

Mookey the Monkey: Gets Over Being Teased

Heather Lonczak

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IngramSpark

978-1-73536-253-3

Mookey the Monkey: Gets Over Being Teased is an excellent children's book that addresses a common children's woe with practical tools and thoughtful style.

A hairless monkey learns how to handle teasing in Heather Lonczak's fun picture book *Mookey the Monkey: Gets Over Being Teased*.

Mookey is born without hair, but he grows up happy and loved. When he begins attending school, however, he's confronted by classmates who point, stare, and call him names like "baldy." Mookey tries to fit in by wearing a fur costume, but it's too hot. He glues fur clippings from a hair salon onto his body and drinks a hair-growth potion, but nothing works.

A wise owl advises Mookey to stop trying to change his appearance, and to focus instead on changing his reactions to the teasing. Other animals tell Mookey to respond to the teasing with humor, by taking a deep breath and walking away, or by avoiding mean kids. Mookey's parents also support him, explaining why children tease: "It's more about them." Mookey's new techniques help him through his difficulties, so he can once again feel proud of being a hairless monkey.

The book takes a perfect approach to its lessons on teasing: thorough but not over-ambitious, they are woven into the story so that when Mookey is being given advice, the audience's primary experience is being entertained, not lectured to, though there are still helpful how-tos and short, easy-to-understand examples of coping throughout. Lonczak is a psychologist, and her afterward evinces expertise in youth resilience and socioemotional development, reinforcing the message with additional information on teasing and bullying.

The artwork is delightful, featuring a variety of friendly animal faces; even the teasers don't look like they intend any real harm. Bright pastel colors and a rich variety of background details aid the storytelling, but also provide reasons to let one's eyes linger on each page. When Mookey returns to school after receiving advice, he imagines himself wearing "a suit of armor over his smooth skin, just like Arty Armadillo!" It's a powerful image that emphasizes his newfound confidence in a way that children will understand and remember. And when Mookey uses the hair potion, he feels something growing on him: the text relies on an image to finish the joke, of confused Mookey with feathers sprouting from his head, rather than hair. Still, there's no further mention of the potion's effects, and the next page shows Mookey back to normal. This storytelling gap may lead to additional questions.

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PETER DABBENE (October 11, 2021)

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