#### We hope you enjoy this free preview





By Colleen Doyle Bryant Illustrated by Manuela Soriani



"Because I want to play my game player. Mom said, 'No.' But I really, really want to...

"Wait a second. Who am I talking to?" asked the little boy, who'd just settled himself into the comfy hollow of an old oak tree.

"Why, me, of course," came the warm voice.

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"Who?" he asked, looking around the yard.

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"Me. The tree. Right here.

"I've been watching you grow up, just like I watched your daddy before you. And it's time I speak up," said the tree.

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"You watched my daddy grow up?" asked the boy, who was so interested, he forgot to be surprised that the tree was talking.

"Oh yes. I watched your daddy and his daddy before him. You're a lot like your daddy, you know," the tree said with a nod of her leaves.

"I am?" he asked.

"Yes. He liked to play outside too. And he sat here one day, just like you, hiding from his momma. Only he was crying," she explained.



"My dad never cries!" exclaimed the boy.

"Saw it with my own eyes," said the tree.

"Why was he crying?" the boy asked, still doubting his father was ever a little boy, much less one who cried.

"Well, he was very sad because he sneaked a toy when his momma had told him not to play with it," the tree explained.

"But my dad never does things he shouldn't," the boy said.

"Everybody makes mistakes. Oh, believe me, I've watched people make lots of mistakes—small ones, big ones, silly ones, serious ones.

"Making mistakes is part of growing up. It's how you learn who you want to be," she said.



"That day, your dad learned an important lesson. Mmhmm, he did," said the tree.

"Yeah. He learned not to get caught 'cause mom will be mad!" cried the boy.

"Oh, he didn't get caught," said the tree.

"Then why was he crying?" asked the boy.

"Because even though his momma didn't know what he'd done, his conscience did," she said.

"What's a 'conshunts'?" he asked, a little worried now.

"A conscience is that voice in your head, and that feeling in your heart, that tells you if something is right or wrong, even when no one is looking," the tree explained.

I think I might know that feeling, the boy thought, looking at his game player.

"Oh no, I have a conscience!"

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#### what would you say if you Could talk to a tree?

Trees make great listeners, and so do your grown-ups. So go ahead and speak up. What are you thinking about?

Why was the boy hiding behind the tree?

Why did the dad's heart hurt when he was a little boy?

How was the boy treating his mom when he broke her rules?

Which feels better in your heart, doing something you aren't supposed to or doing something you are supposed to?

The boy still felt bad even after he decided to put the toy back. Have you ever had trouble feeling ok after making a mistake? What can you do to feel better?

### I'm Proud of me!

What have you done that was kind to yourself and others? When did you make a good choice, even though a bad choice was easier or more fun?

I helped my mom without her asking. I was nice to the new kid at school. I told the truth even when I was scared I'd get in trouble. I listened to the teacher instead of talking to my friends.







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