

Better Than You

by Trudy Ludwig and illustrated by Adam Gustavson

Themes

Do Your Best
Uniqueness of Me
Self-Acceptance
Boasting
Encourage Others
Friendships



Everything Tyler says or does, Jake says he can do it better. Tyler soon feels like he shouldn't even try to do anything until his Uncle Kevin jumps in with some advice. He helps Tyler understand that Jake's bragging has nothing to do with his own abilities. This true-to-life story shows how boasting and bragging is no way to make and keep friends and encourages kids to be accepting of "doing your best" rather than "being the best".

Teacher Note: NED reminds kids to do their best at everything!
"Even if you can't do something as great as someone else – you should always do YOUR personal best. That's what makes you a champion at school and in life!"

Before Reading: Discussion Starters

1. What is more important, to do your best or be your best? *Answers will vary*
2. How does it feel to be around someone who is always better than you? *Answers will vary*

After Reading: Discussion Starters

1. How does Tyler feel when he has to do something that he isn't very good at, like the math test? *Hands get sweaty, brain turns to mush, says "I am stupid", says "Test is stupid". He isn't very encouraging to himself!*
2. What do you do when you aren't very good at something?
Answers will vary. Allow students to talk about their experiences and share their personal responses to struggles.
3. Is Jake NEDlike? What could he have done to be more like NED?
He does NOT encourage Tyler – he brags about his own abilities and makes Tyler feel worse. NED would have seen Tyler doing his very best and encouraged him to keep trying and not give up.
4. What was Tyler's problem with Jake?
Jake kept rubbing it in his face that he could do things better than Tyler. This made Tyler feel inferior to Jake. Tyler started to isolate himself rather than face the embarrassment.
5. Is it wrong to be proud of your own accomplishments?
Answers will vary. NO! just make sure you are not demeaning to others. Discuss appropriate ways to be proud of yourself.

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6. Who had the problem – Tyler or Jake?

Tyler wasn't alone in his feeling about Jake. He treated others the same way. He bragged and boasted with all his friends. Help students to understand that when someone has a "better than you" attitude, it is NOT about you. Everyone has things they are BEST at...just keep doing YOUR best and your best will get better.

7. Explain why Uncle Kevin said Jake was like a puffer fish.

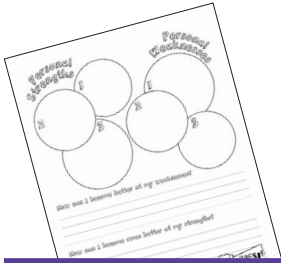
A puffer fish puffs up his body to make himself bigger than he actually is. It protects him from enemies because he looks bigger. When the puffer fish gets really big – it pushes other fishes out of the way. Jake was puffing up with pride which resulted in pushing away all the friends around him.

8. Why do you think Jake needed to puff himself up when he's with his friends?

Answers will vary. Lack of confidence, lack of attention, lack of praise for his accomplishments, jealousy, one-upmanship attitude from sports, etc.

9. Does failure mean you didn't do your best?

Answers will vary. Failure is so important to growth. What did you learn? What can you do differently? Help students to understand that when you do your best and fail – you are just one step closer to success.



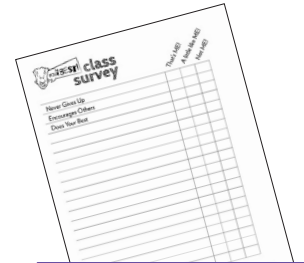
PRINTABLE:

Personal Inventory

Activities

Personal Inventory Take a personal inventory of your strengths and weaknesses. Need help? Ask a friend, teacher, parent what they see in you!

Class Survey Create a class survey to see who is best at different things in your class! Make a long list of **actions** and **attitudes** and then have each student complete the survey and compare results. **TEACHER NOTE:** Encourage use of character traits in the list (Examples: curiosity, loves learning, kindness, compassion, determination, etc) as well as specific skills like baseball, art, music.



PRINTABLE:

Class Survey



ABC Book Activity: Create an ABC Book about you and things you do your best at. Come up with a word or phrase for each letter of the alphabet! It's ok to be creative with spelling...*Xciting!*

Positive Posters Design posters for your school that remind kids to do their best at the things they do at school. Examples: Do your Best when taking a Test!

"I Did My Best" Button

NED buttons are a great reward when students do their personal best! Visit www.ShopNED.com to purchase.



Personal Inventory

Name: _____

Personal
Strengths

1

2

3

Personal
Weaknesses

1

2

3

How can I become better at my weaknesses?

How can I become even better at my strengths?





class survey

Name: _____

Make a long list of *actions* and *attitudes* and then complete the survey and compare results.

That's ME!
A little like ME!
Not ME!

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--|--|--|
| LIST ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS | Never Gives Up | | | |
| | Encourages Others | | | |
| | Does Your Best | | | |
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