

## Mental Health Reading Activity for Grades 2-5

### *Worry Says What?*

This interactive reading activity is designed for students in grades 2-5 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**

[Worry Says What?](#) by Allison Edwards

A girl with a monster camped in her brain, whom she names Worry, shares with us how negative self-talk sounds and feels. Worry's words convince the girl not to do the things she really wants to do and to isolate herself and avoid risk instead. Once the girl decides she's had just about enough of Worry, she begins to generate counter statements, causing Worry to shrink down and lose influence over how she feels and what choices she makes. She ends the story with an increased sense of confidence that she will be able to cope with whatever worries might pop up in her future.

Emphasis: Social-Emotional Development

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

Relationships: Main female character and her Worry monster, peers

#### **ACTIVITY + QUESTIONS**

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

1. Before you begin, introduce that this lesson is about tricks we can use if we feel worried, and review your classroom's norms to ensure that students feel respected and safe.
2. Some lines are sung, so consider deciding on a tune before doing the read aloud.
3. Use a different voice for Worry to distinguish negative self-talk from the girl's own voice.

4. Invite students to make a face and give a thumbs down every time Worry tells her a lie.
5. Have students repeat positive self-talk that you come across as a call and response:
  - I am DONE letting Worry be the boss of me.
  - I can do hard things!
  - I have lots of friends!
  - I believe in myself!
  - I can do anything I put my mind to!
  - I am not afraid.
  - I know they'll be back again, and I'll be ready.

### **Discussion + Activities:**

1. How does the girl in the story experience Worry in her body?
2. What were some of the things that Worry says to the girl in the story?
  - Did she believe the things Worry says to her?
  - How does it affect her decisions when she believes Worry?
  - Are the things Worry says to the girl actually true?
3. What strategies does the girl use after she decides to not let Worry be the boss of her?  
What happens to Worry after she uses those strategies?
4. Draw, write, or share with a partner, your group, or the class:
  - If you have a worry monster, what would you name it? If you don't, what other kind of monster do you sometimes hear inside? What's its name?
  - What could you say to a worry monster that would make it smaller?
5. 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:
  - Do you ever feel worried? What kinds of things do you worry about?
  - How does Worry feel in your body?
  - What does Worry say inside your mind?
6. Consider vocabulary that students might generate or that you might opt to introduce:
  - Feelings: worried, insecure, defeated, scared, confident
  - Strategies: affirmations, counter-statements, self-talk