

Tara had never been one of the "cool kids" in elementary school, but she was a happy girl and had a close group of friends. As she transitioned into middle school, she began worrying about what other girls thought of her and she hated that she wasn't popular. The popular girls wore Ugg boots and clothes from Hollister. They styled their hair and wore makeup every day. Tara liked to wear her old sneakers and sweatshirts and hated doing her hair and makeup in the morning. She thought she would be more popular if she changed her look, so she convinced her mom to take her shopping.

Every day for the next month, Tara got up 45 minutes earlier to do her hair and makeup. She wore new outfits with her Ugg boots and she started fitting in with the popular crowd. The problem was, she was miserable! The boots made her feet hurt, her new shirts were itchy, and she hated how dirty the makeup made her feel. To top it all off, she was tired and crabby because she was losing sleep. Every day she wished she had worn an old sweatshirt and sneakers again. She quickly realized she wanted her old self back again.

7

Copyright© 2014 Kim's Classroom Corner

Hector was different from most other kids. He talked to himself all day long and made weird noises that the other kids thought were annoying. During recess, Hector wandered around the playground by himself. When he didn't get to be the line leader, he would cry and throw temper tantrums. "He's so weird," said Shawn. "I know," responded Brian. "I don't even like to talk to him or sit by him in class. I refuse to play with him. Why does he act like that?"

A few weeks later, Hector was absent from school. "Boys and girls," said Mrs. Davis, "I want to talk to you about Hector. You should know that Hector has autism. Although he may act differently from you, he still has feelings and emotions, and he is actually a very smart kid. I've noticed several of you try to avoid him, but you might actually find that you have something in common with him. Please treat him the same way you would want others to treat you." Brian and Shawn felt horrible! Now it all made sense! Hector couldn't help he acted differently from the other kids. They began to make more of an effort to get to know Hector and respect his differences.

8

Copyright© 2014 Kim's Classroom Corner

Dante was never satisfied with what he had. He had a room full of toys and a closet full of clothes. His parents provided enough food for Dante to eat three healthy meals a day. "I hate my Play Station! I wish I had an Xbox instead," he complained. "You have an entire room filled with brand new toys. Why don't you play with one of those?" his dad suggested. "I don't like those toys. They're boring," Dante answered. At dinner, Dante complained he didn't like the casserole his mom made. "This is gross," he told his mom.

Dante's parents realized they needed to teach Dante a lesson, so they took him to the local homeless shelter with a bag full of necessities. As they walked into the shelter, Dante's father handed him a blanket. "Do you see that boy shivering in the corner? He could use this blanket." As Dante handed the boy a new blanket, the boy's eyes lit up. "That little girl crying by her mother is starving for this sandwich," his dad said as he pulled a sandwich out of the bag. As Dante handed the little girl a sandwich, a huge smile came across her face. After spending an hour at the homeless shelter, Dante's perspective began to change. "I will never complain about what I have again," he told his parents. "I am very lucky for what I have!"

9

Copyright© 2014 Kim's Classroom Corner

Jonathan wanted a new dirt bike more than anything. He begged and begged his parents, but their response was always the same: "We don't have the money." After weeks of begging, Jonathan finally gave up and settled for riding his bicycle. He watched his friends ride their dirt bikes every weekend. "Why can't you get a dirt bike, too?" they asked. "My parents can't afford one," Jonathan replied sadly. He knew his parents struggled financially and had learned to accept it without complaining.

After months of watching their son ride his bicycle while his friends rode their dirt bikes, Jonathan's parents began to appreciate how patient and understanding he had become. They were very proud of him. As December rolled around, Jonathan's parents had one goal in mind. When Jonathan walked down the stairs on Christmas morning, he shrieked when he saw what was under the Christmas tree. "A dirt bike!" he yelled!

10

Copyright© 2014 Kim's Classroom Corner

Courtney and Ashley were good friends who had very different home lives. Ashley lived in a mansion on Lake Norman. Her parents paid for her to take private tennis lessons at the local country club, and she always had the newest technology, clothes, and toys. Courtney was jealous of Ashley's perfect life. Courtney, on the other hand, lived in an apartment building with her two siblings and her parents. During their free time, her family played games and watched movies together, but they never went on vacations or took private tennis lessons.

Courtney was nervous when she invited Ashley over to her apartment for the first time. She was surprised at the end of the evening when Ashley began to cry. "You are so lucky," she told Courtney. "My family never eats dinner together because my parents are always traveling for work. My nanny helps me with my homework and puts me to bed every night. We never get to spend any time together. I wish my family lived a life like yours." Courtney began to realize she would rather live in her small apartment with her close-knit family than live in a big mansion without quality family time.

As a young girl, Liz had one dream. She wanted to attend Michigan State University and open her own clothing business when she got older. Liz knew she had to work hard to make her dreams come true. In middle school, all of her friends procrastinated on their school projects and preferred to hang out at the mall and talk on the phone every night instead of doing their school work. Liz focused on her school work during the week days and only had fun with her friends on the weekends. In high school, Liz took all advanced-placement classes. Again, her friends went out and had fun every night of the week. Liz often felt she was missing out on the fun, but she stayed home on the week nights and studied for her classes. For weeks leading up to the S.A.T. test, Liz studied two hours every night. Her friends thought she was crazy!

At the end of her senior year, Liz graduated the top in her class. She was the valedictorian! Because of her high test scores and straight A's, she earned a full-ride scholarship to Michigan State University! Five years later, she opened her own business and became a very successful business woman. Liz's dreams came true!