

# WHY AM I ALWAYS PICKING ON MYSELF?

A Special Curriculum  
To Help Young People  
Understand The Inner Bully

Ages 9-14



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

## Preface and Personal Note to You from Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle

Bullying started a long time ago — many, many years before we were born. Bullying means to get something you 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. That's what we are going to do in this program—help you understand what causes bullying, in yourself and in the world because bullying on the playground is the same as bullying on the battlefield.

Most everyone has been bullied at some time their lives. It usually starts on the playground at school but it can also be at home, and in your community. Some people get bullied worse than others. Some people suffer from it worse than others. Some people are so terribly bullied that they become bullies themselves and turn around and hurt others. And sometimes these people kill others as we have seen in schools where some kids who were bullied have out of rage shot the ones that bullied them. There are also kids who turn that hurt, hate and rage in at themselves and take their own lives because that self-hate and rage that gets stored up in them has no outlet. That's because most people, especially adults, don't know how to prevent bullying from happening; many adults and young people just pretend it's not happening and don't do anything to help the kids who have been bullied to let out that hurt, rage and hate in a safe and constructive way.

Now that you are taking this course on bullying, on resolving conflict peacefully, you are taking a big step towards helping yourself and others to understand the causes of bullying, the causes of conflict. It all starts in the way you 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. Your brain, everyone's brain, is something like a computer. There is programmed into it certain information that helps us survive, like knowing where you live, calling 911, knowing what foods to eat and even how to protect yourself from harm.

Have you noticed when you are riding in a car that when the driver sees a red light that he or she automatically puts their foot on the brake. This is “positive conditioning” because it helps you 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 then feel creates the way we act. **And this in turn triggers our hard-wired, built-in “fight or flight” system that reacts, based on the message of fear sent to it so we can feel that the threat is very real when it may only be an image, a frightening conditioned thought, that was programmed into our brains at one time in our lives, a prejudgment that, when activated later on, reacts like a “knee-jerk” reflex.** It just happens because it is a part of the programmed system of thought that we were conditioned into. 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” that can corrupt the system and cause a breakdown of its function.

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 it that causes conflict in relationship. If you study history you will 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 tribal hates and revenges.

What I am trying to say and what I want to do with this course is to help you 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 you can do something about this—for yourself and for others. And all it takes is a willingness to understand how we have all been programmed. And this means that you will have to understand the 3Es.

The 3Es stand for how you 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. 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 kid at school, when I thought he was weird, and myself, just

because he came from another country.” 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 in 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 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 process 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. Then you “see” the conditioning and you, in that moment, are free of it. And if you keep up this awareness, 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 adult life where it can cause greater and greater conflict such as war. But remember, the word is NOT 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 your behavior, cannot stop the negative conditioned thinking that causes conflict.

So where do we start and what do we need to understand in order begin to prevent this bullying, these conflicts, from spreading like a computer virus?

Where did this information come from and how did it get programmed into our brains? In this course we will cover the six areas of bullying starting with what causes us to bully. From there we will go into how we beat ourselves up inside our head. This is called *Why Am I Always Picking On Myself?* The other areas are called *Why Is Everybody Always Picking On Me?*, which is bullying on the playground and then *Why Do We Always Let the Bullies Pick on Them? / The Bystander*, and then we go to *Why Is Everybody Picking On Us?*, which is group prejudice and the final area is called *Why Are We Always Picking On Each Other?* which is concerned with bullying on the battlefield or what we call war.

So we start with the structure of the causes of bullying and the inner bully inside your head, and move from there to the schoolyard bully, then on to group prejudice and the bystander, and then finally on to the battlefield bully. Please remember that all this bullying starts in the brain and if left unchecked it will go on to create bullying at school, in the community and the world. And remember too that all this bullying

has the same mechanical structure, like a computer, and therefore if you understand the basic program in your brain that starts off the bullying then you will be able to understand all of it — you will then see that bullying creates conflict, from the playground to the battlefield, is not “my problem” or “your problem” — it is THE problem in the way the human brain has been conditioned to conflict, and like a virus, has infected the whole of the human race.

Like anything new you may have some difficulty with what is being said here in this course. If you need any help please contact me by email with your questions at [atriumsociety@gmail.com](mailto:atriumsociety@gmail.com) or look at [www.atriumsociety.org](http://www.atriumsociety.org), and I will write you back. Remember to look at this simply like it is a mechanical devise, like a computer and you will see how really simple it is to understand negative conditioned thinking that causes bullying at it's basic foundation.

As someone once said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” I wish you well on this incredible journey in self-understanding, the greatest journey of all!

With care,

*Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle*

## A Word or Two About “Cognitive Distortions”

One of our goals in creating the course on bullying and conditioned thinking is to help educate people, especially young people, about the basic factors that create conflict in their behavior. It is our hope that we can help students see — really SEE — these factors *before* their behavior becomes a serious problem.

Whether inside an individual or among a group, bullying on the playground or bullying on the battlefield, conflict begins with conditioned thoughts — thoughts we think on an ongoing basis every day — and thoughts that we simply never question. It is those initial conditioned thoughts that set off a chain reaction that *instantly* triggers fearful emotions — causing us to either want to fight or run away — which produces a powerful reaction of conflict. This conflict, which begins inside us, then develops into conflict outside us, creating struggles with others.

When we are exposed to this succession of conditioned reflexes in our brain, we can begin to become *aware* of the nature of our conflict at a primary prevention level. This awareness enables us to prevent conflict from happening in the first place — which is our greatest goal.

When an event occurs that disturbs us, automatic thoughts enter our minds. These mechanical thoughts happen so fast that we don't notice them! And if we don't notice them, we certainly won't question them. Still, these thoughts affect our attitude, our mood, our body and our ability to function clearly — and our relationships. These thoughts are often referred to as “cognitive distortions” and are the basis for what is called “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.” My approach to shedding new light on this conditioned way of thinking is to change the focus from a “therapy” which I consider a “reactive, remedial approach” (in other words, after the problem has occurred) to an “education” which is a “proactive, preventive approach” (in other words, preventing the problem that this type of thinking can create before it becomes a problem). I call this educational approach C.E.B.E.™ — Cognitive Emotive Bio-reactive Education.

What this means is that when a conditioned thought gets “triggered” by an outside stimulus (such as a bully approaching you) it in turns triggers or stimulates our emotions (fear in this case) and then that thought and feeling combined trigger or stimulate the “Bio-reactive” fight or flight survival system in the old brain. In this educational way we can observe the total process of how a conditioned image (of a bully) can, like a row of dominos, set off a “chain reaction” in the brain to protect oneself. That is a necessary and helpful process

if we are actually being threatened by a real bully and really need to defend ourselves.

But the problem occurs when this chain reaction is stimulated or triggered by an “image” of what may have been or might be a threatening situation. In this situation the threat is not imminent but the brain is reacting to it as if it were when in fact it only a supposed one. And this is where we get into trouble. If we are preparing ourselves to fight or flee from a supposed threat stimulated by an image of what represents to us a threat then we are unnecessarily reacting. This is what can be labeled a “cognitive distortion” in that it is based on a false perception of reality. This reacting to a supposed threat, on a false perception of reality, occurs not only in bullying situations but also in daily life with many “cognitive distortions” that cause us unnecessary conflict in our lives. These seem to be general ones that are shared by most people, ones that need to be examined to see the truth or falseness of what they represent. Here are a few of them:

- Focusing only on our flaws, on what is wrong, and ignoring our strengths.
- Assuming that we know what others think about us — and it’s never good.
- Discounting the good things we do, as if they didn’t matter.
- Making things much worse than they are.
- Believing that we’re either a hero or a villain — with no in-between.
- Setting rigid rules for ourselves: we “should” do this; and “must” do that.
- Believing that what we feel is fact — whether it is or not.
- Exaggerating how the world “always” does you wrong.
- Labeling ourselves in negative ways, based on a single experience.

There are more, and you will learn them as you work through this curriculum. What’s important to know is that we are not born with these disorders — we learn them — in childhood, from others, from personal experiences — and they become habit. When we can see these distortions, right as they happen to us, we can question them and change them. We hope that this curriculum will help you and your students do exactly that.

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