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Damon Leiss  
*Emporia State University*

Paul Luebbers  
*Emporia State University*

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## Fun-Defense: Games that Teach Fundamental Martial-Arts and Build Self-Esteem.

### Abstract

Associations have been made among having a low self-esteem and both being a bully and being bullied. With bullying and its victimization being a common problem in today's schools, increasing students' self-esteem could benefit schools with this dilemma. Learning martial arts has been shown to increase students' self-esteem. However, training in martial arts can take considerable time, usually more time than can be allotted in a typical middle school physical education unit. This paper provides teachers a way to increase students' self-esteem and confidence by quickly teaching and reinforcing fundamental martial arts skills through a game series known as "Fun-Defense."

## **Fun-Defense: Games that Teach Fundamental Martial-Arts and Build Self-Esteem**

**Dr. Damon Leiss**  
**Emporia State University**  
**Dr. Paul Luebbers**  
**Emporia State University**

### *Abstract*

Associations have been made among having a low self-esteem and both being a bully and being bullied. With bullying and its victimization being a common problem in today's schools, increasing students' self-esteem could benefit schools with this dilemma. Learning martial arts has been shown to increase students' self-esteem. However, training in martial arts can take considerable time, usually more time than can be allotted in a typical middle school physical education unit. This paper provides teachers a way to increase students' self-esteem and confidence by quickly teaching and reinforcing fundamental martial arts skills through a game series known as "Fun-Defense."

### *Introduction*

Martial arts have long been a popular recreational activity in our society, among both adults and children (Terry, 2006). While originally developed for combat, martial arts have evolved into activities that today, are means for learning self-defense and enhancing self-development (Lantz, 2002). For physical education students, the physical challenges and the mental stimulation provided by the martial arts aid in self-development by teaching students personal and social responsibilities (Hellison, 2011). Lance (2002) reported that martial arts practice enhances children's self-respect and self-confidence, while teaching life lessons that aid in developing a better understanding of appropriate behavior.

Victimization is acknowledged as a common problem in our schools (Smith, Twemlow, & Hoover, 1999), one that threatens students' psychosocial development (Karna, Voeten, Little, Poskiparta, Alanen, & Salmivalli, 2011). According to Nakamoto and Schwartz (2010), psychosocial development, which is the development of personality and social skills, is impaired when students are victimized by violence. Bullying, one of the most prevalent types of violence occurring in schools today, can lead to increases in depression and/or anxiety in the victim, cause his/her academic progress to suffer, or to lead to him/her avoiding school altogether. In addition, children who are victimized tend to have low self-esteem and poor social skill development (Card & Hodges, 2008).

However, research indicates that some victimizers (often referred to as bullies) not only have a belief that being a victimizer is a normal behavior – which endorses the aggressive conduct – but also a low self-esteem, which could be a potential cause of their deviant behavior (O'Moore, 2000; Guerra, Williams, and Sadek, 2011). This association between low self-esteem and being bullied and/or being a bully is one that should be acknowledged and addressed. Increasing students' self-esteem could be a way of

attenuating the types of behaviors that lead to bullying activity. Incorporating martial arts/self-defense into a physical education class or lesson is one method of increasing all students' confidence and self-esteem.

Zivin et al. (2001) conducted a study in which 60 middle school-aged boys took part in a martial arts class. They found a significant decrease in violent behaviors, an improvement in school work and an increase in happiness as reported by the students. A four-month follow up showed these behavioral improvements were maintained. However, martial arts are not easily learned in a short amount of time and the mastery of skills requires considerable commitment, often with lengthy practices (Lantz, 2002). Being able to derive the benefits of increased self-confidence and self-esteem of martial arts training in a shorter amount of time was the motivation behind developing the *Fun-Defense* game series.

### ***Fun-Defense***

*Fun-Defense* is a series of games developed for physical educators to use in conjunction with teaching some basic martial arts actions and moves. Traditionally, teaching students martial arts skills takes a substantial amount of time (Lantz, 2002), often more time than afforded during a regular physical education course. However, *Fun-Defense* incorporates instruction of basic martial arts skills into short games, allowing an educator to teach essential fundamentals in a reasonable amount of time. In addition to teaching skills, the non-threatening scenarios that are utilized in the games allow the students to apply the learned skills in a way that promotes a deeper understanding of the situation (Griffin & Butler, 2005).

### ***The Fun-Defense Games***

The series follows a modified martial arts/self-defense format, which would generally consist of a warm-up, a skills session, competitions and a cool-down. As with most martial arts curriculum, the defensive stance is the first fundamental skill taught, and as the unit progresses, blocking, punching, kicking and finally, releases from holds are taught.

Immediately after a skill is taught and practiced, the teacher introduces the associated *Fun-Defense* game, which takes the place of the traditional "competition" portion of a self-defense class. These games allow students to use the newly acquired skills in a more stimulating, but non-competitive way, which not only reinforces the skill, but builds self-esteem as they overcome the challenges presented by the games.

In Table 1 are some basic fundamental martial arts skills that can be taught easily, along with an associated *Fun-Defense* game that allows for practice in a non-threatening manner. Table 2 explains two *Fun-Defense* games that can be used to teach students how to handle some stressful situations that they or their classmates may encounter.

**Table 1**

<b><u>Fundamental Skill*</u></b>	<b><u>Associated “Fun-Defense” Game</u></b>
<p><b><u>Defensive Stance</u></b>            Legs are shoulder width apart and set 45% apart with legs slightly bent to lower hips.</p> <p>A lower center of gravity gives a person better balance and more power.</p>	<p><b><u>Point to the Thigh</u></b>            Partners face each other in a defensive stance. Partners reach and hold hand like they are greeting. Each points their index finger and on a signal try to touch their partners thigh while hold their partners hand.</p> <p>This game allows students to experience a lower center of gravity because they are pushing to try to touch the other’s thigh.</p>
<p><b><u>Blocks</u></b>            While in a defensive stance students place hand somewhere between belly button and chin while making a fist. To block sweep forearm leading with pinky of fist across body or sweep upward if blow comes from above</p> <p>By using the pinky as the lead, the arm rotates easier.</p>	<p><b><u>Knee Touch</u></b>            Partners face each other in defensives stance. On command each partner is going to try to touch his partner’s knee.</p> <p>This game allows each partner to concentrate on blocking and countering while keeping their center of gravity down low.</p>
<p><b><u>Punches</u></b>            From a defensive stance, students reach out with none dominate hand while their dominate hand is at their hip with palm up, in a fist. To throw the punch, student rotates trunk and while keeping the elbows in and as arm straightens the palm rotates from palm-up to palm down. This while the other arm moves back into the exact place on the opposite side of the body with palm up.</p> <p>Rotating the hand creates more power in the punch.</p>	<p><b><u>Patty Cake</u></b>            Facing their partner, students get in a defensive stance. Partners reach out with their mirror hand and touch. On command while in their stance student rotate hands matching each other and basically play patty cake. Ideal for those programs who do not have pads to hit and allows students to watch and analyze other student.</p> <p>This game allows student to both practice the rotation of the punch but to visualize it by watching their partner.</p>

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**Kicks**

From a defensive stance student brings their lead foot up to where their thigh is parallel to the ground. Foot is flexed back and toes are bent back. On command student rapidly extends their leg from the knee. Impact area of the foot is the ball of the foot. Students should visualize kicking through an object.

Make sure student has toes curled up or back—NOT DOWN!

**Kick Steps**

Have students form a line or rows of lines. Front row begins in a defensive stance, on command student raise their thigh parallel to the ground and execute the kick. The exception is that student's steps into the kick creating a line that walks together across the designated area.

This game allows students to practice the appropriate skill of kicking by having student follow through with the step.

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**Holds---Wrist releases**

Students are partnered; a designated partner grabs the wrist of their partner. The person who is grabbed clasps their own hand with their free hand, yells "NO" and drops their body weight, much like a fast squat and hanks their arm down to free the hand.

**Partner Pull**

Have partners face each other. Place a bowling pin, tennis ball can, plastic milk container (something that can be knocked over). Have the partners grab their partners opposite hand forming an "X" over the movable object. On command they both pull, trying to get their partner to knock over the container.

This game allows students to not only feel what it is like to be pulled but to think while it is happening.

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\*for more detailed information, the authors suggest reading "Self-Defense: Steps to Survival" (Mattingly, 2007)

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**Table 2**

<b><u>Situational Awareness</u></b>	<b><u>Associated “Fun-Defense” Game</u></b>
<p data-bbox="284 388 500 420"><b><u>Calling for help</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="284 422 846 562">It is important to create attention to yourself when you’re being attacked. However, many people don’t like to make a scene.</p>	<p data-bbox="873 388 1052 420"><b><u>Help Me Tag</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="873 422 1404 930">Select one student to be “it” and have them wear a penny to signify that they are ‘it.’ Out of the remainder of the class, give one to three students an “item” that can be passed or thrown fairly easily (e.g., a rubber chicken, a foam ball, etc.). The student who is “it” will try to tag the other students. However, while a student has the “passable item” in possession the student is immune from being tagged. The students who have the passible item are encouraged to pass/throw the item to someone who is in danger of being tagged, to give them immunity.</p> <p data-bbox="873 972 1404 1260">The purpose is get kids to ask for help and to give help. Because if someone is about to be tagged and yells “help me” and receives the “item” from another student they become immune from being tagged. The game teaches students to help others and to ask for help from others.</p>
<p data-bbox="284 1413 565 1444"><b><u>Getting into a group</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="284 1446 800 1518">When someone feels threatened the first thing is to look for a group to join.</p>	<p data-bbox="873 1413 1052 1444"><b><u>Triangle Tag</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="873 1446 1404 1879">Four students are needed. Three students join hands and form a triangle, with one of the three being designated as a “victim,” the other two are assigned as “protectors.” The forth student is designated as “it.” The object is for the “it” student to tag the “victim.” On a command from the teacher, “it” tries to tag the “victim” by going around the two “protectors,” which means movement and spinning. After 3-5 minutes if the victim is not tagged play is stopped and</p>

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new roles are assigned and play begins again. .

The purpose is to teach safety in numbers.

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### *Summary*

Low self-esteem has been associated with both being bullied and being a bully in the middle school setting. Martial arts have been shown to increase the self-esteem of children who participate in the activity. Incorporating the *Fun-Defense* game series into a physical education curriculum is a quick and simple way to teach basic fundamental martial arts skills. The resultant increase in the self-esteem of the students can help create a school atmosphere that is less conducive to some of the behaviors typically associated with bullying and more supportive of a positive social environment.

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