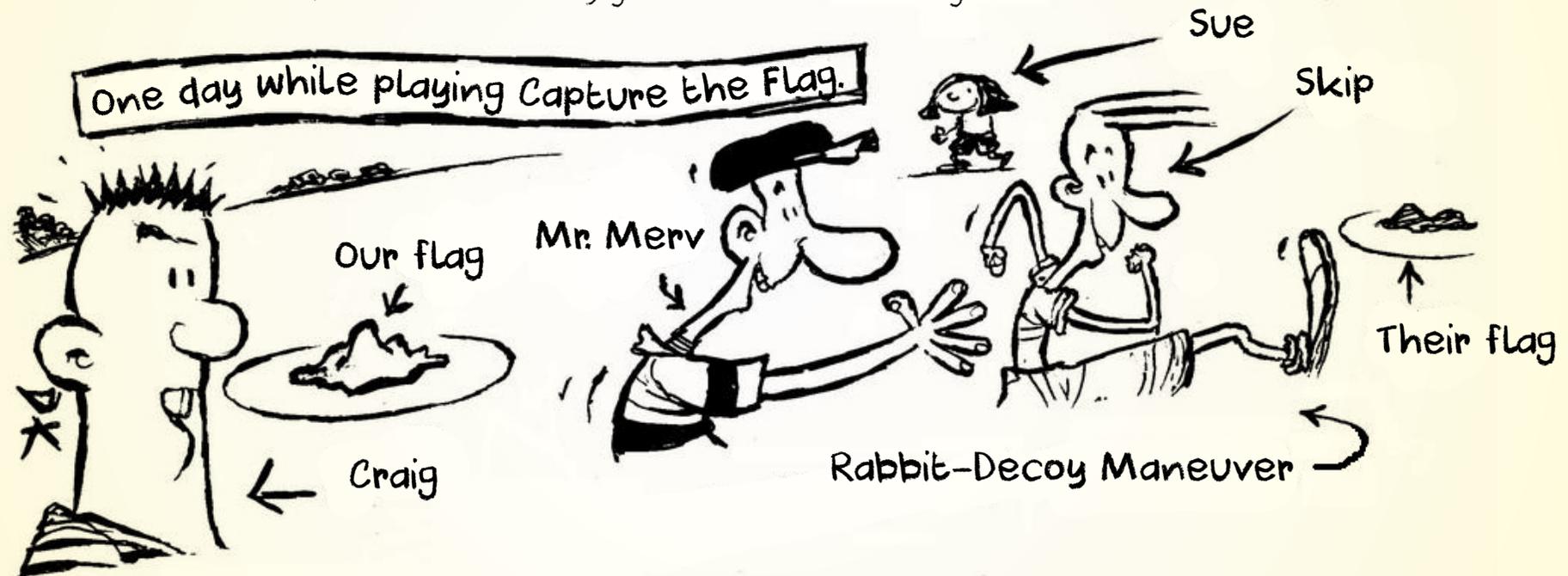


Q&A: To Say or Not to Say

The Scenario:

Craig was not impressed. The very first thing Mr. Merv did as the replacement group leader was run after wiry, opposing team member Skip, leaving the flag wide open for capture. If Craig hadn't doubled his efforts and run back on defense, Sue would have surely grabbed

the flag and returned it to her base, no doubt skipping and whistling all the way. Skip and Sue's "Rabbit-Decoy Maneuver" was the oldest trick in the book, and thanks to Mr. Merv, their team was a hair away from humiliating defeat.



Craig thought about it for a few moments and decided that in the absence of the usual, experienced group leader, Mr. Frank, something needed to be done to "save" their game of Capture the Flag before it was too late. Mr. Merv obviously hadn't had much recent experience.

"Mr. Merv!" Craig said loudly. "You go to the middle of the field and keep an eye on Sue. I'll stay here and guard."

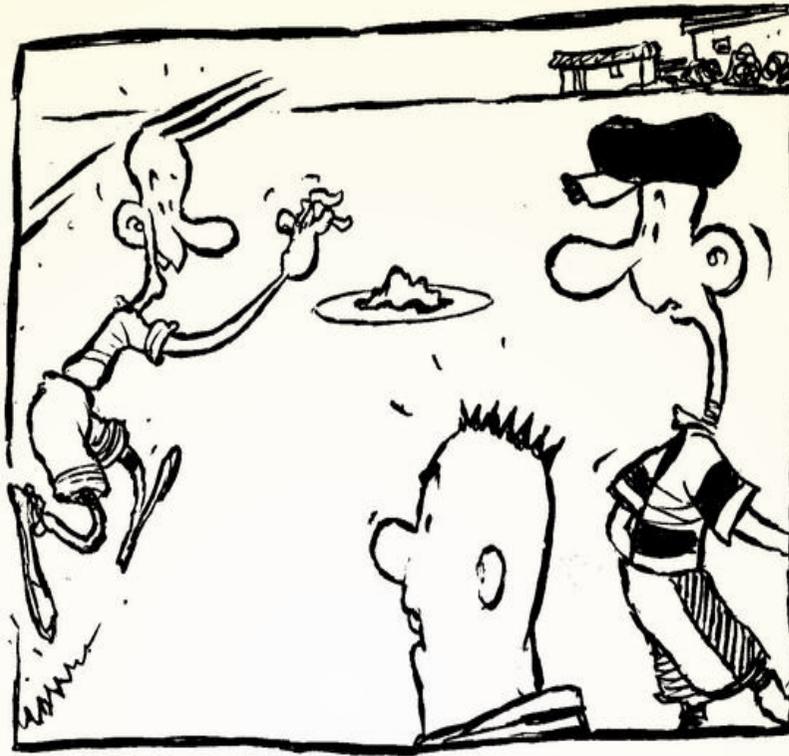
"Well, I'd like to remain here, because we're on a slight hill," Mr. Merv answered. "I can see the entire field from here."

"Well, Mr. Frank never needs to stand at the flag to be able to see all the kids. Quick, get to the middle before Sue comes around!"

However, before Mr. Merv could respond, Skip came running from the left flank, sliding past the rear of the circle with his arm reaching for the flag. Craig and Mr. Merv turned to look behind them, and at that very moment Sue came rushing in from behind at full speed. Skip and Sue collided and landed in a pile directly on top of the flag. There was a moment of silence as Skip and Sue picked themselves up.

"Maybe we should slow down so no one gets hurt," Mr. Merv said.

Craig jumped forward. "Are you hurt, Sue? Skip?" he asked quickly. When both Sue and Skip shook their heads, Craig continued: "Okay, good! Then you're both caught. Now go to jail. We only have fifteen minutes left, so Mr. Merv, you stay here and guard. I'll go for a counterattack and capture the other team's flag."



Mr. Merv couldn't get in a word edgewise, and Craig was soon halfway across the field, contemplating his strategy. Craig spied the opposing team's flag, and to his amazement it was completely unguarded. *Losers*, he thought as he snatched the flag and gleefully sped toward his base, still wondering why he wasn't meeting opposition.

As he came closer to his team's base, he noticed everyone was still huddled around the flag area talking.

"All right, everyone, this is *not* going well," Craig interrupted. He felt distinctly annoyed. "Line up, and I'll decide on the teams. Let's go, people! Move, move!"

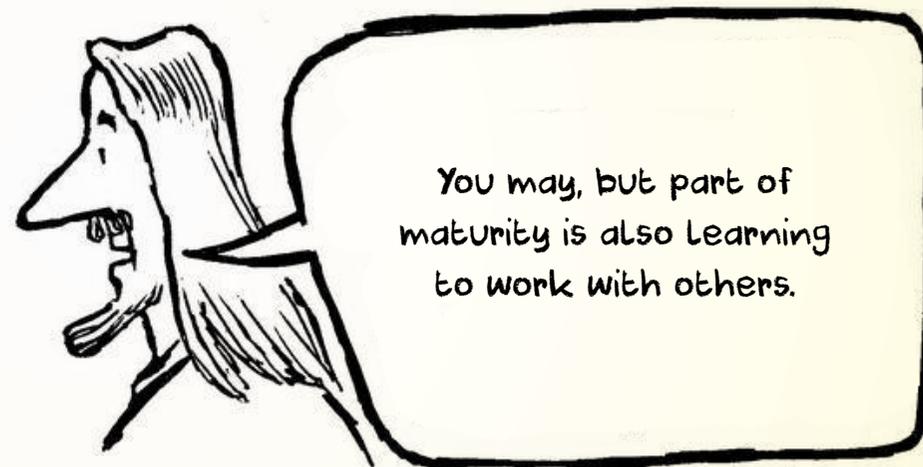
Question: I have opinions and ideas, and sometimes I think I should be the one in charge rather than my teachers and parents, especially when it's something I know more about than they do. Is that okay?

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19 AKJV).

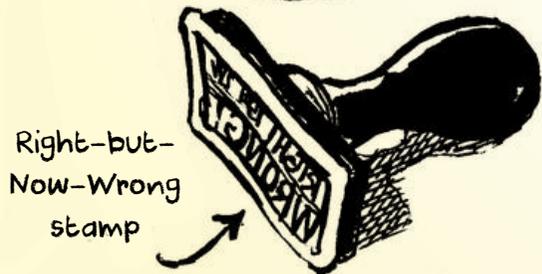
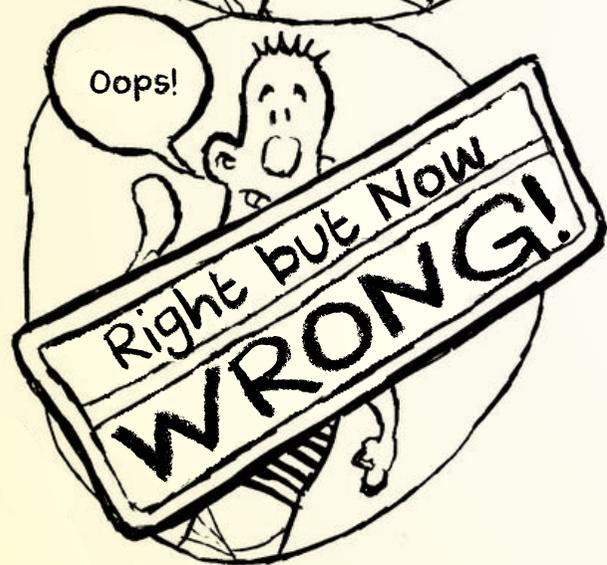
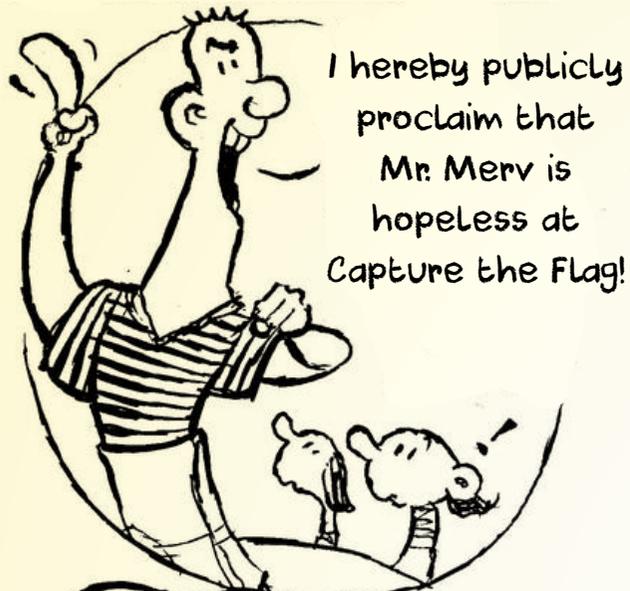


Question: But what if I'm pretty sure I'm right and that my parent or teacher is doing something wrong? Isn't it my duty to speak up and make it right?

Answer: You have many gifts and talents, and you're smart, and as you get older, you'll find yourself increasingly capable of coming up with good ideas for yourself and for your friends. It's wonderful when you put your gifts and talents to good use. However, part of growing up is also learning how to use your gifts and talents wisely. A mature individual knows how to respectfully present his or her ideas, and it takes time to learn how to do that. In fact, being humble and respectful toward others is a sign of maturity.



Answer: You should always speak up if you feel that something is wrong, but you also need to learn to do that the right way. Make it a goal to learn to speak in humility and with respect. Share your ideas with openness and a readiness for feedback from others, even if their views conflict with yours at times.



Even if the point you want to bring out is right, you're putting yourself in the wrong if you're making your point in a proud and disrespectful way. No matter how good you think your point is, if you're not communicating it in a kind and respectful manner, it's just not right. Put more importance on showing loving respect than on simply being right.

It's also important to remember that no matter what your opinion may be, there's always the chance that you are wrong or that you don't see or understand the full issue. If you try to remember that, you'll be humbler and more open in your conversation and presentation.

Question: Sometimes it seems that those older than me simply don't know as much about something as I do, so why would I have to go out of my way to show respect if they're not as informed or knowledgeable and simply want me to see things from their perspective?

Answer: Showing respect to others is not about whether you're smarter than someone else; it's about courtesy and good manners being a part of your communications and interactions with others whether you're in the wrong or the right.

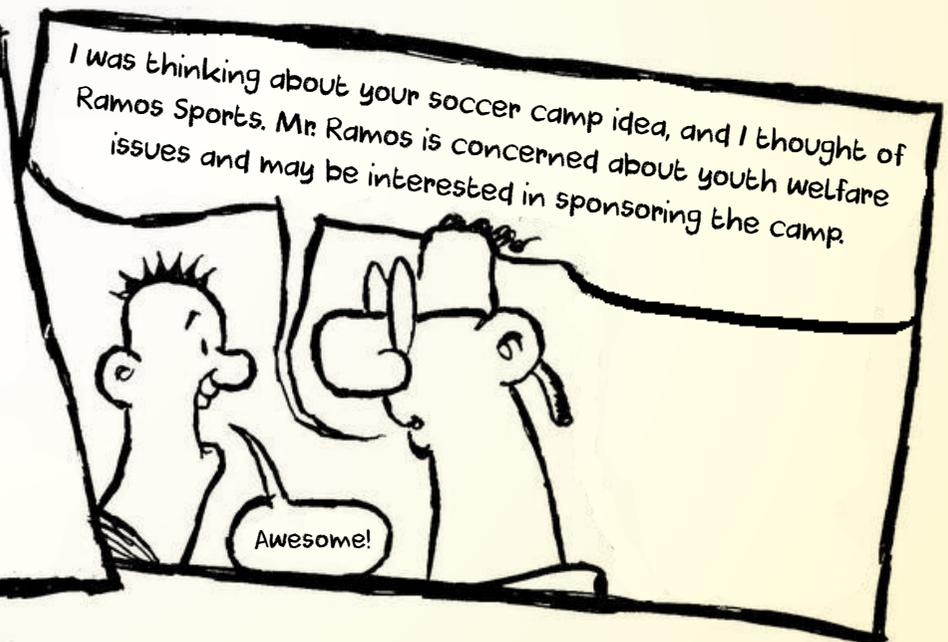
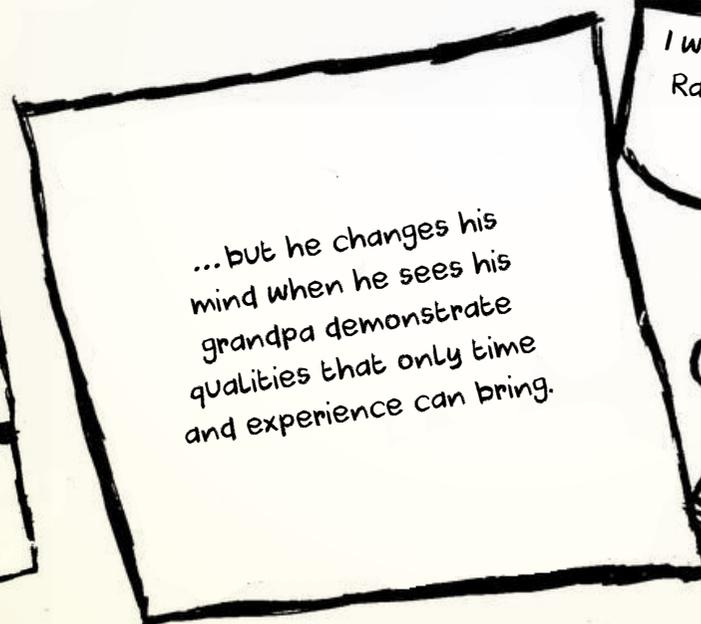
Everyone has a different wealth of knowledge, experiences, and interests, and that can influence what you feel strongly opinionated about. When you're young, it's easy to focus on someone else's lack of knowledge or understanding, and to push the fact that you know more and are right. It can help you to step back and consider the bigger picture.



"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3 ESV).

You can ask yourself whether proving your point is what's of most value in the situation. Perhaps you are missing something beyond the simple facts, and your parent or teacher has a deeper understanding of it. Those who are older than you have accumulated more wisdom and knowledge about life in general, which can influence a viewpoint beyond the simple scholastic or technological knowledge or current trends and fashion.

This is not to say that you should simply verbally agree with everything (even if you disagree), because that will only make you feel unheard and resentful. Respect is a two-way street, and both parties in a discussion should be willing to hear the other side. The key is learning to present your viewpoint with respect and courtesy even if you are more knowledgeable.



Question: How can I get past the frustration I feel when I face these conflicts with my parents or teachers?

Answer: Not every conflict is going to end harmoniously. You may walk away from such a discussion feeling frustrated, unheard, or even undermined, and if that's the case, then you should try to clear that up, but it's not always successful to do so in the heat of the moment.

Sometimes as your temper and irritation cools, you may find that it really wasn't such a big deal, and you can let it pass. Other times the hurt remains, and you will need to communicate about it. In situations like that, find a way to express that to your parents or teachers so you can let them know how the communication or issue has affected you. It helps to define what it was that left you feeling frustrated or hurt so that you can communicate it clearly. You can also do it in writing if you have a hard time expressing yourself verbally.

Part of growing up and maturing is not allowing anger or frustration to become a predominant feature of

your communications with your parents or teachers. Learn to look past what you're currently upset about and focus on what you can learn from your interactions with your parents and teachers, even if you don't agree with everything. Good communication skills are an important part of your interactions with others. But it's a two-way street of listening to others and expressing your own opinions and thoughts. Many times, it comes down to asking yourself whether the better choice is to say what's on your mind, or not to say it and listen. Arguing simply for the sake of being right often prevents you from seeing the bigger picture.