

# Being Bullied!

## Dik Chance with more valuable advice, this time for our younger readers.

I was bullied horribly at school. One day it got so bad that I was choked unconscious and had blood vessels in my eyes burst with the pressure. I was the target for bullying constantly from aged 10 – 14. Things didn't really change for me until I grew substantially. So when I say I know what you are going through, I mean it.

This is remarkably common amongst people who have embraced the *reality* side of martial arts training. I've met some very, very tough people around the world who were bullied in their youth. That experience seems to have made them stronger and tougher. So, if you are being bullied, take heart. Even though this seems like the end of the world, you will get through it. You have to start making changes today.

Bullying comes in many different forms. Some of the things that happened to me include:

- being called names;
- being ignored and excluded;
- having things stolen from me;
- being constantly flicked on the ears;
- being pushed, punched, kicked and choked.

Bullying can also include things like picking on how someone looks (the colour of their hair or skin, if they wear glasses, if they are fat or thin, short or tall etc). Mobile phones are being used to send people bullying text messages.

Being the target of bullying can leave you feeling confused, helpless, weak and desperate. You can't face leaving the house and may even invent illness to keep you at home.

During the actual bullying, your mind and body may play tricks on you. You might feel sick, shaky, weak and in desperate need of the toilet. Your legs might wobble and your hands might be sweaty and shaky. Your mouth might get really dry and all the clever things you hoped to say might get stuck in your throat.

**This happens to everyone!** It is the effect of adrenaline, a hormone your body produces when you are in an emergency situation. When you are worried at night about something that is going to happen tomorrow, your body decides this is an emergency and starts to release adrenaline slowly. This makes your heart beat faster and increases your breathing. It wakes you up and stops you sleeping. When something is threatening you your body dumps adrenaline into you really fast.

### TIPS FOR KIDS

- 1 Do you know where to go if you are being bullied at school?
- 2 Do you know who you can talk to?
- 3 See if your school has a anti-bullying policy.
- 4 Keep with your friends.
- 5 Practice the fence.



Being picked on by a group of people is a very scary thing.



THE FENCE – Your friend and ally.



Your submissive body language gives you away.



You must control the distance – but not like this

All this happens so that your body is prepared for *flight* (running away) or *fight*. Unfortunately, if you aren't ready for it to happen, it can also make you freeze and panic. Every time this happens to you (even on roller coasters or watching scary things on TV) remind yourself that *'it's just adrenaline and it's your friend'*. Adrenaline is the turbo charge that your body needs in times of danger. That's why some people do extreme sports like bungee jumping. They like the feeling of the adrenaline rush.

One of the things I found out though is that it is easy to be a bully without realising it. Have a look at some of the things you do or say to other people, especially when you are in a group of friends. You might be surprised to find that you are bullying someone else.

So what can you do if you are being bullied, or you know someone that is being bullied? The first thing to do is to accept that it is not your fault. You are not stupid, weak or any other of the negative emotions you are feeling. It is okay to have big ears or glasses or ginger hair or any of the other things that people are using to pick on you. Very often people who are being bullied don't say anything because they are worried what people will think of them. You might even be worrying that you'll make it worse.

Unfortunately you do have to take the first steps for yourself. It is vital that you tell someone. To start with you might feel comfortable telling your friend. That's okay. You can feel a little safer if you aren't on your own. However, if the bullying is continuing, you need to tell someone who can do something about it. Your parents are the best choice. If you can't tell them, what about talking to another family member? You could tell a sympathetic teacher. You could tell your sports coach. Keep a record of everything done or said to you. Childline has an excellent log that you can download.

By telling an adult, you have asked them to help you with the problem. Adults should listen to you and they have ways to help available to them that you may not. Schools should have anti-bullying policies that they should use to help stop the problem. If the problem doesn't stop, tell someone else.

So what about things that you can do? Firstly let's try to decide what bullies look for when selecting the targets. Most people I ask will admit to bullying someone. Their brother or sister, someone younger at school, their best friend even.

Think about what you looked for when this happened. Most bullies pick on people who are:

- not very confident;
- showing they are scared;
- looking down;
- talking nervously or too quietly;
- timid;
- not going to make a fuss.

The first rule then is to be a *hard target*. A hard target is someone who is difficult to get to. The most basic way of being a hard target is to be somewhere else. You can't be picked on if you aren't there. If you know where the bullies are going to be, be somewhere different.

The second way of being a hard target is to look confident, even if you aren't feeling like it. We call this *duck style*. On the surface of the water a duck looks calm and relaxed. Under the water, its legs are flapping like crazy. It's the same for you. You have to give the impression that you aren't nervous and scared, even if under the surface you are flapping like crazy.

This is done by body language. If you don't know what body language is, imagine the last time your mum and dad were angry with you. They don't need to say anything, you just know. What you need to do is show confident and assertive body language. This should include:

#### TIPS FOR PARENTS and ADULTS

- 1 Find out what your school's anti-bullying policy is.
- 2 Make sure you listen if you are told about bullying. It's easy to dismiss it.
- 3 Do something about it. Find out from the child what they would like to be done about it.
- 4 Talk to the school.
- 5 Help the child to become a hard target. Practice skills like the fence and verbal assertiveness with them. Ask us for more information if you are unsure.



Being left out of the group is a very nasty form of bullying



All of the people in our photos were acting – they like each other really'

- keeping your head up and your eyes looking;
- confident strong, but polite, voice;
- walking like you are going somewhere important;
- not getting involved in conversations with bullies;
- keeping your distance.

The third rule (and also the first rule too!!) is keeping your distance. If you have good assertive body language this will go along way to keeping people away. Another trick for your duck style is called *The Fence*. If you want to keep people out of your garden, you put up a fence. If you want to keep bullies out of your space, you put up your fence. A good fence is just having your hands up in front. It tells the bully you are confident and ready, but it tells people watching that you don't want to fight (so you don't get into trouble too). A good fence is also like an insect's antenna. It will tell you if people are getting too close.

Using your confident assertive voice is important too. Don't get involved in bullies conversations – that's just playing their game. Just put up your fence and say '*what do you want*' over and over, just like a stuck CD. If you aren't responding, their game plan isn't working.

If that isn't working and they are getting too close to your *antenna*, tell them to '*BACK OFF*', loudly.

People often ask me, when should we use our martial arts skills? There is no real, 100% answer. If you need to do something more physical than running away, you risk getting badly hurt. You can get into serious trouble and labelled as a bully yourself. I always say that '*if someone is going to do something to you that might make you bleed, or bruise you, or*

### Some good websites to visit.

There are hundreds but these are probably the best, or link on to some really good ones.

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

*hurt you, then it's the right time*'. This is very difficult because you can get into lots of trouble, and even be accused of being the bully yourself. You need to think carefully, and if you do use something physical, make sure that you do it at the right time.

Ask your instructors to show you some good releases from grabs and chokes (I wish I'd known some). Come on a FAST Defence course. We do them for 6 years old and above. Making yourself a hard target is better than having to defend yourself.

Take care of yourself and your friends. If you are being bullied, tell someone and remember that you are not alone.

Until next time, train safely, respectfully and smartly with an open mind.

### About the author:

Dik Chance trains under Mr Ray Gayle (7<sup>th</sup> Degree) at Yate Taekwon-Do. He also teaches at his own school at Clifton in Bristol. Like most PUMA instructors, Dik has a significant number of junior students and is actively involved in anti-bullying training. He is an instructor and bulletman in P.U.M.A. & F.A.S.T. Defence team. He has a keen interest in reality based self-protection training and combatives, and regularly trains in this area. This training has led him to train with some of the world's most influential instructors such as Geoff Thompson, Peter Consterdine, Bill Kipp and Peyton Quinn.

