

Emotional intelligence

Stories about children coping with difficult emotions can help parents and children discuss ways of dealing with troubling feelings

Anger, fear, grief, and depression are among the emotions children will face growing up. It is important that they understand that these emotions, though confusing and often painful, are natural. It is also important that children learn ways of dealing with them. These entertaining children's stories show characters dealing with a range of emotions. Through reading these stories, parents and children can empathize with the characters' feelings, discuss their actions, and learn some healthy ways of coping with their own emotions.

When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry..., story and illustrations by Molly Bang. This Caldecott Honor Book tells the story of Sophie, who gets upset when her sister snatches away her toy gorilla. Sophie's anger is described in familiar metaphors accompanied by colorful pictures: Sophie "roars a red, red roar" and is a "volcano, ready to explode." She deals with her intense anger by running, crying, and then climbing in a tree to watch the water until she is calm again. The vibrant text and illustrations depict the way anger can feel and the way one girl has discovered to deal with it. Ages four through eight. (The Blue Sky Press, 1999)

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, story by Judith Viorst, illustrations by Ray Cruz. Judith Viorst's story invites children to empathize with Alexander—and to understand that some days just go bad. On Alexander's "very bad day," he wakes up with gum in his hair, trips over a skateboard, forgets the number 16 when counting in front of his class, and has to watch kissing on television. It's nice to take comfort in the fact that some days are just like that, or, perhaps, to realize that your day is not as bad as Alexander's—unless you, too, have to watch kissing on television! Ages five to nine. (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1972)

The Adventures of Isabel, story by Ogden Nash, illustrations by James Marshall. James Marshall's amusing illustrations accompany Nash's well-known verse about the courageous Isabel. In this story, Isabel confronts several common childhood terrors such as bears, witches, and bad dreams and calmly turns the tables on each one. Even doctors don't escape dear Isabel. While many of the lines are violent, Marshall's childish pictures help to assure that this remains a story that children can enjoy. Nash's tale offers a fearless hero whom children can emulate (at least in their imagination) when they confront their own fears. Ages five to nine. (Little, Brown and Company, 1991)

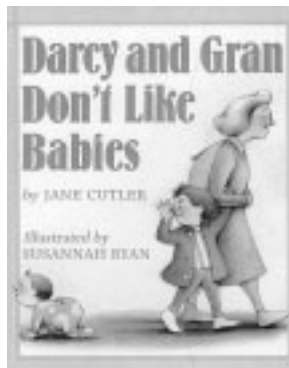
The Quarreling Book, story by Charlotte Zolotow, illustrations by

Arnold Lobel. A frown is contagious but so is a smile. When Mr. Jones passes Mrs. Jones without a kiss on a rainy gray morning, she feels quite cross and tells her son that his shirt is filthy. He feels angry and insults his sister and so starts a chain of bad feelings that travels from person to person until it reaches a dog that is tossed off a bed. But the dog, assuming it's a game, turns around and licks the perpetrator, who begins to laugh. Thus begins the chain of kindness and good deeds that finally concludes when Mr. Jones returns home from work in a good mood and remembers to kiss his wife. Although obviously written decades ago, this book offers an excellent opportunity to discuss how people's actions affect others' feelings. Age four to eight. (Harper & Row, 1963)

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, story and illustrations by Kevin Henkes. Lilly loves school, especially her teacher, Mr. Slinger. But one day, when he takes her purse because she is being disruptive, she gets upset. When she is mad, she slips a mean drawing of the teacher in his bag, an action she regrets when she discovers the kind note he gives her when he returns the purse. Feeling guilty, she goes home and draws him a new picture to express how sorry she is. Parents can use Henkes' humorous account to help children understand the importance of thinking through the effects of their actions. Ages five through nine. (Greenwillow Books, 1996)



Thunder Cake, story and illustrations by Patricia Polacco. Polacco's tender story describes the way a thunderstorm scares a young girl visiting her grandmother. Her grandmother helps her overcome the fear by teaching her to make Thunder Cake. Determining the distance from the storm, the two of them set off to fetch the ingredients from the tough farm animals such as the Old Kick Cow and mean old Nellie Peck Hen. The little girl becomes so preoccupied by the cake that when the storm arrives she realizes that she's actually been quite brave. For fun, Polacco also includes the recipe so parents and children can make a thunder cake of their own. Ages five to nine. (Philomel Books, 1990)



Darcy and Gran Don't Like Babies, story by Jane Cutler, illustrations by Susannah Ryan. Darcy doesn't like her baby brother! Her mother reminds her that the baby is just like she used to be, her dad insists she will eventually like the baby, the neighbor insists she really does love the baby, and the doctor says she isn't supposed to like the baby. Darcy is relieved when her grandmother says she doesn't like babies either. Darcy spends a long afternoon with her grandmother comically complaining that babies smell, demand too much attention, and require too much work. Through this discussion, Darcy develops more understanding and acceptance of the baby and his place in her life. Reading about Darcy can help other children with a new sibling understand their own negative or anxious feelings. Ages five to nine. (Scholastic Inc., 1993)

Everett Anderson series, story by Lucille Clifton, illustrations by Ann Grifalconi. The Everett Anderson series describes the ups and downs of a young boy living in the city. The poetic text describes Everett's activities, friends, family, and lifestyle. Many of the stories are funny descriptions of a normal boy's life, others deal seriously with common, sometimes difficult emotions such as uncertainty (his mother's pregnancy), doubt (the introduction of his new neighbor), and grief (his father's death). Many children will take comfort in seeing how a familiar characters deals with emotions they may be experiencing. *Everett Anderson's Nine Months Long* (1978), *Everett Anderson's Goodbye* (1983), *Everett Anderson's Friend* (1976). Ages six through nine. (Henry Holt and Company)

Some of the Pieces, story by Melissa Madenski, illustrations by Deborah Kogan Ray. A year after his dad died, Dylan accompanies his mother to throw the last of his father's ashes in the river. They recount together old stories and memories of his father and Dylan explains how he felt during different points of his first year of mourning. In the end, Dylan says it's as if his dad's memory has been split into thousands of pieces, and he is glad to have some of them. Madenski's description of how one family handles the loss of a loved one can be helpful to children confronting the death of someone they love. Ages five to nine. (Little, Brown and Company, 1991)

BOOKBASKET

By Ben Peterson

When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...



BY MOLLY BANG

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

