

“Getting it Right Without a Fight – A Musical Experience”

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The show features the ventriloquist figure Benjy, who is on his way to his first school camp. He is nervous, because he is little and is always picked on – in particular by a bully, Chuck.

The presentation commences with a short introduction by Stan being interrupted by Benjy, which leads to conflict. This leads to the concept of *Conflict* and *Conflict Resolution* – “learning to deal with each other in a respectful, way, in order to solve our differences peacefully and without a fight”. Stan illustrates this with the aid of a trick involving an audience member, which shows how a knot in a rope can become tighter as two people argue and pull on the ends. But when they stop pulling in different directions and smooth over their differences, the knot disappears – the conflict has been resolved peacefully. This leads to the realization that it is indeed a wonderful world we live in – and Stan and Benjy sing the song “*What a wonderful world*” made famous by Louis Armstrong.

The scene then shifts to Benjy who explains his fears about Chuck, and how he is constantly tormented by him. Stan discusses the concept of *self-esteem* as a magic word, which develops *personal power* through *self-confidence*. But Benjy is still anxious. Chuck has been teasing him and calling him a squirt and an egg-head, and he just felt like swearing at him and punching him. But he was too scared to do so. Stan explains that disagreements cannot be solved by fighting, and punching never works. Benjy needs to show Chuck that it is not OK to be spoken to in that way, and in order to do so, he needs to control his temper. But Benjy cannot accept this. When his face becomes as red as a beet, and his pulse starts racing and he can’t get his breath - how can he calm down? Stan demonstrates a way to relax by simply taking a few deep breaths. Benjy is delighted by the technique which he says has certainly calmed him down, and has allowed him to think of some ways to deal with Chuck.

Stan and Benjy then enact a scenario where Stan plays the role of Chuck and Benjy reacts appropriately, and this leads to the concept of *compromise*, which is illustrated by the song “*From you I receive, to you I give*” which carries a powerful message.

The concept of *teamwork* is then introduced through a story of a shark attacking a lone fish, who receives support from his family when they combine together and chase the shark away, and this is illustrated by a magic trick with separate ropes, which mysteriously combine into one, large loop.

Stan explains how he used to be bullied as a child and learnt to handle the bullies by enlisting the aid of his parents and teachers in an environment of teamwork. He was encouraged to keep a *Feelings book* where he expressed his feelings by writing about them and drawing, and pretended that he was wearing a suit of invisible armour which secretly protected him from their attacks. “The trick is to stand up for yourself without getting into a fight, no matter what people say or do to you”. And this is illustrated Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “No matter what they tell you”.

Stan then explains that bullies are actually unhappy, insecure people, who are often bullied themselves by parents and peers. This encourages them to become bullies themselves and they take out their feelings on vulnerable victims. They lack self-esteem and personal power and need help. You have to stand up to them and believe in yourself, which introduces the song “*When you believe*” from *The Prince of Egypt*. Stan addresses the bullies in the hall, and explains that bullies CAN change so that they too will be respected, and encourages them to discuss their feelings with teachers, parents or people whom they can trust. These words have an impact on Benjy, who promptly confronts Chuck and tells him exactly how he feels and states that he will simply not tolerate Chuck treating him like that in the future. Chuck is overwhelmed by Benjy’s direct, respectful approach, and becomes friendly with him. They even have an agreement. Chuck, who is a top hockey player, will coach him in hockey, and in return, Benjy will help him with his homework and encourage him to overcome his problems. Stan and Benjy illustrate this friendship by singing “*You’ve got a friend in me*” from *The Toy Story*.

The presentation is summed up with the message of the show in the words that most problems can be solved and things can be worked out, and the young audience is encouraged to go home and think about what they’ve learnt. And if ever they find themselves in a conflict situation, they should think of Stan and Benjy, and try and imagine how they would have resolved the situation. “Yes - you CAN get it right without a fight, and most important, believe in yourself”. The show ends with the song “*I believe*”, sung together by Stan and Benjy, which is designed to bring the children quietly “down to earth” in preparation for dismissal and the control of the teachers who will direct them back to their classrooms.