

Mental Health Reading Activity for K-3 Grade

The Boy with Big, Big Feelings

This interactive reading activity is designed for students in grades K-3 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

[*The Boy with Big, Big Feelings*](#), by Britney Winn Lee

A Boy believes his emotions are “bigger” than other kids’, making him too different. He tries to stuff his feelings down for fear of being teased and rejected, resulting in his isolating himself, as well. Richly illustrated, embodied, and relatable descriptions take the reader inside the Boy’s emotional experiences, even revealing how his empathy for his mom’s stress leaves him overwhelmed and wishing he were less sensitive. When the Boy becomes friends with a tearful girl on the yard, he finds his emotionality mirrored and affirmed in a way that begins to nurture self-acceptance. Ultimately, he discovers that all kids have emotions, and he begins to see that he is just like everybody else.

Emphasis: Stigma Reduction

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

Relationships: Friendship between the main boy and a girl, peers, Mom

ACTIVITY + QUESTIONS

Read the Story:

1. Before you begin, introduce that this lesson is about learning that everyone has feelings, even big ones, and review your classroom's norms to ensure that students feel respected and safe.
2. Invite students to raise their hands silently if they've ever felt the way the boy describes.

3. Help students observe colors, facial cues, and body language for each emotion.
4. Make note of how the boy's sensitivity, including to his mom's big feelings, affects him.
5. Ask students what feelings they see in the artwork the boy creates with his friend.

Discussion + Activities:

1. Help students connect with the concepts explored by writing/drawing individually, or sharing aloud in pairs, small groups, or whole class, their responses to:
 - What size feelings do you usually have? Tiny? Small? Medium? Big? Huge?
 - What sensations do you feel in your body when you have big, big feelings?
 - Why might someone with big feelings be scared to show their feelings to others?
2. Consider vocabulary that students might generate or that you might opt to introduce:
Feelings: sad, afraid, frustrated, angry, happy, sensitive, ashamed, weak, dramatic, scared, silly, mad, alone.
3. Why was the boy scared to let other kids see how big his feelings could be?
4. How did the boy and the girl who was crying show kindness to each other?
5. What discovery did the boy make about the girl and the other kids? How did his discovery help him learn to accept himself and all his big, big feelings?
6. Draw a picture and/or write words to describe one of your big, big feelings.