

Book review

Wishes and Worries

Category: Book Reviews / Children & Youth

Author: Sarina Dickson, Illustrated by Jenny Cooper

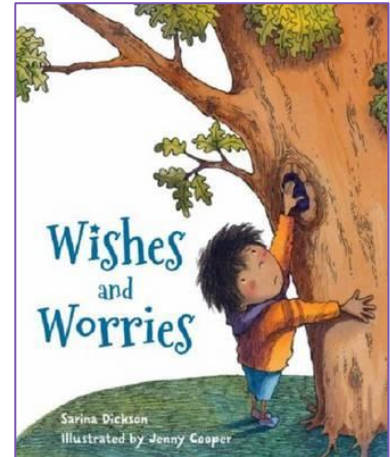
Year: 2015

Publisher: Kotuku Creative, NZ

ISBN: 9780473319267

Audience: For Youth

Summary: An engaging, beautifully illustrated children's book which uses the principles of cognitive and narrative therapy



Wishes and Worries was written in response to the Christchurch earthquakes to help children who are experiencing mild to moderate anxiety. It's designed for use in classrooms, while its companion *Maia and the Worry Bug* is designed for children to take home.

When my partner and son brought *Wishes and Worries* home in their weekly pile from the local library, I could see its immediate value. Our son has become increasingly worried about noises in the night and robbers.

Even though *Wishes and Worries* is intended as a classroom resource, it was an easy night-time read, engaging, beautifully illustrated and the content was affirming. The author is adept at being able to turn the principles of cognitive and narrative therapy into a compelling story.

Easy to relate to for kids

The main character Dan's worries and fears are disrupting his ability to enjoy everyday activities and stopping him having fun with his mates. My son could really relate to the character's focus on noises and listening for sounds of danger.

Through Dan's journey, kids who may previously have felt powerless over their thoughts and feelings can see how they can "untangle" and identify their own worries. They learn to reflect on how these thoughts affect their thinking and their bodies, and to use their creativity to find ways to be with, or direct them.

You also get a good sense of how a child may feel misunderstood when adults around them may think they are just being difficult and that parents and teachers need to be aware of the expectations we put on them to just "get on" with everyday tasks.

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We read through some of the suggestions for class activities at the back, many of which are student-led.

The availability of this book in schools to support the curriculum would help kids realise they are not alone, that others feel the same and that their school is supportive.

My son laughed out loud at the suggestion of putting a box in the principal's drawer that kids could put their written worries into. He decided he would instead send his worries into space on the Millennium Falcon (from *Star Wars*).

The book provides readers with valuable skills and normalises kids' concerns, but also has a dash of magic, fun and hope.

Available in both English and te reo Maori.

Reviewed by Kim Higginson, Information Resources Specialist at the Mental Health Foundation.

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