

## Mental Health Reading Activity for K-3 Grade

### *In My Heart: A Book of Feelings*

This interactive reading activity is designed for students in grades K-3 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**

[\*In My Heart: A Book of Feelings\*](#), by Jo Witek

Vibrant, imaginative, and nonjudgmental descriptions help younger children recognize and normalize the emotions Happy, Brave, Mad, Calm, Broken-hearted, Sad, Hopeful, Afraid, Silly and Shy. Each brightly colored page conveys the tenor of the emotions being described, as well as the body sensations and thoughts that often accompany them.

Emphasis: Social-Emotional Development

Diversity Notes: Shows one ethnically ambiguous, able-bodied, female character

Relationships: None shown

#### **ACTIVITY + QUESTIONS**

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

1. Before you begin, let students know that this lesson is about some of the different feelings we can have and review your classroom's norms to ensure that students feel respected and safe.
2. Use gestures and changes in your voice to reflect the range of feelings being described: big-small, loud-quiet, quick-slow. At the end of the first page, ask students to silently place their hands where their heart is. Invite them to then put their hands where they can feel the house that their feelings live in. Students might leave their hands on their hearts or move to another area, such as their stomach, throat, or head.

3. Ask students to silently raise their hands if they've ever felt the way the story describes. Be sure to make eye contact or nod to acknowledge when students' hands go up.
4. After you read each page, ask students to use their faces and bodies (not voices) to show what that feeling looks like. Model doing this first, if needed.
5. Select which emotions to share and skip others if the story is too long for your class.

**Discussion + Activity:**

1. Do a whole group brainstorm and write students' responses on the board or a flip chart:
  - What are some feelings that we sometimes have, and when might we feel them?
  - Where do different feelings live in our bodies? (Draw a body outline and write the feelings on the parts that students name.)
2. Consider vocabulary that students might generate or that you might opt to introduce:
  - Feelings: happy, brave, mad, calm, broken-hearted, sad, hopeful, afraid, silly, shy
3. Write up whole-class responses to: Which feelings did we read about today?
4. Pair-share: What are 3 feelings that you have a lot, and where do they live in your body?
5. Individually: Draw a picture and/or write words to describe one of your feelings.