

Bullying-How Did It Become Such An Issue?

By Melissa M. Williams

While talking to hundreds of students about *Iggy the Iguana* every week, I pose a few questions regarding making friends and being a friend to others. "Putting yourself in someone else's shoes," is a repeated theme within the *Iggy the Iguana* Chapter Book Series. Iggy, the main character, demonstrates this concept multiple times after he is befriended at a new school, and he himself uses his empathetic awareness by befriending the school bully in 4th grade.

One thing I ask elementary students during my presentations is the question, "Have you ever been the new kid at school or have you ever put yourself in the 'new kid's' shoes?" Being nervous and scared is a normal condition that everyone feels at some point in their life, so the mature thing to do is help others who are experiencing something that you have already been through. The younger students will admit that they have helped the "new kid" out by showing them the cafeteria or playing with them at recess, but I have witnessed the older the children get, the less likely they are to help out a newcomer.

A lack of empathy and putting ourselves in others shoes is a direct correlation to school bullying. Bullying in this day and age has taken on so many different forms from outward meanness, to under cover picking, to rumors being spread, and now the BIG one is bullying through text messages and online.

In an article by Kelly Roberson titled, *Bullying 2.0*, she gives you examples of cyber bullying and advice on how to address it with your children on the website, www.cyberbullying.org. This issue is only becoming a bigger problem and directly affecting our children's self-esteem. There should be a zero tolerance in the school system for bullying. Children need good role models to learn from and go to for advice in matters as serious as bullying, because the end results in some cases are heartbreaking. Please leave your comments on the topic of school bullying. We would love to hear your stories and advice on this extremely important issue.

INSERTS FROM IGGY THE IGUANA AND SUMMER LEAGUE:

Chapter 14: Iggy the Iguana

"Don't look so worried, Iggy. I think you're misunderstanding me. I shouldn't say anything, but I know why Buddy the Bullfrog is so angry and mean."

"You do?"

"Yeah, I think he is really lonely. You see, his parents got a divorce, but neither wanted to take care of him, so Principal Horn adopted him.

"Wow! I had no idea!"

"No one does. I think he is embarrassed, and if he is anything like his grandpa, you know he's got a lot of pride. I don't really know why he told me, but I am happy to listen if he needs me to."

Iggy put all of his jealous feelings aside and tried to put himself in Bud's shoes.

"Maybe we could give him another chance," Iggy suggested.

“Well, I do know that he was looking forward to your birthday, even though he never admitted it. He thinks you’re pretty cool.”

When Iggy and Liz walked back to the group gathered around all the gifts, he noticed Buddy the Bullfrog standing alone. Iggy knew what he had to do. As he walked over to Bud, a new sense of confidence came over the once bashful lizard.

“Bud, I’m glad you got to come to my party. We should try to hang out more.”

“We should?” Bud’s words came from a place of shock.

“Yeah. Believe me, I know how it feels to move to a new school.”

As Bud stood looking down at his feet, Iggy realized that he had said enough, and he would have to give Bud time.

Chapter 3: Summer League

“We should have invited Liz,” Snap suggested as he threw the baseball into Bud’s mitt.

“Yeah, we should have.” Bud looked over at Iggy.

“What? I didn’t mean to leave her out,” Iggy said.

“Hey, remember when I used to pick on the two of you in Mrs. Buff’s class?” Bud laughed.

“Ha, yeah. You were mean.” Kit Kat jumped into the conversation. “Why did you do that?”

“I guess I learned it from my dad,” the frog shrugged.

“Your dad taught you to be a bully?” Iggy asked.

“No. He just used to pick on my mom and me all the time.”

Iggy stood there and thought for a moment. It made perfect sense. Iggy learned everything he knew from his dad. It was obvious that Principal Horn was going to be a better role model for his friend.