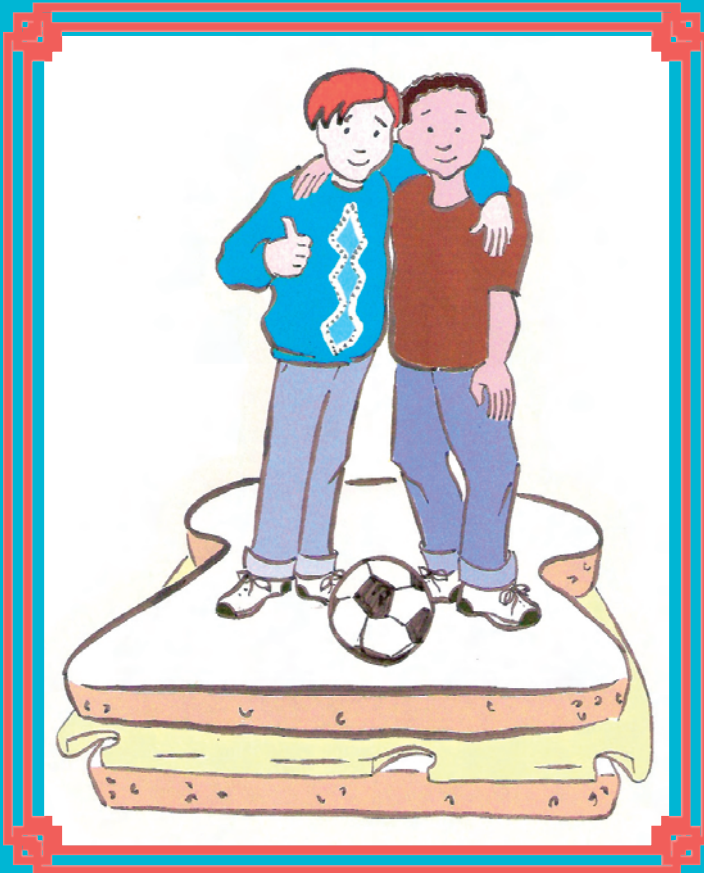


# Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich



By Hetty van Gurp & Rick Lewis

Illustrations by Marijke Simons





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Hetty van Gorp & Rick Lewis

*Peaceful Schools International  
Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia*

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*To all the people who know that  
the way we treat each other  
matters as much as the problems  
we are trying to solve.*

# Acknowledgements

We are thankful to the many people who provided support as this book evolved. Most especially, we thank the 19 educators from the South Shore Regional School Board based in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, for their valuable feedback after they shared the story with their students. We also wish to thank the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and the Nova Scotia Department of Education for their encouragement and support. Andi Rierden and Marijke Simons brought the story to life and we are grateful for their talents.

***Hetty and Rick***

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One morning during recess at Joseph Adams Elementary School, Sam and Lucas were playing soccer with some classmates. When the bell rang, Sam picked up the ball and everyone headed back for class.



“Look at Sam’s sweater!” Lucas said, laughing. “It looks like something my little brother would wear!” Some of the boys and girls began to point and laugh at Sam and they teased him for the rest of the day about wearing ‘baby clothes’.

Sam was upset because his grandmother had knit the sweater in his favourite colours and given it to him as a birthday present.



Sam was also confused because he and Lucas had been friends since they started school. They ate lunch together in the cafeteria and always walked home together after school. Sam couldn't understand why Lucas had teased him.

The more he thought about Lucas teasing him, the worse he felt.

That afternoon, Sam took his sweater off and stuffed it into his backpack. He was quiet that evening when his family gathered for supper. He finished his homework quickly so he could go straight to bed.



In the morning, Sam's Dad was busy making a sandwich for his lunch. "Is something wrong?" he asked. "You were very quiet at the dinner table last night."

Sam told his Dad about what had happened the day before. "Did you get a chance to talk to Lucas about what he said?" his Dad asked.

"No." Sam replied. "I didn't know what to say. I just felt angry."



His Dad thought for a few minutes. He looked at the sandwich he was making and said, "Sam, this might sound strange, but think about the layers in this sandwich. You can picture this sandwich when you need to tell someone that you are upset."

Sam looked puzzled. "That sounds silly, Dad. I don't understand."

"OK. Let me explain with an example. If I had to tell my boss that I was upset about something, I would make up a 'Goodwill Sandwich' message to let him know my feelings."



"Now I am really confused." Sam said. "What is a 'Goodwill Sandwich'?"

"It goes like this..." answered his Dad.

“Here’s the top layer – the bread:”

‘Mr. Anson, I really enjoy the work I do here at ABC Accounting Services, and I know we need to make sure this project gets done.’

“Here’s the middle layer – the filling:”

‘I find it hard working so many extra hours because I have young children who need me at home in the evenings.’

“Here’s the bottom layer – more bread:”

‘I’d like to make our company look good, and I’d also like to leave work in time to be home with my family. Is there a way that we can work this out so that we are both happy?’



Sam was still a little confused and asked for another example.

"All right," his Dad said. "Remember when your sister wanted to have her friends sleep over even though it was a school night?"

His Dad held up the top piece of bread and said, "Your Mom and I told her that we knew she liked spending time with her friends."



Then he held up the cheese.  
"Then we said, 'It's a school night and you will be too tired to focus on your classes at school if you're up late with your friends.'"

“So,” Sam’s Dad said while holding up the other piece of bread, “we agreed that she could have her friends over for a sleep over on the weekend and that way we were all happy.”

“I remember that.” Sam said. “They stayed up and watched movies and then you made brunch for all of us in the morning.”

Sam’s Dad laughed.  
“Yes, the girls had a great time and it didn’t get in the way of their classes.”

Sam said, “I’m starting to get it. You start out by saying something that shows you understand the other person. Then you talk about what you want. Then you ask the other person to help you solve the problem so you are both happy.”



“You’ve got it!” his Dad said.

"Well that sounds good, Dad, but I'm not sure about using it at school. If I try to talk to Lucas or anyone else at school about a Goodwill Sandwich, I'm afraid they'll just make fun of me even more!"



"That's a good point. You don't have to tell anyone about the Goodwill Sandwich. It's just a way for you to try and imagine working out a problem with someone. Why don't we try to figure out a way you can talk with Lucas about what happened yesterday?"

"That's a hard one," Sam said.



"Well, what do you think Lucas was trying to do by talking about your sweater?" his Dad asked.

"Maybe he was trying to get the other kids to laugh?" Sam guessed.

"Well, let's pretend that is true. What would be the top part of the sandwich?"



"Hmm, well I might say, 'Lucas, I know that the class really likes your jokes.'"

"OK! What would be the 'filling'? "

"It really hurt my feelings when everyone laughed at my sweater during recess yesterday."

"Perfect! What would the bottom piece of bread be?"

"Is there a way for you to make everyone laugh without making fun of me?"

"Sounds great!" Sam's Dad said. "Lucas might not know what to do, but the Goodwill Sandwich can give you a way to talk that might actually solve the problem and help you stay friends."

"Why do you call it a Goodwill Sandwich, Dad?"

"Aha! Well Sam, as you've already said, you start by showing the other person that you are trying to understand him or her, and you end by trying to come up with a solution that you're both happy with. By doing that, you show goodwill to a person. You surround the problem with goodwill."



“Thanks, Dad! I’ll try it out today,” he said, grabbing his lunch box and heading for the door.

At school that morning, Lucas was sitting alone on the steps and Sam decided it would be a good time to try talking with him. After Sam tested the ‘Goodwill Sandwich’ that he had practiced with his Dad, Lucas looked embarrassed and apologized for making fun of Sam’s sweater.

“I’m really sorry about making fun of you. I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings so I’ll try to remember to be careful about what I say.”

“Thanks, Lucas!” Sam replied.

The bell rang and the boys went in for class, trying to pick teams for their next game of soccer.

THE END

## **A Parents' Guide to Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich**

Teaching our children how to solve problems with others is never easy. The challenge for all of us is to understand the needs of others, express our own needs in a positive way, and negotiate solutions that work for everyone. *Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich* was written in an attempt to give parents and teachers a way of introducing this type of thinking to the young people in our care.

The core idea of the story is that people of all ages will be more interested in problem-solving when they trust the motives of the other person involved in the issue. All conflicts involve both the issue itself AND the relationship between the people. Most of the time, the facts get far more attention than the relationship, with the result being that the problem can appear to be solved, but the relationship can suffer in the process.

Most of us are familiar with the "Data + Order" method of dealing with others. "Your room is messy! Make your bed!" Or, "This project has to be done by tomorrow. Cancel your evening plans." In these cases, the "data" part, the evidence or issue, is spelled out clearly, but the motives of the speaker

are less clear. Does the speaker really value the personal relationship as much as the issue? Is the situation about power over others, or is it a legitimate request for assistance?

The Goodwill Sandwich technique asks the speaker to wrap the facts of a situation in layers of goodwill, clarifying the issue while also articulating the desire for a positive relationship. The top and bottom pieces of 'bread' convey the recognition that the other person is valuable; the 'filling' of the sandwich is a description of the facts. The heart of the technique is a balance between the factual and emotional needs of the situation.

While *Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich* is written in such a way that it engages the other person as an ally in problem-solving, the applications of the Sandwich strategy could also be used to make a request, give feedback, and even lodge a complaint.

### ***Making a request***

**Top layer:** "I wonder if I can get your help in solving a problem."

**Filling:** "I bought this vacuum cleaner, and when I got it home, I found out that it didn't work as well on my tile floors as it might on carpet."

**Bottom layer:** “You have a wonderful reputation for giving good customer service, and I know we can make this work out, too.”

### ***Giving feedback***

**Top layer:** “I can see you worked on your room, and I really appreciate that.”

**Filling:** “I see that there are some clothes on the floor over there, and that the window sill still looks a little dusty.”

**Bottom layer:** “If you can take care of those little things, your room will look perfect! Do you have everything you need to fix those little things?”

### ***Making a complaint***

**Top layer:** “Doctor, I really appreciate your skill and I’ve recommended you to a lot of my friends.”

**Filling:** “Today, though, my appointment was for 3:00 and now it is 4:30.”

**Bottom layer:** “I would appreciate it very much if you could let me know when you are running very late. I know you can’t predict emergencies, but even a call from your staff on my mobile phone would help.”

Most of the time, the 'filling' of the sandwich is best expressed without judgment or criticism, just as an expression of data that can be seen or heard by anyone looking at the situation. Opinion can be argued with, while facts speak for themselves. The most important part of the skill is speaking a desire for both a good relationship and a good outcome.

***Our last comment...***

**Top layer:** "We are parents, too, and we know it isn't easy getting our children to learn effective social skills."

**Filling:** "This story is a way of opening our children's minds to a different way of thinking."

**Bottom layer:** "We hope you find uses for this strategy with your children and all the other people you value in your life."

Enjoy your Goodwill Sandwich!



## **A Teachers' Guide to Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich**

How many times have we said to ourselves or out loud, "I could get through this material a lot sooner if I didn't have to deal with all these little conflicts!" A teacher must have been the first person to say that emotional intelligence is just as important as intellectual intelligence in the process of helping students to become successful adults. We have all told our students things like, "Be nice!" or "Work it out with her!" and yet we don't often have a way to teach the important skills of perspective-taking, negotiation, and effective communication to our students without taking away from valuable instructional time.

*Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich* was written to give teachers an academic tool to build reading and writing skills, while planting the seeds of pro-social thought in the minds of their students. While the story could be read simply for entertainment or social skill-building, the attached lesson plan can be used to reinforce a variety of academic benchmarks.

The title refers to the technique of engaging another person as an ally in problem-solving or conflict resolution by wrapping



the issue in a given conflict with a covering of articulated personal goodwill. By students making it clear that a positive relationship with the person is just as important as a positive outcome to the problem, there is a greater chance the other person will join the problem as a friend, and not as an adversary.

You will probably recognize your own communication skills in this story. When you think about it, you have probably used a version of the Goodwill Sandwich many times. Here are some examples:

### ***Giving feedback during a parent conference***

**Top layer:** "I'm really glad you were able to come in today, Mrs. Carson. I am enjoying getting to know your son, Ward."

**Filling:** "I need some insight from you about the best way to work with Ward. He has a wonderful outgoing personality, and most of the time it adds a lot to our class, but there are times when he gets a little too wound up and it is hard to keep him focused."

**Bottom layer:** "If we can help him time his talking a little better, it will keep him from getting a lot of correction from teachers AND he can still keep all his friends entertained."

### *Turning down a colleague's request*

**Top layer:** "Ooh, I'd really like to cover your last period class for you. You've always covered for me, and I appreciate it."

**Filling:** "I just can't do it today. I have a parent conference scheduled for my planning period with Mrs. Carson. Again."

**Bottom layer:** "If you could shift things around a little, I could cover tomorrow or Thursday."

### *Getting a student back on track*

**Top layer:** "Mike, I want to talk with you about something important. Whenever you finish your reading assignments, you are a great contributor in this class."

**Filling:** "I've noticed that you have not been able to contribute much the last couple of days, because you haven't done your homework."

**Bottom layer:** "We've missed you! I hope you can get back on track, starting with tonight's assignment. Is there anything going on tonight that would keep you from getting it done?"

The essence of your thoughtful communication is that you make sure the other person knows you value his/her relationship and can empathize with his/her needs, along with a fair and non-judgmental description of the issue you are

trying to resolve. By starting and ending your communication (the two pieces of 'bread') with statements that underline your regard and goodwill for the other person, it increases your chances of gaining their cooperation on solving the issue (the "filling").

In *Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich*, the Dad tries to give his son a way of looking at a situation through the lens of conflicting needs. By asking his son to engage a conversation that ends with "so how can you do this while I can do that?" it opens the door to new solutions that take everybody's needs into account. Aside from this problem-solving function, the Goodwill Sandwich can be used to give direct feedback, correction, and even criticism. Imagine the balanced process of giving correction on a paper:

**Top layer:** "Dave, I loved the ideas behind your story."

**Filling:** "I had to go back a few times to re-read parts of it, in order to make sense of the story."

**Bottom layer:** "Some readers might not have the patience to do that; you'll notice I made a few suggestions in the paper. See what you think of those ideas...See if they allow you to tell your story, while at the same time making the story easier to read."

We have included some ideas for a lesson plan at the back of *Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich*. Feel free to come up with your own examples that might relate more directly to the needs of your particular class.

***We'll end with one more:***

**Top layer:** “We know that it is hard to work one more thing into an already full day.”

**Filling:** “If your students learn a way of communicating that gains cooperation instead of resistance, will it help make your class more pleasant for you and them.”

**Bottom layer:** “We hope you find the story useful, and appreciate your taking the time to customize the examples to fit the needs of your individual class. Good luck!”



## Lesson Plan

Start by asking your students how they would make a complaint or a difficult request to someone. If they find this challenging, offer these as examples of situations:

- Your friend borrowed your sunglasses and returned them broken.
- You believe that your parents give you more chores than your sister.
- Your brother or sister does not help keep the room you share tidy.
- Your friend has been assigned to work on a project with you and has not been doing much work.
- You want to ask your friend to stop talking about you behind your back.

In pairs, ask students to come up with a problem situation of their own and role play how they would express the complaint or request. Confirm with your students that it is not always easy to start a conversation about a problem you are having with another person. It is also difficult to ask for something you need from a friend to improve your relationship, or give feedback that might improve a relationship you have with someone.

Explain to your students that you want to share with them an easy way to solve problems with others. Read *Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich* to your students.

After reading the story, ask if they understand the idea behind 'The Goodwill Sandwich' method of solving interpersonal problems. They may still have some difficulty understanding the concept of goodwill. Here are a few ways of describing the idea of goodwill:

- the friendly hope that something will succeed
- a willingness to be kind
- an attitude of kindness or friendliness

Ask your students to try writing some Goodwill Sandwich messages using the situations they offered earlier.

Give your students colored paper to make their own Goodwill Sandwich booklets, shaping the top and bottom pages as slices of bread and the center page as cheese. On the front page, ask students to write a statement of goodwill, on the cheese page, state the problem and finish with a statement of goodwill on the bottom piece of bread.



# About Peaceful Schools International



Peaceful Schools International (PSI) is a non-profit, charitable organization with the mission of supporting schools as they work to develop innovative programs and policies to ensure that everyone in the school feels safe, valued and respected.

Schools wishing to celebrate their commitment to creating a school-wide culture of peace can become members of PSI through a simple, voluntary application process. PSI provides ongoing support to its members through a web site, newsletters and other resources and workshops. As of 2008, PSI has involved 275 schools in 14 countries.

PSI celebrates peaceful schools around the world.

For more information visit:

**<http://www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org>**



# Resources from Peaceful Schools International

## **Peace in the Classroom** - Hetty van Gurp (Adams)

An entertaining collection of creative activities to use in the classroom to promote peace. A very usable resource. K-8.

## **The Peaceful School: Models that Work** - Hetty van Gurp

Explores many practical ways that schools can develop a culture of peace, by sharing ideas and approaches from 20 schools across Canada. The original materials, activities, events and other resources they developed are reproduced here, helping students to learn about cooperation, respect, effective communication, diversity, expressing emotion and resolving conflict..

## **Peer Mediation: A Complete Guide** - Hetty van Gurp

This book is designed for those who understand the philosophy of conflict resolution and peer mediation and are looking for practical tools to implement it. It includes games, role-plays, worksheets and exercises to train mediators in the nature of conflict, the process of mediation and communication skills.

## **Creating Caring Schools: Peace-promoting activities for all seasons** -

Hetty van Gurp

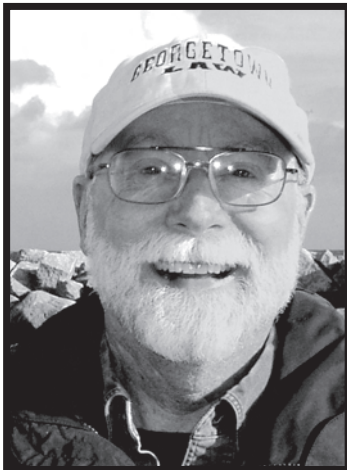
This book for elementary and secondary teachers and administrators includes over 30 practical school-wide initiatives with many variations; CD and sheet music for the original song "The Right Thing to Do" and a full index cross-listing themes and types project .

**Peace@School** - This toolkit consists of two DVDs and a set of three guidebooks. It includes two critically acclaimed films directed by award-winning filmmaker Teresa MacInnes, and produced by the National Film Board of Canada. *Waging Peace* follows a year of change at a junior high, while *Learning Peace* shows an elementary school that has integrated peace education into its curriculum, with amazing results. (Available in French and English.)

## About the authors



Hetty van Gurp, founder of Peaceful Schools International, is an internationally recognized educator and author and an inspiring and passionate presenter. She is the author of several books and educational materials. Her accomplishments are the subject of a National Film Board of Canada documentary film entitled "Teaching Peace in a Time of War." In 2006 Hetty was named as a Canadian hero by *Time* magazine. *Reader's Digest* also recognized Hetty as a Canadian hero in 2007.



Rick Lewis is a regional Coordinator for Peaceful Schools International in South Florida. Rick has served as the Training Coordinator in the Department of Safety and Learning Environments in the School District of Palm Beach County, FL, since 1993. Prior to that, Rick worked as a counselor and educator in a wide variety of therapeutic settings. Much of his work in Safe Schools has focused on conflict resolution and mediation and five of his works have been published by the Peace Education Foundation.



***Definitions of goodwill:***

1. the friendly hope that something will succeed
2. a willingness to be kind
3. a disposition to compassion

When Sam's friend Lucas makes fun of him at school, he goes home feeling hurt and confused. "Why would Lucas tease me?" Sam wonders. Then Sam's Dad shows him how conflicts between friends can be solved through a simple and straightforward approach he calls the "Goodwill Sandwich" message. The next day at school, Sam extends his "goodwill" towards Lucas. In the end, the boys come to a decision that makes them both happy and glad to be friends.

**Peaceful Schools International**  
**Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia**