

English-Spanish
Inglés-Español

For Ages 4–7
De 4 a 7 años

Worries Are Not Forever

Las preocupaciones no duran para siempre

Elizabeth Verdick

Ilustrado por
Marieka Heinlen



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

This book has been filed with the Library of Congress.
ISBN: 978-1-63198-471-6

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Cover and interior design by Shannon Pourciau
Translation edited by Dora O'Malley

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An Imprint of Teacher Created Materials
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Free Spirit offers competitive pricing.
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To anyone—young or young at heart—
who has ever felt worried. I hope this
book provides words of comfort for
children, and ways to help for adults.

—E.V.

To my children, Levi and Nora.

—M.H.

Para cualquier persona, joven o joven de corazón,
que alguna vez se haya sentido preocupada.
Espero que este libro ofrezca palabras de alivio para
los niños y maneras de ayudar a los adultos.

—E.V.

Para mis hijos Levi y Nora.

—M.H.



The world is a big,
beautiful place.
So much to see and do!
El mundo es un lugar
grande y hermoso.
¡Hay tanto que ver y hacer!



Honk!
Honk!
¡Pip-
Pip!

Sometimes BIG
feels a little scary.
A veces lo GRANDE nos
da un poco de miedo.

Tips and Activities for Caregivers and Parents

All children worry—some more than others. Adults may see children’s worries as small or insignificant, but worries and fears are very real for children. If children believe their fears will lead to something bad happening, physical and emotional stress may result. Certain body language and behaviors may signal stress. Signs include:

- being tearful or clingy
- restlessness, agitation, pacing, outbursts, aggression
- being tired during the day or having difficulty sleeping
- not being able to focus in class
- a change in appetite
- avoiding school, social occasions, or everyday activities
- biting nails, chewing hair, sucking on shirt sleeves

Children may not realize that some of their symptoms are the result of worried thoughts. Find out if your child:

- feels tired or worn down most of the day
- has a faster heartbeat or racing heart
- often gets “butterflies in the stomach”
- feels shaky or sweaty
- has frequent stomachaches or headaches
- gets a restless feeling or can’t seem to sit still
- has racing or repetitive thoughts

Getting a child to recognize these signs is a first step in talking about the feelings. A sense of relief will follow . . . but there’s more work to do.

Cutting Worries Down to Size

Worries Are Not Forever aims to give children tools for coping with anxious thoughts and feelings. One of the messages of the book is “You are bigger than your worries.” Children learn they can talk back to worries.

Together, you can try an activity where your child gives their worries a name, such as Worry Bug, Worry Monster, or Sir Worries. What does this character look like? Help your child bring it to life in a drawing or by making a puppet, a painted rock creature, or a clay sculpture. This

character can be held and spoken to: “Stop bugging me,” “Goodbye, monster,” “Sir, it’s time for you to go to bed.”

Other ways to “put away worries” include:

Make a worry jar. Decorate a jar (or box) and ask your child to write worries on slips of paper to “take out of your head and place into the jar.” It’s a powerful moment when a child can remove one of the slips, read about a specific worry, and then tear it up because the problem is gone.



Use a worry timer. Set the timer for ten minutes or so. This is your child’s “worry time”—the time to let all the worries come out freely. When worry time is over, we “put the worries away for the day.” Follow up with a physical activity or something enjoyable to take the mind off of worry.



Give a worry doll. These are tiny handmade Guatemalan dolls created from wool, wire, and leftover textiles. The dolls derive from the legend of a Mayan princess who, as a gift from the sun god, could solve any problem a person might worry about. Traditionally, a worry doll was placed under a child’s pillow, so the child could “sleep on the problem” and have their sorrows taken away. You can give your child a worry doll or make one together. Use the doll as a tool to facilitate conversations between you and your child.



Talking About Worries

If a child’s worry alarm goes off, use that signal to play detective:

- What is the worrisome thought? (Write it down.)
- Are there other thoughts lurking around it? (Put them on paper too.)
- Is this thought about something that might happen in the future? How likely is it to really happen? (Challenge the worries. Look for alternative positive scenarios.)
- Is the thought about something that happened? (Talk about the event and the pain it is causing.)

- Seek comfort. (Find a safe space, or if that’s not possible, use the breathing techniques on page 24.)
- Talk back to the worry. (Use whatever words may be helpful in this situation.)

The way that you, as the adult, talk about worry makes a big difference—so avoid negative language.

Words That DON'T Help

- ❌ “Stop worrying.”
- ❌ “There’s nothing to worry about.”
- ❌ “Don’t be such a worrywart.”
- ❌ “I’m so tired of hearing about your worrying.”
- ❌ “Calm down!”



Words That DO Help

- ✅ “I’m here to listen.”
- ✅ “Worries are just thoughts, just feelings. We can get through this together.”
- ✅ “You are bigger than your worries. How big does this worry feel?”
- ✅ “You’re safe. Let’s talk.”
- ✅ “What can I do to help?”
- ✅ “Talk to your worry. What do you want to tell it?”
- ✅ “This feeling won’t last forever. I’ll stay with you while we work through it.”
- ✅ “Let’s walk. Moving can help make worries go away.”
- ✅ “You are not alone.”
- ✅ “I think you’re brave. You’re facing your worry.”



Helping Children Calm Down

Set up a quiet space. Whether at home or in the classroom, children enjoy having a safe space to chill out when stressed. This place can be as simple as a beanbag chair with earphones. Lower the lights, provide pillows, keep books handy . . . teach children that they can go to this space to breathe deep, relax, and feel restored.

Keep worry tools handy. Stress balls, squishy toys, “fidgets,” and art supplies can help children focus and calm down. If such tools aren’t available, ask a child who is stressed to press her hands hard against the wall, pushing her worries away.

Practice belly breathing. Belly breathing is a special way of controlling the breath to feel calmer. The trick is to teach this skill ahead of time so children can use it in the moment.

1. Imagine a balloon on your belly. Put a hand on top of your belly.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose. As you do this, count to three, pausing between each number. Feel the imaginary balloon filling with air.
3. Breathe out slowly through your mouth. Count to five, pausing between each number. Imagine that the balloon is getting flat. Picture your negative feelings leaving your body as you breathe out.
4. Repeat the belly breathing several times. Notice your muscles relaxing and your worried thoughts slowing down.

To enhance belly breathing, give children bubble wands to blow through or pinwheels to move with their breath.