

The Bystander: Victim or Villain?

A Special Curriculum to Help Young People
Understand and Cope with Conditioning

Ages 9 -14



by
Dr. Terrence Webster Doyle
with Adryan Russ

based on the
Education for Peace Series books
by Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle

A Personal Note to You

from Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle

Thank you for caring enough to want to help your students resolve conflict peacefully. Bullying is a serious affair. I personally suffered from it in my younger years. I think that's why I am compelled to help young people today.

Do We Fight, Run Away, Help?

When I was a boy, I had one option: to run away. That's what I did, and although it often saved me from being bullied, running away gave me no confidence in myself and caused me emotional pain. I was also caught and beaten up. Once I learned how to protect and defend myself, I then had another option: to defend myself physically against a bully who bothered me. This has a certain logic. We *do* have the right to defend ourselves against being violated. Physical self-defense has a place.

But in my preadolescent and adolescent years, the limited options of fighting or running away were not successful in helping me cope with bullying. As I grew older, I thought there must be a better way. So many people are bullied, and many of them never get help from others who are standing by! What concerned me then, and still does today, is that practicing *only* physical self-defense doesn't stop conflict; it merely creates another on top of the one that exists. We need to develop our mental strength so we know how to handle a bully, and how to help a victim in need.

How Do We Promote Nonviolence in a Violent Culture?

Today our young people face far greater threats. Bullying has escalated to homicide. Guns are now the weapons of choice for settling disputes. Physical self-defense, by itself, has become ineffectual in defending us from bullying. The media have conditioned young people to think that using weapons to resolve conflicts is the justifiable — and even honorable — thing to do. Our children have grown up in a tremendously violent culture fed by violent movies, TV programs, video games, magazines and comics. Since 1956 more than 1,500 studies have shown that violence in the media (especially television) *does* affect young people's behavior in a negative way. In other words, we've taught our children to be junior Rambo's, to resolve their problems of relationship by extreme and violent means.

As our young people face more violence, we adults are challenged to come up with ways they can resolve conflicts *nonviolently*. Parents are overwhelmed with making ends meet in this economically unstable time. Teachers are overworked trying to educate young people academically, to give them the intellectual skills they need to go after their chosen vocations. So who's going to help our children understand and

resolve the problems they have with people around them? Who's going to teach them the skills to cope with bullies, conflict and violence?

Learning How to Stop a Fight

One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is the ability to understand and resolve conflict peacefully. This is what this curriculum is all about — to create a new kind of education that teaches Mental Self-Defense™ skills. These skills provide students the ability to resolve conflict before it becomes physical.

When young people learn how to defend themselves mentally, they learn how to deal with bullies, and how to help victims. Our culture has taught us that in order to survive, we need to stand back, observe, and not get involved. We have become bystanders who are either afraid to help or simply don't know how to help. Hopefully, this curriculum will help change this — in your mind, in your school, in your community.

If you have questions about the curriculum, or how to implement it, please feel free to contact me. I also offer teacher-training courses to train people in conflict resolution using this and several other books and curriculums.

Thank you again for selecting these materials for your school. I hope they live up to your expectations and, most importantly, that they help your young students understand and resolve conflict peacefully — by becoming aware of their conditioning and by their willingness to see the world in a new way.

Respectfully yours,

Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle



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