

Self-esteem subject of new kids' book

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BY MARK WEBER

Red Deer Express

Giving kids the tools they need to keep their self-esteem intact is the goal behind a new book by local author and educator Wendy Collier.

Is Unconditional Love Like Heaven? is the second in her delightful Self-Esteem Angel Series. *Being Different is Cool* was released in 2004. That book was also turned into a play with the help of Tree House Youth Theatre.

Collier is on a mission to help children, often victims of teasing and bullying, to keep a healthy sense of self-esteem regardless of what they sometimes hear about themselves. The key measure is to 'reframe' what is being said to them — is it a fact or is it opinion? Also, children learn to look at what makes them 'different' in a positive way.

Reframing unkind words especially wields a tremendous power. Collier has also been taking her message to thousands of students as well.

The feedback has been tremendous. When she reconnects with the youngsters, she hears of how they've managed to fend off unkind comments and keep a healthy, positive perspective about themselves.

Parents and guardians also tell her of the differences they've seen in their kids.

"The definition for self-esteem, I believe, is being able to see our value and appreciate it. We can be good things but not really acknowledge it.

"And self-esteem education isn't just for kids," she explains. Poor self-esteem affects everything from relationships to productivity, she adds.

Unless they are rooted out, hurtful words get stuck in young minds and hearts and can cause all kinds of damage. Sadly, youngsters often don't tell anyone about teasing they've endured. They can also start to believe that such comments are truth.

"If you add to that other experiences that show they are less valuable, then that can become a core belief.

"I honestly think this is also about prevention because if a child feels good enough about themselves and accept they have limitations, then they start to respect themselves.

"If kids are respecting themselves and others, that takes away their need to fit in and for their peers' approval.

"The emotional pain that goes with having a core belief that you're not good enough is overwhelming. They don't know what to do with it, so they look for ways to numb it."

Collier's latest book focuses on the power of unconditional love through the eyes of a child whose family welcomes a new baby into the family.

The quality and amount of love doesn't change — although the youngster feels initially it might.

"It teaches kids we can all love as many people as we want, and as much as we want. They understand they still have value even though there is another child there, or another grandchild."

Meanwhile, Collier is utterly passionate about her work. And she wants the public to get onboard, too.

Sponsorship opportunities help get more of the books into the hands of more children in the community.

Through the Self-Esteem Angel Mission, 20% of book sales go to providing free books. She also offers talks to schools called Countdown to Self-Esteem Angel Day and evening presentations for parents and teachers call Kids Powered by Self-Esteem.

For more information about her books and services, visit www.angelbooks.ca.