



### **He's Not Scary, He's Just A Little Boy**

Jameson is just a little boy like every other little guy . . .well almost! He has a rare condition that has left him looking a little differently.

And unfortunately, that means that sometimes kids treat him a little differently, too—sometimes not too nicely, although not always on purpose.

After some encounters with strangers, Jameson's mom realized she could be silent no more. She knew that their experiences might help protect others from being teased or mistreated. But only if everyone who reads this, shares it to spread this very important message.

This isn't just a message about one little boy, but about all people who are made fun of and singled out for their differences.

Here is his mother's plea for you:

I want to begin by saying that I don't hold anything against these children, or their parents. I understand that it can be extremely awkward when your child is the one making fun or being mean to another child.

But, the next time this happens I hope these parents do more.

Because although I cannot take offense, I would be lying if I said it didn't hurt. It does. It hurts to see my child be made fun of, knowing that this will be a big part of his world the rest of his life.

By now you might be wondering what happened to prompt these words. Nothing has happened that hasn't happened before, and sadly that won't happen again. But, for some reason, it has just happened a lot in the last few weeks.

During a school Open House event, the entire school, K-5th grade, was corralled in the cafeteria to listen to opening remarks and welcomes. As we were walking into the crowded cafeteria we were immediately greeted by a little boy who pointed at Jameson, nudged his mother, and said he looked funny.

We paid no mind and continued to walk through the cafeteria looking for a spot to sit down. Shortly after we sat down two little girls and their mother sat across from us. One little girl looked at us, turned to her mother and said "He looks scary," pointing to Jameson. Her mother told her that wasn't nice to say, and turned around.

Last weekend, in the grocery store with my two boys, a mother and her son are walking down the aisle towards us. I see the little boy look up; I smile at him. He starts to laugh, and tells his mom, "Look mom, that baby looks funny," laughing. I look at his mother and she cannot even muster a word, her jaw hanging open.

As a parent I have been in situations where my child has done or said something inappropriate, so I understand the embarrassment.

I also understand that these children are not to blame. Think about it, we teach them from birth to single things out. Put a bunch of red blocks together, sneak a green one in, and then tell them to look for the green one, the different one.

Sort the shapes that only fit through the right hole. You'll never fit a round peg in a square hole. The round one is wrong. It's OK to notice differences. That's how we identify one thing from another. We teach what is by teaching what isn't.

But these are objects. We can single them out and choose the right one, the one that fits in. We can't do this to people; to children.

As a mother of a child who looks different, this is my plea to you:

If you are the parent whose child says another child looks funny or scary, don't simply say, "That isn't a nice thing to say."

While you are right, it's not nice, simply saying that and walking away still isolates my child.

The next time, follow that statement up and tell your child, "I'm sure he's a very nice boy, let's go meet him."

Please, come introduce yourself and ask my child's name. I assure you, we don't bite! My child is just like yours; he can be sweet, loving, throw temper tantrums, and be a handful. And I assure you, I am just like you; I am a parent learning my way through this.

If your child is curious and doesn't say anything mean but still notices he looks different, please, introduce yourself to us, and ask us our names! Include my child in your world. I promise you, he's not scary, he's just a little boy.

To all the parents and children out there who already practice this, and to those who have purposely made a point to brighten Jameson's day when we have crossed paths: Thank you.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I can honestly tell you I can remember vividly each encounter where a stranger has made a conscious effort to want to know Jameson and include him in their world. And I can bet he does too.

My 6-year-old amazes me when I hear him recount a memory from when he was 3 years old, so I am sure Jameson remembers the same.

I mean seriously, how mean does this happy face covered in S'mores look?!