



Parent and Caregiver Resource Guide: Supporting Knowledge & Skills in Managing Anxiety Using Storybooks



Western
Mary J. Wright Child and
Youth Development Clinic

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We are also thankful to the caregivers and professionals who shared their experiences and reflections throughout the development of this resource. This guide was informed in part by their feedback and lived experience supporting children with anxiety.

We look forward to collaborating with local libraries to share this guide with families and caregivers who are searching for ways to assist their anxious children.

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Setting the Stage: The Importance of Parents and Caregivers

Helping your child overcome their anxiety can feel like a difficult feat. It can be tricky to know where to start, what to do (or not to do!), and how to manage symptoms on a day-to-day basis. Luckily, recent research has discovered that parents can play an important role in their child's anxiety management.

There has been substantial research about the impact of cognitive-behavioural skills in managing anxiety in children and youth.¹ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy that helps individuals re-evaluate and change their thoughts and behaviours to adopt healthier ones.² In child-focused CBT, anxious thoughts and avoidant behaviours are identified and coping strategies are developed to manage anxiety symptoms. Recent research is investigating the role that parents and caregivers can play in supporting the development of these skills in their children using the guidance of therapists or evidence-based information resources.³ Parents know their children and can observe the various ways in which anxiety may present with children across developmental stages in their behaviour, body reactions, and in hearing their anxious thinking. This guide is intended for parents and caregivers to help the child begin to learn about anxiety and build their anxiety management skills with the use of storybooks.

Storybooks offer an accessible and engaging way to work together in a playful, collaborative way to guide their child in exploring their feelings and experiences. Storybooks have been shown to be a helpful tool to help kids learn skills and manage difficult experiences related to anxiety, bullying, separation and divorce, and other challenging moments, such as experiences of trauma.^{4,5} For children with anxiety, storybooks can

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offer a way of reflecting on moments of anxiety, alternative ways to understand their experiences, and ways to promote bravery behaviours. We hope that this guide may promote initial steps for parents and kids in exploring anxiety management skills.

How to Use This Resource

This guide is intended primarily for parents and caregivers to assist their child or children, aged approximately 3 to 12 years old, who may be struggling with early symptoms of anxiety that may be interfering with their day-to-day lives and overall functioning. This guide provides an overview of what anxiety is, different types of anxiety, CBT skills and approaches, as well as suggestions for storybooks for different difficulties. This parent-led approach can be considered a first-step intervention within a “stepped-care” model for anxiety. The goal of a stepped-care model is to start with low intensity (i.e., first-step) interventions before moving up to higher-intensity treatment as required.⁶ This maximizes early intervention opportunities for families and communities.⁷

Development of the Tool

Not all anxiety storybooks are equivalent. Some books may have one main or specific anxiety focus (e.g., fear of bees), whereas others may cover more broad-based anxiety difficulties (e.g., generalized anxiety). Similarly, some books demonstrate the use of one specific CBT skill (e.g., thinking skills), whereas others focus on multiple, different skills. The authors of this resource have intentionally selected and reviewed the storybooks being recommended to ensure that they meet certain criteria, including depicting appropriate application of CBT skills, portraying an accurate representation of childhood anxiety, and overall encompassing evidence-based approaches to anxiety management that parents and caregivers can help support at home.



Other Resources

When to turn to additional or professional help:

Over time, it may become apparent that your child's anxiety is not getting better. When anxiety starts to have a significant disruption to a child's life (or the lives of others), further assistance and support from a professional may be required. Potential signs may include:

- If the child's anxiety is causing major interference in daily life (e.g., not going to school on a regular basis, predictable and severe meltdowns during activities, or impacting their relationship with friends or family).
- If the child's anxiety is uncontrollable (e.g., the child is unable to "turn off their thoughts" or regulate their emotions).
- If the child is withdrawing or no longer participating in activities that they usually enjoy.
- If the child is taking extreme measures to avoid the source or experience of anxiety (e.g., holding their bladder all day to avoid using the school washroom; not crossing the street because they are afraid of being hit by a car).

You may begin by reaching out to your family doctor to address your concerns about your child's anxiety. They may be able to provide you with some strategies and resources as a first step. Below are additional mental health resources within the greater London community:

1. Vanier Children's Mental Wellness

- Lead agency for children's mental health in London and Middlesex.
- Provides no-cost services for children and youth up to 18 years old.
- Contact: 519-433-3101
- Website: <https://www.vanier.com/programs-services>

2. Wellkin Child & Youth Mental Wellness

- Offers a range of free, accessible, compassionate programs and services to support children, youth, and families.
- Has locations in Ingersoll, St. Thomas, Tillsonburg, and Woodstock.
- Contact: 1-877-539-0463
- Website: <https://wellkin.ca>

3. Humana Community Services

- Provides mental health services for children and youth, including counseling and support programs.
- Contact: 519-433-0334
- Website: <https://www.humanacs.org/children-youth-mental-health>

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4. Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre

- Offers family support, crisis intervention, and programs for children aged 6-12 focusing on self-esteem and coping skills.
- Contact: 519-434-6848
- Website: <https://www.merrymount.on.ca>

5. Mary J. Wright Child and Youth Development Clinic

- Offers an array of mental health services to address concerns like childhood anxiety.
- Offers sliding fee scale to community and families based on financial need and personal financial circumstances.
- Psychological services are provided by doctoral psychology students under the supervision of registered psychologists.
- Contact: 519-661-4257
- Website: <https://mjw-cydc.uwo.ca>

6. One Stop Talk

- One Stop Talk is a free, confidential service that lets kids and youth under 18 years of age get immediate mental health support with a registered therapist.
- Reach us by phone or online with a video or audio call during the hours of:
 - Monday to Friday: 12PM – 8PM EST
 - Saturday: 12PM – 4PM EST
- Contact: 1-855-416-TALK (8255) or connect online
- Website: <https://onestoptalk.ca>

7. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Care Program (LHSC)

- Provides assessment and treatment for children and youth up to age 17.
- Note: Wait times for new referrals can be up to 18 months.
- Contact: 519-667-6640
- Website: <https://www.lhsc.on.ca/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-care-program>

8. Child and Parent Resource Institute (CPRI)

- Offers specialized services for children with complex mental health and developmental challenges.
- Programs include mood and anxiety clinics, attachment services, and home visiting for young children.
- Contact: 519-858-2774
- Website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/mood-and-anxiety-clinic>



Understanding Anxiety

Before jumping in to support your child, it will first be important to understand terms and concepts associated with anxiety, and what anxiety may look like in your child.

Anxiety can be characterized by persistent, recurring intrusive thoughts or feelings, as well as by physiological and behavioural responses that are considered disproportionate to the perceived threat (e.g., experiencing a rapid heartbeat and hiding under their desk when asked a question in class).^{8,9} Feelings of fear, worry, and anxiety are common experiences throughout childhood; it is a universal experience that serves to alert and protect us from actual threats and fears. However, it is important to recognize when certain fears and worries become atypical and problematic to avoid developing more severe anxiety in the future.¹⁰

The Impact of Anxiety on Children

Anxiety concerns can differ across ages and developmental stages. For instance, younger children may experience separation anxiety and fear of the dark or monsters under the bed, while adolescents may experience higher levels of social anxiety, performance anxiety, and generalized anxiety (each of these is discussed further later on in the guide).¹¹ As with varying concerns, anxiety symptoms can also differ based on the child or youth's age.

Understanding Anxiety

Early Childhood (2-years-old to 6-years-old)¹¹⁻¹³

Domain	What Anxiety Might Look Like
Physical	Clinginess, restlessness, fidgeting, increased heart rate, muscle tension, and complaints of stomach aches or headaches.
Emotional	Frequent tantrums, irritability, tearfulness.
Cognitive	It is difficult to verbalize worries at this age. May engage in frequent reassurance seeking (e.g., asking repetitive questions) or express concrete fears like getting hurt or parents disappearing.

Middle Childhood (7-years-old to 11-years old)¹³⁻¹⁶

Domain	What Anxiety Might Look Like
Physical	Heart racing, sweating, shortness of breath, dizziness, sleep interference, fatigue, changes in appetite, tension in the neck/shoulders, nail biting, frequent bathroom use, and anxiety attacks.
Emotional	Withdraw, tearfulness, irritability, emotional outbursts, low frustration tolerance, sadness, and feelings of shame or embarrassment. May begin to engage in social avoidance or an unwillingness to do a task (e.g., to go to school, complete homework, or join a sports team).
Cognitive	May begin to verbalize more complex worries (e.g., "I'm going to do awful on this test", "Everyone is going to laugh at me", or "My mom thinks I'm a bad kid"). May engage in "thinking traps" like catastrophizing (e.g., thinking about the worst possible scenario), black-and-white thinking (e.g., "If I fail this test, I am a bad student"). May have difficulty with concentration.

Adolescence (12-years-old to 18-years-old)¹³⁻¹⁵

Domain	What Anxiety Might Look Like
Physical	Heart racing, sweating, shortness of breath, dizziness, sleep interference, fatigue, changes in appetite, tension in the neck/shoulders, and anxiety attacks.
Emotional	Irritability, emotional outbursts, low frustration tolerance, mood swings, sadness, fear of judgement or rejection, and feelings of shame or embarrassment.

Understanding Anxiety

Cognitive	Intrusive thoughts, overthinking or rumination, negative self-talk, self-doubt, perfectionism, fear of failure/letting others down, difficulty focusing/making decisions, avoidance of anxiety provoking situations.
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When we experience anxiety, our **Fight-Flight-Freeze** response is activated. This response is an adaptive part of the body's automatic response system that aims to keep us safe and protect us from imminent danger from real threats. Sometimes, however, it can become triggered due to anxiety or "false alarms", which can result in avoidance, emotion dysregulation, or becoming "stuck".¹⁷

When the body enters "fight" mode, it is preparing itself for the physical demands of protecting itself. You may push, kick, struggle, or clench your jaw, or use more verbal responses including yelling, screaming, or arguing. An example of a false alarm resulting in the fight response being activated is a child yelling at their parents when asking them to begin homework in a subject area that they feel confused about or unconfident in. In "flight" mode, the purpose is to maintain distance between yourself and the perceived threat. Individuals may run, hide, back away or emotionally withdraw. An example of a false alarm would be not attending a friend's birthday party because a child believes that they will be ridiculed or made fun of when there is no evidence to prove that this may actually occur.

When you enter "freeze" mode, our bodies and minds may "shut down" causing our minds to go blank. While the individual may be alert and aware of the threat, they're unable to address it as they are "frozen". An example of this would be a student being called on by a teacher and suddenly "forgetting" the answer.¹⁸

Additional Things to Keep in Mind about Anxiety

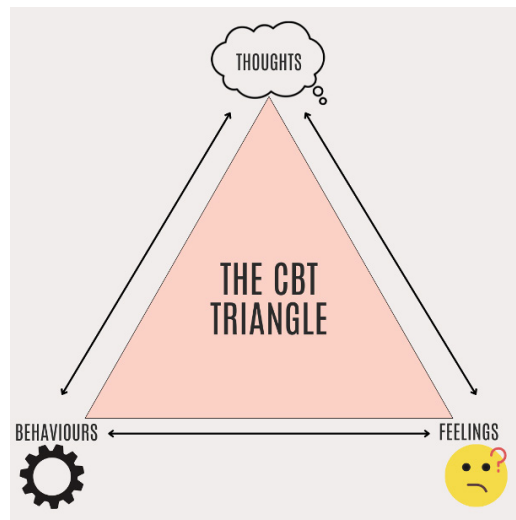
- **Anxiety can feel uncomfortable.** Although anxiety can feel uncomfortable, the bodily sensations are short lived and serve to protect us.
- **Anxiety can take over.** As explained earlier, anxiety can be adaptive and normal; however, in some situations it can cause overwhelming physical responses, unhelpful thoughts, and avoidant behaviours. It can cause children to react in ways that are "out of character" such as tantrums, excessive crying, or aggression.
- **Anxiety should not be avoided.** When we avoid situations that

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cause us anxiety, we get immediate relief. However, when we are approached with this situation again, we continue to feel the same amount or even more anxiety. While it is tempting to avoid scenarios that cause anxiety and distress, it does not allow your child to recognize that they can overcome these situations and become less anxious surrounding these events over time.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Thoughts that your child has may be anxious in nature and in turn can influence their feelings and behaviours. Certain “thinking traps” in children who have anxiety are all-or-nothing thinking (e.g., a single mistake ruins the entire project), catastrophizing (e.g., if I don’t get an A on this paper, I will never be successful in life) and what-if’s (e.g., what if I make a mistake while reading out loud and everyone laughs at me?). The CBT model explains that thoughts, feelings, and behaviours all interact with each other and are interconnected, which can result in a maladaptive cycle.²



Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based therapeutic intervention to inform individuals of dysfunctional thoughts that intensify feelings of anxiety as well as affect behaviour. In CBT, children learn how to identify, challenge, and modify the thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs associated with their problematic emotional and behavioural reactions. Simply put, it encourages the child to be curious and ask questions about the content of these thoughts (e.g., is this thought true? Is there evidence for this thought?), how these thoughts and beliefs make them feel, and how to appropriately respond behaviourally to these thoughts and feelings.



Bravery Behaviour Skills

Description of Bravery Behaviour Skills

These are behaviours and strategies that help children handle feelings of anxiety by directly confronting, rather than avoiding, situations they find frightening. Ultimately, it is about building the courage to face your fears.

What Anxiety Might Look Like

When a child feels frightened by something, they often try to avoid it. While this may offer temporary relief, avoidance behaviours can strengthen the anxiety associated with the situation. In addition to avoidance, children may exhibit various other signs of anxiety, such as the following:¹⁹⁻²¹

- Seeking constant reassurance to feel safe and secure.
- Asking numerous questions to gain a sense of control or predictability.
- Meticulously organizing or over-preparing.
- Staying close to a parent or trusted adult.
- Avoiding activities, tasks, or environments that cause anxiety.
- Displaying “perfectionistic” tendencies.
- Experiencing difficulties with bedtime (e.g., struggling to fall asleep alone, delaying bedtime routines, wanting to sleep with a parent/guardian).
- Crying and experiencing intense emotional outbursts.
- Avoiding social interactions with peers due to fear of embarrassment.
- Displaying restlessness or fidgeting.

How Parents Can Help

An essential first step is to recognize your child’s fears, worries, and anxious behaviours. By observing signs of avoidance or other anxiety-driven responses, you can start to address these behaviours through slow, steady exposure to situations that provoke anxiety. This exposure approach involves supporting your child as they work through a “fear ladder”, beginning with less intimidating tasks and gradually progressing to more challenging ones. With this “team against fear”

Bravery Behaviour Skills

mindset, you can encourage incremental steps toward your child's fears. Breaking overwhelming steps into smaller actions makes the process more manageable. Over time, and with repeated practice, children often realize that these situations are less frightening than anticipated, helping them build resilience and confidence in managing future challenges.^{3,21,22}

Creating the “fear ladder” together is an important part of this process. Before beginning, take time to work with your child to identify what might feel difficult and break those fears into smaller parts. Begin by discussing the situation they find challenging and ask questions to understand which aspects they find most frightening. For instance, if they are afraid of waterslides, is it the height, the speed, the water splashing, the crowds, or a combination of these? Write down each fear-related element and work together to create a sequence of steps that gradually build toward the larger goal. If you are unsure how to arrange the steps, you could ask your child to rate each one on a bravery scale out of 10. For example, going down a large waterslide might feel like a 10 out of 10 in terms of how much bravery it would require. This approach can help you order the steps at a pace that feels manageable.

When possible, try to make the steps feel fun and engaging such as letting their favourite stuffed animal “go first”, adding a silly costume, or turning the task into a shared game to help reduce anxieties and support participation. Involving your child in the planning process helps promote autonomy and reduces the risk of them feeling overwhelmed. This collaborative process helps ensure that the steps reflect your child's unique experiences and reinforces that anxiety is something you will work through together.^{21,23} Below is an example of how this gradual approach can look in practice.

For a child afraid of heights and nervous about riding a waterslide you could:

1. Look at pictures and talk about waterslides.
2. Watch a video of someone going down a waterslide.
3. Have the child lifted to a low height by a parent or guardian.
4. Have the child sit at the top of a small playground slide to get comfortable with the setting.
5. Progress to sliding down a small playground slide.
6. Repeat steps 4-5 at a larger playground slide.
7. Visit a waterpark and look at waterslides.

Bravery Behaviour Skills

8. Have the child sit at the top of a small waterslide and get comfortable with the setting.
9. Progress to sliding down a small waterslide.

When practicing exposures, if a step feels too difficult, it can be shortened, broken down further, or made time-limited (e.g., only sitting at the top of a slide for 10 seconds). Although exposures will be anxiety-provoking, they should not feel unmanageable. If your child becomes distressed or refuses to continue, it can be helpful to pause rather than push forward. Taking time to regulate together using strategies such as mindfulness, deep breathing, and grounding can help your child feel safer and become accustomed to the experience.²¹ You may also return to an earlier step or modify the current one by adjusting how it is approached. Repeating earlier steps is often a necessary and effective part of building confidence. By the time your child reaches their biggest fear, these previous gradual steps will make it feel much more manageable and less overwhelming to handle.^{21,23}

Your presence can also be an important part of helping your child face anxiety-provoking situations. Some children may feel more secure having a caregiver nearby, while others may feel more comfortable with space. There is no single right approach; what matters most is supporting your child in a way that helps them feel safe enough to try. While it can feel natural to want to step in when your child seems worried, finding a balance between offering reassurance and encouraging them to try things on their own can help build their confidence. Over time, and when your child is ready, you may gradually reduce your involvement to support growing independence.³

Ultimately, supporting your child in facing their fears requires a balance of encouragement and patience. Instead of pushing them into situations they are not ready for, meet them where they are and guide them forward with steady reassurance. Remind them that they have the strategies to manage their anxiety and that they are not alone on this journey. Be sure to offer lots of encouragement and celebrate every small win along the way!



Cognitive/Thinking Skills

Description of Skills

Cognitive skills for managing anxiety involve the mental processes that shape how we interpret and respond to situations. These skills help children handle stressful feelings by changing how they think about challenging experiences. There is a strong link between our thoughts and emotions; when we view something as enjoyable, we tend to feel excited, whereas if we see something as frightening, it can lead to feelings of fear and anxiety.²¹

What it Looks Like

Anxiety in children can often show up through various unhelpful thinking patterns. These cognitive processes can amplify feelings of fear and worry. Here are some common examples:^{21,24}

- 1. Trigger:** A classroom presentation.
 - a. **Thought:** “If I mess up, everyone will think I am not smart”
 - b. **Cognitive Process:** Imagining worst-case scenarios; assuming others are judging them negatively or will think the worst of them if they make a mistake.
- 2. Trigger:** A minor mistake, such as spilling their drink.
 - a. **Thought:** “I ruin everything. I cannot do anything right”
 - b. **Cognitive Process:** Viewing situations in extremes with no middle ground; defining themselves negatively based on a single experience/mistake.
- 3. Trigger:** Seeing friends laughing in a group.
 - a. **Thought:** “They’re probably laughing at me”
 - b. **Cognitive Process:** Assuming others are thinking negatively about them.
- 4. Trigger:** A challenging homework assignment.
 - a. **Thought:** “If I do not get this perfect, I am a failure”
 - b. **Cognitive Process:** Believing that only “flawless” results are acceptable.
- 5. Trigger:** Seeing or hearing about a natural disaster or global event.
 - a. **Thought:** “What if this happens to my city or family?”
 - b. **Cognitive Process:** Assuming a high likelihood of negative outcomes; imagining worst case-scenarios.

Cognitive/Thinking Skills

- 6. Trigger:** Their teacher changes the schedule to include a surprise group activity.
- Thought:** “This is not how our day was supposed to go; I cannot work like this”
 - Cognitive Process:** Believing things must follow a strict set of expectations.
- 7. Trigger:** Being told they did an excellent job on a group presentation but told to speak more loudly next time.
- Thought:** “They only noticed that I did not speak loud enough”
 - Cognitive Process:** Focusing solely on negative details and ignoring positives; paying attention only to details that confirm their negative beliefs.
- 8. Trigger:** A classmate getting upset after losing a board game.
- Thought:** “I should not have won. I made them feel bad”
 - Cognitive Process:** Taking responsibility for others’ emotions or things outside of their control.
- 9. Trigger:** Tripping during a game of tag and being tagged as a result.
- Thought:** “I always mess up games. I am never going to be good at this”
 - Cognitive Process:** Believing one negative experience will always be repeated; paying attention only to details that confirm their negative beliefs.
- 10. Trigger:** Forgetting their homework at home.
- Thought:** “The teacher will be so mad, and I will fail this class. Everyone will think I am irresponsible”
 - Cognitive Process:** Making situations seem much worse than they are by imagining extreme negative outcomes.

How Parents Can Help

3,21,24,25

Building Your Understanding: To support your child in managing anxious thoughts, start by recognizing the signs of negative thinking patterns and understanding how they develop. Learn about common negative cognitive processes or “thinking traps” (e.g., expecting the worst or assuming others’ thoughts) and negative self-talk (e.g., “I am not smart”). This knowledge equips you to identify these patterns in your children and respond appropriately.

Normalize Anxiety: Feeling anxious, though uncomfortable, is a natural part of life, which is why it is important to address stigma. Stigma refers

Cognitive/Thinking Skills

to negative attitudes or unfair judgments about experiences such as anxiety. These attitudes can make someone feel ashamed or less comfortable talking about what they are going through. Reassure your child that experiencing anxiety does not mean there is something wrong with them. Emphasize that everyone has moments of worry or self-doubt, and these feelings do not have to define who we are.

Create a Safe and Supportive Environment: Make sure your child feels comfortable speaking openly about their feelings and concerns. Within this environment, encourage ongoing discussions that explore their anxious thoughts and emotions without judgement. For instance, you can frame conversations around process-focused thinking:

- A test score does not define their worth; it simply reflects one moment of performance.
- Presenting in front of others is a way to share knowledge.
- Making mistakes is a part of learning, not a sign of failure.
- Social interactions are opportunities to connect without pressure.
- Trying something new is a sign of courage, not a requirement to get it right the first time.

Help Challenge Anxious Thoughts (Cognitive Restructuring):

Cognitive restructuring involves supporting your child in identifying and challenging their unhelpful thoughts, and learning how to reframe them. As well, it entails encouraging them to examine evidence against the anxious thought and to consider the source of where it may have come from (e.g., peers, family, personal experiences). Guide them in replacing negative thoughts with more balanced and self-compassionate alternatives. For example:

- Negative thought: “I am not smart”
- Balanced thought: “I might not have succeeded this time, but I have done well in other situations and can do well in the future”



Ultimately, the goal is to help your child reframe their negative thinking patterns. Anxious thoughts can feel powerful, but their influence often depends on how we respond to them. By being mindful of their thoughts, your child can create distance from them and reduce the impact those thoughts have on their actions or self-perception.



Relaxation/Body Skills

Description of Skills

Helping children manage anxiety begins with recognizing physical signs and learning ways to respond effectively. When children experience distressing physical reactions to anxiety, having the awareness and tools to help them relax both body and mind can make a big difference. This section provides an overview of how to identify what anxiety may feel like in the body and introduces skills that support relaxation and emotional regulation.

What Anxiety Can Look Like on our Bodies

Anxiety can cause various physical responses in the body as part of its natural way of preparing for potential danger. This process, called the fight-flight-freeze response, is activated when adrenaline and cortisol levels in the brain increase during periods of heightened anxiety.²⁷ These physical responses may be felt by the child and, in some cases, noticed by parents or caregivers. Some of the bodily sensations we might observe include:²¹

- **Increased heart rate and breathing:** When a child feels anxious, their body activates a stress response that increases heart rate and speeds up breathing. This helps pump oxygen and blood to areas such as the legs and arms, preparing them to act quickly, even if no real danger is present.
- **Muscle tension/Tightness in the chest:** Muscles may become tense as the body gets ready to respond to a perceived threat. This tension, especially around the chest, can sometimes make it harder to take deep breaths.
- **Light-headedness:** Anxiety can lead to rapid breathing and changes in blood flow, which affect how oxygen is used in the body. This can cause sensations of dizziness or light-headedness.
- **Bodily temperature changes:** Children might feel sudden chills or hot flashes. These sensations occur as blood flow is redirected and blood vessels near the skin tighten.
- **Sweating:** Sweating is part of the body's natural way to cool down when it is in a heightened state of alert.
- **Fidgeting/Restlessness:** When a child is anxious, they may move constantly, such as tapping their feet, shifting in their seat,

Relaxation/Body Skills

or bouncing their legs. These small movements help them release nervous energy built up from the fight-or-flight response.

- **Stomachaches:** When the body enters a heightened state, it slows digestion to focus energy elsewhere. This can lead to upset stomachs or nausea.

How Parents Can Help

Begin by observing and recognizing signs of anxiety in your child. Understanding physical indicators, such as fidgeting, muscle tension, or rapid breathing, can help you identify moments when your child may benefit from additional support. Becoming familiar with relaxation techniques empowers you and your child to navigate anxiety calmly and confidently. Drawing on your knowledge of your child's preferences, you can guide them toward soothing activities they find enjoyable during high-stress moments. Techniques such as deep breathing, grounding exercises, music or art therapy, mindfulness meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation can be valuable tools in supporting emotional well-being. Examples of these techniques are included below.

Relaxation Exercises

The Physiological Sigh: This exercise follows a breathing pattern that involves two sharp inhales through the nose, followed by an extended exhale through the mouth.

- To practice this, take two quick breaths in through the nose, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat this cycle for about five minutes, or until the feelings of anxiety have decreased to a manageable level. Parents can join in, practicing this technique in tandem with their child.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique: A mindfulness exercise that involves focusing on specific senses to help manage stress and anxiety.

- To begin, notice five things that you can see in your environment, then identify four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. Parents can join in during this activity.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Protocol: A method to ease muscle tension by having your child tense and relax different muscle groups, promoting stress relief and relaxation.

- To begin, guide your child to find a comfortable spot where they can sit or lie down without distractions. Have them close their eyes and

Relaxation/Body Skills

focus on their breathing.

- Next, instruct your child to tense each muscle group for about five seconds, then release and relax for about ten seconds before moving to the next area. Continue through the body from head to toe until all muscle groups are relaxed. Finish by having them tense their entire body for as long as they comfortably can before relaxing completely.
- Example Instructions:
 - Hands: “Make a fist with your right hand, clench it as hard as you can for five seconds, then relax”.
 - Forehead: “Raise your eyebrows as high as they can go, hold for five seconds, then release”.

Deep Pressure Stimulation: A technique that involves applying firm, consistent pressure to the body, which can help calm the nervous system and reduce stress.

- Deep pressure stimulation can be applied through methods such as using a weighted blanket, hugging your child to provide comforting pressure, or swaddling them with firm, steady movements.

Guided Meditation: There are plenty of great videos online (i.e., YouTube) where you can find guided meditations to do with your child.

- Try searching “Guided Meditation for Kids” or “Guided Meditation for [age] year olds”.

Yoga: Yoga or simple exercises such as stretching can bring focus to the body and mind, creating a sense of calm and relaxation. There are plenty of great “Yoga for Kids” videos online (i.e., YouTube) for age-appropriate routines.

Art: Art activities such as drawing, painting, or crafting can serve as an outlet for self-expression and emotional regulation. Encourage your child to choose their favourite art activity such as making colorful drawings, molding clay, or simply doodling.

- For older children, consider exploring guided therapeutic art techniques (i.e., mindful colouring or drawing), with instructional videos available online.

Other Physical Activities: Outdoor activities such as walking, gardening, biking, or even playing with a family pet can provide additional sensory input and help your child feel grounded.



Identifying Emotions and Emotion Regulation

Description of Skills

Emotion regulation refers to how people manage their emotions. It relates to how one controls their emotions, how they feel them, and how they are expressed. Emotion regulation development plays a key role in how children handle their feelings and related behaviours effectively. Joint conversations about emotions are one way that parents can help their children learn about emotions. Specifically, these conversations can help children learn emotion names and how to identify which emotions they may be feeling.^{28,29}

Examples of how to Speak About Emotions

- **Address emotions supportively:** Try to avoid addressing your child's emotions dismissively (e.g., "You will be fine") or judgmentally (e.g., "You shouldn't be sad about this").³⁰
 - Allowing the child to express emotions in a safe environment can aid in the development of their own emotion regulation skills. This teaches the child that having emotions is acceptable, and that they do not have to be pushed down or hidden.
 - The strategies below can help your child learn how to effectively cope with and manage big emotions.
- **Emotion Coaching:** One way that parents can help their children develop emotion regulation skills is to coach them in identifying emotions and finding solutions. Below is a tool called an "emotions wheel". Sometimes, we do not just feel simply "happy" or "angry", but it can be difficult to pinpoint which emotion we are truly experiencing.
 - It is best to introduce the feelings wheel in calm moments. When children are dysregulated, they are not able to take in new information and understand new concepts very well. Instead, introduce the wheel when they are calm and curious by saying something like, "Look at all of these emotions! I bet you've felt some of these before? Remember when you got candy as a fun snack after lunch today? You probably felt excited!" By doing this, you are

Identifying Emotions and Emotion Regulation

also using **reflection and story-telling** to draw on past experiences to discuss and label emotions.

- You can then begin to use the wheel to engage in “check-ins” throughout the day using the feelings wheel by asking your child to identify which emotion they are feeling.
- When emotions run high, gently bring out the wheel and ask, “Can you show me how you’re feeling?” Stay calm and don’t push. The goal is to help them build awareness over time.
- You may also begin to help your child identify emotions in times of dysregulation. For example, if your child is crying because you said “no” to something, you can say, “You are feeling frustrated because I said no. That is okay and normal. How can we get you to feel less frustrated?”.



(He’s Extraordinary, 2025)⁴²

- **Modelling:** Demonstrating how you work through emotions and talk about feelings is also an incredibly valuable method of teaching emotion regulation to your children.³¹
 - An example of modelling would be explaining why you are feeling a certain emotion and what you can do to help lessen the intensity. For instance: “I am feeling very sad because I dropped my favourite mug. I feel sad because it was important to me, but now it is broken. I think taking a few deep breaths will help me feel a little better. Maybe I can clean it up carefully and then make tea in another mug I like. It’s okay to feel sad when we lose something.”

Co-Regulation

It can be difficult to remain calm when your child is exhibiting signs of anxiety and big emotions. One of the ways that you can help your child diminish their anxiety as well as your own is by using co-regulation skills. Co-regulation is the process by which parents can provide external support to their children by demonstrating how to navigate emotional experiences or feelings of anxiety.²⁶ You can use any of the skills above at the same time as your child to engage in co-regulation. It is helpful for the child to observe their parent engaging in these activities or skills in order to learn how to do them themselves.

An example of co-regulation can look like:

Timmy, age 5, has become sad because he has to leave for school. He begins to cry and hyperventilate. His mom gets down to his level, rubs his arms, and looks at him in the eyes while saying “I hear you and I understand why you feel sad. I will miss you too when you go to school, but I will see you when you get home! Let’s do some deep breaths together to help us calm down. Ready?”

As part of the co-regulation process, quietly reminding yourself “I am safe, this is not an emergency” can help you stay grounded and respond in a way that supports you and your child.





Types of Anxiety

Generalized Anxiety

Generalized anxiety in children is characterized by persistent, overwhelming worry about a wide range of everyday situations and future possibilities. These worries can often focus on personal or familial safety and well-being, peer relationships, being negatively judged by others, and performance in school. Broader concerns may include health and illness, family financial challenges and stability, global events, environmental concerns, or anticipated long-term life outcomes.^{19,32,33}

Children experiencing generalized anxiety may frequently seek reassurance, be overly self-critical, second-guess their decisions, and exhibit physical symptoms such as exhaustion, restlessness, trouble sleeping, stomachaches, or difficulty focusing. These symptoms, coupled with their excessive worries, can significantly disrupt their daily functioning and well-being.^{19,32,33}

Examples of behaviours associated with generalized anxiety include:

- Persistent and repetitive thoughts about a situation
- Sleep difficulties
- Constantly seeking validation or reassurance from others
- Asking “what if” questions repeatedly
- Delaying tasks or avoiding responsibilities altogether
- Refusing to attend school or avoiding academic settings
- Struggling to focus or maintain attention
- Creating overly detailed or unnecessary to-do lists
- Appearing tense, irritable, or easily overwhelmed

Social Anxiety

Children experiencing social anxiety often feel intense fear in situations that involve interacting with others or being observed, such as attending school, participating in extracurriculars, or going to social events. They often worry excessively about being negatively judged or embarrassing themselves. This can lead to a persistent sense of being watched or evaluated by others, causing emotional discomfort and withdrawal from social settings.^{19,32,33}

In some cases, social fears may be limited to specific activities, such as reading aloud or presenting in class, while in others, it may extend to a broader range of social interactions, such as group work, unstructured time at school, or peer conversations. It is important to note that social anxiety is distinct from being naturally shy or reserved, as it significantly interferes with daily life and emotional well-being.^{19,32,33}

Examples of behaviours associated with social anxiety include:

- Refusing to attend school
- Avoiding unfamiliar activities or places
- Avoiding phone calls or messages with peers
- Avoiding eating or speaking in front of others
- Requesting a caregiver to stay nearby or be available
- Turning down invitations to social gatherings
- Remaining silent during class discussions
- Crying or experiencing emotional outbursts in stressful situations
- Wanting to stay home instead of spending time with friends

Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety involves intense worry or fear about being separated from or losing primary attachment figures. While it is common for children to struggle during regular separation from their caregivers, often resulting in behaviours such as crying or being reluctant to let them go, when this distress is persistent, intense, or begins to interfere with daily life, it may reflect separation anxiety. This type of anxiety can lead to difficulties in forming peer relationships, social isolation, missed learning opportunities, decreased attendance at school, and increased family stress.^{19,32,33}

Examples of behaviours associated with separation anxiety include:

- Needing to sleep in the same bed as their caregiver
- Staying close to their caregiver within the home
- Refusing to be in a separate room from their caregiver
- Frequently contacting their caregiver when apart

Types of Anxiety

- Avoiding activities that require being away from their caregiver, such as school, summer camp, or extracurricular activities
- Experiencing stomachaches or headaches before separation

New Situations and Uncertainty

Anticipatory anxiety refers to the nervousness or fear someone feels when thinking about upcoming events or unfamiliar situations. It often happens when children are unsure of what will happen and imagine outcomes that might be stressful or challenging. For example, they might feel uneasy about starting a new school, giving a presentation, or attending a big social event.³³

Examples of behaviours associated with anxiety around uncertainty may include:

- Avoiding or refusing to attend new activities
- Avoiding social interactions with unfamiliar people
- Repeatedly seeking reassurance
- Persistent fear or dread of the future

Specific Phobias/Difficult Situations

In children, specific phobias involve an extreme and disproportionate fear of specific situations or objects, even when there is no actual or immediate danger present. These intense fears may stem from past experiences, such as an allergic reaction leading to a fear of visiting the doctor, or a bee sting resulting in a fear of bees. Phobias can also develop by observing others' fearful reactions, such as witnessing a sibling scream and cry when they are about to get a needle or seeing a caregiver express fear while driving through a tunnel.^{19,32,33}

Although this list is not exhaustive, common phobias include fear of animals, bugs, severe weather, blood, injuries, needles, water, small spaces, or forms of transportation. These fears often lead to avoidance behaviours that disrupt daily life and can interfere with participation in daily activities.^{19,32,33}

Examples of behaviours associated with specific phobias may include:

- Staying away from feared objects or places where they might encounter them
- Asking caregivers to inspect or ensure safety (e.g., inspecting for spiders, checking locks or fire alarms before bed)
- Requesting a caregiver to stay nearby for comfort or reassurance
- Fleeing from situations involving the feared object or environment
- Holding onto caregivers for security

Nighttime Anxiety

Nighttime anxiety in children involves heightened fear or distress around bedtime or during the night. It is common for children to experience worries at night, especially about the dark, being alone, or imagined threats.³⁵ Nighttime anxiety can interfere with a child's ability to fall and stay asleep, leading to fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating during the day. Children with nighttime anxiety may struggle with increased dependence on caregivers at bedtime and may experience anticipatory anxiety as bedtime approaches.³⁶

Examples of behaviours associated with nighttime anxiety include:

- Refusing to sleep alone or needing a caregiver present to fall asleep
- Expressing fears about the dark, monsters, or intruders
- Frequently waking up during the night and seeking reassurance
- Complaining of physical symptoms at bedtime (e.g., stomachaches, headaches)
- Delaying bedtime through repeated requests or stalling tactics

Medical Anxiety

For some children, medical visits, personnel, or procedures can cause quite intense anxiety. Additionally, there may be fear or worry related to health and illnesses.³⁷ Children who experience medical anxiety may have strong reactions to needles or exams, persistent worries about becoming sick or getting injured, and may attempt to avoid medical treatment.³⁸

Examples of behaviours that are associated with medical anxiety include:

- Crying, freezing, or becoming overwhelmed during medical appointments
- Avoiding medical settings or avoiding necessary care
- Expressing repeated fears related to injury or illness
- Reassurance seeking
- Complaining about physical symptoms prior to medical visits (e.g., nausea, stomach aches, or headaches)



Concerns related to Immigration, Cultural Elements, and Diversity

Cultural and immigration-related anxiety refers to the emotional distress that can arise from navigating cultural differences, acculturation stress, language barriers, or adjusting to a new country.³⁹ Children from immigrant or refugee backgrounds can face a variety of unique challenges, such as unfamiliar social norms, experiences of discrimination, or fear of family separation due to immigration status.⁴⁰ These stressors can contribute to heightened anxiety, especially when children feel pressure to fit in while also maintaining their cultural identity. This type of anxiety may interfere with school participation, social relationships, and self-esteem.⁴¹

Examples of behaviours associated with cultural or immigration-related anxiety include:

- Avoiding speaking in their first language or discussing their cultural background
- Withdrawing from peers due to feeling different or misunderstood
- Expressing fears about immigration enforcement or family separation
- Struggling with identity confusion or pressure to assimilate



How to decide on which books to choose from

After reading the descriptions of the various types of anxiety, hopefully you feel more comfortable deciding on which books you think would be best to read with your child. Keep in mind that it may be possible that your child is experiencing more than one anxiety concern, and in that case, you may decide to select a few different books from the corresponding anxiety concerns.

The book recommendations can be found in the section below, and there is also a supplementary book finder with additional titles.

Supporting Conversations with your Child

The guiding questions that go along with each book are designed to help you talk with your child about the story and connect it to their own experiences. These conversations will look different for everyone, and there is no single “right” way to have them. The tips below can help you get started:

- **Choosing the moment:** Pick a calm and relaxed time to read together, such as before bed, during a quiet part of the day, or when you know you will have time to read the book and discuss the questions.
- **Start with curiosity:** Begin by inviting your child to share what they noticed or thought about the story before moving into the guiding questions for that book.
- **Follow their lead:** If your child focuses on one part of the story, explore that area together. Let their thoughts guide the conversation, even if it means setting aside some of the guiding questions for another time.
- **Validate and connect:** Acknowledge your child’s feelings before suggesting ideas or strategies. You might say “It sounds like that part of the story felt a bit [worrying, relatable, etc.] for you. I can understand that!”. You can then try to connect the character’s experience to a similar one that your child may have had. For example, “Remember how the Sloth felt worried before going to school, but then actually ended up having a great day? Does that remind you of when you had a great first day at daycare even though you had a hard time saying goodbye to me at the beginning of the day?”.
- **Close on a positive note:** End with encouragement or a small next step, such as “Let’s remember what the character tried, and see if we can try that strategy next time you might feel that way”.
- **Tie to everyday moments:** When worries come up in daily life, gently remind your child of strategies or ideas from the book.

Some children may not want to discuss their feelings immediately, may provide brief answers, or may prefer to express themselves through other ways, such as playing or drawing. Each child’s responses may vary, and this is okay! You can still approach the guiding questions in a gentle, low-pressure manner. If your child does not want to respond, you can revisit the questions later or connect them to everyday situations as they arise.

Questions and Metrics to Guide Feedback

We are currently gathering feedback on this guide to better understand how it is being used and how it can be strengthened. If you have used this guide with your child, we would love to hear about your experience! If you are a professional who has reviewed the guide, we also welcome your feedback. Your responses will help inform future updates and ensure that this guide continues to reflect the needs and experiences of those who use it. Survey links for parents/caregivers and professionals are included below. Thank you for taking the time to share your feedback and thoughts.

Parent/caregiver Survey

If you would like to complete the survey, please scan the QR code below or follow the link. The survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete, and all responses are anonymous.

https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5iPakJ5Jf2CFEVO



Professional Survey

We are in need of professionals within the field of children's mental health to provide feedback on this guide. The survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete, and all responses are anonymous.

https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d1oBcWMtwfite62



Selected Books by Anxiety Themes

Separation Anxiety



Five Little Ducklings Go to School

Author: Roth, Carol **Illustrator:** Julian, Sean

Book Summary:

It's time for the five little ducklings to go to school.

Four of the little duckling's shout, "YIPPEE! HOORAY! OH BOY! THAT'S COOL!" The fifth little duckling sobs, "BOO-HOO! I won't go to school! I'm going to miss you!" But when Mama reminds them, "Even though we'll be apart, we'll still be in each other's heart," the little ducklings go forth and soon discover "School is great!"

Guiding Questions:

- Five little ducks are getting ready for school while the fifth little duck wakes up crying, indicating to his mother that "I won't go to school", and "I am going to miss you". How might we help children manage these fearful feelings?
- The five little ducks had a blast at school, engaging in many activities and making lots of friends. Do you believe opening up a discussion about concerns and worries could have been more beneficial in the long run? Was this avoiding the feelings?
- When the fifth little duckling started to cry, his brothers and sisters began crying as well! Can you think of a situation where you empathized with someone else's emotions?
- Have you experienced feelings of worry before going to school and where might these feelings stem from?
- It is okay to feel these worries before school, what can we do together to help relieve some of these unsettling feelings?

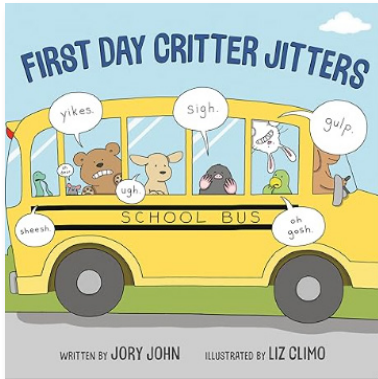
YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/5BDkqqNjqVg?si=Xs6spT_X4m9BBkQN

YouTube Title: Five little ducklings go to school read aloud

By: Crystals Storybooks



Separation Anxiety



First Day Critter Jitters

Author: John, Jory **Illustrator:** Climo, Liz

Book Summary:

It's almost the first day of school, and the animals are nervous. Sloth worries about getting there on time, snake can't seem to get his backpack fastened onto his body, and bunny is afraid she'll want to hop around instead of sitting still. When they all arrive at their classroom, though, they're in for a surprise: Somebody else is nervous too. It's their teacher, the armadillo! He has rolled in as a ball, and it takes him a while to relax and unfurl. But by the next day, the animals have all figured out how to help one another through their jitters. School isn't so scary after all.

Guiding Questions:

- Mouse is worried because all the other kids are bigger than him, Kangaroo is worried about being away from his mom's pouch, Parrot talks a lot when he's nervous, and Rabbit has a hard time sitting still in class. Do you relate to any of these critters' feelings?
- The animals were worried about going to school for the first time because they did not know what to expect. Are there any situations you are unsure about?
- Their teacher, Armadillo, felt nervous about the first day of school too! The worried animals reassured him, and ended up feeling better themselves. Does helping others calm down ever make you feel better?
- Armadillo was anxious about forgetting things. Do you ever forget things when you're worried, or do you know someone forgetful? What sort of strategies can help you to remember?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqSOEnI8vOg>

YouTube Title: FIRST DAY CRITTER JITTERS / Stories for Kids / Read Aloud / First Day of School



By: STORIES AT HOME with Ms. Turner

Separation Anxiety



Fancy Nancy: Saturday Night Sleepover

Author: O'Connor, Jane **Illustrator:** Preiss Glasser, Robin

Book Summary:

When Nancy's parents win an all-expenses-paid vacation, Nancy and JoJo get to sleep over at their neighbor's home, Mrs. DeVine's. But JoJo is a little nervous to sleep at someone else's house— luckily, Nancy is an expert on sleepovers and can help prepare her little sister.

The big night arrives, and JoJo and Nancy have a blast at Mrs. DeVine's. But when it's time for bed, it turns out Nancy wasn't as prepared as she thought. Good thing there is nothing better than a sister to make you feel better.

Guiding Questions:

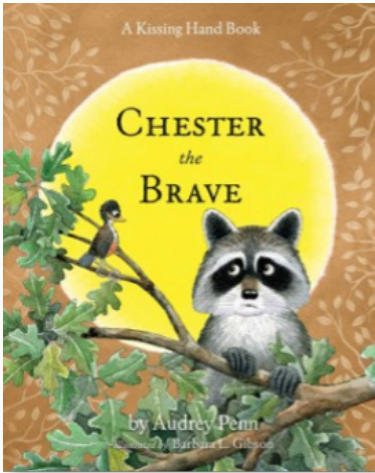
- Nancy and her sister JoJo spent a night away from home for the first time. Do you remember the first time you had a sleepover away from your parents? How did it make you feel?
- Nancy reassured her worried sister by making a checklist of things to bring, things to eat, and activities to do. Would making a checklist to prepare for new situations reassure you?
- It's normal to miss your parents, but Nancy and JoJo ended up having a fun time with their babysitter, Mrs. DeVine. Have you ever had a babysitter? What sorts of activities do you enjoy doing with them?
- At Mrs. DeVine's house, Nancy practiced falling asleep to prepare for the sleepover. Have you ever practiced for something you were worried about? How did it go?

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/h6EOpUlvBQ8?si=2-esDcoYB6R7HPap>

YouTube Title: Children's Book Read Aloud | Fancy Nancy Saturday Night Sleepover

By: Rachel's Read-aloud





Chester the Brave

Author: Penn, Audrey **Illustrator:** Gibson, Barbara

Book Summary:

Little Chester Raccoon, the beloved character who has helped so many children with issues in their lives, learns the meaning of bravery and a method for overcoming his fears in this new Audrey Penn title. After sharing the story of a little bird who is afraid to have flying lessons in front of his friends, Mrs. Raccoon tells Chester that being brave doesn't mean being unafraid; being brave means not letting that fear stop him. Mrs. Raccoon teaches Chester an important strategy: Think-Tell-Do. When he thinks he is afraid, he tells himself he can do it, and then he just does it. Of course, getting a kissing hand helps a little too. This simple strategy can be helpful to children in many different situations.

Guiding Questions:

- Chester and the little robin feel worried when they have to present in front of the class. Do you feel that way when you have to speak in front of the class? What thoughts do you have about it? What do you think makes you most nervous?
- Think-Tell-Do is what Chester tells himself when he feels like he can't do something. Do you ever try this when you are worried you can't do something?
- The robin's mother gave him a good luck feather, and Chester's mother gave him a kiss for good luck. Do you think having a bravery charm would help remind you to be brave in moments where you are anxious?
- Is there anything that you think you can't do? (e.g., Can you remember to tell yourself you can before trying it out?)

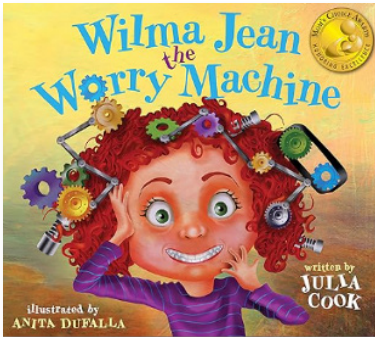
YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hi07urXgr5I>

YouTube Title: Chester the Brave by Audrey Penn | Read Aloud Books for Kids

By: Julia's Wonder World



Generalized Anxiety



Wilma Jean The Worry Machine

Author: Cook, Julia **Illustrator:** Dufalla, Anita

Book Summary:

Anxiety is a subjective sense of worry, apprehension, and/or fear. It is considered to be the number one health problem in America. Although quite common, anxiety disorders in children are often misdiagnosed and overlooked. Everyone feels fear, worry and apprehension from time to time, but when these feelings prevent a person from doing what he/she wants and/or needs to do, anxiety becomes a disability. This fun and humorous book addresses the problem of anxiety in a way that relates to children of all ages. It offers creative strategies for parents and teachers to use that can lessen the severity of anxiety. The goal of the book is to give children the tools needed to feel more in control of their anxiety. For those worries that are not in anyone's control (i.e. the weather,) a worry is introduced. A fun read for Wilmas of all ages!

Guiding Questions:

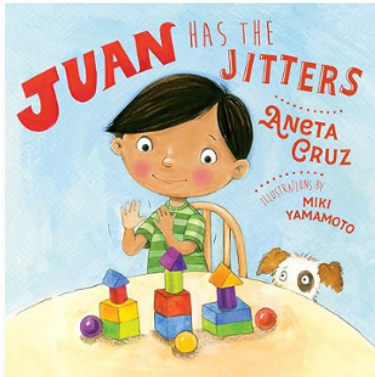
- Wilma Jean worries about spelling tests and math at school... are there any class subjects that make you the most worried? What part of that class scares you the most?
- Wilma Jean was worried about many things such as forgetting how to spell and getting called on during math, but none of these worries ended up actually happening! Do you find that the things you worry about end up happening most of the time, or not?
- What do you think about sorting your worries into ones that you can and cannot control? How do you think this would impact how you feel?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yfva5ltdpEw>

YouTube Title: BOOKENDS with Julia Cook:
Wilma Jean the Worry Machine

By: Julia Cook





Juan Has the Jitters

Author: Cruz, Aneta **Illustrator:** Yamamoto, Miki

Book Summary:

A story about inclusion, diversity, and the power of math to help one boy with autism thrive among his peers.

Juan claps his hands to get his Jitters out. They make his tummy swoosh and swirl. His Jitters happen when there are too many people, too much noise, or too many changes to his day. Juan doesn't like surprises.

Tomorrow there is an athletic event planned at school, which makes Juan very nervous. But his teacher has the perfect solution: math--Juan's favorite subject! Counting, sorting, and matching help Juan calm his Jitters. By making math part of the day's athletic games, and by appointing Juan the official judge, his teacher can make sure that Juan will have fun and feel included. The class is calling it the Mathletic Games!

Parents of children 4 to 8 years-old can use this book to help teach kids about neurodiversity, inclusion, and the beauty in what makes every one of us unique. Teachers will find the book meets several Common Core Standards for pre-K through third grade in reading and math, and nurtures multiple domains of scholastic development.

Guiding Questions:

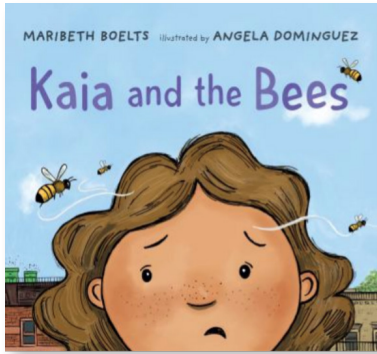
- Have you ever felt the Jitters (swooshing and swirling tummy, buzzing ears)? If so, what was going on while you were feeling this way?
- Juan calms himself by sorting his books by size, his blocks by colour, naming all the shapes he can see in his room, and clapping. What sort of things do you do to calm down?
- Juan's teacher and classmates show their support by trusting Juan with a special role (Mathletics Game judge) and clapping with him. In what ways do you like to be supported?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLD5dOweSQQ>

YouTube Title: Family Fridays from GRCM - Juan Has the Jitters by Aneta Cruz

By: The Grand Rapids Children's Museum





Kaia and The Bees

Author: Boelts, Maribeth **Illustrator:** Dominguez, Angela

Book Summary:

Kaia is the brave type. Like hottest-hot-pepper brave. But there is one thing that scares her: BEES! And right now, thousands of bees live on her roof because Kaia's dad is a beekeeper. Her dad says that the world needs bees and that's why they are beekeepers. But only he goes on the roof, not Kaia, unless she can find a way to be the brave girl she always says she is.

Guiding Questions:

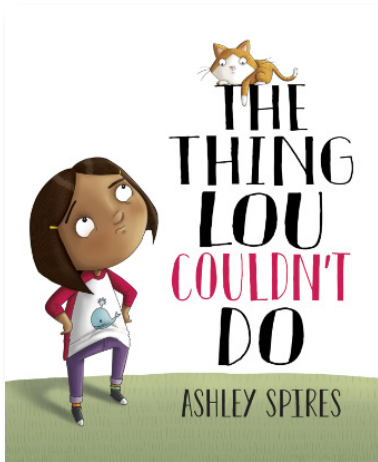
- Kaia is usually very brave, but she has a strong fear of bees. Is there something that makes you feel nervous or scared, even if you are usually brave too? What does it feel like in your body when you are scared?
- Kaia pretended she was comfortable with bees when talking to the kids in her building. Have you ever acted like you were not scared when you actually were? Why do you think people sometimes do that?
- When Kaia gets stung again, she decides to stay away from the bees for a while. But eventually, she finds a new way to help with the honey. Have you ever found a different way to do something that scared you?
- Kaia notices that bees are not always trying to sting her, sometimes they just are looking to get away. Have you ever learned something new about something you were afraid of that helped change how you felt?
- Kaia felt “twisty inside” when she was not being honest with herself, but that twisty feeling went away when she accepted how she felt. What helps you feel better when you are feeling “twisty” or nervous?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0e33RBKgLO>

YouTube Title: Kaia and the Bees (Read-Aloud)

By: Family Promise Educational Videos





The Thing Lou Couldn't Do

Author/Illustrator: Spires, Ashley

Book Summary:

Lou and her friends are BRAVE adventurers. They run FASTER than airplanes. They build MIGHTY fortresses. They rescue WILD animals. But one day, when they're looking for a ship to play pirates in, Lou's friend has an idea: Up there! The tree can be our ship! "Ummm ...?" says Lou. This is something new. Lou has never climbed a tree before, and she's sure she can't do it.

Guiding Questions:

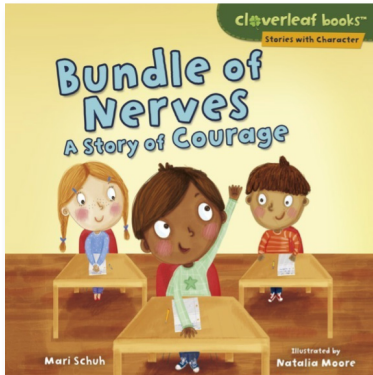
- Lou gives lots of reasons not to climb the tree. Have you ever avoided something because it felt scary or hard?
- Lou tries to act like she does not want to climb, even though she thinks it looks fun. Have you ever pretended not to care about something because you were not sure you could do it?
- Lou says, "I can't climb the tree... not yet." What do you think "not yet" means, and how does it feel to keep trying something even when it is difficult?
- Lou loves adventures, but this one felt different. Can you think of a time when trying something new felt like its own kind of adventure?

YouTube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLdAXyZ7_iQ

YouTube Title: THE THING THAT LOU COULDN'T DO Read Aloud Book for Kids

By: READ ALOUD KIDS BOOK TIME





Bundles of Nerves: A Story of Courage

Author: Gorbachev, Valeri **Illustrator:** Moore, Natalia

Book Summary:

Luis is very nervous about the first day of school but finds many ways to be brave.

Guiding Questions:

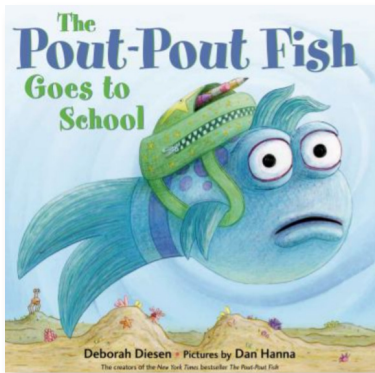
- When Luis was feeling nervous about school, his dad talked to him and told him to “Have courage”. Who do you talk to when you feel nervous? What do they say to you to make you feel better?
- Luis was scared to ride the bus and meet new people, but he did it anyway. Can you think of a time you did something even though it felt scary at first? What happened after you tried it?
- When Luis couldn't remember where his classroom was, he felt worried, but then he asked for help. How do you feel about asking for help? Is it easy or hard?
- Luis faced his fear by taking a deep breath and saying he will lead the sing-along. What strategies do you use to help you face your fears? How do you feel after you've faced something that made you nervous?
- At the end of the story, Luis says the day ended up being lots of fun. Has something ever turned out better than you expected when you were nervous to try it?

YouTube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxD9g33_Fbs

YouTube Title: Kids Books Read Aloud | Story Time Pals | BUNDLE OF NERVES A STORY OF COURAGE by Mari Schuh

By: Story Time Pals





The Pout-Pout Fish Goes to School

Author: Diesen, Deborah **Illustrator:** Hanna, Dan

Book Summary:

Mr. Fish recalls how, on his very first day of school, he anxiously went to one classroom after another watching students do things he could not, until Miss Hewitt showed him to the room that was right for beginners.

Guiding Questions:

- Mr. Fish tried to write, draw shapes, and do math, but each time he thought, “I am not smart”, “I will never get it”, “I do not belong”, and “I should just forget it”. Have you ever felt this way when something felt hard at school?
- Mr. Fish wanted to leave school because things felt too hard. Have you ever wanted to stop doing something because it was frustrating? What helped you keep going?
- Miss Hewitt told Mr. Fish, “You do not have to know things you have not learned yet.” What do you think that means? Has anyone ever told you something like that?
- Mr. Fish said goodbye to his “blub-bubbles”, “doubt-doubt worry”, and “flub-flub troubles”. What kinds of worries feel heavy for you during the school day, and what helps those feelings get smaller?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yekZNVtzmO8>

YouTube Title: THE POUT POUT FISH GOES TO SCHOOL | Kindergarten Books for Kids | Children’s Books Read Aloud



By: Happy Cultivated



Tiny T. Rex and the Very Dark Dark

Author: Stutzman, Jonathan **Illustrator:** Fleck, Jay

Book Summary:

Tiny T. Rex and his friend Pointy are having a campout in the backyard! It is what best friends do. But without their night-lights, the dark outside suddenly seems VERY dark . . . and very full of spooky things. Good thing Tiny has a super-secret plan to keep the dark at bay! Full of warmth and plenty of laughs, this new adventure starring Tiny T. Rex shows that friends will always find a way to face their fears together, even when those fears are not what they seem!

Guiding Questions:

- Tiny and Pointy were nervous about sleeping outside because it was dark. Have you ever felt nervous or scared at night? What helped you feel a little bit better?
- Tiny and Pointy made a plan to feel brave, including building a hiding fort and making special helmets. Have you ever made a plan, or used something special, that helped you feel safe?
- When the lights went out, Tiny said, “We are all scared together”. How does it feel to know that other people are scared sometimes too?
- At the end, Tiny and Pointy opened their eyes and found light in the moon and stars. When you feel scared, what helps you find something comforting or calming around you?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVMGq-RrySU>

YouTube Title: Tiny T-Rex and the Very Dark Dark | Book Nook Story Time (Read Aloud)

By: Wise Wonder Enrichment (Previously Book Nook)





Orion and the Dark

Author/Illustrator: Yarlett, Emma

Book Summary:

Fearing the dark more than anything, little Orion is approached by a friendly Dark, who takes him on a wondrous, fear-conquering adventure.

Guiding Questions:

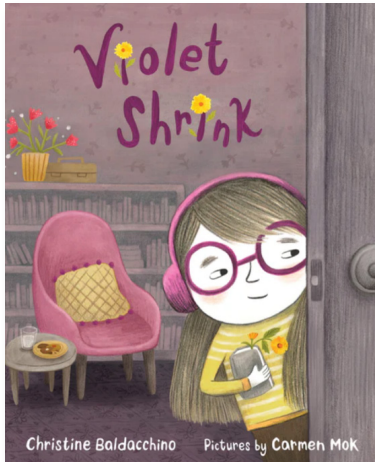
- Orion had a big imagination and felt afraid of many things, especially the dark. What helps you feel safe when something feels a little scary?
- Orion came up with lots of ideas to help himself feel better, like using glow paint or pretending to be an owl. What are some things you have done that helped you feel more okay when you were nervous?
- When Orion spent time with the dark, it did not feel as scary anymore. Has learning more about something ever helped you feel less afraid?
- At the end, Orion said the dark could be his friend. What helped him feel different about it? What helps you feel a little braver when something feels big or unknown?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATGatKK1icU>

YouTube Title: CHILDREN'S BOOK | Orion and the Dark by Emma Yarlett | READ ALOUD

By: Storytime with Ryan & Craig





Violet Shrink

Author: Baldacchino, Christine **Illustrator:** Mok, Carmen

Book Summary:

Although her family loves parties, Violet suffers from shyness and social anxiety, but after she talks with her dad, they come up with a solution for her problem.

Guiding Questions:

- Violet enjoys quiet time, like drawing comics in her blanket tent and listening to music with her headphones. What kinds of things help you feel calm or safe when you need a break?
- When Violet goes to parties, her stomach hurts, her palms get sweaty, her ears feel hot, and she sometimes squeezes her teeth until her head hurts. Have you ever felt that way in a loud or busy place? What helps you feel more comfortable?
- Violet imagined herself as a shark or a snake to feel more okay. Have you ever imagined something or done something that helped you feel braver?
- Violet told her dad how she felt, and they found a plan that worked for her. Is there someone you talk to when something feels hard? What makes it easier to tell them how you feel?

YouTube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4klnm_pCI3A

YouTube Title: Violet Shrink by Christine Baldacchino read by Alane Freund

By: Alane Freund



Social Anxiety



Shy Ones

Author/Illustrator: Ciruolo, Simona

Book Summary:

This delicate picture book about a quiet little octopus that keeps to himself in a school of lively fish explores the topic of shyness and friendship. Stunningly illustrated by the bestselling creator of Hug Me, Simona Ciruolo, this book is sure to resonate with young children across the world, particularly those who are just starting school.

Guiding Questions:

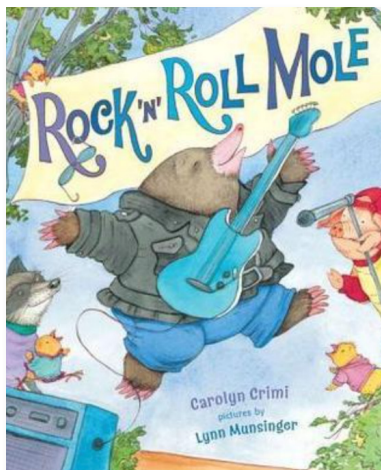
- Maurice hides in places like under the table or behind coral. Have you ever felt nervous or worried and wanted to hide?
- Maurice dances when he thinks no one is looking, and he looks really happy. Is there something you like to do when you are by yourself that helps you feel happy or calm?
- Maurice gets invited to a birthday party. He feels a bit embarrassed and awkward, but he makes the effort to go. Have you ever gone somewhere even when it felt hard at first?
- At the end, Maurice meets another “shy one”. They smile and play together. How does it feel when someone else understands how you feel?

YouTube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_Ttk9wmubg

YouTube Title: Shy Ones - Story Time

By: Deadly Kindies





Rock 'n' roll Mole

Author: Crimi, Carolyn **Illustrator:** Munsinger, Lynn

Book Summary:

Mole has a “rock-and-roll soul” and the groupies to prove it, but when his friend Pig organizes a talent show, Mole’s stage fright may prevent him from performing.

Guiding Questions:

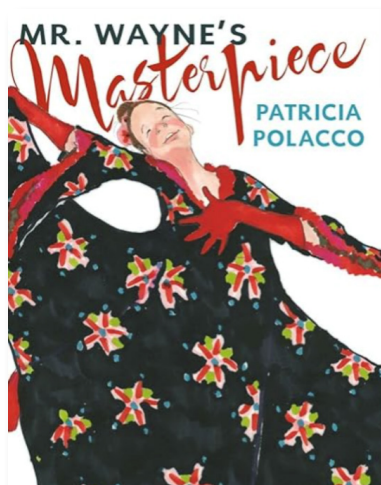
- Mole played guitar and sang when he was alone but said he could not play in front of the whole school. Have you ever liked doing something but felt unsure about doing it in front of other people?
- Mole’s paws shook, his legs wobbled, and his voice cracked when he tried to practice. Have you ever noticed your body feeling that way when you are nervous or getting ready for something?
- Mole said, “I quit”, and took down his posters. Have you ever wanted to stop doing something because it felt too hard or you were not sure how it would go?
- Right before going on stage, Mole stumbled and thought, “I’m doomed”. Then he took a deep breath and got back up. What helps you when you are trying something that feels really big or scary?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wj6BaiHbNfU>

YouTube Title: “Rock ‘N’ Roll Mole” - Children’s Book Narration

By: Bubble Toast





Mr. Wayne's Masterpiece

Author/Illustrator: Polacco, Patricia

Book Summary:

Because she is afraid to read an essay aloud in English class, young Patricia is invited to take Mr. Wayne's drama class where she paints sets, participates in fun exercises, and memorizes every part in the play the others are rehearsing.

Guiding Questions:

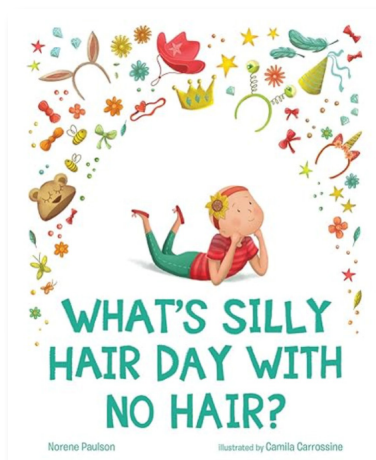
- When Patricia was asked to read her essay out loud in class, she said her knees knocked, her mouth was dry, and her heart was beating fast. Have you ever felt like that when you were asked to speak in front of people?
- Patricia said "no" when she was first asked to take the lead part in the play. Have you ever said "no" to something because it felt really hard or made you nervous?
- When it was time to go on stage, Patricia said her mouth was dry and she could not feel her legs. What helps you when your body feels that way because something is scary or new?
- At the end of the play, Patricia said all her lines, moved around the stage, and felt like she was part of something special. Can you think of a time when you tried something that felt hard at first, but then you felt proud or glad you did it?

YouTube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3tgm6Clp_M

YouTube Title: Mr Waynes Masterpiece

By: Pashion Carlson





What's Silly Hair Day with No Hair?

Author: Paulson, Norene **Illustrator:** Carrossine, Camilla

Book Summary:

Bea was born with hair but around 4 years old it all had fallen out. She must overcome bullying and a fear of missing out. She is dreading Silly Hair Day, yet is able to overcome the anxiety through mutual experiences she and her friend Shaleah have.

Guiding Questions:

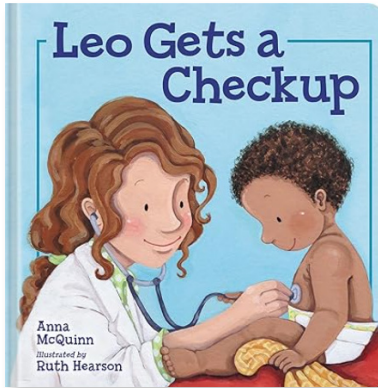
- Bee felt nervous about Silly Hair Day because it was hard to know how to join in. Have you ever felt unsure or left out at school? What helped you feel more okay?
- Bee tried on wigs and made silly hair, but none of it felt quite right. Can you think of a time when something didn't feel like "you"? What helped you feel more like yourself?
- Bee and Sheila came up with a new idea that helped everyone join in. Why do you think it's important to include different ways of participating?
- At the end of the story, Bee said her idea felt "silly - and just right". What does it feel like when you get to be included in a way that works for you?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSRZX7tdCS8>

YouTube Title: Storytime with Mr. Karl - What's Silly Hair Day with No Hair?

By: Newark Public Library





Leo Gets a Checkup

Author: McQuinn, Anna **Illustrator:** Hearson, Ruth

Book Summary:

Leo is experiencing his visit with the doctor to check his height, weight, eyes, ears, heart, etc., and his father accompanies him. He also gets an immunization, leaving this visit happy and healthy. Focus on very young children to feel safe and happy for doctor visits rather anxious.

Guiding Questions:

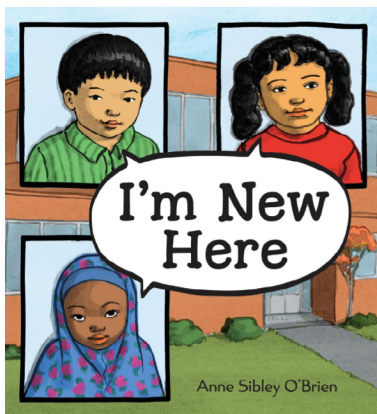
- Leo waits at the clinic with his blankie and Mr. Seahorse. Do you bring anything with you when you go to the doctor that helps you feel more comfortable?
- Leo sits and plays with Mr. Seahorse while he waits for his turn. How do you feel when you are waiting at the doctor's office, and what helps you feel okay?
- Leo got a shot that helps keep him healthy. How do you feel when you know you are getting a shot?
- After the checkup, Leo got a sticker and a book, and he said goodbye. Can you think of a time when you did something that felt a little scary, but then you were proud of yourself afterward?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUQ5Hiym3uQ>

YouTube Title: Leo Gets a Checkup - Read Aloud, Story Books for Story Time

By: Black Children's Books & Videos





I'm New Here

Author/Illustrator: O'Brien, Anne Sibley

Book Summary:

This story follows Maria, Jin, and Fatimah, three students who have recently moved to a new country and are starting at a new school. Each of them is learning a new language, adjusting to new routines, and figuring out how to take part in the classroom. At first, they feel unsure, left out, and overwhelmed. Over time, they begin to connect with classmates, try new things, and share parts of their own cultures.

Guiding Questions:

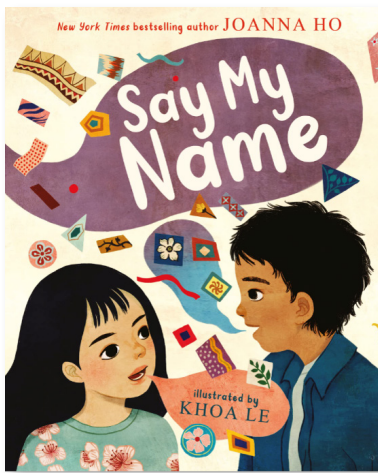
- Maria, Jin, and Fatimah are new to the school and are learning how to speak and understand a new language. What is something that helped you feel more comfortable when you were in an unfamiliar environment?
- Sometimes the children felt nervous trying to speak, write, or take part in class. Have you ever felt unsure about saying something out loud or joining a group? What helped you feel ready to try?
- The children in the book learn from others, but they also share their own stories and culture. What is something special about you, your family, or your culture that you like to share with others?
- At the end of the story, the children begin to feel more included and connected. Can you think of a time when you started to feel more comfortable being yourself in a new place?

YouTube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNfiL_Qv-VA

YouTube Title: I'm New Here by Anne Sibley O'Brien

By: StoryTimeWithMsMelange





Say My Name

Author: Ho, Joanna **Illustrator:** Le, Khoa

Book Summary:

This book focuses on the mispronunciation of ethnically diverse names. Joanna Ho emphasizes cultural pride and identity through a powerful refrain to “say my name”. A pronunciation guide at the back helps readers speak names with care and respect.

Guiding Questions:

- In the story, each person’s name carries stories about their family, culture, and history. What do you know about your own name? Has anyone ever shared what it means or why it was chosen?
- Some names in the book come from languages and places across oceans and generations. Have you ever heard a name that was new to you? How do you try to say names that are unfamiliar?
- The book says that names can be “a key to unlock the dreams of our ancestors”. What is something about your family or background that feels important to who you are?
- In the story, each name is spoken with care and respect. How does it feel when someone takes the time to learn and say your name?

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=JFdq9Mbgsn0>

YouTube Title: Joanna Ho Book Talk - Say My Name

By: Children’s Book World & CBW Teens & Adults



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