from self-judgment and not be controlled by guilty feelings, where we can think and act productively.

In this world of ours, because we are conditioned we see things differently. That's why it's helpful to be able to look at life through a wide-angle lens — to see, to be aware, to notice other people, other cultures — and make an attempt to understand them.

Being able to see more isn't difficult. All we have to remember to do is *notice* when we're feeling afraid and *recognize* that this is our old computer program at work. When we can watch our old programming, like watching a movie, and not do anything — just watch — the fear stops. If, on your way to work every day, you trip over a rock, and one day, you notice the rock and step over it — you stop tripping! That's how recognizing conditioning works!

Step 12: Everyone Is Better Than I Am

How often do you see someone wearing great clothes, riding in a beautiful car, living in a fabulous house, and think: "Aren't I good enough to have those clothes, drive that car, and live in that house"? Have you ever envied the fact that someone can hardly study at all and still do well in school? That someone can eat any food they want and never gain weight? That someone can do something better, faster, and more powerfully than you can?

Welcome to the club called "Everyone Is Better Than I Am." We all compare ourselves to others; it's part of conditioning. The question

is: What is this comparison doing for us? Isn't the best comparison a personal one — one that measures where you are now and where you could be down the road? Isn't your best basis for measurement *you* — how far you've come and how far you want to go? I don't mean becoming psychologically, becoming someone important but rather objectively in what we can attain in our work, in our relationships.

Experiencing conditioning Is the Best Teacher

Understanding conditioned thinking is a process of learning that I call the “3Es,” as I briefly spoke about in the beginning of this book. It shows that behavior changes only at the 3rd. E — Experiencing — being aware of it as it happens each and every moment in the brain, at its root in the way we think/feel. Doing the following exercise helps you see the difference between explaining a situation in your life, providing an example of a situation in your life, and experiencing a situation in your life.

Explanation:

Example:

Experiencing:

Explanation: Put yourself in this place and *explain*, as best you can, the following thought: *“I am conditioned to beat up on myself every time I make a mistake.”* Just talk out loud and **explain** this thought you have and why you believe you have it.

Example: This time, instead of explaining this thought, think of an *example* of this same thought: *“I am conditioned to beat up on myself every time I make a mistake.”* Use your own personal **example** of how you do this. Do you shout at yourself? Hurt yourself? Put yourself down? Punish yourself in some way?

Experiencing: Now see if you can be aware the next time this happens in-the-moment of *experiencing* the same thought: *“I am conditioned to beat up on myself every time I make a mistake.”* Watch the experience as it occurs so you have the opportunity in **experiencing** it. It is this awareness, this experiencing that can change the behavior.

How is experiencing the thought different from explaining it or giving an example of it? Is being aware the experience the one that makes the incident clearest — the one that helps you learn?

When we are experiencing how we've been conditioned – in the moment – insight is being enhanced. This insight helps us see our conditioned reaction as it happens. In this moment of insight, our conditioned brain does not operate as it has in the past. In this moment, when we see how our brain has conditioned us —reaction can cease, because we are, in the moment, seeing! This is an “aha” moment — when you suddenly realize how what you've said or done may have triggered a reaction. Do you recall what happened in this “aha” moment? What were you thinking? Where were you? What was happening?

An “aha” moment is insight! It is experiencing what is! This moment lets you know that while what you were thinking/feeling until now seemed real, it may not be true!

When we look at the world through colored glasses and catch ourselves in the act of being either 100% right or 100% wrong — if we can catch ourselves judging this way, we are experiencing an “aha” moment. If we can see that we are dwelling only on the negatives in our life — in that moment of stopping and seeing, the negative reaction stops — instantly — and responsible action begins.

If you are *experiencing* yourself blaming yourself for things that go wrong, or feeling ashamed of yourself when you've made a mistake — then you can see, in that moment, what you are doing. This is an “aha” moment! And in that “aha” moment, you have faced your inner bully and made peace.

As we end this chapter, if you've participated in all of the exercises, you can probably tell how you've made some valuable inroads to understanding your inner bully and learning why that bully picks on you. In the chapter that follows, we will move outside our own thoughts, and look at the making of a bully — the kind who at one time may have made you a victim.

Chapter 3

The Bully Outside Us

“A journey of a thousand miles
starts under one’s feet.

— *Lao tsu*

On this journey, we’ve come to understand at least one characteristic we all have in common — we pick on ourselves. There is a bully who sits inside us, turns us into a victim, and scolds us for not being perfect. This inner bully is most often created because of the bullies outside us who do the same thing. If you’ve had the feeling, “Why is everybody always picking on me?” you know what it’s like to feel like a victim. Let’s take a look at those outer bullies and find out why they’re always picking on you.

Bullies come in all shapes, sizes, ages and nationalities. They can be rich or poor, educated or ignorant, male or female, young or old. Every bully is different, but what each has in common with the rest is that they verbally and/or physically pick on other people. Understanding how bullies think and act begins with knowing this fact: Bullies are hurt, angry, frustrated, frightened people — people with problems.

Because of their feelings and inability to deal with them, some bullies have done great harm. Some of their victims have felt so terrible that they’ve taken their own lives. This happened in the southern U.S. when a 7th grade student, tired of four years of being called “chubby” and “a walking dictionary,” brought a gun to school and fatally shot another student before killing himself. His classmates said, “He was just someone to pick on.”

Why do some of us need someone to pick on? What need is fulfilled when a person gets the opportunity to bully someone? What is it inside a person that feels better after bullying someone? When a bully finds a victim to torment, there are always reasons, and it’s important to try to figure out what they are. A victim who explores and discovers why he or she has been victimized is on the way to never having to be a victim again.

When we're bullied, the fear we feel can stay with us for a long time — for some people, all their lives. Such victims often feel weak, unimportant, inadequate, depressed. Being bullied can lead us to believe there's something wrong with us. Or victims can turn in the opposite direction and become bullies themselves — to protect themselves, to put on a strong, important, and even happy front so that no one knows the suffering they endure.

Kid bullies grow up to be adult bullies. Why? Because they've never figured out a way to resolve their problems. They're still hurt, unhappy, or angry about whatever turned them into tyrants in the first place. Tending to not trust people, they spend a lot of time alone. As a result, they lose a sense of how to act with other people. When they are among others, they start a fight or create conflict in some other way.

The Bully Has Many Faces

There are basically two kinds of bullies — those who are extroverted and outgoing, and those who are introverted and reserved.

Extroverted bullies want to be on top, in control. They are more interested in things outside themselves than in their own thoughts and feelings. They are rebels who often end up in trouble. Generally rough-and-tough, angry and mean on the surface, they get their way by brute force. Inside, however, they may feel inferior, insecure and unsure of themselves. They reject rules and regulations and feel a need to rebel in order to achieve a feeling of superiority and security.

Introverted bullies do not seek recognition. They prefer to hide, never rebel, and conform to society. However, they, too, want to be in control. So, they find other ways to get it — sometimes by smooth-talking, saying the right thing at the right time, sometimes by misleading, lying and saying and doing whatever they think the other person wants to hear, just to get their way. They deceive people into thinking that they mean well. They are often so good at bullying in this way that we don't even notice they are bullying us.

The bully has many faces. These include the person who always knows best, the jock who always knows the right moves, the "brain" who insists on always having the right answers, the patriot who tells us the

only proper action for the country, the self-righteous religious leader who knows and preaches the “only” way to believe, the political know-it-all who is quick to tell us how to vote, and the financial wizard who wants to spend our money for us. What they all have in common is that they:

- Are concerned primarily with their own agenda.
- Want attention, recognition, power, position and fame.
- Are willing to use other people to get what they want.
- Want revenge for hurt feelings they have.
- Do not take the time or make the effort to see “the big picture.”
- See only what they want to see.

The Roles We Play

We all play many roles in our lives — father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter, cousin, friend. In our work we play other roles — teacher, doctor, lawyer, writer, assistant, engineer, architect, waiter, athlete, musician, politician, fire fighter, truck driver, flight attendant – the list goes on and on. These are roles we take on because they are meaningful to us, because we feel a sense of responsibility or because we enjoy or have a talent for them. These are *conscious* roles.

There are other roles we take on that we don’t choose and that we’re not always aware of. These roles may come from a need to protect ourselves. These are *unconscious* roles.

Examples:

- Scared of standing up for what you believe, you become “someone weak.”
- Afraid of speaking in front of other people, you become “someone shy.”
- Frightened of taking responsibility for your actions, you become “Poor Me.”

When we take on the role of “someone weak,” or “someone shy,” these roles are not really who we are — they are parts we are playing, like actors on a stage. We have taken on these roles most likely due to some fear — “If I act weak, no one will expect me to do anything.” “If I act shy, I’ll never get into trouble.”

In the same way, a bully make take on the role of someone superior, in an effort to control others, because this bully fears being taken advantage of. A victim, on the other hand, may take on the role of an inferior person or servant to the “superior” person, because the victim fears making the “superior” person angry or upset. Both bullies and victims are afraid, but they act out their fears in different ways.

A bully is not a bad person — merely a troubled person. We all get bully feelings from time to time. Look at the list below and check the responses that fit you.

The times I feel like bullying are when someone I know:

- Punishes me physically and/or verbally.
- Inspires me to be aggressive.
- Doesn't talk with me or spend much time with me.
- Doesn't praise or support me.
- Encourages me to take violent actions.
- Ridicules and laughs at me.
- Pushes me to participate in unhealthy activities.
- Is never there for me, but wants me to be there for him or her.
- Believes things that make me angry.
- Doesn't allow me room to be who I am.
- Has rules and regulations that don't fit me.

Influences From Long Ago

Aside from our family members, our workplace associates, our education, and the media, who have all contributed to teaching us to be bullies, there is something else deep inside us that is another cause for bullying.

Have you ever watched a dog and cat when they meet for the first time? Do you recall what they do? They freeze. Then if the cat moves, either the dog chases the cat or the cat stands its ground and fights the dog. This is the “fight or flight” syndrome we discussed earlier. As far back as man can remember, living creatures have been afraid of predators and have adapted self-defensive, aggressive ways to survive.

Today, we human creatures try to dominate and control others because we believe we still need to in order to survive. Humankind learned this behavior long ago, and has been passing it along, generation after generation.

Do we still need this “survivor” instinct today? Do we still have to fight to survive? Why do humans continue to believe that we need to compete in order to live? Why is one person rich and another poor? Why does one country have so much while others have so little?

The Problem With Perfection

In a previous chapter we talked about the ways we strive to be perfect, and how no human being is perfect — no one. We are taught to be “good,” which is important in life, but how we are taught can make a difference in how we see “good.” As children, many of us rebel against being good. We feel bullied when we’re judged good, because we feel pressured to act according to what certain authorities in our lives proclaimed was “the right way.” As a result, some of us rebelled and preferred to be “bad.”

We are rarely taught, as children, to think for ourselves about what’s good or bad for us. Rather than use our minds to determine what works best, we are simply told what’s best. The conflict we feel over this is between the judgment and the ideal. When we “misbehave,” we are judged bad; when we act in a way others consider “good,” we sometimes feel we’re being set up to be some kind of ideal or image of perfection. Most of us suspect, early on in our lives, that we are not perfect, and will never be. So when people attempt to make us “perfect,” it goes against our grain.

Still, we work toward perfection — for our family, our teachers, our bosses, and our significant others — knowing we’ll never achieve it. This produces conflict. Never able to live up to impossible standards, we continue to live in a state of ongoing conflict. People in conflict are not happy people — they are people who take out their frustration on themselves and others. This is how bullies are born.

How Can We Stop People From Picking on Us?

Bullying causes conflict — inside us (in our thoughts and feelings) and outside us (between us and other people). When we are frightened and make the decision to either run away or fight, we create conflict. If we run, the conflict is inside us — we feel cowardly or know that it's not the last time we'll encounter this bully. If we fight, the conflict is between us and another person. Someone gets hurt, then someone seeks revenge, and the conflict goes on. What can we do? There are three steps.

Take an interest in stopping bullying — a real, personal interest. This interest is not something anyone can give you. It can come only from you. If you don't like that feeling of being out of control and wish there were a way to put you in charge, know that there is, and start there.

Learn to understand why people bully. Develop an awareness of how bullies act and a desire to understand why they act that way. When you understand why a bully acts in a certain way, you are less likely to seek revenge and more likely to work out a way to bring you and the bully to some level of agreement. At the very least, you'll understand the bully's needs and learn what to do to protect yourself.

If you are a bully, once you understand why you are, you'll see ways to change and still get what you want. In order to not fight, it's important to look at reasons why we do fight. In order to not run away, we have to look at why we do.

Develop skills to deal with bullies — nonviolent skills. For example, there are ways to win that do not involve fighting. You can win by *not* fighting. You can win by *not* freezing up with fear. Here are some examples

1. **Make friends.** One of the easiest ways to stop a fight from happening is to befriend, help and be kind to a bully. If the bully believes you are treating him or her with respect, you may get respect as well. But we have to be careful. Bullies

aren't accustomed to being treated with kindness, so it's hard to know how any bully will respond.

2. **Use humor.** Sometimes you can stop a fight by being funny, telling a joke — as long as the bully doesn't think that you are making fun of him or her. Make sure the bully knows that the story you're telling is not meant to be at his or her expense.
3. **Walk away.** Fighting back tends to never solve any problem. When we fight back, we become our own bully, using violence to try to solve violence. It takes a lot of strength to turn your back and just walk away, but if you do succeed, no one gets hurt.
4. **Agree with the bully.** Many fights start when a person feels insulted. If someone offends you in some way, instead of reacting in anger, just stop. Stop and watch what you're feeling and thinking. Do nothing. Just let the thoughts and feelings be there. Turn your thoughts into bubbles and let them float away. After you feel calm again, agree with the bully. The bully wants you to get angry and fight. If you don't, you take the wind out of the bully's sails.
5. **Refuse to fight.** A fight takes two or more people. If you refuse to fight, the conflict stops. Refusing to fight, turning and walking away takes great strength. But once you do it and succeed, you will experience renewed strength.
6. **Stand up to the bully.** You can tell the bully, with words or with your body language that you do not want to be bullied. You can say, "I know you'd like this to blow up into a fight, but I'm not fighting. You're not going to hurt me anymore." Sometimes this approach surprises the bully and causes the bully to back down. Standing up means that, inside yourself, you have decided you are not going to tolerate being bullied any longer.
7. **Ignore the bully.** This tack requires caution, as do all these alternatives. When you ignore the bully, you pretend that he

or she is not there. This may work well with some bullies and backfire with others. This is good to use with walking away.

8. **Use authority.** Show the bully you are not afraid and will not allow the bully to hurt you. Be your own authority; use your own power. Or, call someone else to help you who is more powerful than the bully. Powerful can refer to physical, mental or psychological strength.

When you develop confidence in learning how to handle the bullies in your life you can enjoy your relationships more. The way to do this is to practice. Perhaps you have a friend at work or a family member with whom you can practice. Ask your friend or family member to role-play you. You can role-play the part of your bully boss, or bully associate. This can be great fun and also a serious learning experience. What part will you play today? The part of someone you are, someone you never were? Someone you wish you were?

Bullying Is a Lose/Lose Situation

We all want what we want. This is neither good nor bad — just a fact. The problem begins when we try to push another person into doing what we want — especially when they don't want to. This is bullying.

We might believe that if everybody thought and acted the way we do, the world would be a better place. We can think this as much as we want; there's no right or wrong about it. The problem comes, however, when we try to force another person into thinking and acting the way we do. This is bullying.

Perhaps you have the strength to bully people and make them do what you want. But, in the end, you're not really getting what you want. That person may do what you want for the moment, but once you leave, he or she will go back to being whoever they are and doing what they wish. What you really want — attention and affection — you don't get. As a matter of fact, you get the opposite. Your victim loses self-esteem; you lose self-respect. Bullying is a lose/lose situation.

As long as you feel bullied, and as long as you may be bullying others in your life, it's to be expected that this antagonism is going to grow, and spread. We need to educate ourselves, and each other, about the basic factors that create conflict caused by bullying — before it becomes a serious problem. *From the individual to the group — bullying on the playground to bullying on the battlefield — conflict begins with unexamined conditioned thinking.*

Those initial fearful thoughts set off a chain reaction instantly triggering fearful emotions and the biological fight-or-flight response. This produces a powerful mental reaction of conflict inwardly in the brain and outwardly in relationship with others.

When we are conscious of this process, we can begin to become aware of the structure and nature of human conflict at the primary prevention level and *prevent* it before it begins. At this fundamental level, one can prevent conflict from happening just by being aware of its underlying structure as it occurs.

Knowing how to prevent personal conflict puts us in a far more intelligent position to prevent conflict on a larger scale. In the chapter that follows, we look at prejudice — the cause of the greatest conflict that exists between people. As our awareness grows, we can develop naturally, free of the conditioning that creates the unnecessary conflict we experience in relationship with other people. If we can achieve this — it is as close to perfect as any of us can get.

Chapter 4

The Enemy: Them vs. Us

You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
You've got to be taught from year to year,
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight
To hate all the people your relatives hate,
You've got to be carefully taught.

— From *South Pacific*
©1949 Oscar Hammerstein, lyric
Richard Rodgers, music

The Roots of Prejudice

The words to the above song were written more than 50 years ago, for a musical called *South Pacific*. What they have to say still rings true today. It's about conditioning — being carefully taught. This is how prejudice begins, with what and how we are all carefully taught.

People bully you; you bully yourself; it seems that everyone is always picking on you. This develops a bias in you — a partiality to like or dislike, a predisposition to love or hate, to act friendly or not. The more your bias grows, the more it feeds other biases and, before you know it, your biases have evolved into full-grown prejudice.

The roots of a tree grow from a single seed. That's where the tree begins its life. Without roots, there would be no trunk, no limbs, no branches, and no leaves. That's how it is with prejudice. If it had no roots, there would be no hatred, no conflict, no feelings of superiority or

inferiority. All prejudices share one root — one basic cause — conditioned thinking — that creates fear.

Millions of people have suffered and died because of prejudice. To put an end to prejudice, we must understand what creates it, at its roots — inside ourselves. That means, besides looking at what others say and do, we have to look at the way we think and act and be willing to recognize — and admit — that we have been conditioned to hate and fear.

The Drive to Survive

When the world seemed a larger place and there were far fewer people than today, small groups of people formed tribes and engaged in ritual practices that performed for thousands of years, made them feel secure. Living with many people made them feel safe.

Today, we still live in small groups and still have tribes. Families, clubs, organizations, houses of worship and political parties are some of today's tribes. All of these groups help establish our identity, our sense of who we are. Unlike in the past, we do not mainly rely on them for our safety, but the sense of belonging that we derive from these groups does give us a feeling of security.

Since the world today has become a smaller place, and people from all over the world must depend on each other for survival, the old ways of individual tribes and those of our modern groups no longer help make us safe. Instead, they can divide us and even prevent us from contributing to one another's welfare as one race — the human race.

There are two kinds of survival — physical and psychological. Take a look at the difference between them.

- **Physical Survival.** We survive physically when we have enough to eat and drink, clothes to keep us warm and a place to live. Ancient tribes helped members survive physically by guaranteeing them food, clothing, shelter and protection.
- **Psychological survival.** We survive psychologically when we *feel* safe and secure. Ancient tribe members were required to

“identify” with their group and follow the group’s customs and beliefs. This dedication to the group made it more powerful — better able to care for its members.

A sense of safety and security comes when both our physical, mental and emotional needs are satisfied. Over time, science has developed remarkable tools and technology to provide us with the food, clothing and shelter we need to cover our physical needs. But what about our psychological needs?

Deeply ingrained in our brain cells, old tribal ways continue to make us prisoners of the past. We are conditioned to fear people who are different from us, to feel threatened by people who think and act differently than we do, and to be afraid that we won’t have enough of what we believe we need. Our parents were conditioned by their parents, and we are conditioned by ours. The question is: Do we continue to pass our prejudice, our conditioning to our children? Do we keep conditioned thinking alive by continuing to feed it to generation after generation? Or do we stop, think and realize that in order to survive today, we must change our thinking — and think in new ways. Here’s a thought to consider:

Our survival does not depend on strengthening our tribe over someone else’s tribe. Our survival depends upon understanding and going beyond the conditioned thinking that divides the human race into opposing ethnocentric ideologies that create conflict.

When we move from considering “Why is everyone picking on *me*?” to “Why is everyone picking on *us*?” we begin to look at conflict on a much larger scale. A simple one-person bias turns into group prejudice — and the group can be large, as large as a nation.

What Does Prejudice Mean?

If you throw a punch at someone and hurt that person, there’s a good chance you’re going to hurt your hand, too. Prejudice is like that. It hurts everyone — not only the person being bullied, but the bully, too.

Every prejudice has an effect. Putting an end to it requires that we find the cause for that effect.

Have you ever had a terrible toothache? The dentist may have had to remove a rotten tooth. But removing a tooth does not prevent a future toothache in another tooth. To prevent tooth decay, you need to understand the *cause* of tooth decay — what you, yourself, do to create it. Maybe you eat too much sugar. Maybe you don't brush after meals. Maybe you don't floss. You have to become aware of how you can *prevent* decay. Prejudice is like tooth decay. It starts deep inside. Once we see a symptom, the decay has already begun.

Preventive dentistry's goal is to stop decay before it spreads. To practice preventive prejudice, we need to stop hate *before* it spreads. When people are acting hatefully toward one another, it may be too late. If we can get to the conflict between people *before* it happens — at the beginning, right where the prejudice starts — we can prevent it from happening.

Definition 1: The first step in becoming free of prejudice is learning to question everything — to find the cause. The reason is that prejudice is judging, assuming, or expressing our opinion *before* we have all the right information.

Example:

- If I ask you, "What do you think of vanilla ice cream?" you might say: "My favorite!" Or, "Too bland!" Or, "I prefer chocolate!"

Your opinion of vanilla ice cream would be based on the fact that you've tasted it. You've had firsthand experience with it.

- If I ask you, "What do you think of your new neighbor who just emigrated here from the Ukraine?" you might say, "He isn't very friendly." Or, "He doesn't seem very smart — every time I say anything to him, he just smiles."

Is this opinion based on fact? Firsthand information? Someone else's opinion? First impressions? In this case, your opinion would show a

clear sign of prejudice. The reason? You have no real evidence. You've *assumed* unfriendliness and lack of intelligence without knowing the truth.

Maybe this person, new to your country, does not speak the language well. Is it fair to judge him because he cannot speak your language yet?

Definition 2: To be prejudiced is to judge a person or group simply because they act or appear different from us.

Example:

- If there's a new person in your community who discovered that you were not born in this country and she hates you because of this — what would you think? How would you feel?

It's like sending an innocent person to jail. The person has to suffer, but has no idea why.

Prejudice prevents us from getting along with other people. It is based on opinion, not fact, and often formed without real reason or sufficient knowledge.

Ask yourself, about anything you believe — Is this a fact, or my opinion? Give yourself time to answer the question honestly.

The Images in Our Mind

Let's say someone tells you that Jan, someone you know, is a bad person. When that message first enters your brain, you get an image in your mind. Dale says Jan is bad. As the message is repeated, the image is reinforced. Dale says Jan is bad. Now Pat says Jan is dishonest, and Julio says Jan is mean. This image causes a negative feeling to develop. This feeling inside you is: "I hate Jan, because Jan is a bad, dishonest, mean person."

Are these words about Jan true? Are they based on fact? You don't know. They are opinions of certain people. Regardless of its truth, the image creates a feeling. So one day, when you see Jan, the image

and feeling pop into your head. The feeling is mechanical, automatic — it happens unconsciously, without your being aware of it. You can't control its appearance. The image and the feeling are programmed in your brain and triggered when you see Jan. Then they are projected outward — toward Jan — like a movie projected onto a screen. But the image you're projecting in your brain is not true. We think that the image is a fact and that our thought is just reporting the truth of this. But what we don't realize is that what is "out there" that we think is a fact, is true, is only a projection of our own thinking. In other words, we have created and we are constantly recreating what we call "reality" by our conditioned prejudicial thinking. Prejudice is like a house of mirrors. But you create all the images you have of others.

Why do we bully? Because we get images like this one in our heads and can't get them out. The reason we can't get them out is because we believe them when we see them, without questioning them. We believe our brain has told us something factual, but it hasn't. We have been judging, not understanding. It has been projecting and hence recreating what others have told us is true, which are conditioned thoughts and feelings.

You know how you can be drinking a last gulp of water from a glass and, as you look through the glass, everything you're looking at appears squashed or elongated? These are the shapes of prejudice. Prejudice causes our thinking to get out of focus, so we inaccurately judge what we see.

The moment you judge someone as bad, wrong, stupid or different, you are at war — with yourself, inside your mind. This thought creates conflict in your mind, between bad and good, right and wrong and ignorant and smart. You think, "That person is bad. I am good." Or, "That person is right. I must be wrong." Or, "That bully is smart. I must be stupid."

Once we think and act from the prejudice we feel inside, we put our prejudice outside ourselves. We act negatively toward someone we believe is bad, stupid or making us feel wrong. Over time, we create a long list of categories we use to distinguish ourselves from others — to dislike others or feel superior to them. Instead of similarities, we see

differences between “them” and “us.” All of these thoughts and feelings are based on images we have created in our minds!

There is a difference between asking, “Why doesn’t the TV work?” and “What moron broke the TV?” Can you see the difference a word or two will make? Which question seeks an answer? Which question judges? It’s easy to see, isn’t it? But not always easy to see when we’re the one uttering those words!

When we carelessly use image-provoking words, we create the worst outcome of prejudice, which is conflict. When prejudice lives inside us, and we put it outside ourselves by acting prejudiced toward another human being, we set the stage for conflict — between ourselves and someone else.

Our brain is capable of great thoughts, but also of false images. Learning to recognize the difference is essential to understanding what prevents peace in our relationships.

When We’re Asleep, We Can’t See

Have you ever seen people hypnotized? The hypnotist puts you “to sleep” and tells you that when you wake up, at his or her command you will do something you’re asked to do. This is called a post-hypnotic suggestion. The amazing outcome is that when the person hypnotized is given that post-hypnotic suggestion and is “awakened,” he or she is not *aware* of having been hypnotized — even when asked afterward.

This is a lot like being prejudiced. We are hypnotized by a post-hypnotic suggestion, we go to sleep, becoming unaware of the reality of the world around us, and we react to images in our mind *as if they were real*, unaware that we’ve been “hypnotized.” Acting with prejudice is acting from shadows of memories that have gone before. We are “programmed” like a computer to “act strong like a man” or “act politely like a woman.” We are all prejudiced, in one way or another, by our elders when we are young. If we’re lucky, we learn to recognize our prejudices and to see the truth or falseness of them. When we become prejudiced by not being aware, we become numb to life around us.

We accept the opinions of other people without finding out the facts for ourselves.

Ask yourself if you have any of the following thoughts:

- Men are naturally more intelligent than women.
- Women are kinder and gentler than men.
- White people are better business people than black people.
- Black people have more athletic prowess than white people.
- Younger people are better workers than older people.
- To have peace, we must fight for it.
- Freedom is not free
- Authorities should never be questioned.
- To be good, we must do whatever we're told.
- Ambition is good; winning is everything.
- The more money you have, the better person you are.

The Only Enemy We Have

Imagine that someone teaches you to believe that people who live across the street from you are no good. If you believe what you've been conditioned to think is real, then what is "real" to you is that all those people are "enemies." In other words, they are a threat to the way you think, act and live.

Feeling threatened, you may believe it's necessary to defend yourself. Once you make this decision, you create conflict — between yourself and these people. Carrying this conflict inside you, you may get into a skirmish with one of those people. Suddenly your personal conflict becomes a full-fledged conflict. Here's how it looks:

The Ten Mental Steps that Create Conflict

1. The person across the street is no good.
2. That person is different from me.
3. That person is "my enemy."
4. That person is a threat to my safety and security.
5. That person is a threat to my family, my community.
6. I must defend myself against my enemy.

7. I must defend my community against “them.”
8. I feel inner conflict.
9. I project my conflict onto my “enemy.”
10. We are going to fight.

There is only one enemy — the one we create in our brain.

The Bells and Knots of Conditioning

We talked earlier about the “fight or flight” response. The “fight or flight” response exists for our self-preservation. It’s an instinct to protect us from harm, which is a healthy and natural response to *real* danger. A problem arises when the danger we perceive is not real, but only something we have pre-judged. This is where the word “prejudice” comes from. We are prejudiced when we pre-judge something or someone. Our first encounter with any particular experience causes us to pre-judge any similar encounter that follows. To protect itself in a conflict situation, our brain cues us either to get ready for battle or to escape.

The next time you start to think about how different someone is from you, stop and remember the basic trait we all have in common: When we’re scared, we either want to fight, or run away. But we don’t have to do either!

Pavlov’s Dogs

Have you heard of Pavlov’s dogs? Ivan Pavlov was a Russian surgeon who developed the concept of the “conditioned reflex.” In a well-known experiment, every time he fed his dog, he would ring a bell. Right before the dog was fed, no matter what time of day, Pavlov would ring a bell.

Over time, the dog came to understand that when he heard a bell, he was going to eat. So, every time the dog would hear the bell, he would salivate, in preparation for the food he knew was coming. Then, Pavlov would feed him.

One day, to try something different, Pavlov rang the bell but didn’t give the dog food. What amazed the scientist is that the dog salivated

anyway. Days later, when Pavlov again rang the bell — even though the dog didn't know whether or not he would get food, he would salivate. So, Pavlov discovered that he had conditioned his dog to salivate — to react in a certain way — by creating an association between the sound of a bell and food.

In our daily lives, people often “ring” a certain “bell” that we react to without thinking. For example, if someone puts you down, isn't there a bell that goes off inside you, making you want to fight or run away? If someone tells you to do something you don't want to do, does a bell inside ring with anger, fear or shame?

Every day we are fed information — from our families, friends, our community, television, radio, films and other media. Is all of it true? How do we know? Once any thought or belief is “out there,” people hear it, repeat it and begin to believe it more and more. That's when prejudice is born. Do we need to attune our ear to a new kind of bell ringing — a bell that rings inside our head every time we hear a prejudiced thought or see a prejudiced action?

When we can become aware of the enemies we have created in our minds and realize that we act out of prejudice, we're on our way to an important discovery: Unaware of our programming, we act as if our hatred is necessary. But we are the ones who are keeping it alive.

We were all born into a world already full of conditioned and prejudiced thinking. The culture we were born into programs us on a daily basis. Therefore, many things we believe may be part of a “tribal inheritance” — a cultural set of beliefs that may not be true. Every time we look at what we call “society” we think that is just the way it is, that our thinking is just reporting on “what is” the fact of reality. What most people don't realize is that we are recreating “reality” by our conditioned thinking as we said above. The problem created by prejudice is not your problem or my problem or even our problem. It is *the* problem, because it affects us all. If we want to change the world we need to change the way we think about it.

Every day, in several parts of the world, there seem to be two or more opposing sides that cannot come to an agreement and, as a result,

lives are lost. If no one identified with either side, would conflict and violence end? Could a solution be this simple?

If people woke up and saw that what they believed was only a “dream,” a conditioned projection of “reality” then the division, hence the conflict, would cease to exist.

Here’s what we’ve learned:

- There’s a difference between fact and prejudgment.
- Also, between assuming and getting information firsthand.
- Our mechanical brains have been programmed with images.
- Many of these images appear real but are not true.
- Under the spell of conditioned thinking, our brains are asleep.
- When we stereotype people, we create false images in our brain.
- Fear creates images that get stuck in our brain.
- Conditioning holds on to these images unless we wake up.
- The hatred we feel is our own invention, which we keep recreating.
- Prejudice is an automatic reaction. Awareness of this is what can end it.

Today, fighting to be the most powerful group, the most powerful country, works against security rather than for it. It creates conflict between people and keeps us from acting as a single unified species. Conditioning breeds prejudice. Prejudice ends when we can observe it in the making. Once we observe our conditioning in ourselves, it can stop.

Chapter 5

The Bystander: Neither Bully nor Victim

All of our conditioning is based on our drive to survive. We are born with this instinct. If you examine the way you respond to situations in your life, you will see that most of your actions and reactions are based on this motivation. Perhaps this is why many of us do nothing when we witness another human being attacked by a bully. A voice inside us says, “Don’t get involved, and you will survive.”

Bystanders Are Conditioned Creatures

In most bully situations, targets of bullying find themselves isolated and alone. People who formerly may have been friendly and supportive fall away, and the target is left feeling like a pariah and an outcast. How does this happen?

There are many reasons people fail to come to the aid of someone in distress. In some situations, in the presence of an aggressor — particularly a devious, manipulative, charming one — many people do not recognize a bully at work. Bullying often goes on behind closed doors so no one sees it or recognizes it. In some environments, where bullying is entrenched, it’s regarded as normal behavior.

Unlike with outgoing assault and harassment, introverted bullying is subtle and comprises hundreds, perhaps thousands, of incidents that out of context or in isolation appear trivial, making it difficult for bystanders to see the full picture. Reclusive bullies exert power and control by spreading misinformation, providing a distorted picture of only what the bully wants them to see. They are adept at manipulating peoples' perceptions and engendering a negative view of the target in the minds of others. This is achieved by undermining, including the creation of doubt and suspicion and the sharing of false concerns.

Lacking an understanding of bullying, some people hold outdated views such as “Why don’t you stand up for yourself?” The answer to this question is that the moment you assert your right to not be bullied, the bully moves into the next bullying phase, which too often is elimination. This happens at home, at work, and on the street. The bully creates a climate of fear where everybody is afraid to speak out or take action, for fear of reprisal.

The bully warns everybody off, often using implied threats of physical action against anyone who helps the target. People think that if they keep their heads down, their mouths shut and pretend nothing is happening, it won't happen to them.

Those who have no understanding of bullying, manipulation, or psychological violence don't know what to do about bullies. Some bystanders are able to employ the "I didn't know what to do" excuse to abdicate and deny their responsibility. When put to the test, not everyone has the integrity and moral courage to stand up to harassment.

Bullies can be masters of manipulation, and are fond of targeting people with their emotions. When close to being outwitted and exposed, bullies feign being victims and turn the focus on themselves — another example of manipulating people via guilt, sympathy, feeling sorry. The bully sometimes convinces bystanders to punish the target for alleged infractions, so bystanders become instruments of harassment. The bully encourages bystanders to lie, act dishonorably and dishonestly, withhold information and spread misinformation.

The bully is often able to bewitch an especially emotionally needy bystander into being an easily controlled spokesperson / advocate / supporter / denier. Or the bully may form an alliance with another who has the same behavior profile, increasing the level of threat, fear and dysfunction. When there's conflict in the air, most people want to be on the winning side, the side they think will help them survive.

This enables the bully to groom bystanders and the target into believing that the target deserves the treatment he or she is receiving. When bullying goes on over a long period of time, the target eventually becomes obsessive about the bullying, friends and family start to experience "compassion fatigue" and turn off. If the bullying continues, people may actually become aggressive and actively join in mobbing, victimizing and scape-goating as the pack mentality takes over.

It's easy to see the parallels between the actions and inactions of how the mentality of bullying — at school, at work, at home and in the community — can lead to despots such as Adolph Hitler, who was able to draft so many German people into supporting him. Those with the

moral integrity to refuse were arrested, tortured or shot. Hitler was not the first dictator to eliminate anyone who objected — nor the last. History demonstrates that every age has its share of bully dictators.

Can We Break the Bystander Habit?

Bullies are extremely vindictive and will do everything in their power to destroy anyone who can see through their mask of deceit. In rare cases you may receive information from a bystander who wants to help but is afraid to do so publicly for fear of retribution — and fear of becoming the next target. We need to look more closely at what exactly a bystander is.

A bystander is an onlooker, a witness — someone who watches and takes no action. A bystander refuses to help when someone is being attacked, takes cover in the face of danger, uses ignorance as an excuse to not help, denies responsibility for helping, sometimes pretends to not see the harm being done, and feels caught between the bully and the victim.

It is not for us to judge the bystander. As creatures of habit, we've all been conditioned in many ways. We've been taught to study in school, follow the rules at work, obey the law, and do what's right. We've been trained to tell the truth and do unto others, as we would have them do unto us. Some of our conditioning is positive, and some is isn't. Bystanders are people who are unaware that they are capable of helping a victim in trouble.

Just because a bully uses violent tactics doesn't mean that a person has to use violence to subdue the bully. As a matter of fact, it's best to not use violence, whether or not a bully acts violently. It's always best to act, based on your own thinking, than to react, based on that of the bully.

As bystanders, we have choices. Instead of succumbing to fear and doing nothing, we can take action. Any of these choices can be dangerous — because we never know how a bully is going to act, or react. Still, we have opportunities to help someone in distress and, if we're able to move beyond our drive to survive, we can choose to take action. Here are some forms of action similar to those we've already learned, but applied to a bystander situation.

Eight Opportunities

- **Make Friends.** All bullies need admiration and respect. Figure out a way to get the bully's mind off the victim by giving the bully some attention.
- **Use Humor.** Getting the bully's mind off anger and fear could make the bully less aggressive. But be sure the bully understands you're not making fun of the bully.
- **Be creative.** Tell the bully that the victim is sick — has poison oak or some disease or infection the bully will get if he/she touches the victim. Call the police! Or, at least tell the bully that someone called the police and they're on the way. Use a cell phone.
- **Agree With Bully.** Pretend to take sides with the bully. Use this distraction to give you time to talk some sense into the bully.
- **Stand Up to the Bully.** This can work, but it can also make a bully angrier. Get help before you stand up to the bully. Shout! Scream! Yell!
- **Ignore The Threats.** Listen to the bully's threats, walk up to the bully, take hold of the victim and walk the victim away. This can work, but it can also be dangerous, because it may turn you into the next victim.
- **Reason With The Bully.** If you are a good talker, you might convince the bully to not hurt the victim, or anyone else.
- **Convince the Bully of a New Definition of Power.** Attempt to convince the bully that *not* hurting a victim takes greater power than hurting the victim.

All humans feel fear, even the bully. Fear appears without our having any say in the matter — it's part of human nature. Once it appears, it creates responses that can cause us to lose confidence. But as we continue to learn how bullies think and act, we gain more confidence in our ability to deal with them.

The Ways We Are Conditioned

There is no right or wrong way we act when we're afraid. When the "fight or flight" syndrome takes hold, the way we are conditioned appears automatically. We've already talked about physical and psychological survival. Based on these, there are three kinds of conditioning, and it helps to be able to recognize the difference between them.

- **Basic Biological Conditioning**

One way we are conditioned is biological. We act spontaneously to find adequate food, shelter and clothing — everything we need physically to survive. This conditioning happens spontaneously. We are born with it.

- **Fight /flight Biological Conditioning**

This biological conditioning is the fight or flight response we talked about earlier. In situations of fear this response is activated too prepare a person to act for their survival. As a bystander one can feel the effect of this biological conditioning that can prevent them from acting on behalf of the victim. One may feel paralyzed with this fear and not be able to move. But there is a way one can deal with this biological fear, which we will discuss at the end of the book in the section called Martial Arts for Peace. But for now it is important to realize that this biological fight or flight exists and is a powerful force.

- **Physical Conditioning**

When we exercise or participate in sports, our muscles become conditioned to certain movement. The way we breathe when we run, stretch for a basket, the way we kick a ball in soccer or hit a tennis ball with a racket — it all becomes second nature. Dancers' bodies become conditioned to movement others find strenuous. Physical conditioning is conditioning of the body.

- **Psychological Conditioning**

Another way we are conditioned is psychological. Our mental drive to survive makes us want to triumph, prevail, to beat, to be better than — to win over "the other." We are not born with this conditioning. We learn it from other people. This kind of drive to survive can get us into

a disagreement or fight. On a larger scale, this is what drives people who run countries to go to war.

Our basic biological drive to survive is real. Without adequate food, shelter and clothing, we would perish. Our physical conditioning is also real — we can feel just how real after a strenuous workout. Our psychological drive to survive is real, but most often based on something that happened in the past — never on something happening here and now. This drive creates conflict inside us — pits us against another — so we take on the perspective of “you” vs. “me,” of “them” vs. “us.” Instead of looking for and finding similarities among others, and ourselves we find differences. And our fight/flight biological conditioning is a primary factor that can both work for and against us. It can be stimulated by exposure to fearful images as well as a real threat to our survival. This is where this biological conditioned response works against when it is activated by a supposed threat, one that has been conditioned into us. If the bully is a person that you have been conditioned to fear then this image may prevent you from acting to protect a victim.

To practice putting yourself in control of a fearful bystander situation, contemplate an imaginary bystander situation. Then, ask yourself:

- What’s making me afraid of this situation?
- What kind of conditioning is causing this fear — biological, psychological?
- How is this conditioning creating conflict in me?
- How am I creating conflict in this situation?
- What’s one way I might be able to end the conflict in this situation?

In a bystander situation, when a bully attacks a victim, you, the bystander, most likely feel conflict. You want to help the victim but you’re afraid to help because the bully might attack you instead. Caught between two opposing forces, scared to take action and scared not to, you feel helpless. Even when there are 10 or more bystanders and 1 bully, people are often afraid to help the victim.

From a Passive Bystander to Active Bystander

The only way to move from passive bystander to an active bystander is to practice. Let's look at two situations in which you could possibly find yourself a participant.

Situation A

You are playing baseball with teammates from work. You hear a cry from your friend, Pat. He holds his shoulder as if he's been hit with something. You spin around and see someone who threw the ball and is laughing because he purposely hit Pat. This is the third time you've seen this happen to Pat, and Pat says it's happened many more times. Pat yells loudly, "Somebody has to stop this!"

1. What are you thinking?
2. What action do you want to take?
3. Why do you want to take this action?
4. Will you take this action, or will you take another?
5. What thought is running through your mind now?
6. Do you see your thinking as possibly aligned with anyone else's?
7. How will you communicate your plan to the others?
8. What do you think the outcome will be?

Situation B

A man has a strong arm around Terry, a friend of yours. The man is threatening a group of people that includes you. Terry looks panicked but is doing everything the man says. The man tells everyone to move away as he backs toward a car that appears to be his. He drags Terry with him. He yells, "If anyone gets near me, you'll be sorry!" He continues to drag Terry and prepares to force Terry into the car.

1. What are you thinking?
2. What action do you want to take?
3. Why do you think this action will help?
4. Are you going to take this action?
5. What thought is running through your mind?
6. Do you see any way to turn your thought into action?
7. Do you want to communicate your plan to the others around you?
8. How will you do this?
9. How quickly are you going to have to act to make this work?
10. Do you think you can outsmart this bully?

11. Is there a chance that someone other than the original victim will get hurt?
12. If there's a chance you might get hurt, why do you consider doing this?

The Power That Bystanders Have

Most bullies act tough but are very insecure people. They threaten others because they want to hide their own fear. A bully can do a lot of damage and harm a lot of people, but bystanders working together can outsmart a bully and create a happy ending. Not always, but it is possible. At the very least, they can deter a bully from harming the bully's intended target.

On September 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 93, the fourth plane to be hijacked by terrorists, had 40 passengers aboard. When they received word that three other planes had been hijacked before them and had succeeded in their suicide missions, they knew they were next. Together, they pooled their thoughts and organized an attack on the hijackers, which included pushing a coffee cart down the aisle to break open the cockpit door. The attack did not save their own lives, but it kept the hijackers from reaching their intended target, which is alleged to have been either the White House or the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Power comes from being aware. The best way to learn how to become more aware is to practice. Becoming aware requires that we let our body rest while we engage our mind. Instead of focusing on what's around us, we focus on what's inside us. We sit quietly, close our eyes and allow anything we are thinking about to drift to the surface, where we can see it.

Sometimes this act frightens people, because they fear some of their innermost thoughts. Many of us have thoughts we would rather not think about. But most people discover that once they allow their thoughts to surface, thinking becomes clearer, and looking at their thoughts becomes easier. The bullies in our lives need to know this, too.

Bullies, the masters of manipulation, are often smart but use their intelligence for negative reasons. Whenever we can get a bully to use his

or her brainpower for positive reasons, we are doing something good. Many bully situations can be prevented before they happen if we will take the time to *understand* a bully and attempt to *work with* a bully. Part of this process is helping a bully to feel wanted, needed, important — things we all want to feel. This is the power we, as bystanders, have.

When we stand in a bully's shoes and see the world through a bully's eyes, we can relate to the bully's thoughts and actions. We can see that he or she may be someone who fears not being able to live up to the expectations of other people.

If you've ever felt anxious, worthless, hurt, ashamed, humiliated, rejected, enraged, scared, powerless, frustrated, lonely and unloved — you know how a bully feels. If you've ever thought, "What did I do to deserve this?" you know how a bully thinks. When we can stand in a bully's shoes and see the world through a bully's eyes — we strengthen our own mental power.

Awareness Creates a Desire to Change

Becoming aware of our possibilities — possibilities that we never knew were there — often creates a desire inside us to change in some way. For example, when we become aware that we can alter our thinking by taking a moment to stop and think before we act — we begin to feel stronger. We are sometimes taught to not trust our instinct, but our instinct is often right.

All of us who've been a bully, a victim or a bystander can do things that will change the way we approach our life. What are some changes you see yourself making?

- Talking with people you trust about what you feel?
- Appreciate who you are and allow yourself to feel proud of the good you do?
- Engage friends who support the positive sides of who you are?
- Engage in activities that encourage new learning that's positive and fun?
- Admit that nobody is perfect and that we all make mistakes?
- Acknowledge that every day you can do something that improves your life?

In a bully/victim situation, the decision to not take action makes the bystander a “middleman” — someone who does not support the bully or the victim. At such times, many of us tend to convince ourselves that not helping someone in distress is safer than helping. Does this make us guiltless? Blameless? Innocent?

There are times when, without having a choice in the matter, we become bystanders in a bully/victim situation. In these moments, we must make a decision. Are we going to help someone in distress, or not? The truth is that bystanders who do nothing end up on the side of the bully. Still, the times to help are when we strongly believe that there is a chance we can do some good — that we’re able to help, and that we have enough backup to make the action work.

Consider a bully/victim situation you have experienced, or make one up. Once you have the situation established in your mind, ask yourself:

1. Is this a situation I would avoid? Would I walk away? Run? Hide?
2. Is this a situation I think I could do something about? What, for example?
3. If I were to take some action, is this something I would do alone, or would I get help?
4. As a bystander in this situation, do I believe I have the responsibility to do something? Why do I feel this way?
5. As a bystander in any situation, what do I think I am required to do, if anything?
6. If I become a bystander in this situation, will I think I’m not doing what’s right if I don’t take some action?
7. Do I think that there are some situations that cannot be helped, and that this is one of them?
8. How would I feel if I were the bully in this situation? Would I want any accomplice to help me?

9. How would I feel if I were the victim in this situation? Would I want a bystander to help me?
10. How would I feel, after the incident, if I were a bystander who didn't help, and the victim recognized me afterward?
11. Would I feel compelled to explain my reasons for not helping? Would I believe that it was not my job to help and therefore I would have no need to explain anything?
12. Does being a bystander put us between a rock and a hard place?

How Prejudice Affects Our Desire to Act

Learning to think for ourselves means developing the ability to understand what's true and what isn't — what's fact and what's fiction. When we do not learn to think for ourselves, our prejudices live on and create an imbalance in our view of people and places around us. Unable to see that a bully is just as much a person in need as the victim, we do not act to help either one.

Prejudiced thinking makes us prisoners, more interested in protecting ourselves than in learning something new. Our prejudice is often what keeps us from helping another person in distress.

Prejudice is seeing other people as different from you. You may think, if that person is different from me, why should I help? Prejudice is feeling superior to another person, which separates you from that person. Prejudice is feeling afraid of someone because that person represents something threatening. Too often it is prejudice, rather than fear, that keeps bystanders from helping another person.

Can you think of something different about someone you've seen that gives you strong feelings about that person? Can you think of a situation in which someone tried to hurt you, or bully you, because that person saw you as different from him or her? And, as a result, you now have feelings of prejudice toward that person?

Now, can you think of something similar about someone you know that would give you strong feelings about that person? Can you think of a time someone was kind to you because you were similar or had something in common? And, as a result, do you now have feelings of camaraderie toward that person?

Are you aware of the kinds of thoughts that arise from finding differences, and the kinds of thoughts that arise from finding similarities? Imagine you are a bystander watching a bully attack a victim. What prejudice do you feel toward the bully? What prejudice do you feel toward the victim? What similarities do you see between yourself and the bully? What similarities do you see between yourself and the victim? Whose side are you on? Or are there any “sides”?

Bullies, Victims and Bystanders

Bullies come in all shapes and sizes, all ages and nationalities, all levels of income and education, and can be male or female. What all bullies have in common is that they verbally or physically pick on other people, because they are hurt, angry, afraid and frustrated. A bully is someone who was once a victim.

Victims also come in all shapes and sizes, ages, nationalities, levels of income and education, and either sex. What all victims have in common is that they have been verbally or physically attacked for being in the wrong place at the wrong time; for being good at what they do; and/or for being popular, intelligent, and having a strong sense of values. Some victims are attacked because they appear vulnerable or weak, demonstrate independence, or refuse to join a particular group.

A victim is someone who, after being repeatedly attacked, can easily turn into a bully. Like bullies and victims, bystanders come in all shapes and sizes, all ages, nationalities, all levels of income and education, and either sex. There are two basic kinds of bystanders. One has been manipulated or tricked, in one way or another, to support a bully. Another is someone who does not have the emotional intelligence to understand bullying and therefore becomes a victim. Some bystanders will always jump to the winning side, to ensure their own survival. Others develop a warped sense of gratification in seeing others in distress and

become a partner in bullying. Bystanders are observers, onlookers, witnesses and spectators who, more often than not, decide to passively accept someone else being harassed, and not help.

Now you know that bystanders are people who can make a difference. They can be active participants in helping someone in trouble — just by knowing that there are ways to reach bullies and ways to stop them from creating conflict that they may regret for the rest of their lives. Making a decision to become an active participant can have a happy ending, but it can also have a sad one. It's a choice we make, based on our perception of a particular situation.

Chapter 6

Helping Young People To Handle Bullies

Mastering others requires force;
Mastering the self requires enlightenment.”
— *Lao-tzu*

If you parent and have kids at home, or if you are a teacher, counselor, youth care worker there's a good chance, in today's society, that the children you live or work with will be frightened by a bully. That's why it's essential for your kids to know that all cruelty springs from weakness. A bully who picks on you or threatens you is someone who feels powerless — and then takes this feeling of powerless out on *you*. When your children learn this and practice what they can do in a bully situation, they will get stronger and grow more confident.

Ask your children: If you were a bully, how would you pick a person to pick on? Would you target someone who looks strong? Someone who looks helpless? Someone tall? Someone short? An athlete? A computer nerd? Would you pick on someone who's good at everything? Someone who's not so good at anything? Someone popular? Someone quiet? Someone honest? Someone who lies?

Bullies are very good at selecting a target. They know how to find someone who is afraid, easily upset, or who lacks self-esteem. Bullies need to be in control, and when they find people with these characteristics, they immediately sense that they can control these people. To ensure their control, they will lie, deceive or charm you into believing what they say. This is why awareness is essential.

Being bullied is a frightening situation when we don't know how to handle it. Being scared all the time completely changes who we are. Instead of focusing on everyday life — to take care of ourselves, do our homework, relate to our family and hang out with friends — we think about the bully, how to avoid the bully and how to get away from the bully should we need to escape quickly. Sometimes, after only one bullying incident, we live in a continual state of fear, always looking back to see

who might be following us, looking around the corner to see who might be hiding. Instead of enjoying our lives, we become victims, afraid of our own shadow.

The curse of being bullied is that we begin to see ourselves as victims — all the time — and grow more and more afraid to simply go about our lives. This is not a healthy way to live.

Questioning Your Children's Conditioning

Have you ever asked your children if a bully has attacked them? Do they shrug it off? Do they get upset? Does your question make them angry? If so, perhaps they have been victimized and need attention. When a bully upsets or hurts us, the bully's actions trigger a wave of emotions that affect how we think and feel, sometimes for the rest of our lives. That's why it's important to talk to your children now. Just as cigarette smoking will affect their physical health, bullying will affect their mental health.

Here's a good way to break the ice on the subject of bullying. Ask your children: "Do you know what conditioning is?" Explain that conditioning is the training we get in our lives. "You've been conditioned to brush your teeth." "Look both ways before crossing the street." "You are conditioned to respect other people."

Explain to your children the three kinds of conditioning:

- **Biological conditioning** makes us crave food, water, and sleep, and to do what it takes to survive! We get hungry! We get thirsty! We get tired! Biological conditioning is natural human conditioning!
- **Physical conditioning** happens when we exercise or participate in sports, and our muscles get conditioned to certain movement. Physical conditioning is conditioning of the body.
- **Mental conditioning.** Learning to stop for a red light, to brush our teeth, to act with respect toward other people — this is training of the mind. Repeated over time, this behavior

becomes a habit — something we once had to think about, but now we do without thinking.

Tell your Children this short story:

A strong, tough bully shows up at a school playground and walks up to a student who is practicing kicking a soccer ball. This student is much smaller than the bully. The bully demands that the student hand over the soccer ball and grabs it away. Walking off with the ball, the bully threatens: “If you tell anyone about this, I’ll come back and hurt you!” The student, who is angry, says nothing.

Ask your children:

Do you think the bully acted this way because of **biological** conditioning? Did the bully act this way out of a need for food, water, and sleep? *Encourage all opinions!*

The bully may be hungry or thirsty and it’s possible the bully did not get enough sleep, but that’s probably not why the bully threatened the student.

Did the bully act this way because of **physical** conditioning, because of training in certain physical movement? *Encourage more opinions!*

The bully may have sore muscles or not feel well, but threatening another person usually comes from some place deeper than body aches.

Did the bully act this way because of **mental** or **psychological** conditioning — because the bully was trained to think that in order to get what he or she wants, it’s important to be tough?

This is more likely. Many bullies have a need to be tough and to control others because they don’t have much control over their own lives.

Tell your children:

- Bullies become bullies and hurt other people mostly because, at some time in their lives, someone hurt *them*!
- Out of fear or desire for revenge, they take out their frustrations on other people because they can't take them out on the people who bullied *them*.
- Most bullies become bullies because they were once victims.

Ask your children:

Now you've talked about the bully's side of the story. What do you think of the victim's situation?

Do you think the victim said nothing and did nothing because of **biological** conditioning — out of a need for food, water, or sleep?

The victim may have been hungry, thirsty or tired, but that's probably not why this victim did anything to stop the bully.

Did the student do nothing because of **physical** conditioning, because of training in certain physical movement?

The student may have had sore muscles or not felt well, but deciding whether or not to act in a threatening situation usually comes from some place deeper than body aches.

Did the student do nothing because of **mental** or **psychological** conditioning — maybe deciding not to do anything for fear of being hurt?

This is more likely. Although victims usually either want to fight back or run away, many, out of fear or indecision, choose to do nothing.

Tell your children that victims in such situations feel helpless: If they fight, they'll get hurt. If they run away, the bully may chase and attack. After experiencing this kind of threatening situation, victims sometimes get angry with themselves for doing nothing and may feel frustrated by their helplessness in not knowing what to do.

If a bully continues to hassle a victim, over and over again, the victim may go through life afraid of any situation that's the least bit threatening. It's been proven that even a brief situation such as this one can have long-term effects. Many adults today still cannot forget bully situations they experienced when they were young.

That's why it's important to talk with your kids so they learn how to handle bullies they encounter — on the playground, in the community and in the world.

One way to practice handling bullies is to practice thinking ahead — in other words, thinking about what you would do if you found yourself in a bully situation. It's helpful to think about these things *before* they happen, so you're ready, prepared, in case they do.

Practice Thinking Ahead

If you want to teach your kids how to handle bullies and have some fun at the same time, play a game called "Pick A Strip." On a piece of paper, put the following partial sentences on a piece of paper and cut them into strips. Place the strips in a basket and ask everyone to pick one out of the basket. Then, finish the sentence, as quickly as you can.

1. A bully is someone who...
2. A victim is someone who...

3. When I see a bully some of the thoughts in my brain are ...
4. When I get angry being a victim, what I do is...
5. When I'm upset because I am a bully, the thing I ought to do is...
6. When I have the desire to run away from a bully, I usually...
7. Whenever I feel good about myself because I stopped a fight, I...
8. Whenever I feel bad about myself because I didn't stop a fight, I...
9. When my parents want me to do something that I don't want to, I usually
10. When I do something smart, I think...
11. When I do something stupid, I think...
12. Whenever I lose — a game, or an argument — I...
13. The times I think people don't like me are...
14. A time when I first encountered a bully in my brain was...
15. There's a bully that sits on my shoulder and tells me, over and over again...
16. What I really should do with my life first is...
17. When I make a mistake, I think...
18. The way I think I should think about myself is...
19. The way I really think about myself is...
20. What I need to learn most about myself is...
21. The times I bully myself are when I...

22. I have a bully inside me who's always trying to get me to...
23. The way I feel about change is...
24. When someone tells me to change, I think...
25. When I try to be perfect, what happens is...
26. The way I want to live my life is...
27. The way I'm currently living my life is...
28. The way I feel about what's happening in the world today is...
29. The times I wish I could do something about the world is...
30. The times I realize that I do something about the world situation is...

What Your Children Need to Know

When we have thoughts that disturb us and try to bury them somewhere inside us and refuse to think about them, we do ourselves harm. When we stop and identify thoughts that disturb us — and talk about them — that's when the process of healing can begin. You can tell your children that it's like finding a virus in a computer. Once it's identified and removed, your computer works well again.

It may at first seem too big a task to figure out the cause of our upsetting thoughts, but the process gets easier once we give it a try. Since it's not always easy, we have to be willing to use our brainpower and stay in the game.

The first step is to go inside the memory of your hard-drive brain and click open a disturbing event that happened to you. The next step is to say or write down what that event taught you to believe. The step after that is to say or write down what you think and what you feel as a result of that event. It goes like this:

1. A disturbing event I recall was...
2. The event taught me to believe that...
3. What I think and feel as a result of that event is...

Make sure your children understand that what they were conditioned to believe about this event is the cause of why they feel bad — not the event itself! The viruses in our brain have conditioned us to believe that we have said or done something wrong, but this isn't true. What we *believe* is what affects how we think and feel. This is why it's important to be able to spot the real cause of how we think and what we feel. We may be blaming ourselves for something that isn't our fault. Or, we may be blaming someone else who's innocent as well.

To practice developing your children's ability to distinguish between what they feel and what they believe, find a place at home or school to put up a chart, where they — and you, too — can record incidents that the whole family or class can see. Make it everyone's responsibility to write down any disturbing event that happens to him or her. Then, write what they believe because of what happened during the event. Then, write how this belief makes them feel. Call the chart: "Cause and Effect"

CAUSE AND EFFECT

**A DISTURBING
EVENT
BECAUSE**

**WHAT I BELIEVE
DUE TO THE EVENT**

**WHAT I THINK
AND FEEL
OF THIS EVENT**

Example:

My friend gets angry
calls me stupid when
I don't get good
grades and don't
do everything perfectly.

I need to be perfect
all the time

Everyone ought to and
strive to be perfect.
When we're perfect,
we don't make mistakes
and no one can call us
an idiot.

Remind your children that fear is part of our conditioning. All humans feel fear. Once fear appears, it can cause us to lose confidence, but this does not have to happen. There is no right or wrong way to act when we're scared. However we act is based on our conditioning.

Our psychological conditioning — our mental drive to survive — is very real. We feel we need to win, to be better than, triumph over another, be the victor. While our biological drive is real — we need food, water and shelter to survive — our mental or psychological drive often is based on a need that was once real but isn't anymore. We don't need to win an argument to survive. We don't need to get the upper hand to survive this way.

Getting Your Children to See How They Create Conflict

None of us wants to be the one accused of creating conflict, but we all do it. Fear creates conflict inside us. Remember the last time you felt afraid of something or someone? Didn't you feel conflict? What was the conflict you felt? Did you want to help someone but were afraid of getting involved? What could you have done to end the conflict you felt inside you at the time?

To be in conflict means that we're caught between two opposing forces. We are scared to take action, and scared not to. This causes us to feel helpless. In a conflict situation, you may think, "I want to do something, but I can't fight that bully. I'm not strong enough." Some people believe that having conflict in our lives is good, because it teaches us how to work through problems and strengthens our ability to solve them. But some kinds of conflict are harmful and cause unnecessary pain. In order to take steps not to catch a cold, it's necessary to understand how we got our cold in the first place. Did we not wear warm clothing in winter, eat healthy food, get enough rest, and be around people who were sick?

It is important as role models for children to look at our own lives and see how our conflict got started and at all the steps that made it happen. Then we can educate them as we learn about ourselves.

How does conflict start for us? Did I start an argument? Did I say something that offended someone? Did I accidentally push someone's

button? Every conflict has a cause. We just have to find it. Conflict arises from being conditioned to act in a certain way but feeling that we would rather act in a different way. For example, you can tell your children you may want to fight someone for making fun of you, but you've been conditioned to believe you're not strong enough. You may want to yell at someone, but you've been conditioned to think that yelling isn't right.

The causes of conflict in any situation in this order are: how we think, how we feel, how we act, and the effect of our thoughts and feelings on our actions.

Your thoughts and feelings affect your actions! Do you ever stop to think about what thought and feelings triggered any of the hundreds of actions you take in a day? If you think about your actions before you proceed with them, you may find yourself changing your action. The process goes like this:

The Pause That Calms

1. Take a few seconds to get as calm and relaxed as you can. Then, think of someone who's been on your mind lately, or something you've thought a lot about lately — a parent, colleague, close friend, work, a problem you're having. Pick one thought.
2. Select a thought about someone or something you feel angry or hurt about.
3. As you sit comfortably, close your eyes and look inside at your hurt or angry feelings. Don't do anything — just watch.
4. Whatever your hurt or angry thoughts and feelings are, just look at them, as if you were watching a video. Don't judge them as either good or bad. Think of them as "These are my thoughts." They just "are." Let these thoughts rise, like bubbles in a glass of soda. Watch them bubble up, and then watch the bubbles quietly disappear, without any effort.
5. Do your best to not judge what you see by saying that's good or that's bad. If you do, just notice that you're doing that. "Oops, I'm thinking

that thoughts are bad!” Or, “Uh-oh, I’m criticizing myself!”

6. The point is to let the thoughts and feelings come into your thoughts, and then watch your thoughts, without *acting* on them.
7. Like a strong tree in the wind, you are bending without breaking. Even though you’ve been hurt, you are able to *not* hurt back.
8. This is the true essence of stopping a fight — whether that fight is inside you, or outside you with someone else. We learn how to not hurt back, so we stop the conflict, whether it’s in our mind or with another person. And we learn to stop the conflict before it ever starts.

Now, open your eyes. You can do this exercise any time, anywhere, when you feel angry, hurt, frustrated, alone, or discouraged. Taking this pause that refreshes helps us understand the hurt — without hurting back!

Teaching your children this form of self-observation can help build their confidence and help them develop new skills to get by in this world. You can even have role-play nights. Instead of watching television, you can create and enact a role-play. Or at school you can take the time to do this. Our research has shown that kids who role-play bully situations feel much better prepared to face bullies in real-life situations.

In addition to role-playing, you can ask your children to contemplate a possible bully situation in which they find themselves involved. You could tell them:

1. Imagine yourself in a situation, where you’re about to be attacked by a bully — physically or psychologically.
2. In your wildest dream, how would you handle this bully? Even though it might be a dream, make this as realistic as you can. It can be great fun, as well as instructive, to be imaginative in real-life situations!
3. Think to yourself:

- ☐ How will this affect the bully and possibly change the bully's thinking?
- ☐ How will this affect the victim and strengthen the victim's position?
- ☐ What would be the best outcome in this situation, so that everyone can win?
- ☐ How does it make me feel to come up with these alternate situations? Do I feel stronger? Smarter?
- ☐ What are some bully situations that go on in my life all the time that this could be helpful with?

What Happens When We Get Angry

Whether you are a bully or a victim, although getting angry is part of human nature, it almost always makes a situation worse. And, in the long run, it rarely gets you what you want.

Have you ever thought about why you get angry? Is anger a conditioned response? Is there anything positive that comes from anger? Does your anger hurt other people? Does it hurt you?

People sometimes believe that the way we think and things we say can never be changed. That's our negative conditioning at work. The truth is, when we can learn to think for ourselves, think on our feet in a scary situation, keep our mind clear to make a positive decision — our intelligence is acting and we can feel the difference inside ourselves.

A New Definition of Strength

Here are ten ways to show your children how they can think for themselves. These are the same ways we discussed in the previous chapter, but this time you're using them with your children. Talk to your kids about them. Ask them what they think of these Bully Busters. Ask them which ones they like and which they don't. Ask

them, which they think they could use, and which they would never use. Ask why.

Explain to them that these are alternate actions a person can take in a bully situation. Simply being aware of these new actions already puts you a step ahead of the bully. The reason is that instead of getting scared by a bully and cowering because you don't know what to do, you try out one of these alternatives (all 12 are in Addendum One).

Ten Bully Busters

1. **Make Friends.** All bullies need admiration and respect. Get the bully's mind off you by treating the bully as a friend instead of an enemy. Think about how you can do this.
2. **Use Humor.** Turn a scary situation into a funny one — use humor, but be careful. Have fun *with* the bully rather than making fun *of* the bully. Getting the bully's mind off anger can help.
3. **Be creative.** As a victim, pretend you are sick — you have poison oak, some disease or infection the bully will get if he or she touches or fights with you. Or, tell the bully that some authority figure is due any moment.
4. **Agree With the Bully.** If a bully attacks you in any way, think of how you could take sides with the bully. This is like making friends. It helps to distract the bully from doing you any harm.
5. **Stand Up to the Bully.** This can work, but it can also make a bully angrier. If you can, get help before you stand up to the bully. If not, follow your instinct and make a decision.
6. **Scream/Yell.** A good shout or yell can shock a bully. Yell, to distract the bully, and use that moment of shock to get away while the bully is distracted.

7. **Ignore The Threats.** Listen to the bully's threats, and calmly walk away. This can work, but it can also be dangerous, because the bully may follow you. But sometimes, walking away takes the wind out of the bully's sails.
8. **Use Authority.** Call a teacher, a police officer, a parent, or someone you know who can help stop the bully from hurting you. These days many people have cell phones, and we can call for help. Arrange for a cell phone "help" code between you and your friends and family. Take note of where public phones are available near in the areas you frequent every day.
9. **Reason With the Bully.** If you are a good talker, perhaps you and the bully can talk it out. If you don't argue or get angry, if you act friendly, you might convince the bully to not hurt you.
10. **Convince the Bully of a New Definition of Power.** Attempt to convince the bully that *not* hurting someone takes greater power than hurting someone. This takes practice, and not every bully will buy the argument. But when it works, you're the one who's in power!

When these Bully Busters are practiced, children can get very creative and often come up with life-saving actions.

When we're emotionally involved in a situation, we can lose touch with our reasoning ability. Losing touch with our ability to reason, based on our mental conditioning, is the primary reason for conflict in our lives.

So, if you'd like to get conflict out of your life, the best thing you can do is work on changing your thinking.

Tell your children that since we can't see our conditioning in the same way that we can see a bird, a tree or each other, it's important to become *aware* of our conditioning and talk about it. When we can understand how we've been conditioned, we can begin to understand why we think the way we do, and act the way we do. And if we're lucky, we can then start to change our thinking. Changing your

thinking changes everything. We are the world and the world is us. Change the way we think and we change the world we live in.

Encourage your kids to create a chart called “New Thinking” and to add to the chart on an ongoing basis. Invite them to write down a new way of thinking they have tried and to give it a fun name. The left column would be called “Name for My New Thinking” and the right column would be called “Here’s What It’s About.” This might be too much fun for you to leave just to them.

Festered Anger Creates Depression

As we know by now, there are many different ways we are conditioned or “trained.” We condition our kids to think and act in certain ways because we believe these ways will help them survive in the world — or because we believe these ways will add to our own comfort zone.

Another form of conditioning is based on the use of reward or punishment. When we want our kids to act in a certain way, we reward them when they do and punish them when they don’t. “If you don’t do your homework, there will be no TV tonight.” “You took out the trash without my asking? Wow! You get your favorite dessert.”

It’s common for people to react to situations spontaneously, often without thinking. Spontaneity can be exciting and rewarding. Some situations, however, work best when we take a moment to think before we act. It’s important to know when to take that pause.

For example, while some of us freely exhibit our anger as soon as we feel it, others push our anger down inside ourselves and don’t let it show. What our kids need to know is that festered anger creates depression. When we’re angry and don’t let anyone know we’re angry, that anger tends to grow and spread, like a disease. It can infect all of our thinking and feeling.

Ask your children: “Why do you think some kids keep their anger inside and don’t show it?” Listen to what they have to say. What makes us make the decision to keep it inside? Is it fear? Have we been punished in some way for showing our anger?

Outward Anger Creates Imbalance

Just as keeping anger inside is unhealthy and unhelpful, expressing anger in a violent way toward another person achieves exactly the same thing — dissatisfaction. All of us want to survive. All of us want to come up with ideas and take action that supports what we want, that helps us live better lives. Becoming violent achieves none of this!

That's why, it's important to communicate to your children that when you feel the impulse to express your anger outwardly in a violent or otherwise negative way — it's time to take the pause that calms! Stop! Think! Ask yourself: What is making me so upset? How do I want to say what I think? How do I want to express this in a way that's going to help me instead of hinder me?

Learning Some New ABC's

There are three kinds of conflict situations — one that we can sense is coming but has not yet begun, one that has just begun, and one that has been going on for a while. Discuss these with your children.

A is for avoidance. Learning how to avoid conflict before it even starts is the highest goal we can achieve. Whether a fight with another person, or a fight inside your head, preventing the fight from taking over shows that you understand conflict and can prevent it at the start — before the spark ignites a fire.

B is for bargaining. Learning how to come up with nonviolent verbal alternatives to violent physical moves is the best action you can take when it's no longer possible to prevent a fight. When a conflict situation has already begun, you can take steps to keep it from getting worse.

C is for control. When we can learn how to handle a conflict situation that's already started and already beyond bargaining, we can experience some sense of control. This kind of conflict situation is the most difficult to stop, because it's not only already begun, but the people involved are already very emotional, so it is very important

to Control your emotions. This is also having the confidence to Control the situation with humane physical self-defense skills if necessary, as a last resort after avoiding and Resolving conflict.

Admitting Our Mistakes

All of us are guilty of getting caught up in justifying what we've done in certain situations, as if we have to prove that our behavior was the right thing to do because we believe that admitting a mistake shows weakness. The truth is that when we can see a mistake we've made, and admit it to ourselves — and then to others if necessary — our mind goes through a tremendous transformation. Our brain suddenly opens to new learning. Instead of judging ourselves as bad or wrong, we see ourselves as human and capable of making a mistake. That's when we start to learn..

Strength Comes from Being Aware

When we get depressed — as we all do from time to time — sometimes we bottle things up inside and then, one day, we explode, like dynamite. Becoming aware of the strength inside us to understand our lives requires only one major step — that we stay connected to our thoughts and how they are affecting us. What we need to focus on is not what's around us, but what's inside us. We take a pause that calms — even if it's only for a few seconds — and allow anything we're thinking to come to the surface where we can really see it.

Sometimes this scares people — to allow thoughts to rise to the surface, because we may have painful thoughts. But when we do, we discover that this process is better than rage and produces no explosion.

Bullies are very good at manipulating people. Many are smart but use their brainpower for negative reasons. Whenever we can get a bully to use his or her brainpower for positive reasons, we are doing some good. Many bully situations can be prevented before they happen if we take the time to understand and work with a bully, so the bully never reaches the point of rage. Part of this process is

helping a bully feel wanted, needed, and important — things we all want to feel.

When we improve our awareness, we come up with alternative ways to handle bullies that really work.

Awareness Creates a Desire to Change

When we become aware that we can alter our thinking by just taking a moment to stop and become aware — we begin to feel stronger. When we stop and become aware, we find that place inside us that helps us know what to do.

All of us who've been a bully or a victim can make changes that will alter the way we approach our life. What are some changes you would like to make? What are some changes your children would like to make?

Learning to think on our feet not only makes us stronger but also helps us choose a path that's different from anger or self-blame. When we become aware of what causes us to think in new ways, we suddenly have choices. We no longer have to do what we've always done. When we're busy getting upset, feeling afraid or absorbed by our anger, we cannot clearly see what's going on inside us. That's why it's helpful to learn how to stop the fear, stop the anger and stop the fight inside us — think before we act.

Tell your children learning to think for yourself does not mean purposely challenging your family and friends, just to be different or hostile. Learning to think for yourself means developing the ability to understand what's true and what isn't — what's fact and what's fiction.

When we have learned to think for ourselves, it's easy for us to let go of prejudiced thinking and negative conditioning. It's easier to have balanced points of view about the world, and the people in it. Conditioned thinking makes us prisoners. When we're busy protecting ourselves by living in fear of something that happened in the past, we never learn anything in the here and now. Our fear and conditioned thinking keep us from taking positive action — for ourselves and for people around us.

When we can talk with each other about the conflict we create — honestly and freely — and admit our conflict-making thoughts to each other, we can work together to end our conflict.

As strange as it may sound, most of us are responsible for getting in the way of our own peaceful lives, our own conflict-free existence. We don't always want to take responsibility for creating peace in our lives through understanding what prevents it. We think it's too difficult, or that it can't be done unless we have a lot of help.

Help is good. But your intent for a conditioned free existence begins with you. Remember:

- Our minds are full of conditioned beliefs that sometimes keep us from seeing the truth, and create conflict. The process of creating conflict is self-judgment.
- The more “bad” you think you are, the more painful your thoughts become.
- Sometimes we “project” our hurt feelings onto other people, blaming *them* for the pain we feel. Sometimes our brain forgets that it is the one that creates these thoughts and feelings.
- Self-judgment creates a division inside us. Part of us thinks we are a hero, and part of us thinks we are a villain. We can heal the division in our brain. We have created the division by the way we think so when this thinking ceases so does the division, hence the conflict.
- We can learn to watch our thoughts rather than judge them. By watching, we become *aware* of who we are and how we think. Once we are aware of our thoughts and do not judge them, we have stopped the division that creates this inner conflict!
- If I do not judge myself, I will not judge others either. This prevents outer conflict.

- To go beyond conflict, we need to allow ourselves to speak honestly and freely, and admit our conflict-making thoughts to one another. Then, we can work together to end our conflict.

Chapter 7

Prejudice —That Creates War — The Greatest Bully of All

“We have met the enemy and he is us.” Pogo (cartoon character)

Very young children have no prejudices. Their minds are free. They don't see differences between people. Somewhere between being a tiny child and becoming a young person, we start to see differences. We aren't born prejudiced. It's something we learn.

As you know by now, prejudice is not a simple problem that affects only you and me. It affects everyone in the world. And it affects how everyone in the world lives with everyone else in the world. One would think that survival today would be easier than it was millions of years ago, but it isn't. The world is far more complicated than it once was.

What Does It Mean to Survive

Today the world is a smaller place than it used to be. We can travel around the world in a few days, or talk with people on the other side of our planet in seconds. As a result, people all over the world depend on one another for survival. That's why it's more important than ever that we see similarities among people, rather than differences.

As you've learned, we survive physically when we have enough to eat and drink, clothes to keep us warm, and a place to live. When human beings lived in tribes hundreds of years ago, these tribes helped members survive physically by guaranteeing tribe members food, clothing, shelter and protection.

We survive psychologically when we feel safe and secure. Ancient tribe members were required to identify with their group and follow the group's customs and beliefs. This dedication to the group made it more powerful — better able to care for its members.

Over time, ancient tribes grew bigger, until their territories began to intrude onto other tribes' territories. Since everyone needed food, clothing and shelter, each tribe began to see other tribes as threats to their physical survival. Since their psychological survival was strongly tied to their physical survival, they believed their traditions were also threatened.

This threat created conflict between the tribes — not only over territory and physical needs, but also over whose beliefs would dominate, whose birthright should rule, and whose laws ought to govern. War broke out, just as it does today.

These days, science has developed tools and technology that now provide us the ability to create plenty of food, clothing and housing for our physical needs. Not every country has enough, and there are still communities that suffer, but in most parts of the world, the physical needs of so many are taken care of with far greater efficiency than in the days of ancient tribes.

Survival today means not identifying with a particular ethnocentric cultural belief system. *Psychological survival is now preventing physical survival where in the past it helped insure it.*

Science has been less successful taking care of our psychological needs — the different ideas we all have about “how life should be.” That’s where prejudice enters the picture.

Where Prejudice Begins

Prejudice can start with a thought, or a word. For example, there’s a big difference between: “All people from that country are different” and “All stupid people from that country are different.” Are these two statements saying the same thing? Is one of the statements prejudiced, and one not? What’s the difference? One word? The intention behind the word?

When we hear or read news reports about clashes between people of different races, religions, cultures and/or countries, do you wonder why they exist? Do you think the reasons may have something to do with survival? Learning how to understand fear, ignorance and day-to-day pressures is an important way to survive. Examining prejudice in

ourselves teaches us how to survive at the highest level of understanding — learning how to get along with all people.

The first step in becoming free of prejudice is learning to question everything you see and hear. Let the following words become some of your favorites: Who? What? Where? How? Why? Since the act of prejudice is based on judgment — not fact — it's essential for us to know when we are expressing an opinion and when we are making an assumption.

Prejudice is judging, assuming or expressing an opinion before we have all the right information. Prejudice is judging a person or group as bad, wrong or less just because that person or group appears different from us. Prejudice is judging people because we don't understand their thoughts or actions.

Although prejudice is most often based on something that happened in the past, it can continue, and make you unhappy in the present. The next time you notice a feeling of prejudice creep up inside you, ask yourself: What gave me that unhappy feeling in the past? What happened that made me think this way?

What Makes “Different” Unappealing

If you discovered there was a new theme park in town that had a wild ride — something you'd never experienced before — would you instantly hate it? If you learned that there's a new restaurant in town that 's so different from anything you've eve experienced that you'd never want to eat at any other restaurant again, would you be interested in what makes it different? If a new automobile came out that was more powerful, more beautiful — different from any car you'd ever seen — would it scare you, or would you want to take it for a ride?

Why should our thoughts and feelings be different about a person? What makes someone “different” unappealing? Why would someone who walks, talks, dresses, thinks or acts “differently” be less exciting than a new flavor of ice cream, a new shade of make-up, or a new car?

You and I can be taught to think in ways that make us dislike, or even hate, another person — without understanding why. All over the

world, little conflicts go on every day. Imagine how much prejudice must exist to create a conflict as monumental as a war.

Our Mechanical Brain

When your TV screen gets diagonal lines in it, there's a good chance that something mechanical has gone wrong. Prejudice is like that. Prejudice is a mechanical difficulty in the brain. It's like a machine in your head that programs you to act in ways that are hurtful — ways that create static and conflict. A thought can get programmed into your head and create a groove, where it remains ingrained in your thought process.

Here's how it works. A thought enters your brain once. As a result, you get an image in your mind. This image, repeated, becomes a reinforced message in your brain. The message is backed up by a feeling.

$$\textbf{Thought + Image = Message + Feeling}$$

When that image kicks in, it's mechanical, automatic. The thought triggers an image, and the image is projected onto your brain like a movie projector projects an image onto a screen.

Is the image real? How can you tell? The image is not happening in the real world outside yourself. The only place it's happening is in your brain. You believe that what your brain has told you is factual, but you've been judging instead. And all the time you've been judging, there has been no room for understanding.

Your brain says, "That's the way things are." But what we may not realize is that we have created and are constantly recreating "The way things are." In reality, everything "out there" is just a projection of thought — a "prejudgment."

Understanding is the key to removing prejudice from our lives. To keep our minds in a mode of operation that promotes understanding, there are five goals to remember in any conflict situation:

- **Remain cool and calm.** How do you get yourself to be relaxed, composed and unruffled?
 - **Explore all parts of the machinery.** When you look at a broken clock, how do you know which part of the machinery isn't working? When a car doesn't start, how do you figure out why? Look at the situation from every possible perspective.
 - **Think about whether the parts make up a whole.** Have you looked at the floor plan of a house? How does one room dovetail into another? How is balance achieved in the layout of the house? If you hear a rumor about someone being "bad" or "weird" or "stupid," what part will you play in this rumor? Will you spread it? Question it?
 - **Question everything, without judging.** How do you get your mind to look at the facts of a situation instead of automatically agreeing with friends or superiors? How do you respond to a conflict situation in which everyone expects you to act in a certain way, and you want to act in another way? If you've been brought up Protestant, Republican or in an African American community, will you always take the "side" of that group — in any situation? No matter what?
 - **Test findings to see whether they are factual.** How do you find the facts in any situation? Do you read? Research? Ask questions — who, what, where, why and how? If your instincts tell you that something isn't right, is your tendency to ignore them, or value them? Do you listen to the voice of your instincts? The next time you hear a rumor about someone, what will be your first thought?
- Begin to see that what you consider "real" is only a thought, an illusion for our convenience, as in belonging to a "corporation" or a "nation" — or a "delusion"— when you think that war is a "necessary evil" and will always be so because it has been so for thousands of years.

Prejudice Begins Inside Us

If I name a person you know, and I tell you I think that person is stupid, there is a place inside you that either accepts what I've said as true or questions it. It's the place where you make decisions. Some people say, "I can feel it in my gut." Their gut is their decision making place. Wherever that place is inside you, you can put up a mental sign there that says, "All rumors stop here."

If you've seen anyone hypnotized, you know that the hypnotist apparently puts the person to sleep. Being prejudiced is like being hypnotized. Here's the difference:

- **When we're hypnotized**, we "go to sleep." We act out what we're told to do. We react to a situation as if it were real, unaware that we've been hypnotized.
- **When we're prejudiced**, our brain goes to sleep. We act according to how we think, and how we think is based on what we've been told. We react to a situation as if it were real, unaware that we have been "hypnotized."

Many of us go through life believing that what we see is real — but it isn't always. One of the times life is not real is when we're acting out of prejudice. Prejudice is a bad dream in our brain that's been played out for centuries, passed from one generation to the next.

If you think for a moment, you're likely to come up with at least one prejudice that was passed to you from a parent, grandparent or other adult. Is it difficult to begin to think of such a prejudice? Is it possible that looking at your prejudice scares you because letting go of something you've always believed is like entering a cave — walking blindly into the unknown? Or are you so identified with what you think is real — your prejudices — that if you did not have them you would not know who you are and would therefore feel quite insecure? Or do you think that when you feel fear, it can sometimes awaken you to a new awareness — a helpful realization?

The Mental Steps That Create War

One of the things that make awareness of prejudice difficult is that the people we choose to talk with about our prejudice could be the very people who passed the prejudice on to us. To understand prejudice, we must question our conditioning. Doing this could prove offensive to the generation that preceded us.

Sometimes we are conditioned to be prejudiced, because we believe that thinking and acting in certain ways is safe, predictable and orderly. But, in reality, acting in prejudiced ways is not orderly or safe. It is acting out of ignorance which means, “to ignore” what is because we are caught up looking for what should be. When our prejudice puts us to sleep in this way, we get numb to life around us. We accept the opinions of other people without finding out the facts for ourselves. When we become *aware* that we were asleep, there is a possibility that we can wake up!

Anxious feelings can cause a person to experience fear, tension and feelings of danger. If the anxiety grows strong, it can become a phobia — an exaggerated, unexplainable, illogical fear of a person, place or thing. For example, here are some phobias:

- Agoraphobia — a fear of open spaces and crowded places
- Acrophobia — a fear of heights
- Claustrophobia — a fear of enclosed places

Like these distorted images, an extreme fear of foreigners is a prejudice held by people who believe these “strangers” are a threat to their safety and security. For example: The brain turns the “foreigner” into “someone different.” The person feared becomes an “enemy.”

In fact, there is only one enemy — the one we create in our brain.

Here’s how it happens, as simplistic as it may be. Be as aware as you can of each step in the process of “The Mental Steps That Create War.”

1. I have been told those people in that country are different from me.
2. I have been told those people are “bad.”
3. I have been told that those people are my “enemy.”

4. I have been told those people are a threat to my safety and security
5. I have been told those people are a threat to my group's wellbeing.
6. I have been told I must defend myself against my enemy.
7. I have been told I must defend my group against "them."
8. I feel inner conflict
9. I project my conflict onto "them" – my/our "enemy."
10. I'm going to war!

When we come upon a finding, such as "Those people in that country are bad," it's important to test that finding, in the same way a research scientist would. We have to ask: Is this true? Is it a judgment? How do I know? Otherwise, our mechanical brain takes us to Step 2, then Steps 3, 4 and 5, and before we know it, we are at war.

Here are some criteria you can use to test your information. We become prejudiced by:

- **Sleepwalking through life.**
- **Acting on images we're conditioned to believe.**
- **Creating enemies that exist only in our brains.**

The Bells and Knots of Conditioning

As you've already learned, the "fight or flight" response exists for our self-preservation. An instinct designed to protect us from harm, the fight or flight response is a healthy and natural response to real danger.

Sometimes, however, our fight or flight response gets activated when the danger is not real, when our prejudice flares up. This is when an image of the "enemy" can trigger the fight or flight system as if it is real, when in fact it is only an image. The next time you catch yourself noticing how someone is different from you, stop and ask yourself: What do we have in common? Although we may have grown up in different places and had different experiences, the human brain is the same brain we all have. To protect itself, it cues us to want to either get ready for a battle, or to get ready to run away. We all certainly have *this* in common.

Let me share with you one very insightful personal experience that dramatically showed me the conditioning we are talking about. I was

living in the town of Sebastopol in northern California where I operating my martial arts school. This was in the late 1970's at a time when the U.S. and the Soviet Union were still wary of each other. As a young person I had been deeply conditioned or prejudiced to fear Russians because in school at that time we had what was called "air raid drills" that were designed to protect us from Nuclear attacks by the Russians. We would have to duck under our desks when the air raid drill bell went off in our classroom. Now if you know anything about the Russian psychologist Pavlov and his experiments with conditioning dogs to salivate upon hearing a bell without food being in sight then you can see how we were programmed to fear a people we never saw or personally knew. The message that was being conditioned into us was very simple and very effective: "Russians are very dangerous and are a very real threat to us in our classrooms and at home."

Now I was an adult living in Sebastopol, California and I was going to meet Russians face-to-face for the first time! I was going to meet the "ENEMY!" This was going to happen because Sebastopol was originally founded by early Russian settlers and someone in Sebastopol got the great idea that in order to bring about a peaceful understanding between Russians and Americans that we were going to invite "THEM" to our town to create a sister city program to foster harmony between these two countries.

Well, I have never forgotten that day when "the Russian were coming!" We Americans were congregated in the town's main center in a large hall. I remember to this day how nervous I was. I had all these images in my brain of what "THEY" would look like: giant KGB Russian bear-type Cossacks revolutionaries that wanted to kill us."

Well, the night had come when THEY were to arrive in our town. I remember the heightened state of anxiety I was in. It was a balmy evening in the summer when the Russians came through the door of the hall. The air seemed highly charged and I felt very tense. I knew I had to make a gesture of friendship to them but I felt afraid to do so.

I was standing around trying to look confident and sociable when a woman arrived at my side and we started to talk. I was glad just to talk to anyone even if it was someone I didn't recognize from my hometown. In the course of the conversation about the weather and other mundane

things I asked her where she was from which she replied, "I am from Georgia." I thought it funny that she did not have a southern accent but many people from the north had moved to the south so I did not think much of it. But then she said something that completely stunned me! She said, "We from Russia are glad to be here." I said "Say what?" and she repeated her statement and I then "freaked out!" At least I did inside my brain. I went into what is called a "fight or flight" response. The fight or flight response triggered my body's primitive, automatic, inborn self-defense mechanism to prepare it to "fight" or "flee" from a perceived attack, harm or threat to my survival. There was a Georgia in Russia and she was one of THEM!

My heart started pumping fast and my breathing increased! My pupils dilated! My awareness intensified! My sight sharpened! My impulses quicken! My perception of pain diminished! My immune system was mobilizing with increased activation! I was becoming prepared—physically and psychologically—to fight or flee because I was face-to-face with "the enemy!" My body was doing what it was programmed to do—protect itself from harm. Yet outwardly, much to my surprise, I was maintaining my cool.

I realized at that moment my body was preparing to fight her even though she was actually not a real threat to me. She was a "supposed threat" in that the image of her being my enemy that I had been programmed or conditioned to believe was triggering a real fight or flight reaction as if she were a real threat. Granted if she was pointing a gun at me I would be justified in fighting or fleeing. But she was doing nothing of the kind. She was a very nice attractive woman who was just trying to be friendly!

I realized later after some reflection that this is what all humans do when confronted with a conditioned image of the OTHER, of their ENEMY. I realized that it was the same for all of us, that conditioning works the same in everyone's brain. I saw that the "ENEMY" is just a projection of our conditioning. It is only in our head. It is created by thought and is sustained by thought. It is thought that triggers our emotions and in turn triggers our fight or flight response. In other words, the ENEMY is like living in a bad dream thinking that it is real. This is not to say that there aren't people out there who will hurt us. There are.

But we need to know the difference between the ones that are conditioned into us and the ones that are a real threat.

I have since been to Russia and have Russian friends. I realized that they too had been conditioned or prejudiced to hate and fear us as Americans. And I realized that there would be no peace unless we understood what this conditioning was and how it affected us in this way.

When we're prejudiced, instead of acting based on what we're actually seeing, we REact based on something that happened in the past. We need to learn the difference. Are we responding to something real and true, or to a remembered fear?

The Prejudice Knot

One of the biggest knots in our brain is the prejudice knot. Such thinking usually begins with a basic statement of information. Then, a thought is expressed — in the case of prejudice — a thought that isn't true, or that's only partially true or meant to hide the truth. Once that thought is out there, people who express it believe in it more and more. That's how prejudice is born. Here's how the knot works.

- 1. Basic statement of information.** "I think that all people with blue skin are mean, greedy and distrustful. I know this because my best friend told me."
- 2. The thought is expressed, and it begins to catch on.** "I was told by experts that all people with blue skin are mean, greedy and distrustful. These people are the ones who know what they're talking about. They must know what's true and right."
- 3. The thought continues in the wrong direction and keeps going.** I believe what they say. People with blue skin are mean, greedy and distrustful. When I meet a blue-skinned person, I automatically think, "That person's greedy!" "That person's distrustful!" "That person is mean."
- 4. The knot gets tighter.** I can't trust "them," so I'm afraid of them. Being afraid of them, I want to protect myself. So, I join other people who think the way I do, so we feel safe. So our friends, family, leaders, country

can feel secure, and together we can defend against all blue-skinned people who are mean and distrustful.

4. **“They” and “them” become “the enemy.”** Why should we defend against all blue-skinned people who are mean, greedy and distrustful? Because they threaten our beliefs, our traditions, our heritage, our way of life ... everything we stand for.

If blue-skinned people are a threat to us and against everything we stand for, they must be the enemy. And, being our enemy, they must be terrorists. And if they are terrorists, we must be freedom fighters. And if we are freedom fighters, we must be proud of those who are our heroes in our war against the blue-skinned people — who are mean and distrustful. We must defend against them, because we have no choice, do we?

Elements of Our Knot-Like Thinking

Have you had a television, radio or other piece of equipment break down because of faulty wiring? That’s how our thinking can break down. It is possible for us to have believed something all our life and then find out that it’s not true — that it’s never been true. It’s hard to accept at first, like untying a knot that has been tied for a long time.

It’s possible to become aware of our knots. All we have to do is take the time to look at our thinking. For example, when something is repeated over and over again — like a television commercial — do we feel compelled to believe it’s true? Do we think that because something is repeated many times that it must be factual?

Repetition is an element of knot-like thinking. When we’re young, our family conditions us to not cross the street when the traffic light is red. We are told this rule many times before it sinks in. We need this repetition! On the other hand, advertisers continually reinforce us to believe we ought to buy their products. They spend billions of dollars to condition us. If their ads didn’t work, they wouldn’t continue to spend money on them.

Comparison can be an element of knot-like thinking, especially, for example, when one group of people is compared with another. This leads one group of people to see themselves as “us” and everyone else as

“them.” Thinking in this way can cause one group to see themselves as superior and others as inferior. This kind of comparison can cause separation between people, which stimulates conflict.

Projection is another ingredient of knot-like thinking. It’s the act of throwing an image that’s in our minds onto some other person or thing. Blue-eyed people saying, for example, that people with dark-colored eyes are a threat to “our” way of life projects an image in our minds of those people. Is that image a fact? A judgment? When we engage in projecting our thoughts onto others, is the image real? It’s in our brain, but is it factual, true? Or is it based on some kind of fear?

Identification can be a source of knot-like thinking. Our identity is often made up of occurrences we experience within a group. Unconsciously imitating a group’s “personality” helps us identify with, and feel accepted by, the group. It makes us feel safe and secure and gives us a sense of belonging. We feel that our physical security will be fulfilled. When we’re aware that we’re identifying with and acting like the group, we’re acting from a sense of intelligence. When we’re unconsciously conditioned to put on the particular “mask” or “costume” of a social group, then we are not aware — we’re asleep. And we carry on with old tribal ways that divide the human race into fragmented competing ideologies.

Authority is the power to command or demand obedience and enforce laws. Many people feel a great need to depend on authority in the psychological sense. When we unconditionally accept information that so-called experts feed us, without checking on the truth for ourselves — we are surrendering to authority. Some authorities have our best interests at heart; others don’t. Some have a lot to teach us, some don’t. Rarely does one person know everything there is to know on a subject. Detectives check the facts, and so should we.

Reinforcement is rewarding behavior with words or actions to achieve an effect — to get us to behave, for example. There’s a voice inside that tells us what to think, what to say and how to live. This voice is a reflection of a set of values we learned based on a belief system. This is our “Inner Authority.” People who want us to think and act in certain ways may be aware of the ideas and feelings we’ve been programmed to believe, and may know what “buttons” to push inside us to get us to think and act in those ways. Many of us have been brought up to strongly

believe that certain thoughts and feelings are the only ones that will bring us security and happiness. We are so convinced that the way we are living is the only way or the best way that we don't even *look* at other possibilities.

Belief is an unquestioning acceptance of something, with no proof that it's true. We are more inclined to check the validity of basic information when a situation is life threatening and may affect our physical survival. Sometimes we are unaware of situations that affect our psychological survival, and we don't check them because we don't recognize them!

Conditioning is not education. It's repeated, memorized learning. We must learn to tell the difference. When we get proper, intelligent guidance to help us make informed decisions, then we're getting a real education.

Is there a holiday you celebrate because your parents and grandparents have always celebrated it? What is it? How do you celebrate? How long have these traditions been practiced? If you belong to a group with an established belief system, are there certain practices that have come down through the ages? What are they? Why do you think they're still followed? Why do you do them? And if you do, aren't they just habit, automatic reactions to what we have been conditioned to believe? Aren't we just keeping ourselves asleep, hypnotized? Are we aware of the danger of this? Look at what we call the "Holy land" and see how being asleep, being hypnotized by ritual systematic practices is creating and sustaining great conflict? Do we think that we can have peace but still hold onto our established belief systems? For example, is what we call the "Holy land," a land divided by conditioned ethnocentric, superstitious antiquated belief systems, "Holy" at all?

What is something you believe very strongly? Is this belief something you decided for yourself? Or is it something that has been passed down to you from a remembered or forgotten ancestor? If you decided on it for yourself, what brought you to this conclusion? Was it in protest of a previous belief system that had been given to you by an ancestor? Was prejudice an element in coming to this belief? Does this belief create conflict of any kind? In your head? With any people you know?

The point is to be able to tell the difference between a conditioned “reactive” thought and an educated “responsible” thought so that when we hear concepts that have the potential to numb our brain, we won’t let them!

Concepts That Numb the Brain

Has the human race developed since cave creatures fought, ran away and became conditioned to thoughts they believed help them survive? When we read or hear news reports about conflicting interests around the world, it’s easy to conclude that we humans have not evolved psychologically much at all. How can there be peaceful cooperation when people continue to take sides? Can there be concurrence when tribe-like groups still seek security through beliefs, traditions and rituals that rule out the validity of those of others? Are we all too programmed, too brainwashed, too conditioned to see that if no one identified with any “side,” there would be no conflict, no violence?

Here is what we have learned so far:

- There is a difference between a fact and an opinion; between getting information first-hand and assuming; and between understanding and judging.
- Our brain operates in a mechanical way that’s sometimes programmed to create false images — many that appear real, but aren’t true.
- We’ve seen how programmed images can be formed when we’re asleep, under the hypnotic spell of knot-like thinking.
- We are now aware of what happens when we repeat, compare, project, identify with, and reinforce this thinking by listening to authorities that may not be passing along accurate information.
- We’ve discovered that fear can create incorrect images that get stuck in our brains, and that conditioning helps us hold on to these images — sometimes forever, if we don’t wake up.

- We've discovered that hate passed on to us by our ancestors is one thing, and that hate we continue to feel is our own invention, a constant recreation that we believe is just the way things are.
- We've learned that prejudice is a reaction, and that if we want to act rather than react, we have to think for ourselves.

The Effects of Prejudice

When someone calls us a name we don't like, it hurts, if we believe it to be true. Words intended to hurt are an attempt to de-humanize or make us feel inferior. Any feeling that projects these words onto us is triggered by conditioned thinking. If we can remember that when and if we are the victims of name-calling, it helps. When someone calls you a name, the only thing that can make it true is your reaction — again, if you believe it to be true! If you react to this name-calling as if it's true — if you take it as an insult — you create conflict inside your brain.

You don't have to act as if it's true. If you act toward this person doing the name-calling as if this name does not apply to you — you create no conflict inside your brain, and you feel no need to react. For example, if someone calls you "stupid" then this is either a fact and therefore true or it is not so and therefore false. If it is true then perhaps you can learn from it.

When we are aware that someone is judging, assuming or voicing an opinion — rather than seeking the truth, or trying to understand us — we can see that this person is hurt. People who need to call other people names are people who have probably been called names themselves, and probably have a lot of conflict going on in their brain. When we can see that person's hurt, we can stop conflict right on the spot! We don't have to fight that person. We don't have to run away from that person. We can simply stop and understand that person.

There are many words that people call other people when their intention is to put someone down, or feel superior to that person. We don't have to say any of them; we all know what words hurt us. No

matter what the words are, the strong emotional reaction we feel is an effect of prejudice. When we use these words, we must understand that there is going to be an effect.

There's an old saying: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Theoretically, it's true – the words cannot hurt us, physically. But mentally, they can burn. It all depends on how we handle them.

Generalizations Are Misleading

A generalization is an assumption about a person, place or thing, based on past experience with another person, place or thing. It's a form of lazy thinking — something we're all guilty of at one time or another. We say, "All (fill in the blank) people are (fill in the blank). We say this without knowing whether or not ALL of them are or aren't. We know these generalizations and admit they do harm, and still we use them. Here are a few examples:

Stereotype is a standardized mental picture, held in common by members of a group that represents an oversimplified opinion, attitude or judgment. When we encounter a stereotyped person or group, our mechanical brain automatically reacts with a shallow image. For example: "All blue-skinned people are dumb." Rather than question our reaction, most of us simply act on it.

Bigotry, based on the word "bigot," refers to the act of being strongly partial to one's own group, religion, race or politics — intolerant of those who are different in some way. A bigot has a fixed mind-set, an immovable way of thinking that divides people. Bigots think in terms of "my group" vs. "your group." Sectioning the human race into any form of "them" vs. "us" causes separation and conflict.

Discrimination is the act of judging others as inferior. When we look upon a person, or a certain group of people, as "bad," we're discriminating against them. When we discriminate against people, we act on a pre-judged set of values that we've been conditioned to believe. When we discriminate, we create conflict inside us that promotes conflict outside us. As we know well, conflict outside is a form of war.

Scapegoating is the act of making someone bear the blame of others. Our brain — not willing to accept the blame for something that's happened — finds someone else to condemn. When we attempt to make someone else a scapegoat for something we did, we create conflict — beginning with conflict inside our brain. We know we are responsible (even though we may find it hard to admit to ourselves), and yet we let someone else appear guilty who isn't.

Stereotyping, bigotry, discrimination and scapegoating are all forms of prejudiced thinking. If you engage in this kind of thinking, it's most likely because you've been programmed by others to think this way. The people who taught you are not bad people. They were simply taught these ways by *their* families and friends — who didn't question them either. The old ways of thinking are like shadows that follow us. They have been passed down from generation to generation. They stay with us and relentlessly cause us to get hurt, over and over again. They have formed ideas and actions that exist inside us all. We cannot use people who came before us as our personal scapegoats. We are knowledgeable enough to think intelligently and to act properly on our own. We are responsible for our actions.

We must continue to ask ourselves questions. For example:

1. What's a quality I really dislike in a person?
2. Does the quality harm me in any way?
3. Why does this quality irritate me?
4. How do I respond to this quality?
5. Is my response an action, or a reaction?
6. What quality in me makes me act/react in this way?
7. Do I have the awareness to act differently — intelligently — in response to this quality?
8. How would I act in an intelligent way, rather than react in a conditioned way?

9. Does changing my awareness helps me deal better with this quality in a person?
10. Isn't there only one person that can really change? Me?

Prejudice at Its Worst

The word “race” was originally meant to define people in a positive way — to classify who we are, or to what group we belong. In the past, it simply referred to what tribe, clan, country, nation or culture we belonged to. At some point the word “race” also referred to physical features that make us similar to some people and different from others. It also once referred to where we come from, what beliefs we have, what rituals and traditions we practice, the type of food we eat, the songs we sing, and the holidays we observe.

At some point in our history, the word “racism” came out of the word “race.” Racism is what occurs when one group of people believe that they are superior to another group of people. Of all the forms of prejudice that exist, racism is one of the most horrible. It has existed for centuries and is still alive today. Believing they are superior allows a group of people to attack, accuse, make fun of, or hurt, what they consider inferior, or less powerful groups. In the extreme, this kind of prejudice can create terrible suffering.

Perhaps the most extreme example is that of genocide. It's difficult to imagine, but billions of people were victims of genocide during the 20th century. They were not casualties of war; they were purposely killed.

This is a difficult subject matter to discuss, because we all have strong feelings about certain groups of people and the purposeful destruction of certain groups in the past. Genocide is a crime against a group. The individuals in the group are victims simply because they belong to that group. Individual members of such a group are dehumanized, reduced to numerical statistics.

Societies that have suffered genocide have had at least one significant minority group that was “different” from the majority, usually racially, ethnically, religiously or politically. Genocide has occurred all over the world. One of the most notorious was Nazi genocide — the killing of more than *six million* Jews from all over Europe.

One has to think hard about Adolph Hitler, the German dictator, who must have had prejudices passed down to him from others. How much hatred had to live inside him to be personally responsible for the death of so many people? What kind of mechanical difficulty occurred in his brain? What effects of conditioning do you see? How do you think it’s possible that six million people could die because one person willed it to happen?

In the act of genocide, all normal constraints against killing human beings are set aside — as in the case of any war — in the name of a so-called “higher” aim. Some of these aims have been to:

- Build socialism
- Reprimand “sinful” behavior
- Enhance the march of progress and civilization
- Replace the weaker with the stronger
- Engage in religious warfare
- Create economic revitalization
- Bring about social purification

Serbs adopted one of the newer forms of genocide in treatment of Muslim and Croat minorities (and possible treatment of Serbs by Croats and Muslims). It happened while Serbian forces tried to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina after the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. This form was called “ethnic cleansing” — a polite attempt to hide an alarming act of terror — killing people because they are different. How can we ethnically clean a country?

Throughout history there have been minorities. There have been masters and slaves. There have been different forms of “caste” systems, where classes are set off from one another. Minorities today are handled in one of two ways: They are either assimilated into the majority culture, or they are oppressed. In the process of assimilation, values and ways of thinking are exchanged and shared between a

minority and the majority. Oppression, on the other hand, separates people and has resulted in segregation, slavery, ejection, extermination and genocide.

The effect of prejudiced thoughts, feelings and words is relentless, unending conflict. And the most disturbing effect is the devastation of millions of people. Is this how we are going to continue to live?

The only thing to remember: This book is not asking one to memorize what has been said. It is not through any Explanation that conditioning ceases. The Explanation has to lead to insight. It is only through the actual nonintellectual observation of the fact of conditioning — Experiencing — as it arises in each and every moment in the human brain that can end the conflict it creates — individually and globally. Try it and find out for yourself if it is true.

Addendum One

EIGHT STAGES OF BULLYING

By Dr. Terrence and Jean Webster-Doyle

1. **Why do we bully?** When we can understand the causes of bullying — that are rooted in the way we think — we can prevent it.
2. **Why am I always picking on myself?** Each of us has an “inner bully” — an inner voice that nags us, intimidates us. This is often where bullying begins.
3. **Why is everybody always picking on me?** When a bully finds a victim to torment, there are always reasons. A victim benefits from knowing the answer to this question and to how a bully thinks.
4. **Why Can't I Do What I Want?** Young people need to learn that for every right there is a corresponding responsibility. Learning this makes for a balanced frame of mind in one's relationship to others and the world.
5. **Why is everybody always picking on us?** When we learn to hate and fear because someone else is different then we are caught in prejudice. Whether it is the color of one's skin, nationality, gender, sexual preference or religion it only creates pain and suffering.
6. **Why are we always letting the bullies pick on them?**
Bystanders often don't want to get involved in a bully situation. But a knowledgeable bystander can be powerful and resourceful.
7. **Why are they always getting picked on?** Youth-at-risk are bullied by fellow youth and by adults. Understanding how and why they are picked on — by the youth themselves as well as by parents and teachers — can be eye-opening.
8. **Why are we always picking on each other?** Wars break out because one group of people bullies another. In today's world, it helps to understand how this bullying begins.

Addendum Two

THE ATRIUM SOCIETY'S INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED, AWARD WINNING BOOKS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE COPE WITH THE ISSUES THAT CONCERN THEM

The Books of the Atrium Society have won widespread praise as resources for the understanding and nonviolent resolution of conflict

- Selected by the National PTA as a recommended resource for parents.
- Endorsed by Scouting Magazine and Sports Illustrated for Kids
- Awarded the Robert Burns Medal for literature by Austria's Albert Schweitzer Society, for "outstanding merits in the field of peace-promotion"
- Acclaimed at the Soviet Peace Fund Conference in Moscow and published in Russia by Moscow's Library of Foreign Literature and Magistr Publications
- Selected by the International Association of Educators for World Peace for their Central American peace education project in Panama and El Salvador
- Nine time Winner of the Benjamin Franklin Awards for Excellence in Independent Publishing - in six consecutive years
- On permanent display at the International Museum of Peace and Solidarity in Samarkind, Uzbekistan, the Commonwealth of Independent States.
- WHY IS EVERYBODY ALWAYS PICKING ON ME—cited by the *Omega New Age Directory* as one of the Ten Best Books, for its "atmosphere of universal benevolence and practical application"
- Approved by the New York City Board of Education
- Selected by the American Booksellers Association for its resource listing of "Children's Books About Peace"

•"These topics are excellent and highly relevant. If each of the major countries of the world were to have ten Drs. Webster-Doyle, world peace is guaranteed to be achieved over a period of just one generation."

—Dr. Charles Mercieca, Executive Vice President
International Association of Educators for World Peace
NGO, United Nations (ECOSOC), UNICEF & UNESCO

•"Every publication from the pen of this author should make a significant contribution to peace within and without. Highly recommended!"

—*New Age Publishers and Retailers Alliance Trade Journal*

•The Center for Applied Psychology, Inc. cites Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle as an "eloquent leader of the movement to combine principles of education, psychology, and the martial arts to teach young people to resolve conflict peacefully."

•"Webster-Doyle's insight is that by recognizing, understanding, and accepting our violent tendencies, we can avoid acting them out. These new books . . . are good for teachers and parents of elementary school children who need appropriate language and activities to help children deal with their feelings and the violence-provoking parts of the environment. To this reviewer, they are realistic and practical."

—*Young Children* (Magazine of the National Association for the Education of Young Children)

•"We use his books and thoroughly endorse the usefulness of his methods which have high potential in schools."

-Stewart W. Twemlow, M.D. Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis
Menninger Clinic, /Martial Arts School owner

•"The books of Dr. Webster-Doyle are the first attempt I have seen to explain to young people and adults the concept of martial arts as a peaceful, nonviolent 'way of life' and to give students the tools to accomplish this goal." - Linda Lee Cadwell

•"Helps young people deal with conflict and violence by describing practical skills for peace."

—*Holistic Education Review*

• "I realize *Why Is Everybody Always Picking On Me?* was urgent for every child and adult . . . My daughter couldn't stop reading it!"

—Marina Dubrovskaya, Assistant Director

Dept. of Sociology, Lenin Library, Moscow, Russia

• "Your book (*Why Is Everybody Always Picking On Me?*) has really helped me ignore the bullies; and in a way stop bullying others." - 4th grader

• Presented the National Conference on Peacemaking & Conflict Resolution

• "The materials were very helpful to the facilitators who conducted the workshop on bullying strategies."

-New Jersey State Bar Foundation

...To name only a few

ABOUT THE ATRIUM SOCIETY

The Atrium Society is a nonsectarian, nonpolitical, nonprofit organization dedicated to the understanding of individual and international conflict — and to the resolution of such conflict by creative, nonviolent means. Through its publications, seminars, teacher training, and community events of its "Education for Peace Program," Atrium Society promotes insight into the socially conditioned thinking and behavior that lead human beings, time and again, into conflict. **For more information, call 1-800-848-6021 or email: atriumsociety@aol.com. See our web page: www.bullysolutions.org**

Addendum Three

HELPING OUR STUDENTS LEARN TO AVOID CONFLICT THEIR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

Why are more and more parents enrolling their children in martial arts classes?

Because more and more children are being victimized by bullies.

DEKALB, MISSOURI —Twelve-year-old Nathan D. Faris pulled a gun from a duffel bag, fatally shot Timothy Perrin, 13, and took his own life by shooting himself. Faris had been the victim of relentless teasing by classmates.

EDINBORO, PENNSYLVANIA —A month before shooting students at an eighth-grade dance, 14-year-old Andrew Wurst reportedly led friends to a dresser drawer, pulled out a gun, and told them he intended to kill people who had made him feel small.

JONESBORO, ARKANSAS — Friends said Mitchell Johnson, age 13, was angry about being rejected by a girl and warned a day before the tragedy “he had a lot of killing to do.” Johnson, whose parents were divorced, was known as a bully and a braggart, but he was also teased for being fat.

SPRINGFIELD, ORE — Kipland Phillip Kinkel, a 15-year-old who’d been arrested for possession of a stolen firearm, walked into his school cafeteria, pulled a .22-caliber rifle out from under a khaki trench coat and calmly fired more than 50 rounds among the 400 teenagers present. Two boys died and 23 other youngsters were injured. Later, a search of the Kinkel family home turned up the bodies of his parents, William Kinkel, 59, and Faith Kinkel, 57. News reports said Kinkel was angry at being teased by older students.

LITTLETON, COLORADO —”This is for all the people who made fun of us this year,” Klebold and Harris said as they fired on fellow students. “There was blood everywhere.” Eric Harris, age 18 and Dylan Klebold, age 17, two high school students at Columbine High School, armed with

guns and bombs laid siege to their fellow students with a relentless fury for hours of terror killing 12 students and one teacher and wounding 23 other students. Harris and Klebold casually decided which of their classmates should live and which should die, and laughed triumphantly as they dealt out their fate. They made at least two female hostages answer a question: did they believe in God? When they answered yes, the gunman executed them at point -blank range. At the end of the terror both of the gunmen ended their own lives by shooting themselves. It took days to find the homemade bombs these teenage killers left at the school in order to create more carnage. This was the most lethal school shooting in history. These two young boys who killed their fellow students with an insane rage were school outcasts who had been picked on, taunted and harassed by a certain segment of popular students.

The week of the Santee, California shootings there were 30 reported incidents of similar threats, with lists of people to be "hit." three of which were carried out.

...And on it goes! Where does it end?

Violence and aggression are rampant in our society. Indeed, they're among the most critical issues facing our children. Unfortunately, young people are victimized more than any other age group and thus face a significant risk of harm. Juveniles are one-tenth of the population, but they are victims in one out of every four violent crimes. Schools are experiencing a proliferation of violence. Recent statistics from the Department of Justice indicate that twenty- five percent of children are fearful of being attacked in school. Bullying is often ignored by both parents and teachers as a serious problem. A recent survey conducted of 204 middle and high school students in several Midwestern communities indicated that seventy-five percent of those surveyed said they had been bullied. Bullying not only affects the lives of our children but also sets a pattern for adult life. Gang related violence is a form of bullying, as is global conflict. In other words, bullying needs to be addressed.

I am an educator, former school principal, author, martial artist and a parent of five daughters and as a professional and parent I am naturally concerned about children's welfare. In all I've learned, the martial arts, if properly taught, has the best opportunity to address this urgent social concern. It is time that we martial arts teachers recognize

our unique capabilities in dealing with conflict. We have the possibility to successfully address the problems of violence and bullying with our young students because we, like no other professional in the lives of children, can help them understand and avoid conflict at *all* levels. It's what I call **A.R.M.ing** them with knowledge: **Avoid conflict** by learning to prevent it through developing awareness and sensitivity to its causes; **Resolve conflict** by developing mental skills that give the confidence to neutralize potential hostility by alternative, nonviolent means; and **Manage conflict** if it gets to the physical confrontational level by the proper and humane use of physical restraint. And no one is really doing this! No one really helps young people understand the *causes of conflict* and no one is combining understanding with conflict resolution skills and physical martial arts skills.

Physical self-defense has a place in giving students the confidence to be able to defend themselves when it gets to that point, which is AFTER it becomes a physical confrontation. But the intention of the martial arts is to stop conflict BEFORE it becomes one, which is, to avoid and therefore prevent it. This takes a different kind of training, one that would naturally compliment physical self- defense, which is what I call "Mental Self-Defense™," the other half of a complete martial arts training, for the martial arts is a holistic educational endeavor, encompassing the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of being human.

Combining physical and Mental Self-Defense™ our children are being taught not only physical skills for confidence but, at the same time, mental skills of nonviolent alternatives for confidence to enable them to reason their way out of a potential conflict. This is then the right combination of brawn and brain, the combined power of muscle and intelligence, the balance between brute force and reason. Teaching only physical skills can be dangerous because young students think that by themselves these skills can end conflict, when in fact, they can all too often escalate conflict. All they know is how to end fighting by fighting. And in today's world of fighting, with young people having an easy access to weapons, what would be thought of as a relatively simple and harmless physical fight in my day is now met with knives and guns, ending up with serious injury and even death. Therefore it is essential

that we teach the martial arts both physically *and* mentally, which is the way they were originally taught. If we want to help our children to successfully cope with conflict at all the levels mentioned above, which is the only intelligent way to do so, then we must begin to train our students at the levels of avoiding and resolving conflict to balance out their current training in the physical level.

The martial arts need to evolve in order to meet the challenges of violence and the decline of values in the modern world. The martial arts teacher has primarily been trained as a self-defense instructor or coach, giving the skills and training to students to defend themselves and to enjoy the sports aspect of the martial arts. This was a necessary and important stage in the development of the martial arts. But now, in the natural and inevitable evolution of the martial arts, from being primarily a self-defense and a sport, we need to develop Martial Art Educators, trained to teach students the educational aspects of the martial arts, that is, how to use reason in order to cope with brutal aggression before reacting physically. In other words, Martial Art Educators need to get the training and resources to be able in turn to train their students in understanding and avoiding conflict, which is the primary intent of all martial arts. Learning only physical self-defense defeats this intent. Whereas including "Mental Self-Defense, TM" learning to use the most powerful "muscle" in their bodies — their brains — children learn how to avoid conflict by employing nonviolent alternatives, instead of resorting to the limited alternatives of brute force, and possibly getting hurt physically, or running away, and feeling emotionally hurt. These nonviolent alternatives to conflict include, among others, being able to talk their way out, or to make friends, use humor, call a proper authority, ignore threats, or even have the confidence to refuse to fight and walk away. These nonviolent alternatives are mental skills that need to be taught along with the physical skills. The method of teaching them is role-playing, a skill the modern Martial Arts Educator needs to be trained in.

We all want our children to be safe and happy. Teaching them physical self-defense is only one half of their education. It is like giving them a fire hose with no water to put out the fire. Worse, it is potentially

harming young people by not giving them a "first line of defense," the mental skills to avoid conflict and therefore to stop it before it occurs.

We all wish violence would go away. But we cannot avoid it by pretending it doesn't exist. We can begin to reverse this terrible trend of violence that young people face daily, but only if they get the proper training and resources for a complete mental and physical martial art education. The best education young people can ever receive is one that has the potential to create a safe and peaceful world for them and, in turn for their children for generations to come. The martial arts has that potential, *if* it educates its students in the totality of these creative and peaceful arts, to not only have the confidence to manage conflict by the humane application of physical restraint, if it becomes necessary to do so, but much more importantly, to have the skills and presence of mind to resolve and avoid conflict before it becomes one.

Addendum Four

About BioCognetics — Cognitive Emotive Bio-Reactive Conditioning.™

BioCognetics™ is a proactive, preventative approach of educating people about the basic factors that create conflict before it becomes a serious problem. From the individual to the group, bullying on the playground to bullying on the battlefield, conflict begins with unquestioned conditioned thinking. It is those initial thoughts that set off a chain reaction instantly triggering fearful emotions, which in turn trigger the biological fight-or-flight system. This produces a powerful psychosomatic reaction of conflict inwardly in the brain and outwardly in relationship with others. When people are conscious of this process they can begin to become aware of the structure and nature of human conflict at the primary prevention level. It is at this fundamental level that one can prevent conflict from happening by being cognizant of its underlying structure as it occurs.

BioCognetics™ is an innovative approach to understanding the basic structure and nature of conflict. It is a pre-therapeutic, proactive, preventative educational approach as compared to the popular counseling method C.B.T. (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) that is a reactive, remedial therapeutic approach. BioCognetics™ helps educate young people to creatively cope with conflict before it becomes a physical confrontation

It is based on understanding the primary factors (conditioning) that create conflict in human relationship and on understanding the secondary and tertiary factors have come about and applying these insights to the primary level in an attempt to help young people to understand and avoid conflict. It therefore helps young people develop clear and strong guidelines of behavior through this unique, comprehensive approach to Conflict Education and Character Development training.

The format for this education is the combination of martial arts mental and physical skills. The physical self-defense skills gives the young person the confidence not to react unnecessarily in a freeze, fight or flight manner to a potential threat thus creating a “space” in the biologically reactive fight or flight system so it does not come into play

with a conditioned reaction that reinforces the psychological impulse of a supposed threat. The fight or flight system is necessary when there is a real threat but when the fight or flight system gets triggered by an image of a threat then — a supposed threat — this is not an appropriate response but rather a conditioned one to what one thinks is a threat.

The mental martial arts self-defense skills then give the young person the ability to avoid or resolve a potential conflict through preventing it from happening in the first place. The two set of “self-defense” skills work together as one integrated whole approach to helping young people cope with conflict.

Addendum Five

THE NEED FOR CHILDSAFE MARTIAL ARTS™

The Potential Danger of Martial Arts for Children — An Accident Waiting to Happen!

There is a serious question to ask and it is this: "What happens when a child from a conventional martial arts school uses potentially lethal physical martial arts techniques against another untrained, unarmed kid on the school playground — even if it was in self-defense?"

Is using this type of highly lethal skill excessive? My concern is that a child be taught a physically and legally safe, developmentally sound, age and situation appropriate "self-defense" system — one that includes *both* mental and physical skills to help young people (1) avoid (2) resolve and (3) manage conflict without using unnecessary, potentially lethal skills to defend themselves.

What should be taught is **CHILDSAFE Martial Arts™** — a physically effective, legally safe, age appropriate, developmentally sound, non-lethal integrated system of physical and mental martial arts self-defense skills. It is a system that gives young people the total confidence to cope successfully and humanely with conflict.

CHILDSAFE Martial Arts™ is about building character and honing one's skills for understanding and resolving conflict peacefully, which comes about from studying beyond the physical aspect. Many traditional martial artists think that by just studying the physical one can, over time, understand the mental aspects. This is not true. "Self-defense," as defined in **CHILDSAFE Martial Arts™**, is different from the conventional view of most martial arts. What **CHILDSAFE Martial Arts™** does is look at what a person needs to defend him- or herself *completely*.

The total **CHILDSAFE Martial Arts™** program of self-defense is a combination of self-protection skills, physical fitness, character development, conflict education, stranger awareness, life skills, and the

study of rights and responsibilities. All these seemingly separate parts do make up a whole system of “self-defense.” Whereas conventional martial arts define self-defense as merely physical skills, **CHILDSAFE Martial Arts**™ focuses on the total needs of a person in understanding what causes conflict so one can “Avoid, Resolve and Manage” conflict intelligently and effectively at all levels.

A major question one must ask oneself when considering martial arts training for young people is: “How much conventional physical self-defense training is needed when it comes to children being able to defend themselves?” In other words, how many physical skills do children need to defend themselves against other children on the playground?

Conventional martial arts teachers spend almost all of their time training children in physical martial arts for years. For what? When more than 90% of bullying is mental, why do martial arts schools place so much emphasis on physical skills when what is really needed, to completely protect oneself from harm, are skills that have nothing to do with the physical, such as:

1. Being aware of suspicious strangers;
2. Having good character skills to avoid conflict;
3. Building conflict education skills to resolve conflict;
4. Learning one's rights and responsibilities so as to know one's boundaries in being assertive;
5. Developing an intelligent understanding of Life Skills that make for a more peaceful life;
6. Acquiring an understanding of the basic factors that create conflict due to the conditioned, prejudicial images we have about “other people.”

These are all “*mental* martial arts.” So how much conventional physical, potentially lethal “self-defense” skills do children need? Very little, at this age.

Concerning actual physical self-defense combative **CHILDSAFE Martial Arts**™ teaches children an introductory appropriate system of physical skills called S.O.S.™ that has been developed just for young people. S.O.S.™ stands for Safe Options Self-defense™. It teaches

young people how to first become *aware* of a potential conflict and then to *combat* it by using excellent *defensive skills only*, which is the way a real system of self-defense functions.

CHILDSAFE Martial Arts [™] teaches young people all the necessary skills that give them a comprehensive system of protecting themselves, not only physically — but also mentally, emotionally and socially.

Is there a choice in choosing a martial arts school for children? Either we offer them a potentially lethal, questionably legal, age and situation inappropriate martial art — or we offer them a physically effective, legally safe, age appropriate, developmentally sound, non-lethal integrated system of physical and mental martial arts self-defense skills that provides them with total confidence to cope successfully with conflict.

Addendum Six

The Intent of all Martial Arts – Understanding the Cause of Conflict

Conflict, or what we call bullying, started along time ago many, many years before we were born. The conflict called bullying means to get something we want by force either physically or mentally or both. Bullying has continued on for all these years because people didn't really know how to deal with it in a way that worked. The way they did try to deal with it was through punishing people who bullied and rewarding people who didn't. But this didn't help people understand what caused bullying, what caused conflict. That's what I want to address in this column—to help us understand what causes conflict, in ourselves and in the world because bullying on the playground is the same as bullying on the battlefield.

Understanding the causes of bullying, the causes of conflict starts in the way we have been “conditioned” to think and act. The word conditioning is very important in understanding why people bully. “Conditioning” means to do something automatically, like a computer program. A computer program is information that has been put into the computer and will act automatically when we push a certain button. The human brain is something like a computer. It is programmed with certain information that helps us survive, like knowing where we live, calling 911, knowing what foods to eat and even how to protect ourselves from harm.

When we are riding in a car and the driver sees a red light he or she automatically puts their foot on the brake. This is “positive conditioning” because it helps us survive. It is an automatic reaction that happens because it has been “programmed” into the brain of the driver. It is a habit. There is also “negative conditioning” that gets programmed into our brains that causes conflict and is harming our chances for survival. This “negative conditioning” can also be called “prejudice” and acts the same way “positive conditioning” does. “Negative conditioning” creates conflict because it puts into our brain information that, like a computer, acts automatically without understanding why it does this or what the effects it may have on yourself and other people.

Both “positive conditioning” and negative conditioning” is information or knowledge that gets programmed into the brain. The information is the disk and the brain is the system that operates the disk. Can you see just by this simple example that information (a “disk”) creates who we are? In other words, we are what we think. And what we think is also what we feel because thinking and feeling are connected in the brain by a bundle of nerves. And then what we are programmed to think and feel creates the way we act. So it is very important not only to see how this all works in the brain but to also see the information being put into the brain on the “disk.” so we can see what it is doing to us and others, especially when the “disk” contains a “virus” of “negative information,” a prejudice or pre-judgment, that can corrupt the system. This “virus” can create a breakdown of the system thereby causing conflict in relationship allowing conditioned fears and hatreds to dominate our actions.

The malfunctioning of the computer (the brain as the “system”) can cause a malfunction in our relationships. Prejudice, or “negative conditioning” is just that. It is information that has been programmed into our brain without us knowing that it causes conflict in relationship. When we study history we see how prejudice (“negative conditioning”) has caused tremendous suffering and conflict as when a dictator like Adolph Hitler created his view of the perfect race and how he killed millions that did not fit this “program” or view. This “negative conditioning” has been programmed into us for thousands of years, old prejudices that have been carried over from past bullying experiences and have now programmed new generations with old hates and revenges.

We need to understand that we have been conditioned or programmed with hurtful and hateful information (and feelings) that keep the hurt and hate going on for years and years. The good news is that we can do something about this—for ourselves and for others. What it takes is a willingness to understand how we have all been programmed. And this means that we will have to understand the “3Es.”

The 3Es stand for how we learn. The first “E” stands for “Explanation” like what I am doing here telling you about negative conditioned thinking. It is merely a definition, a description. It describes the problem but does not resolve it. It is called “foresight” which means understanding something intellectually by reflecting on it for future reference. The second “E” stands for “Example” like when you say, “Oh, I have done that! I remember when my negative conditioned thinking (prejudice) created conflict between that new person at work when I

thought he was weird just because he came from another country.” Here you went from just the general explanation or definition of negative conditioned thinking to seeing how it actually created conflict in your life sometime in the past. This is called “hindsight” which means remembering something that happened to you before. Both of the above “Es” are memory and therefore are the past. In order to understand what I am saying here about negative conditioned thinking you will have to have some knowledge of it, the Explanation of what it is. The same is true of the personal Example in your life of negative conditioned thinking (and feeling).

It is the last “E” of Experience, not the “past experience” but Experiencing the information that has been programmed into the brain as it reoccurs or re-happens in the moment that is the capacity that can free you from it. This is called “insight” and it is this insight that sees the conditioned thinking/feeling as it is happening and in that awareness of it the conditioned thinking/feeling doesn’t operate like it did in the past. Whereas before you didn’t see the negative conditioning and it just automatically operated and caused conflict, now you are aware of the “programmed disk” and don’t act out of it. This is where the conditioned thoughts/feelings end because they are seen for what they are—destructive negative information that was programmed (the “disk”) into us (the “system” or brain). It’s like turning on a light where in the past it was dark. The conditioning is seen for what it is and, in that moment, one is free of it. And if this awareness is kept up, this “Experiencing” the program on the disk will eventually die out from lack of use. And this means that you have the opportunity not to take this “virus” of “negative conditioning” into your relationships where it can cause greater and greater conflict such as war. But remember, the word is NOT the thing; the “thing” (conditioned thinking and feeling) has to be seen, observed for it to stop. The Explanation or the Example are only words and therefore cannot change behavior, cannot stop the negative conditioned thinking that causes conflict.

Addendum Seven

Fight or Flight? The Foundation of Conflict?

Is the fight or flight mechanism is the human brain fundamentally responsible for human conflict? And if so, can the teaching of physical martial arts help to prevent this reaction that causes conflict?

The title of my first Martial Arts book for young people,

Facing the Double-Edged Sword is a metaphor for the fight or flight survival mechanism in the deeper recesses of our brains. You may have experienced this fight or flight mechanism at one time or another in response to a threat to your survival. If you have a cat or dog, you have seen your pet react when confronted by a threat. The animal reacts according to this built-in survival mechanism by either attacking (fight) or running (flight), depending on the specific conditions.

The human fight or flight mechanism reacts in the same mode as that of the animal in certain circumstances. When, for instance, a bully on the playground confronts a young person, the victim usually has only this fight or flight option available to him or her. The brain relies on this more primitive mode of dealing with hostile aggression because it hasn't been shown anything else. Adults generally only reinforce this method of dealing with conflict by telling the young person to either fight or "turn the other cheek." But does teaching young people how to defend themselves somehow help deal with this situation?

I think it does and this is how it works: the skills of physical self-defense give the young person confidence. This confidence assures him or her that he or she can handle a potentially violent situation. The acquisition of these skills circumvents the primitive fight or flight mechanism. If in a potentially threatening situation, a person has been taught to defend him or herself, the message to the brain does not immediately stimulate this primitive, animalistic reaction. Instead of fighting or running away one can pause in readiness. In the "pause" there is a moment of calm, a suspension of the fear that stimulates fight or flight. Confidence lessens fear and de-activates this automatic survival mechanism.

In this "pause" there is room to deal with the potential threat in new ways. This is where teaching the young person nonviolent alternatives come into play. The brain that is not caught up in fear, and therefore not caught up in the primitive fight or flight reaction, can think more clearly and intelligently and will come up with other methods of dealing with the problem that will open the possibility of ending conflict before it starts. This is how teaching "mental martial arts" complements the physical so a person has the skills to avoid a physical confrontation before it gets to that level.

But there is another issue related to the "fight or flight" reaction that needs looking into in understanding how conflict is created. And this is the mind's inability to distinguish between a physical or psychological threat. Hollywood has exploited the Martial Arts by portraying them as lethal fighting. This notion makes for a sensational appeal to our more primitive human responses. All these violent images in Martial Arts and other "action" films psychologically stimulate a physiological fight or flight reaction even though the threat is not physically present. In other words, the media's exposure of violent images triggers the mind/body's response as *if* the image were real - as if the images were an actual physical threat to our well-being. With the constant stimulation of violent, "life threatening" images, the brain is constantly on alert, using up a tremendous amount of energy to defend against a ghost of a threat - one that simply isn't there. Watching constant violence puts our "fight or flight" mechanism in a constant "on" mode, causing our bodies to continually produce physiological chemical reactions to combat an invasion that in reality is not taking place.

What are the sociological implications of young people who have been raised on violent TV, video games and "action films?" Are we conditioning their minds for more violence, violence of a far greater threat than we are experiencing now? And what vitally important role does the martial arts play in helping young people to understand all this?

So what can we do about alleviating the potential for stimulating a physiological fight or flight reaction to psychological images and what role does the martial arts play in helping young people to understand all this?

This response to such violent visual presentations, as we talked about, creates tremendous fear, especially when it is compounded by the 24/7 news shows that are reinforcing this paranoia. We are always on guard. It is not unusual to see global paranoia of "The Enemy." This feeling that

everyone is out to get us, that we need to be constantly on guard, reinforces the feeling of isolation and separatism and strengthens our image of ourselves as perpetual victims that are continually being threatened. "Help! I'm in danger!" is the psychological response we get when *images* of violence create the fear of a real imminent physical threat. When the brain receives a psychological image of violence and interprets it as an actual physical threat, it reacts in a personal, psychological, defensive manner. It has a psychological fight or flight reaction.

In an actual combat situation when confronting a real danger to one's physical well being, one would need to actually fight or flee from the potential harm. But when the threat via violent images is merely psychological, then a physical fight or flight response is not appropriate. When this occurs the brain goes through a mock fight or flight playing out the scenario psychologically, which has the effect of producing heightened fear because the tension created by the supposed threat cannot be alleviated. This interpretation by the brain of greater fear provides even more justification that "I am being threatened." In my view this is why we are seeing so many extremely violent video games, like Grand Theft Auto where we are able to act out, or simulate the need to protect ourselves from all the "bad guys" out there. This was the major theme in the book 1984 where Big Brother was portrayed as a constant threat to individual and social welfare. The current "news" programs play on this anxiety reinforcing the sensation of "internal terrorism," of villains and criminals that we think are out to get us. All dictators in their quest for power have used this means of psychological manipulation by assigning certain people as the villains to be feared and distrusted so that they can create a fear-based dependency to keep them in power to protect their people from the "enemy."

This stimulation of the fight or flight whether it be actual, as in a real life or death situation or a mock up of psychologically violent images provoking the need to protect oneself physically is of importance in understanding conflict, which is the original and fundamental intent of all martial arts. The word "Budo" in the Japanese martial arts means to "stop the halberd" or to "stop the sword," which means to stop conflict. The martial arts have worked out sophisticated techniques to cope conflict in unarmed combat by developing parts of the body as weapons. It has also, in it's original intent and in the 20th century become a means to "defeat the enemy without fighting" by developing ways of avoiding and resolving conflict without the use of

physical self-defense skills. But I think if we are serious about understanding conflict at its root causes we need to look further.

In my view, Martial Arts training is a unique way to help us understand the conflict created by both a physical and psychological fight or flight. In order to do this we will need to widen our perspective of what the martial arts are. As the saying goes, “An unexamined life is not worth living.” It seems to me that is just what the martial arts are – a means for self-examination in order to carry out the basic intent of all martial arts, that is, to understand and resolve conflict peacefully, for in my view anything else is not a martial ART.

Addendum Eight

Martial Arts For Peace

12 Step Self-Defense Program™

It's as easy as A. B. C.

<h1>Avoid</h1> <p>CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT</p> <hr/> <p><u>Character For Kids Kit™</u> 12 Ways to Act with Respect</p>	<h1>Bargain</h1> <p>CONFLICT EDUCATION</p> <hr/> <p><u>Buster System™</u> 12 Ways to Walk Away with Confidence</p>	<h1>Control</h1> <p>SELF PROTECTION</p> <hr/> <p><u>SOS™ System™</u> 12 Ways to Protect Yourself From Harm</p>
Courtesy	Make Friends	The Force
Gentleness	Use Humor	The Circle of Awareness
Honesty	Walk Away	Friend or Foe
Humility	Use Cleverness	Push - Spin-away
Intelligence	Agree With The Bully	Push - Roll-away
Kindness	Refuse to Fight	Push - Back Stance
Order	Stand Up to the Bully	Grab - Release: One Hand
Responsibility	Scream/Yell	Grab- Release: Two Hand
Wisdom	Use Authority	Grab- Release: Both Arms
Compassion	Ignore the Threat	Hit - Low Block
Respect	Reason with the Bully	Hit - Middle Block
Courage & Commitment	Take a Stance	Hit - High Block

