



THE TRUTH BEHIND TOOTLES THE TURTLE

Lenell Levy Melancon is truly an author on a mission! Her recently released book, *Tootles the Turtle Tells the Truth*, is a very timely interactive tale about the secrets behind bullying and abuse.

"Whether physical, mental, or sexual," says Levy Melancon, "bullying and abuse have become extremely rampant in our society, especially now with social media outlets. And, unfortunately, it is nearly a daily event to hear of a teen or child suicide from the effects of bullying."

The author's heartfelt desire is that *Tootles the Turtle Tells the Truth* will raise awareness of the intimidation tactics that bullies and abusers use to instill fear. She wants children to know that it is okay to expose the scary, debilitating secrets, thereby taking away the power from the bullies and perpetrators and returning it to the child.

"Stemming from a young child's emotional turmoil," Levy Melancon added, "I wrote *Tootles the Turtle Tells the Truth* to ease the terror associated with the fear of retribution if she exposed a scary secret she had been carrying. For quite some time, the child had been harboring the terrifying secret, actually becoming emotionally, as well as physically, ill; so much so that the mother enlisted the help of a professional.

"But because the counselor could not get her to 'open up' and since we are friends, the mother finally confided in me to ask my opinion on what she could do to help her child. That's when I came up with the tale of Tootles.

"One day, not long after my friend read the story of Tootles to her daughter, the child confessed to her counselor, "Tootles told me I could tell you what my daddy did to me." She hesitated for a moment, and then continued, "But, my momma's not gonna go to jail, is she?" Surprised by the statement, the counselor replied, "No, sweetie, your mommy is not going to go to jail. Why would you think that?"

"The child whispered, "Because my daddy told me that my mommy would go to jail if I told anybody what he did to me. I don't want my mommy to go to jail!"

When the counselor finally assured the worried child that her mommy would not go to jail, this brave little girl exposed the paralyzing secret of many episodes of abuse that, in the mother's opinion, had caused her to behave in such a way that she needed counseling.

The counselor said that, with Tootles's encouragement, the child had exposed the secret and could now get the emotional help she so desperately needed. She also urged the mother to have the story published as soon as possible so that it could help other children as much as it had helped her.

Helping other children and adolescents gain the courage to seek appropriate help is really what Levy Melancon's book is all about. "By addressing the sinister nature of these prevalent issues with children, and the 'earlier the better,'" the author emphasizes, "it will raise awareness of the secrecy involved in these situations.

"Preventing anything that makes a child feel sad, bad, or uncomfortable, such as bullying and abuse," Levy Melancon insists, "could be as simple as teaching and encouraging children at an early age to expose, rather than harbor, the burdensome secrets."

In the interactive tale of Tootles, a nearby alligator bites off Tootles's leg when she wanders too near the edge of the lake. Mean ole' Guss-toff, the gluttonous gator, warns Tootles, "Don't you tell a soul OR ELSE! Not ONE SOUL or I'll come back and eat your other legs one by one and FINALLY--I'll have your Mommy for dessert!"

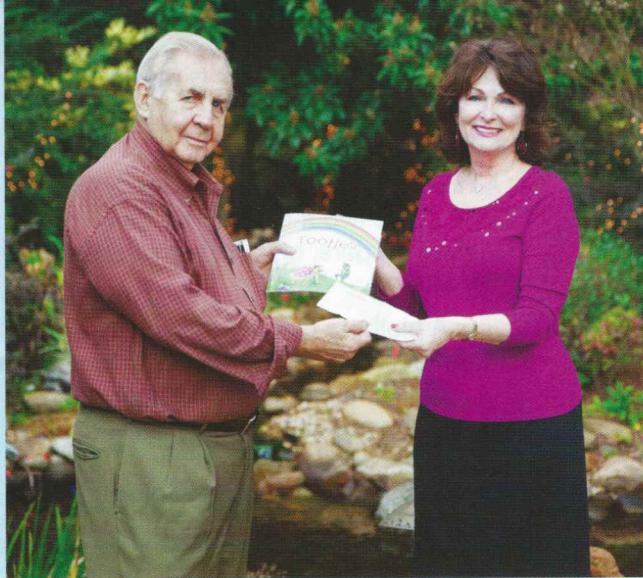
Of course, Tootles takes the alligator at his word and doesn't tell a soul about the warning, especially not her mommy, for fear of losing her. When Tootles inadvertently tells her new friend, Freddie the Fearless Free-Spirited Frog, an exaggerated version of what happened to her leg, she becomes physically sick with worry that the alligator will come back to carry out his threats.

Mommy eventually coaxes the truth from the miserably ill Tootles and then assures the scared little turtle that the alligator is only trying to frighten her from preventing anyone from learning the truth that he did something so terrible to her. When Tootles finally understands that Mommy is not afraid of the nasty alligator and can only make her feel better if she knows the truth, Tootles tearfully admits all of the scary threats the alligator made. She instantly feels better knowing that Mommy can now protect her.

Levy Melancon states that, thankfully, Tootles helped her friend's child tell what happened to her without fear of her mommy going to jail if she told anyone. "The sad truth," says Levy Melancon, "is that this happens much too often and children ARE terribly afraid of the threats made to themselves or their loved ones."

"Tootles is not a bed-time story!" the author says emphatically. "It is an interactive tale meant to be read by, or with, a parent, teacher, counselor, or older sibling. It includes pertinent questions at the end in order to candidly discuss good, bad, or scary secrets. And, although the subject may be a bit frightening, it's not nearly as terrifying as bullying and abuse."

For younger children, the energetic characters in the drawings will tell the story without words. For children in elementary school, the story



itself will pack a powerful punch with both pictures and text. Adolescents will enjoy the alliteration and grasp the hidden meanings in the delightful pictures and symbols, such as the rainbow for God's promise that everything will be okay, and the butterfly, which is the symbol of transformation. The dark clouds go behind the rainbow, the water is the Holy Spirit, the hot pink is the color of unconditional love and the blue is the color of healing.

Tootles the Turtle Tells the Truth is designed to empower everyone, no matter what age or gender, allowing them the freedom to expose overwhelming secrets that have caused or possibly could cause horrific harm to their physical and emotional well-being.

"My mission is to empower children to live free from emotional as well as physical pain. My heartfelt belief is that the future of our children must be protected at all costs."

Tootles the Turtle Tells the Truth is a delightful publication disguised as a children's book—but in reality its alliterative message transcends age and gender. In the hands of a caring parent, counselor, or teacher, Tootles the Turtle Tells the Truth has the potential to lead to resolution and empowerment for sensitive persons of any age.

Presently in the process of obtaining a 501c3 status, Team Tootles Foundation, Inc., a group of like-minded hearts, is reaching out to the community through personal partnerships and corporate sponsorships, to donate these empowering books to schools and libraries, hospitals, day care centers, etc., to assist our children in obtaining help in abusive situations. **Tootles the Turtle Tells the Truth** is printed in the USA by Balboa Press, a division of Hay House, and is available from her or the website, www.Tootles.org, or can be ordered worldwide through any book seller.

