

## **Mannng Up**

written by Torie Wiggins

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*(An 11<sup>th</sup> grade boy sits in front of a group of younger boys who have had behavioral problems - he has been asked to speak to them about his experience.)* I threw a chair at my teacher one time. Like, I didn't knock it over or throw it in his direction...I threw it *at* him. He was hurt...and I felt bad afterwards. He didn't deserve that. I was just angry. *(Acknowledging a young boy who asked a question)* What's the difference between being mad and being angry? That's a good question. I think when you're mad, you just say stuff...you know, like to get the frustration out. You can explain why you're mad, and it will probably make sense. So when you're mad at someone, you can tell them why. But when you're angry...it's like it's all pent up inside and you don't know what to do with it. You don't even know how you got there. But you reach that point, and something happens. In that moment, you don't even know what is happening really. I never thought to myself, "I'm gonna pick up this chair and throw it at him." I think my brain just said to hurt him, because I was hurt. I was hurting inside. It's crazy how your brain works when emotions take over. I remember before I threw the chair, he asked "What's wrong with you?" But he wasn't asking to actually get an answer...it sounded more like an insult. Like I was being accused of something. And I wanted to say I'm angry! But I didn't. Why does something have to be wrong with me for feeling emotions? And when emotions sit inside too long, they turn into something that has to get out, by any means necessary. So when he asked me what was wrong with me...I just acted. I threw the chair. As hard as I could. And after that, he asked me again, he yelled it - "what's wrong with you???" And that's when it hit me...I wasn't even angry at him. That's what was wrong...I didn't know why I was really angry. I never learned how to express any emotions, especially anger. So I just let it all build up inside me with nowhere to go. No one ever taught me how...I was always just told to "man up" or "shake it off." I had to figure that out; how to deal with my emotions on my own. So when I later went back and apologized, I also thanked him. I thanked him for releasing me from that anger by making me answer that question. Once I figured out what was wrong...I could make it right. And now, I don't throw stuff anymore. I have peace inside.



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