

[Children, Think About This](#)

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YOUTH

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A great book to help you "be the best you can be"

Merrick Johnston, age 9, sat at the feet of Vernon Tejas, a veteran mountaineer and guide, listening to his stories of slippery slopes and the tremendous rush when you reach the mountaintop. Merrick knew that she just had to climb Alaska's Mt. McKinley (the highest North American mountain) some day. She decided that, after climbing, she would also do something to help other children who weren't as fortunate as she. Her plan: to collect pledges from her community. The higher she climbed--the more money she would raise. It would be donated to the Anchorage Center, a family wellness center and child-abuse prevention agency. Merrick Johnson was age 12 when she stood at the top of Mt. McKinley--the youngest person ever."

Educator Barbara A. Lewis' shrewd, written-for-youth book *What do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character*, uses this story to teach adolescents courage--one of a catalog of decent, noble traits 90s parents want to unfold in their child. It's a fun, contemporary, inspiring, challenging book parents should buy for their kids--and also read themselves. Schools would benefit enormously with this text as a course. The American Library Association calls it "The best of the best for

children."

Lewis crafted the book as a working manual. The preteen or teen participates in character nurturing by self-reflection, writing, thinking, researching--that is, by doing. Chapters on character virtues include: Positive Attitudes, Caring, Choice and Accountability, Citizenship, Cleanliness, Honesty, Conservation, Courage, Empathy, Endurance, Health and Forgiveness.

Under the chapter "Responsibility," she offers this activity: "Survey your neighborhood to see if there are seniors who need help with such things as repairing fences, shopping for groceries, painting, doing minor repairs, lawn care, etc. Take responsibility and either do it yourself or get others to help you. Be sure to take an adult chaperon along, both when you survey your neighborhood and when you do your good deeds."

Each chapter is separated into six elements: a definition or anecdote; terse, memorable listings of examples; character dilemmas; activities; "check it out" listings and discussions of published, TV or website resources; and true kid stories germane to the character trait. For example, in "Leadership" Lewis lists five traits of leaders: "1) Great leaders care about and serve others. Or they care about animals, environment or other important issues. 2) They listen to others and communicate well. They accept advice and criticism without exploding or wilting. 3) They have integrity. 4) They are true to what they say. 5) They set a good example of honesty and trustworthiness."

Lewis offers an anagram for THINK: "Think before you follow. Help to make plans, if you can. Imagine the ending before you begin. Do nothing that will hurt yourself or other beings. Keep thinking and rethinking as you go." What Do You Stand For? stands a mile high in value for parents.

TO ORDER "WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?," WRITE TO: FREE SPIRIT PUBLISHING,
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WEBSITE: www.freespirit.com