

# Who's Going To Be You?

Christine Sarno-Doyle



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by

Christine Sarno-Doyle



"Christine Sarno-Doyle has produced a book that whether read with or by children, serves as a positive affirmation and gives a potent message of acceptance."

—Maureen DiPalma  
Reading and Special Education Teacher, Retired

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## Acknowledgments

My sincere gratitude to the loving souls who guided me along this journey. People who, to a little girl, a young woman, now grandmother had an extraordinary impact on her ability to survive, thrive and be happy.

Through my writing I hope to pay it forward. *Follow your dreams and listen to your heart, for in its wisdom lies a destiny unique only to you.*

*For the young and young at heart*

In our childhood we learn so much as we grow, and we continue to learn as we age. One of the most important principles we can embrace is self-acceptance. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. If there's a quality you admire in another, you may choose to develop that attribute. But don't think less of yourself simply because you don't possess it. We each hold valued qualities. Recognize your strengths; use them to your benefit and that of others. Where you perceive a not-so-strong point, if you wish, invest in strengthening it. Most of all, be happy for yourself and for others. We are individuals. By definition that makes each of us an original. So be one!

Trust your inner voice. It's also called inner wisdom. Most of the answers you'll ever need about life are inside of you. It just takes practice to become aware of them. Practice listening to that wisdom. At night just before you go to sleep, ask a question for which you want an answer, about life, about you. Listen. The answer may come just as you are about to fall asleep. It may come as you wake, or it may come in some unexpected way during the day. You'll recognize the answer when it comes. (This doesn't work for test questions. You will have to study and do your homework for those!)

Enjoy all that's new coming your way!

Believe in yourself!

Do your best!

Learn!

Laugh!

Love!

1



"If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands! If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands! If you're happy and you know it and you really want to show it..." The children's voices are jubilant, punctuated by their collective laughter. The carousel carries six of them and more are scattered across the park. Their voices carry beyond the field to the edge of the woods where a young girl sits watching under a tree, alone.

"They have so much energy," Darcie thinks. "If they aren't swimming or climbing, they're reaching their feet to the sky on the swings."

"I don't like the carousel," Darcie says aloud watching boys and girls become one big blur as the wheel speeds up. "I like that best," she says looking at the monkey bars. Today Darcie got to

the end of that horizontal ladder quicker than anyone else. She found just the right rhythm to move quickly across the rungs, skipping some as she went, a feat of which she is very proud.

Giuseppe and Kyle jump off the ropes and run over to the jungle gym. Brooke is right behind. "How can they keep going?" Darcie wonders. "No one else needs a break. Why do I?"

"C'mon!" she hears children call from the carousel asking her to join them. She shakes her head, no. "It makes me queasy!" she answers.

"C'mon!" she hears again as they spin towards her. "You big baby!" Zack shouts back as they spin away. Zack teases, but Darcie doesn't respond. Orion, a boy at Darcie's school, watches nearby. By his expression, she can tell he's uncomfortable with Zack's teasing.





Orion looks over and waves at Darcie as he walks towards the carousel. They're too far away for her to hear what's being said, but Zack and Orion nod.

"Hi, what are you doing?" Orion asks as he walks up to Darcie.

"Resting."

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm all right."

"Don't mind Zack. He'll stop."

"Thanks."



"Okay. If you're okay, I'm going!" Orion says and dashes toward the pond. "See you."

"See you later," Darcie replies. "Thank you!"

"Maybe if I was more like the others no one would tease me," she thinks. Then, imagining a genie might hear her and grant a wish she speaks her words aloud, "I wish I could be more like them."

"Then who's going to be you?" a voice replies. This startles Darcie. She didn't notice anyone nearby. But it's Mr. Daily, the grounds keeper at Winnings Park, busy pruning branches.

There he is with his rolled-up cuffs hanging across the top of his work boots laced with bright-colored laces. "Funny for an old person

to be wearing those,” she thinks. “They look like little kid laces.”



The pockets of his carpenter jeans are stuffed to their brims. The loose end of a roll of string dangles out of the top of one pocket, pressing

against a grass-stained, yellow rag. The other pocket reveals his sunglasses and a small pair of gardening shears, and what looks like an unopened bottle of sun lotion.

"Hi, Mr. Daily," Darcie says and smiles.

"Hello, little lady." Mr. Daily doesn't remember all the girls' and boys' names, so he refers to the girls as ladies and the boys as gentlemen. Everyone knows Mr. Daily though. He's been at Winnings Park forever. Her mom and dad say how kind he is and how they appreciate him watching out for the children.

"You taking a break? he asks.

"Yes, it's too hot today."

"Take a break when you need to. You don't want to get overheated."

Overheated. Darcie hasn't heard that term before and thinks, "That's how I feel, overheated."

"It's not just that," Darcie says and pauses. "I can't keep up. They have more energy than I do."

Mr. Daily stops working and takes a step closer to listen. When he does, Darcie fully sees his face for the first time. His skin is weathered from spending so much time in the sun. Sweat is across his forehead, and there is dirt on his nose and cheeks. His smile is bright though, and his eyes light up with his smile.

She notices that Mr. Daily's right arm hangs a bit limp. His left arm is stronger. All these years she's been coming to the park she never really looked at Mr. Daily. He's just always been there

like the playground structures. She really sees him today.

Mr. Daily kneels at the edge of the shade where Darcie's sitting and waits for her to continue speaking.

"Sometimes I would like to do other things," she tells him finally.

"What would you like to do?"

Darcie has a wonderful imagination and daydreams of magical places. Soon she's in an enchanted forest. Sunshine and rain come at the same time! Wildflowers bloom as she nears. "They're happy to see me," she imagines. Honeysuckle vines swirl, hug her shoulders then twirl back in their place. When she reaches for strawberries, pixie dust glistens from her

fingertips and the berries burst to twice their size! *Oooo, they taste so sweet.* In this fairy-like place, lovebirds swoop, light on her shoulder, and whisper secrets of the forest in her ear. Darcie continues daydreaming until she hears Mr. Daily speak.





"Do you see the Obaras over there?" he asks. Cris and Kevin Obara have arrived with their nieces and nephews. They are unpacking their van carrying chairs, coolers of food and drinks, and games to play.

"Yes, I see them," Darcie replies.

"When Kevin was young, he spent a lot of time on his own.

"He did?"

"Yes. He was always going off doing other things."

"Like what?"

"I don't know exactly, but I know he loved animals. He'd go off on his own and the rest of us kept playing. We knew he'd be back later."

"Did you make fun of him?"

"No. There were a couple of kids who did, though."

"Why?"

Mr. Daily put down his rake and sat on the ground with Darcie. "Here's the thing. Each one of us is unique," he says and gestures for Darcie to look at all the people in the park. "Being unique means that we have our own interests. Sometimes what interests us will be the same as others, but sometimes our interests will be different. They can even be extraordinary. As we get older, we discover what those interests are. We discover what we love to do. We discover our passion and our talents. Some people learn early. Sounds like you're an early bloomer."

Darcie smiles and thinks, "Bloomer. I like that. I'm blooming like a flower."

"It didn't matter what anyone said to Kevin when he was young," Mr. Daily continues. "And it doesn't matter what anyone may say to you or to me. There is nothing wrong with doing what you love to do even if no one else wants to join you."

Darcie's heart lightens. "There isn't anything wrong with me doing what I love to do," she echoes with a hint of relief in her voice, "even if no one else wants to join me."

"Those who make fun of others are being mean and selfish," Mr. Daily explains.

"Selfish? I knew they were mean, but selfish?"

"Yes."

"Let's say you would like to go for a walk and everyone else wants to play ball. Most kids are fine with your decision. They will see you when you return. The kids who tease are ones who want everyone's attention on themselves and on what they are doing. They say mean things to get you to change your mind and stay focused on them. That is being selfish. Kevin simply wanted to go and do things that interested him. He loved being around animals." Darcie sees a big smile come across his face. "I think the animals knew he liked them too, because they would let him get so close. He'd sit very still, and they'd get so close, he thought they'd hop right in his lap." The picture of animals hopping into Kevin's lap has Darcie and Mr. Daily laughing.

“Yep, he’s the best vet around. He’s been happy all these years doing what he loves. No one’s better at taking care of animals. Remember how he saved Leo?”



Darcie nods. She remembers the day on the bus when she saw Leo, the Caspers’ Saint Bernard,

barrel out of the open gate in their front yard. He ran right into the street. She didn't see the car, but all the kids on the bus heard tires screech and a loud thump. She knew Leo had been hit.

“If it wasn’t for Kevin, who is now Dr. Obara, Leo may not have come home,” Mr. Daily says, continuing his story. “When a person does what they love to do, there is no telling what good fortune will come their way, and what good fortune they will bring to others. It's the passion a person brings to the task that makes all the difference. That's what life's about. So, little lady, when you start wishing you were someone else, you remember you have something special inside no one else has. Ask yourself who's going to fulfill your dreams? Who's going to be you?"

Mr. Daily gives Darcie a big smile, gets up and goes back to work. "Take care, little lady."

"Bye, Mr. Daily," she says and nods, she understands.

"Do what I really enjoy doing," she says and thinks about the forest. What will I find in the forest this time of year? What plants will be in bloom? What baby birds will be leaving their nests? Will I see one? Just then a tiny sparrow swoops so close Darcie feels its wings. The sparrow lands on the ground nearby and curiously inspects a piece of yellow fabric in the grass. "That must have come from Mr. Daily's rag," she thinks as the bird looks up at her.

"May I have this?" Darcie imagines the bird asking. "I could use this for my nest; it will help keep my babies warm." She sees the bird poke

at it with its beak, then hop on top of the cloth and look up at her, fluffing its feathers as if really waiting for permission.

"Of course you may have it," Darcie says aloud. With that, the sparrow lifts the scrap and carries it away. It's headed towards the woods. Darcie decides to follow. "What exciting adventure will be in store for me today?" she wonders. Maybe the woodland sunflowers or wild violets will be in bloom!

Others are too busy to notice that she's leaving her spot in the shade and is making her way to the path in the woods. As she does, she thinks about what Mr. Daily said. *Do what you love.* "I will," she says and thinks about the questions he asked. *Who's going to fulfill your dreams? Who's going to be you?*



"Who's going to be me? But I am me."

Darcie's thoughts soon turn to her surroundings. She enters the forest and puts aside the events of the day.

2



At dinner that evening Darcie tells her mom and dad about her day.

“Yes, Dr. Obara is a wonderful vet,” her mom says. “Look at how well he takes care of Buddy.”

“I remember when we played baseball together,” her dad adds. “He was exceptional. We all thought he’d go on to professional ball.”

"He was better than you?" Darcie asks.

"That he was."

"But you're the coach." Darcie states with more of a question in her voice and looks curiously at her dad.

"I love to play. But some people have a natural talent. That was Kevin," he says then pauses.

With a smile and a wink, he admits, “I wasn’t.”

Darcie’s smiles too. She understands.



“I still love the game. That’s why I’ve coached all these years. I found a way to continue doing something I love. It makes me happy. Maybe in the process I can help others discover what they love to do.

“Life lesson, honey,” her mom says. “Discover what it is you're passionate about and do as much with it as you can. Quite a lot for one day, huh? You'll be fine.”

Darcie leaves the dinner table and goes to her garden in the backyard full of colorful plants and flowers she and her mom selected and planted themselves. A birdbath is in the middle and painted rocks line its walkway. A bench is in the corner where Darcie sits and reads. With her red watering can in hand and filled to the brim, Darcie waters the flowers and muses, "What if fairy dust came out of the spout and sprinkled on the flowers instead of water? Flower buds might open and close in delight. Petunias could twirl. Pansies would dance. What fun that would be!"

As the last drop of water falls from the spout, Darcie takes a moment to look around her garden and sees it is just as beautiful without the magic!



It's the end of a wonderful day full of surprises, make-believe, and lessons.

3



The next morning, Darcie is up and on her way to the park. She travels the same path every time. Starting at the end of her street, she follows the edge of Winnings Pond into the woods. Others, too, walk and run along the trail but Darcie feels a part of it. She knows every hollow, every breach made by the large roots that stretch across the path, the moss that grows on the north side of the tree bark, ferns, and mushroom patches on the ground, and large rocks along the way. She knows the path so well that if she closes her eyes, she can still see it in her mind.

The trail is surrounded by acres of towering trees and interweaving branches. The large oak trees have narrow-shaped leaves and plenty of acorns. The maple trees have wider-shaped leaves with three large tips, and plenty of fruit.



It's not the kind of fruit you eat. The maple tree fruits are long, bunny-ear-shaped flora, which the kids call helicopters, because when it falls it spins 'round and 'round through the air. The fruit are maple tree seeds that will land in other parts of the forest and take root.

There are many more evergreens than deciduous trees, those that lose their leaves. And there are a variety of bushes and ground cover animals feed on, eating leaves and berries.

Last spring she noticed a large tree had fallen during the winter. When she saw it on the ground she went to look at where the break occurred. She studied its trunk and counted its rings to determine how old it was. How long had this tree been in the forest? Some of the rings were not clear, but she did her best to count

those she could identify. “Fifty, at least fifty,” she said. The tree was at least fifty years old.

There are many sounds along the path, and a loud chirp gets her attention. “I know that one!” she says aloud and looks up into the branches for a cardinal. There’s not enough light, though. Clouds are blocking the sun. “I wish I could see you,” Darcie says. Then, as if a genie hears and grants her wish, a gust of wind shifts the clouds, and sunlight comes through the treetops.

"There you are," Darcie says with a big smile. She’s spotted a female cardinal sitting on a branch high above. It’s the female for sure because her colors are muted. Her feathers are not as red as her male companion's. “Where's your friend?" Darcie can hear another cardinal nearby, and as she watches, a bright-red cardinal

swoops over and lands on the branch beside the female. "There he is." The birds stay together for a moment and then take flight.

As she listens to an assortment of chirping going on around her, she tries to identify those she can. She hears the noisy call of a blue jay, and the lamenting sound of mourning doves. She can hear the cheery song of a warbler, and the flute-like sound of a wood thrush. That's five she recognized today! "Where's the sparrow that flew off with the piece of yellow fabric yesterday?" she wonders. Darcie loves this pastime, so she decides to stay for a while and makes herself comfortable on a mound of leaves that have collected just off the trail.

As she enjoys the birds, she remembers the story Mr. Daily told her about Kevin Obara.

“If I sit very still, I wonder if any animals will come up close to me?” She wonders and waits.

No animals yet, but she does notice little creatures scurrying around on the ground over and under leaves and twigs. “I don’t recognize those bugs,” she thinks and then quickly corrects herself: “Insects, they are insects.” A fact she learned in school.

“Eeyuu, what are those?” she squirms. Two large, strange-looking beetles rush past her heading somewhere. She doesn't know where. She's just glad they are in a hurry to move along.

“How on earth can tiny ants carry such big pieces?” she wonders as she watches a line of ants going about their daily chores. “What are they doing with all that stuff they’re carrying?”



A chipmunk darts past. Then another; this one stops and looks back at Darcie. He's looking for food and not afraid of her at all. A few seconds tick by, then he runs off just as fast as he arrived. She smiles as she watches him dart through the brush, over a large log, and then disappear.

Just as she loses sight of the chipmunk something else catches her eye. There is light reflecting off a tiny pair of eyes peering out from under the log the chipmunk just maneuvered his way across. "What is that?" she wonders.



They aren't moving. She's not sure she wants them to move. Darcie remains very still and watches. A minute passes, then two or three more. Neither Darcie nor the pair of eyes has moved. Those eyes haven't even blinked!

Darcie tries not to blink either. She does not want to miss anything if those eyes should move even the slightest bit. It's been too long now, and Darcie can't hold her stare any longer. She blinks!

In that instant, a burst of wind sweeps by, and a muffled voice utters, "Whaat aare yoouu doooooing?"

She doesn't know what it is, but something has just propelled itself out from the tiny space under the log.

Startled, Darcie jumps back from her seat on the ground. She's ready to get up and run but sees what exploded from out of the darkness has come to a stop.

She watches as the creature shakes itself, behaving like her dog Buddy when he shakes water off his fur. This animal isn't shaking water off its body, though. It is ridding itself of dirt, and it's making a mess! There is dust and dirt everywhere!

As the dust begins to settle, Darcie can make out the creature's color, its size, and its shape. It is brown. It has white markings. It has sharp pinpoints among its fur. It's a porcupine!

"Sorry," says the porcupine as he looks over at Darcie. "Hope I didn't scare you."



Darcie doesn't answer. This is strange. *Is he really speaking?*

"My name's Perry," he says. "What's your name?"

Darcie still does not answer.

"It's easier for me to come out from the other side of the log," Perry continues. "But it's fun trying to see how far I can propel myself out of the hole on this side. I can really get some distance when I hold my breath and blow out really fast. One time I landed where you're sitting! Did I scare you? Hope I didn't scare you."

Darcie is still not speaking.

"I don't come out during the day. I like nighttime. But you woke me, and you've been

here for a while. I thought I'd come out and see if you are lost. Are you lost? Can you talk?"

Perry asks a lot of questions.

"Yyyes," Darcie says slowly.

"You're lost?"

"No, I'm not lost. Yes, I can talk."

"This is not normal," Darcie thinks to herself and wonders if animals spoke to Dr. Obara too!

"What are you doing here?"

"I like it here."

"You one of us? You don't look like one of us."

"What do you mean?"

"Are you an animal?" Perry chuckles. He knows she's not an animal.

"I'm not an animal!" Darcie quickly replies, correcting Perry. "I'm a person."

"Hey, nothing wrong with being an animal!" Perry proclaims.

"Yeah, I know. I love animals. I'm just not one."

"Why are you here so long today?"

"I like it here."

"Yeah? Me too. Why are you alone? Where are your other persons?"

"People."

"Huh?"

"It's people. You should have asked, 'Where are your other people?' People are many. Person is just one. I'm a person." Darcie wonders why she is explaining grammar to a porcupine.

Perry is sitting, curiously looking at her.

"The others are playing at the park," she continues.

"Oh," Perry utters, then turns and rummages for food.

"I'm taking my time. I like it here in the woods," she says. "Anyway, I'm not in a hurry to get to the park. I'm uncomfortable there sometimes. I don't always fit in with the others."

"Huh? What does that mean? Don't fit in."

"I'm different."

"You're supposed to be different."

"Maybe, but I'm too different. Sometimes I get teased and that makes me feel sad. I want to be more like the other kids."

"I don't understand. How can you be more like them and still be you?"

"I am me. I just want to be more like others too."

"Impossible! You can't be two people at the same time. Can you?" Perry's looking at Darcie with surprise. "Is that magic?"

Darcie doesn't answer.

"Seems to me that it's impossible for you to be something you're not. Anyway, if you want to be someone else, who's going to be you?"



“All I know is that sometimes I’m uncomfortable being around other kids, and sometimes I don’t like being me.”

A new voice bellows from behind a rock.

"Well, that's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard!" All the commotion got Stuart's attention.

Darcie looks to see who's talking.

"Oh! A skunk!" she exclaims.

Stuart sits calmly and looks at Darcie.

"You say that like it's a bad thing; I'm not a bad thing!" he replies.

"Don't spray. Don't spray me!"

"Calm down, Missy."

"My name is Darcie."

"Calm down, Miss Darcie. Skunks don't spray every new thing we see. We only have so much reek stink, so it's important that we save and use

it for dangerous creatures. Are you dangerous?"

Stuart asks as he turns and starts to raise his tail.

"She's not dangerous," Perry says, then looks at

Darcie. "You're not dangerous, are you?"

Darcie is shaking her head. "No."

"Then, Miss Darcie, take a breath. What's this about not belonging? Everyone belongs. Even

him." Stuart is pointing to Perry who mumbles with a mouth full of food. "Yeah, even me."

Perry is more interested in eating now that Stuart has picked up the conversation.

Darcie looks at Perry. "That wasn't nice! Did he hurt your feelings?"

"Who?"

"Stuart."



"When?"

"Just now when he said, 'Everyone belongs. Even him.' Like you're different or not good enough. Didn't that make you feel bad?"

"No," answers Perry. "I *am* different. I'm supposed to be different. We're all different. Who else do you know who has this type of fur?" Perry pulls on one of his quills and it snaps back into place.

"That's not fur!" Stuart quickly replies.

Stuart looks at Darcie and points out that Perry has quills.

"Have you ever touched one of those things? He's a walking pin cushion! This is fur," Stuart says as he runs his paw over his soft, black coat with its distinctive white stripe. "Soft and

luxurious—this is what you call fur,” he says, proudly primping himself.

Perry grins. “He doesn’t like it when I call mine fur.”

Stuart sighs and shakes his head.

"And look at these colors. Isn't this combination beautiful?" Stuart says admiring himself.

“I’m glad we’re different. Who wants to be the same as a skunk? No thank you,” Perry pipes up.

“Keep it up, Perry!” Stuart warns and pretends to turn and raise his tail.

"Just kidding, Stuart."

"I know," Stuart says. "You see, Miss Darcie. I don't want to be him, and he doesn't want to be



me. Why do you want to be someone else? If you're someone else, who's going to be you?"

*Who's going to be you?* That's the same question Mr. Daily and Perry asked. It's the same thing mom and dad talked about last night.

"Do you hear that?" Stuart asks, referring to all the sounds in the forest. "The birds are singing and chirping. They each have a special sound. Wouldn't it be dull if they all sang the same song or if they all looked the same? You have a special song and a special look too! It just wouldn't be the same if they sounded the same."

Stuart stops and thinks about what he just said.

"Hey, that's a good title for a song! *It Just Wouldn't be the Same if They Sounded the Same.*

"Get it? Hey, Perry!"

Stuart is laughing because he made a joke and starts singing to a familiar tune. "It just wouldn't be the same, if they sounded the same. Dear Darcie. Dear Darcie. Ha ha ha ha. Yeah, this is great!"

Perry waddles over and joins in the singing, “Dear Darcie, Dear Darcie. That’s good Stuart! Ha ha ha. You see, Dear Darcie, it’s great being different. Hey, look at this!” Perry takes one of his quills and flosses his teeth. “No one else can do this,” he says, and displays a big grin.



Stuart raises his paws in the air and rolls his eyes. "He's right, though. I couldn't have quills. How would I raise my tail to spray my reek stink if I had quills? I'd stab myself in the butt!"

Perry hears that, looks at Stuart then over at Darcie and they all start laughing.

Differences make us interesting. Don't you want to be interesting, Miss Darcie?" Stuart asks.

"Yes, I just don't want to be *so* different."

"No can do, Missy. You are."

4



“The things that make us different allow us to view life from our own unique perch,” another voice in the forest joins in.

“Hey Brandy,” Stuart calls to a blue bird sitting on the branch above.

“Hi, Brnnnday,” mumbles Perry.

“Differences are important,” Brandy says. “For instance, I can spot danger from way up here and sound an alarm for everyone in the forest to be careful, or to run or hide. If Stuart sees or smells something menacing, he can use his looks to scare it away, especially if he raises his tail.”

“Huh?” Perry just heard Brandy say Stuart’s looks are scary and thinks that’s funny.



“Ha ha ha. Yeah, his looks *are* awful,” Perry says, rolling on the ground laughing.



“That’s not what I meant,” Brandy corrects Perry and turns back to Darcie. “The animals learn pretty fast that if they see that stripe, they could get sprayed with a very strong odor, and it will last for a long time.”

"Yeah," Stuart says proudly.

"It smells bad around here afterwards too, but Stuart helps himself and the rest of us when he feels he needs to use it," Perry says, catching his breath from laughing.

"And Perry can scare a predator when he shows his quills. Something else, Perry's sloppy eating. Do you see all that food he dropped?" Brandy asks.

Perry's eyes open wide.

"Fellows like Perry spend a lot of time in trees, and when they drop food on the ground other animals come along and find it. It's really helpful in the winter when food is scarce. It's a way of sharing, I guess."



Darcie is starting to understand that differences are important.

She looks around and observes all the distinct qualities nearby, just like the game she plays when she looks at similar pictures and tries to find what's different or the same between them.

As Darcie scans her surroundings, Brandy continues her lesson on the diversity in nature. “Does the maple tree wish it were the plant life below? Probably not. The maple tree needs the sun, so its branches bear the heat and provide shade for all that is underneath. That’s how it’s made. Do the pine trees wish they could shed their pine needles in the winter like the deciduous trees? Probably not. The snow on the pine limbs can sometimes be too heavy, and a branch will snap and fall. But the pine branches provide protection for the animals and other living things in the forest. It’s necessary. That’s how it’s made.”

Darcie spies moss on the ground. “What about moss?” she asks. “It’s so small. What value does moss hold?”

“It has value too,” Brandy replies. “Yes, it is short as plant life goes, and because it’s small one might think it has less value than other plants, but that would be incorrect. Moss is critical to life in the forest. It keeps moisture in the soil, and it holds nutrients that we need to live. Animals and plants depend on moss. Do you see? Everything has value. Everything is important.”

This is all making sense to Darcie, and she’s starting to realize that unique features are things to be grateful for and to be excited about. That’s what mom and dad were talking about. That’s what Mr. Daily was talking about.

*Who’s going to be me? I have to pay attention to what makes me special so that I can be my best too!*

“Just like Dr. Obara our veterinarian who takes care of our pets. Just like Officer Henry who helps us on our way to school. Ms. Britney the art teacher. Mom’s hairdresser, Ellen and dad’s barber, Frank. Gardeners, plumbers, mechanics, everyone, everywhere! Different! Wonderful! Just like Perry, Stuart, and Brandy!”

Darcie’s smile grows bright, and her eyes sparkle so much, the forest glows and glistens.

# 5



Children's voices in the distance are making their way down the path. Daylight is waning, and Darcie wonders, "How long have I been here?"

Gazing at her new friends, she says, "They must be getting close."

"You just heard that?" Stuart asks.

"Yes!" Darcie says with surprise.

"I've been listening for a while," Perry says. "They're getting closer. One of them smells awful! Has someone been playing with Stuart's relatives?" he says laughing. Stuart gives him a smirk.

"Their sense of hearing and smell are better than humans," Brandy adds. "We all knew your



friends were coming this way. We should go now.”

Darcie turns toward the path to see if the boys and girls are in sight, then spins back to her new friends. What will the others think if they see me sitting here with a porcupine, a skunk, and a bird? “What should we do?” she asks. But Perry, Stuart and Brandy are not sitting with her anymore.

She looks up to see only Brandy has remained returning to her perch on the branch above. The forest is humming as if nothing extraordinary happened today.

“Hey Darcie, what are you doing?” Olivia asks as she runs up. “Missed you at the park. Where’ve you been? We’re going to Jake and Emma’s for a cookout. Come with us.”

“C’mon!” Jake calls out as he runs past.

“I’ll be along,” Darcie tells them, and the kids continue on down the trail.



Following right behind is Mr. Daily. He’s making sure everyone is safely finding their way home.

"Hi little lady," he says, greeting Darcie. "I didn't see you at the park. Have you been here all day?" He stops and looks around. Is he waiting for something? Or is he waiting for someone? "Let me guess. You had company."

Darcie's expression is surprise. "What should I say? Does he know?" she wonders, and then asks, "Do you know?"

Mr. Daily nods his head.

A minute later Perry appears, waddling out from the far side of his log. He decided to walk out this time instead of propelling himself out in a wad of dirt.

"Hey," says Perry.

"Hey yourself," Mr. Daily replies.

"You know him?" Darcie asks.

"Yes, we all know Perry. Don't we buddy?"

Perry's moving along, nodding his head.

"We?"

"Yes, many people know Perry."



"How?" she asks.

"It seems that this is a special place for a lot of people. Over the years many have stopped here to reflect on the very questions you've been asking lately. 'How do I fit in? Why am I different?' When we try to find answers to such important questions, we choose a place to stop for a while and reflect. Did you find some answers today?"

A slight grin has replaced the worry on Darcie's face, and she nods, "Yes."

"Most of the answers we'll ever need about our life come from our heart," he continues. "Others come from the most extraordinary places," and winks at Perry. "We need only be still for a while so we can listen."

"Listen to what?" she asks. "Perry?"

"Life can get busy, and we lose sight of what's important to us. We try too hard to be like everyone else or to be someone we're not. That's when we become disconnected from our own dreams. It's important to take time to be still and listen. Your heart will always lead you back to where you belong. It's another lesson we learn as we grow."

Perry motions to Darcie, "See, he knows."

"And then there are the messages we get from others or other extraordinary places. Perry knew why you were here." He turns to Perry. "'Who's going to be you?' Is that what you asked her?"

Perry nods yes.

"Stuart and the others?"

"Yes. It was a very pleasant afternoon," Perry says proudly.

"Well then little lady. I have no doubt. You will be fine. Don't forget all you learned today. And, if you ever feel lost, remember your special place." Mr. Daily smiles, waves goodbye and continues on his way home.

Perry says goodbye and returns to his spot under the log.

Darcie stays a few minutes longer reflecting on the events of the day and thinking about all she is learning.

"This was magical! Have I been daydreaming all afternoon?" she wonders. "Was this my imagination or was this real?"

She rises from the cushion of leaves that provided a comfortable place for her to rest and thinks about all the joy she experienced.

*I learned so much today.*

*Differences are important.*

*Everyone and everything has value.*

*Everyone and everything has something significant to offer.*

*It is real.*

“I *am* different and that’s okay,” she says. “I am me and no one else can be me!” She turns to see her friends from the park now far down the path. “They are who they’re supposed to be too.”

“If I ever start to doubt myself again, I hope I remember this day. But then how could I ever forget?”



Darcie looks at Perry, whose eyes peer out from the darkness under the log where she first met them. "I am so glad you came out and spoke with me today," she tells him.

Perry blinks his eyes in acknowledgment.

Darcie gets up and heads home.

Stepping out at the end of her pathway, Darcie whispers a thought out on the wind. "Thank you so much. That was extraordinary, make believe or not."

The wind whispers back, "Who's going to be you?"

Her happy heart answers. "I am."

*The End*



## About the Author

Christine Sarno-Doyle is an inspirational writer with two children's books, a novel on relationship PTSD, and motivational articles to her credit. Her children's books are *Your Inside Shape* and *Who's Going to Be You?* Both offer lessons in individuality and introduce children to ways of discovering their passions and interests and the essence of appreciating uniqueness in themselves and others.



Christine describes her writing purpose as a means to empower others, specifically in their quest to discover and focus on their individuality. "I'm all about personal growth and empowerment, and my hope is what I offer will inspire others. For children learning to value oneself can never come too early." Widowed at nineteen after losing her mother at fourteen, Christine says she struggled with her own sense of self early on and since,

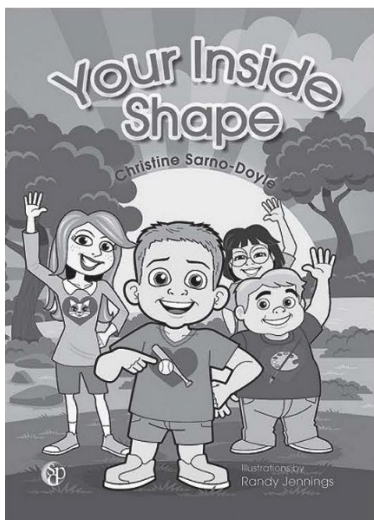
"It's always been important to me to reach out and help others with their sense of belonging and self-esteem."

Before becoming a full-time writer, Christine's career included development, marketing communications, and public relations. At the age of 45 she graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Massachusetts, followed by first year of law studies at Massachusetts School of Law in Andover. Health issues cut short her legal career and brought about a reassessment of her goals. Christine decided it was time to return to her first love and to recognize her inside shape: a writer with a dream of becoming a published author.

[www.ChristineSarnoDoyle.com](http://www.ChristineSarnoDoyle.com)



Other children's books by Christine Sarno-Doyle



***Your Inside Shape***, Children's book, ages 4-8.

# Who's Going To Be You?

Like many young children, Darcie struggles to fit in with the rest of her peers. She doesn't always like to do the things her friends and playmates like to do, and she wishes she could be more like them. Darcie believes being more like her peers will make her happy, until one day, a mysterious voice asks, "Then who's going to be you?"

As Darcie searches to answer this question, she learns to love herself, her world, and to do the things that make her happy. Along the way, she makes some charming new friends that invite her and readers into their magical, special world, where being "you" is the only way to be!

"Christine Sarno-Doyle has her finger on the pulse of what today's kids need to hear. In a day and age where even elementary school children are caught up in comparing themselves to others and struggling with self-esteem, *Who's Going to Be You?* is a welcome voice to help kids feel good about themselves."

—Tammy Fletcher, M.A.,  
licensed marriage and family therapist

