For ages 7–11

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

A Child's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety



www.summersdale.com

Poppy O'Neill

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

Copyright © Summersdale Publishers Ltd, 2018

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced by any means, nor transmitted, nor translated into a machine language, without the written permission of the publishers.

Poppy O'Neill has asserted her moral right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Condition of Sale
This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

An Hachette UK Company
www.hachette.co.uk

Vie Books, an imprint of Summersdale Publishers Ltd
Part of Octopus Publishing Group Limited
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
LONDON
EC4Y 0DZ
UK

www.summersdale.com

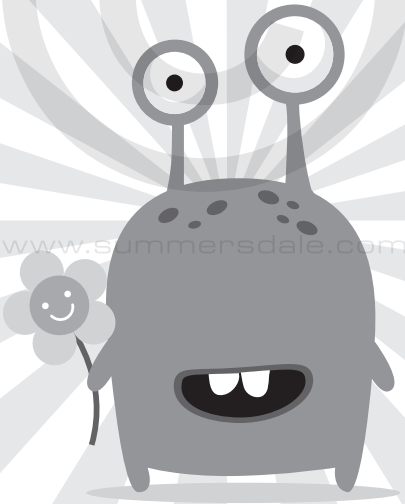
Printed and bound in the Czech Republic

ISBN: 978-1-78685-236-6

Substantial discounts on bulk quantities of Summersdale books are available to corporations, professional associations and other organisations. For details contact general enquiries: telephone: +44 (0) 1243 771107 or email: enquiries@summersdale.com.

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

A Child's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety



www.summersdale.com

Poppy O'Neill

vie

CONTENTS

Foreword 7
Introduction: A guide for parents and carers 8
How to use this book 8
Signs of anxiety 9
Talking it over 10
Getting started 11
How to use this book: A guide for children 12
Introducing Fiz the monster 13

PART 1: WHAT IS ANXIETY? 14
Activity: All about me! 15
What are feelings? 18
Why do we feel worried? 21
Activity: How does Fiz feel? 25
What does anxiety feel like? 26
What do kids worry about? 27
Activity: My worries 31
Panic attacks 35

PART 2: DEALING WITH WORRIES 37
Activity: Happy brain/worried brain 38
Listen to your body and mind 41
The anxiety hill 43
Activity: Handprint breathing 44
Activity: My battle cry! 46
Activity: Count it out 49

© www.summersdale.com

How big is my problem? 50
Activity: My day 52
The big wide world 55
Things that go bump in the night 56
Knowledge is power 57
Why do we tell scary stories? 58
Keep a diary 60
Activity: Help Fiz feel better 61
Thoughts, feelings and actions 62
Thinking errors 65

PART 3: SOLVING THE PROBLEM 67

Fact or opinion? 68
Activity: Facts about me 69
Thoughts aren't facts 72
Work it out! 75
Activity: What does your worry look like? 79
Talk to your worry 80
Understanding your worries 82
Activity: My worry jar 87
Activity: I'm brave! 90
Letting go 91
Fatima's bravery plan 93
Face your fears 94
Joe's bravery plan 96
Activity: My bravery plan 98

www.summersdale.com

PART 4: LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF....100
What do you do to relax?....101
What is tension?....104
Activity: Squeezy nose breathing....104
Appearances....106
Activity: Mirror, mirror....107
Love your body....110
Keep healthy....111
Activity: Sleep....112

PART 5: FRIENDSHIPS AND BULLYING....114
What makes a true friend?....115
What does bullying look like?....117
You're not alone....117
We are all different!....119
Activity: Love your differences!....120
My perfect friend…?....123
Activity: I'm grateful for….123

PART 6: WHAT NEXT?....130
Activity: My anxiety action plan....131
You're not the only one....134
The end....137

For parents: How to help your child deal with anxiety....138
Further advice....140
Recommended reading....141
Credits....142

www.summersdale.com

FOREWORD

Amanda Ashman-Wymbs, Counsellor and Psychotherapist, registered and accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Having raised two girls and after working in the public and private sector with many young people therapeutically for over ten years, it is clear to me that issues of anxiety are prevalent in our children and our society today. Understanding the symptoms and causes, and knowing where to go and what to do with these feelings and behaviours, can be an overwhelming and confusing experience for both the child and the parents.

Poppy O'Neill's *Don't Worry, Be Happy* is a simple and fun workbook for children to use independently or with the support of their parents or carers. It sets out explanations and examples of anxious feelings, thoughts and experiences in a clear format and shows the child how to understand and overcome these in manageable ways. I particularly like how the book is infused with big positive statements, which will make an impression on the child's mind, and examples of how other children have dealt with anxiety, as so often young people can feel that they are the only ones experiencing these fears and knowing that is not the case can be hugely comforting.

As anxiety-based feelings and thoughts are usually about something that *might* happen in the future, having the introduction to mindfulness is also invaluable in learning to manage and transcend symptoms – the more that children can connect to the reality of their present experience through their breath, body and senses, the more they will naturally learn to feel calm and happy again.

This is a much-needed and great self-help book to support children when they are experiencing difficult times.

INTRODUCTION: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

How to use this book

Don't Worry, Be Happy is a practical guide to anxiety for children. Using cognitive behavioural therapy techniques developed by child psychologists, the simple activities and encouraging text will help your child to overcome anxious thoughts and feelings.

Anxiety is an evolutionary phenomenon that stems back to the dawn of mankind, to a time when remaining hypervigilant to potential threats often meant the difference between life and being eaten by a sabre-toothed tiger for our cave-dwelling ancestors. For modern humans, anxiety can still help us make sensible decisions and avoid dangerous situations. While occasional anxious feelings are common, it becomes a problem when anxiety starts to get in the way of leading a normal life.

We all have worries – big ones and small ones – and your child might seem to be more prone to worrying or phobias than others their age. Sometimes no matter how much you reassure them, certain things can prey on their minds. The thing about anxiety is, it doesn't follow logic: anxiety can take the form of realistic or unrealistic worries, and it can be very difficult for children to explain or shake off.

You might remember separation anxiety from the toddler years – younger children can get tearful and clingy when leaving their parent or carer. While separation anxiety is a normal and healthy developmental phase, anxiety can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Sometimes anxiety can be persistent beyond just a phase, and can cause the child undue distress.

This book is aimed at children aged 7–11, an age when it can feel like there's a lot to worry about. Exams, friendship woes, changes to their bodies, a greater interest in their physical attractiveness and that of others are all new and sometimes daunting experiences. Children this age might start using social media, and their awareness of the news, popular media and the world as a whole is developing. It's no wonder this can be an anxious time.

Signs of anxiety

Looking out for these signs can help determine if anxiety is a problem for your child. They may exhibit these signs most of the time, or only in certain situations:

- They are reluctant to try new things
- They seem unable to cope with everyday challenges
- They find it hard to concentrate
- They have trouble sleeping or eating properly
- They are prone to angry outbursts
- They experience intrusive, unwanted thoughts that they struggle to get out of their head
- They worry excessively that bad things are going to happen

www.summersdale.com

- They avoid everyday activities such as going to school, seeing friends or going out in public

- They seek constant reassurance

Keep a note when you notice any of these behaviours. Where were they? What had happened just before, or was about to happen? This way you can work out if there is a particular situation that is causing your child to feel anxious.

Remember, anxieties can be difficult for children to talk about, but it's never too late to start helping them conquer their worries.

Talking it over

When a child is suffering with anxiety, it's tempting to shield them from the thing they're worried about. Your instinct might be to say: 'if you're worried about the party, don't go.' But the message your child receives is that their feelings of anxiety mean they aren't capable of doing the things they find challenging.

It's important to talk things through with your child, exploring potential situations in a calm way, to really get to the heart of their worries. Focus on solutions and realistic outcomes rather than all the things that could go wrong. Offer your support and let them know you will take them seriously and work with them to solve the problem. It's essential that children learn how to effectively deal with negative thoughts and feelings in order to become independent, self-assured young people.

© www.summersdale.com

Getting started

Guide your child through the chapters and activities in this book – just one at a time, perhaps once a week or every few days. Allow your child to set the pace and work on the activities independently – this is important because by developing your child's independence you are showing them that they are able to have a go at challenges by themselves. The activities are designed to get them thinking about themselves and how they deal with worries while giving them the tools needed to recognise and overcome anxiety. When your child feels calm and capable they are better equipped to deal with the challenges of everyday life. Make sure they know that they have your support and that you will take their worries seriously, even if they seem trivial to you. Help them learn new habits to deal with their problems independently, then watch their confidence grow.

This book aims to help you and your child understand and tackle anxious thoughts and feelings. However, if you have any serious concerns about your child's mental health, beyond what is covered in this book, your GP is the best person to turn to for further advice.

www.summersdale.com

How to use this book: A guide for children

This book is for you if you often…

- Feel nervous, worried or afraid
- Get scary thoughts stuck in your head
- Don't want to leave your parents or carer because you are worried
- Feel tired or ill because of worrying
- Miss out on fun activities because of worrying

If that sounds like you (maybe a lot of the time, or maybe only sometimes), this book is jam-packed with activities and advice to help you beat your worries, feel braver and become more confident. You can do them at your own pace, there's no rush!

If you get stuck, or want to talk about anything you see in this book, you can ask a trusted adult for help, or just for them to listen. That grown-up could be your mum or dad, your carer, one of your teachers, a big brother or sister, grandparent, aunt, uncle, next-door neighbour, or any other adult that you know well and feel comfortable talking to.

© www.pumpernickel.com