

Be Confident in Who You Are

# MIDDLE SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL™

ANNIE FOX, M.Ed.

ILLUSTRATED BY  
MATT KINDT



Winner of Parental Wisdom's Good Parenting Seal

**Be Confident in Who You Are**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL  
CONFIDENTIAL™**

**BOOK 1**

**ANNIE FOX, M.Ed.**  
**ILLUSTRATED BY MATT KINDT**

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# Dedication

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To David, always in all ways. I'm who I am today because I know you.

# Acknowledgments

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My own middle school memories wouldn't have sustained me through writing this book. Fortunately, I receive middle school confidential updates from students around the world. Their daily email is a source of wisdom for me and for teens and parents who visit [www.anniefox.com](http://www.anniefox.com).

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# Introduction

**Hi.** I'm an online advisor at a Web site for teens ([www.theinsite.org](http://www.theinsite.org)). Many visitors of the site email me questions about what's going on in their lives. Middle school issues come up a lot, so I thought, "Hey, why not write a book about this?"

Middle school can be cool but also stressful. Maybe you have a packed schedule and more homework than ever. Friendships may be shifting, and things at home might also be changing. Other people's opinions can start to seem very important—especially their opinion of you. If you compare yourself to others and don't believe you measure up in looks, smarts, athletic ability, or popularity, you might wonder if there's something wrong with you.

It's normal to want to fit in, and lots of people feel pressure to go along with everyone else or do whatever it takes to avoid getting picked on. If this sounds familiar, this book may be able to help. It's all about being who you want to be and feeling good about that. Confidence gives you power. If other people try to bring you down or push you around, you can use that power to keep it together and figure out your next move.

Throughout the book you'll find the stories of six teens trying to figure out middle school, quotes and advice from real teens, quizzes, tips, and insider tools for staying strong through the rough spots. As you read, I hope you'll feel free to email me ([help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com)) with any thoughts, questions, or stories of your own.

In friendship,

**Annie**

## We go to Milldale Middle School.

We're very different in lots of ways, but we're all good friends. A couple months ago, we were just hanging out when these kids came over...













**Just so you know, we're normal teens.** We don't like everybody and we don't expect everyone to like us. Our school is probably like yours. There are plenty of nice people and some bullies, too. If by some miracle the bullies got an attitude transplant and the teasing stopped, everyone in Milldale (including us) would be happier. We'd be friends with the people we're friends with. And the other kids would leave us alone.

Anyway, after those guys left, Mateo said he was fed up with being teased because of his height. Abby totally understood because people always call her names like "lard butt." The rest of us don't get picked on because of our looks, but we still have plenty of things we'd like to change about ourselves. Chris hates that he's got ADD. Michelle wishes that she stressed less about grades. Jen admits that she worries a lot about what other people think. Jack doesn't like talking about feelings so it's hard to know what he thinks, but he did say he wanted to beat up those guys for making fun of Mateo.

As we were talking, Michelle, who's really smart, came up with one of her probing questions:



IF NOBODY TEASED YOU,  
WOULD YOU TOTALLY ACCEPT  
YOURSELF JUST THE WAY  
YOU ARE?

NO.

**How about that?** We always thought the problem was the mean kids giving us a hard time. Turns out we're not always so nice to ourselves. There's that voice inside our head saying things like: **"I'm not smart enough ... Not strong enough ... Not hot enough ... Not cool enough ... Not good enough!"** Maybe you've heard it, too.

When we criticize ourselves it brings us down, but we don't know how to stop. It's like we're in this race. Nobody actually entered, but everyone's in it and we all want to win. So we try to be like the kids everyone likes so people will like us, too. We watch what we do and say so we don't make mistakes and embarrass ourselves. We hate being in the race, but that's the way it is in middle school and there's nothing we can do about it.

Or is there?

We hear that things get easier in high school. We don't know if that's true, but thinking about it gives us hope. It also gave Michelle an idea: "Why don't we ask other kids how they deal with these problems?"

Turns out lots of kids had great advice about getting through middle school—secret information that no one tells you about. **That's why this series is called "Middle School Confidential"—because not everyone knows the things we've found out.** Like, how to quit worrying about what other people think. That advice really helped us.





**Not that we've totally stopped worrying ... we still do.**  
But little by little, we've started caring less about what "they" think  
and started having more fun just **BEING OURSELVES.**

PEACE.



**Michelle**



**Chris**



**Mateo**



**Abby**



# Chapter 1: Do You Like the Way You Look

"MY BIGGEST PROBLEM IN LIFE IS MY WEIGHT! EVERYONE IS ALWAYS TEASING ME! AT HOME, AT SCHOOL . . . EVEN PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW! IT REALLY GETS ME DOWN."  
— ANTHONY, 13



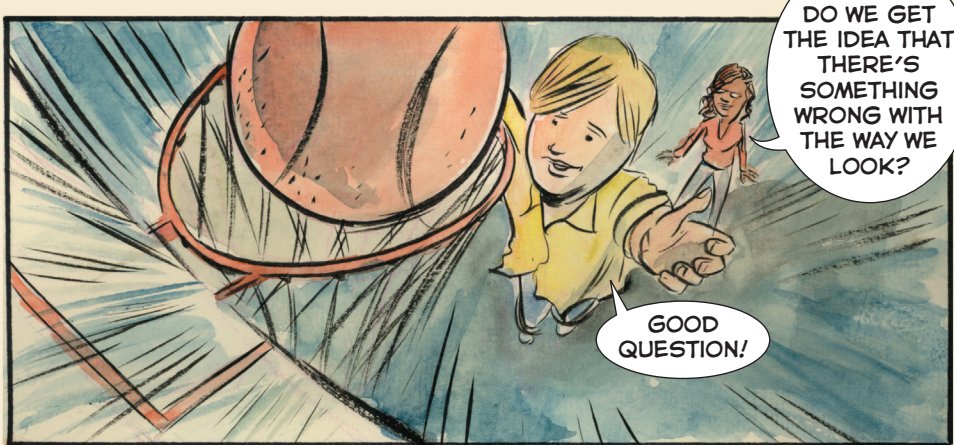
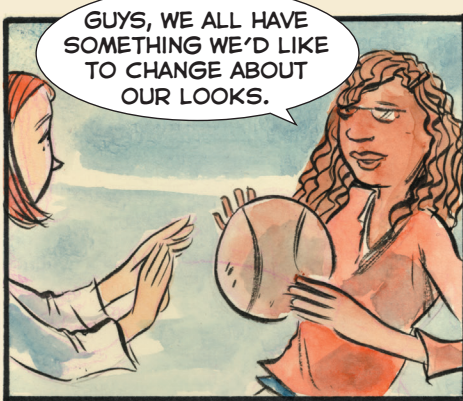
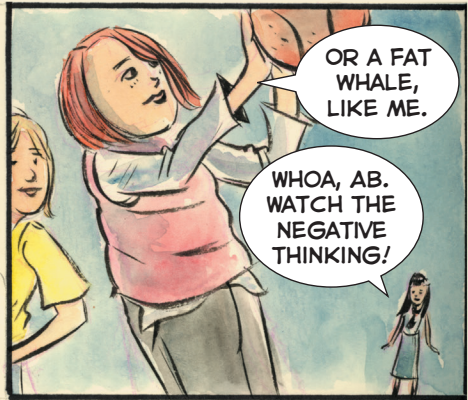
I KNOW HOW THIS GUY FEELS!

WHEN PEOPLE CALL ME EL SHRIMPO I'M IN A BAD MOOD FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.



DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU, MAT.







## **When you're in a good mood you might look in the mirror and think, "I look good!" That probably makes you feel more confident.**

But if you have a look when you're angry, sad, or worried, you may not like what you see. You might even make rude comments to yourself. Or other people may tease you. That can make you feel insecure and change the way you feel about yourself and the way you act.

When you feel down about your looks, what's really going on? Do you suddenly look different? Not likely. But maybe your mood is making it hard for you to see yourself the way you really are. Maybe you are just comparing yourself to some "perfect" person and don't feel like you measure up. Or maybe you're starting to believe what the teasers are saying.

The truth is, nobody is "perfect." Pro athletes may be bulked up on steroids. Supermodels' photos are often touched up by computers.

**And people who tease you have their own problems—  
that's why they're taking things out on  
YOU.**

THESE TEENS HAVE A  
BUNCH OF BODY BEEFS.



## MY BODY Beef

**"I'm such a wimp!  
Anybody could beat me up  
without even trying."**

—Kevin, 13

**"I'm too pale."**

—Alana, 13

**"My hair  
looks like  
crap."**

—Matthew, 13

**"I sort of have  
hairy legs."**

—Faith, 12

**"I've always  
hated having a  
big belly."**

—Mike, 13

**"My eyebrows  
are ginormous."**

—Caitlin, 11

**"I'm like a foot shorter  
than everyone else."**

—Joe, 14

**"My tongue is  
weird!"**

—Bethany, 11

## ADS MESS WITH YOUR MIND

Slick ads and hi-tech marketing messages are designed to manipulate the way you think. Teens spend billions each year buying certain sodas, snacks, fast food, hair products, makeup, designer clothes, and tech toys because they think: "If I buy this, I'll be cool!" You don't need to buy anything to make you a better person. And you don't need to let the media define you or mess with your confidence.

Companies don't want to waste their advertising dollars. That's why they always know exactly who they want to target with their ads. How can you be a smart media consumer? By opening your mind and paying attention to media messages. Next time you see a TV commercial or an ad online or in a magazine, ask yourself:

- **Who is this ad aimed at?**
- **What's the message here?**
- **What do I think when I see the ad?**
- **How does it make me feel about the product?**
- **How does it make me feel about myself?**