

Ronnie's Morning

It was just one of those days.

Ronnie had been up all night, taking care of his crying sister, Lisa. She had had one of those nightmares again. Ronnie had long given up on trying to wake their mother. After she had been drinking, it was impossible to rouse her. And, in the off chance that they were able to, she would wake up angry. That certainly would not help Lisa in the least.

In the morning, Ronnie's mother was still asleep, so he got Lisa ready for school. Lisa had a permission slip for a field trip, and Ronnie forged their mother's signature on it. He didn't want to wake her if she had a hangover.

Sleepwalking, Ronnie and Lisa headed to the bus stop. The bullies were waiting there, of course, and they stole Lisa's lunch, once again. Ronnie tried to stop them, and was written up for fighting, once again. So that Lisa wouldn't have to go hungry, Ronnie gave her his lunch.

Ronnie headed to first hour. It was history class. The teacher asked everyone to get out their homework. Ronnie had not done his, because he was too busy caring for Lisa.

"Ronald, how do you ever expect to graduate?" Mrs. Smith asked, sternly. "You need to be responsible."

Ronnie bit his tongue. He knew that arguing would just get him into more trouble.

"Yeah, Ronnie" Brad, the boy behind him whispered. "You're just as dumb as the ugly little sister of yours."

It was as if something inside of Ronnie had exploded. He turned around and punched Brad square in the nose.

Questions

Please answer in complete sentences.

1. How do you think Ronnie feels?
2. What clues tell you that he feels this way?
3. Make a personal connection. Have you ever felt like Ronnie?
4. What do you think is going to happen next?

Coping Strategies

Coping Strategies are strategies we can use, when we are having a bad day. Coping strategies help us to deal with strong emotions such as anger, frustration, and stress. When we use coping strategies, we are less likely to get ourselves in trouble, by lashing out, getting in fights, or being grouchy.

Here are some coping strategies:

1. **Write it down**—Keep a journal. When you're feeling frustrated or upset, write your feelings down in your journal. If you would like someone else to read it, give it to a trusted friend or adult once a day.
2. **Write a letter.** Write a note, letter, or e-mail to a trusted friend or adult, when you are frustrated.
3. **Talk to someone.** Sometimes it helps to talk to a friend, trusted adult, or counselor.
4. **Draw.** Drawing can be a great way to let our your anger and frustration.
5. **Take a walk.** Get a drink, or ask if you can take a short walk.
6. **Exercise.** When you aren't at school, go running, ride your bike, or do something else to exercise.
7. **Read.** Reading can be a great way to escape from your frustrations, for awhile.
8. **Do something you love.** Find a hobby. Do you like playing music? Singing? Making models? Find something you love doing, and do that when you are upset.
9. **Focus on what you are doing.** Sometimes it helps to just plow ahead. Focus on what you are doing, and block out everything else.

Coping Strategy Homework

Sometime during the next week, use a coping strategy. Write about it on this sheet.

1. The thing that made me mad was...
2. The coping strategy I used was....
3. Did it help, why or why not?
4. Will you use this strategy again? If not, what strategy will you use?