

## Mental Health Reading Activity for Grades 2-4

### *Lola's Words Disappeared*

This interactive reading activity is designed for students in grades 2-4 and provides educators with opportunities to help students develop social-emotional intelligence and reduce mental health stigma by introducing mental health challenges that children sometimes face.

A link to purchase the book, the book's synopsis, and an activity guide with discussion questions have been provided to help facilitate the activity, create dialogue and teach strategies, tools and skills that help to develop resilience, mindfulness, positive self-talk, self-esteem, confidence-building, acceptance and compassion for oneself and others, as well as teach students how to be a supportive friend and that it's okay to ask for help.

#### **BOOK DETAILS**

[\*Lola's Words Disappeared\*](#), by Elaheh Bos

While Lola's struggle is with selective mutism, her journey easily translates to many other challenges and barriers children can face. Patient support, compassion, positive self-talk, numerous practical strategies, and Lola's hope and perseverance all serve as inspiration to keep trying to gently help those struggling parts inside feel braver.

Emphasis: Stigma Reduction (as well as Social-Emotional Development)

Diversity Notes: Shows ethnically diverse, able-bodied, female characters and two boys

Relationships: Friends, teacher, Mom, several animals and special toys

#### **ACTIVITY + QUESTIONS**

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##### **Read the Story:**

1. Before you begin, introduce that this lesson is about how we can overcome any challenge, if we try, and review your classroom's norms to ensure that students feel respected and safe.
2. Use gestures and changes in your voice to characterize Lola's feelings and sensations.
3. Invite students to raise their hands silently if they've ever felt the same way as Lola.

### **Discussion + Activities:**

1. What was the big change in Lola's life? What strange thing happened after?
2. What sensations and feelings did Lola have when she was struggling?
3. What strategies did Lola use to help her words be braver? Which ones could help you?
4. Help students connect with the concepts to be explored by writing/drawing individually, or sharing aloud in pairs, small groups, or whole class, their responses to:
  - Have you ever struggled to do something that you really wanted to do, but just couldn't get yourself to, and you didn't even know why? (Like jumping off a diving board or performing on stage.)
  - What do you remember feeling in your body when you couldn't do it?
  - What did you try that got you closer to being able to?
5. Consider vocabulary that students might generate or that you might opt to introduce:
  - Feelings: scared, happy, sad, shy
  - Sensations: cheeks hot, tummy hurt, words disappear, hands sweaty, throat dry
  - Strategies: breathing in calm and breathing out her words, worry box, whispering to worry friends, drawing her worries, drawing talking to her friends, wrote out the best and worst that could happen, limited how much time she spent worrying, practicing in front of the mirror, practicing with her friend at home, practiced parts of talking: moving her lips, pretending to talk, making little sounds, trying when she felt ready, and practicing until she got it!