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## ENHANCING LIVES

# Stopping Bullies: Empowering our Children

With the recent media attention drawn to a slew of young teens who have committed suicide because of constant harassment in school and out, bullying has come to the forefront of American consciousness. Any parent who feels helpless while their child is being mentally or physically harassed at school knows how important this topic is. Having been bullied as a child, and spending most of my adult life studying this subject, I wholeheartedly believe that bullying is not a issue to be taken lightly. Even if you do not focus on the extreme cases, most children who are continuously bullied face difficulties focusing in class, getting good grades, meeting new friends, and being in a consistent healthy mindset. Ultimately, a lifetime of bullying that is not managed can potentially be the difference between a person who has the confidence to go out into the world and be successful or not.

My parents put me in Tae Kwon Do when I was seven years old because they were fed up with the harassment, both mentally and physically. I regularly got off the bus in elementary school with a bloody nose, and the name calling was constant. Their goals were to have me gain confidence, learn to protect myself, and ultimately, become a happier child. These goals were achieved, and a little over a year into my training, I was forced to stand up for myself. After that incident, I made the realization that I was capable of protecting myself and my confidence continued to grow

from that point. To add to this, my skill was improving in martial arts, I was increasing in my rank, competing in tournaments, winning trophies, learning about leadership, and developing a sense of control over my actions.

Today, it is our goal at Cutting Edge to spread the knowledge that I have gained through my training, my education in the field of psychology, as well as my multitude of life experiences. We have created a program that we teach in the local schools and that we use regularly in our children's programs. The cornerstone of our "Bully Buster" program is the idea that no matter how much parents, teachers, and principals would like to stop bullying, they do not have the power to make it happen. With this knowledge, we can then teach children the importance of taking personal responsibility for making bullying stop. This is their first step to success. We teach that by taking control of the situation and making different choices, we can change the way we interact with the bully. The fact is, it is a relationship that forms between a child and a bully, albeit a very unhealthy one. In a relationship, there is a Yin and Yang, and the choices we make represent 50% of the equation. There are several solutions for children to change their current relationship with the bully. The bottom line is, if a bully is out to make you upset (the negative), and you show them how upset you really are and give them what they want (the positive), you are giving that child exactly what they are looking for. That combination of positive and negative

is like a powerful electric charge that is hard to break. Once a child commits to making choices that will break the electric charge between themselves and the bully, over time, it will lose all of its power.

Cutting Edge Martial Arts is committed to teaching and inspiring the children of our community to develop the confidence, knowledge, and techniques necessary to end the bullying in their classrooms and their community. It takes time, commitment and perseverance, but with good strategies and techniques, children have the power to make positive changes in their own lives. Over the years, we have heard story after story from our students— how they finally stood up for themselves, showed the bully that they were not afraid, and how it changed everything. We offer seminars on the subject in local schools and through special events at our school, and it is a routine part of our curriculum.



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