

# ATA World

CREATING TOMORROW'S LEADERS...ONE BLACK BELT AT A TIME

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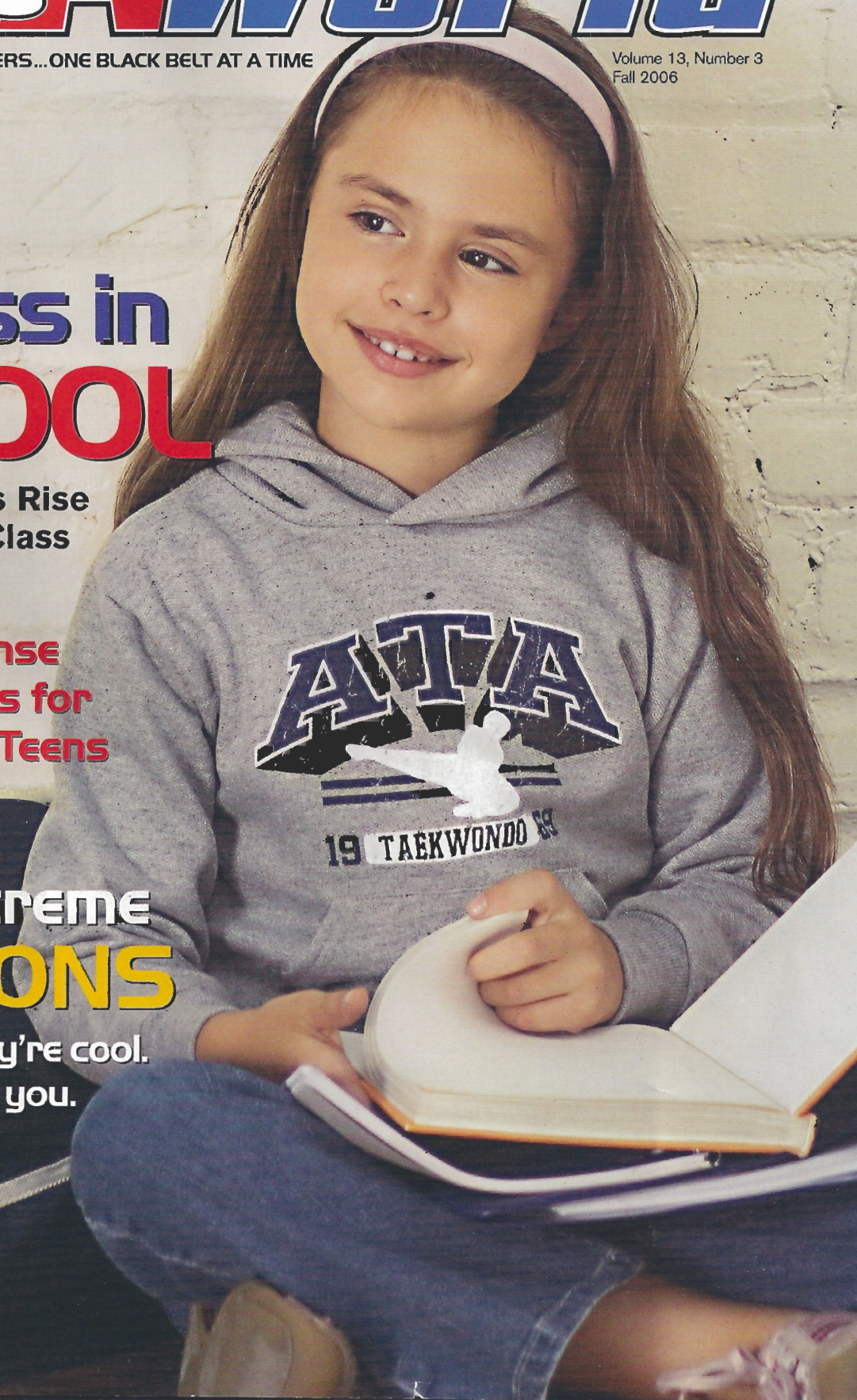
## Success in SCHOOL

Why ATA Students Rise  
to the Top of the Class

**8** Self-Defense  
Strategies for  
Kids and Teens

**+** ATA-Xtreme  
WEAPONS

They're here. They're cool.  
They're made for you.





## Bouncing Back

ATA World Champion Sally Burke used Taekwondo to conquer abuse, gain confidence and live happy. You can do it, too. By Susan T. Lennon

It's hard to believe that spirited, steadfast Sally Burke once considered herself 'mousy.' Watching this 3rd Degree Black Belt, certified instructor and four-time World Champion in forms compete, you'd never suspect she was once abused and suffers from several serious medical conditions. And even though she doesn't think she's special, Burke has taken Taekwondo to heart in ways that can instruct and inspire us all.

### Starting Over

Burke, 64, started martial arts training after separating from her physically and emotionally abusive, alcoholic husband in 1980. "I was terrified of him," she explains, "and I believed the negative things he told me—that I was useless and would never be able to support myself or take care of my kids." But Burke refused to remain a "beaten-down person," and chose not just to survive, but also to thrive.

She found strength initially by watching other students in the do-jahng and learning to defend herself. Then, gradually, participating in martial arts built up her self-esteem and confidence, and taught her that she could do "way more" than she'd ever dreamed possible.

In her younger years, “way more” included working two jobs, supporting her daughter and two sons—one of whom became a quadriplegic at age 15—and earning advanced belts in Aikido, Judo and Taekwondo.

These days, “way more” means training and teaching in Cape Canaveral and Merritt Island, Fla., six days a week despite asthma, degenerative “bone-on-bone” arthritis in her knees and an excruciating back problem called spinal stenosis.

And Burke still has no intention of giving up. “My goal is mastership, and I tease my instructor about pushing me across the floor in a wheelchair if I ever make it.”

### Growing Stronger

Persevering in Taekwondo can be difficult without any obstacles. Burke has overcome many—and continues to do so on a daily basis. So what’s her secret?

According to Tina Tessina, Ph.D., psychotherapist and author of *It Ends with You: Grow Up and Out of Dysfunction* (2003), learning from adversity makes our experiences less painful, and in learning, we also feel less helpless. “You know the saying, ‘What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger?’” Tessina says. “This is how it makes you stronger: You gain wisdom, emotional strength and the ability to make better decisions, because you’re thinking rather than reacting.”

Martial arts are especially effective for women who’ve experienced domestic violence. “You need to blow off steam, and when you get rid of your frustration and anger, you feel stronger and safer,” Tessina explains. “You’ve gotten on top of the experience instead of it being on top of you.”

When you’re in a difficult situation, the thought of starting over can be daunting, but it might not be as scary as remaining stuck. “Often there is a trigger event that propels us to change,” Tessina says. For Burke, the lightning bolt struck the day her teenage son raised a hand to her in anger. “I decided that I would learn to

defend myself so no one would ever dominate me again. Ever,” she says.

The event brought Burke to another conclusion, as well: She didn’t want her son to turn out like his father or treat

says. Emotionally, imagining yourself warding off an attacker reminds you that you’re strong. And physically, visualization can help you heal. “The nerve endings in your muscles fire as if you’re actually

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his future wife as she’d been treated for more than 19 years. Sometimes when people can’t fight for themselves, Tessina says, you have to fight for them.

### Working Through It

Proficiency in Taekwondo helps Burke feel strong and confident. It also helps her overcome physical pain. “My doctor is surprised I can do as much as I can,” she says, “but it’s because of all the stretching, exercise and staying active that I get with Taekwondo.”

When she is in pain, Burke imagines herself going through her forms or practicing various self-defense techniques. She says it keeps her focused on something other than what hurts.

Visualization and imagery are powerful tools for pain reduction, relaxation and mastery, Tessina says. “When you do imagery, you take yourself out of the present and put yourself into another time and place. Your brain doesn’t register the pain.”

The techniques also calm the pain cycle: Pain makes you tense, and the more tense you are, the more you hurt; the more you hurt, the more the tension builds. “[Visualization and imagery] relax you and lessen the physical hurt,” Tessina

performing the activity,” Tessina explains. “It’s a subtle form of exercise that reduces pain and stiffness.”

If you’re discouraged by a demanding life circumstance, an abusive relationship or health problems, take heart. “Often we don’t do something because we don’t know what to do,” Tessina says. But Burke has a suggestion: “If I can do it, you can do it. Just do it to the best of your ability because Taekwondo is for everybody.” **ATA**

*Susan T. Lennon, a 2nd Degree Black Belt, writes about health-related topics for various national publications.*

## Ask for HELP

According to recent reports, more than three women are murdered every day by their husbands or boyfriends in America, and about one in four are abused by a partner during their lives. If you need help, call the National Domestic Violence Hot Line at **1-800-799-SAFE**.