

I Remember My Breath

Mindful Breathing
for All My Feelings



Lynn Rummel

illustrated by Karen Bunting

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I have so many feelings.
Sometimes it's hard to know
what to do with them.



Paying attention to my breath can help.
My breath is always with me.
My breath helps me know what to do.



I feel **worried**.

The what-ifs are rising,
growing,
pretending they are real.



Mindfulness and Mindful Breathing: A Guide for Caring Adults

You Chose This Book for a Beloved Child

The little people in our lives can sometimes be overwhelmed by big emotions. When this happens, it is our job to share with them what we have learned about experiencing and coping with a variety of feelings.

Mindfulness is one important tool for understanding and managing emotions. This book offers a simple introduction to mindfulness through rhythm, imagery, and affirming messages for young children and their families. Thank you for sharing it with the children in your life.

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the human state of being fully present. People of all ages may find it difficult to be in this state. We struggle with all the distractions and stressful thoughts we experience throughout each day. But the more we practice mindfulness, the easier it becomes.

Mindfulness practice can take many forms. For children, awareness of breath is a helpful and

easy-to-learn form. You could introduce children to mindfulness practice by inviting them to lie on their backs, place a stuffed animal on their bellies, and watch the animals move up and down on their bellies as they breathe.

The benefits of mindfulness are many. Scientific evidence suggests that regular mindfulness practice can relieve stress, reduce the risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, improve quality of sleep, and even calm some digestive discomforts. For children, perhaps the greatest benefit of practicing mindfulness is in emotional regulation.

I Remember My Breath was born from a conversation I had with my son on our way to preschool when he was four. As we neared the school parking lot, I heard his quivering voice from the back seat: “Mom, I have dose butta-fwies in my tummy again.” He was often nervous about going to school, and this time he was experiencing a secondary fear of the “butterflies” too. As adults, we know this feeling as anxiety. My four-year-old just knew it felt like butterflies. He didn’t like it, and he didn’t know what to do about it.



I invited him to imagine his breath was a net. I suggested that he could breathe in to catch the butterflies in his tummy and breathe out to release them into the air. This simple mindful breathing gave him the power he needed to get through that moment—and many others in the years to come.

Mindfulness and Feelings

As you read this book with children and explore the emotions it describes, I hope it will spark conversations about times when you have felt these feelings. The characters in *I Remember My Breath* experience worry, excitement, happiness, sadness, nervousness, anger, and embarrassment. Children may experience many other emotions too but might not yet have names for them: anxiety, guilt, jealousy, irritation, edginess, awkwardness, reluctance . . . the list goes on and on.

Most children know the names of three emotions: sad, happy, and angry (or mad). But there are more! It is important for children to learn to name those other emotions too, and to recognize how they feel physically and what thoughts they bring.

It is essential for all people—young, old, and in-between—to be aware of our own thoughts and feelings and to know that we can experience our emotions safely and manage our physical and mental responses to them. One key way we can do this is by mindful breathing, or bringing attention to our breath. Our breath is always



with us, so it is the foundation of mindfulness and emotional self-regulation.

This book addresses each emotion in three steps: (1) name the feeling, (2) sit with it—notice without judgment how this feeling affects your thoughts and your body, and (3) bring your attention to your breath. The book uses imagery and rhythm to show children identifying and coping with a variety of emotions through mindfulness and awareness of breath.

For example, when the girl experiences anger, she doesn’t rush to get rid of the feeling. Rather, she names it (“I feel angry”) and notices her thoughts and physical feelings. (“Words come fast and hot from my mouth. They burn my face.”) Then she turns her attention to her breath (“I remember my breath”) and compares it to rushing water, which helps her self-soothe and self-regulate this strong emotion.

