

## **A Note to Parents and Educators:**

Anxiety is a subjective sense of worry, apprehension, and/or fear. It is considered to be the number one health problem in America. Although quite common, anxiety disorders in children are often misdiagnosed or overlooked. It is normal for everyone to feel fear, worry, and apprehension from time to time, but when these feelings prevent a person from doing what he/she wants and/or needs to do, anxiety becomes a disability.

The purpose of this book is to offer creative activities for counselors, teachers, and parents that can lessen the severity of anxiety in children. The ultimate goal is to provide children with the tools they need to feel in control of their anxiety.

I hope you enjoy doing these activities as much as I have enjoyed creating them. Now, take a deep breath, and let the fun begin!!!

**BEST!**

Julia Cook

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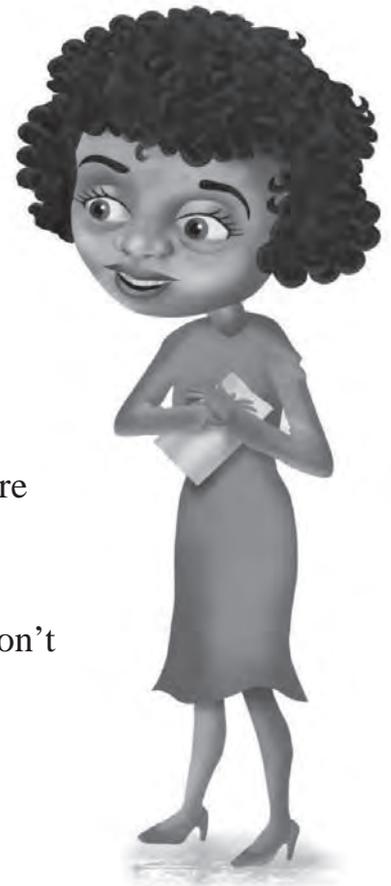
Summary: A supplementary teacher's guide for *Wilma Jean the Worry Machine*.  
Full of discussion questions and exercises to share with students.

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# Helpful Tips for Supporting an Anxious Child

- Genuinely accept your child's concerns.
- Listen to your child's perceptions and gently correct misinformation.
- Patiently encourage your child to approach a feared situation one step at a time until it becomes familiar and manageable.
- Always try to get your child to events on time, or early – being late can elevate levels of anxiety.
- Continually set equal expectations for all kids, anxious or not. Expecting a child to be anxious will only encourage anxiety.
- Role-play strategies – give them ideas for how to react in certain situations. Explore both best case scenarios and worst case scenarios using realistic evidence.
- Build your child's personal strengths.
- Help your child organize the next day's school materials the night before.
- Allow and encourage your child to do things on his/her own.
- Allow extra time on tests and/or allow students to take tests away from other students.
- If a child is going to be singled out for a classroom activity, let that child know a day in advance so they can feel more prepared.
- Designate a "safe person" at school that understands your child's worries and concerns.
- Try not to pass your own fears onto your child.
- Work together as a team (family members, teachers, child, day-care providers, etc.).
- Set consequences – don't confuse anxiety with other types of inappropriate behavior. Set limits and consequences so that you don't allow anxiety to enable your child.
- Have reasonable expectations.



# The Amazing Worry Doll

## Materials

Small plastic doll for each anxious child – may be new or used. (Easy to find at hobby or craft stores.)

## Directions

Your worry doll is AMAZING! You can tell her/him anything! Hold your worry doll in your hand and just start talking. Tell your doll everything you are worried about. As soon as you tell your doll a worry, you have given that worry away to the doll and she/he will hold it for you until you need it back. YES, your doll will worry for you so that you can be worry free!!!

- If you worry at night, tell your doll your worries before you go to bed. Then tuck the doll under your pillow and enjoy a good night's sleep!
- If you worry at school, tell your doll your worries. Then put the doll inside your coat pocket or inside your desk and enjoy a worry free day!
- Your worry doll will work any time and in any place!

If you ever want or need your worries back, just hold your doll in your hand, close your eyes, and let your worries transfer back into your head – but who would want that?!



# Square Breathing

## Materials

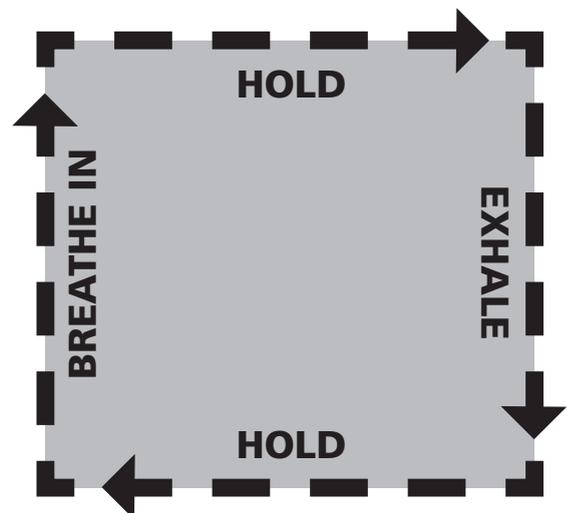
- Paper
- Pen or pencil.

Sometimes, when we feel anxious, we start to breathe too fast. This activity will help you slow down your breathing and help you to relax.

## Directions

Draw a clockwise square as you breathe in and out. Start in the left hand bottom corner of your paper. Inhale slowly as you draw a line up. Hold your breath as you slowly draw a line across to the right. Exhale slowly as you draw a line down toward the bottom of the paper. Pause your breathing as you draw a line to the left completing the square. The bigger your square, the slower you breathe.

**Try it on paper a few times and then do it in your head without paper. If you want, you can draw your square in the air with your finger as you breathe.**



# What Are You Worried About?



## Directions

In the space below, make a list of everything you are worried about. Use the back of this paper if you need more room.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now rewrite your list of worries and put them in order from your biggest worry to your smallest worry (use the back if you need more room.)

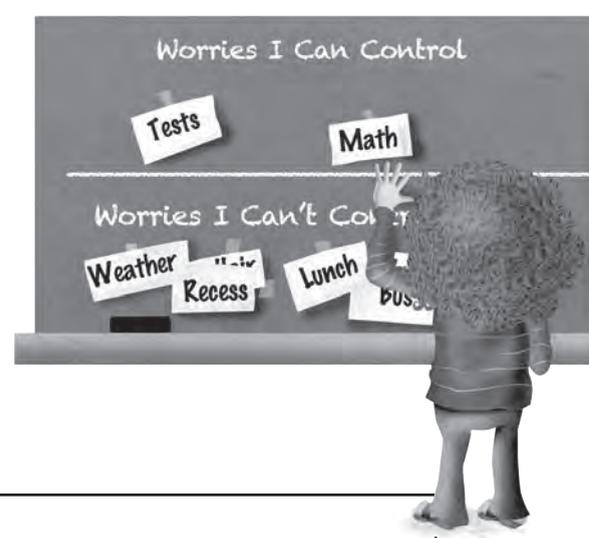
## BIGGEST

1. _____	6. _____
2. _____	7. _____
3. _____	8. _____
4. _____	9. _____
5. _____	10. _____

## SMALLEST

1. _____	6. _____
2. _____	7. _____
3. _____	8. _____
4. _____	9. _____
5. _____	10. _____

# Can You Control Your Worries?



Use your list of worries from page 5 and write them where you think they belong on the chart below.

Worries I Can Control

Worries I Can't Control

Brainstorm ideas and solutions for moving your worries up to the “**Worries I Can Control**” part of your paper. For the worries that are not in your control, try using a worry doll or a worry hat so you can feel worry-free more of the time.

# I Feel It “Here”!

## Materials

- Large piece of bulletin board paper (long enough to lie down on)
- Pencil or Pen
- Scissors
- Markers

## Directions

**When we worry, we can feel it anywhere!**

1. Take turns tracing each other on the bulletin board paper. You can pose any way you want to!
2. Cut out the figure of yourself and draw your face on your figure.

**When you worry about something, where can you feel it?**

3. Draw what worry feels like or write the word “worry” on your body every place that you feel it when you are worried about something.
4. Compare your body cut-out to others. Does worrying affect other people the same way it affects you?

# A Chain of Events: Thoughts to Feelings

## Materials

- Strips of lightly colored construction paper cut 1 1/2" X 12"
- Pen or Pencil
- Glue Stick or Stapler

What we are thinking can directly lead to how we are feeling, both in good and bad situations.

## Directions

1. Think of something that happened that made you feel worried or anxious. Write down what happened on one of the strips of paper. Glue or staple that strip into a circle.
2. Write down what you thought (worst case scenario) when this happened to you on another strip of paper. Attach that strip to the first one like a paper chain.
3. Write down how you felt on another strip of paper and attach that strip to the first two strips.
4. Look at your three-link chain. Can you see how what you think about a situation dictates how you will feel about it?

## Now Try Again

1. Think of something that happened that made you feel worried or anxious. Write down what happened on one of the strips of paper. Glue or staple that strip into a circle.
2. Write down what you thought (best case scenario – using only positive thoughts.) Attach that strip to the first one like a paper chain.
3. Write down how your more positive thoughts made you feel on another strip of paper and attach that strip to the first two.
4. Look at your three-link chain. Can you see how what you think about a situation can dictate how you will feel about it?

What Happened

How It Made Me Feel

What I Thought About

# How Do You Feel?



*“By the time I got to school,  
I felt like I’d swallowed an elephant  
playing the banjo!”*

This is how Wilma Jean felt when  
she was anxious about school.

Complete the following sentence about a time when you felt anxious or worried.  
Then, in the space below, draw a picture of what the inside of your stomach felt like.

“By the time I got to \_\_\_\_\_ I felt like  
I’d swallowed a \_\_\_\_\_.”

