

Excerpt from *Conversations I've Had with Your Child* by Dave Desmond:

"I don't want you to do anything," he said quickly. "Please don't do anything."

I sighed and looked at James. I could have predicted this reaction. "I get it, James," I said quietly. "I know what you mean. It's bad now, but you don't wanna make it worse by pissing Charlie off."

James nodded and kept staring at me, probably waiting for me to agree and stop all of this.

"Well... I am going to do something. But I'm going to explain it all to you so you'll understand everything."

James looked nervous, and then he glared at me a bit as if to say, I knew I shouldn't have said anything to you.

That look was a bummer because it said he didn't trust me, that he regretted ever talking to me, and I knew I had to try and convince him that this was really for the best.

"I know, James, I know. You're probably thinking, Man I never should have opened my big mouth. Now this ding dong counselor is gonna talk to Charlie, and then Charlie's gonna be pissed and make my life miserable. Right?" I asked.

James raised his eyebrows and shrugged as if saying, Yep, that's about right.

"And I know you're thinking if we just keep this to ourselves, maybe it'll just get better..." He looked up and nodded. "But I hate to tell you, James, if we just sit tight and hope for the best, this isn't gonna get any better. I've done this job for a long time now, and I've seen situations like this before. Sometimes people don't let me know what's going on for a long time and hope things will improve, but they never do."

James looked to the side.

"Think about it," I said. "Charlie is being a jerk, and he's getting away with it, and he's obviously not feeling bad about it, so what reason does he have to stop? No reason. In fact, if I don't get in the middle of this mess, I hate to say it, but he'll probably just get worse." James' eyes flashed toward me.

"Hasn't it gotten worse since middle school, James?" I asked. He sat for a moment and then nodded ever so slightly.

"That's what I was afraid of. But I'm gonna get in the middle of this and make it better. You're gonna have..."

"Please don't," interrupted James. I sat and looked at him for a moment. This poor guy was very worried.

"James, I'm going to do something. I don't want you to hold out any hope that I'm just going to hear some guy is making your life miserable and I'm maybe going to just ignore it. That's not going to happen," I said. "Wrap your head around that reality, because I'm in this with you now. We're in it together. What I was going to say is that you're gonna have to trust me. I know you don't know me that well, but you've gotta trust that I'm on your side and we're going to make this better."