

BULLYPROOF:

Unleash The Hero Inside Your Kid

VOLUME 2



**THE #1 BEST-SELLING SERIES ON BULLYING PREVENTION
AND EMPOWERMENT FOR KIDS, TEENS, AND ADULTS**

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CHAPTER 2: TRAINING BODY & MIND TO BE BULLYPROOF

**BY YONG HYEOK LEE
SHOREVIEW, MINNESOTA**

I've owned Lee's Champion Taekwondo Academy in Shoreview, Minnesota for over twenty years. I've also been training in martial arts for over forty years, and have had the pleasure of being in a position to transform many lives through Taekwondo training. One of my passions throughout my career has been to focus on the fight against bullying for our children. This is a topic that I hold especially close, because it was due to my own experience of being

bullied as a child that led me to martial arts training so many years ago.

How Big A Problem Is Bullying?

I'm aware that there are still some people out there who don't consider bullying to be a real issue, or don't think it's important enough to warrant the publicity it's been getting lately. When I hear these types of reactions I'm honestly not sure why these people are so reluctant to see bullying for the major problem it is. The only thing I can think of is maybe they're fortunate enough to never have experienced bullying themselves.

If that's true those parents should consider themselves quite lucky indeed, because according to statistics there are many people who have different experiences. Studies show that every seven minutes a child is a victim of bullying. Within these incidents there is zero intervention as much as 85% of the time, which may explain why each day as many as 160,000 students miss school due to bullying. Bullying is the leading reason for suicide in kids

eleven through sixteen years old. By the age of twenty-four, 60% of people who were bullies in school are convicted of a crime. One in three students are reportedly bullied in their lives, and 86% of children ages twelve through fifteen say that bullying has moderately or severely interfered with their studies. So the people who haven't experienced bullying should understand that while they may not think it's an issue, statistically their friends, family members, or children would disagree.

What Is A Bully?

One of the most common concerns I hear is that people don't always know how to define bullying. This is understandable, because it's not an easy thing to do. It's also hard for parents to understand bullying these days because it can take so many forms - it's not the same as when I was a kid. When I was a kid we had verbal bullying and physical bullying, but it was all in person. However, even though the methods of bullying may have changed in many ways, the core definition is still the same now as it's

always been. Bullying is when one person intentionally and consistently hurt's someone else, either through words or actions.

I mentioned that the methods of bullying have changed over the years. Now we have the addition of things like cyber bullying and text bullying. Really, social media in general has given rise to a whole new segment of bullying where instead of face to face confrontation a bully can be attacking from miles away through Facebook, Snapchat, or any other outlet. These new forms of bullying can involve spreading rumors about people, harassing them, and hurting them in different ways. Although the attacks are digital, they're still defined as bullying if they are intentionally and consistently done with the goal of hurting someone.

Bullying In Schools

It's no secret that probably the most common site for bullying to occur is in schools. It makes sense, because kids spend so much of their time there every day. That's not to say that bullying doesn't happen other places - home, neighborhoods, etc. - but kids are in

school six to eight hours or more a day, in an environment full of other kids, so of course this is a likely place to find bullying. One of the biggest problems I hear about is that we trust our children are safe and protected in schools, and we hope the teachers are able to watch out for their well-being, but the reality is that teachers often have limited power.

Because teachers may have a limited say in what they can do to combat bullying, one of the best things they can do is make sure they're communicating with their students about what bullying is. Teachers have a tremendous power to influence kids. They can educate students about bullying by taking the time to explain what bullying looks like, tell kids that bullying is not ok, explain the school's policies about bullying and what steps students should take if they witness or are victims of bullying, and let students know that they should always feel comfortable coming to teachers or parents with any questions or concerns about bullying.

Another great strategy teachers can use is to partner up with other people in the community. I'm a firm believer in the power of

teamwork, and I think that when like-minded people come together for a cause they can make a tremendous impact. I've had personal experiences where local teachers and I team up to teach about bullying. I speak with the teachers and administrators before I go in to speak so we understand each other's approach to bully prevention, and I go in and speak to students about the topic of bullying. One of the most popular topics I cover is just reinforcing the idea that bullying is never ok, and that it shouldn't be tolerated. Often this leads into discussions about self-defense and appropriate reactions to bullying.

Your Kid Can Be A "Nice" Kid and Still Be A "Safe" Kid

I know good kids want to be nice kids, and sometimes they think that means they can't stand up for themselves. Sometimes parents feel this way too. They're afraid that if they encourage their kids to stand up for themselves they're potentially creating a bully, or allowing their child to engage in behavior they shouldn't be. We raise our kids teaching them manners, not to talk back, not to hit people - but we should also teach them about how to stand up for

themselves, how not to be pushed around, and how not to be walked all over.

We as adults know what bullying looks like, the intentionally persistent cruel behavior we talked about earlier, so let's teach our kids about that as well. Our kids can be "nice", they can be respectful and kind and generous. But while we're teaching them these life skills, let's not forget about things like self-esteem, pride, and confidence. Building strong bodies and strong minds in our children isn't wrong, it's responsible. Our kids can be nice to the kids who are nice, and have the confidence to look a bully straight in the eye and say that what they're doing is not ok. Again, we all want to have nice kids, but we also want to have safe and happy kids - let's do both.

How Walking Away Is Running Away

This may be controversial, but I don't think kids should be taught to walk away from a bully. I don't think ignoring a problem is a solution that works, and most times a child walks away from a

bully they feel as if they're retreating. In doing this they've lost confidence in themselves, and have shown the bully weakness because they just took the punishment. Walking away may be a temporary fix, but it will be a very short-lived success. Bullies, criminals, and predators have something in common - they all look for easy targets. They have an ability to sense weakness, and they'll strike at the target that offers the least resistance.

Instead, encourage your child to stand up for themselves. You can't run away from a problem, it will follow you relentlessly. If a kid is being bullied they need to stop running, face the bully, and let them know in no uncertain terms that they are not going to be an easy target. This is how we help make our kids bullyproof, we teach them how to face their problems with confidence and a sense of self-worth.

Steps Parents Can Take

There is so much information out there today about steps parents can take to help bullyproof their children. Just go on YouTube or

Google and do a search and it will yield more results than you can imagine. The interesting thing is that more and more often these resources will have key areas in common. They'll talk about the importance of strengthening both body and mind so kids look and feel confident in themselves. They'll focus on the facts that looking more physically fit and having a higher sense of self-esteem have a definite effect on the way kids are perceived.

Another thing these resources have in common is that one of the most recommended activities for parents looking to either proactively prevent bullying or handle current bullying issues is enrolling their children in a martial arts program. I may be a bit biased on this issue, but I have to agree that martial arts are a wonderful activity for parents to seek out, either for their children or as a family. A quality martial arts school will train students to become bullyproof by focusing on ongoing training of the mind and body, and students will learn how to deal with bullies both mentally and physically. My parents made the decision to enroll me in martial arts when I was five years old because I was being

bullied, and I can tell you that it undoubtedly changed my life for the better.

Final Thoughts

I wish I could say that bullying is something we can eradicate, and that future generations will be able to go through their lives without the worries that current children have. Unfortunately that's just not the case – bullying will never be able to be completely eliminated. What we can do is work together as a team, as a community, to engage in conversation and educate ourselves and others as much as possible. We can share this knowledge with our children and do everything we can to keep them safe and allow them to lead happy and healthy lives. Bullying may not be a problem we can just get rid of, but through a concerted team effort we will be able to protect our children better, and continue that momentum for generations.



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Lee is a certified 8th degree black belt from the World Taekwondo Federation, three-time Korean National Taekwondo Champion, and Former US National Taekwondo Team Coach and Manager.

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