

CHARACTER BUILDING LESSONS

CARL SOMMER

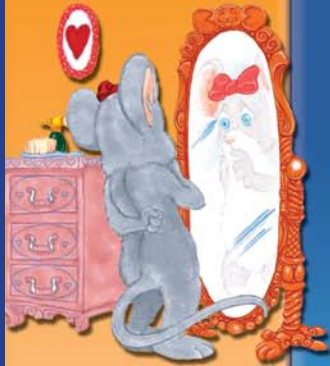
IF ONLY I WERE...

About the Book

Missy the mouse has a very big problem—she's dissatisfied with who she is and what she looks like. She thinks her ears are too big and her tail is too skinny. Even worse, Horace the cat is constantly chasing her, and she can't do anything about it! If only she could be as big and beautiful as Horace, then all her problems would be gone.

One day, while being chased by Horace, Missy wishes herself into becoming a big cat. Her wish comes true, and she chases Horace. Missy is delighted that she is now the biggest and most beautiful cat in the whole world. But she quickly discovers that cats have serious problems with dogs. As Missy wishes herself into becoming bigger and stronger creatures, she discovers that everyone has problems. Missy finally learns to accept herself for what she is.

This delightful and powerful story by Carl Sommer shows children the importance of self-esteem, trust, and cheerfulness.



Main Virtues

Self-Esteem/Trust/Cheerfulness

Other Virtues

Appreciation, Caring, Compassion, Fairness, Obedience to Parents, and Trust



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- Self-Esteem—
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Self-Esteem—Accepting Yourself

Missy could have been the happiest mouse in the world...if it had not been for her one BIG problem; Missy did not like being a mouse.

“I’m tired of being so little!” she groaned. “Besides, my ears are too big, and my tail is too skinny!”

Never be ashamed of the way you were born. You can’t change the way you were born, so learn to accept yourself; you’ll be much happier.

Recognizing That Everyone Has Problems and Trials

Papa and Mama told Missy, “Everyone has problems—even big cats.”

But Missy did not think so. Missy soon discovered that Papa and Mama were right.

Missy discovered that EVERYONE has problems. Mice have problems with cats, cats have problems with dogs, dogs have problems with tigers, tigers have problems with elephants, elephants have problems with people, and people have problems with mice.

Trusting and Obeying Parents

Missy did not agree with what her papa and mama told her about everyone having problems. Missy became very sad. She wanted so much to be like Horace the cat. If only she had trusted and obeyed her papa and mama, she wouldn’t have been so sad.

Facing Our Problems and Trials

“Here we go again!” huffed Missy. Horace was chasing her. Today was starting out just like every other day. Poor Missy was so tired of being a tiny little mouse.

Missy was living in misery because of her problem with Horace. Missy should have faced her problem and made the necessary changes. Moaning and crying do not change problems.

Treating Others As You Would Like to be Treated

Missy knew just what to do. Like all the other cats, she began chasing Itty and Bitty. “This is fun!” she laughed while running after her friends.

Missy didn’t like being chased when she was a little mouse, but now that she is big, she does the same to others. We should treat others as we would like to be treated.

Cheerfulness

Once Missy discovered that EVERYONE has problems, she decided not to be sad anymore about being so little. And she did not even mind looking

like a mouse—big ears, skinny tail, and all. Missy finally learned to accept herself. Now she was cheerful.

Questions

1. Where did Missy live?

Missy lived with her papa and mama in the zookeeper's house, next to the kitchen.

2. What would Missy's papa and mama do at night?

At night Papa and Mama would tuck her in and read her a story.

3. Who were Missy's two best friends?

Itty and Bitty were Missy's two best friends.

4. Missy always had something good to eat, a place to sleep, and lots of friends. What was her one BIG problem?

Missy did not like being a mouse.

5. Why didn't Missy like being a mouse?

Missy did not like being like a mouse because she thought her ears were too big, and her tail was too skinny!

6. Why is it unwise to be ashamed for the way we were born?

It is unwise to be ashamed for the way we were born because one cannot change anything about our birth.

If we learn to accept ourselves, we'll be much happier.

7. Missy thought, "If only I were a big cat, I wouldn't have any problems. Then I'd be happy, just like Horace." What did her papa and mama say?

Papa and Mama told Missy, "Everyone has problems—even big cats."

But Missy did not think so. Missy will soon find out that Papa and Mama were right.

8. One night Missy was so sad that she went straight to bed without eating supper. What was Missy crying about?

Missy cried, "It's just not fair! Why do I have to be so little? And why must I have such a skinny tail and big ugly ears?"

Missy did not agree with what her papa and mama told her about everyone having problems. Missy became very sad. She wanted so much to be like Horace the cat. If only she had listened to Papa and Mama, she wouldn't have been so sad.

9. What was Missy moaning and groaning about as she was drifting off to

sleep?

Missy was moaning and groaning, "If only I were like Horace."

10. The next day started out just like every other day with Horace chasing Missy. What was Missy so tired of being?

Missy was tired of being a tiny little mouse.

Missy was living in misery because of her problem with Horace. Missy should have faced her problem and made the necessary changes. Moaning and crying do not change problems.

11. While running away from Horace, what did Missy wish out loud?

Missy wished out loud, "If only I were...a great, big cat!"

12. What did Horace do when Missy arched her back and gave a loud, "Hsssss..."?

Horace ran away as fast as he could.

13. What did Missy do to her friends Itty and Bitty when she turned into a big cat?

Missy began chasing Itty and Bitty.

14. The Golden Rule says, "Do to other as you want others to do to you." How would Missy have treated Itty and Bitty if she followed the Golden Rule?

If Missy followed the Golden Rule she would have treated Itty and Bitty kindly.

Missy didn't like being chased when she was a little mouse, but when she became big, she did the same to others. We should treat others the way we want to be treated.

15. What did Missy think about her problems as she raised her beautiful tail and strutted through the park?

Missy thought, "No more problems for me!"

16. Who did Missy meet next?

Missy met a great big dog.

17. What thought did Missy have about being a cat?

Missy thought, "Being a cat isn't much fun!"

18. What did Missy wish for as she was running away from the great big dog?

Missy wished, "If only I were a...tiger!"

19. What did Missy do about the dog when she became a tiger?

Missy began chasing the dog.

20. What did Missy say about her problems as she pranced around as a tiger?

Missy said, "Now my problems are gone for sure! I don't have to be afraid of anything!"

21. When Missy met some of her tiger friends, what did she say to her new friends?

Missy told her new friends. "Let's have some fun and tease the elephants."

22. Why is teasing wrong?

Teasing is wrong because teasing is trying to get someone irritated or mad. If we love people we will always want to do things that will make them happy, not irritated or sad.

23. As the tigers silently crept up to the elephants to tease them, what did one of the elephants do to Missy?

Quickly an elephant spun around and grabbed Missy.

24. Where did the elephant finally toss Missy?

The elephant tossed Missy into a nearby pond.

25. What thought did Missy have about being a tiger?

Missy thought, "Being a tiger isn't much fun!"

26. What did Missy wish for as she was running away from the elephant?

Missy wished, "If only I were...a giant elephant!"

27. What thought did Missy have as she felt like the biggest creature in the whole world?

Missy thought, "No more problems for me! Surely no one can bother me now!"

28. What were some men looking to buy when they came to the zoo?

Some men had come to the zoo to buy an elephant.

29. What did the zookeeper use to get Missy into the big truck?

The zookeeper used a bucket full of peanuts.

30. What did Missy do when she saw the bucket full of peanuts?

She hurried after the zookeeper...right into the back of a big truck.

31. What did the woman trainer shout to Missy as she cracked her whip?
The woman shouted, "Come on! You're going to learn to do tricks!"

32. What did Missy say about being a strong elephant?
Missy said, "Being a strong elephant isn't much fun at all."

33. What did Missy wish real hard for when the woman left?
When the woman left, Missy wished real hard, "If only I were...an elephant trainer!"

34. What kind of tricks did Missy have the elephants do when she turned into an elephant trainer?
They had to stand on their back legs, stand on top of a ladder, hold a ball, and do many other hard tricks.

35. What thought did Missy have about her problems when she was an elephant trainer?
Missy thought, "Surely now all my problems are gone! I can make the biggest animals obey me!"

36. What did the ringmaster say to Missy?
The ringmaster said, "These elephants can do much better tricks than that! Either you teach them some new tricks or you're fired!"

37. What thought did Missy have about being an elephant trainer?
Missy thought, "Being an elephant trainer isn't much fun at all!"

38. What happened when Missy was just about to set her food down?
A wee, little mouse ran across the floor—right between her feet!

39. What did Missy wish for then?
Missy wished, "If only I were...a mouse!"

40. What did Missy shout when she jumped out of bed and ran to take a peek at Horace?
Missy shouted, "Yippee! I am a mouse!"

41. What did Missy discover about problems?
Missy discovered that EVERYONE has problems.

Mice have problems with cats, cats have problems with dogs, dogs have problems with tigers, tigers have problems with elephants, elephants have problems with people, and people have problems with mice. Missy finally discovered that Papa and Mama were right.

42. Why is so important to understand that in life we will have problems?

It is important to understand that in life we will have problems because when problems come, it will help us do things to solve the problems. Groaning about problems does not solve them.

43. What did Missy decide not to be sad about?

Missy decided not to be sad about being so little. And she did not even mind looking like a mouse—big ears, skinny tail, and all.

Missy learned to accept herself. You also will be much happier if you learn to accept yourself.

44. Missy became a happy mouse. Now when she saw Horace, what did she do?

Whenever she saw Horace, she just stayed home.

45. What did Missy do when Horace left?

When Horace left, then she would go outside and play.

46. What was the best thing Missy learned?

Best of all, never again was she sad about the way she looked, or about being...a wee, little mouse.

Be wise and never be ashamed of who you are.