

SUSPENSION LEARNING PACKET #1:

FIGHTING

WHAT TO DO

This is a Suspension Learning Packet. It consists of several pages of text and a Response sheet. Your assignment is to read the text and answer the questions on the Response sheet. The text includes three stories about students who broke a school rule. The Response sheet asks questions about what the people in the stories did that got them into trouble. Reading the text and answering the questions on the Response sheet will help you understand what you have done wrong and how to avoid doing it again. Read the text first and try to remember what you've read. Then read the Response Sheet and write answers to the questions.

WHAT YOU DID AND WHY IT WAS WRONG

You were suspended because you were fighting. What's wrong with fighting? In addition to the fact that you can hurt somebody--including yourself--fighting is a poor way to handle a problem you are having with another person. Even when you win a fight, your victory is hollow because you've made an enemy. Once you start solving your problems by fighting, it's hard to stop--and the number of enemies grows every day.

WHAT THE REAL FIGHTERS SAY ABOUT FIGHTING

Fighting seems to be the most natural thing in the world, right? When somebody makes you angry, hit him! If somebody insults you, beat him up! If somebody comes onto your turf, throw him out. If you're a girl and another girl does something you don't like, slap her face. When somebody threatens you, knock him down and he won't mess with you anymore. Be tough. Be mean. People will leave you alone. People will have respect for you if you show them you are ready to fight, right?

At least, that's what some people think. But what about people who really know about fighting? Let's cut through the kid stuff and talk about real fighters--not the playground bullies or people who hit each other on the shoulder in the bus--and not the people who've seen too many phony kung fu movies and don't understand that 99% of what they are seeing is special effects. Let's talk about someone who is recognized all over the world as one of the greatest martial arts experts of the 20th century.

One time several years ago, a man named Hedetaka Nishiyama was the head of the Japan Karate Association in America. This association is the foremost school of the Shotokan style of karate, which was developed in Japan. Mr. Nishiyama had a 7th degree black belt, and was acting as a judge at a karate tournament.

After the tournament, Mr. Nishiyama gave a party for the contestants. Somebody got a little rowdy, and started bragging about how tough he was. Mr. Nishiyama stayed quiet and just watched. The man tried to pick a fight with one of the guests who was a Judo instructor. He yelled, "Judo is nothing. Karate is the greatest way to fight!"

Mr. Nishiyama walked up to the man, put his left arm around his shoulder, clasped his right hand in a firm handshake, and smiled at him. Then, in a quiet voice he said, "You are mistaken, my friend. Karate is not fighting. Fighting is for animals. Karate is a way to stay out of fights. The greatest karateka is the one who never needs to fight."

What's the point of this story? Simple. People who go around bullying others, picking on persons who are smaller or weaker than they are, aren't doing anything brave. People who try to solve every problem with a fist are not warriors in any sense. They certainly aren't following a warrior's code of honor.

Instead, they dishonor themselves, and reduce themselves to the level of the animals who don't know any other way to survive except by fighting. If they really knew anything about fighting, they would know that no real warrior goes around looking for a fight.

You'll get the same story from champion boxers, war veterans, hand-to-hand combat specialists, professional anti-terrorists, bodyguards, policemen, FBI agents, and anybody else who has ever been in a real fight with a real opponent, using real weapons.

People who know what fighting is really about never go looking for fights. While there may be honor in beating a worthy opponent in a supervised match, there is no honor in fighting just to hurt someone or simply for the sake of fighting.

FOUR STORIES ABOUT FIGHTING

The following are four stories about fighting. Read them and think about the mistakes these students made.

KUNG FU KELLY

Kelly is a martial arts fan. He's seen all of the movies ever made by Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Michael Dudikoff and David Carradine. He subscribes to martial arts magazines, and spends all his time reading them instead of doing his homework.

Kelly has a collection of nunchaka sticks, ninja knives, and replicas of Samurai swords. He was once in a karate class, but didn't stick with it. He couldn't stand taking orders from the sensei. He also didn't like having to practice with persons who were better at karate than he was.

Kelly especially didn't like the part where you had to show respect for your opponents. He started Karate class in order to be able to beat anybody in the school. But he didn't want to put in the hours of practice necessary to perfect his technique. He just wanted to fight.

Before he quit the class, he learned just enough to be dangerous to others and to himself. He learned how to punch, strike, block and kick. But he didn't do them very well, because he never learned control. As a result, he was always hurting his feet or his hands.

Kelly's problem was that he learned only how to go through the motions. He didn't understand the way of looking at the world that lay behind those motions. He looked like a karateka, and he talked like a Karateka, but he wasn't a real karateka. Actually he was just a bully who wanted to learn how to beat people up.

Kelly never learned that the real purpose of karate is not to fight, but to defend yourself from persons who try to hurt you. If he ever got into a fight with a real karateka, Kelly wouldn't last ten seconds.

BIG BAD BUBBA, THE BULLY BOY

Everybody knows somebody like Big Bad Bubba. Bubba is bigger than the other boys at school. He's big for his age, and always has been. He's not particularly skilled in fighting, but gets by on size alone. When he wants something, he takes it. When he wants to get in line ahead of other persons, he pushes them out of the way. If somebody objects, Bubba challenges him to a fight. Sometimes, Bubba just hits people for no reason. He's one of the guys who hits you and says, "pass it on."

Bubba never went out for football or any of the other contact sports. He didn't enroll in karate or judo. He never developed any athletic skills. He just gets by on his size. Besides, Bubba doesn't do well as a team member. He doesn't know how to work with others. Bubba has made so many enemies, he no longer has any friends. Nobody wants him on their team.

Bubba is interested in military subjects. His older brother is a Sergeant in the Marine Corps, and Bubba has always wanted to be like him. He reads all the military magazines, and dreams of becoming a soldier of fortune. He wears "cammies" to school. He sometimes slips a combat knife into his boot. "Just in case..." he says.

Bubba doesn't study military history. He knows nothing of military strategy. He doesn't really know much about guns, either. He doesn't know a wadcutter from a semi-jacketed hollowpoint. But he talks and

thinks about military equipment all the time. People get tired of hearing about it. They think Bubba lives in a fantasy world, made up of all the war movies he's seen.

Underneath Bubba's bullying, you get the feeling that he's still a little boy, playing with toy pistols. Bubba thinks the world revolves around him. When he doesn't get what he wants, he gets angry. When he gets angry, he gets into fights. When he gets into fights, he gets suspended. Bubba becomes more separated from his classmates every day.

CATTY CATHY

Catty Cathy does what she wants to do. She never has anything good to say about anybody, and likes to be called "The Cat." Nobody talks to The Cat unless The Cat wants to talk. Nobody messes with The Cat without getting clawed.

Cathy can play kitten when she wants to, but most of the time Cathy plays a mean game. When another girl says something she doesn't like, out come the claws. She makes a negative ("catty") remark about the girl. Or she may hit her, or start a bad rumor about her, or pick a fight with her after school. One way or the other, The Cat tries to get even.

Sometimes, Cathy comes to school with bruises. Her father hits her to punish her. When classmates ask about them, she tells them to mind their own business. Sometimes, she seems very sad, and you want to help her. But if you try, she'll probably tell you to leave her alone or just get lost.

Other times, she seems to be happy, until somebody says something that Cathy takes the wrong way. Then another fight starts. You can never tell how Cathy will react. She usually has a chip on her shoulder.

Cathy carries a can of MACE in her bag. When away from the school, she also carries a knife. She likes to think of herself as self-sufficient, needing no friends at school. The Cat can take care of herself.

Cathy had a boyfriend for a while, but they broke up. She can't seem to get along with boys or girls. Fighting is not Cathy's only problem. She is often late to class, and sometimes skips school. She hangs around with older kids that she meets every day after school. Cathy is really not a part of the school scene at all.

Although she is no older than her classmates, Cathy lives in another world.

GARY AND THE GANG

Gary belongs to The Gang, which is a new street gang he and Bubba and Kelly started. He wears Gang colors, writes gang symbols in his notebook, has a beeper, and deals drugs when he is out on the streets. He's been involved in thefts, vandalism, and minor scuffles on the schoolyard.

Gary doesn't have much to do with his classmates. But he does like to brag to the few persons who hang around him. He gets into a lot of fights, because he knows the Gang will protect him if he gets in over his head.

Last week, Gary and a few of his friends made a shoplifting raid on a supermarket. They wore long coats and stole food and beer. The week before that, they stole a car and drove it around until it ran out of gas. Then they trashed it, just for fun.

Yesterday, Gary tried to steal money from Cathy. Cathy caught him trying to take her wallet from her purse during math class. When Cathy grabbed it back, Gary hit her.

Nobody can reach Gary. Nobody can talk to him. His counselors have tried, his friends have tried, his parents have tried. But Gary belongs to The Gang. And The Gang takes care of its own. Gary tells his parents and friends that he doesn't need them. All he needs is The Gang.

REASONS FOR FIGHTING

People fight for many reasons. Sometimes, you have to protect yourself from those who fight for the fun of it. But mostly, people fight because it is the only way (or the easiest way) to get what they want or to get out of the situation they are in at the moment.

Something common to all of us is the "fight or flight" reaction. When we are in danger, we either run or stand and fight. Often, although we would rather run, fighting seems unavoidable. There is always a risk involved in fighting. If you run and get away, you may be called a coward, but you won't get hurt.

If you stand and fight, you may or may not win. If you win, great. If you lose, too bad. Either way, you can get hurt. Isn't there a better way than this?

Many people fight over what they see as an issue of honor. Maybe they don't call it that, but that's what it is. Somebody insults you or your girlfriend or your brother or boyfriend. Are you going to stand there and let them get away with it? No. You're going to fight for your honor.

What this means is that you see yourself somehow made smaller or less important by what was said to you. The old saying about "sticks and stones may break my bones but names can never hurt me!" is just wrong. Bad names do hurt, as anybody knows who has ever been insulted or belittled. The question is, "Is fighting the best way to work your way out of the situation?"

For Kelly, with his limited understanding of the martial arts, fighting is a way to be important, to be mysterious, to look dangerous, to be above the crowd. Unfortunately, Kelly has never learned the other side of the martial arts: the self-discipline, the commitment to peacefulness, the desire not to fight. His mind works only in the "fighting mode." What does the future hold for Kelly?

Some people fight because they honestly don't know any other way to cope with life. Their ability to get along with others never developed. Big Bad Bubba is a good example. He has always gotten by on his size. He was big enough to get what he wanted, so he never developed what we call

"interpersonal skills." In plain words, he doesn't know how to get along with others.

Bubba has reached a point where he's not developing any further. At first he didn't learn how to get along with others because he didn't have to. Now he doesn't learn because nobody wants to have anything to do with him. Bubba's missed his chance. He may not get another. So it's off to the fantasy world of military magazines and Army surplus clothes, hidden weapons and make-believe terrorism.

Some people fight because it's what they've been taught to do. Some people are abused by their parents or their older brothers or sisters. If you had an older brother like Bubba, you might get into more fights. Fighting may be the way they learned to cope.

If you came from a household where everybody fights, you probably fought to survive. When you come to school, you shouldn't have to continue reacting this way. But if it's the way you survive at home, you'll probably try to survive the same way in other places, whether a threat is there or not.

Why do people join gangs? Probably for the same reasons that young people in early times joined hunting groups. Young men have always formed alliances with other young men. It's a practice as old as human communities. In all cultures, it serves an important function. But today's gangs help neither people nor communities. Instead, they have a negative effect.

While you are in your teens, you are still becoming who you will be as an adult. One of the most important things during this stage is learning to get along with others. This includes working with others toward common goals. This helps a person be more satisfied with his or her life.

In ancient times, in addition to hunting parties, there were also "clans," which were like clubs. Young people joined these clans because it was the way they made the change from childhood to adulthood. The clans taught you how to hunt, fight, survive, and all the other things adults have to know.

Thousands of years ago, when there were fewer things to learn, you were taught by your parents, relatives, and the clan to which you belonged. Now that things are more complicated and we no longer live in tribal communities, schools have taken over much of the teaching process. School spirit among students is a reflection of the old clan spirit of earlier times. Such spirit has a positive effect on people and communities.

The urge to belong to a close group of people who care about you is one of the strongest drives we have: the desire to belong, to be a part of something, to make a difference, to be recognized as having personal worth. This is true whether it is your family, a street gang, the choir at your church, or the weekend surfing group.

The problem comes with the values of the group. If they agree with the values of society as a whole, you benefit from membership. If they are not, you suffer the consequences. There is a great difference between a club that helps you learn how to build for your future and a gang that helps you destroy your future.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF FIGHTING

What happens when you fight? And more importantly, what happens when you believe that fighting solves problems? The answers to these questions can change your life.

Why do you get into fights? Are you like Kelly, all caught up in the fantasy world of martial arts movies? Are you like Bubba, pretending you are a soldier on a search-and-destroy mission?

Are you like Cathy, scratching out your territory and daring anybody to try to get close to you?

Are you like Gary, looking to a group for your very identify? Or are you just somebody who enjoys hurting others because it makes you feel important?

The worst thing about the characters in the four stories you've read is that none of them are connected to the real world. Kung Fu movies are just movies.

Nobody can take that many punches and kicks and survive. Those involved in real martial arts don't act like the people in the Kung Fu movies. They participate in sports competitions, under strict rules and regulations. They win and defend titles.

The last thing a real karateka would ever do is get himself or herself involved in a brawl. Remember, fighting is for animals, as Mr. Nishiyama said. If you always turn to fighting to solve your problems, you become less human and more like an animal.

Take another look at Big Bad Bubba. Do you know anybody like him? He also lives in a fantasy world. He thinks that the glory stories in the war movies and the military magazines are all true. He can't wait to have a chance to fight. Better that he should talk to a real veteran who has actually seen combat.

Several years ago, a group of grandsons got together to brag about their training in Airborne jump school. They talked for hours about pistols, rifles, Claymore antipersonnel mines, making night jumps, and going through Ranger school. They had a "fire in the blood," and were actually looking forward to combat.

Through all of it, their grandfather kept silent. He was the only one in the room who had ever actually been in combat. He had spent World War II on a troop ship, and had been in every major sea battle in the South Pacific, from the battle of Midway to the Leyte Gulf. At the end of the war, his ship sailed into Tokyo bay.

Afterwards, the grandfather said, "I hope they never have to go to war. There's nothing glamorous or inspiring about combat. It's all just noise and confusion and blood and death. The world that these kids believe in doesn't exist. I hope they never have to go." When he left, the boys were still sitting in the living room, talking enthusiastically about what they would do when they made it to the front lines.

How long would Bubba last in a real fire fight? What would happen to Kelly if he ever came up against a real martial arts expert? Where will Gary's gang be when he is serving seven to ten for armed robbery? Where will Cathy wind up, having turned everyone away who would have been her friend? These

characters will have to work hard to break the destructive patterns of their lives and go on to do something positive with themselves. But just remember, changes can be made!

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO IN THE FUTURE

The world around us is a complicated place. We have learned a lot, but we still have more to learn. But there is one thing that we do know, and have known ever since we became more or less civilized: we are social beings. We live in close contact with other people.

Once, societies were relatively small and simple. Now they are vast and complicated. But whether we live in a tribe in a New Guinea jungle or in a condo in downtown Chicago, we really succeed in the world only if we can get along with other people and work with them in achieving the goals we share. The people who make a difference in the world are the ones who work together, not the ones who fight each other.

So if you are in a habit of getting into fights, you need to take a deep breath, sit back, and ask yourself these questions: "Why? Why do I get into fights? Why me when other people don't get into fights? What is it about me that gets me into fights while my classmates get along with each other and help each other and work together?"

Everyone has a right to defend himself or herself when attacked. But if you really know the martial arts, there will be no fight, since you have the ability to prevent a fight from happening.

If you are really a good soldier, you will try to stop the fight from developing because your combat experience has taught you that there are no easy victories. Like the grandfather, you will know that combat is not glorious. And if you really understand your own motives and the those of the persons you are fighting, you will want to help them as well as yourself to work together, and leave the fighting to the animals.

Personal fulfillment isn't built on fighting. It's built on working together. Civilization is not built on war, it's built on peace. It's a hard lesson to learn. It

goes against our most basic tendencies. But fighting is something that should be avoided, not sought. Your life should be one of helping, not hurting; of peace, not war. If you have to model yourself after fictional characters, you'd be a lot better off with the crew of the Starship Enterprise than with Kung Fu Kelly and Big Bad Bubba.

You figure it out.

STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 1.1

FIGHTING

NAME _____

DATE _____

GRADE __ HOMEROOM _____

WHAT TO DO

Below are some questions about what you just read. These questions will help you learn why what you did was wrong and how you can avoid such problems in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

For most of the questions, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The answers depend on you. Be honest with yourself as you write the answers. Take time to think before you write. The work you do on these Response Packets reflects your willingness to improve your behavior and attitude.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences.

1. What happened before the fight you were in got started? Why did the fight start?
2. Describe the fight. What did you do? What did the other person do? How did it end. Were other persons involved in the fight, or was it just you and one other person?

8. What would it be like at school if there were no rule against fighting?

9. Mr. Nishiyama said, "Karate is not fighting. Fighting is for animals. Karate is a way to avoid fighting." What do you think he meant by that statement?

10. Kung Fu Kelly believes everything he sees in the martial arts movies. From what you read, what do you think Kelly will do after he finishes high school?

11. From what you read, describe what Big Bad Bubba's problem is.

12. Big Bad Bubba doesn't know how to get along with others. What do you think Bubba will do after he finishes high school.

13. Catty Cathy's automatic reaction to any problem is to fight. Why do you think she acts this way?

14. What do you think Cathy will do after she finishes high school?

15. What do street gangs offer their members? What price do you have to pay for what they offer?

16. Why did Gary join a gang? From what you read, do you think Gary will make much of himself?

17. List four things you've learned about fighting from reading this packet.

18. Write 3 goals for yourself that will help you stop fighting.

STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 1.2

FIGHTING

NAME _____

DATE _____

GRADE __ HOMEROOM _____

WHAT TO DO

Below are some questions about what you just read. These questions will help you learn why what you did was wrong and how you can avoid such problems in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

For most of the questions, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The answers depend on you. Be honest with yourself as you write the answers. Take time to think before you write. The work you do on these Response Packets reflects your willingness to improve your behavior and attitude.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences.

1. You were suspended because you were fighting. What were you fighting about?

2. What type of fight was this? Did you push each other, punch or kick each other, or did you wrestle? Describe the fight the best you can.

3. How many people were involved in the fight? Was it a personal fight, or were other students involved?

4. How the fight end?

5. What happened after the fight was over? Were you or was anybody else hurt?

6. You've been in more than one fight this year. What would be bad about having a reputation as a fighter?

7. Many fights start over name-calling or rumors. Why is this? Is this how the last fight you were in got started?

8. Why do you fight to solve problems? Why don't you just walk away from fights?

9. The greatest martial arts men in the world say that the real purpose of karate is to avoid fighting. What do they mean by this statement?

10. Martial arts movies show long fights, where many people are punched, stuck, and kicked over and over. Yet they get up and come right back. Does this seem real to you? Have you ever been hit--really hit? Were you able to come right back? What does this tell you about martial arts movies? Why do people make martial arts movies?

11. Why do you think Bubba reads all the military magazines? Why do people publish military magazines?

12. Does Bubba sound like a real soldier? Why don't real soldiers think that combat is fun?

13. What do street gangs do for people who belong to them? What's wrong with being a member of a gang?

