

Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Sadness & Low Mood Through the Reading of Picture Books (Primary)

Note:

The interest levels listed in this bibliography are those given by the publishers. Each teacher, however, needs to decide the age suitability for their own students.

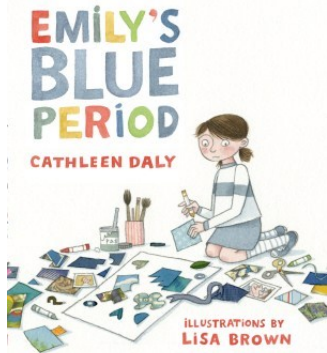
The summaries are from the publishers as well and have been included to give you a quick overview of the main themes of each title. In this way you can quickly select the titles that suit the particular social and emotional needs of your students. Some of the titles fit the theme loosely and others more tightly. The titles also range from "light-hearted" to more serious in tone.

Your school counsellor is an excellent source for suggestions on how to support students when teaching more sensitive subjects.

Joan Pearce, April 2024

Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Sadness and Low Mood (Primary)

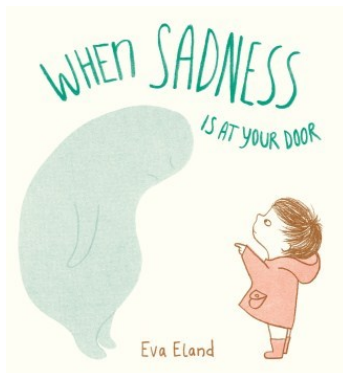
Compiled by Joan Pearce
Picture Book Format



Emily's Blue Period

by Cathleen Daly, c2014 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.8)

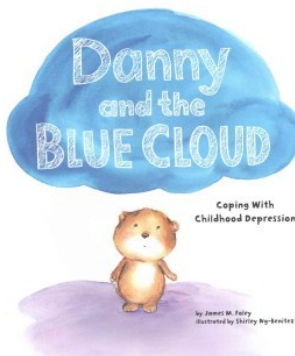
"Emily wants to be an artist. She likes painting and loves the way artists like Pablo Picasso mixed things up. Emily's life is a little mixed up right now. Her dad doesn't live at home anymore, and it feels like everything around her is changing. "When Picasso was sad for a while," says Emily, "he only painted in blue. And now I am in my blue period." It might last quite some time." - Pub.



When Sadness is at Your Door

by Eva Eland, c2019 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.1)

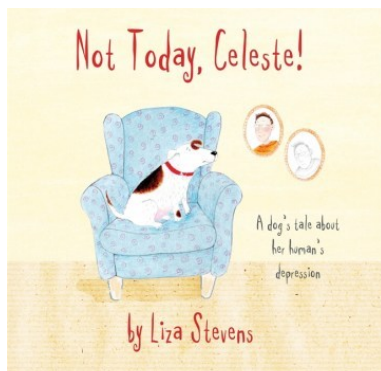
"In *When Sadness Is at Your Door*, Eva Eland brilliantly approaches this feeling as if it is a visitor. She gives it a shape and a face, and encourages the reader to give it a name, all of which helps to demystify it and distinguish it from ourselves. She suggests activities to do with it, like sitting quietly, drawing, and going outside for a walk. The beauty of this approach is in the respect the book has for the feeling..." - Pub.



Danny and the Blue Cloud: Coping With Childhood Depression

by James M. Foley, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.9)

"Danny was born under a blue cloud. He didn't know why, but sometimes the cloud made him cry. Some days he didn't want to get out of bed. Some days he was one big GROWL! With the help of Barnaby the rabbit, Danny learns to think more helpful thoughts, feel better about himself, and dance his way into a better mood! He practices Barnaby's "Feel-Good Rules" until his cloud turns lighter and brighter." -Pub.



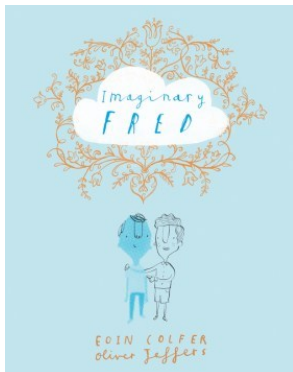
Not Today, Celeste! A Dog's Tale About Her Human's Depression

by Liza Stevens, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.0)

"Celeste thinks she is the happiest dog in the world. But when she notices something different about her human, Rupert, she wonders if things will ever be the same again. Charmingly illustrated, this heart-warming story, for children aged three and up, reflects some of the feelings and experiences that a child whose parent or carer has depression may face." - Pub.

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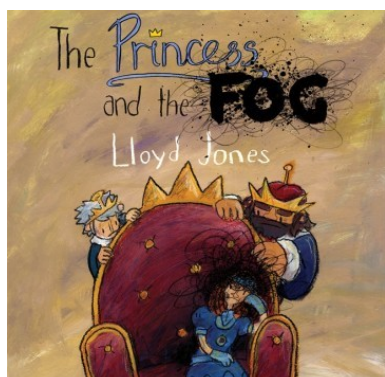
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Imaginary Fred

by Eoin Colfer, c2015 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.5)

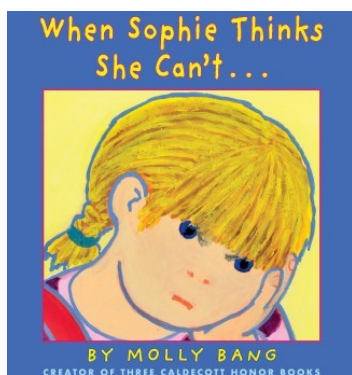
"Fred is the best imaginary friend you could ever hope for, but no matter how hard he tries, the same thing always happens: his friend finds a real friend in the real world, and Fred fades away, bit by bit, waiting to be wished for again... Then one day, a boy called Sam wishes for a friend, and Fred appears! For a while, everything is perfect. But what about the day when Sam finds a real friend? Could it be that this time, something magical might happen...?" - Follett



The Princess and the Fog: A Story for Children with Depression

by Lloyd Jones, c2015 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.2)

"The Princess and the Fog is picture book to help sufferers of depression aged 5-7 cope with their difficult feelings. It uses vibrant illustrations, a sense of humour and metaphor to create a relatable, enjoyable story that describes the symptoms of childhood depression while also providing hope that things can get better with a little help and support." - Pub.



When Sophie Thinks She Can't...

by Molly Bang, c2018 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.0)

"Sophie is discouraged because she always struggles with math and puzzles—until her teacher shows her the hidden value of 'try' and 'yet'" - Follett



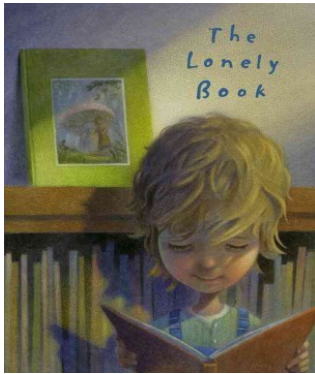
The Lonely Mailman

by Susanna Isern, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.8)

"Each day, the old mailman faithfully delivers special letters to the forest animals. But the mailman has never received any letters of his own. Then one day everything changes. This touching story of friendship and love will delight readers and letter writers of all ages." - Pub.

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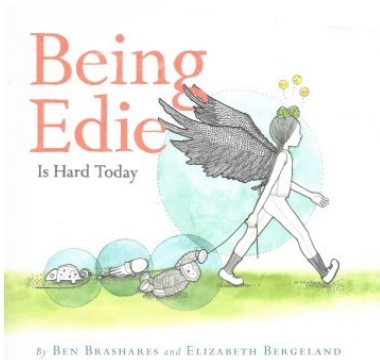
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The Lonely Book

by Kate Bernheimer, c2012 (IL: K-3, RL: 4.7)

"When a wonderful new book arrives at the library, at first it is loved by all, checked out constantly, and rarely spends a night on the library shelf. But over time it grows old and worn, and the children lose interest in its story. The book is sent to the library's basement where the other faded books live. How it eventually finds an honored place on a little girl's bookshelf-and in her heart-makes for an unforgettable story..." - Pub.

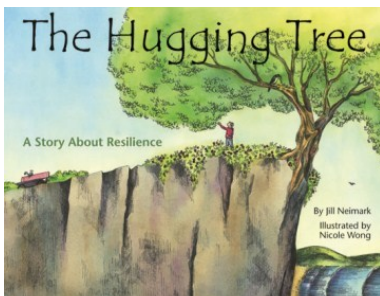


Being Edie is Hard Today

by Ben Brashares, c2019 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.3)

"This warm and tender story about being yourself—even when you're sad, anxious, or feeling lonely—reminds readers that human connection is essential, tears can heal, and a new day is always coming.

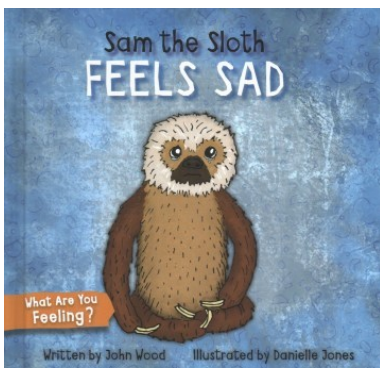
Being Edie is hard today. No one understands. Not her mother. Not her teachers, or the kids at school. If only if she could be an animal! Edie's imagination may be the perfect escape, but she can't run from her feelings forever if she's going to be comfortable in her own skin." - Pub.



The Hugging Tree: A Story About Resilience

by Jill Neimark, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL 1.9)

"The Hugging Tree tells the story of a little tree growing all alone on a cliff, by a vast and mighty sea. Through thundering storms and the cold of winter, the tree holds fast. Sustained by the natural world and the kindness and compassion of one little boy, eventually the tree grows until it can hold and shelter others. The resilience of the Hugging Tree calls to mind the potential in all of us: to thrive, despite times of struggle and difficulty. To nurture the little spark of hope and resolve. To dream and to grow, just where we are." - Pub.



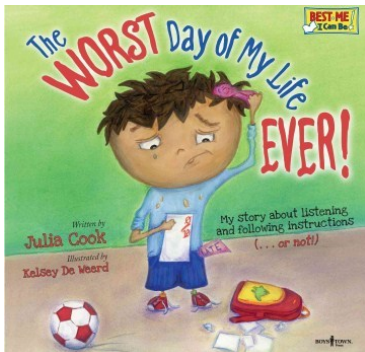
Sam the Sloth Feels Sad

by John Wood, c2020 (IL: K-3, RL 1.5)

"Sadness is a normal feeling that everyone experiences sometimes, but it can be hard to know how to handle. In this...story, a sloth named Sam is feeling sad. Sam's friends try their best to cheer her up. At first, nothing they do seems to help her feel any better. Eventually, however, they find that talking about their feelings can help each other feel better." - Follett

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The Worst Day of My Life Ever!

by Julia Cook, c2011 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.9)

"RJ has had a rough day: a series of foul-ups that included being late for school, scoring an own goal & getting a zero for his maths homework. All his own fault, you see, because RJ just doesn't listen & cannot do what he is asked." - Publisher

"Shows readers the steps to the fundamental social skills of listening and following instructions. When the hero, RJ, learns to use these skills the right way, he has the best day of his life." - Follett

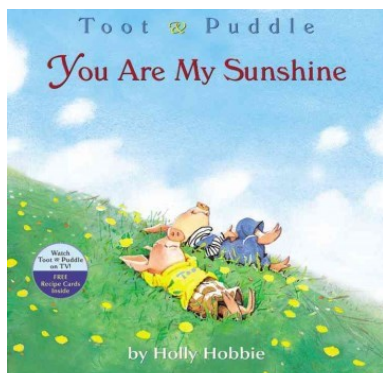
THE RABBIT LISTENED



The Rabbit Listened

by Cori Doerrfeld, c2018 (IL: K-3, RL: 1.6)

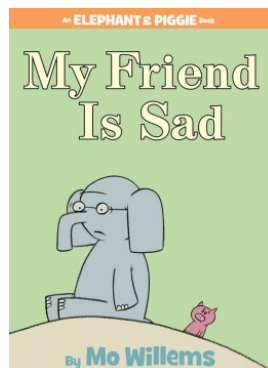
"When something sad happens, Taylor doesn't know where to turn. All the animals are sure they have the answer. The chicken wants to talk it out, but Taylor doesn't feel like chatting. The bear thinks Taylor should get angry, but that's not quite right either. One by one, the animals try to tell Taylor 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." - Pub.



Tout and Puddle: You Are My Sunshine

by Hollie Hobby, c1999 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.4)

"The sun is shining, the birds are singing, and the flowers are in full bloom—so why is Toot so blue? In an effort to cheer up his best friend, Puddle bakes Toot's favorite berry cobbler, takes him on a river rafting adventure, invites all of their friends over for a fun-filled day of games and sing-alongs, but nothing seems to help. Just when he is about to give up, a sudden thunderstorm hits Woodcock Pocket, flooding all of Pocket Pond. The next day, Puddle wakes up to find the air cleared...and his old friend back." - Pub.



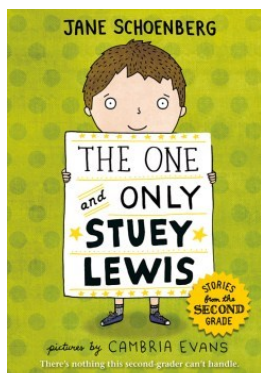
My Friend is Sad (Series: Elephant and Piggie)

by Mo Willems, c2007 (IL: K-3, RL: 0.7)

"When Gerald the Elephant is sad, Piggie is determined to cheer him up, but finds after many tries that it only takes the simplest thing to change Gerald's mood." - Follett

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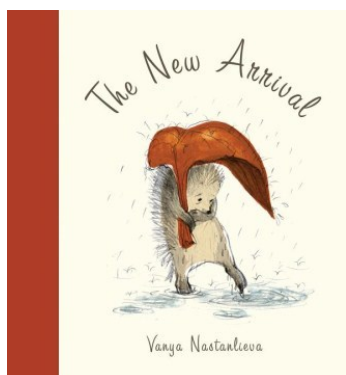
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The One and Only Stuey Lewis

by Jane Schoenberg, c2012 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.9)

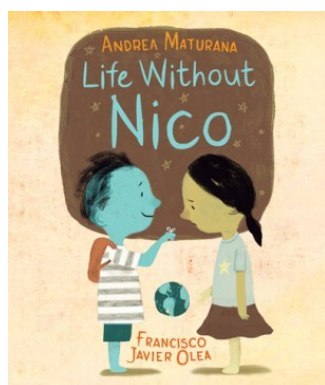
"So what if Stuey isn't the world's best reader, is only allowed to trick or treat around one block, doesn't get to play on his soccer dream team, and has to put up with the most annoying girl on the planet. Somehow Stuey always makes life work and when he puts his mind to it, he can survive anything—even second grade." - *Pub.*



The New Arrival

by Vanya Nastanlieva, c2012 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.3)

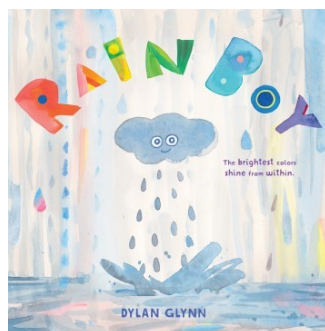
"A hedgehog named Sam moves to a new home in the forest and wonders if the others will welcome him." - *Follett*



Life Without Nico

by Francisco Javier Olea, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.6)

"When Maia learns that her closest friend Nico will be moving with his family to the other side of the world while his father pursues further education, she is heartbroken. Without her friend, Maia feels that there is a hole in her life. This is a sweet story about experiencing separation and loss, with illustrations and words that can assist children in expressing their feelings." - *SLJ*



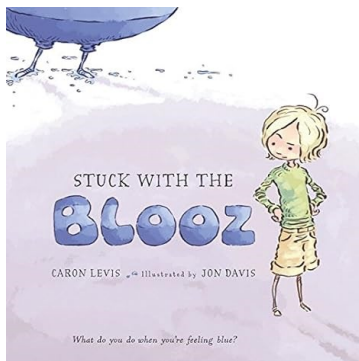
Rain Boy

by Dylan Glynn, c2020 (IL: K-3)

"Wherever Rain Boy goes, rain follows, and when he is invited to Sun Kidd's birthday party the other children complain that his presence is ruining their fun; now Sun Kidd is hiding in her room because she is upset by her friends' behavior, and an apparently an endless storm has descended on the world--until they all discover that something wonderful happens when rain and sun finally get together." - *Follett*

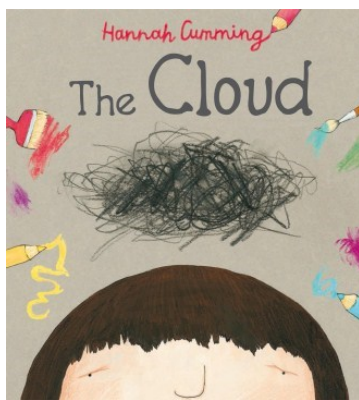
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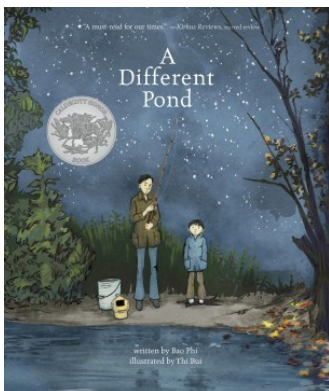
Stuck with the Blooz by Caron Levis, c2012 (IL: K-3)

"What do you do when you're feeling blue--especially when your mood takes the form of a drippy, oozy monster called the Blooz? Through trial and error, the child in this story discovers that while it may not be easy, it's not impossible to shake the Blooz. This picture book helps children talk about emotions--and is perfect for young fans of friendly monsters." - Pub



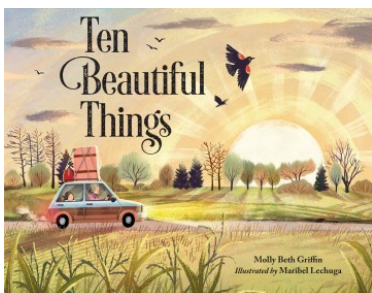
The Cloud by Hannah Cumming, c2010 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.0)

"Everyone has bad days, and children are no exception. When a black cloud descends on a little girl at school, support from a classmate with a great deal of imagination helps to brighten up everyone's lives." - Pub



A Different Pond by Bao Phi, c2017 (IL: K-4, RL: 3.1)

"As a young boy, Bao Phi awoke early, hours before his father's long workday began, to fish on the shores of a small pond in Minneapolis. Unlike many other anglers, Bao and his father fished for food, not recreation. Between hope-filled casts, Bao's father told him about a different pond in their homeland of Vietnam." - Pub

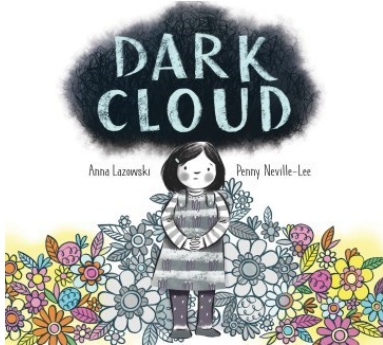


Ten Beautiful Things by Molly Beth Griffin, c2021 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.3)

"Lily is moving into her grandmother's farm in Iowa, and she is sad about all the changes necessary in her life--but on the long drive her grandmother challenges her to find ten beautiful things that they can share together. The exact cause of Lily's move is ambiguous, making it perfect for anyone navigating change, whether it be the loss of a parent, entering or leaving a foster home, or moving." - Pub

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Picture Book Format



Dark Cloud

by Anna Lazowski, c2023 (IL: K-3, RL: 1.7)

"Abigail's dark cloud follows her everywhere. It can be a ball of worries, a swirl of fog or a long shadow. But it's always with her, making other children distant, getting in the way at ballet class and even taking away her appetite. Then Abigail begins to understand some things about her dark cloud. Like how it's not always the same size. How she can trap it in a sandcastle. And how, sometimes, she can even step away from it and feel the sunshine on her skin." - Pub



Way Past Sad

by Hallee Adelman, c2021 (IL: K-3)

"When James learns that his next-door neighbor and best friend, Sanj, is moving away, he is very sad--so sad he thinks he will feel that way forever" - Pub

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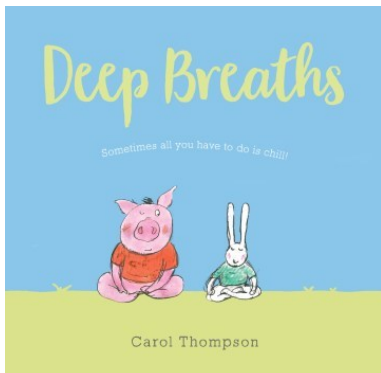
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Picture Book Format-Strategies



Breathing Makes It Better

by Christopher Willard, c2019 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.3)

"Read aloud and breathe along with this sweet story teaching children how to navigate powerful emotions like anger, fear, sadness, confusion, anxiety, and loneliness. With rhythmic writing and engaging illustrations, *Breathing Makes It Better* guides children to breathe through their feelings and find calm with recurring cues to stop and take a breath. Simple guided practices, like imagining you are a tree blowing in the wind, follow each story to teach children how to apply mindfulness techniques when they need them the most." - Pub.

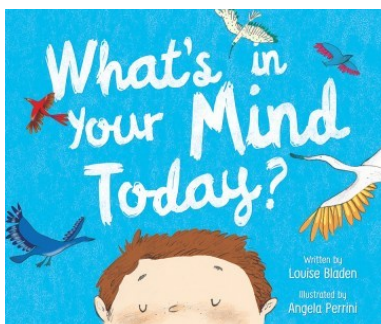


Deep Breaths

by Carol Thompson, c2019 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.0)

"Dolly the pig and Jack the rabbit are best friends, but even best friends don't always get along. When Dolly and Jack get into a big disagreement, they go from happy to mad, to sad...and then back to happy!

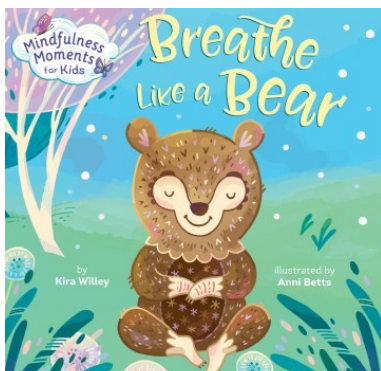
Both hilarious and instructive, *Deep Breaths* is a refreshing picture-book portrait of real friendship, and sets an example of how to manage strong emotions and resolve differences through simple mindfulness and meditation techniques." - Pub.



What's In Your Mind Today?

by Louise Bladen, c2020 (IL: K-3, RL: 1.5)

"In this guided, illustrated meditation for kids, author Louise Bladen offers a simple mindfulness practice, not to banish bad thoughts, but to feel calm in the midst of thoughts that come and go. Children will learn how to breathe and center themselves in their bodies, find different ways to think about their positive and negative thoughts, and ultimately learn that they have the ability to feel calm and at peace no matter what kinds of thoughts happen to be in their mind at any particular moment." - OCLC



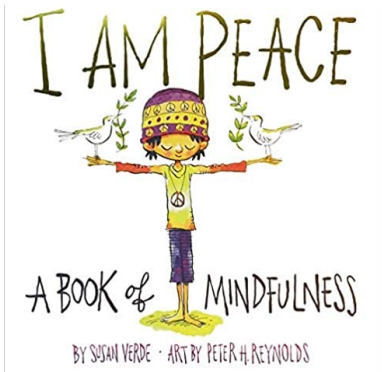
Mindfulness Moments for Kids: Breathe Like a Bear

by Kira Willey, c2019 (IL: K-3, RL: 1.3)

"...a collection of mindful moments and exercises for kids—this...book is an easy-to-follow breathing exercise kids can use to manage their bodies, breath, and emotions." - Amazon.ca

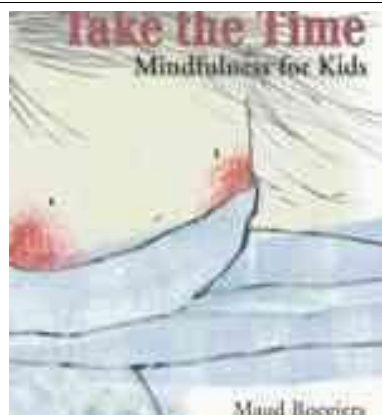
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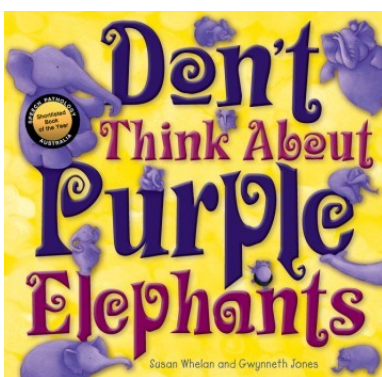
I am Peace: A Book of Mindfulness
by Susan Verde, c2017 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.2)

"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...a gentle expression of the tenets of mindfulness, encouraging children to breathe, taste, smell, and be present in the here and now." - Amazon.ca



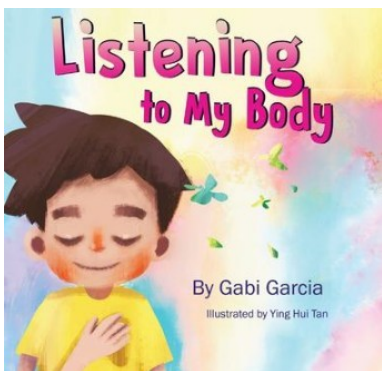
Take the Time: Mindfulness for Kids
by Maud Roegiers, c2010 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.3)

"What do you notice when you take the time to stop, listen, and experience? This book encourages children to slow down and become deliberate with their day-to-day actions and thoughts. With gentle rhythms and soothing imagery, it guides kids toward a quiet self-awareness and mindfulness." - Pub.



Don't Think About Purple Elephants
by Susan Whelan, c2015 (IL: K-3, RL: 4.2)

"Sometimes Sophie worries—not during the day when she is busy with family and friends, but at night when everything is calm and quiet. Her family all try to help, but somehow they just make her worries worse. Until her mother thinks of a new approach...that might just involve an elephant or two! But wait, don't think about purple elephants, whatever you do! Whimsical and humorous, this little girl's story of finding a way to ease her worry will resonate with children and parents everywhere." - Pub.



Listening to My Body: A Guide to Helping Kids Understand the Connection Between Their Sensations and...
by Gabi Garcia, c2017 (IL: 3-6)

"A guide to helping kids understand the connection between sensations (what the heck are those?) and feelings so that they can get better at figuring out what they need." "... guides children through the practice of naming their feelings and the physical sensations that accompany them. From wiggly and squirmy to rested and still, *Listening to My Body* helps children develop a sensations vocabulary so that they can express what they are experiencing." - Pub.

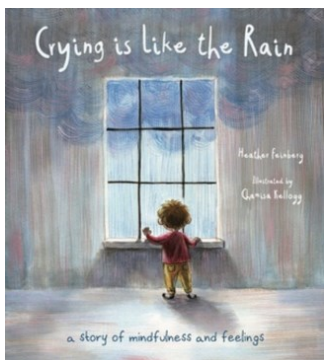
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Out, Out, Away From Here
by Rachel Woodworth, c2018 (IL: K-3, RL: 1.6)

"Some days I feel mad. Some days I feel sad. Some days I feel smiling-ear-to-ear glad...Emotions can be strange, sudden, and even overwhelming at times. Through thoughtful words and expressive images, this book guides us on a journey through our imagination... to a place where everything feels calm again." - Pub.



Crying Is Like the Rain: A Story of Mindfulness and Feelings
by Heather Feinberg, c2020 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.9)

"Feelings come and go like the weather, and crying is like the rain. The words of this . . . book elaborate this soothing, encouraging theme, while the pictures tell a story of a little boy tearfully bound for his first day of school in the company of his older and wiser sister." - Pub

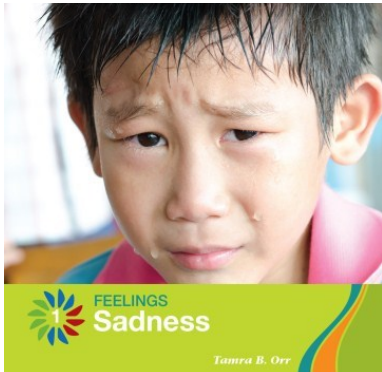


Why Do We Cry?
by Fran Pintadera, c2020 (IL: K-2)

"This sensitive, poetic picture book uses metaphors and beautiful imagery to explain the reasons for our tears, making it clear that everyone is allowed to cry, and that everyone does." - Pub

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Non-fiction



Sadness (Series: Feelings)

by Tamra B. Orr, c2017 (IL: K-3, RL: 1.3)

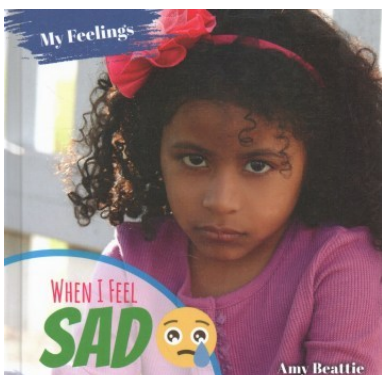
"This Level 1 guided reader explores the feeling of sadness. Students will develop word recognition and reading skills while learning about their feelings." - Pub.



Feeling Sad (Series: Minding Emotions)

by Amber Bullis, c2020, (IL: K-3, RL: 1.6)

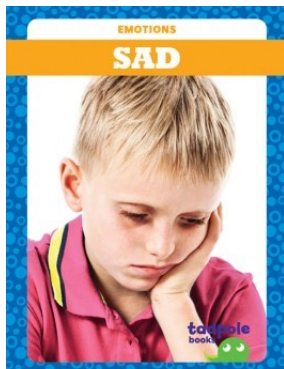
"In this book, readers will discover how to recognize sadness in themselves and others, how to best respond to it, and how to communicate about these feelings. Social and emotional learning (SEL) concepts support growth mindset throughout, while Try This! and Grow with Goals activities at the end of the book further reinforce the content." - Follett



When I Feel Sad (Series: My Feelings)

by Amy Beattie, c2020 (IL: K-3, RL: 1.5)

"From seeing an injured animal to missing a faraway family member, many everyday encounters can cause a child to be sad. With this sensitive book, readers will learn to recognize when and why they feel sad and what to do under this trying circumstance. Correlating with educational standards on social and emotional learning, this book will help children cope with sadness through age-appropriate text and realistic descriptions of situations." - Pub.



Sad (Series: Emotions)

by Genevieve Nilsen, c2019 (IL: K-3, RL: 0.6)

"Explores the emotion sadness, and the words associated with it." - Follett

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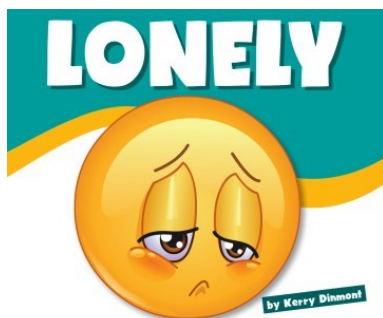
When Your Friend Is Sad (Series: You've Got a Friend) by Allan Morey, c2020 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.2)

"In this book, readers will discover how to recognize sadness in others and how to best respond to it with empathy and understanding. Social and emotional learning (SEL) concepts support growth mindset throughout, while Try This and Grow with Goals activities at the end of the book further reinforce the content." - Pub.



When Your Friend is Lonely (Series: You've Got a Friend) by Allan Morey, c2020 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.2)

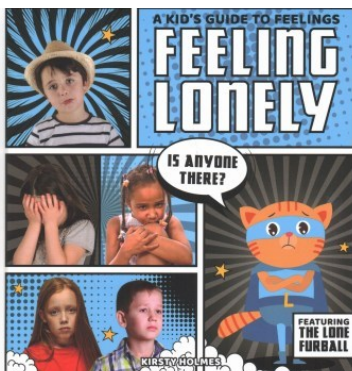
"In this book, readers will discover how to recognize loneliness in others and how to best respond to it with empathy and understanding. Social and emotional learning (SEL) concepts support growth mindset throughout, while Try This and Grow with Goals activities at the end of the book further reinforce the content." - Pub.



Lonely

by Kerry Dinmont, c2019 (IL: K-3, RL: 1.4)

"Introduces the feeling of loneliness and helps children understand what to do when they experience that emotion or encounter someone else who is experiencing it." - Pub.



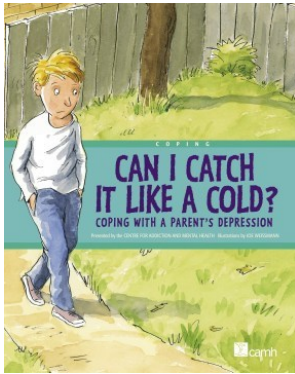
Feeling Lonely (Series: A Kid's Guide to Feelings)

by Kirsty Holmes, c2019 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.4)

"Readers will learn about experiencing feelings of loneliness and how to deal with them in a healthy way. As they are introduced to the colorful, adorable character The Lone Furball, they find tips on dealing with loneliness through this relatable and age-appropriate main text. Readers uncover strategies for approaching their own lonely emotions in a constructive way to turn gloomy feelings into positive ones." - Pub.

Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Sadness and Low Mood (Primary)

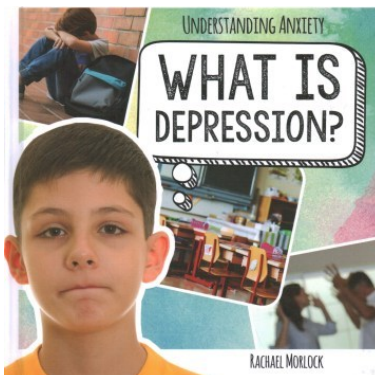
Compiled by Joan Pearce
Non-fiction



Can I Catch It Like a Cold? Coping With a Parent's Depression

by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, c2009 (IL: 3-6)

"Young Alex's father had been a policeman until he began to suffer from depression, perhaps the most common mental health issue we face. Alex's questions are those that are often asked by the children of parents who have depression: is the parent simply lazy? Does he no longer care? And is it something I can catch, like a cold?" - Amazon.ca



What is Depression? (Series: Understanding Mental Health)

by Rachael Morlock, c2021 (IL: 3-6, RL: 7.0)

"Everyone experiences sadness at some point in their life, but not everyone experiences depression. Depression is extreme sadness and feeling discouragement, despair, or hopelessness from weeks to years at a time. People who experience depression often don't take enjoyment from life and don't have much energy, motivation, or concentration. With this volume, readers will learn what causes depression, steps to a diagnosis, and different types of treatments. They'll also learn that it's OK not to be OK, and that it's important to talk about feelings with people who are available to help." - Pub.