

## If You Don't Help Yourself, Nobody Will

by

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When I started to learn English in my ninth grade I learned that if you don't help yourself, nobody will. First of all, ninth grade was my worst year. Because I had come from Mexico I did not know how to speak English, so it was very hard for me to understand what the teachers were saying during class. They would say, "Go to the next page," "For homework you need to do pages 154 to 158," or "Team up to finish the activity." Although these phrases were simple and easy to understand for everyone else in the class, for me it was as if teachers were talking backwards. Sometimes, I felt like a little defenseless creature coming from another planet trying to comprehend the human language without anybody to help me. Also, I tolerated jeers from my classmates. For example, the first day in English class Mrs. Gainer asked us to present ourselves in front of the class. I did not know what she was talking about, and I asked Araceli, a girl sitting next to me, "Que esta diciendo la maestra?" I asked her what the teacher was saying. She said with a jester's smile on her face, "I am sorry, I don't speak Spanish." Then I asked her the same question in English one more time, but it was worse because she and the other classmates started to laugh, saying mean comments and making fun of me and my accent, such as "Look, her face turned red, like a tomato," "You see, I told you she doesn't speak English," and "She didn't say it right." In retrospect, I remember wanting to run away from the classroom and to never come back. I felt like a little defenseless fish surrounded by piranhas. Finally, I resolved my homework and class work by myself. For example, I had to carry dictionaries with me all the time during school and I had to look for each single word to know what to do in each exercise. Every time I asked my friends for help they were always making excuses like, "I have soccer practice today," or "I can't explain it to you in Spanish, I get confused." Therefore, I learned to ask myself for help, because if you don't help yourself, nobody will.