From Beneath his Cosmo costume, Joshua Drean observed the excited children in local schools that he visited. Every BYU fan recognizes BYU’s friendly mascot, and Drean found himself swarmed by children cheering for Cosmo. While doing his shtick at local school pep assemblies, he thought, “There’s a huge opportunity for us to leave a message. These kids look up to us. We could drop a message that would help them in their lives. . . . I saw the [bullying] in the halls and on social media. . . . That’s when I caught the bug to be a speaker.”

After Drean graduated, he began offering his services as a youth speaker to schools in his area. With his upbeat and funny performances, demand for Drean’s presentations quickly snowballed.

Psychology, 2011

Drean seeks to stop bullying by sharing a positive message. To promote empathy instead of apathy, he emphasizes how individual choices affect teens individually as well as their families, friends, teams, and school. Through beatboxing, spontaneous dancing, stand-up comedy, daily video blogs, and sharing personal experiences, Drean reaches his young audiences in their schools and online.

At the schools where he presents, Drean has learned that the students who might be bullying and creating a negative school environment are able to come up with the solutions to these same issues. “I think the [solution comes] from the students realizing that they do have the power to stand up online and to create a school culture that is positive,” explains Drean.

His message of empathy, responsibility, and hope resonates with teens across the country as they seek to successfully navigate social scenes, both online and in the classroom. Every year, Drean speaks at more than 150 conferences and schools, interacting with upwards of a thousand teenagers. Drean currently lives in Boston with his wife and son, where he is completing a master’s degree in business administration at Harvard University. For more on Drean and his programs to end bullying and promote youth leadership, visit his website at joshdrean.com or his YouTube channel.

Adapted from a story submitted to BYU Alumni’s RISE initiative. Share your own story or a story about someone you know at rise.byu.edu.