

Athena's Adventures in Health Policy

TINY SUPERHEROES



By Ana Rita Gonzalez and Ilaria Lucibello

Illustrated by Melina Sugliano

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CHAPTER 1: A HEALTHY PLANET



It was raining. Athena loved rain.

Ever since she was a little girl, she liked to watch it fall. The falling rain made puddles. Puddles were perfect for splashing.

Boom! The thunder was loud, but Athena wasn't afraid. She knew that rainstorms were good for the lakes, rivers, animals, and plants around her home. And if rain was good for lakes, rivers, animals, and plants, then it was good for people, too.



“What are you doing?” Athena’s brother asked.
His name was Odin. He was holding an empty water bottle.
“I’m watching the rain,” said Athena. “What are you doing?”
“Recycling,” said Odin. He put his water bottle in the blue bin.
“I’ll watch with you.”



So, Athena and Odin watched the rain fall outside the window.

Athena was glad that her family recycled.

Recycling helped the planet stay healthy, just like rain.

“We only get one planet.” That’s what Athena’s Papa always said.

It is a beautiful planet, Athena thought.



When the rain stopped, Athena and Odin went outside to play.
They brought their little sister, Rae. She was only three.

“Let’s pick flowers,” said Athena.

“Pink ones, please,” said Rae. She loved anything pink.

“I’m going to look for worms,” said Odin.

He waved goodbye and ran off.



Athena held Rae's hand and walked around Mama's garden.

They picked pink, blue, and yellow flowers.

Athena put one of the pink ones in Rae's hair.

"Your turn," said Rae. She picked a blue flower.

Then, she screamed, "OUCH!"

"What's wrong, Rae?" gasped Athena.

"A bee!" cried Rae. "It stung me!"



Odin heard Rae crying and ran as fast as he could to help her.

“Where does it hurt?” he asked. He was covered in mud.

“My arm,” she wailed. “It’s red!”

Rae was right. Her arm was getting puffy.

“Hurry,” said Athena. “We’ll take you to Mama.”

The three children ran into the house. Rae tried to stop crying.

Athena thought she was very brave.



“I hate bees,” said Odin. “They’re so mean.”
“Me too,” said Athena. She was angry and worried.
Just then, Mama walked into the kitchen.
“What’s all this?” she asked. “Rae, what’s wrong?”
“She got stung by a bee,” said Athena.
“She was trying to pick a flower for my hair.”



“Let me see,” said Mama. She held Rae’s arm and smiled at her.

“Would you like a popsicle, honey?”

Rae nodded. Athena gave her a pink popsicle from the freezer. Then, she gave a red one to Odin. Finally, she chose a green one for herself.

Everyone ate their popsicles, and Mama washed Rae’s arm.

Rae had stopped crying. The popsicle made her happy.



“Now,” said Mama, “let’s talk about why you got stung.”

“She got stung because bees are mean,” said Odin.

“Is that so?” said Mama.

“Why do we even need bees?” Athena asked.

“All they do is buzz and sting!”

“No more bees!” said Rae.



Mama put an ice pack on Rae's arm to make it less puffy.

Then, she looked at all three children.

"Bees and other insects are our friends," she said.

"Do you know why?"

Athena, Odin, and Rae shook their heads.

"That's all right," said Mama. "I will teach you."

CHAPTER 2: INSECTS



Athena and her siblings followed Mama into the backyard. They did not know how bees could be their friends. They stayed far away from the garden. No one wanted to be stung!

“Insects are very important,” said Mama. “Even bees.

The planet would hurt without them.”

Athena knew all about hurting the planet. That’s why she never threw trash on the ground. “But how do insects help the planet?” she asked.



Mama pointed to a yellow butterfly. It was resting on a flower.
“Some insects, like bees, butterflies, and moths, move pollen to new plants to help them grow. Pollen is a powder that plants produce.”

“There’s pollen on that butterfly,” said Odin.

“See? It looks like gold dust.”

“That’s right, Odin,” said Mama.

She watched the butterfly until it flew away.



Then, she told the children more about insects.
“Insects help plants, and plants feed animals and humans,” she said.

“It is a cycle. It happens over and over again.”

“But why did that bee hurt Rae?” Athena asked. “That’s not helpful at all!”

“Rae must have scared the bee when she picked that flower,”
said Odin.

“She didn’t mean to, but the bee didn’t know that.”



Mama nodded. “Imagine if you were tiny and a giant picked you up. Would you be scared?”

“I would,” said Rae. She looked at the garden. “I’m sorry for picking your flower, little bee!”

“Do you see how everything is connected?” asked Mama. “We need insects to grow plants. We need plants to feed animals and ourselves. And we need to feed ourselves to take care of each other and the planet.”



The children nodded. Athena and Odin felt bad for being so angry with the bee. It was just doing its job.

“Mama, how can we help the insects?” asked Athena.

“Having a garden is a good start,” said Mama. She led the children through the plants. They saw four bees, two moths, and another butterfly.

“What else can we do?” asked Odin.



“Well, helping insects is a big job,” said Mama. “That’s why the government does the hard work of protecting them.”

“From what?” asked Athena. It seemed like the bees were good at protecting themselves!

“We call some insects pests,” Mama explained. “Pests become annoying when they eat our crops. Sometimes, we are so annoyed that we use sprays to get rid of them.”



Athena frowned. “What are crops?” she asked.

“Crops are plants that we grow and eat,” said Mama.

“Farmers grow crops like corn, wheat, and beans to sell at the supermarket.

That’s why they use sprays to get rid of the pests.”

“But sprays don’t hurt the other insects, do they, Mama?” said Odin.

Mama looked sad. “Sprays can hurt all the insects and humans, too.

They can break the life cycle.”



“Even the butterflies?” cried Rae.

“Even the butterflies.”

Athena and Odin looked at each other. They didn’t like bee stings, but they didn’t want the bees to die! Who would help the plants grow?

“Mama,” said Athena, “what is the government doing about this?”

CHAPTER 3: PROTECT INSECTS



Just then, Athena saw the blue flower that Rae had picked for her. It was still lying in the dirt, but the bee was gone. She picked up the flower and sighed. Poor little bee!

We must help the insects, Athena thought.

Thankfully, Mama had some good news: “The government protects us from pests and keeps other insects safe.”

“How?” asked Odin.



“Our government leaders come together to create health policies that tell farmers not to use yucky sprays,” said Mama.

“In fact, they create many health policies to help the planet.”

Rae picked up an earthworm. She was always picking things up.

Mama said it helped her learn. “What are *policies*?” she asked.

“A policy is like an instruction from a parent or teacher,” said Mama.

“We don’t always like them, but they keep us safe and healthy.

Isn’t that right, Papa?”



The children turned to find their Papa walking with them. He heard everyone talking about insects and wanted to join. “That’s right,” he said. “We need someone to make sure our sprays are safe.”

“And that’s what the government does?” said Odin. “Exactly,” said Papa. “The government tells us what is in our sprays. Policies tell us how to use them.”

“But what happens if we use them the wrong way?” asked Athena.



“What affects insects also affects us,” said Papa. “For healthy humans, we need healthy insects and plants.”

“Sometimes, sprays are needed,” said Mama, “but we can use a little instead of a lot.”

“Like chocolate!” said Athena. “We can have some, but not a lot, and not every day.”

“Just like chocolate,” said Mama. She was proud of Athena, Odin, and Rae for changing their minds about bees and other insects.



Athena's family spent the rest of the day in the garden. They watered the flowers, pulled up the weeds, and picked vegetables for dinner.

Rae's arm was feeling much better. Every time she saw a bee, she said, "Thank you, little bee!" She knew they had an important job to do.

"I'm so glad there are health policies that protect insects," said Athena. "Me too," said Odin. He held up a bunch of carrots. "We need insects to grow these."



As the sun began to set, Mama said, "Time to go inside.
Everyone needs a bath. You're all covered in dirt!"

"My worms need a bath, too," said Rae.

She had filled her little bucket with earthworms. Yuck!

"Let's put the worms back in the garden," said Mama.

"They will be happier there."



“Mama, do worms have a job, too?” Athena asked.

“Everything has a job, Athena,” Mama said.

“Everything is part of the life cycle. Our job is to keep the planet healthy so that the cycle keeps going.”

Athena smiled. She couldn’t wait to tell her friends about this.



THE END





You can practice health policy just like Athena, Odin, and Rae.
Tell your friends how insects help plants, animals, and humans.
Then, tell them how governments create health policies to
protect them.

By caring for our insect friends, we care for our planet.
Remember, we only get one!

Writing this series of storybooks is a dream come true and is more rewarding than I ever could have imagined. I want kids of all ages to know that working in health policy is as viable as becoming a doctor, an architect, a teacher, or a farmer.

Thank you so much to my teammates for helping me conceptualize and write each book; to our amazing editor, Aquinnah Bree; and to our talented illustrator, Melina Sugliano. In creating this series, we have also created a lifelong bond.

- Ana Rita Gonzalez, President & CEO, Policy Wisdom LLC

We truly hope you enjoyed reading this edition in the Athena's
Adventures in Health Policy series!

We invite you to encourage the young people in your life
who are interested in public health to learn more about us
and our networks.

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Athena and her siblings love playing in the garden...
until Rae gets stung by a bee.

Angry and upset, they decide that bees are mean. But according to Mama and Papa, not only do we need bees, but they need us, too!

Together, Athena, Odin, and Rae discover the health policies
that protect insects.

Will they choose to help the bees thrive or vow to hate them forever?

Through Athena's Adventures in Health Policy, Policy Wisdom aims to
inspire the next generation of public health professionals and
show them the importance and impact of health policies.

Learn more about our mission at policywisdom.com.

