

Vicki Chandler
Interview Questions and Answers

Tell us a little about yourself and what you do.

I'm a wife, mother (of two grown sons and a daughter-in-law), and a grandmother. I'm an educator and an MS patient.

My husband and I enjoy traveling (visiting our granddaughter and her parents, going to speaking engagements). We sometimes enjoy watching local sports teams.

In my spare time, I love to do photo shoots outdoors. I have a collection of things that make me smile or help others giggle (brain floss, a mannequin, a marionette, a 6 foot workman's boot...)

What is the name of your book, who is the publisher, and when is it scheduled to come out?

Heart Eyes: Beth and the Bullies is now available on Amazon (published by CreateSpace).

What is the book about and who is the audience?

In the Heart Eyes series, Beth sees others differently. She uses her insight about people to bring about change. As a peacemaker, Beth inspires bystanders to respond creatively to bullying.

Heart Eyes: Beth and the Bullies includes follow-up questions adults can use to guide discussions about how to prevent bullying.

The series is written for children in grades 2 through 4. It is intended to be read to children by educators, counselors, librarians, parents, and grandparents.

What motivated you to write the book?

I share the collective frustration about bullying as a parent (of a son who has ADHD and mental illness and who was bullied), as an adjunct professor (teaching special education courses), as a former administrator, as a former special education teacher, and as a former classroom teacher.

I wrote the picture book "Heart Eyes: Beth and the Bullies" because of the [growing evidence](#) that bystanders are also intimidated by bullies, rendering some of them fearful of reporting bullying.

What's your experience with bullying? What's your perspective?

As a bystander: Fifty years ago I witnessed a classmate get bullied on a regular basis. None of the students knew she was sick. All we knew was that she couldn't run around at recess, couldn't take gym, and was absent a lot. Either she was teased or ignored by kids in the class. Then one day our teacher told us Susan died. It's bothered me ever since because I didn't do anything to help her. I could have sat with her at recess or joined her at lunch.

As a parent: My son got bullied all throughout school. His ADHD made him an easy target. Other children taunted him without being seen by teachers. When Chris turned around, the teachers assumed he was causing some disturbance. When he was in sixth grade, kids beat him up after he got off the school bus. He was stuffed in a locker. Children took things from him (his textbooks, his trombone...).

As a teacher: Whenever students got bullied at recess, they'd come into the classroom reporting it. It was difficult to get the facts having not been outside when the harassment occurred. It was frustrating and time consuming. Often investigating those incidents infringed on valuable teaching time.

As an administrator: Often students reported bullying on the bus, in the hall, or other places where there were no adult witnesses. Sometimes parents called to report incidents of bullying their child experienced. It was difficult to prove the offenses. It was challenging to get the guilty student to admit the bullying.

As a professor: Future educators are concerned about the ongoing issue of bullying. As classrooms become more diverse, there are increasing numbers of vulnerable students who can become victims of bullying. College students seek tools to help them combat the problem.

What's the most important question to ask?

What's the heart of the problem?

Bullying continues because the heart of the problem is the heart.

We've been addressing the behaviors (the symptoms) and not the driving force behind those behaviors (the cause): the heart. Often, there is a lack of motivation to get involved, to be an agent of change, or to assume responsibility. Children choose friends who are popular, attractive, rich, and athletic. They play with friends in their own clicks, rather than looking for someone who might need a friend.

The good news is that children can be taught to "see others differently." We can equip students with proactive tools. Sometimes children are ignored, as though they are invisible and worthless. Children can be taught to notice them. Sometimes children are bullied for a superficial characteristic (a disability, a physical trait that makes them stand out...). Sensitivity lessons can elevate compassion. Children will begin to see inner beauty and hidden potential in others.

What is the message of your book? What has been the response of your readers?

The Message:

New research shows that bystanders of bullying are also intimidated by bullying. That's why many are fearful of reporting incidents witnessed. *Heart Eyes: Beth and the Bullies* offers them a new option. It demonstrates how seeing others differently provides new insight. That insight empowers them to respond creatively to bullying. The central character, Beth, inspires children to mobilize other bystanders in order to protect and include victims.

Response of Readers: Everyone responds enthusiastically...even with a sense of urgency to get the message out so children will be empowered to stop bullies. Each person spontaneously shares their story about bullying, proving the problem is pervasive and strikes a chord.

Did you learn anything from writing your book, and what was it?

I learned from my writer's critique group how to improve my writing (to "show and not tell"). I've also learned quite a bit about art from my illustrator, Ryan Jackson (when he explained how he's able to draw his astounding illustrations).

What do you hope your readers will take away from reading your book?

One child can make a difference when bystanders of bullies are taught what to do when they witness bullying (other than telling an adult).

Children will begin to see others differently. They will use their heart eyes to detect what kids wish others would know (our hurt, our fears, our potential...).

[We all could use a Beth in our lives.]

What book or authors have influenced your life and writing?

John Maxwell's books

One of my favorite [John Maxwell's quotes](#):

"I want to make a difference with people who want to make a difference, doing something that makes a difference."

— [John C. Maxwell](#)

What are your current or future projects?

- I'll continue writing more books in the Heart Eyes series, and am busy getting the word out about the message of the book *Heart Eyes: Beth and the Bullies* (teaching a course at Bucks County Community College for teachers and parents, speaking at the [Mid Atlantic Christian Schools Association](#) (MACSA) teachers' conference in November, going into elementary classrooms in local public schools...).
- Ongoing writing projects:
 - Connecting with other moms with children who have mental illness @ [my blog](#)
 - Writing devotions for [Rest Ministries](#) (an online Christian ministries for people like me who have chronic illness or pain)