

*Solving Conflict*  
**Nonviolently**

Special Thanks to Jean Webster-Doyle,  
for her patient, loving support and understanding,  
and for making this work possible.

# **WHY IS EVERYBODY ALWAYS PICKING ON ME?**

A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING BULLIES  
For Young People

by Terrence Webster-Doyle



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**Have you ever felt:**

Anxious?	Helpless?
Worthless?	Powerless?
Out of control?	Unfairly punished?
Ridiculed?	Harassed?
Hurt?	Vengeful?
Ashamed?	Angry?
Humiliated?	Frustrated?
Insecure?	Lonely?
Enraged?	Unloved?
Rejected?	Violent?
Ambitious?	Greedy?
Pressured to conform?	Pressured to compete?
Scared?	Afraid of not "making it"?

Afraid of not living up to the expectations of others?

**In other words, have you ever felt  
that everybody is picking on you?**

## **Boys Will Be Boys**

### **A Story**

Whack! You feel a sharp pain in your back. You spin around in anger to see the boy who threw the ball and hit you.

"Hey, you, Jack! I'll get you for that!" you yell at him, clenching your fists as you walk in his direction. Your palms sweat and your eyes harden as you approach this smaller and younger boy. "I could put your lights out for hitting me!" you say to him as you grab his shirt.

"I'm sorry! I didn't mean to hit you. It was an accident," the smaller boy says fearfully. He is so afraid of you, his body is shaking. You feel a surge of power from his fear. You know you are in control.

Other kids on the playground gather about you as you continue to harass this younger boy.

"Oh, sure. It was no mistake, punk. You're asking for a bruising!"

You feel the eyes of your classmates on you. You feel that they admire your strength, and fear it at the same time. Most of the kids keep away from you. The few buddies you have hang out with you because they also think bullying other kids is having a good time.

"Stop that, this minute!" you hear Mrs. Potter, the playground supervisor, command from across the yard. She is coming toward you at full steam, her finger wagging "Bad boy!" and her tone threatening the vice principal's office again.

"What a dope she is," you think to yourself. "She can't scare me. All the vice principal can do is send me home. Then what? No one's there and they don't care anyhow."







"Let go of Mark right now, or I'll send you to Mr. Nathan. You are a bully. Don't you think that you can get away with this behavior. I won't tolerate it. Why can't you be good, like Mark? He wouldn't start a fight; he has fine manners. You're a troublemaker, and you always will be as far as I'm concerned," she lectures.

Mrs. Potter puts her hand on your arm and you push it off. You let go of Mark to face Mrs. Potter. "You're not one of my parents. You can't tell me what to do," you yell back at her defiantly, your hands on your hips, your feet apart.

"Come with me. We are going to the vice principal's office right now," she insists.

"No way. I'm out of here!" You run across the yard and to the field beyond the school, yelling names back at the playground supervisor and the group of kids that are standing around. "Jerks, punks! I'll get you yet! All of you! You wait and see!"

After school you meet your two buddies, Mac and Tom. You hang out behind the stores downtown in the empty lot where you throw rocks at bottles and smoke cigarettes that you stole from your parents.

It's getting dark and your buddies and you start to go home. As you arrive at your house, your mother pulls up in her new, expensive foreign car. Your dad is still at work, as usual. Both of them work six days a week, usually into the late evening hours. Walking into the house, you see your big sister crashed out on the sofa, eating pizza and watching TY.

"Hey, weirdo. -How goes it?" she sneers. "Failing all your subjects as usual?" You don't respond. "Got into a fight today, I heard."

"Aw shut up," you snap back at her, heading into the kitchen to see what you can find to eat.

"You're going to end up a bum or a convict, if you don't watch out, you know," your sister yells with a mouth full of doughy pizza. "You're just too dumb to learn. You're going to flunk everything if you don't straighten out, ya' hear me?"

You get some leftover pizza, a coke and some chocolate doughnuts and go into the living room to watch TV. Your mother has gone into her office upstairs to make some phone calls.

"Change the channel," you command your bigger sister with a look of anger. "I want to watch 'Rambo IV' and it's on now."

"You always watch that macho junk," your sister says, not looking at you, and not changing the channel. "You should watch something more intelligent instead of all that warstuff. It'll pollute your brain." She looks at you. "Maybe it's too late. Your brain has turned to mush already. Why can't you be more like Jason? He gets good grades and everyone likes him. He's a better brother than you," she says, smugly. "Did you hear he's getting a football scholarship to State?"

"Jason's a fake. He wants to be just like Dad, a big success. But he's just a phony. You think I'm a bully? So is he. But he's sly like a fox. He sweet-talks all his teachers. They'd do anything for him. He's just like the rest of those phony jocks he hangs out with. They're all alike. They play the same game, and I'm not talking about football. They get into college and get all the big-time lawyer, banker, stock market jobs. They're all phonies. But try to get in their way and they'll knock you over. Rambo's nothing but mush compared to

those guys. Talk about aggressive! But everyone loves them for it, because they're playing the success game."

(Secretly, you are jealous of your brother, because your Mom and Dad always seem to favor him. When you and Jason were younger, he used to beat you up a lot. He *really* hurt you. When you told Mom and Dad, Jason would lie and say that you started it. You always got the blame and Jason usually got off with a slight reprimand. "Boys will be boys," your father used to say, patting Jason on the back while giving you a disapproving look. The memory fuels your anger and you're boiling inside.)

"Change the channel before I give you one," you threaten your sister. She knows you mean business.

"I might as well. You probably can't understand this program anyhow. Your level of mentality is just above a cave man's. You can't even talk intelligently. No wonder you don't have any friends - only those jerks, Mac and Tom. You'll all land up in jail together someday."

Your sister gets up to leave. You notice how overweight she is. She never gets any exercise. She eats way too much junk food and reads trashy movie magazines. She looks at you with contempt. "All that those G.I. Joe characters do is grunt. No wonder you understand them," she says coldly as she turns her back on you to leave the room.

You make a rude face and turn your attention to the movie. Rambo has just been trapped in the jungle and is fighting his way past the enemy patrol. He is big and harsh looking, with his M-16 gun spraying bullets everywhere. With a defiant scream, he throws a grenade at the oncoming "gooks," blowing them up.

Suddenly he is jumped from behind by one of the patrol. You watch Rambo fight in hand-to-hand combat with this violent looking creature.

They roll down into the river, where they continue to punch, kick, and strike at each other. Rambo grabs the enemy by the throat and holds him underwater with a look of crazed intensity on his face. Finally Rambo pulls out his commando knife and plunges it beneath the surface into the gut of the quivering body. The river runs blood red as Rambo, unscathed, climbs ashore to meet his next "patriotic" and violent adventure.

There is a strange attraction to these films. You feel the excitement; you feel like Rambo. You experience his every emotion; your palms sweat and your fists go hard. You want to be like him. You have even thought of joining the Commando Forces after high school. You want to serve your country against the enemy.

When you were younger, you used to read war comics and play with war toys. G.I. Joe and other action figures were your favorites. You took a few lessons in Karate, but you didn't like the teacher or the class because they talked about feelings. The teacher wasn't a patriot or hero like Rambo, anxious to go to battle to defend our country's image. This Karate teacher was soft and gentle. He told you that Karate wasn't for promoting fighting, but rather for learning about how to defend yourself so you don't have to fight. He talked about being peaceful and caring, and you thought he was a wimp. You bought some Martial Arts weapons instead - nun-chucks and a butterfly knife - which you carried until they were taken away by Mr. Nathan one day at school.





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Suddenly your thoughts are interrupted by your father's voice coming from the front hall. "Hello, I'm home. Hey, anyone here? Come on, let's celebrate!" You can tell he's been drinking again. Your stomach suddenly becomes tight and starts to ache. Your palms sweat as you clench your fists.

"Hey buddy, what's the good word?" your father asks, entering the family room where you are watching TV.

"Nothing," you grunt, not taking your eyes off the TV. You can sense your father's anger and frustration behind you. Your father and you do not get along very well. Sometimes when he drinks, he tries to hit you. When you were little, he did; but now you are too quick. One night last year, on your thirteenth birthday, you and he finally went at it. He was drunk and heard that you had been caught stealing cigarettes from a local store.

"You bum!" he shouted then. "Why can't you be more like your brother Jason? He'd never do anything like that." He swung at you, but you ducked and let him have it. Jason, your mother, and sister had to break it up.

You remember that time now and you think angrily, "If he only knew who taught me how to steal, he'd die." Jason is the biggest thief. He takes his parents' money, liquor, and cigarettes right from under their noses, and they don't ever seem to notice.

You sink down in your chair as your father comes over to you. You are ready for whatever happens. You don't care any more. Sometimes he gets violent, sometimes he spoils you by giving you a bunch of money when he's drunk. You can never tell which way he will go. "Hey, buddy, watching old Rambo. Great, isn't he? Kills all those gooks. Blows them away. They deserve it." He looks at you. "How are you? Get into any



fights lately? Hope you stand up for yourself, if you're getting picked on. Here's a little something to get a treat with (as he stuffs a twenty dollar bill into your shirt pocket). Sorry I'm late again. Lots of work to do. This family is very expensive to support!"

You sink even lower in your chair, letting his words and his smelly breath go over your head. Rambo is moving across the jungle to the enemy airstrip. He is trying to get an Attack Hawk Helicopter. You've seen this scene before. He captures the helicopter and flies over the enemy compound shooting rockets into the enemy barracks, bodies flying in all directions, fire and smoke everywhere. You fix your eyes on that flickering screen, hands sweaty, fists clenched, waiting for the big kill.



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