

A GREAT BOOK!

AN IMPORTANT LESSON!

A COMMITMENT TO FORTIFY OUR KIDS' SELF-ESTEEM!

KIDS RANCH STAFF WORKS TIRELESSLY TO CHALLENGE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND BUILD POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

By Teresa Parker

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The Kids Ranch staff know that children's self-esteem is especially important because it plays a critical role in the decisions and choices we make throughout our life. Our Kids Ranch staff are 100% committed to raising the self-esteem of our campers. One of the ways we accomplish this is by using a special children's book that teaches about self-esteem. The name of the book is, *Don't Feed the Monster on Tuesdays*, written by Adolph Moser, Ed.D. This one-of-a-kind-book teaches the importance of having healthy self-esteem and gives practical suggestions about how to protect it. Below, are a few excerpts from this book.

"It happens every day. Some People look in their mirror and scream, 'Oh no! My nose is too long!' 'My ears are too big!' 'My eyes are too small!' It is true that many children and adults too are picky picky, picky about the way they look. And that's not all! Here's a few more- 'I don't make high grades in school. I must be dumb.' 'I can't read as well as the other students. I must be stupid!' 'My classmates don't like me as much as they do the other kids. There must be something wrong with me!'" These are some of the examples we find in the book; they are negative messages many people say to themselves all day long. This is often referred to as "self-talk."

After giving several examples of negative messages that some people repeatedly say to themselves, it asks the question: "Why do we think such things about ourselves? *Don't Feed the Monster on Tuesday* offers a wonderful explanation.

The author writes, "Well-somewhere inside our brains there is an area that makes us think negative thoughts. It's as if we have a little green monster inside our heads who is determined to make us feel bad about ourselves. That little monster is really a sly one. He begins his attacks by whispering awful things to us. And if we listen to his whispers, the monster's voice becomes louder and louder."

The author goes on to warn the reader that, "If we believe the things the monster tells us, we lose our self-confidence and we become unhappy. And that monster is hungry, hungry, hungry all the time! He likes nothing better than to take big bites out of our self-esteem." And if we let him, he will convince us that we are unworthy, or unloved, or not a good person, or not smart, etc. And from this vantage point, the author suggests that each one of us has the power within ourselves to 'stop feeding the monster'.

The book invites the reader to, "Start by choosing one day out of the week-let's say Tuesday. Next Tuesday make a big sign that reads- 'DON'T FEED THE MONSTER ON TUESDAYS!' And all-day Tuesday, be careful not to say negative things to yourself." As you may suspect, the reader is encouraged to add more days until a new habit is formed and the self-talk with negative messages is eliminated.

This powerful children's book (which should probably be read by all of us adults as well) is ingenious in helping the kids learn about the power of their self-talk, i.e., the messages they say to themselves every day that work to shape our self-esteem and our future potential.

At Kids Ranch we read this book during morning group time, and then follow up with small group discussions about the importance of challenging our negative thoughts and beliefs, and changing our self-talk into positive affirmations. The children are given individual work sheets asking them to identify the most frequent negative messages they give themselves; we also teach them different techniques they can use to silence the monster.

Below, you can see the whiteboard with all the campers responses from last week. On the left are the negative things the monster whispers to our kids; on the right are the positive statements the kids use to counter the negative thoughts; at the bottom of the board you see examples from the kids about what actions they can take to challenge and change frequent negative thoughts.

Most of the children who come to Kids Ranch have many challenges. Many have endured extraordinary hardships such as loss of a loved one, medical and/or emotional struggles in their family, learning difficulties (several of the children are 2-3 years behind in reading), and unidentified or untreated special education needs. So most of our kids have lots of reasons to think they are not lucky, nor gifted, nor smart, nor liked by others, nor loved or capable, nor have reasons to hope.

Our programming at camp includes the use of daily affirmations which the children read together in morning group; then we ask them for their favorite positive quality (Ex. I am capable, I am kind, I am respectful, I am smart, I can figure things out, etc.) The children say one quality that they strongly feel they already have, and another one they want to work on that day. In the last group of the day, we sometimes look back to their goal and the child can reflect on his/her progress.

Another way we work to build positive self-esteem with the children throughout the day is when the staff and volunteers work to catch the kids doing a specific positive behavior such as listening to instruction, responding to another child's hurt or helping someone in need, saying, 'Please and 'Thank You', and showing gratitude. And we praise them using very specific language. Ex "I like how you showed respect to Mary!" "I see that you are listening! Good for you! That's how we learn new things!" "Thank you for showing caring to your friend."

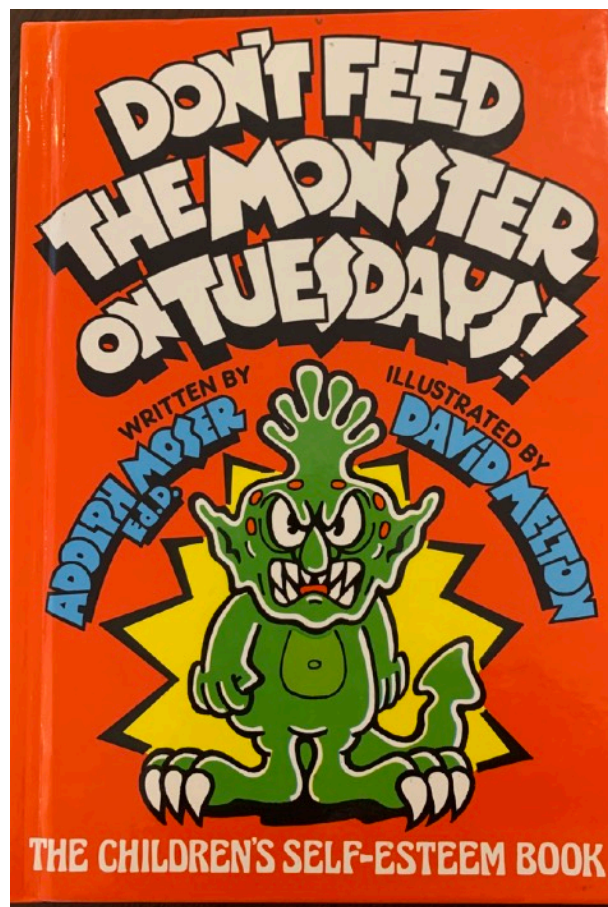
Everything we do in our programming at Kids Ranch is focused on lifting the self-esteem of our children, to teach them to dream what they can be, and to help lay the groundwork to begin a new journey of inspired hope.

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." Ralph Waldo Emerson

KIDS RANCH

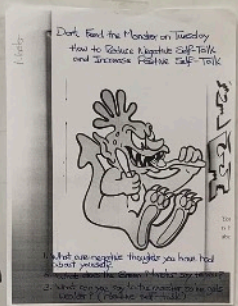
Building capable, caring, confident children.

Teresa Parker, MSSW
Mental Health Coordinator for Kids Ranch



- self-talk

- * You don't look good
- * You're bad You're a nerd
- * You're ugly
- * You're not smart enough
- * You're too short
- You're too tall * You're too forgetful
- * Nobody likes you
- * You're bad at reading * Your clothes are ugly
- You're not perfect
- * You talk too much
- ***



+ self-talk
+ actions

- You're nice
- You're a good person
- You're smart
- You're a good friend
- You're good at reading/spelling
- You're pretty/handsome
- You have good clothes
- You don't talk too much

- ✓ DEEP BREATHS ✓ music
- ✓ move your body/exercise
- ✓ talk to someone you trust