

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan library programs as well as activities for family time, day care, or the classroom.

Meet author and illustrator Tracy Subisak, who grew up in Columbus and now lives in Portland, Oregon.

Engage children in conversations and activities that explore emotions, friendship, and empathy.

Explore fun activities that align with Ohio's Learning Standards.

Jenny Mei Is Sad

By Tracy Subisak

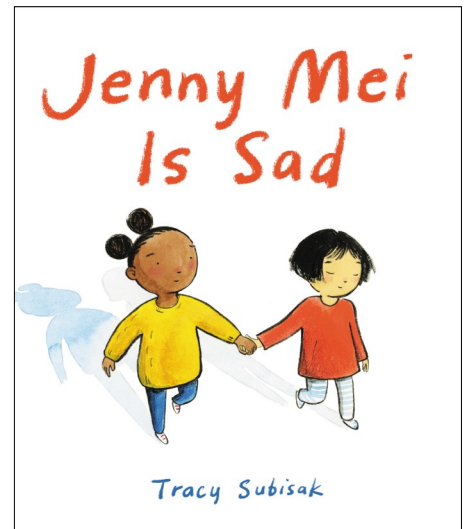


About the Book

Jenny Mei still smiles a lot. She makes everyone laugh. And she still likes blue Popsicles the best. But, her friend knows that Jenny Mei is sad, and does her best to be there to support her.

Jenny Mei Is Sad introduces children to the complexity of sadness and shows them that the best way to be a good friend, especially to someone sad, is by being there for the fun, the not-fun, and everything in between. **Jenny Mei Is Sad** encourages readers and listeners to approach difficult emotions with compassion and understanding—and be the best friend you can be.

Little, Brown and Co. Books for Young Readers, 2021. ISBN 9780316537711. Ages 4-8.
www.lbr.com/titles/tracy-subisak/jenny-mei-is-sad/9780316537711/



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Get Ready To Read!

Encouraging early literacy skill-building in young children.

Many of the activities in this toolkit incorporate **five early literacy practices**, everyday activities that help children get ready to read. These practices are:

Reading - Writing - Talking - Singing - Playing

Reading to and with children is the most effective way to support reading readiness. Reading aloud develops comprehension and vocabulary, builds familiarity and comfort with books, and is fun for adult and child.

Writing (or drawing and scribbling) helps children learn about print, letters, and vocabulary, and supports fine motor skills.

Talking helps children learn oral language—a critical early literacy skill—and increases vocabulary and comprehension.

Singing slows language down so children can hear the different sounds that make up words, and helps develop vocabulary and phonological awareness.

Playing teaches children to think symbolically, practice self-expression, and put thoughts into words.

All of these practices lead to children being ready to learn how to read when they begin school.

Parents, teachers, and librarians can share these practices with children at home, in the classroom, or at the library. For more information, visit ohreadytoread.org.



Author photo by Zoey Abbott, courtesy Little, Brown Young Readers; used with permission. Biography credit: tracysubisak.com/about

About the Author

Tracy Subisak is the proud daughter of a Taiwanese mother who was a Chinese language instructor and art teacher, and an American father, son of Polish and Slovakian immigrant parents, who is an engineer. She was born and raised in Columbus; has lived in Taiwan, South Korea, New York, and San Francisco; and now makes her home in Portland, Oregon. She is always eager to go adventuring and is a true believer that experience begets the best stories.

Jenny Mei Is Sad is Tracy's first author-illustrated picture book. She is the illustrator of several picture books including ***This Book Is Not for You*** by Shannon Hale, ***Amah Faraway*** by Margaret Chiu Greanias, and ***Shawn Loves Sharks*** by Curtis Manley, which received a 2018 Washington State Book Award. Tracy is also the illustrator of ***Wood, Wire, Wings*** by Kirsten Larson, a nonfiction picture book biography of Emma Lilian Todd, the first woman to successfully design and engineer a working airplane.

Tracy studied industrial design in school and worked in the field internationally for seven years. She designed computers for the future before turning her focus to freelance illustration and design. Tracy is also a certified yoga teacher focused on providing a light-hearted space for healing and creating resilience in the body and mind.

“Being sad is hard.

Jenny Mei is sad.

But she knows I'm here for fun and not-fun and everything in between.

Because that's what friends are for.”

Author Resources

Tracy Subisak's official website
tracysubisak.com

Author page on Little, Brown website
www.lbyr.com/contributor/tracy-subisak

LK Literary Agency: Tracy Subisak profile
www.lkliterary.com/tracy-subisak

Author Interview and Activity (video, 22 minutes)
youtu.be/ZaU3Y-hUOMw

Tracy Subisak discusses ***Jenny Mei Is Sad*** and the process of grief, leads a meditation activity, and creates a book of feelings for Children's Grief Awareness Day, hosted by Highmark Caring Place.

Best Picture Books of 2021: Tracy Subisak
www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/best-picture-books-of-2021-tracy-subisak

Interview from *Kirkus Reviews*.

Choose to Read Ohio—Ohioana Book Festival 2022 (video, 61 minutes)
youtu.be/l6OIRptpK4U

Author panel at the 2022 Ohioana Book Festival featuring Tracy Subisak along with Sharon M. Draper, e.E. Charlton-Trujillo, and Terri Libenson.

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

Contact lbyrauthorvisits@gmail.com or see Tracy Subisak's School Visits page: tracysubisak.com/schoolvisits.

Talk About It!

Open a conversation with children to increase comprehension and spark creativity.

- Jenny Mei is sad on her way to school in the morning. What are some things that could make her sad so early in the morning? What might make you sad in the morning? How can you stop feeling sad?
- Even though Jenny Mei is sad, it's hard to tell because she smiles, shares, helps her friends, and makes everyone laugh. Why might Jenny Mei do these things if she is sad? People don't always share their feelings when they are sad. What are some ways we can tell when someone is sad?
- Sadness is one of many emotions that people often feel. Emotions, or feelings, can make us feel good or bad, happy or sad. Talk about things that make you feel good and things that make you feel not so good. What kinds of things make you feel those emotions?
- When Jenny Mei is having a bad day, how does she show it? How do her actions make her classmates feel? Can you think of some other ways that someone might show that they are sad?
- Jenny Mei says that her teacher, Ms. Abbott, is a good listener. Talking about our feelings is an important way to help us deal with and work through things. Who can you talk to when you are feeling sad or afraid? What are some other ways we can deal with our feelings?
- Jenny Mei and her friend think of some fun things to do to help Jenny feel better. How do they do that? What are some things that might help you feel better when you are feeling sad?

Practice It!

Extend the story to include the five practices for younger children.

Read. Many children's books deal with emotions. Recall some favorites from childhood, explore the library, or ask a teacher or librarian for some suggestions. Reading stories about experiences related to emotions, both positive and negative, can help a child deal with those emotions within themselves.

Write. Together with your child or the group or class, write about or draw a picture of one thing that makes you sad and one thing that makes you happy. Think of someone who might need a pick-me-up and write them a letter or draw a picture for them.

Talk. Talking about our emotions is an important way to help us feel better if we're feeling sad or down. Encourage expression of feeling, allowing opportunities for children to talk about their emotions. Are they having a good day? Why? What makes a good day? Affirm that all emotions are valid. Talking about things that we are afraid or unsure of helps conquer our fears. Who can we talk to when we are feeling afraid or sad?

Sing. Singing often makes people feel happy! Do you have a favorite song? Sing it together and ask the children to share their favorite songs. Singing can help us recall memories, both happy and sad.

Play. Jenny Mei and her friend play Kick the Rock on the way home from school. Play some fun, simple games like Kick the Rock, Tag You're It, or Ring Around the Rosie. Try some that are familiar or learn a new game. Explore dozens of active games on Playworks: www.playworks.org/game-library.

Tie It In!

Using this book with Ohio's Learning Standards.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards also apply. These activities using **Jenny Mei Is Sad** align with Ohio's Learning Standards for Birth-Kindergarten and Kindergarten-2nd Grade.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on "Learning in Ohio."

These activities are also great for library programs, family time, and playgroups.

Social and Emotional Development (Birth-K)

Self: Awareness of expression and emotion.

Discuss the emotions that we all experience, why we feel such a range of emotions, and how we express them. Using a mirror, model how you might look if you were feeling silly, happy, sad, or afraid. Encourage children to exhibit their emotions in the mirror. Being able to identify and describe emotions helps children to manage them.

Talk about appropriate and inappropriate ways to express emotions. It's okay to cry when we are sad or angry, but not to strike out physically or throw things. Sing and act out the song "If You're Happy and You Know It." Have the children think of additional ways to show they are happy, then add different emotions, allowing the children to share ways to show they are angry, afraid, etc. Helping children identify appropriate ways of expressing emotion offers them choices when it's important to do so.

Social and Emotional Learning (K-2)

Self-Awareness: Demonstrate an awareness of personal emotion.

Help the children understand that emotions are normal and important. Discuss ways that they express various emotions. Do others in their family express emotions in other ways? Why might people express emotions differently? Talk about the importance of processing emotions. Our environment impacts our emotions. Events that take place in our homes and schools, as well as communities and our society, play a great role in our emotional health.

Self-Management: Regulate emotions and behaviors by using thinking strategies that are consistent with brain development.

Discuss how the children handled emotions when they were younger. Help them recognize their personal growth and development when it comes to learning how to handle their emotions. If possible, look at pictures of the children and/or yourself at a younger age. Talk about how emotions were handled then and now. Help the children imagine how they might handle emotions when they are older.

Fine Arts

Visual Arts: Communicate personal emotions and read emotional content in works of art.

Talk with the children about art and how it evokes emotion. Provide an opportunity to create a picture using a variety of colors. Ask how different colors make them feel. The story **My Many Colored Days** by Dr. Seuss is a perfect complement to this activity. If possible, visit an art museum, or explore famous artworks online. Affirm that art can inspire us and help us to explore emotion.

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: library.ohio.gov/ctro.

Toolkit created by Terry Tocchi, Stark Library, August 2022.