

TEACHERS' NOTES

MARCIA WILLIAMS

THE FANTASTIC BOOK OF FEELINGS

A GUIDE TO BEING

HAPPY, SAD

AND EVERYTHING
IN-BETWEEN!

9781406397949 • £12.99 • hardback • 7 years +

Get to know all your feelings and how to look after them in this positive and practical guide from beloved author-illustrator Marcia Williams.

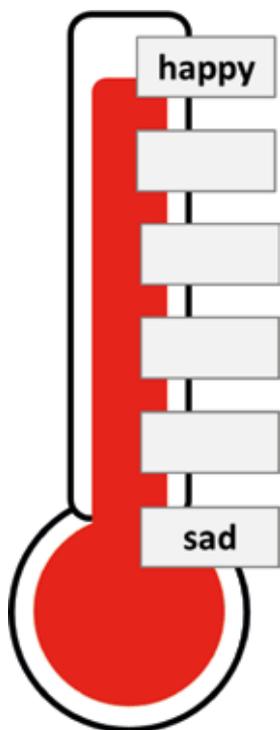
How do you feel today? Whether you're happy, sad or anything in-between, this book is the perfect guide to understanding and celebrating all your feelings! In colourful comic-strip stories, explore a whole range of emotions and discover ways to cope when any feeling becomes overwhelming.

Packed with top tips for mental wellbeing and a first aid box for feelings, this is a helpful and engaging guide celebrating the importance of good mental health.

These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.

These teaching notes are particularly suited to working with children in Key Stage 2

- Begin by exploring the front cover, looking at and talking about its illustration and its title. Take the opportunity to draw out and introduce some vocabulary we can use to describe a range of emotions that can be built on as you explore the book together. Children will have varied experience in and attitudes to talking about, sharing and articulating their feelings and in understanding the abstract concept of emotions.
 - What does the title **The Fantastic Book of Feelings A Guide to Being Happy, Sad and Everything in-between** mean to the children? Consider the sub-title and invite the children to share what kinds of feelings they would describe as being **in-between** happy and sad and note these down. You might create an outline of a thermometer with **sad** at the bottom and **happy** at the top, using it to explore and record emotions that we think belong **in-between**, for example:



- What kinds of feelings are being expressed on the front cover? Give the children time to explore the sunshine emoji illustrations that form part of the font design and those surrounding the title. *Have you ever felt like this?*
- What do you notice about the children and how they are feeling? Are they all feeling the same way? What tells you this? Why does this child [in the bottom corner] appear unhappier than the other children? What is different for her? Give the children time to explore the relationships between the other children and their companions and to talk about what or who helps them to feel better when they feel sad.
- Consider the title again **Fantastic Book of Feelings**. *Do the children agree that all feelings are fantastic? Why or why not? What do you think the author means by this and why do you think she has created this book? What does she want to do? How does she want us to feel?*

- Open the book to reveal the back cover, looking at and talking about the illustrations and the blurb.

What do the children think the author illustrator is trying to show in these images of the children with the emojis? Again, discuss the emotions they think are being expressed and how they think the children are trying to manage each of their emojis or emotions. Which children do they think are happiest and why do they think this is?
- Read aloud the blurb and talk about anything that the children don't understand or need clarifying, such as the phrase **mental wellbeing**. *What do the children expect to see when they open this book? What kinds of stories*



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might they hear about? Revisit the illustrations of the children again. *Have they ever felt this way? What was the story behind these feelings? Who or what helped them to cope with their emotions? What kinds of **top tips** do they think might be shared in the book? Is there anything they can see already on the cover of the book that might be helpful in coping with feelings? What advice would they give to their friends if they were feeling this way?*

- Open the book to reveal the end paper and letter from the author - Marcia - to them, the reader. Before reading the content of the letter, encourage the children to look closely at what they can see in the illustration, noting the range of emotions being expressed by more of the sunshine emojis and relating them back to the children's personal experiences.
- Now look more closely at the characters playing out the narrative across the bottom of the spread, reading aloud the dialogue being expressed and discussing what is happening. *How do Lou's feelings change from being excited about starting a new book to the page turn? What tells you this?* The children might recognise the other two children from the back cover. *What is different about them now? What might have happened? Do you agree with them or with Lou about sharing your feelings or keeping them private?*
- Now read aloud the letter and talk about what Marcia is saying to us about feelings. Can the children summarise the key message they are taking from her letter? Encourage them to revisit and re-read the letter to help them draw out what they think might be important in managing your feelings. *How does the comic strip at the bottom reinforce the messages in the letter?*
- Turn the page and follow the characters' dialogue along the footer, exploring their emotional responses to this book about feelings. *Which character do you relate to most? Why? Where would you place yourself on the band of emotions?*
- Turn the page and begin to read aloud the main body of text on the first page of the spread, pausing after the first paragraph to gather the children's thoughts in relation to the reassertion that **feelings are fantastic**. *What do the children think about what they see here? Does anything interest them? Do they agree that all feelings are good? Has the author shared anything that might make them think differently to how they felt before?*
- Continue reading, giving the opportunity for the children to talk together about what they have heard and to talk about anything they don't understand or need clarifying. *Does anything interest them in particular? Do you they have any questions or does anything puzzle them? How does this relate to the illustration on the opposite page? How are the children each feeling about winning their cup? Why don't they all feel the same way?*
- Return to the characters at the foot of the spread and what they are discussing between them. *Why is Lou described as being **empathetic**? What does this mean to the children? When have you showed empathy towards someone else? How did it make the other person feel? Why do you think understanding others' feelings is described as being a **great skill**? Do you know anyone that is empathetic or shows understanding?*
- Before turning the page, show the children the endpaper at the back of the book which includes an index list. Skim the list with the children to get a sense of what they will find inside this book. *Is this what the children expected?* Consider the section relaying the author's **Top Ten Tips – for keeping your feelings fit**. What do the children think about this? Why would you need to keep your feelings 'fit' as well as your body? What might this involve? Ask the children to anticipate what kinds of 'top tips' they might expect to find, drawing out their personal experiences of managing emotions as well as relating ideas to what they have seen and heard in the book so far.



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- Return to the front of the book and turn to the spread which shares the **Top Ten Tips**. Scan across the spread to locate each of the emboldened tips numbered one to ten, discussing anything that confirms their predictions, surprises or interests them in any way. Read aloud the body of text underneath the tips, talking about what this means to the children. Explore the line **This will help you remain in charge of your feelings, instead of them taking charge of you**. *What does the author mean by this? Have you ever felt like feelings were taking over and were becoming difficult to manage? Did any one of these ten suggestions help you to feel more in charge again?*
- You could create copies of this spread and cut up the ten top tips to create a set of cards for groups of children to explore for themselves in more depth. *Do they have any preferences for keeping their own feelings fit? Which work best for each of them? Do certain activities work better for different emotions, for example how might managing loneliness be different or similar to managing anger? Why is it important to recognise your feelings and explore different ways to keep them **fit and healthy**?* Children could go on to create some additional tips, sharing what works for them in coping with emotions.
- Read the dialogue shared between the characters at the footer and turn the page to reveal the first story about **Feeling Anxious**; something Lou reveals is how he feels all the time. Invite the children to share what they think feeling anxious involves and when they may have experienced this for themselves or observed anxiety in someone else. *What does it mean to feel anxious? What kind of thing can make us feel anxious or nervous?* Encourage them to try and articulate the kinds of thoughts and feelings it might create and how it might affect our bodies as well. Read the introduction to Alesha's story, discussing the negative as well as the positive impact of anxiety that is being described.
- Begin by reading the story to the children, demonstrating how to navigate the story and dialogue text and the illustrations used to create the graphic comic strip style. Talk to the children about the story, using appropriate questions to frame your discussions. *What did they like about the story? What did it make them think about? How did it make them feel?* Include questions that encourage the children to connect personally with the story. *Have they ever felt like this? What makes them feel anxious?* Look at and talk about the illustrations with the children, such as the one on the third panel with the butterflies. *Do you share any of Alesha's worries? What tells you that Alesha is beginning to feel overwhelmed by her anxieties or that she can't get away from them?*
- Look at the last panel with the children. *How have Alesha's feelings changed from the start to the end of this story? How does the last image make us feel compared to those in the early panels? what is the difference in the way Alesha is holding her body, or in her facial expression? What or who has helped Alesha manage her anxiety in the story? What do the children think about her behaviour before bedtime and what she felt she had to do in order to get to sleep? Do they think this was helping Alesha? Consider her mum's response to her growing list of worries ["Relax, chick."]. Do they think this was helping her to stop worrying? What was the moment that things began to improve? Consider what Granny said or did that was so helpful to Alesha. Do the children have anyone special like this that can empathise with their feelings as well as offering suggestions to help manage emotions?*
- You might create a graph of emotion to map Alesha's emotional journey in this story. Mapping her ups and downs as a simple line graph will help the children better understand and articulate nuanced emotional states that we may all feel on occasion or over the course of our own lives.
- Explore Alesha's top tip of meditation, learned from her Granny, providing time and space for the children to have a go at some of the techniques suggested for themselves, either individually or together. Invite them to



share how they felt before and after and begin to discuss the positive impact on both their bodies and their minds. *How do we know when we are calm and when we are anxious? How is the book helping the character Lou so far? Is he still reluctant or unwilling to share his feelings?*

- Return to the index and look at the various emotions being explored in the stories. Allow the children the opportunity to choose which they are most interested in looking at in more depth. You might want to organise the children in to small groups or pairs so that they can explore their chosen emotion together. Depending on their reading experience, you could either read these aloud or invite the children to read independently with interested friends and classmates.
- Invite children to come together and share what they have found out about the children in the stories and the emotions involved. Offer helpful prompts to support a meaningful discussion and allow for shared thinking. *How are their stories different or similar? How were their emotions affecting them? Who or what helped them to take back control and understand how to manage their emotion? What can we learn from this story?*
- Once all the stories have been explored as a class, reflect with the children on what we can learn from these stories. Turn to the spread **First Aid Box** at the end of the book and look at one or two examples, drawing on the expertise of the children who chose to focus on a given emotion. You might add more ideas to this first aid box as well as using these summary panels to support children as and when relevant to their emotional well-being. You could revisit the final endpaper and look at the top tips inside the clouds, perhaps using it as a graphic model to create a class display adding the children's suggestions as they become more experienced in understanding and managing their emotions.
- Revisit the list of emotions that the children offered in response to the book cover illustrations as well as any others discussed over the course of the book. *Are there any that are not exemplified through the stories in the book?* Ask the children to choose an emotion that they feel they can write a story about to add to the repertoire in the book, such as **Feeling Frustrated** or **Feeling Embarrassed**. Maybe they have first-hand experience of this emotion themselves and can use their story to help others. Encourage the children to step inside the memory of the feeling and to consider what and who was involved. Children can map the basic shape of their story including the emotional ups and downs then begin to illustrate and write about and sequence the key events or pivotal moments of the story. They might want to present and publish their story in the same comic book style of the book. Give them plenty of time to draft, talk about and refine their story until they are happy with it.
- Turn to the spread **What makes you happy?** Consider why it is important to know and understand what makes us happy. Look at the range of activities that are making the children in the book happy and whether this relates to the children in the class. *Why is it important to allow other people to choose what makes them happy? How could we find out what makes us happy as well as what makes other people happy?* You could create a display similar in illustrative style to that of Marcia Williams of the children engaging in things that make them happy, or take photographs of them. You might open this out to their families and the wider school community.
- Allow the group to begin to explore their responses to it through book talk with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls 'the four basic questions'. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:



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- Tell me ... was there anything you liked about this story?
 - Was there anything that you particularly disliked?
 - Was there anything that puzzled you?
 - Were there any patterns ... any connections that you noticed? Did it remind you of anything else you've read or seen?
- The openness of these questions unlike the more interrogative 'Why?' question encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. It allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the 'wrong' answer.
 - Extend the children's thinking through a more evaluative question, such as: *Why do you think Marcia Williams chose to write this book? Who do you think it would help? When would you choose to pick up this book again? Is there anyone that you would recommend this book to? Why?*
 - You could also look at the illustrations and graphic format and reflect on how they have helped readers to access the content. *What else has the author/illustrator done to help the children to feel comfortable in reading and talking about emotions? Read some of the text aloud again and reflect on the impact of the informal, reassuring tone and voice she adopts, speaking to the reader directly. What is she trying to achieve? How is this different to a book that explains feelings objectively rather than speaking to the reader?*
 - Leave a copy of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or socially in a group.

After reading, you could also:

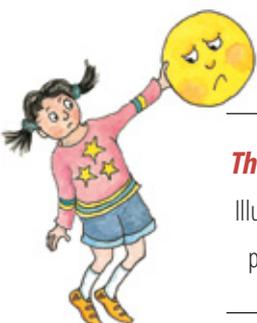
- Give an opportunity for the children to write a personal narrative about a time they have felt confused or overwhelmed by a particular emotion or when they have observed this in someone else they care about. *What happened? What or who caused the feeling? How did the emotion affect them? What did it make them feel or think about? What did it do to their body? How did their story end? Who or what helped them to take charge of their emotions again? What can other people learn from this story?*
- Revisit the **Ten Top Tips** and those found in the endpaper clouds at the back of the book. Invite the children to choose one of these, perhaps something new to them, and give it a go. *Is this something that they would rather do on their own or with friends or family members? Do they need a lot of time or resources? Can they do it anywhere?* Children can feedback to each other how each made them feel and act as a support partner for others unsure about trying a new approach to managing their feelings.
- Reflect on the simple pleasures we can take from the world and people around us. Provide the children with a simple notebook or handmade origami book in which they can keep a record of the things that have made them happy over the week, encouraging them to take notice of the small moments of happiness rather than waiting for a grand event or gesture. They might then begin to keep a daily **gratitude journal**, as suggested in the top tips, giving them opportunity to reflect on simple pleasures of their day and begin to understand that – even when it has felt tricky at times – every day can hold these moments.



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- Consider the class and school culture of supporting mental health and well-being of the children but also the wider school community. *What is in place that will help anyone who is struggling with an emotion? How is this communicated to make sure everyone feels included and can feel comfortable in asking for help?* Ask the children to think about how they can get involved in supporting others and discuss which suggested approaches would work well within the school and classroom context.
- Consider how children in the school are supported in developing **empathy** from the earliest years, perhaps through rich reading provision in which children are exposed to stories with relatable characters and can engage in the dilemmas they face. It can be less threatening to reflect deeply on the emotional journey of a fictional character than it is to face one's own feelings. This kind of engagement with quality texts also supports children to develop empathy beyond that of the fictional world and make connections with their real world experiences. Consider with the children how we would know if someone was experiencing difficulty, revisiting the books for further information and drawing on these intertextual and personal experiences. Look for booklists recommended by supportive organisations, such as:
 - CLPE's Core Book Lists: <https://clpe.org.uk/corebooks>
 - Empathy Lab's Read for Empathy List in partnership with CLPE: <https://www.empathylab.uk/2021-read-for-empathy-collections>
- Explore with the children the benefits of helping others or **volunteering** to their own mental health and well-being. *Why do they think this has a positive impact on them as well as the cause or person they are supporting?*
- You could engage the children in further research around mental health and well-being, visiting websites or engage in resources, such as:
 - CBBC's <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/bp-check-in-with-yourself>
 - Place2Be's Children's Mental Health Week 'Draw your Feelings' film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STdJ_8ORyE
- You could act on the research that makes the link between contact with nature and mental health and well-being and offered by Marcia Williams as a **Top Tip** by increasing the children's own contact with nature. There are a number of organisations that can support with this:
- The Wildlife Trusts – are a leading provider of outdoor nature education: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/pioneering-nature-friendly-schools-boost-childrens-learning-and-well-being-critical-time>
- Groundwork – transforming young lives in the most disadvantaged communities: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/themes/supporting-young-people/>
- Sensory Trust – experts in ensuring children with special needs enjoy access to nature: <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/>
- Field Studies Council – inspires environmental education through residential courses: <https://www.field-studies-council.org/>



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Other suggested titles to further support the exploration of themes arising from the book:

- Before exploring the book, you might make accessible books that support the children in talking about and sharing their thoughts, feelings and emotions with others. Such books might include:
 - **A Book of Feelings**, Amanda McCardie and Salvatore Rubbino (Walker)
 - **Happy! A First Book of Feelings**, Mary Murphy (Walker)
 - **Happy in Our Skin**, Fran Manushkin and Lauren Tobia (Walker)
 - **Joy**, Yasmeen Ismail and Jennie Desmon (Walker)
 - **Grumpy Duck**, Joyce Dunbar and Petr Horacek (Walker)
 - **Silly Billy**, Anthony Browne (Walker)
 - **Owl Babies**, Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson (Walker)
 - **Rain Before Rainbows**, Smriti Halls and David Litchfield (Walker)
 - **Feelings: Inside My Heart and in My Head**, Libby Walden and Richard Jones (Caterpillar Books)
 - **Sometimes I Feel**, Sarah Maycock (Big Picture Press)
 - **Tell Me Something Happy Before I Go To Sleep**, Joyce Dunbar and Debi Gliori (Corgi)
 - **Sweep**, Louise Greig and Julia Sarda (Egmont)
 - **Kindness Grows**, Britta Teckentrup (Caterpillar Books)
 - **When Sadness Comes to Call**, Eva Eland (Andersen Press)
 - **Where Happiness Begins**, Eva Eland (Andersen Press)
 - **Ruby's Worry**, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)
 - **Ravi's Roar**, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)
 - **Meesha Makes Friends**, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)
 - **Dogger**, Shirley Hughes (Red Fox)
 - **Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears**, Emily Gravett (Macmillan)



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