



**Robert Jorgensen, Grade 8**  
**Chandler School**  
**Pasadena**

*Touching Spirit Bear*, Ben Mikaelson

**Dear Ben Mikaelson,**

Your book *Touching Spirit Bear* inspired and helped me understand and cope with a significant problem of my own. Even though I seem very happy and easy-going with my friends, I am not what I appear to be. Sometimes, I become very, very angry. This anger is so strong and so consuming that I cannot control it and it scares me.

I resemble my grandfather both emotionally and physically. Like me, he had very red hair. I asked him once if he used to get angry. He said, "What do you mean used to?" Knowing that it is not just me does not really make me feel any better.

The first time I remember feeling enraged, I was seven years old. I do not recall exactly what happened but I remember the intensity of the feeling and lashing out at the people around me. The thought of that experience and being unable to control myself and my situation still terrifies me. I am now 13 years old and in the eighth grade. Recently I exploded at my parents, stormed out of the room, and went to sleep. What usually happens is that I get angry with my parents for stupid and crazy reasons like when they are just trying to encourage me. After that my mom or dad will walk away and leave me alone. I do not try to apologize or direct any form of kindness towards them until the next day.

When I read *Touching Spirit Bear* I felt a connection with Cole. His experience helped me understand that my problems are not as serious as his. I am not a bully and I do not blame others for my choices. Nonetheless, I followed Cole's journey with great interest. Cole's experience with the Spirit Bear helped me realize that I can find a way to stay calm and that lashing out is mean and contemptuous. Most importantly, I realized that I do not want to be like Cole. I do not want to be the kind of person who needs extreme measures like being sent away to Alaska and then mauled by a pure white bear in order to change. Your book made me contemplate myself and the people around me in a way that no other book has. I now stop and think about the way I treat my parents when I feel anger building and boiling inside of me.

Before I read your book I could not even talk about, much less write about, the angry feelings that possessed me. I would like you to know how much your book has helped me. It has motivated me to think carefully about the way I treat my family

and the type of person that I am and that I want to be. I know my journey is only beginning but you helped me to start it.

*Thank you from the bottom of my heart,*  
**Robert Jorgensen**

*Besides reading, I love singing and playing goalkeeper for my all star soccer team. As a singer, I am currently rehearsing for my second opera. I am also working towards becoming an Eagle Scout. One day, I aspire to be a writer of children's and young adult literature.*

L E V E L 2



**Brianna Rodriguez, Grade 8**  
**Serrano Intermediate School**  
**Lake Forest**

*Go Ask Alice*, Anonymous

**Dear Anonymous Writer,**

I never knew how drug addicts felt or how they reacted. Reading your book *Go Ask Alice* made me think how I treated my mom, how I treated homeless drug addicts. When I discovered my mom's problem with drugs, it changed the way I looked and thought about drug addicts.

About a year ago I got separated from my mother by social services. She did drugs, I knew it and so did my family. My mom—my hero and supposed to be my role model; I never knew how she felt. I'd always pressure her, tell her to quit. Once I even told her I hated her—even though I loved her no matter what she did. How could I have treated her like that, she needed me, and I didn't even know it. Loving someone with a problem isn't that easy, it takes courage and a big heart.

I always treated drug addicts like they were animals—desperate and lonely, waiting for a person to love them. Reading this book was like cold water splashing on my face; it woke me up. Realizing addicts could only depend on one person—God and themselves. I realized they also need a supporter, someone to be there—love them, hold them, and tell them everything would be okay. That's what I wanted to do for my mother, but I couldn't. I wanted her to realize what I was going through. I wanted her to know that I need a mother, a supporter, and someone to hold me close and to tell me everything was going to be okay.

Finding a way out from addiction is not only hard, it's hard to admit—admit mistakes that you've done, and I know that part was so hard for my mom. Now I know how to react with mom, what to say, and when to say it. Helping an addict is a new understanding, and a self-reflection.