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Battling the Bully – Standing Up For Yourself With Confidence

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When I was young, there was a girl who was a year younger and a foot taller than me. She bullied me for approximately two years. One day something inside of me snapped; I decided I wasn't going to take her abuse any longer and stood up to her. Unfortunately, our confrontation ended in a fight, which I won. She never picked on me again. I learned at an early age that if you allow people to bully, harass, or cut you down, then they will do so. If, on the other hand, you make a decision to stand up for yourself and not allow the bully to take control, then s/he will move on to someone or something else.

Avoiding defending yourself and confronting others in difficult situations can have many origins. Your parents may have told you not to fight with other kids, you may not have had the self-confidence to confront someone's bullying tactics, or you may have felt that you would lose in any kind of physical battle. If you never developed the self-esteem and self-confidence to defend yourself, you still may be allowing others to take advantage of or bully you.

If you are ready to battle and defeat the bullies in your life, there are four steps you can take to develop your self-esteem, ensuring that you meet all future battles with self-confidence and success.

1. Loving yourself. The first step is to learn how to love and appreciate yourself by itemizing and reminding yourself of your unique gifts, talents, attributes, and skills. Everyone has something to offer the world; you are no different. Also, understand that no one deserves to be abused, in any manner. We all deserve happiness and love, and a life free of abuse. Do things that make you feel good, and be around people who love you unconditionally.

2. Taking responsibility. The second step is to understand that you are responsible for what happens in your life. You can either allow others to take advantage of you and use you as a doormat or you can put a stop to this. Only you can dictate who takes advantage of you and who doesn't. Once you accept responsibility for how you allow others to treat you, and stop blaming them, you will feel empowered and your life will dramatically change for the better.

3. Developing a solid plan of action. Once you accept responsibility for how others treat you, your next step is to explore and develop solutions and strategies for saying no, not allowing others to treat you in a negative manner, and how to assert yourself so that others can't take advantage of you. For example, if someone asks you to do something that you don't want to do, a solution might be to say no, in a neutral manner, and explain the reason for your decision. Once people understand why you're saying no, they may be more willing to let go of their request, especially if you don't waver in your firmness. If people want to treat you poorly, tell them that you are more than willing to discuss what might be bothering them, but that you will not entertain insults or any type of disrespect. If you stand your ground without raising your voice, this can help to defuse the situation. By avoiding anger, and pointing

out in an assertive manner what you want, what you expect, and what you won't allow, you will learn how to keep your bullies at bay. To develop self-esteem and confidence, don't rule out taking an empowerment or self-defense class. Although a self-defense class teaches you how to physically defend yourself, it can also help to build your self-confidence.

4. Practicing your plan of action. The fourth step is using every available opportunity to implement your plan of action. In other words, practice saying no, and assertively stating what you need and how you want to be treated. Start with small issues/problems and people who are less intimidating. Practice on your friends and family members. Remember the old adage "Practice makes perfect." The more you practice and experience success, however small, the more confident you will become, which will help you to tackle the most troublesome issues and the largest bullies.

If you are tired of being pushed around and taken advantage of, know that you are responsible for how others treat you; that you can develop a plan of action with strategies for saying no, being assertive, and taking control; and that by practicing the implementation of your strategies, you can defend yourself in any situation with confidence and assertiveness. Remember to start with minor issues and problems, and with individuals who are not as much of a threat. Monitor which approaches work and which ones don't. Celebrate your successes, continue to use those methods that work best for you, and watch your life change for the better. After all, no one deserves to be bullied. So, begin to take control today and tame the bullies in your life!