

The Complete Guide to the Bully – Victim Cycle

From the Playground To The Battlefield

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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 a 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 fact remains that we are not born bullies. We learn as children, then grow up and turn into the bullies we have been taught 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 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 understand “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 is 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, a 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.