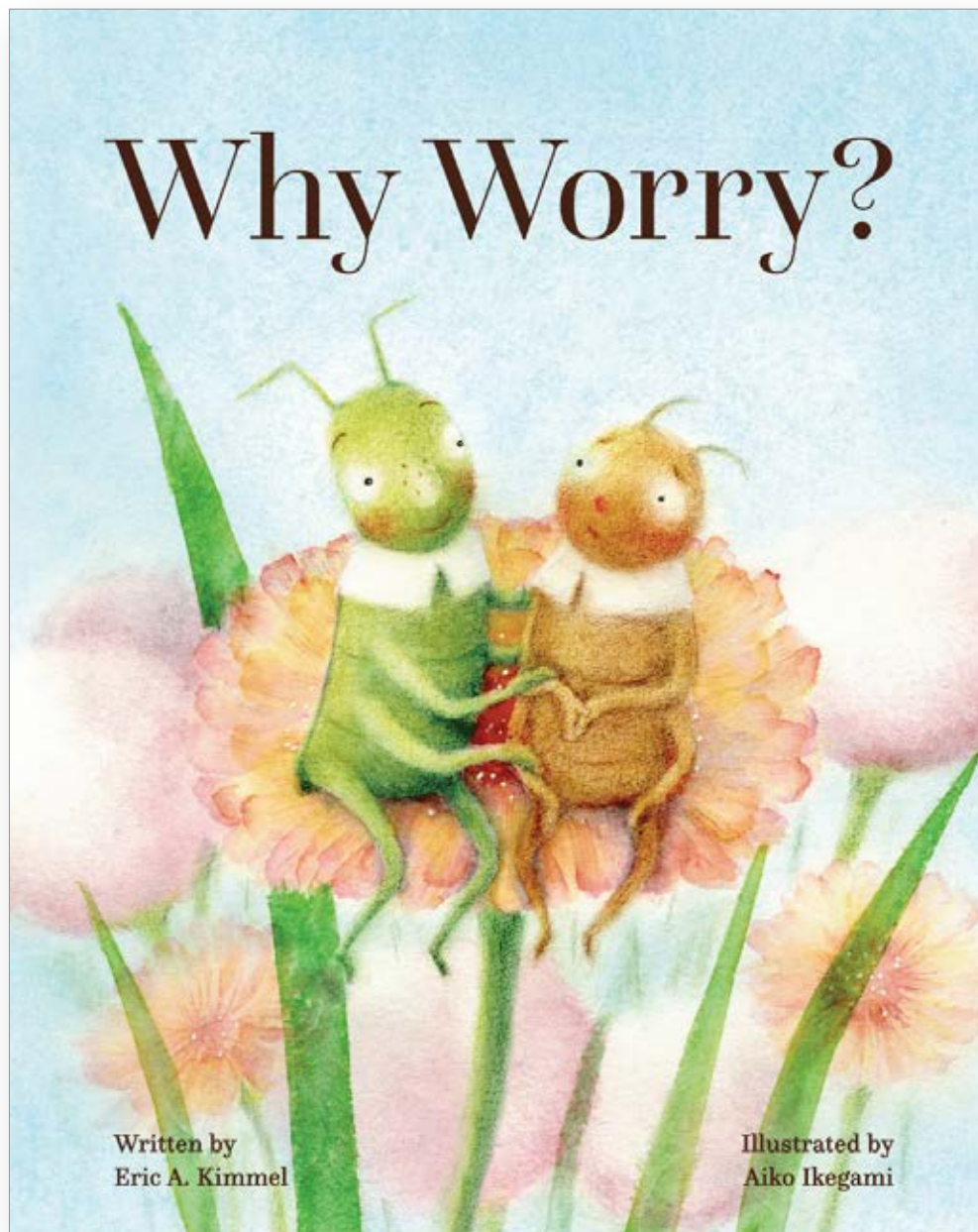




BOOK GUIDE FOR *Why Worry?*

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Guide created by Val Hornburg



Fry Readability: 2

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A special note about using this book for educators and counselors

It is important when sharing this book or any book about worry and anxiety with children that you know the children well. You have a place of trust in their lives that will help you create a safe environment in which to share the topic of worry. We encourage you to read the thoughts regarding children and worry shared on the last page of this book before sharing the book with children.

Children and Worry

Just like Cricket, children worry about many things. They worry about conflicts with parents, siblings, or friends, bullying, and life changes like divorce, moving, or loss of a loved one. They also have fears about not knowing how to handle future situations like schoolwork or a new activity. Children can't control events in their lives and often don't have all the information about what is happening to them. This can increase anxiety.

Some level of worry is normal for everyone. Children, however, can show intense feelings of worry and fear in a number of obvious and subtle ways. They may act out, crying, throwing tantrums, or refusing to follow directions. They may express more subtle signs like complaining of headaches or stomachaches, avoiding stressful situations, or isolating themselves with books or video games.

Here are some ways to help children (and Crickets) deal with their worries:

- * Reassure them that there are sometimes good reasons to have fear and concern. Parents can provide reassurance by saying, "We're here. Talk to us. We can help." Children can also say to themselves, "Be brave today."
- * Help them reframe their worries into positives about themselves and their new situation by saying, "You are loved. You are safe. This fear will pass."
- * Focus on the excitement of a new adventure and their ability to manage the new situation. Parents can say, "Channel your superpower!"
- * Roleplay or rehearse a future situation so that it feels less scary and unknown. Parents might say, "Imagine yourself in that situation. Close your eyes. See yourself as powerful and courageous."
- * If there is a conflict with a friend, encourage them to talk about it and help them develop an action plan. Say, "This might be scary and difficult, but talking it through is a good way to fix it."
- * Offer relaxation techniques to help them learn to calm themselves. Parents might say, "Close your eyes. Relax. Breathe slowly. See yourself in a happy place."
- * In some situations, adults may need to intervene and advocate for a child when the child cannot. For example, if a child is bullied, parents might say, "This is not right. I am going to help you through this. I am going to take charge. I will handle this for you and with you."

—Drs. Gayle and Mike Klaybor,
psychotherapists





SUMMARY

Cricket and Grasshopper are neighbors and the best of friends. However, Cricket always worries and Grasshopper never does. When the friends go off on a wild adventure, Grasshopper makes the best of each situation while Cricket worries and worries. With gentleness and kindness, they learn that together, they can keep each other safe as they find their way home.



About the Author

Beloved author Eric Kimmel has written more than a hundred books including *Hank and Gertie* and won numerous awards. This book is a completely revised edition of a book he originally wrote in 1979. Eric knows how to worry too, but prefers biking when not writing, and having fun in Portland, Oregon with his wife Doris, dog, Hope and their cat named Doug. Visit Eric at ericakimmel.com



About the Illustrator

Aiko Ikegami was born in Tokyo, Japan. She loves animals, color, painting and creating stories. After years working as a neuropharmacologist, she decided to leave the field to follow her dream of creating picture books. She lives in Ohio now, where she can paint gentle illustrations for her picture books every day. Find more information about Aiko at aikoikegami.com

DISCUSSION

Before Reading

Look closely at the cover of the book and study the two characters on there. What do you notice about their facial expressions? How are they treating each other?

Describe the setting. Where do you think the two characters are? How does the illustrator help us feel calmer by the way she paints the cover?

After Reading

Cricket and Grasshopper look at life “with different glasses on.” Cricket’s glasses cause him to worry and Grasshopper’s help her to see life as an adventure, with possibilities. Let’s go back through the book and look at each situation where Cricket and Grasshopper look at things differently—with “Adventure” glasses on and with “Worry” glasses on.

Examples

With “Worry” Glasses (Cricket)

I’m sorry to have caused all this trouble.

We’ll be smashed to bits.

I feel so nervous and upset.

I knew something terrible was going to happen.

With “Adventure” Glasses (Grasshopper)

NO trouble at all. Everything will turn out alright.

Don’t worry. We’ll come out swimmingly

There, there. Have a good cry. You’ll feel better.

It’s not so bad. We’re getting to see the world.

What part of the story captured your attention the most?

Are there times when you are more like Grasshopper? Cricket?

SELF REFLECTION

Naming your worries

Cricket does seem to worry a lot! Feeling worried or nervous is perfectly all right. And it seems that most people worry about things sometimes, but not all of the time like Cricket does.

Do you ever worry? What are some of your worries? Sometimes it helps to name the worries, to say them out loud. Do some of your friends have worries too? Are some of your friends' worries the same as yours?

Naming when you've not worried

Are there times when you are more like Grasshopper, when you do not worry? What have you done in the past to help yourself not worry as much?

When in the classroom or at other times have you been able to not worry? What helps you not worry?

Sharing your worries

Cricket has a wonderful friend in Grasshopper who he can talk to about his worries. Sometimes there are good reasons to be concerned or to worry, but it's important for you to remember that at school it is the teacher's (or other school-related role) job to be here for you and keep you safe.

Do you have people you can talk to when you begin to think worrying thoughts?

Who are they?

Who are all of the people you feel you can talk to at school?

Do you have people you can talk to at home? Other places?



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING EXERCISES

All of us benefit from self-care strategies that help us when we become anxious, afraid, and distracted. The activities below can be used at any time and will hopefully be remembered by children when they truly need to draw upon them

Belly breathing

Sometimes when we worry, we forget to breathe. Belly breathing is a way to breathe deeply that will help calm your body and mind when you need that or begin to worry. (Be sure to teach this strategy when children are calm so they have a tool in their self-care toolbox when needed.)

- Find a place to sit quietly and put your hands on your belly.
- Take a slow breath in through your nose keeping your mouth closed.
- Count to four in your head, 1-2-3-4.
- Now let your breath out through your mouth to a count of four, 1-2-3-4.
- Breathe in through your nose, 1-2-3-4; out through your mouth, 1-2-3-4. Do you feel your belly going in and out? Breathe in and out like this to the count of 4 nine more times.

There are many additional simple breathing techniques for children available online for teachers, counselors, and parents to choose from.

Guided imagery

Guided meditations that are created especially for children will help calm them down when they are worried or anxious. Some of these are available on CDs for children, and some are available online. Children usually love these as they invite them on an adventure with their imaginations.

Social-Emotional Learning Exercises continued

Affirmations

An affirmation is something that can be said and repeated often. You can create affirmations that you can say each morning and repeat throughout the day whenever you might need it or start to worry. One might be "I am brave. I am strong." Or you could say, "I am smart and will have a good day." Another one is "I am safe. I am loved. I am strong."

What affirmations would help us all feel safe and calm? Create an affirmation for the class to say every day at school in the morning. For example: "We are kind. We are safe. Everything will be alright."

Channel your Superpowers!

A superpower is something you are really, REALLY good at! Grasshopper's superpower is seeing the good or positive in every situation.

What are some things you are really good at?

What are your superpowers?

Who are some of the superheroes you know about and what are their superpowers?

Give yourself a superhero name!

Grasshopper's superhero name can be SuperGrasshopper! Her superpower is to be brave and positive whenever she might begin to worry. Imagine SuperGrasshopper having a big green cape. What is your superhero name, and what color is your cape? (With young children, go through the physical motions of putting on a cape.) We can put on our own superhero capes whenever we feel we want to be brave and strong and say the affirmation or superhero words that help us feel brave and strong.

MOVEMENT

Role play

If examples of worry come up in previous discussions, it could be helpful to roleplay with children some of those situations. Focus on the excitement and adventure of the situations, like Grasshopper would. Some role-playing ideas that may come up are: when a child has moved or learns they are moving to a new school; when trying to make a new friend; when someone isn't sharing; or when they get into an argument.

Moving outdoors

It's hard to worry when you are moving your body! Get anxious children outside whenever possible, preferably around nature like trees or plants. If they happen to be worried about something and voice that to you while on the playground or in the park, invite them to walk with you to let out their worries. Get them moving however you can. Just breathing fresh air into their lungs while moving may help calm them down.

Yoga

Teach children some basic yoga stretches and poses. Help them focus on their bodies and the poses instead of their worries.

Singing and dancing party

Push any furniture to the walls and let some worries out while singing and dancing around the classroom to a fun tune. Teach a kid's version of "Don't Worry, Be Happy!" There are several versions available on YouTube.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Journaling

Write or draw some of your worries in a journal or notebook. Write or draw about how you might see each situation through Grasshopper's eyes. How could you look at the worry a different or positive, happy way?

Art

Draw or paint a poster of yourself being brave with your superpower cape on. Write a superpower affirmation or saying to put the poster like, "I am brave. I can do this!!"

