

When I Feel Worried

A free printable social story for ages 4-10

Childhood anxiety often shows up as stomachaches, clinginess, or avoidance rather than words. This story helps children name worry and use simple calming tools they can carry anywhere. It suits everyday worriers as well as children working with a therapist on anxiety skills.

Sometimes I feel worried.

Worry can feel like butterflies in my tummy or a squeeze in my chest.

Everybody worries sometimes, even grown-ups.

Worry is my brain trying to keep me safe, but sometimes it worries too much.

When I feel worried, I can name it: "This is worry."

Naming the feeling helps it get smaller.

I can take slow balloon breaths: breathe in to fill the balloon, then let it out slowly.

I can tell a grown-up what my worry says. Grown-ups are good worry helpers.

I can ask, "Is my worry telling the truth?" Lots of worries are not true.

I can remember a time I was brave before.

Worries come, and worries go. They do not stay forever.

I am safe, and my grown-ups are here to help me.

I can feel worried and still do brave things.

Tips for Reading This Story Together

- Give the worry a silly name or character with your child; externalizing it (there goes Worry Monster again) shrinks its power.
- Practice balloon breaths at random happy moments so the skill is not linked only to distress.
- Validate first, then coach: I see the worry is big right now, and then reach for a tool from the story.
- Avoid pure reassurance loops (it will be fine); instead ask the story's question, is the worry telling the truth?

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