

Discovering the Real Me

Student Textbook 5
Family and Friends

For children 10 to 11 years of age

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Chapter 1

I Am Valuable

Even though I stand taller than all of the girls and boys in my class and some call me “lanky” or think that I must play basketball because I am so tall, I still love me. Even though I am skinny and not a straight A student, and I don’t wear fancy name brand clothes, I still love me. Even though I may not bring “special” lunches to school with syrupy, sweet contents because my parents care about my health, and other students say I eat rabbit food, I still love me. I think I’m worth a lot.



My name is Kenyatta Tucker, and I am a “Trini,” which means I am from Trinidad and Tobago. I am a fifth grade student, and I absolutely love science. My best friend’s name is Jeffrey Redman, and he is in my class, which is taught by the best teacher in the whole world, Mrs. Miller. Mrs. Miller teaches us that no matter how you look or dress, you should always love yourself. She teaches us that it is what is on the inside of you, not the outside of you, that counts.

I wish I could tell that to Kayla and Jessica, who are the school bullies and talk about everyone. They make students feel like running and hiding when they see them walking down the hallways. But not me. I have self-confidence, and I can handle whatever they want to dish out.

“Look at Kenyatta over there, looking like she plays basketball for the NBA,” said Kayla.

Jeffrey said, “Just ignore them. They just hate it that they can’t get to you, Kenyatta.”

I responded, “Yeah, they don’t bother me.” I continued, “I just look at them and laugh to myself because they obviously don’t like themselves, which is why they are always picking on other people.” I also said, “They must need a hug—that is why they are always screaming for attention.”

A few of the students in the hallways just laughed at my response to the bullies’ ridicule.

Kayla said, “If I needed a hug, it surely wouldn’t come from a skinny beanpole like you, Kenyatta.”

Jessica echoed, “Yeah!”

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I didn't have time to continue the verbal exchange because I did not want to be late for Mrs. Miller's class. Jeffrey and I hurried downstairs to our class to get our two favorite seats right in the front row. As the attendance was being called, Kayla and Jessica made their way into the classroom and found their usual seats in the back row by the door. I sat in my seat and anxiously waited the topic Mrs. Miller would talk about today. I liked all the things Mrs. Miller taught us about life, like that we should love ourselves no matter where we lived, what kind of car we drove, or what name brands of clothes we wore. I personally knew I didn't need the approval of my peers to "fit in." I love me just the way I am.

Mrs. Miller asked, "Who is almost finished with their science fair projects, because we have less than three weeks before they are due."

Most of the students responded that they hadn't even started their projects yet, and others said they hadn't even picked a topic yet.

I proudly said, "Mrs. Miller my project is almost complete."

Mrs. Miller responded, "Good job, Kenyatta. You are always ahead of the game."

My experiment had to do with which soil grew plants the fastest.

Jessica heckled me from the back row by saying, "I bet Kenyatta will be doing her experiment on what foods giraffes like to eat."

The entire class started to laugh, except for my friend, Jeffrey, and Mrs. Miller. Instead of playing the verbal exchange game with Jessica, I flipped everything around by offering her my assistance in finishing her science project. Everyone got real quiet. Then, to my surprise, Jessica accepted my offer to help, and Mrs. Miller nodded her approval.

I could see Kayla in the corner of my eye, fuming because Jessica decided to work with me. I always received As in science, so Jessica knew I was a worthy candidate to assist her.

I ended up helping Jessica receive a B+ on her science project, which is the highest grade she has ever received in science. She normally gets a D—barely passing.

As we worked together, Jessica and I realized we had a lot in common—like music and favorite television shows. So after the project was complete, we continued to spend time together. We got together on the weekends and talked on the phone almost three times a week. Kayla, of course, felt I was taking her friend from her, but Jessica realized it was more fun to *have* fun than to *make* fun of other people.



Jessica shared with me that people used to pick on her and Kayla, which is why they started talking about other people—to avoid being picked on.

I said, “Two wrongs don’t make a right. You should treat people the way you would like to be treated.”

Jessica said, “How can you be so nice to me, when I have been so mean to you?”

I responded, “Mrs. Miller teaches us to let go of the negative and embrace the positive.”

Jessica said, “I like that. I will have to use it on Kayla.” We laughed.

Jessica admitted that, thanks to our new friendship, she had a lot more self-confidence.

“It feels good to be friends *for* something instead of just *against* other people.”

“We need to help Kayla learn that,” I said. “She’ll have a lot more fun.”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Kayla and Jessica are “girl bullies” in the beginning of the story. That means they use the way they talk to and about people to bully them. Are there any “girl bullies” in your school? What do you do about them?

2. What do you think is the best way to handle girl bullies?

3. What do you think is the best way to handle boy bullies? (Boy bullies use force and threats to bully other students.)

4. Do you think bullies, boys or girls, are not getting enough attention and love?

“What can a bully do?”

Learn how to handle your anger.

Ask yourself, “Why am I doing this?”

Get help to feel better about yourself.

Try to stop picking on someone for just one day.

Listen to a friend.

Talk to another bully and discuss your behavior.

Form a “Bullies Anonymous” [self-help] group.

Experience some consequences.

Recognize what you are doing.

Work really hard to control your behavior.

Think about how you would feel if you were the victim.

Try to get attention by doing something good.

What can a victim do?

Ignore the bully.

Walk away.

Use humor.

Think about good things.

Talk to a friend.

Tell an adult.

Stand up for yourself.

Get involved in some activities that make you feel good.

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5. Do you have any teachers who, like Mrs. Miller, teach you about life as well as the subjects in school?

6. What's the best thing about life a teacher has ever taught you?

7. List five things you like about yourself.

8. Name five things you are good at.

9. Write, "I am talented, valuable, and lovable" five times.

EXERCISE

Circle the five best things you think a bully can do to stop him- or herself. Then circle the five best things you think a victim can do to make a bully stop bullying him or her.

(These suggestions are from the book *Bullies and Victims* by SuEllen Fried and Paula Fried, published by M. Evans and Company, New York, 1996, pp. 111-112.)

Threaten a bully who might back off from strength.

Use “I” messages. (“When you bully me, *I* feel really hurt and mad. *I* need you to stop it.”)

Involve a peer mediator (someone your own age who can help you understand each other).

Take karate lessons.

Fight back as a last resort.

Share your feelings.

Try to make a friend of the bully.

Go to another school.

Give the bully a compliment.

Give the bully a hug.”