

INSPIRATION
OVATION

BY KAREN EDEN

"HOW YOU LEARN TO DEAL WITH YOURSELF WHEN OTHERS DON'T ACCEPT YOU WILL BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING A SUCCESSFUL PERSON IN LIFE OR SOMEONE WHO SINKS WHEN HE OR SHE HAS TO STAND ALONE."

How Prolific Inventor Thomas Edison Dealt with Bullying

Bullying is a big issue today. Like most karate instructors, I especially hate the thought of kids being rejected, ridiculed and roughed up by their peers because of things they have no control over. I, too, was one of those kids.

But bullying is by no means a new phenomenon. Who hasn't had to endure someone nasty somewhere along the line? The bottom line is, the more inclined someone is to being separate from the mainstream in philosophy, action or image, the more bullying he or she will have to endure.

Thomas Edison, the brilliant inventor of the light bulb, the phonograph and the motion-picture camera, also had this problem, particularly with schoolteachers and workplace bosses. And this was in the mid-19th century, more than 150 years ago!

As a child, it was his own teacher who told Edison he was too stupid to learn anything. The truth is, he was a genius in the making who learned from hands-on activities, not from someone teaching out of a book.

It seems that time and time again, there was always someone telling Mr. Edison that he was an idiot, and that he didn't measure up. He was also fired from his first two jobs, being labeled "non-productive" because of his unconventional approach to solving problems while on the clock.

What especially grabs my attention is how someone who was constantly being put down still had the courage to pick himself up and keep going. And whatever you call that trait, how can we take it and instill it in our children who are being bullied today?

Obviously, bullying isn't going to go away. But is it possible to be so secure in one's self that even words don't hurt? My 13-year-old son says it's nearly impossible. Everybody wants to be accepted because acceptance is a direct link to our sense of self-worth.

I keep pointing out to him and to other kids that I speak to one of life's truths: How you learn to deal with yourself when others don't accept you will be the difference between being a successful person in life or someone who sinks when he or she has to stand alone.

As an inventor, it is said that Edison made nearly 10,000 *unsuccessful attempts* at inventing the light bulb. When a reporter asked, "How does it feel to have failed thousands of times?" Edison replied, "I have not failed. I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Like most karate instructors, I get my share of students who want to take karate lessons because they are being bullied.

"I'm not convinced that this is the right solution," one mother told me.

"It is," I replied.

Yes, these students will learn how to kick and punch, and hopefully they will never have to use the physical techniques they learn. But the reason karate is the "anti-bullying" solution is not because of the self-defense aspect. It's because my goal, as his or her instructor, is to empower this student to the point that *nothing* anybody says will ever take away this student's sense of self-worth.

Show me a young person who is different and doesn't care that they're different, and I'll show you a young person who will never get knocked down in life. That's how Thomas Edison dealt with bullying.

In closing, I'll leave you with some of Edison's other more notable quotes:

"Negative results are just what I want. They're just as valuable to me as positive results. I can never find the thing that does the job best until I find the ones that don't."

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

"If we all did the things we are really capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves." —