

Advice, ideas,
and news you can use to help your kid

HEADY ADVICE FROM A BLACK BELT PSYCHOLOGIST ON DEALING WITH BULLIES

THE LAST THING THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD boy expected when he walked into the locker room was to wind up with a knife pointed at his neck. But he had stumbled upon a teenager picking on a younger child and he had told the bully to stop.

"The teenager then said to the boy, 'You don't know what's

going on here,'" recalls Linda West, a fifth-degree black belt in taekwondo. West taught a martial arts class in the boy's Vermont elementary school. As part of the class, West taught the boy numerous "mental" self-defense techniques. The boy used those skills to defuse the dangerous situation.

"First he agreed with the bully that he didn't know what was going on," West says. "Then he backed up toward the door, since we had talked about never turning your back on an enemy." Fortunately, the bully did not follow him. "And he kept his voice confident and calm as he repeated, 'Yes, you're right,' until he got away. He told me later it was just like the role-playing we'd done in class," says West.

West's class incorporates the principles of a program called Martial Arts for Peace. The

program was created in 1991 by Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle, a psychologist, educator, and sixth-degree black belt in karate. Webster-Doyle teaches nonviolent solutions to conflict through his nonprofit organization, Martial Arts for Peace, in Middlebury, Vermont.

"The intent of the martial arts is to *resolve* conflict, not create it," Webster-Doyle says. "True martial arts combines physical skills that build confidence with mental skills geared to solving conflict before anyone gets hurt.

"Kids need to learn how to handle bullies and avoid being victims," he adds. "Too often we tell our kids that they have only two choices, fight or flight. But there are more alternatives if kids learn to use their minds instead of their fists."

Using one's mind means getting inside the head of the bully. In his book *Why is Everybody Always Picking On Me? A Guide to Handling Bullies*, Webster-Doyle writes, "Bullies are people with problems. They are hurt, angry, afraid and frustrated. Because of these feelings, and their inability to deal with them, some bullies have done a lot of harm."

As martial arts legend Bruce Lee used to say, "Any dummy can get in a fight. It takes a smart guy to stay out of one."

—BY CAROL KRUCOFF

**For literature and information about Martial Arts for Peace, call 1-800-848-6021.*



GARY CLAYTON-HALL

Through Martial Arts for Peace, Webster-Doyle teaches kids how to defeat a bully without fighting. Kids learn martial arts and "mental" self-defense techniques.

SOME BULLY-BESTING TECHNIQUES

HERE ARE A FEW OF THE TECHNIQUES used in Webster-Doyle's program. They should be used only after kids have practiced role-playing with a qualified Martial Arts for Peace instructor.

- Treat the bully as a friend instead of an enemy.
- Try to turn a scary situation into a funny one. But don't make fun of the bully.
- Walk away. Don't get into it.
- Use cleverness. For example, say that you have a

disease or that your father is on his way to pick you up.

- Agree with the bully, even if it means accepting insults.
- No matter what, refuse to fight.
- Stand up to a bully. Use words and body language to just say NO! to bullying.
- Yell. A powerful shout can end a fight before it starts or it can be a call for help.
- Reason with the bully. Use the most powerful tool you have: your brain.