

GRADES 2-5 SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

based on the book:

I Have Squirrels in My Belly: A Child's View of Anxiety – by Trish Hammond



Topic: Mental Health – Anxiety in Children	Subject Areas: Language, Health
Suggested Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Specific)	
(L) Oral	(Gr. 2-5) 1.6 extend understanding of oral texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience; to other familiar texts, including print and visual texts; and to the world around them 2.4 choose appropriate words/phrases to communicate their meaning accurately and engage the interest of their audience (e.g. use descriptive adjectives/adverbs to create vivid images for their audience)
(L) Reading	(Gr. 2-3) 1.6 extend understanding of texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge & experience... 1.8 express personal thoughts/feelings/opinions/ideas about what has been read/presented in texts 1.9 identify (the speaker and) the point of view presented in a text and suggest one/two/some possible alternative perspectives 2.4 identify some simple elements of style including voice, word choice, and different types of sentences, and explain how they help readers understand texts (Gr. 4) 2.4 identify various elements of style – including ... descriptive adjectives and adverbs, ... – and explain how they help communicate meaning (Gr. 5) 2.4 identify various elements of style – including word choice and the use of similes, personification, comparative adjectives ... – and explain how they communicate meaning
Health:	(Gr. 2) C3.1 describe how to relate positively to others and describe behaviours that can be harmful in relating to others (Gr. 3) C1.3 identify the characteristics of healthy relationships and describe ways of overcoming challenges C3.3 describe how visible differences and invisible differences make each person unique, and identify ways of showing respect for differences in others (Gr. 5) C2.4 describe emotional and interpersonal stresses related to puberty, and identify strategies that they can apply to manage stress, build resilience, and enhance their mental health and well-being
Learning Targets/Goals	
By the end of the lesson, students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognize some of the physical and emotional characteristics of anxiety • recognize that anxiety affects many people • develop empathy for friends/peers struggling with anxiety • understand that strategies may temporarily help alleviate feelings of anxiety 	
Vocabulary	
-Chronic -Anxious -Transition -Strategy -Embarrassed	
Resources/Equipment:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Copy of the book "I Have Squirrels in my Belly: A Child's View of Anxiety" with or without a document camera, or ○ Ebook + projector or ebook readers 	

Time	Lesson (approx.40 min + additional time for practice and application activities)
5 minutes	<p>Mental Set (Hook students/determine previous knowledge)</p> <p>Whole group introduction: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7g8Atv27Q8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss video – how can you relate? <p>If video not available, 2nd option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell students that something is going to be different in their day tomorrow, but you can't tell them what it is or if it's something good or bad • Let students turn and talk to a partner about how that makes them feel – what are they wondering about? Is there anything that worries them? • Share feelings with larger group
5 minutes	<p>Setting the Context (Learning Goals/targets for lesson)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the video was used, extend the conversation to other things students might become worried about (e.g. beyond the playground like in the video) • Thumbs up if worried feelings have ever made their body feel different (e.g. racing heart, sweaty palms, flushed face, dry mouth, upset stomach) • Being worried is a natural feeling (e.g. change in teacher, moving to a new school, a test, sick family member, etc.); for most people, the physical feelings go away after the situation resolves

15
minutes

- Show students the book cover. Things are different for the main character in the story. His feelings of fear never go away. Knowing that, why do you think the author picked squirrels to illustrate his anxiety?

Input (*Teaching of content – connections between text/self; text/text; text/world*)

- Explain to students that Timothy uses a lot of describing words to share what he feels like when he's anxious. Ask students to listen for the descriptions (adjectives, analogies, similes, etc. depending on the age group)
- Begin reading story:
 - Page 1: *What do you think it means when the story says "the squirrels were already waiting for him?" Have you ever woken up feeling this way?*
 - Page 2: *Are there real squirrels living inside Timothy? (for younger students)*
 - Pages 4-5: *What is a 'grounded fish'? How does Timothy describe his feelings?*
 - Page 6: *How did Timothy react to the news that he was changing classes? What specific words did you hear that told you he was upset? (e.g. "her words became nothing but noise, the squirrels clenched their claws, knocked on his heart, body got hot, palms got sweaty, pushed David")*
 - Pages 7-8: *Why did Timothy hide in a locker? What strategies did Timothy use to help him calm down? Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you were embarrassed, and didn't know how to get out of it?*
 - Remainder of story: *What things happened at school that helped Timothy to feel better? What things help you to feel better? What would you say to Timothy if you were to meet him?*

5
minutes

Modelling: (*Demonstrate desired outcome*)

- Emphasize the importance of showing empathy towards people struggling with anxiety; sometimes people react in a way that they can't control
- Share a personal text-to-self connection (if possible) or have others share
- Talk about ways we can support someone who is challenged by anxiety (e.g. give them space when in a heightened state, offer a dignified way out of an embarrassing situation, ask them what they need and how you can help, etc.)

10
minutes

Checks for Understanding: (*Allow students' comprehension of the topic to guide your instruction*)

- Check for understanding of key vocabulary from the story (*chronic, anxious, transition, strategy, embarrassed*)
- Check for understanding of imagery/figurative language throughout the story

Closure: (*Consolidate key learnings*)

- Review the meaning of the word 'anxiety'
- Re-iterate that having feelings of 'worry' are natural; however, if they are ongoing without a reason, students should talk to an adult
- Review the physical signs of anxiety
- Emphasize the importance of showing empathy to others

[Optional] Practice and Application: (*Group/partner work; independent practice; extension activities*)

- Have students find forms of figurative language in a sentence/on a page/in the story. (Project or photocopy pages ahead of time). Ask students to write their own examples
- Have students journal about a time they felt anxious, or found themselves in an embarrassing situation – how was it resolved?
- Have students write a narrative from the squirrels' point of view
- Research the connection between mental health and physical health (e.g. the effect anxiety can have on the physical body)
- Have students create a video/poster/brochure to teach others about anxiety