

“The Color Monster uses his emotions toolkit to help the reader learn to regulate emotions through many different self-soothing, therapeutic techniques.”

PRE-READING: SETTING THE STAGE

Before sharing this book, talk about how we all feel many different emotions at different times and sometimes we struggle with expressing or understanding them. Talk about how this book shows many ways we can try to handle our emotions. Invite listeners to think about a time when they felt big emotions or a time they didn't know how to express the emotions they were feeling.

READING ALOUD

This is an engaging story to read aloud especially for using a distinctive voice for the main character, Dr. Color Monster, and a contrasting “little” voice for the character of the young girl named Nuna. Read the story without pausing for discussion the first time through to provide a vicarious journey through the process of handling a big, unnamed emotion. This provides children time to identify with the story and consider their own experiences privately. During repeated readings, there are many moments that lend themselves for reflection and participation, so impromptu responses would be welcome.

READERS THEATER

A distinctive feature of this book is the use of dialogue indicated by quotation marks for the back-and-forth story between the monster and Nuna. This can be very effective for reading aloud in parts—readers theater style. A child volunteer can read only Nuna's lines while you read the rest or you can invite a guest reader like the school counselor or the principal to read Dr. Color Monster's part.

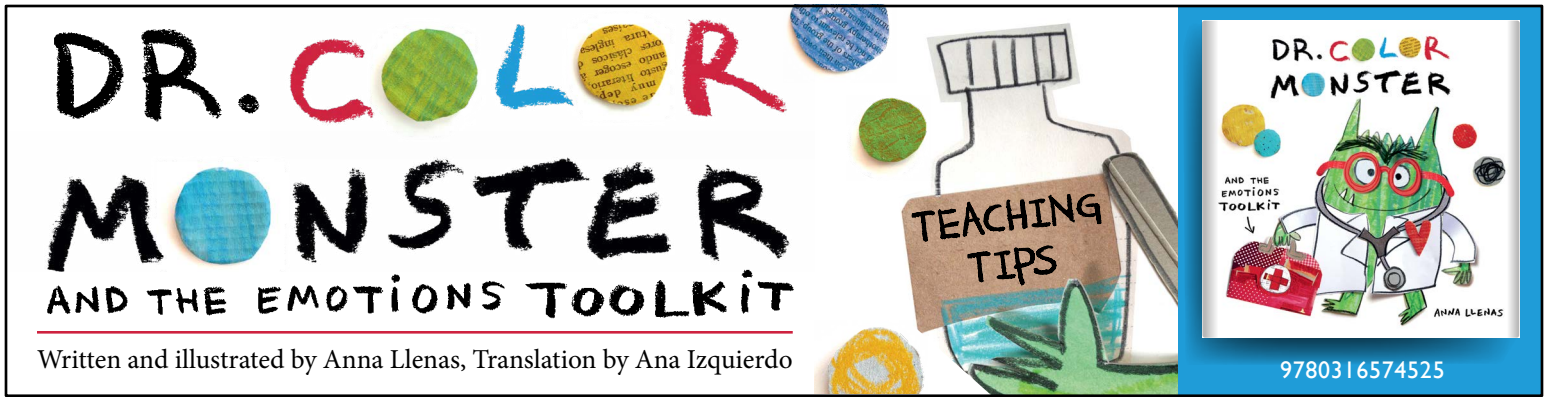
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

PICTURE FEELINGS: Dr. Color Monster is trying to help us identify and cope with our feelings. Sharing this book can help launch a discussion of the different emotions we all experience at different times. Share the illustrations (only) from the book and encourage children to try to put words to the feelings they see depicted.

USING SCALES: Focus on the scale that Dr. Color Monster uses to help Nuna describe her current feeling from one to ten. “Zero means you don't feel anything, and ten means you can't stand it.” Give children a few minutes to think about how they're feeling at the moment and invite them to raise fingers to assess their own feelings. Create a physical “ruler” numbered 1-10 for a classroom visual tool for future reference. The same applies to the drawing of five faces with different expressions shared in the book). Create a graphic of this scale for classroom display and use.

DEEP BREATHING: One of the exercises that Dr. Color Monster shares with Nuna to help her cope with her difficult emotions is deep breathing. He takes off his coat, sits down with her, and guides her in taking three deep





breaths, saying, “You inhale a forest of trees...and you exhale a soft sea breeze.” This simple act is always a good way to help anyone find a bit more calmness. Lead deep breathing with the children starting with three deep breaths and try it whenever anyone (including you) needs a moment of mindfulness.

MUSIC AND DANCING: Dr. Color Monster also suggests that movement and dancing can help us release tension and feel better. As they listen to you read aloud, encourage children to stand and sway or twirl or wave as you read Dr. Color Monster’s lines beginning, “Let’s move our bodies through this space.” If possible, add soothing music along with movement and dance when children need a break from the routine or a few moments to unwind or calm down.

ART ACTIVITIES

This picture book is perfect for following up with a variety of fun, engaging art activities.

1. **SCRIBBLING:** When Dr. Color Monster first asks Nuna how she is doing, she says she has a “weird feeling” and there is a big scribble. With just 3 or 4 crayons each, children can try to draw how they are feeling today with their own scribbles.
2. **CLAY:** Another art activity introduced in the story, is playing with clay. Dr. Color Monster urges Nuna to: “Stretch it, squeeze it, punch it, break it, shape it.” Offer children simple clay or homemade dough to experiment with as they express their feelings.
3. **MANDALAS:** A third art activity that is introduced in the story is painting or coloring a mandala or intricate, circular coloring page. Dr. Color Monster claims, “Coloring these mandalas is like a healing balm, as we journey to the center that brings us calm.” Free printable mandalas are available at Color-A-Mandala.com. Keep printouts available for children to select and color whenever they have the need.
4. **COLLAGE:** The illustrations for this book are a fun mix of doodling, writing, sketching, drawing, painting, cutting, and gluing. The artist uses all kinds of materials including rough brown cardboard to create the images on each page. Bring together scraps of paper of various colors, as well as crayons, markers, pencils, and pens and encourage children to create their own Dr. Color Monster or a new page showing a particular emotion.

THE EMOTIONS TOOLKIT

The gatefold at the heart of this book is an excellent resource for the classroom or family at home. There are 36 different ways that “help[s] us calm down and regulate our emotions to feel better.” These can be discussion points or single activities when things are getting stressful. The author also offers helpful tips so children create their own “emotions toolkit” too.

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