



## **What to Be FOR When You're Against Bullying**

### **Anti-Bullying 2.0: A Pro-Encouragement Message for Schools**

*School children have been inundated with anti-bullying messages, and rightly so! But when everyone knows what NOT to do, we need to talk about what we CAN do! Bill draws on his own experience with disability to explain the power of encouragement he experienced. His program leaves kids inspired to be encouragers.*

#### **Main themes:**

- Differences, we all have them
- How to act when you know what NOT to do
- What you can do with CONFIDENCE!
- The Encouragement Principle: Building character by giving and receiving encouragement and acceptance

My hope is that school-age children realize the positive impact they could have in encouraging each other, in accepting others who might be different. In fact, everyone is different. Some differences are very apparent (physical disability, nationality, speech, outward appearance). But some are not – how someone feels about himself or herself and how much they feel accepted or not. Those can't be seen but have a huge influence on themselves and on others.

Kids in school are hearing many very important anti-bullying messages that focus on how NOT to act, but they do not emphasize positive actions or attitudes.

My message, the stories of my life growing up, is a positive one, a pro-encouragement message. It is a story of a young boy, faced with severe physical disabilities, who was encouraged and accepted by his classmates who looked past his differences and became his friend. This youngster experienced a healthy level of self-confidence which helped him have a happy and fulfilling life.

The positive impact of all this went both ways. I experienced acceptance, and my classmates experienced a sense of pride in my success. They took the time to know me, and as a result, encouragement came naturally for them.

Kids need to hear a positive message. I am a living example to them of how encouragement and acceptance can build character in all of us.