

Case Study: “A Bad Start”

Marcus and Jack are friends, but they wouldn’t call each other “best friends”. They’ve been in the same class since kindergarten, so they’ve kind of always been in each other’s life. They’re both on the soccer team. They both love Minecraft. They’ve always been in the same group of friends: Desmond, Anwar, Joe, Raphael are the other guys in their group.

Marcus is a really high-energy kind of guy. He laughs really loudly. He’s always making jokes. He’s gotten in trouble plenty of times in pretty much every class he’s ever been in, but the teachers always seem to really like him, too. He’s a clown, and sometimes he’s annoying, but he puts a smile on everyone’s face, even if it’s during the middle of math.

Jack is quieter. He likes to observe people and not give his opinion too often. He finds it harder to speak up in class, unless it’s something he really has a question about. It gets on his nerves when Marcus interrupts the whole class - again - just to say something about what they’re working on. If you asked him, this would probably be the reason that Jack would give for why he and Marcus aren’t best buddies. Marcus would say it’s because Jack can sometimes be seriously boring.

Today, Marcus and Jack both show up to class a few minutes late. Marcus’ mom’s car stalled on the way to school, so his dad had to come and pick them up. Jack slept through his alarm because he was up on his tablet until 11:30pm watching YouTube. Jack’s parents are always gone to work before Jack leaves for school, so no one was there to wake him. Marcus skipped breakfast, because he always does. Jack didn’t get to eat because he was rushing to school.

They hung up their coats outside their classroom and put their bags away. Marcus said “Well, well, well, look who’s late!” in a really irritating voice. Jack wasn’t in the mood for any jokes. He was tired and hungry and annoyed that he had had to rush that morning.

“You’re late, too,” Jack responded to Marcus.

“Yeah, but I have a reason. My mom’s car busted on the way here. My dad talked to Morrow,” said Marcus.

“So?” said Jack. “Just go inside.”

“Well, I’m just saying... You’ll probably get detention for being late without an excuse... again!” said Marcus in a high sing-songy voice.

Jack was already worried about this. He’d been late a few times in the past few weeks because of this new bad habit of watching YouTube until late at night. He just couldn’t seem to stop, even though he knew it made it really hard to wake up on time for school. Mr. Morrow, the vice-principal, had told him last time that he’d have to call Jack’s parents if this continued to happen. That had been three days ago. Jack knew Mr. Morrow would probably be making the call today and Jack really didn’t want to find out what his parents would say when they found out. Jack’s stomach had been feeling tight as he rushed to school that morning. As Marcus teased him, it started to feel tighter.

All of a sudden, Jack felt really mad at Marcus for bringing up the fact that he’d probably have detention this afternoon. As they entered their class, Jack shouldered Marcus really hard as he walked by him and into class. Marcus said in a really loud voice, “Hey! What was that for?”

Jack felt anger burning in his chest. *Marcus is such an idiot!* Jack thought to himself. *Can’t he ever shut up? Why can’t he just take the shoulder and realize I’m annoyed at him?* Jack knew he should just be quiet and walk to his seat, but he was sick of Marcus’ stupid little comments. “You know what it’s for,” said Jack, almost in a whisper.

Marcus wasn’t in any mood to step down. He’d been to the principal’s office plenty of times. What was once more? Marcus shoved Jack in the chest with both hands. Hard.

Jack shoved back. Hard.

“Boys!” said their teacher, Mrs. Ewen.

As Marcus and Jack stared at each other, they both had a choice to make...

Discussion

What do you think is going on here?

What is Jack feeling? What is Marcus feeling?

What should they not do?

What should they do?

What other factors most likely shaped the emotions they are now experiencing?

What could they do to help themselves in this situation?