



Hi mamas and papas!

There is great risk in putting one's work in print for the world to critique — particularly when I deeply believe in this subject matter and how desperately our world needs to empower children with choices of kindness. But there is even greater risk in publicizing one's work when it involves the scrutiny of other moms and dads (*especially* moms – we can be pretty harsh with each other, can't we?).

I am a mom of four children -- four young, frequently screaming, often fighting, sometimes even blood-drawing, non-perfect human beings. I see first-hand how hurtful they can be to each other – despite the fact that they are siblings and claim to love one another. For several months (eleven, but who's counting), I was afraid (terrified) to release the Willamena Picklepants book because I feared my family and I wouldn't be able to uphold the standards of perfection the community would deem necessary. After all, who writes a book on kindness when their boys are face-planting each other in the front lawn, screaming high-decibel sentiments of 'YOU'RE THE MEANEST BROTHER EVER!' as I tell them to get inside before the neighbors hear, only to be met with voices of immediate obedience and honor (note sarcasm) yelling: 'I WISH YOU WEREN'T MY MOM!'

Worse yet, **what happens if one of my kids is cruel to another child at school? Or, what if one of them bullies another child? What if *all four* of them are just plain mean?** All of these 'what if's' stood firmly in the way of publishing the Willamena Picklepants book for far too long. And, as result, the message of choosing kindness and empowering children to sow seeds of encouragement, grace, and forgiveness almost never came to be.

Here's the point. I was letting fear win. And that's exactly what bullies do. They overpower their victims through fear, threats, and intimidation. I was afraid. Afraid of the critics. Afraid of the moms and dads out there who might see one of my kids (or me or their dad) on a bad day (we have many), judge us, and judge this book and its message based on our family and the many ways we fall short (and we're talking a free-fall of *exceptional shortness* between the hours of 4 and 6pm on any given weekday). The point is, *fear* became my bully.

But Willamena's voice kept nudging me. Because sometimes it's the quieter voice that, in its subtlety, is more influential than the world's louder, bigger, stronger voice. And, ultimately, I believe it's that quiet voice within that propels us to change things for greater good, **if only we have the courage to listen to it.** As I tuned *out* the critics and tuned *in* to Willamena, I heard loudly and clearly the voices of children who have been hurt, excluded, left out ... children who sit alone at lunch every day (and adults, too), children who play by themselves at recess, children who have been marginalized, made fun of, who don't fit in ... they all *deeply matter*.

Our children must understand the powerful influence of their words. Let's follow the example of a silly girl named Willamena Picklepants. Let's spread more love, more kindness, more care. We're in this together ... I'm learning how to do this, too.

With Love,

Lauri

A Very Imperfect Momma

“Willamena, here's the lesson, and it's very good news!

You must decide—yes, you get to choose.

Will you speak words that are loving and kind?

Or will you cause pain—is that what others will find?”

We all get to choose to harm or to heal.

The words that we speak are powerful and real.”