

TAKE CONTROL

In an emergency, if you are being physically threatened and don't know what to do, escape! Do not turn and run, keep an eye on them as you leave. If they try to stop you leaving, break away and leave anyway.

Go to a safe place where allies can protect you. If you can't get away, minimise damage by moving and shielding your important features. Do not expect strangers or acquaintances to help you.

To avoid physical assault by a bully, it's better to train in advance. The irony is that after training, you will not likely need to physically defend yourself. Bullies want to feel powerful by hurting other people and this can't happen if you know how to neutralise it. Luckily the training will have made you fitter, stronger, wiser and is fun, so the time spent is not wasted.

You will be chosen by the bully because they think they can cause damage, without you being able to retaliate. They will probably have physical size on their side, or be in a group, and you are alone.

Emotional and intellectual bullying is different. You are not going to sustain irreparable damage to your body from abusive comments. But bodies may heal faster than souls. Verbal bullying can be harder to see.

Getting help is a good strategy. Working with your peers is also very good. But learning how to handle a bully on your own is a decisive moment in your life. And help is not always at hand.

Who is the bully? They seem so scary when you are on the receiving end, but they are human. Why they bully is they need something. And they are trying to get it from the interaction with you.

Most bullies are victims themselves. Someone took their happiness and they are trying to get it back by taking yours. Healthy happy people do not destroy other people for some small satisfaction. Bullies have poor relationship skills and fighting with someone is better than being alone.

When the bullying comes, whether it

is verbal or physical, being calm and relaxed is important. If you tense up you are telling the bully that you are bracing for impact. Tension tells them that you do not know any escape moves or how to retaliate.

If you can stand your ground, choose a safe distance, control your breathing, control time, control your reactions and thoughts, you are already too much for most bullies. Observing their lack of skill and feeling pity for them is more constructive than focussing on your fear.

Just ignoring abusive comments might work. But remember the bully might be lonely or seeking recognition and so this moving away will aggravate them.

A bully will keep probing and targeting your weak spots until they find somewhere you react.

Let them get tired first. It's ideal to resolve the situation permanently, but deferring the solution by another day is still a good outcome.

By agreeing with abusive comments you can destabilise a bully. You are supposed to defend yourself. This way you are playing a game with them. Not exactly the one they wanted to play but they get to be 'right'. This is easier if they are targeting 'the person they think you are' and not the real you.

When they start getting really personal and really accurate, it gets harder to play this game. It is important not to take too much offence. Try and conceal any hits that you take. When they hear a solid thwack of a hit, they know they are on target and they will 'fire for effect'. The folklore of the redcoats was you can't see blood stains on a red tunic so no one knows you are wounded. If they land a good one and you are angry, you are likely to overreact and lash out. Then you become the bully.

Matthew Hulse suggests some steps you could take

TO ESCAPE UNSCATHED

Changing the subject is another good skill. Someone says some vile insult and you ask them the time. Don't address the abusive comments directly. If they are making unnecessary comments you can respond with equally silly responses. Be careful not to resort to insults. Instead of silly comments, remembering the reason why you are in proximity can be another focus. "I'd love to stay and talk, but I'm going to eat my lunch and get my sports gear ready/get back to work/do my jobs around the house".

Being able to 'name the game' is powerful. You may get a flash of insight or need to research this. It can be hard as the truth might be as uncomfortable for you as it is for them. But if you get it right you are in a better position. For example stating: "You have no friends, so you hassle little kids." You could then ask "is it working for you?" This might be done in one step by asking a really simple, revealing but confronting question. Having their game exposed is devastating. A child can drop a grown man with one question.

We expect people to know that violent and abusive behaviour should not occur. But if they do behave this way, you might need to describe the offensive behaviours and ASK them to stop. If they do not stop, TELL them to stop. Failing this you have to MAKE them

stop. Now, what this means depends on the situation.

There needs to be consequences. I define violence as damage that you don't plan to pay for. Making people pay for their damage will usually make them stop. But only if they can afford the consequences. People with nothing have nothing to lose.

Making them pay. How do you decide the price? It depends on the customer. Pricing theory is a subject in business schools: How much can they afford and what is the value of the product. Prison to some is a holiday, to others it will destroy their world. A \$100 fine is a lot or nothing to different people.

Another way to decide price is by auction. Normally the price starts low and is raised in increments. There is also a Dutch auction where the price starts high and is lowered. Bullies tend to be used to enduring hardships are pretty resilient to this slow raising of 'price'. I find if you start with a high price, the shock value tends to curb any offensive behaviour. If you think this line of thinking is strange, the police even use the word 'charge' when accusing someone of a crime.

A universal reimbursement for committing violence is 'pack exclusion'. This could be studied in much greater detail but I will mention it and you can do your own research. It is a personal favourite of mine because it involves

'doing nothing' and is very serious. In a primitive environment it is a death sentence, so offering a place back in the group is warranted in most circumstances.

When a bully stops behaving badly, be ready to help them, if you want a long term solution. They do not know how to get what they want. Give them a demonstration of what they could do when the violence came to them. Reward good behaviour and keep connection. Destroy your enemy by making them your friend.

You can contact me at Braidwood Aikido Dojo on 0438 648 468. ■



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BULLYING