



□ **I grew up in a small mining town where bullying started early. Just about every kid in my class experienced some level of abuse from the same bullies.**

□□ **When my dad found out he got angry. Looking down at me he scolded me to fight back. I just stood there. I remember thinking “I don’t know what to do.” I said nothing.**

In my town, there were no karate schools; I don’t think I even knew the term in those days. There were wrestling and boxing programs however, but I was afraid to ask to be put in one. He wouldn’t have done it anyway; we didn’t have funds for such activities.

The stress was overwhelming. I hated school to end, knowing the bullying was waiting. Sitting, watching the last minutes of the last class was torture. I’ll never forget it.

In hindsight, this was a blessing that has helped me be a better teacher today. I know exactly how it feels to be bullied. I know if you fight back it will start slowing down and eventually stop. But kids need help in this area. Yes, like me, many will figure it out the hard way. Unfortunately, many do not; bad things then can happen. Kids need instruction.

Parents, don’t assume your child will tell you they are being bullied. Take initiative and offer your child the opportunity to train in a martial arts program. Even if they are not being bullying at the time, let the child know it’s a possibility. Educate the child how important it is to be prepared. Talk to your child.

Below is an article I recently wrote for a local magazine. Unfortunately, there were restrictions in length. I would love to have gone deeper into the pain of being bullied. I want those who have never experienced bullying to understand the pain a child experiences. We must help children be prepared for such possibilities. A parent and child need to Plan and Prepare.

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Bullying - what to do?

By Ray Hughes

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I was that kid. Seems like yesterday; the mental and physical pain, the shame and humiliation, the powerless feeling. I remember staring at the clock, not wanting the last class to end because of the impending doom. These were my 3rd to 6th grade years.

Not only is abuse horrible, but so is the hopelessness a child feels not being able to tell anyone for fear of making things worse. Most children have a hard time asking for help.

The majority of parents, when they realize there is a problem, try to fix it. Though some things can and should be done, such as identifying the bully and so on, the solution more often than not has to come from the child, for two reasons; first to resolve the current situation and second, to develop future skills.

Bullying comes in many forms and kids need to develop the skills to handle it. These skills are best taught, not just left to a child to figure out. It may take years for kids to sort it all out alone. Some never do. Then a parent's worst nightmare can happen.

### Plan and Practice

Kids need an actual plan to handle bullying abuse. Simply telling a child to walk away, ignore the bully, or fight back is not enough. The child must understand the importance of posture, eye contact, the power of words, and have some idea what to do if the situation turns physical. If not, they are left to flounder.

Along with a plan comes practice. As in most any endeavor, discussion is not enough. Role playing and rehearsal are necessary.

### The Plan

1. Act confidently
2. Be aware of surroundings
3. Enhance posture and verbal skills
4. Review potential bullying scenarios
5. Consider physical fitness and formal self-defense training

### The Practice

1. Rehearse realistic posture and stance in case of confrontation.
2. Work on maintaining eye contact. Role play
3. Drill verbal skills; don't touch me, back off, etc. Strong voice.
4. Run through techniques for various confrontations, including physical altercations.

The parent can do a lot to help. Many parents have experienced bullying themselves and understand the importance of posture and confidence. They can role play scenarios with their children.

I recommend a great booklet, *Bully Games*, by Dana Sherman, PH.D. It covers bullying situations and strategies to resolve them. It's available on Amazon.

Kids, however, need structured practice, theory isn't enough. Parents can talk, but nothing beats some exposure to pursuits like wrestling, boxing, and martial arts to instill confidence. I have seen it time and again for forty years. When a child has some idea what to do physically, their confidence jumps. This, alone, will minimize bullying.

If bullying results in actual physical conflict, at least the child with training will have a legitimate chance of defending themselves. Martial arts programs often go further than sports like wrestling and boxing because they focus on drills designed to help children perform under pressure and manage stress. Actual role playing on conflict resolutions is also a part of a good

curriculum.

In summary, the secret to help children be prepared for bullying situations - Plan and Practice.

By Ray Hughes  
November 2016

\*\* KARATE- Philosophy, history, & events-November Edition