

Sam Speaks Up



By Hetty van Gorp and Rick Lewis

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Peaceful Schools International
Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia

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*To all the adults who know
that young people have the
right to speak up,
and the responsibility
to do so respectfully
and skillfully.*

The 'Sam' Series

Sam Speaks Up is the third book in the 'Sam' series.

The first book is *Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich*.

When Sam's friend Lucas makes fun of him at school, Sam goes home feeling hurt and confused. "Why would Lucas tease me?" Sam wonders. Then Sam's father 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' toward Lucas. In the end, the boys come to a decision that makes them both happy and glad to be friends.

The second book is *Sam Takes a Stand*.

When Sam is teased by a classmate, he tries the 'Goodwill Sandwich' approach his father taught him. Sam learns that this approach does not always work. In *Sam Takes a Stand*, Sam's mother teaches him how to be assertive when he encounters verbal abuse. Sam practices at home, and the next day he gets to use his new skills when Jake makes fun of him.

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One sunny day in May, when Sam was walking home from school, he noticed three baby robins in a nest. The nest was in a big tree in his neighbor's yard.

When Sam got a little closer to the tree, he saw that one of the baby robins had fallen out of the nest and was lying on the grass. Sam also spotted Ginger nearby. Ginger was his neighbor's cat.

Ginger was creeping quietly toward the baby bird.



Sam gently picked up the tiny robin. He climbed up on the fence and put the baby bird back in its nest.



Sam climbed down and smiled as he watched Ginger slink away.



As Sam was leaving, his neighbor came outside.
“Get away from that fence and get off my property.
You are nothing but trouble,” Mr. Cook yelled.

Then Mr. Cook went back inside, slamming the door
behind him.

That evening,
Sam told his father
what had happened.

Sam was upset
because he liked
Mr. Cook and didn't
understand why Mr.
Cook had yelled at
him.



"Maybe Mr. Cook thought you were teasing his cat,"
said Sam's father.

"Well, he should have asked what I was doing instead
of yelling at me," said Sam.

"Sam," said his father. "There will be times in your life
when you will need to speak up if you feel you have
been treated unfairly. It's not easy, but there are ways
to speak up and still be respectful."

“What do you mean, Dad?” asked Sam.

“I can give you an example,” said Sam’s father.

“I had a problem at work last week. My boss thought I had lost an important report, and she yelled at me before I had a chance to explain that the report had been sent.”



“What did you do?” asked Sam.

“Well, first I calmed down and thought about what I would say,” said Sam’s father.

"Then, when everyone else had gone home, I said, 'Ms. Carson, I'd like to talk with you about something that will only take a few minutes. Do you have time now?'"

Ms. Carson nodded, so I continued. 'I know that you have a lot on your mind, Ms. Carson. I understand that you were worried about the report for the Adams Company. Because you just got back from your trip last evening, I didn't have a chance to tell you that I finished the report early and e-mailed it.'"



"What did Ms. Carson say?" asked Sam.

"She looked embarrassed and apologized," said Sam's father.

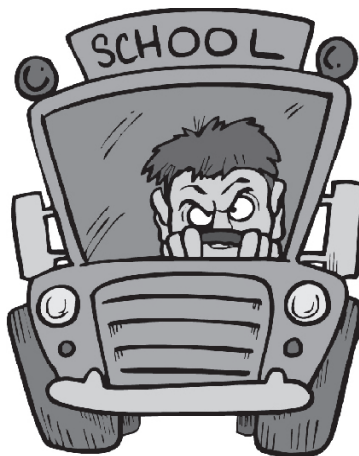
“Maybe I should talk to Mr. Cook tomorrow, but I’m not sure what to say,” said Sam.

“You could say something like this,” said Sam’s father. “Mr. Cook, may I talk with you about what happened yesterday? On my way to school, I noticed a baby robin on the grass next to your fence. I also saw Ginger ready to pounce on the bird, so I climbed up on the fence to put it back in the nest. I know it must have looked different to you, but that is what I was doing. I hope that next time you will give me a chance to explain if you see me doing something you don’t like.”

The next day Sam knocked on Mr. Cook’s door. When Mr. Cook answered, Sam tried out the message he had practiced with his father. Mr. Cook apologized and explained that he did not realize that Sam was trying to save the baby robin.

Over the next few days, Sam got better and better at speaking up respectfully and assertively with his teachers, his neighbors, and even his parents.

On Monday, he said to his principal, “Ms. Wilson, may I talk with you for a minute about what you said this morning on the public address system? I know you are the principal and that you are in charge, and I respect that. I also know that you want us to be respectful of school property. Canceling our field trip because a few people left a mess on the bus hurts a lot of people who didn’t throw anything on the floor. I didn’t throw anything on the floor, and none of my friends did either. I wonder if we could come up with a way of keeping the bus clean without punishing everybody for what a few people did?”





On Tuesday, he said to his teacher, “Mr. Stone, do you have a minute to talk about something? I realize that you are the teacher and have to keep order in the class. I had a different view of what happened in class today. May I tell you about it? I know you thought you heard my voice, but I wasn’t the one talking. Would you be willing to cancel my detention if I can prove that I wasn’t the one doing the talking?”



On Wednesday, Sam said to his father, “Dad, I know you want me to get enough rest for school, and you set an 8:30 bedtime. You might not know that I took a 15-minute nap when I came home, and all my homework is finished. If I get up tomorrow morning without you having to wake me more than once, could I stay up and watch the movie that starts at 9:00?”

After Sam finished, his father laughed and said, “OK Sam, I think you’ve mastered this assertiveness idea. I must admit, you are getting pretty good at it. You still have to go to bed at 8:30 tonight, but I will record the show for you so you can watch it tomorrow after school!”

THE END



Sam Speaks Up: Ideas for Adult Coaches

Skill One: Prepare.

In *Sam Takes a Stand*, Sam's mother teaches him the skill of 'self-talk.' Saying short, positive statements to himself allowed Sam to be mentally ready for the conversation.

Examples: "I can do this."

"I can speak up for myself in a respectful way."

Skill Two: Pick a good time to approach the Authority-Person (AP).

If the concern is not an emergency, coach your child to try to find a time and place where he or she can have a private talk with the AP. If there are a lot of other people around, or if something else important is happening, the AP might not have time to hear your child out. If other people are around, it makes it harder for APs to modify what they said or did, since they might feel sensitive about 'being challenged,' even if it is done respectfully and with good data.

Examples:

"Mr. Jones, do you have a minute to talk about something?"

"Mrs. Smith, I'd like to talk with you about something that will take about three minutes. Do you have time now?"

"Mr. Williams, when do you think I could spend about three minutes with you when I won't be interrupting you?"

Skill Three: Start by acknowledging the AP's authority. If your child starts by acknowledging the AP's authority, it immediately de-escalates potential power struggles.

Examples:

"Mr. Jones, I realize that you are the teacher and have to keep order in the class."

"Mom, I know you are in charge around here, and I'm not being disrespectful or anything..."

"Mrs. Smith, I know you will do whatever you think is best."

Skill Four: Give new data about the situation.

Data could involve both inner events (feelings) or outer events (facts), but the key is to make sure the data does not include judgment or opinion. To say, "You were mean to John," is a judgment. "John cried after class," is a fact. "You were unfair," is a judgment. "I didn't have a chance to speak," is a fact. This is the hardest part — saying things in such a way that it doesn't make the person look 'wrong' or 'bad.' If there is any way to help the AP save face, it will help him/her accept the new data.

Examples:

"I know you thought you heard my voice, but I wasn't the one talking."

"I know you think you told us about the quiz, but none of my friends in class heard you say anything about it."

Skill Five: Ask for something different.

This is where your child asks for a different outcome either this time or next time. The essence of this skill is to discuss what is bothering us without making the other person look wrong. Once again, asking doesn't mean the AP will agree or change.

Examples:

"Would you be willing to cancel my detention if I can prove that I wasn't the one doing the talking?"

"Would you please kid me about something other than that, next time?"

"Could you please write down the quiz date changes on the board from now on? That way all of us will remember."

Because of the extra skill needed to speak assertively with APs, it is important for people of all ages to feel confident about the points they want to make. Encourage your child to rehearse what she or he wants to say.

About Peaceful Schools International



Peaceful Schools
International

Peaceful Schools International (PSI) is a nonprofit, 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 2009, PSI has involved 300 schools in 14 countries.

PSI celebrates peaceful schools around the world.

For more information visit:

<http://www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org>

Resources from Peaceful Schools International

(Available on the Store page of the PSI web site.)

Peace in the Classroom - Hetty van Gorp (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 Gorp

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 Gorp

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. The book 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 Gorp

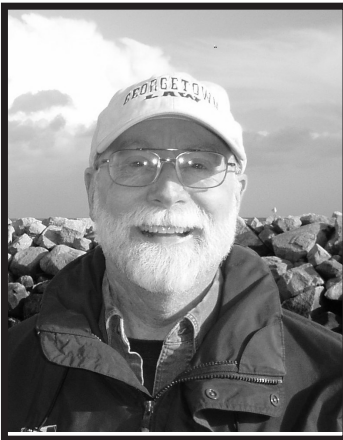
This book for elementary and secondary teachers and administrators includes over 30 practical school-wide initiatives with many variations, CD and sheet music for the original song "The Right Thing to Do" and a full index cross-listing of themes and projects.

Peace@School - This toolkit consists of two DVDs and a set of three guide-books. 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.

When Sam feels that he is treated unfairly by his adult neighbor, Sam's father teaches him how to speak up for himself in a respectful way.



Over the next week, Sam practices his new skills with all kinds of grown-ups, including his father. Will Sam be able to convince his father to let him stay up late?

Sam Speaks Up includes a guide for adult coaches.

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