

Picture Books on Mental Health

(* denotes series)

Worry/Anxiety/Big Emotions

Pig and Horse and the Something Scary by Zoey Abbott

Pig can't stop thinking about something that is bothering her. Try as Horse might to get her mind off of it—with bike rides, swims, and silly hats—it's no use. But maybe if Pig shares the something with her friend, they can talk about it and figure out how to face the something together.

What's the Matter, Marlo? by Andrew Arnold

Marlo and Coco are best friends. They do everything together—they read together, laugh together, and play games together. After all, they're best friends. And that's what best friends do. But one day, when Coco asks Marlo to play, he doesn't answer. Instead, Marlo turns away ignoring Coco, until he's lost in his anger. Coco is worried about her friend, but then she remembers she can always find Marlo.

Clovis Keeps His Cool by Katelyn Aronson

Clovis used to struggle with his temper, but ever since he took over his late grandmother's china shop, he's been learning how to manage it. He pours tea, listens to soothing music, and always keeps Granny's words in mind: "Grace, grace, nothing broken to replace." But when rivals from his football days come to heckle him at the shop, Clovis faces a big challenge that even Granny's words and deep breaths might not be enough for.

Chill, Chomp, Chill by Chris Ayala-Kronos

From losing a toy to making a huge mistake on the kickball field, Chomp is a loveable T. Rex going through tough and relatable preschool experiences. When Chomp is about to lose his temper and act out, he uses mindfulness as a tool to better understand his emotions.

Violet Shrink by Christine Baldacchino

Violet Shrink doesn't like parties. Or bashes, or gatherings. Lots of people and lots of noise make Violet's tummy ache and her hands sweat. She would much rather spend time on her own, watching the birds in her backyard, reading comics or listening to music through her purple headphones. The problem is that the whole Shrink family loves parties with loud music and games and dancing. When Violet learns that the Shrink family reunion is fast approaching, she musters up the courage to have a talk with her dad.

When Sophie Gets Angry - Really, Really Angry... by Molly Bang*

Everybody gets angry sometimes. For children, anger can be very upsetting. Parents, teachers, and children can talk about it. People do lots of different things when they get angry.

Cranky Right Now by Julie Berry*

Sometimes we're all cranky. Maybe we're tired, we're hungry, or we're just feeling grumpy. Dealing with emotions can be hard. *Cranky Right Now* is a fun and funny ride through the ups and downs of being cranky, helping kids process difficult feelings, frustrating relationships, and things that just make them mad.

I'm Sad by Michael Ian Black*

Everyone feels sad sometimes—even flamingos. Sigh. When Flamingo announces he's feeling down, the little girl and Potato try to cheer him up, but nothing seems to work. Not even dirt! (Which usually works for Potato.) Flamingo learns that he will not always feel this way. And his friends learn that sometimes being a friend means you don't have to cheer someone up. You just have to stick by your pal no matter how they feel.

Being Edie is Hard Today by Ben Brashares

Being Edie is hard today. No one understands. Not her mother. Not her teachers, or the kids at school. If only if she could be an animal! Edie's imagination may be the perfect escape, but she can't run from her feelings forever if she's going to be comfortable in her own skin.

Gloria's Big Problem by Sarah Stiles Bright

Gloria loves to sing, dance, and act in her bedroom, but not in public. No way. Gloria's big problem makes sure of that, following her wherever she goes and constantly reminding her that she's anxious and frightened, that she's not good enough, and that everyone will laugh at her. Anxious Gloria worries all the time, about everything. Until, one day, Gloria summons all her courage to try out for a community theater production. She marches herself to the audition, and her big problem marches right in behind her. She gets up on stage, and her big problem takes a seat in the front row and starts to laugh at her. And then at last she yells "STOP!", and her big problem shrinks to a little problem, and Gloria wins a part in the play.

The Unbudgeable Curmudgeon by Matthew Burgess

Have you ever seen a curmudgeon that looks like your brother, but is in such a bad mood you hardly recognize him? You can try all the peanut butter sandwiches and brownies you have, but he is not moving. Nothing works, especially nudging, and he just makes you so grumpy that eventually you have no choice but to fight back--and then... Have you ever become a curmudgeon that just won't budge?

My Body is a Rainbow > the Color of My Feelings by Mallika Chopra

Did you know that your body is absolutely amazing? It can do so many things at the same time, explore the world both inside and outside, and help you feel the feelings deep down inside. When you start to feel big feelings, it's helpful to use colors, words, and breath to explore your body and to make yourself calmer and more at peace.

There Might Be Lobsters by Carolyn Crimi

Lots of things at the beach scare Sukie. Lots. Because she is just a small dog, and the stairs are big and sandy, and the waves are big and whooshy, and the balls are big and beachy. And besides, there might be lobsters. Here is a funny and honest read-aloud about how overwhelming the world can be when you're worried — and how empowering it is to overcome your fears when it matters the most.

Little Grump Truck by Amanda Driscoll

When Little Dump Truck is happy, the whole construction crew knows it. When she isn't happy, she becomes Little GRUMP Truck. She can't contain her mood--and soon it starts spreading to the rest of the trucks. When she closes her eyes to get away from her grumpies, she discovers that taking a quiet moment away from her troubles can shift her bad mood into reverse. For now...

You Are Your Strong by Danielle Dufayet

Soothing and empowering, this book reassures kids that they can handle big emotions and highlights the benefit of developing inner strength and confidence in oneself. With diverse characters and scenes featuring a range of different family relationships—from parents, to grandparents, to an older sister in the military—this book shows kids that they will have help along the way to being strong and in control.

Sweep by Louise Greig

Ed's bad mood begins as something really small, hardly a thing at all. But before long it grows, gathers pace, and spreads through the whole town. Can Ed sweep his troubles away?

What If, Pig? by Linzie Hunter

Mouse has never had a friend quite like Pig. Pig is so incredibly kind, fabulously fun, but he also has a big secret—he's a tremendous worrier! When Pig gets the brilliant idea to throw a party for Mouse and their friends, he can't help but think of everything that could possibly go wrong. After all, what if a lion eats all the invitations? What if nobody comes? Or worse, what if everyone comes and has an awful time?

My Monster and Me by Nadiya Hussain

A touching story about a little boy whose worry monster follows him everywhere he goes. It's there when he gets dressed, when he wants to play with his toys, and even when his friends come over to visit. How can he escape his worries?

The Good Egg by Jory John*

Meet the good egg. He's a verrrrrry good egg indeed. But trying to be so good is hard when everyone else is plain ol' rotten. As the other eggs in the dozen behave badly, the good egg starts to crack from all the pressure of feeling like he has to be perfect. So, he decides enough is enough! It's time for him to make a change.

The Nervous Knight by Lloyd Jones

Once upon a time, in a peaceful kingdom far away, there lived a knight (in training). This knight was never ever seen without their armour. In fact, nobody even knew what they looked like under their helmet. Why would they remove their armour? You never know what might happen. What if there was suddenly a war, or an exploding volcano, or they fell and scraped their knee?!

The Whatifs by Emily Kilgore

Cora is constantly worrying about everything. Because of this, the Whatifs love her. They sneak up to her and give her all kinds of doubts: big or small, silly or frightening, likely or impossible. As she prepares for an upcoming piano recital, the Whatifs cling on tighter and drag her down, making her anxious about messing up during the concert. Will she be able to change her worry-filled thoughts into hopeful ones?

Sour Cakes by Karen Krossing

Two siblings wake up in two very different moods; the older one cheerful and lively, the younger feeling sad and irritable. The big sister negotiates and cajoles, tries everything she can think of to cheer her little sister up, but nothing works. It's only when little sister's gloomy mood reaches a boiling point that the older sibling tries a different tactic. She empathizes and enters the gloom with her sister, and offers up compassion along with a gray picture and a sour cake. Together, they navigate the little sister's grim, messy feelings until the siblings are able to play.

The Magic Hug: A Story about Emotions by Fifi Kuo

What happens when a little dragon gets angry? She FLAMES red-hot . . . and things get burnt. Then she feels sad and lonely. Explore the powerful feeling of anger, showing how it affects us and everyone we love.

The Boy with Big, Big, Feelings by Britney Winn Lee

Meet a boy with feelings so big that they glow from his cheeks, spill out of his eyes, and jump up and down on his chest. When a loud truck drives by, he cries.

When he hears a joke, he bursts with joy. When his loved ones are having a hard day, he feels their emotions as if they were his own. The boy tries to cope by stuffing down his feelings, but with a little help and artistic inspiration, the boy realizes his feelings are something to be celebrated.

The Color Monster: A Story about Emotions by Anna Llenas

One day, Color Monster wakes up feeling very confused. His emotions are all over the place; he feels angry, happy, calm, sad, and scared all at once! To help him, a little girl shows him what each feeling means through color. As this adorable monster learns to sort and define his mixed up emotions, he gains self-awareness and peace as a result.

Mindi and the Goose No One Else Could See by Sam McBratney

When a little girl named Mindi says she is being visited by a big goose—a scary creature that is visible only to her—her devoted dad and mom try everything they can think of to drive it away. But maybe some outside assistance is warranted from their wise friend Austen, a farmer who knows what is needed to help Mindi turn her mind to something new.

Wild Feelings by David Milgrim

Do you ever feel as stubborn as a mule? Or as chicken as a chicken? Of course you do. Everyone does.

The Piano Recital by Akiko Miyakoshi

It's the day of Momo's first piano recital. As she nervously waits for her turn to play, she tells herself, "I'll be okay ... I'll be okay ..." Then she hears a voice nearby, also saying, "I'll be okay ... I'll be okay ..." It's a mouseling! And the little mouse is nervous about her first performance, too. The mouseling invites Momo through a small door backstage, where Momo is amazed to find a miniature theater filled with an audience of finely dressed mice there to watch singers, dancers and circus performers! When it's the mouseling's turn, Momo agrees to accompany her on piano. The mouse audience is so appreciative! But then, as she rises to take her bow, Momo is surprised to discover --- it isn't a mouse audience at all!

Big Feelings by Alexandra Penfold

What should we do when things don't go to plan? We may feel mad, frustrated, or overwhelmed, but by talking it through, compromising, and seeing another point of view, we can start fresh, begin anew.

Ravi's Roar by Tom Percival*

Ravi never minded being the smallest in his family. Until one day, his short arms can't reach the monkey bars, he can't find anyone during hide-and-seek, AND he's too little to ride the big slide. Ravi is so mad -- so furious -- that he can't control

his temper anymore . . . and he turns into a ferocious, roaring TIGER! Tigers can do anything they want! But who wants to play with a growling, wild tiger who won't share or behave? Ravi is about to discover something very important about voicing his feelings.

Why Do We Cry? by Fran Pintadera

In a soft voice, Mario asks, "Mother, why do we cry?" His mother thinks for a moment, and then begins to tell him about the many reasons for our tears. We cry because our sadness is so huge it must escape from our bodies. Because we don't understand the world, and our tears go in search of an answer. Because we can't find the right words, and our tears speak a universal language. Most important, she tells him, we cry because we feel like crying. And, as she shows him then, sometimes we feel like crying for joy.

Playing Possum by Jennifer Black Reinhardt

In this winsome tale, Alfred, who plays dead, and Sophia, who rolls up in a ball, stand in for shy or anxious humans whose discomfort keeps them from fitting in. Alfred and Sofia open up to each other and go on to help other creatures who have social difficulties by practicing patience, forgiveness, and friendship—tools for overcoming the barriers that keep us from connecting with others.

Hector's Favorite Place by Jo Rooks

Hector loves his home so much that he doesn't often go out, and it starts to affect his friendships. Soon Hector realizes that his worries are keeping him from enjoying himself, so he needs to learn to be brave and try new things. Can Hector find the courage to break out of his comfort zone?

The Problem with Problems by Rachel Rooney

Have you ever met a Problem? They come in all shapes and sizes, and can pop up at the most inconvenient times. But you should know some things about them that will help you make them disappear . . .

Pilar's Worries by Victoria Sanchez

Pilar loves to dance. She plies while brushing her teeth. She leaps when hurrying to ballet class. But when tryouts for her favorite ballet are held, Pilar is anxious. Auditioning makes her whole body feel scared. But by using some of the coping techniques she's learned and focusing on her love for ballet, she is able to persevere.

Hello, Dark by Wai Mei Wong

A little boy faces his fear of the dark by engaging in a conversation with it. Imagining the dark as a friendly shadow creature, the boy comes to the realization that the dark is not only a necessary part of life, but that it can be fun

as well! The boy and his new friend play make believe, meditate, and listen to music until it's finally time to fall asleep.

Depression

Balloons for Papa by Elizabeth Gilbert Bedia

Arthur's gloomy father rushes him through the park every morning, through gray and rainy weather. Arthur just wants a bright balloon from the park's vendor, but Papa always says no. One morning, the balloons magically appear at their doorstep, and Arthur figures out the perfect way to bring the sunshine out—and Papa's smile back—even if only for a few moments.

Felix After the Rain by Dunja Jogan

A young man called Felix hides all of his sorrow inside a large black suitcase that he carries with him wherever he goes. One day, a small boy opens the suitcase whilst Felix is sleeping. Felix wakes and the tears that he had been carrying for so long suddenly pour from him. Felix is uplifted, free and his heart is full of joy. Felix embraces the world, and the world embraces him.

Fen's Drop of Gray by Brian Wray

Little Fen loves all of the beautiful colors in the world and loves capturing them with her treasured set of paints. One day, Fen notices a little drop of gray in her paints and can't seem to stop it from spreading. Before long the gray is everywhere, and Fen no longer enjoys doing what she loves the most. With a little encouragement from her mother, Fen finds a way to put the colors back in her world and begin enjoying life again.

Trauma

A Place Inside of Me by Zetta Elliott

Summertime is filled with joy—skateboarding and playing basketball—until his community is deeply wounded by a police shooting. As fall turns to winter and then spring, fear grows into anger, then pride and peace.

Big Bear Was Not the Same by Joanna Rowland

Little Bear loves the woods, his home, and going on adventures with his best friend, Big Bear. Big Bear is so big and strong and brave. He always protects Little Bear and helps him feel safe. Then something scary happens to Big Bear. He's caught in a forest fire. Even after he escapes and is safe, Little Bear can tell that Big Bear is not the same. He runs, roars, or freezes in fear when ordinary things happen in the woods that remind him of that traumatic day. How can Little Bear's big, strong, brave friend be so scared now? And how can Little Bear be a good friend?

Loss/Grief

Maybe Tomorrow? By Charlotte Agell

This tender exploration of loss illuminates the sustaining power of kindness, empathy, and friendship. It will resonate with anyone who has experienced hardship or grief, from the death of a loved one or a pet, to the transition to a new home, family situation, or learning environment. It is especially comforting during this time of social distancing and the uncertainty around what the future holds, sensitively demonstrating that we are stronger together.

The Rabbit Listened by Cori Doerrfeld

When something sad happens, Taylor doesn't know where to turn. All the animals are sure they have the answer. The chicken wants to talk it out, but Taylor doesn't feel like chatting. The bear thinks Taylor should get angry, but that's not quite right either. One by one, the animals try to tell Taylor how to act, and one by one they fail to offer comfort. Then the rabbit arrives. All the rabbit does is listen . . . which is just what Taylor needs.

When Sadness is at Your Door by Eva Eland

Sadness can be scary and confusing at any age! When we feel sad, especially for long periods of time, it can seem as if the sadness is a part of who we are--an overwhelming, invisible, and scary sensation. Eland brilliantly approaches this feeling as if it is a visitor. She gives it a shape and a face, and encourages the reader to give it a name, all of which helps to demystify it and distinguish it from ourselves.

Mama's Waves by Chandra Ghosh Ippen

Ellie's mom did not come for their visit, and Ellie is stuck in a cloud of sadness and anger as she tries to understand why. Fortunately, Miss K. and Ellie's Uncle Finny are there to help her. Using the metaphor of a wave, they help Ellie talk about and understand her mother's ups and downs, recognize and hold on to loving memories, and know that she is not alone.

If You Miss Me by Jocelyn Li Langrand

Charlie loves to dance her way through life with her grandma. They may not always be together, but each time they part Grandma says, "If you miss me, look at the moon." Then winter brings unexpected change, and not even dancing feels the same. What will Charlie do? Will Grandma come to see her dance again? In the biggest show of the year, Charlie finds her answer.

Jenny Mei is Sad by Tracy Subisak

Jenny Mei still smiles a lot. She makes everyone laugh. And she still likes blue Popsicles the best. But, her friend knows that Jenny Mei is sad, and does her best to be there to support her.

Mindfulness/Resilience

My Heart Flies Open by Omileye Achikeobi-Lewis

Beautifully and brightly illustrated, *My Heart Flies Open* takes readers on a yoga journey of mindful reflection, self-discovery, and self-love. Starting with Easy Pose ("I AM LOVE") and moving through Mountain Pose ("I AM STILLNESS"), Triangle Pose ("I AM ME"), and more, *My Heart Flies Open* guides young readers through a grounding sequence of 15 yoga poses and affirmations.

Already a Butterfly: A Meditation Story by Julia Alvarez

With so much to do in so little time, Mari is constantly on the move, flitting from flower to flower, practicing her camouflage poses, and planning for migration. She's the busiest butterfly around. But does being productive mean she is happy? Mari couldn't say. The only way she feels like a butterfly is by acting like one. Little does Mari know, the secret to feeling like herself is simply to focus her breath, find her quiet place, and follow her instincts. With the guidance of a thoughtful flower bud, Mari soon learns to meditate and appreciate that she was a butterfly all along.

I am a Peaceful Goldfish by Shoshana Chaim

When we are overcome with emotions, our breath—and a bit of imagination—can bring us back to a peaceful place. In *I Am a Peaceful Goldfish*, two children learn how to settle their difficult feelings with imaginative breathing techniques, pretending they are elephants, flowers, and even dragons!

Mindful Mr. Sloth by Katy Hudson

Sasha has one speed—fast. She loves to do lots of things, all at once, as fast as possible. Mr. Sloth has one speed—slow. He loves to do things one at a time, at a nice, easy pace. Can Mr. Sloth's mindful ways teach Sasha to slow down and enjoy life?

Breathe Deep, Little Sheep: A Calm Down Book for Kids by Jessica Lee

A kid-friendly introduction to self-soothing and mindfulness with adorable animal friends. A child's "very first step" into mindfulness where the story's short rhymes can be used as soothing mantras, paired with delightful illustrations of baby animals working through anxious situations.

A Little Space for Me by Jennifer Gray Olson

Sometimes, when it's too loud, too crowded, too messy, too smelly, or for no reason at all, you might just need a little bit of space to feel like yourself again.

Calm Monsters, Kind Monsters by Sesame Street

Breathing, positive self talk, and calming down—mindfulness includes all this and more. Sesame Street characters present big emotions readers have likely

faced alongside simple solutions like belly breathing to help kids cope with what they're feeling.

I Am Peace by Susan Verde*

Mindfulness means being fully in the present moment. Children can learn how to manage their emotions, make good choices, and balance their busy lives by learning to be mindful, express emotions through speech, find empathy through imagination, and wonder at the beauty of the natural world.

The Three Little Yogis and the Wolf Who Lost His Breath by Susan Verde

Once upon a time there lived a wolf who lost his huff and his puff. It was a BIG, BAD problem! One morning, the wolf came upon a peaceful little yogi doing sun salutations. The wolf wanted to huff and puff and bloow her hut down into a big pile of straw. But instead the yogi suggested, "Let's meditate on that!" Soon the wolf met a second yogi, and then a third. He may have lost his huff and puff—but with the help of three new yogi friends, can the wolf find his breath?

I'm Gonna Push Through by Jasmyn Wright

Inspired by a mantra written for her third-grade students, Jasmyn Wright's uplifting call to "push through" is an invitation to young readers to announce their own power and to recognize and reaffirm that of others, regardless of setbacks. Her empowering words not only lift children up, but show them how to lift themselves up and seize their potential.

Mop Rides the Waves of Life by Jaimal Yogis

If only life could be like surfing! Having "funny" hair and being embarrassed in school is hard, but when little surfer Mop studies the lessons of the waves—breathing, letting the bad waves go by, and riding the good ones—he learns how to bring the mindfulness and joy of surfing into his whole life.