

## ***When My Mom is Sad***

By Mary Watson Avery & William Beardslee

Illustrations by Joan Margot Smith



**Summary:** A little girl is confused by her mother's moods and behavior. Her mother reassures her with a conversation about depression and taking care of oneself.

### **Social-Emotional Themes:**

- Age-appropriate discussion of parental depression

### **Overall Preparation:**

In our experience, we wouldn't share this book with children until we had indicated to parents that the subject was being discussed. Think about how it would be best to communicate this to the parents in your program. Consider if a letter home would be sufficient, or if you would like to supplement that with a parent meeting, workshop or additional resource on parental depression.

### **Workshop Leader Reflection**

Before sharing this book, reflect on the story's subject matter and the group of children with whom you plan to share it. Consider your own understanding and experience with the subject of depression. You may want to spend some time learning more about depression and resilience. Two brief articles included in the Tell Me A Story Materials to consider as a resource are:

*Parenting, Depression and Hope: Reaching Out to Families Facing Adversity*  
*Fostering Resilience in Families Coping With Depression*

You do not have to be a mental health expert to share or discuss *When My Mom is Sad* with children. The book has been written to reflect the concerns and questions a preschooler might have, and is structured to present a supportive conversation between a child and parent, in which the mother shares some important, age-appropriate information about depression. The story concludes with a reassurance that action is being taken in order to respond to the mother and child's needs, and therefore provides a responsive message of hope.

### Teacher Tip

As you prepare to share this book, here are some ideas to keep in mind:

**Talking about feelings is a good idea in a context that is safe and supportive for children:** Children will benefit from the opportunity to discuss how parents can sometimes exhibit emotions that are confusing to them.

**Knowledge supports understanding:** Age-appropriate information about depression can promote greater understanding in children.

**Encouraging resourcefulness:** By focusing on what the little girl in the story does with the powerful emotions she is experiencing – sharing her concerns with her mother and receiving a caring and hopeful response – you can promote a sense of resourcefulness and action. Such resourcefulness encourages children to stay emotionally connected to trusted adults, even during challenging times. This in turn promotes resilience, the ability to survive and even be successful, despite adversity.

### 1st Reading: Learning about the book.

Point out parts of the story that describe the little girl's experience and connect it to the children's own experiences by asking questions and drawing their attention to the plot and illustrations.

#### Before reading the story for the first time:

Display the front cover to the children.

The title of this book is *When My Mom Is Sad*

Two people wrote this book: **Mary Watson Avery** and **William Beardslee**

**What do we think this book will be about?**

Accept answers from the children, then prepare them for the story by introducing them to the main characters through the cover illustration:

**This little girl is going to tell us about her mother and her little brother.**

#### While reading the story:

Here are some suggestions for how to highlight the story when sharing it for the first time.

Looking at the first page, point out the little girl and her mother in the background.

**Here's the little girl who is telling us about her mother.**

Looking at the second page in which the mother is yelling, draw attention to the children on the couch. **Do you see the little girl and her brother here?**

Looking at the page in which the little girl is hiding, ask: **Where is she?** (under the table) **What did she bring with her?** (her doll)

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Looking at the page that mentions the mother crying, ask: **What is the brother doing?** (Yelling)

Point out to the children: **The little girl thinks her mother is crying because she is bad.**

At the point in the story in which the little girl asks her mother what is wrong, draw attention to this development in the plot.

**Okay, now the little girl has decided to ask her mother about what is going on.**

Looking at the last two pictures, draw attention to how the story is resolving.

**Oh, look! Is the mother smiling now? What about the little girl?**

**After reading the story for the first time:**

Ask the children for their opinions about the book and share some key points you would like them to remember.

**Did you like the drawings?**

You may need to go back to the book and show the illustrations.

Allow children to ask their own questions if they have them.

## 2nd Reading of the Story: What are the characters feeling?

Provide a stronger focus on the character's feelings and the social-emotional themes of the story.

**Before reading the story for the second time:**

Display the front cover to the children.

**Do you remember the last time we read this book?**

**While reading the story:**

Here are some suggestions for how to highlight the story when sharing it for the second time.

**Look at the little girl's face** (while she is under the table.) **How do you think she feels? Why does she feel that way?**

**The little girl doesn't know why her mom is crying. In this picture I think her face looks confused. What do you think? Maybe she is worried?**

**What happened? Now the mommy is smiling. Do you think talking about it made her feel better? Does the little girl feel better? How do you know?**

**After reading the story for the second time:**

Ask the children for their opinions about the book and share some key points you would like them to remember.

Be sure to review the final illustration and ask the children.

**And then in the end...**(The mommy and the little girl are happy. The little girl knows things are going to be better.)

### 3rd Reading of the Story: What does the story make me think about?

Foster a connection between the social-emotional themes and the children. Help the children consider what the little girl did when she was confused about her mommy.

#### Before reading the story:

Display the front cover to the children.

Do you remember this book?

Do you remember the little girl? And her brother? And mommy?

Let's see what happens.

#### While reading the story:

Here are some suggestions for how to highlight the story when sharing it for the third time.

Remember last time we talked about how the little girl feels when her mom is crying? Confused? Worried? What is the little girl going to do about those feelings?

The little girl feels upset but she is not going to hide this time. What is she going to do? (Talk to her mom about it.)

The mom is reminding the little girl about when she was sick so that she can understand what it is like for the mommy.

#### After reading the story for the third time:

Ask the children for their opinions about the book and share some key points you would like them to remember.

This book makes me think of all the different feelings we can have - and that sometimes all those feelings can be hard to understand.

I like the part when the little girl asks her mother what's wrong and the mommy explains it to her. What part did you like?

I also liked when the mommy smiles and then the little girl does too.

## Activity: Feelings Book

**Objective:** To encourage description and discussion regarding a range of emotions.

**Space Requirement:** Circle Time space for activity and then table space for assembling the book.

### Materials:

A copy of the book *When My Mom is Sad*  
Markers  
Large piece of paper  
Camera  
Card stock weight paper  
Clear contact paper  
Hole punch  
Yarn, ribbon or cord for binding pages of book  
Velcro dots  
Envelope or small basket

### Directions:

Post a large piece of paper where the group of children can see it, and the activity leader can reach easily for writing.

Ask the children to recall the variety of emotions in the book *When My Mom is Sad*.

For instance: Even though this book is called *When my Mom is Sad*, the story has a lot of different feelings in it. Let's see if we can remember some.

You may need to refer to the illustrations in the book, cuing children to the character's expressions.

As children name feelings from the story, record the answers on the large piece of paper.

Introduce the activity by telling the children that this list will help in creating a book and chart about feelings.

Let the children know that you will be photographing them to make the book and chart's illustrations.

### Volunteers and Photographs:

Ask for volunteers for each emotion. Record these names on the large piece of paper. Without insisting every child participate, try to include as many children as possible.

For example:

**Sad:** Laurie, Tom, Andrew

**Scared:** Ellen, Alliyah, Peg

**Angry:** Tim, Miguel, Pam

**Worried:** Annie, David, Angela

**Happy:** Marquise, Rickie, Ella

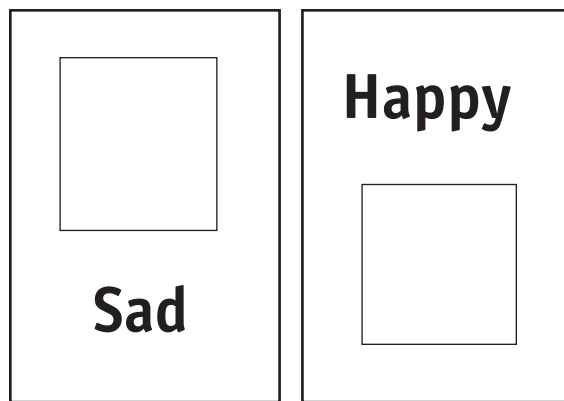
**Hopeful:** Billy, Kristen, Jon

During the classroom's Free Play or Choice Time, call children over individually to photograph them displaying the volunteered emotion. You may want a mirror nearby so that the children can practice their expressions.

### **Creating the Feelings Book**

After printing the photographs, use card stock to create a page for each emotion. Label each page with the designated emotion and then attach the photographs that illustrate that emotion.

For example:



Protect the photographs by covering each page with clear contact paper.

Punch holes on the left side of each page.

Stack pages and bind together with yarn, ribbon or chord.

Share the book with children during a Circle Time and then include it in your book corner.

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Authors would like to recognize Voices PreK, an early literacy curriculum published as part of Voices Reading by Zaner-Bloser. The goal of Voices PreK is to develop oral language comprehension and production skills in children 3-5 years old. Senior authors of the Voices curriculum are Catherine Snow, Ph.D., Robert L. Selman, Ph.D., and Patrick C. Walker, Ph.D. The Tell Me A Story Book Guide 2011 series was developed to supplement guidance available in the Zaner-Bloser Teacher Guides about using trade books included in the PreK curriculum in preschool classrooms.