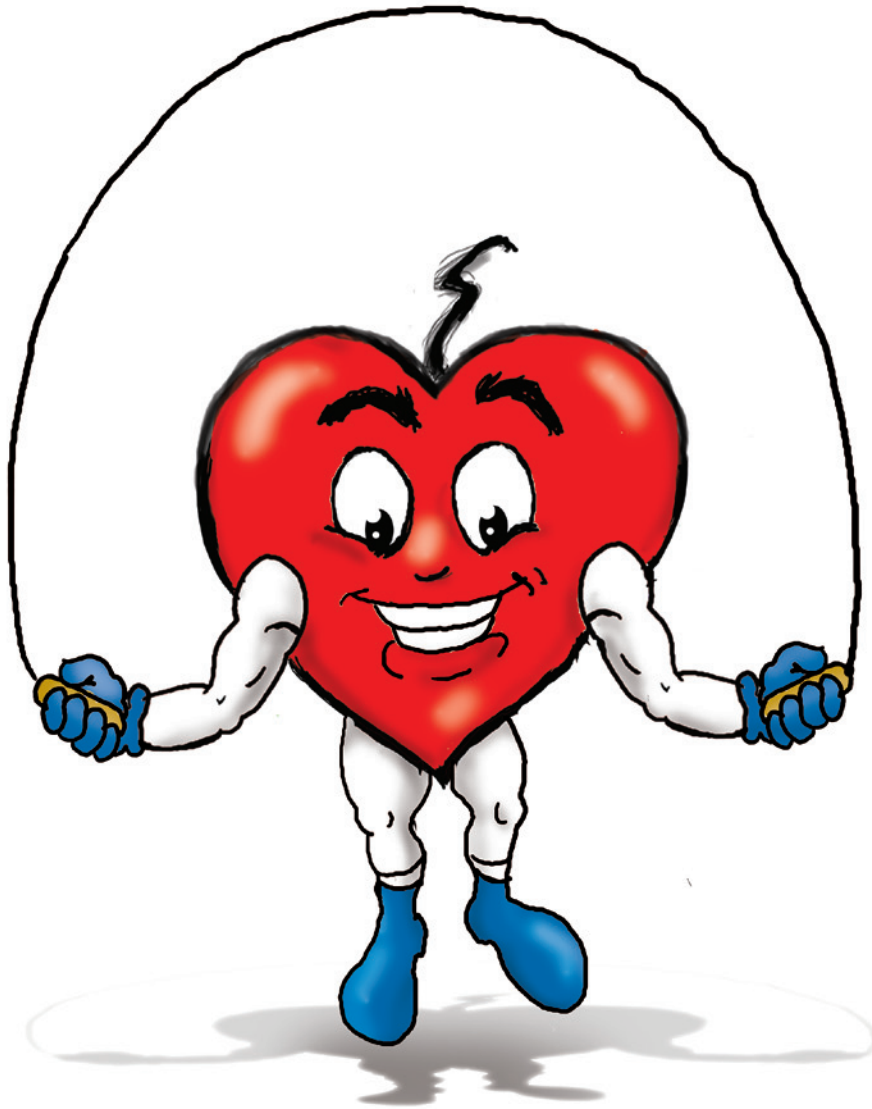


IT'S ALL ABOUT CHOICE™

Getting Back in the Game!



Featuring the Cardio Kidd

by Herb D. Trainer

DEDICATION

It's All About Choice: Getting Back in the Game! is dedicated to my mom, Faye Benjamin, who unfortunately departed this world January 2, 2010. She was my biggest fan and cheerleader, and constantly stayed on my case about completing this project. The fact that she won't be here to witness the finished product or, more importantly, the potentially positive impact we both felt it would have for improving the physical and mental health of children worldwide, is my one huge regret.

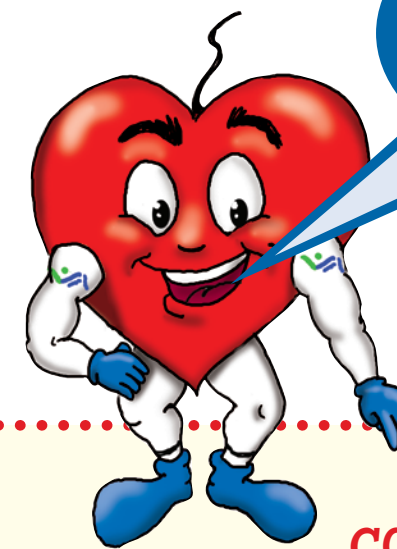
Her favorite part of the book—The Healthy Choices Rap Song—always made her smile. Her favorite character was Mr. Stuffin-Gutt. She was a big kid at heart, and most kids love good rhyming. She had a wicked, razor sharp sense of humor. When she got on a roll, she'd make you laugh hard all day. That's probably one of the things about her I miss the most.

Well Moms, if you're watching over my shoulder, I made good on my promise to you. I am sorry I didn't get it done sooner. But had it not been for your strong, relentless encouragement, *It's All About Choice* would have remained nothing but a dream.

—Love always!
Your son, Herb

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ISBN: 0615440797
ISBN-13: 9780615440798



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Getting Back In The Game!

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would take a whole other book to thank all the friends and family who've played some part in helping me create *It's All About Choice: Getting Back in the Game!* So, forgive me if I fail to mention you if you're one of the contributors who helped me make this dream a reality.

Even though my mom is not here, at least physically, there's no question her inspiration and the confidence she expressed in my abilities kept me going, even when I was frustrated, tired, or couldn't think of the right words...Thanks, Momsy!

The following friends played a special role in the creation of the book you're about to read. I was very fortunate to find my gifted illustrator, Taillefer Long, aka TL. He not only created amazing and fun illustrations that brought all my colorful characters to life, he put his heart and soul in this project. I can't thank you enough.

Even though this is my first book, I thought I'd hit a home run. But I wasn't sure, so I asked Susie Wilde, a superb writer's coach, for her thoughts. Well, it turns out I had hit something closer to a double—at best. It was humbling to get all those red marks on my "great" manuscript. Susie forced me to bring out more of every character's personality, and tie up several loose ends in the story. Thanks so much!

Producing the rap song that I wrote to make this project truly unique was a challenge in itself. The first producer disappeared in the middle of the production. Then I found the Apple Juice Kid. He carefully picked up the pieces and brought together great talent such as Carlitta Durand and King Mez. He mixed the backbeat, and voilà—we had a toe-tapping, head-bopping rap song with a positive message! Thanks Carlitta, King Mez, and AJ!

When I needed straight-up feedback on anything from cover design to the storyline, I couldn't ask for a sharper mind or more vocal cheerleader than my sage cousin, Yvonne Pugh, Esq. And my cousin, Dwight Manning, has been a steady rock of support!

The folks I train to help improve their health and fitness are also my friends. And they all were inspirational to me. Some, however, were exceptional in their support such as Doug Durrett, who found time in his busy schedule to bring me articles, provide



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names of potential endorsers or sponsors. Another source of great inspiration and encouragement was Kathy Mills who sometimes showed more enthusiasm for my book and its healthy choices message than I did. Thank you my friends!

Of course, every man needs a partner by his side. For the past 11 years Barbara Hershey was there for me. No words will ever come close to expressing my gratitude for everything she's done to support my dream.



INTRODUCTION

It's All About Choice (IAAC): Getting Back in the Game! is a children's book with colorful fictional characters that deliver both empowering and life-enhancing messages. The story centers on the struggles of an overweight boy who is humiliated and bullied by other kids when he returns to the basketball court—in a new neighborhood—after a year of avoiding the sport he loves. (You'll have to read the book to discover why he avoids the court.) And how, through hard work and discipline, he loses weight and gets back in the game. The book's health and fitness lessons and training are expressed in the form of two cool, positive rap songs and several rhymes. The Healthy Choices Rap is free to download at www.CardioKidd.com when you buy this book. You'll love the song's lyrics and catchy beat!

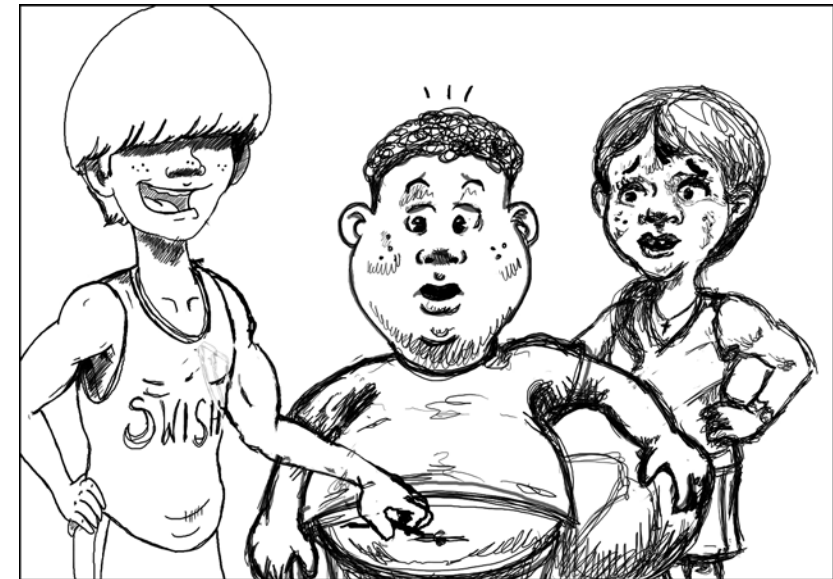
This children's book is intended to both increase awareness and promote healthy choice messages in a fun, colorful, and attention-grabbing way. The "bad" characters include a walking doughnut (Sweet Glazio), a chocolate chip cookie (Chubbacious Chip), crinkle-cut, greasy french fry (Faz-n-Greazy), and an overstuffed stomach (Mr. Stuffin-Gutt), the leader of this trouble-making trio called the Blubba Hill Gang. The good guys are equally colorful.

Besides encouraging healthier food choices, regular exercise, and discouraging bullying, IAAC provides examples of forgiveness, conflict resolution and friendship between kids with different cultural backgrounds, to name but a few. I've also included discussion points for teachers/parents in appendix I. And all kids who read IAAC will have the chance to compete for great prizes in our first annual IAAC Essay and Rap Competition. Learn more about these programs at www.CardioKidd.com.

Getting Back in the Game has been strongly endorsed by teachers and parents. More importantly, I believe kids—worldwide—will love it! —Herb D Trainer



CHAPTER 1: Getting Back in the Game!



The Bully Setback

Danny thought a change of scenery would help him get back in the game. Only he wasn't prepared to get bullied and wander the street in shame.

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"Sheez, about time! I thought that bell would never ring," Danny Dixon fussed to himself, as he DASHED out of school and waddled home as fast as his pudgy legs would go.

"Danny! You're dripping with sweat. Why are you rush—"

"Hi Mom!" Danny, huffing and puffing, scooted past his mom, ran to his room, tossed his books on the bed, grabbed his basketball and ran past his mom again.

"Danny, here's some yummy snack choices. I baked your fav cookies, and there's pound cake left from yesterday."

"MMYOOOW!!!!" Danny's cat Dusty leaped straight up in the air.

"S-s-sorry Dusty! Bye Mom!"

"Danny wait! At least grab a cookie! How was your first day of school?"

"Great Mom! Please feed Dusty for me. See you later!"

Danny took off like he was chasing an ice cream truck. When he arrived at the park, Danny looked down and saw his heart pounding through his skin-tight, sweaty T-shirt. He leaned over and held his chest for several minutes until he caught his breath.

"This...is a...cool...park. Th...The courts are much...nicer...than my old park. Nice trees. Even new tennis courts. Oh man, it's been so long since I've been on a basketball court. It feels so good just to dribble the ball again."

Danny looked down at the court as if he wanted to kiss it and then up toward the sky, "I'm so sorry, Dad for not playing ball and gaining all this extra weight since you passed away last summer. I know I promised you that I'd keep working hard on the court and in the classroom, and take care of Mom. But it took a lot more time to get over the pain of losing you than I ever thought. Don't worry Dad, I'm ready to work my butt off like you taught me and make you proud."

Danny dribbled the ball between his legs and behind his back as he headed toward the courts when he spotted a rare sight.



"Wow! Wonder who that dark-haired cutie shooting alone on the other court is?" he said to himself. "Hmmm, I bet she's that star point guard that balls for Park City--her shooting and ball-handling skills are better than most guys!"

Danny, still dribbling, zigzagged his way toward Sonny McSwisher, one of the biggest boys shooting around on the court. "Hey, aren't you the captain of Park City's basketball team? Looks like you need another baller, can I play with your team?" Danny asked.

Swish turned his back on Danny and looked toward the girl who had caused Danny's eyes to twinkle.

"Hey Carmen!" Swish shouted. "We need one more baller to play!" Then Swish sneered at Danny, and pointed toward Carmen, "That's Carmen Acosta, Park City's best point guard and my next door neighbor since we played peek-a-boo together in diapers. If we need a baller, it'll be Carmen."

"But you already have ten Swish," Carmen shouted back. "I gotta practice for a big game against Mt. Baker—they crushed us in the championship game last year!"

Swish aimed his right index finger toward the basketball hoop, "C'mon lil sis, ONE game! We need the park's best ballhandler," Swish pleaded.

Carmen jogged over and half-nodded "Okay big bro, ONE game!"

Swish high-fived Carmen and whispered, "Hey, who's the doughboy?"

Carmen shrugged, "I don't know. Never seen him before."

Swish and Carmen walked over to Danny. "Hi, I'm Carmen, and this is my bestie Swish."

Instantly, Danny's mouth was dryer than day-old toast; his palms were so wet with sweat the basketball slipped out of his hands.

"My name is D-Dan, and uh...I just moved around the corner. If you need another baller, I was the top scorer at Riverside Academy."

Carmen glanced down at Danny's belly, which overlapped his shorts.

"Really? No offense Danny, but you look kinda heavy to be a top baller."

Danny sucked in his potbelly as much as he could, but it popped right back out when he spoke. "But...I...Look, if you just give me a chance."



Then Swish reached out and grabbed a big chunk of Danny's flabby stomach, "C'mon, get real Chunky Dan, how you gonna run and jump with all these extra groceries jiggling like an over-filled water balloon? You sure you weren't looking for the SUMO wrestling team?"



"Hey, don't pinch me, Swish!" Danny heard one laugh, then another, and by the time he looked up, all the players had joined in. Except Carmen. She must have seen the hurt look on Danny's pie-shaped face because she patted him on the back.

"Don't trip Danny," Carmen said. "Have a seat. You can take my spot next game."



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"Thanks Carmen. I'm cool." But only a lip reader would have heard him. Like a leftover can of soda, Danny's bubbly spirit had lost all its fizz. His head sank, and his shoulders drooped.

Carmen gave her old friend an icy glare and then scolded him like a puppy that just leaked on the carpet.

"That was very mean Swish. You need to apologize to Danny—now!"

As if she had spread a wet blanket over a campfire, the rip-roaring laughter faded to a few scattered crackles. Swish backed away, took a few dribbles, and made a long three-point shot.

"Ah chill, Carmen. You see any pampers on that boy? Everybody gets teased!"

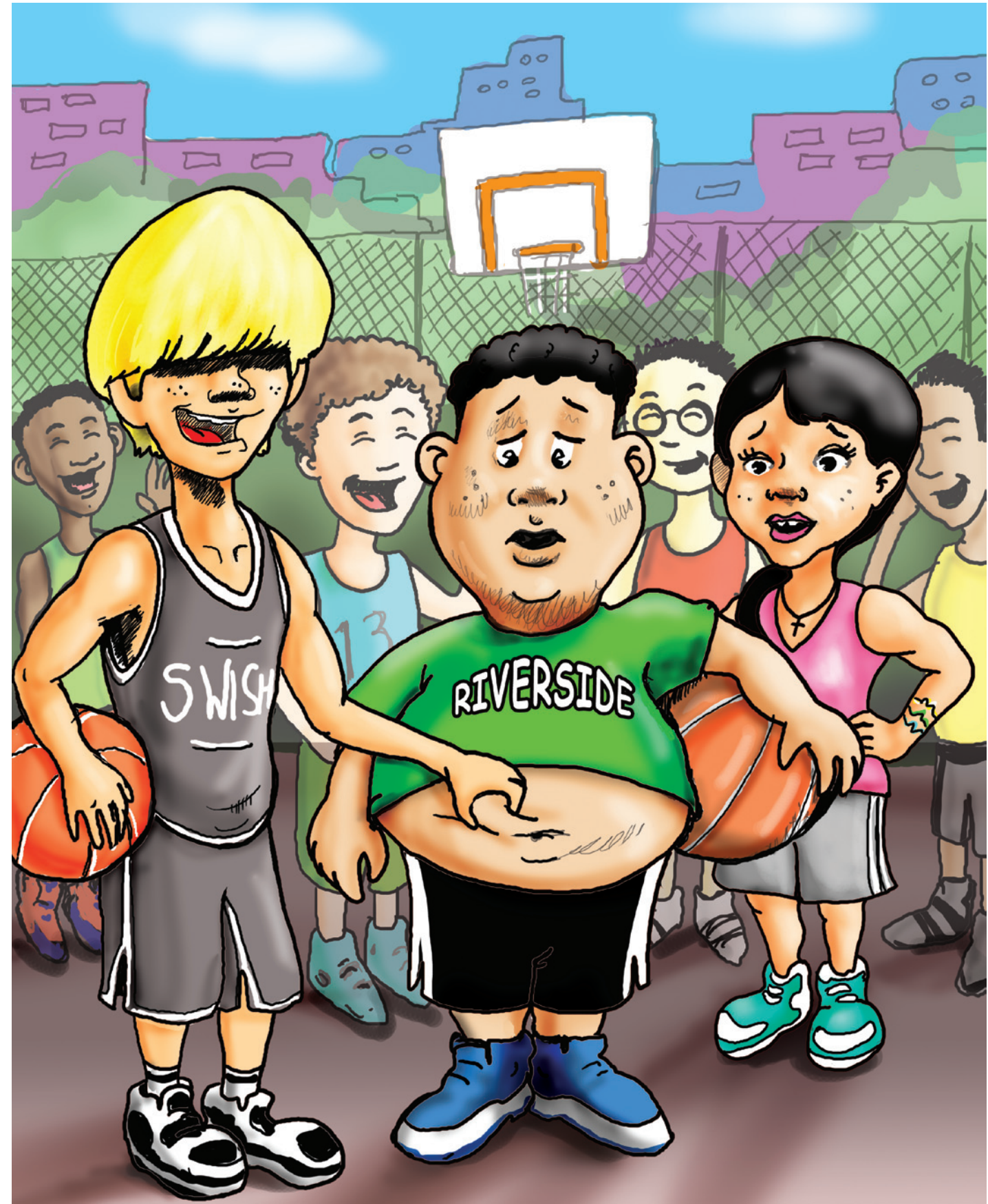
Danny plopped down on the bench, sank his head into his hands, and stared blankly at the ground. A chain of ants crawled over his tennis shoes, carrying food crumbs, and working together like close teammates.

"Dang, even these tiny ants have friends. Not gonna happen for me, I guess."

The painful lump swelling in his throat made it hard to breath. His soft brown eyes looked like he had been cutting raw onions all day. He stood to leave, taking just a few seconds to watch the kids having fun playing the game he loved.

"See ya later, Chunky Dan!" Swish yelled.

"One day...One day I'm going to show Swish how wrong he is," Danny said to himself.



CHAPTER 2: Getting Back in the Game!



New Beginnings!

*Danny wandered the street
feeling sad and very alone.
Those words "See-ya-later-Chunky-Dan"
cut like a knife,
all the way to the bone.*



NEW BEGINNINGS!

As Danny passed a parked shiny black car, he caught a glimpse of his body's barrel-shaped reflection. He stopped. And stared. No amount of swallowing could hold back that hard painful lump in his throat. Tears streamed down his chubby cheeks faster than he could wipe them away.

"W-Why do I have to be so fat? WHY?"

S-c-r-e-e-c-h! Danny's head snapped up. His legs froze; beads of sweat burst out across his forehead, and his eyes bugged out. A huge truck was headed directly toward him; the driver managed to swerve at the last second, narrowly avoiding hitting him.

"Watch where ya going!" the driver yelled.

Danny tried to mumble an apology, but his tongue and body might as well have belonged to a storefront mannequin—until the moment he realized his new basketball was bouncing down the street.

"Noooooo!" Danny screamed. "Don't run over my..." *Splaaat!*

Danny looked up from his flattened ball to see a crowd of people lined up like they were waiting for a parade. Every single person seemed to stare, laugh, and point at him. Danny bolted down the street, his round belly bouncing up and down outside his overstretched T-shirt. Gasping, he stopped to catch his breath and held his chest.

"I hate being fat. I hate being called Chunky Dan! And I really hate having to fight for air—it's scary!" Danny said to himself. "I just wanna have fun like Swish and Carmen—the kinda fun I had before Dad died."

Finally catching his breath, Danny looked up to see the entrance to a gigantic mall that had a Disney World feel. In the parking lot he spotted a humongous bus covered with pictures of kids playing soccer, swimming, riding bikes, and twirling Hula-Hoops. A sign at the entrance read Welcome All Kids—We Make Fitness Fun!





NEW BEGINNINGS!

“Man, that’s the phattest-looking bus I’ve ever seen! All those kids look so healthy and happy. Maybe this is the answer to my prayers.” He looked down at his stomach, grabbed a handful of fat and jiggled it. “I need some belly-be-gone, so I can get back to my old self.”

Danny took a long, deep breath, crept up to the bus, and tapped lightly on the door. A smiling, muscular heart with one curly strand of hair sticking straight up opened the door and greeted him. He looked like some kind of superhero from a comic book.

“Hi, I’m the Cardio Kidd, but call me CK. Welcome to the Fit-Mobile!”

“Whoa!” Danny shrieked. He stepped back and rubbed his eyes, “I must be dreaming. Hearts don’t talk!”

CK chuckled, and reached out to shake Danny’s hand. “See, you’re not dreaming.”

“Sorry, Mr. CK, I’m Danny Dixon. I didn’t mean to be rude, but um, you’re the first talking heart I’ve ever met. I-I-I just can’t believe I’m talking with a heart.”

“All hearts speak Danny, you just have to listen.”

Like a nail being pulled toward a magnet, Danny was drawn inside this magical bus. He poked his head through the door and rolled his eyes up-down-and-side-to-side with a mix of curiosity and excitement.

“WOW! This bus ROCKS, CK! I love these cool shiny-looking bikes with the skinny tires and fancy handlebars. And what’s that treadmilly-looking thing with all those wires and a computer on it? What do you do in here? Do you help people lose weight? Can you show me how to get muscles like the boys on the outside of—”

“Slow down, Danny boy. I love your questions!” CK pointed at his chest, “You’ve got this heart’s body pumping with excitement too! In this bus we reach and teach. We help young people reach their unique healthy weight through exercise, and teach them to make healthier food choices.”

