



## LIFE LESSONS AND COPING SKILLS

### *Marlon Finds a Way*



Nice Dog  
Books

*Marlon Finds a Way* is a humorous tale about an unlikely friendship between a cat named Marlon and a sparrow named Silky as they evolve from suspicion to trust. It's full of funny moments, silly songs, and some marvelous Marlon high-jinx. Along the way, the story offers life lessons for building self-reliance, solving problems, and gaining a friend, as well as coping skills for dealing with frustration and anger.

Below you'll find brief descriptions of the different life lessons and coping skills contained in the story. Each description includes several questions teachers, parents or family relatives can use to initiate further discussions.

## Building Self-Reliance

We see Marlon's will to succeed, wit and ingenuity as he looks for creative ways to attract Silky's attention and show her that he wants to be friends. As his early efforts fail, he keeps trying with another approach and then another. Through his determination not to give up and his ultimate success, Marlon shows children that they can harness their own abilities and efforts to achieve their goals.

### Questions for Discussion

1. When his first effort to win Silky's friendship fails, what does Marlon do? Why?
2. Does Marlon ever ask for help? Who helps him and what do they tell him?
3. What is self-reliance and how would you describe it? How does Marlon show self-reliance?

## Solving Problems

Marlon uses cat logic and reasoning to pursue his goal of making friends with Silky. Cat logic is a form of problem-solving that puts Marlon in some funny situations. But each time, he goes through the process of analyzing his problem, arriving at a potential solution and following through to try to achieve his goal. When one attempt fails, he goes through the process again until he ultimately finds an approach that works. As children hear his thoughts and watch him in action, they learn how to use logic and reasoning to solve problems.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What is a plan and why does Marlon think he needs one?
2. If you made a plan and it didn't work, what would you do next?
3. What problem is Marlon trying to solve? Does he solve it in the end? How?



## Gaining a Friend

When Marlon first tries to be friends with Silky, she doesn't trust him because he's a cat. So, Marlon decides to trick Silky into thinking that he's just a big bird. After he fails at that, he discovers that his best option is to just be himself. He discovers they both have a sense of rhythm and, by making beats together, they enjoy their own sweet music. The story helps children understand that friendship blossoms when you respect the other person. And while that person may be different from you, there are many things you can do and enjoy together.

### Questions for Discussion

1. In the beginning of the story, Silky doesn't trust Marlon. At the end she does. What made her change her mind?
2. Why does Marlon try to fool Silky into thinking he's a bird? Does it work? Why?
3. Think about one of your friends. What do you like about that person? And what do they like about you?

## Taming a Temper and Managing Anger

When Marlon feels frustrated or upset, he gets angry and lashes out, earning him the nickname, "Mad Marlon." He realizes that if he can't tame his temper, he'll never gain Silky's trust. When he asks for help, he gets two practical skills to help manage his angry behavior. The "Quiet Count" teaches him to count slowly before he reacts or shows his temper. The "Check It Out" teaches him to ask questions before deciding to act. Armed with the "Quiet Count" and "Check It Out," Marlon learns that he can stay calm in the face of frustration and manage his angry feelings. *Marlon Finds A Way* shows children that when they're upset and feeling frustrated, they can use these two powerful anger management skills to help them stay calm.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What happens when Marlon uses the "Quiet Count?" Does it help? How?
2. What happens when Marlon uses the "Check It Out?" Does it help? How?
3. What happens when you get angry? Do you do anything to help your anger go away? What works best for you?