

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Chicken Soup for the Soul Hallway Heroes. We are excited about using this program in our school and hope you find the following information helpful. Please reach out with any questions or concerns you may have.

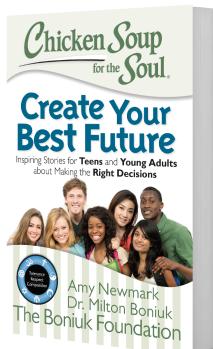
OUR GOAL

Our goal is to provide students opportunities to develop and practice literacy skills while also developing tolerance, respect, compassion, confidence, and empathy. Through storytelling, social and emotional learning, and project-based learning, students apply the strategies and tools they learn to prevent bullying and cyberbullying behaviors. We've chosen Chicken Soup for the Soul Hallway Heroes to help us achieve this goal.

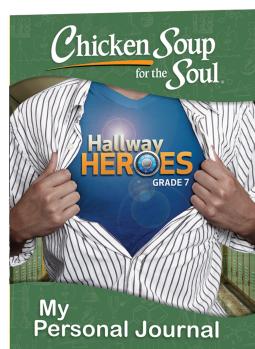
PROGRAM BENEFITS

- Improved school climate
- Strengthened literacy skills
- Instruction and practice of social and emotional skills
- Participation in collaborative learning activities
- Opportunities to strengthen student relationships
- Focused efforts to address and prevent bullying and cyberbullying behaviors

PROGRAM COMPONENTS



*Chicken Soup for the Soul:
Create Your Best Future*



Hallway Heroes
Student Journal

HOW TO BE INVOLVED

- Read and discuss stories from Chicken Soup for the Soul: Create Your Best Future
- Ask about the stories, school activities, and projects from Hallway Heroes
- Talk about the Hallway Heroes Classroom Respect and Personal Pledge
- Talk to your child(ren)'s teacher about what he or she is learning in the program
- Watch the CBS Dream Team...It's Epic! Show: *Chicken Soup for the Soul's Hidden Heroes*
- Visit the family portal at: <http://www.chickensoup.com/hallwayheroes>
- Sign up for a subsidized online subscription for access to thousands of other stories to read with the family



Busy

By Erika Hoffman

As Published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Raising Great Kids*

If you are too busy to laugh, you are too busy.

~Proverb

All my life, I thought it was good to be busy. Idle hands are the devil's work. I was a busy kid, a busy teen, a busy student. I graduated on a Saturday from college and began my master's on Monday. After that summer of courses ended, I taught school while continuing my studies with night classes. The next summer break, I completed my advanced degree and launched my career. I taught high school, pursued an administrative certificate, joined clubs, and dated my boyfriend. I married, moved, acquired a new job and kept doing what I'd been doing, including taking groups of students to France on spring break. Then, at thirty, I had my first child and quit work. Life as I knew it came to a grinding halt.

I doted on that baby, and the one who came twenty-one months after him, and the one who came two years later, and the last one who came twenty-one months after the third. I stayed busy. All the while, I kept adding duties: sundry volunteer jobs, clubs, subbing, pets.

My father-in-law often advised that folks need to take it slow when raising kids. When I'd tout the educational benefits of some toy, he'd say, "Let the kids bang on pots and pans." When I'd sign up for some exercise class that would take me out of the house, he'd say, "Vacuum more." I'd furrow my forehead at the suggestion, and he'd add, "Grow a garden!"

"Next year, maybe," I'd say, not really planning on doing it.

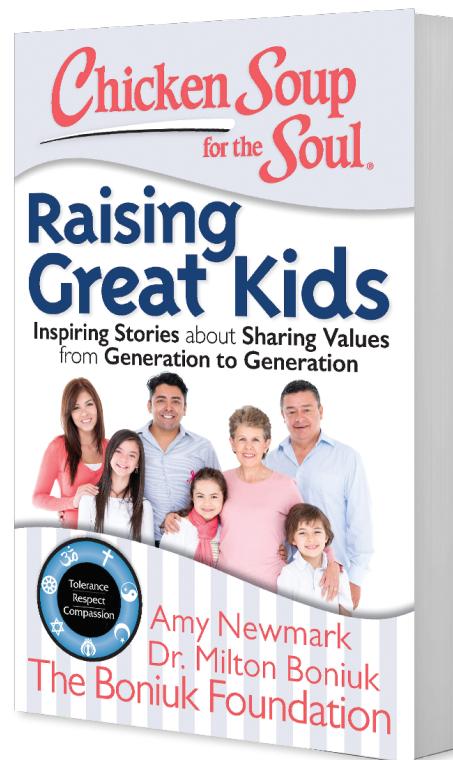
"I like sweeping myself, and it's great exercise," he'd comment and pick up a broom and sweep out my garage. I thought he didn't want me to spend money on babysitters or classes. He encouraged more domestic work. I dismissed his advice and did as I pleased, which is what most thirty-something mommies would do. And then our folks got sick. My mom passed first. Then my father-in-law became gravely ill.

I remember the last time we saw him, wheelchair-bound, pale and aged. He called each of the boys to him. He gave a marble weight to one son, a brass eagle weight to another, and a signed baseball to the third boy. He hugged my little girl and rubbed her head. He delighted in watching them run around the lawn. In his last hours of his last days, he liked nothing more than to sit on the stoop and gaze at the kids romping around his front lawn. He'd been a busy man with a demanding career. He was a joiner. He had engaged in multiple civic duties and sundry clubs and Sunday school, but in the end, he sat serenely viewing his grandchildren doing nothing, just existing.

As I noted his fading eyes pore over them, I pondered the joy he gathered studying their movements and taking in their energy as they frolicked and rolled around on the grass. Something occurred to me. Maybe it's not good to be busy all the time. Maybe being a good mother doesn't mean you have to sign your kids up for every activity that comes down the pike. Maybe you yourself don't have to participate in every social function. It's good to plant a garden and watch the flowers grow without having to till it constantly.

One of the last things I said to my father-in-law that day, the last time I saw him alive, was this: "I'm going to become calmer. I'm going to become less busy."

He smiled weakly as he tilted his head up at me and said, "That's a good idea, Erika." And then he returned his gaze to the kids tussling under the magnolia tree. He smiled.



THINK ABOUT IT

After reading the story “Busy”, consider the following questions:

- How much time do you spend with your child(ren) each day?
- In what ways could you simplify your life to make more time for your family?
- What are some things you do with your child(ren) that bring you joy?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Cyberbullying Research Center

<http://cyberbullying.us/resources/educators/>

Digizen – Digital Citizenship for Young People

<http://www.digizen.org>

PACER – National Bullying Prevention Center

<http://pacer.org>

Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center

<http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov>

StopBullying.gov

<http://stopbullying.gov>

Upstander Alliance

<http://www.bullybust.org/upstander>

Chicken Soup for the Soul Hallway Heroes

Family Pledge

What are some important behaviors, strategies, or skills that you will model at home for your child(ren)?

In what other ways can you serve as a role model of tolerance, acceptance, respect, and kindness?

Signature

Date