

Bullies and the Good Guys

For a child starting school, being with other children can be challenging. Most of the time playing with others and doing things together can be real fun. However, there are other times when being around others can be a real problem. Children often find themselves having to deal with bullies, situations of unfairness, unfriendliness, as well as insecurities about themselves, among others.

These troubles are very worrisome for children, as well as for their parents and teachers. Adults have to try to figure out how to help children get along but are not always able to find easy answers.

Dr. Robert Bohlken, in his book *Listening to the Mukies and Their Character Building Adventures* helps children deal with bullies and more through his direct one-on-one approach. Most children will talk about their problems and what worries them if they can use an intermediary. The middle guys in this book are the Mukies, who are gregarious, optimistic and understanding creatures. They demonstrate the value of character building and active listening to others. By reading these stories aloud one-on-one, the reader and listener can talk through and help solve the Mukies' problems and perhaps even their own.

After reading each story children will learn how character building skills such as cooperation, understanding, and respect will go a long way toward peaceful co-existence. The questions listed throughout each chapter help parents or teachers reach out to children to help them sort through decisions and how to resolve problems. As a result, children will get a head start on developing critical thinking and decision-making skills.

While reading the stories, children will learn from the following messages portrayed in the stories:

- Treating the root of a problem and instead of the symptoms.
- Valuing people over material things.
- Never giving up on being friendly to others.
- Taking a “disadvantage” and turning into an advantage.
- Accepting responsibility for doing something wrong.
- Not letting negativity take over one’s life.
- Not judging others by their appearance.
- Resolving conflicts in a peaceful manner.

After each chapter, there are questions for parents or teachers to ask children and to help apply the story to the children’s lives. This can give them different insights into how to handle problems and interact with their peers.

Giving children tools to help them solve their problems, or at least understand why some occur, gives them a distinct advantage. They become more self-confident and more able to work through their difficulties. These character building skills will make them better prepared for the outside world.

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