

Teaching Notes: HARRIET'S EXPANDING HEART

Written by Rachel Brace

Illustrated by Angela Perrini

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SYNOPSIS

It's normal for children living in stepfamilies to have lots of different feelings and to feel different things at different times. This story shares Harriet's emotional experiences surrounding her stepfamily beginnings.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

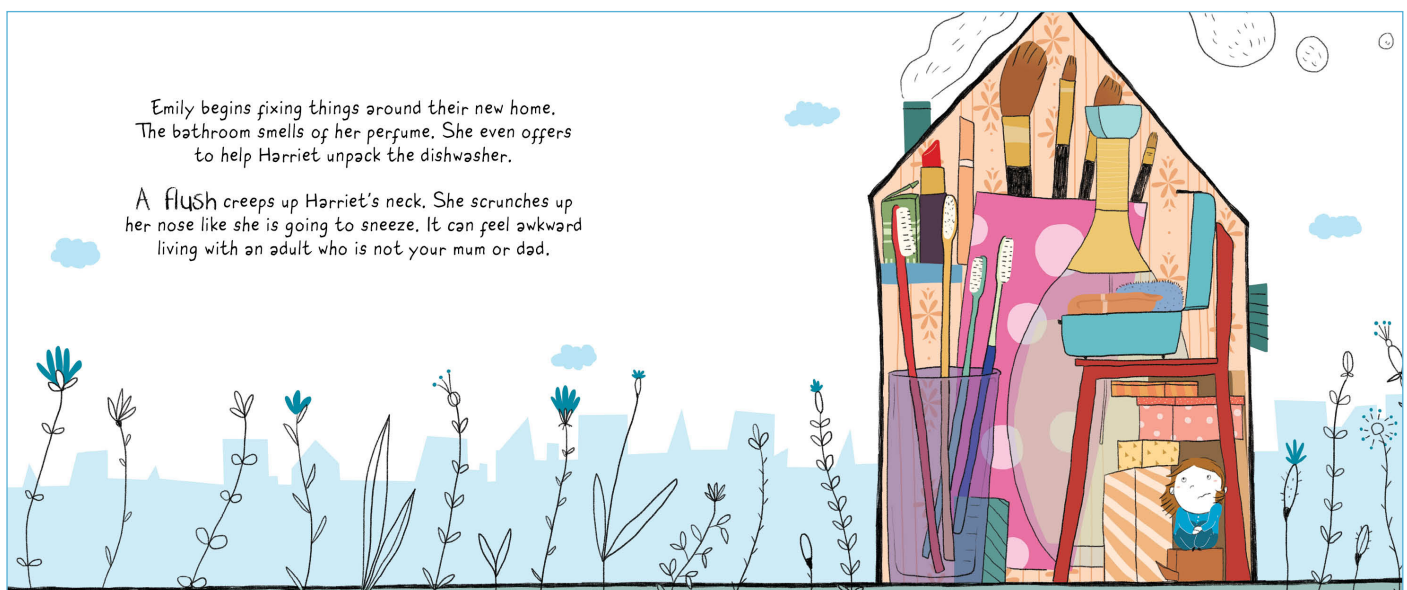
Rachel Brace is a registered psychologist and co-creator and founder of www.steppingthrough.com.au – an educational and support resource for stepparents and their partners. She has worked extensively with children and families over many years across a variety of settings in Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Rachel currently consults privately from The Relationspace in Sydney's CBD to parents and families on issues relating to separation and divorce, family conflict, post-separation parenting, co-parenting and step-family living. Rachel believes books can be a tremendous help in explaining situations, supporting understanding, teaching emotional skills and a coping tool for children and adults. Her previous book *Max's Divorce Earthquake* dealt with the impact of a divorce. Originally from New Zealand, Rachel now lives in Sydney with her family, including her beloved pet schnauzer, Maxie.

ANOTHER BOOK BY RACHEL & ANGELA



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Angela was born in Putignano, Italy. She is a freelance illustrator with a degree in Art History and Cultural Heritage. She is fascinated by historical fables and fairy tales and loves bringing stories to life.



DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. When Emily and her son begin living with Harriet and Harriet's dad, things at home begin to change. Ask children to think of a time when something happened in their family that changed things for them, such as getting a new sibling, a parent remarrying and getting a step-parent or even getting a new puppy that gets a lot of attention.
Encourage them to talk about what changed in their family when this happened? What new things have they had to do around the house as a result of this change? What are some feelings they experienced when this change occurred? What were they afraid might happen? What are a few helpful things that they or others can do/or did to help them better cope with the change?
2. What are the things that Harriet is worried about in her story? What advice do you have for Harriet? How far can your love stretch? Imagine love as unpopable balloon that keeps getting blown up and up, just like Harriet's expanding heart.
3. Look at the language used to describe Harriet's new family members in the book. Can you come up with more descriptive or better words for family members such as Cooper and Emily? Look at your family. Do all of the people in your family have a descriptive title?
4. There are different ways that we can find out how people feel. They can tell us, or we can find out by using the messages their face and body tell us. During her story, Harriet's body gives out signals to show her emotions. For example, when she feels awkward, she notices a flush creeping up her neck and her nose scrunching up like she is going to sneeze. When she feels angry, she notices her cheeks reddening, her jaw twitching and her nostril flaring and her instinct is to turn and run away.
5. Ask the children to think of a time when they felt sad, angry or awkward. Ask them to share what they recall about whatever sensations and body signals they experienced in that moment? Where did the sensation/signal live? Outside their body, on their skin? Or, inside their body, in their head, torso, legs, muscles, heart, lungs or even in their tummy? What are the clues/signals that a friend might see or hear to know you are feeling a certain way? Encourage the children to think about the shape of the eyes, the eyebrows, the position of the head, the shape of the mouth, body language, energy level, etc.
6. In her story Harriet learns to put words to her emotions. She also learns that there is often more than one word to describe a feeling. At one point, when Harriet's stepmother, Emily, asks Harriet to brush her teeth, Harriet becomes angry. Instead of the word 'angry', what are some other words that you could use to describe this feeling? (For example, mad, cross, furious, upset). Encourage and show the children how use a vocabulary resource, such as Word Hippo www.wordhippo.com, to find different words that mean the same or similar.
7. Harriet enjoys doing a variety of activities when at home with her mum and when at home with her dad, all of which make her feel safe, loved and assure her that she is an important part of her family. What are some things that you do with your family that make you feel safe? What are things that your parents or carers do that show you how much you are loved?



WORDSEARCH ACTIVITY

Find all the words below in the *Harriet's Expanding Heart* wordsearch.

Harriet's Expanding Heart

E	M	O	H	A	P	P	Y	B
M	R	E	T	S	I	S	R	S
M	C	E	L	R	F	I	G	T
U	R	X	H	A	A	N	N	E
M	N	C	M	T	I	E	A	P
T	E	I	G	L	O	U	H	S
D	L	T	E	X	O	R	A	O
Y	A	E	V	O	L	D	B	O
T	F	D	R	A	W	K	W	A

ANGRY
AWKWARD
BROTHER
DAD
EXCITED

FAMILY
FEELINGS
HAPPY
HEART
HOME

LOVE
MUM
SAD
SISTER
STEP



Harriet's Expanding Heart

E	M	O	H	A	P	P	Y	B
M	R	E	T	S	I	S	R	S
M	C	E	L	R	F	I	G	T
U	R	X	H	A	A	N	N	E
M	N	C	M	T	I	E	A	P
T	E	I	G	L	O	U	H	S
D	L	T	E	X	O	R	A	O
Y	A	E	V	O	L	D	B	O
T	F	D	R	A	W	K	W	A

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MY FAMILY ACTIVITY

Fill out this worksheet to share more about your family.

Family members in my home:

This is what we like to do for fun:

My family is different because:

What I love about my family:

My favourite family
memory is::

Something I might change about
my family is:

MATCH THE FEELING TO THE FACE ACTIVITY

Have a look at the faces and the words. Match these emotions to the correct facial expression.

In the book, notice some of Harriet's facial features – how do they help you to know how she is feeling?

Extra Activity:
Colour in all the faces
in your favourite
colours.

Excited

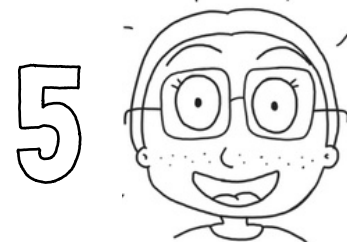
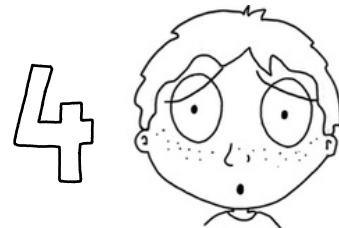
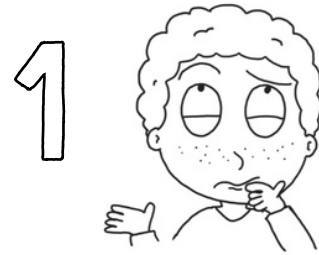
Anger

Sad

Confused

Surprise

Worry



Answers:
Excited - 5, Anger - 6, Sad - 2, Confused - 1, Surprised - 3, Worry - 4.

IN MY HEART ACTIVITY

Take a moment and focus your attention on your heart. Imagine all the people, pets and other significant things resting here and write their name in a piece.

If you need more pieces, just print out another heart - there is ALWAYS enough space!

_____ 'S HEART

