

MIDDLE SCHOOL/NONFICTION

“Smart and funny and real, these tips and tools will help you deal with real life issues. I wish I had this book when I was in middle school.”

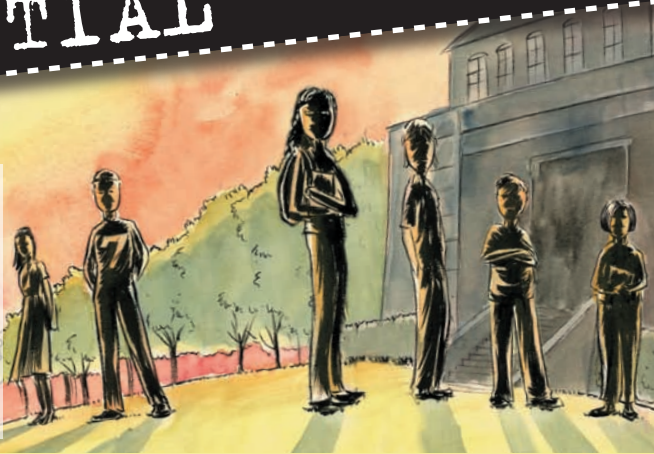
—Ericka Lutz, author of *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Friendship for Teens*

Be Confident in Who You Are

BOOK 1

# MIDDLE SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL™

“WE GO TO MILLDALE MIDDLE SCHOOL. WE’RE VERY DIFFERENT IN LOTS OF WAYS, BUT WE’RE ALL GOOD FRIENDS. A COUPLE MONTHS AGO, WE WERE JUST HANGING OUT WHEN THESE KIDS CAME OVER. . . .”



Meet Jack, Jen, Chris, Abby, Mateo, and Michelle—six teens trying to figure out middle school. But some serious challenges stand in their way—bullies putting them down, blowups that threaten friendships, and real doubts about whether they measure up in looks, popularity, smarts, or athletic ability.

Follow these teens as they take a stand against letting others define who they are. Along the way, discover insider information for dealing with teasing, staying cool, and feeling good about who you are. You’ll also find quizzes, quotes, tips, tools, and many other resources to help you survive the social scene at your school.

Annie Fox, M.Ed., is a writer, educator, workshop presenter, and online advisor for teens. Her Web site ([www.heyterra.com](http://www.heyterra.com)) serves as a popular forum for teen and family issues.



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1 BOOK 1

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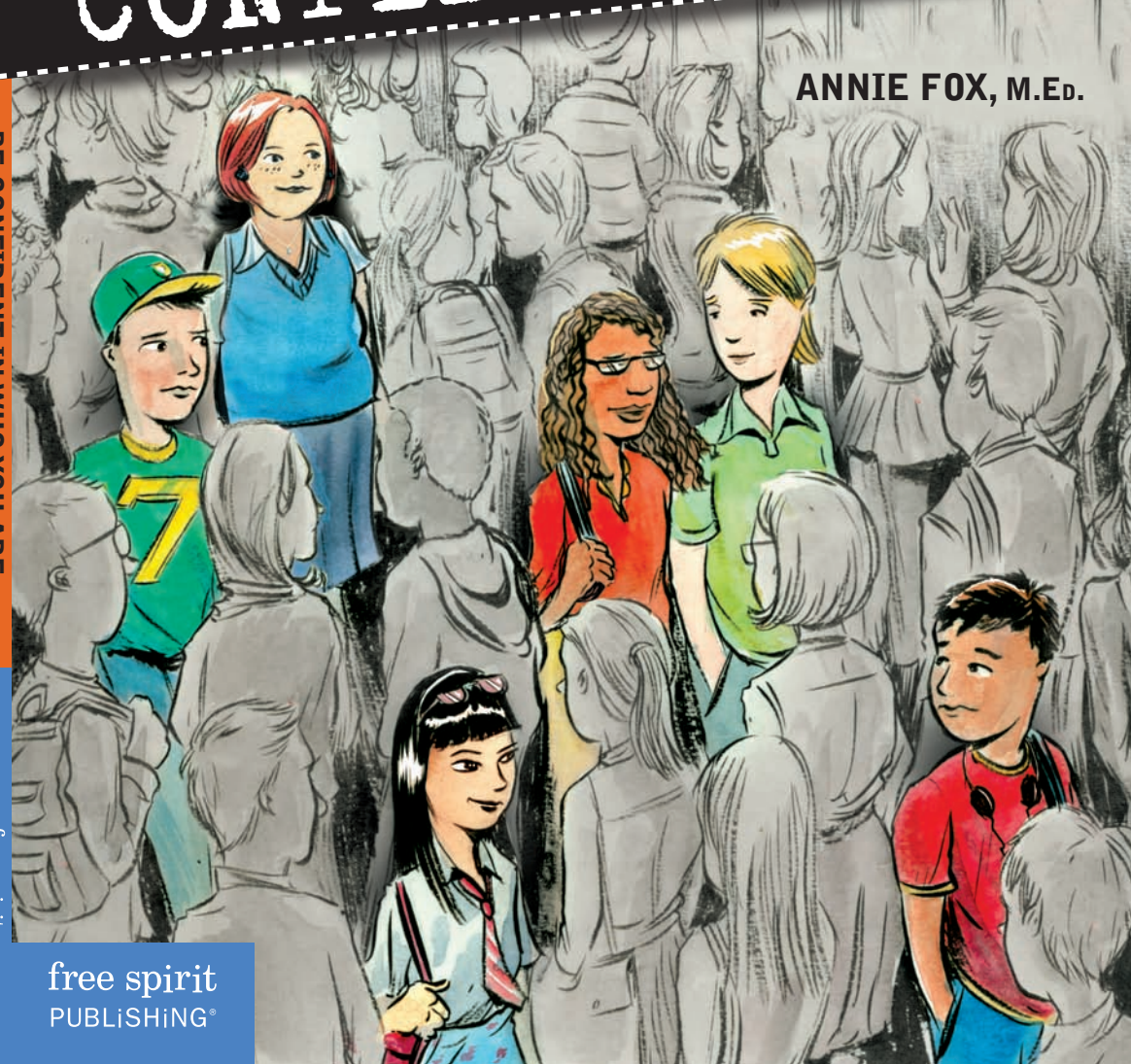
BE CONFIDENT IN WHO YOU ARE

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# Be Confident in Who You Are

# MIDDLE SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL™

ANNIE FOX, M.Ed.



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# Introduction

**Hi.** I'm an online advisor at a Web site for teens ([www.theinsite.org](http://www.theinsite.org)). Many visitors of the site email me questions about what's going on in their lives. Middle school issues come up a lot, so I thought, "Hey, why not write a book about this?"

Middle school can be cool but also stressful. Maybe you have a packed schedule and more homework than ever. Friendships may be shifting, and things at home might also be changing. Other people's opinions can start to seem very important—especially their opinion of you. If you compare yourself to others and don't believe you measure up in looks, smarts, athletic ability, or popularity, you might wonder if there's something wrong with you.

It's normal to want to fit in, and lots of people feel pressure to go along with everyone else or do whatever it takes to avoid getting picked on. If this sounds familiar, this book may be able to help. It's all about being who you want to be and feeling good about that. Confidence gives you power. If other people try to bring you down or push you around, you can use that power to keep it together and figure out your next move.

Throughout the book you'll find the stories of six teens trying to figure out middle school, quotes and advice from real teens, quizzes, tips, and insider tools for staying strong through the rough spots. As you read, I hope you'll feel free to email me ([help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com)) with any thoughts, questions, or stories of your own.

In friendship,  
**Annie**



## We go to Milldale Middle School.

We're very different in lots of ways, but we're all good friends. A couple months ago, we were just hanging out when these kids came over...







**Just so you know, we're normal teens.** We don't like everybody and we don't expect everyone to like us. Our school is probably like yours. There are plenty of nice people and some bullies, too. If by some miracle the bullies got an attitude transplant and the teasing stopped, everyone in Milldale (including us) would be happier. We'd be friends with the people we're friends with. And the other kids would leave us alone.

Anyway, after those guys left, Mateo said he was fed up with being teased because of his height. Abby totally understood because people always call her names like "lard butt." The rest of us don't get picked on because of our looks, but we still have plenty of things we'd like to change about ourselves. Chris hates that he's got ADD. Michelle wishes that she stressed less about grades. Jen admits that she worries a lot about what other people think. Jack doesn't like talking about feelings so it's hard to know what he thinks, but he did say he wanted to beat up those guys for making fun of Mateo.

As we were talking, Michelle, who's really smart, came up with one of her probing questions:





**How about that?** We always thought the problem was the mean kids giving us a hard time. Turns out we're not always so nice to ourselves. There's that voice inside our head saying things like: **"I'm not smart enough ... Not strong enough ... Not hot enough ... Not cool enough ... Not good enough!"** Maybe you've heard it, too.

When we criticize ourselves it brings us down, but we don't know how to stop. It's like we're in this race. Nobody actually entered, but everyone's in it and we all want to win. So we try to be like the kids everyone likes so people will like us, too. We watch what we do and say so we don't make mistakes and embarrass ourselves. We hate being in the race, but that's the way it is in middle school and there's nothing we can do about it.

Or is there?

We hear that things get easier in high school. We don't know if that's true, but thinking about it gives us hope. It also gave Michelle an idea: "Why don't we ask other kids how they deal with these problems?"

Turns out lots of kids had great advice about getting through middle school—secret information that no one tells you about. **That's why this series is called "Middle School Confidential"—because not everyone knows the things we've found out.** Like, how to quit worrying about what other people think. That advice really helped us.

**Not that we've totally stopped worrying ... we still do.**  
**But little by little, we've started caring less about what "they" think and started having more fun just BEING OURSELVES.**

PEACE.

