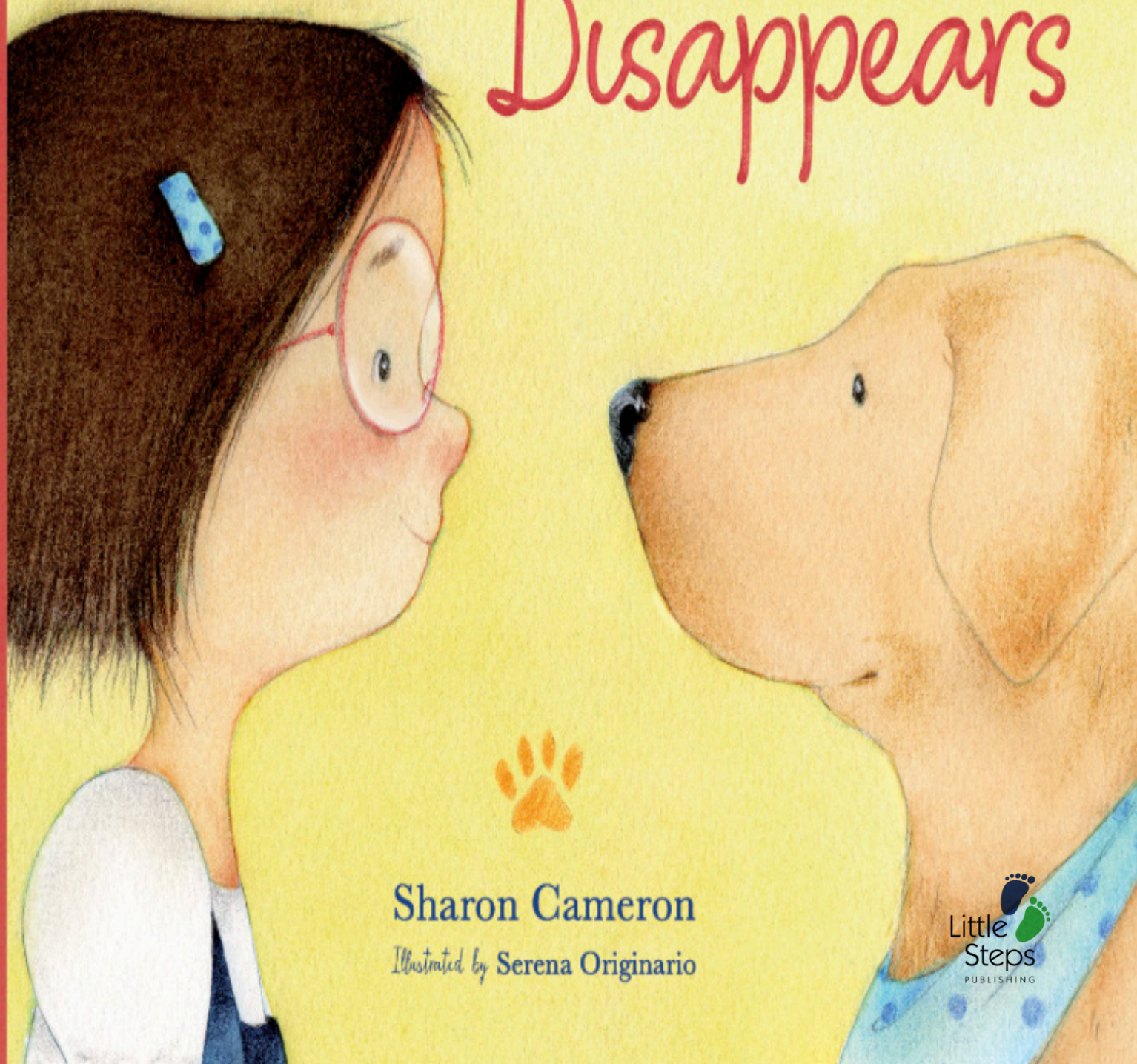


Arte's ANXIETY Disappears



Sharon Cameron

Illustrated by Serena Originario


Little
Steps
PUBLISHING

Teaching Notes

Synopsis

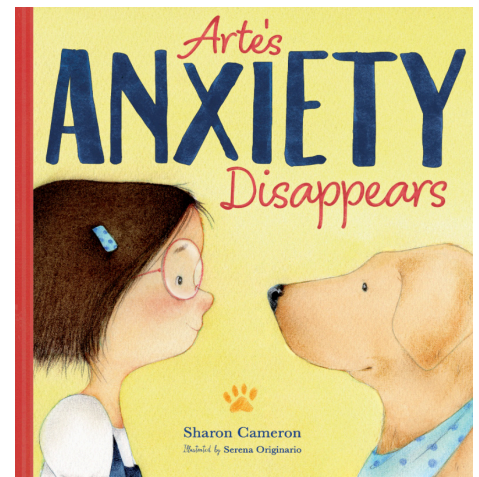
Kids can do amazing things with the right information. *Arte's Anxiety Disappears* is an interactive and engaging book. It tackles the topic of anxiety in children in a realistic and relatable way, without oversimplifying or dramatising it. The story follows the adventures of Arte and Lulu as they use coping strategies to deal with their worries. They are brave, they face their fears together, support each other and don't let their worries stop them from having fun! They know that the anxious feeling won't last forever.

About the Author

Sharon Cameron is a Registered Counsellor and certified Animal Assisted Therapist. She has extensive experience working with both neurotypical and neurodiverse children in a variety of settings. She works closely with her cotherapist Artemis (Arte), a Certified Therapy Dog. Sharon is passionate about supporting children to develop lifelong skills and strategies for dealing with anxiety and other emotional or behavioural difficulties. She lives in Melbourne with her husband Mark, her twin boys Oli and Lachy and of course Arte the dog! You can follow Sharon on Instagram: @calmkidscounsellingandcoaching You can follow Arte's adventures on Instagram: @artethetherapydog Website www.calmkidscounselling.com

About the Illustrator

Serena enjoyed drawing from an early age. She is keen to share emotions through illustrations, and gains inspiration from the natural environment around her. Following on from art school, Serena graduated with a degree in Literature. She currently works for Ninedition publishing and for the Hoepli Scholastica.



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Illustrated by
Serena Originario

Published by
Little Steps Publishing

Please share your work with us on
Instagram @littlestepspublishinguk



Sometimes, I get worried about things that might happen,
like what if I lose my favourite toy? Or what if my
human friend doesn't come back home?

That's when I feel anxious
and my heart beats super fast.





*Supporting your
anxious child!*

Normalise all feelings and emotions

Open Conversations: Regularly talk to your child about their feelings. Let them know it's okay to feel anxious and that everyone experiences anxiety at times.

Share Your Own Experiences: Share times when you felt anxious and how you managed it. This helps your child see that anxiety is a normal part of life.

Empower with knowledge

Explain Anxiety: Teach your child that anxiety is a natural response to stress or danger. Use simple analogies like: "Your brain has many parts doing different jobs, one of these parts is called the amygdala. You can think of the amygdala as your body's alarm system. Its job is to keep you safe by making you react quickly when there's danger. For example, if you're crossing the street and a car is coming fast, your amygdala helps you feel scared, so you'll get out of the way quickly. That's your amygdala doing its job 'really well'! But sometimes, the amygdala can be a bit too protective. It's like a guard dog that barks at everything - even a leaf blowing in the wind. This means it can make you feel scared or anxious even when there's no real danger. It's not that the amygdala is bad or broken, it's just working a bit too hard. Remember, it's okay if your amygdala gets a bit overexcited sometimes. There are things we can do to help calm it down, like taking deep breaths, imagining a happy place, or talking about our feelings with someone we trust. And just like a guard dog can learn to tell the difference between a leaf and a real threat, your amygdala can learn too!"

Body Signals: Help your child recognize physical symptoms of anxiety, such as a racing heart or butterflies in the tummy. Explain that these feelings are normal and temporary. "The feeling won't last forever."

Recognize anxious thoughts

Teach Awareness: Teach your child that everyone has thoughts, and that not all thoughts are helpful. Just because they have a thought doesn't mean it's true. "Is it a FACT or a FEELING? Let's focus on the FACTS."

Reframe: Help your child replace their worried thoughts with realistic ones. Teach them to collect evidence to support or negate their worries. For example, if they think, "No one likes me," help them find evidence that contradicts this thought, like friends they play with. Encourage them to challenge their thoughts and promote accurate thinking. "Is it a FACT or a FEELING? Let's focus on the FACTS."

Role model calming strategies

Demonstrate Techniques: Show your child how to calm down when feeling anxious. Practice deep breathing, mindfulness, or other relaxation techniques together. Talk about the coping strategies that you use, "I am going for a walk because I am feeling anxious, and this helps me to feel calm."

Create a Calming Routine: Establish a daily routine that includes calming activities, such as reading, drawing, or playing outside. Ensure your child has time for unstructured play, overscheduling kids can lead to increased anxiety.

Active Listening and Validation

Listen First: Give your child your full attention, don't interrupt and then validate their feelings. This helps them feel understood and supported.

Reflect Back: Repeat what they've said to show you understand. For example, "It sounds like you're worried about your test tomorrow."

Guided Problem-Solving

Ask Open-Ended Questions: Encourage them to think of solutions by asking, “What could you do?” or “What might happen if you tried this?”

Brainstorm Together: Help them list possible solutions without judging any ideas initially. Make it fun, suggest some ‘silly idea’s’ as well as some more appropriate solutions, this fosters creativity and confidence.

Empowerment and Planning

Encourage Independence: Let them choose a solution to try. This builds their decision-making skills and confidence.

Support and Guide: Offer help where needed but allow them to take the lead. For example, “How can I support you in this plan?”

Reflect and Adjust

Review Outcomes: After trying a solution, discuss what worked and what didn’t. This helps them learn and adapt.

Celebrate Efforts: Praise their efforts and progress, not just the outcome. This reinforces their problem-solving skills and resilience. If your child is reluctant to talk about their worries, choose relaxed moments for these talks, like during car rides when they don’t have to make eye contact.

Face Fears

Avoid Avoidance: Break down fears into manageable steps and gradually expose your child to them. For example, if your child is afraid of dogs, start by looking at pictures of dogs, then watching videos, and eventually being near a calm dog. This gradual exposure helps them build confidence and reduces anxiety over time. Avoidance of a situation that causes anxiety reinforces the anxiety.

Support and Encourage: Provide emotional support and encouragement as your child faces their fears bit by bit.

Normalize Anxiety Through Stories

Read Books: Read stories or books that feature characters dealing with anxiety. This can help your child see that they are not alone in their feelings. When reading, stop at points when a character is experiencing a strong emotion, and ask your child questions about the character’s feelings. “How do you think they feel right now?” “Why do you think they are feeling this way?”

Create Stories: Encourage your child to create their own stories about characters who feel anxious and how they overcome it.

Build Confidence

Encourage Exploration: Motivate your child to try new activities, hobbies, or tasks. This can be anything from helping around the house to trying a new hobby.

Celebrate Efforts: Focus on their efforts rather than the outcome. Praise them for trying, regardless of success. This helps them understand that effort is valuable, and mistakes are part of learning.

Role Model

Share Your Stories: Talk about times when you took risks or made mistakes. Explain what you learned from those experiences. This normalizes the process of trial and error.

Demonstrate Resilience: Show how you handle setbacks and challenges. Your child will learn by observing your reactions and attitudes towards mistakes and success.

Create a Supportive Environment

Safe Space for Mistakes: Ensure your child knows that it's okay to make a mistake. Encourage them to view mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow.

Provide Encouragement: Be their biggest supporter. Offer positive reinforcement and support as they navigate new experiences.

Set Realistic Goals

Small Steps: Encourage your child to take small, manageable steps towards trying new things. This makes the process less overwhelming and more achievable.

Celebrate Milestones: Acknowledge and celebrate each milestone they reach. This builds their confidence and motivates them to keep trying.



Use Humour to Cope with Anxiety

Reduces Stress: Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, reducing stress and anxiety.

Provides a Distraction: Humour can serve as a distraction from anxious thoughts.

Improves Mood: Laughing can trigger the release of dopamine, improving mood and reducing anxiety.

Incorporate Humour: Include humour in daily routines, such as watching funny shows, telling jokes, or playing silly games.

Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

Set Healthy Boundaries: Establish clear and consistent boundaries and consequences to help your child feel safe and secure.

Be in Charge: Ensure children know that you are in charge of adult decisions and set consistent limits.

Provide Emotional Support: Be there for your child when they feel anxious. Offer comfort and reassurance without dismissing their feelings.

Practice Self-Care

Take Care of Yourself: Model self-care by taking time for yourself and managing your own stress. A calm and relaxed parent can better support an anxious child.

Focus on support: Anxiety in children can be caused by a variety of factors, instead of focussing on blame it can be more productive to focus on how you can support your child. Practice self-compassion!

Seek Help if Needed: If your child's anxiety is overwhelming, consider seeking support from a therapist or counsellor.



Ways to calm down

Spend time with a dog

Research has shown that simply patting a dog lowers the stress hormone cortisol. The social interaction between you and a dog can increase levels of the feel-good hormone oxytocin.



Deep belly breathing

Taking slow deep breaths is the fastest way to activate the body's relaxation response. It gives your body a chance to calm and reset.



Grounding

Grounding exercises work by engaging the senses and interrupting the mind and body's automatic response to anxiety.



5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique

Slowly identify five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can smell, two things you can touch, and one thing you can taste.

Talk to your amygdala

The amygdala is the part of the brain that causes anxiety, it keeps you safe from threat. This is great when you need protection, in the absence of threat the amygdala becomes overprotective. Let your amygdala know you are okay. Phrases like 'I am safe', 'I can do this' and 'I have got this' can help your amygdala to calm.

Exercise

Exercise increases levels of serotonin, dopamine and noradrenaline in the brain, which elevates your mood, reduce feelings of anxiety, and just makes you feel good.

Nature

Spending time in nature has been shown to reduce anxiety and negative thoughts. It promotes relaxation and helps you connect to the present moment, contributing to emotional regulation and resilience.

Vocalising

Singing, humming, gurgling and chewing all activate the Vagus nerve. Activating this nerve basically tells the brain all is well, stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system, helping you to relax.

Creativity

Creative activities like painting, drawing, craft, dancing, or playing music, provides a healthy outlet for emotional expression, allowing for the release of trapped emotions.



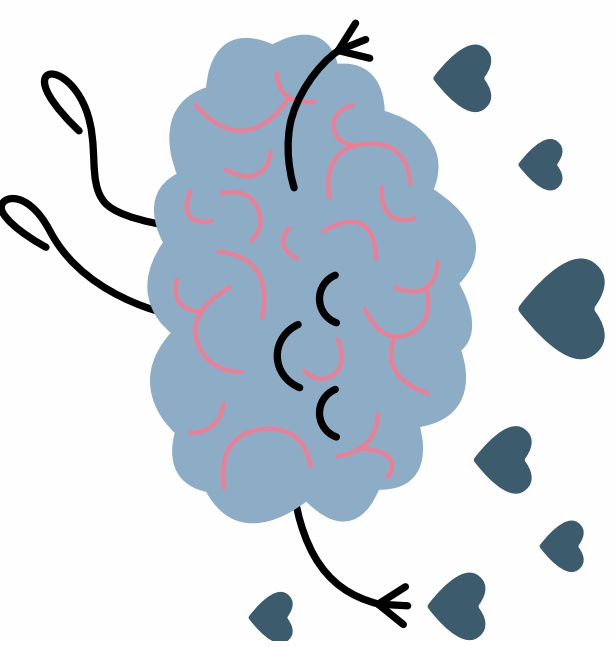
What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural response to stress or danger.

“Your brain has many parts doing different jobs, one of these parts is called the amygdala. You can think of the amygdala as your body’s alarm system. Its job is to keep you safe by making you react quickly when there’s danger. For example, if you’re crossing the street and a car is coming fast, your amygdala helps you feel scared, so you’ll get out of the way quickly. That’s your amygdala doing its job ‘really well’!

But sometimes, the amygdala can be a bit too protective. It’s like a guard dog that barks at everything - even a leaf blowing in the wind. This means it can make you feel scared or anxious even when there’s no real danger.

It’s not that the amygdala is bad or broken, it’s just working a bit too hard. Remember, it’s okay if your amygdala gets a bit overexcited sometimes. There are things we can do to help calm it down and just like a guard dog can learn to tell the difference between a leaf and a real threat, your amygdala can learn too!



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Dear Brain.....

Thanks for looking after me, I am ok, you can relax

Let's think about a happy, safe place, We don't need to worry

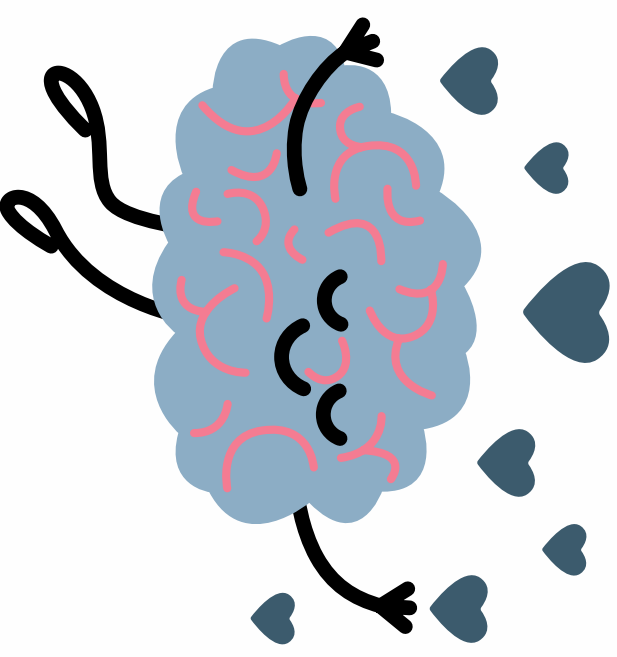
Thanks for trying to protect me, amygdala, but I've got this

You're working so hard to keep me safe, but we're alright now, time to relax!

I am strong

We can do hard things

Let's take a break and think of something that makes us smile



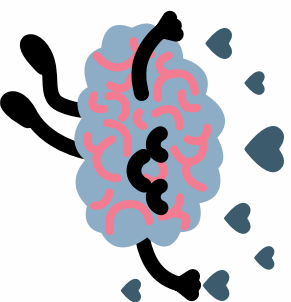
Dear Brain.....



Dear Brain.....



Dear Brain.....

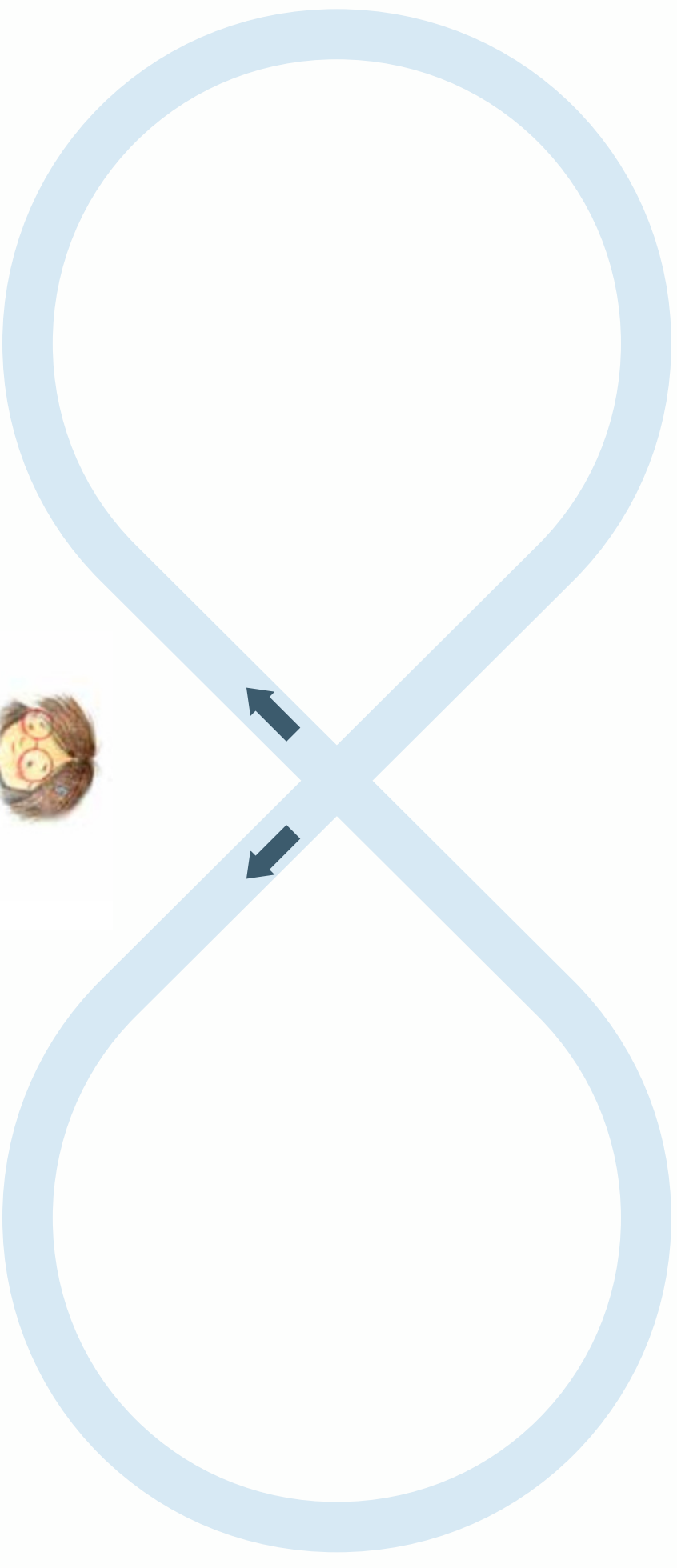


Dear Brain.....



ARTE'S ANXIETY DISAPPEARS-BREATHWORK

Trace your finger around the infinity symbol, focusing on your inhaling and exhaling.



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ARTE'S ANXIETY DISAPPEARS COLOUR-IN

Spending time with a friend can
help my anxiety disappear.



ARTE'S ANXIETY DISAPPEARS MAZE

Help Lulu find Arte



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COPING TOOLS

WHAT HELPS ME

- ☐ Cuddle or play with a pet
- ☐ Do some drawing
- ☐ Rest and take a break
- ☐ Use a stress ball
- ☐ Talk to someone I trust
- ☐ Read a book
- ☐ Take a shower or bath
- ☐ Get a drink
- ☐ Use positive affirmations
- ☐ Listen to my favorite music
- ☐ Stretch
- ☐ Blow bubbles
- ☐ Get a hug
- ☐ Take slow, mindful breaths
- ☐ Dance



COPING TOOLS

WHAT HELPS ME

- ☐ My choice
- ☐ My choice
- ☐ 'The Big Sigh'
- ☐ Singing
- ☐ Meditation
- ☐ Play a game
- ☐ Talk to my amygdala (brain)
- ☐ Crunch on an ice cube
- ☐ Play with a fidget
- ☐ Get out in nature
- ☐ Go for a walk
- ☐ Humming
- ☐ Use a grounding strategy
- ☐ Pat a dog

- ☐ Exercise



ARTE'S ANXIETY DISAPPEARS WORD SEARCH



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Mindfulness	strategies	amygdala	Arte
grounding	Emotions	Strength	Kind
thoughts	Breathe	Support	Fear
Anxiety	anxious	zoomies	Lulu
strong	Stress	happy	help
Worry	Brave	Relax	
Calm	angry	Hope	



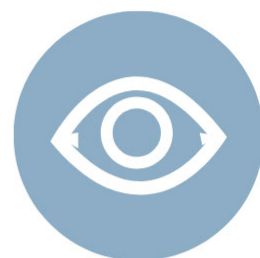
Calm Kids
COUNSELLING & COACHING

GROUNDING STRATEGY

A calming technique that connects you with the present by exploring the five senses.

5

THINGS YOU CAN
SEE



4

THINGS YOU CAN
TOUCH



3

THINGS YOU CAN
HEAR



2

THINGS YOU CAN
SMELL



1

THING YOU CAN
TASTE



ARTE'S ANXIETY DISAPPEARS DOT DOT



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