



## Making Friends with Feelings

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Lubabalo has been told that boys should not cry, but deep down, he knows better. With the help of an imaginary friend, he learns how to understand and manage his emotions, discovering that real strength comes from expressing his feelings, not hiding them.

Making Friends with Feelings is a heartfelt and empowering story that encourages boys to embrace their emotions without fear of judgment. This book reminds young and old that it is okay for boys to cry, to feel, and to express themselves freely. It is a beautiful celebration of emotional honesty, perfect for opening up important conversations about mental health and empathy.

### Teaching notes

These notes have been written by the Otto Foundation to provide teachers and caregivers with ideas to develop reading comprehension and support literacy skills. They encourage deep reading of the text and illustrations, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, not just one sitting.

These notes have been written with Grade R, 1, 2 and 3 readers in mind, but teachers and caregivers will need to adapt them to the age and experience of their readers.

### Themes

- Empathy
- Feelings
- Family
- Bravery/Courage
- Self-knowledge
- Imagination

### Before reading the story

- Open up the discussion by allowing the children to share their initial responses to the front cover of the book. Encourage them to discuss what they see and their responses to it.
  - *What do you notice about the cover illustration?*
  - *What does the cover illustration make you think about?*
  - *How does the cover illustration make you feel?*
  - *What do you like most about the cover illustration?*
- Explain that the title of the book is **Making Friends with Feelings**. Ask the children to share their thoughts about the title.

- Which different feelings can you name?
  - How can you make friends with feelings?
  - Why might it be important to make friends with feelings?
  - How do you think the boy and the lightbulb on the cover might be feeling?
  - What do you think might happen in this story?
- Read the back cover blurb aloud. Explore how your children may change their ideas about the story now that they have more information.
    - How does this change what you thought might happen in the story?
    - Why do people say that boys should not cry?
    - What advice do you think Lubabalo's inside voice might give him about crying?
    - What would you say to a boy or girl was crying? How might you comfort them?

## Reading aloud discussion points

- Read about meeting Lubabalo and his family with your children on pages 4 – 5 and explore the illustrations.
  - What was **Lubabalo's** nickname?
  - What does it mean to have a nickname? Do you or any of your friends have a nickname? If so, what are they?
  - How old was Luba? How old are you?
  - What do you think Luba was doing on the first page of this story? What makes you think this?
  - Who does Luba live with? Who do you live with?
  - What is **Tata** another word for? What language does **Tata** come from?
  - What do you notice about Luba's older brothers? What is the word for two children who are siblings and were born on the same day and look the same?
  - What do you think might be inside the brown paper bags that Luba's **Mama** was giving the children?
- On pages 6 – 7 we learnt more about how Luba enjoys spending his time.
  - What sport did Luba enjoy playing with his friends at school? What games do you enjoy playing with your friends at school?
  - Look at the illustration of Luba playing soccer with his friends. How do you think Luba was feeling when he played soccer? Why do you think this?
  - What did Luba enjoy doing with his brothers when they played outside at home?
  - Who do you think won the running races between Luba and his brothers? Why do you think this?
  - Sometimes Luba has **a bad day at school**. What do you think could have happened to Luba at school for it to be **a bad day at school**? Have you ever had **a bad day at school**? If so, what happened to make it a bad day?
  - What did Luba's brothers do to make him laugh?
  - How do you think Luba felt while he was playing cards with his brothers? What makes you think this?
  - Luba and his brothers like telling jokes. Ask your children to share any jokes they may know.
  - What do you do to feel better if you have had a bad day?

- We met Luba's imaginary friend on pages 8 – 11.
  - Luba likes to **play alone**. Do you like to **play alone**? Why or why not? If you do **play alone**, what games do you play?
  - Look carefully at the illustration on page 8 of Luba playing alone. What is he playing? Who else do you notice in the picture?
  - What is an **imaginary friend**? What did Luba's **imaginary friend** look like? What did Luba do with his **imaginary friend**? What game did Luba and his **imaginary friend** play together on page 9?
  - Look at the pictures on pages 10 – 11. What are the different things Luba liked to do with his imaginary friend? What would you like to do with an imaginary friend?
  - What was the name Luba gave to his imaginary friend? What name would you give your imaginary friend?
  - How did Luba feel when he played with his imaginary friend **Lesedi**?
  
- On pages 12 – 17 Luba came home feeling very sad.
  - What do you think could have happened to Luba that made him feel sad?
  - Look carefully at Mama and Tata's faces on page 12? How do you think they were feeling? What makes you think this?
  - Luba walked to his room, **dragging his feet**. What does it mean if you **drag your feet**?
  - How do you think Luba felt coming home to a quiet house without his brothers there? Why do you think he felt that way?
  - Describe how Luba reacted to his sad day once he got to his bedroom.
  - How do you think Lesedi knows that Luba is sad? Why do you think Lesedi does not like to see Luba sad?
  - Lesedi asked Luba **Why the long face?** What does it mean to have a **long face**? Have you ever had a **long face**? If so, why?
  - How do you think Luba was feeling in the illustration on page 17? What makes you think this?
  
- Luba shared with Lesedi why he had a bad day from pages 18 – 21.
  - What happened to Luba at school that made him feel sad?
  - What do you think the boys laughing **HaHaHa** at Luba were saying? Have you ever laughed at someone when they fell? How do you think it made the person you were laughing at feel?
  - Do you think it was normal for Luba to have cried? Why or why not?
  - Some of Luba's friend's said to him **Boys don't cry**. Is it true that **boys don't cry**? Why or why not?
  - How did Luba feel as he told the story of what happened at school to Lesedi? What was comforting to Luba about how Lesedi responded?
  - Luba says **Enkosi** to Lesedi. What does **Enkosi** mean? What language is the word **Enkosi** from?
  - Why was Luba feeling confused about whether or not it was wrong to cry?
  
- On pages 22 – 25 Lesedi explained to Luba that there is nothing wrong with crying.
  - Why do people cry?
  - What does Lesedi explain the healthy thing to do with feelings is?
  - Is crying a healthy way to let your feelings out? What are other healthy ways to let your feelings out?

- How did **Malome** feel when his bicycle was stolen? Was this a healthy way for **Malome** to let his feelings out? How would you have felt if your bicycle was stolen?
  - Lesedi explains: **There is nothing wrong with crying when we feel sad. We all have feelings and it is healthy to let them out.** How did Lesedi's words help Luba start to feel better?
  - What different types of tears does Luba remember having cried? What different types of tears have you cried?
  - What are the different types of things Luba starts to think about that make him happy?
  - Look at the illustration on page 25. How was Luba feeling playing with **Rex** in this picture? How were his tears different from his earlier tears?
- Luba felt much better after talking about his feelings with Lesedi. From pages 26 – 31 he had a much happier day.
    - Who was scratching at Luba's door?
    - What was the name of the toy Rex wants Luba to play with? If you have a dog, how do you like to play with it?
    - How did Rex communicate to Luba that he would like to play outside?
    - Look at the illustration on page 27. How do you think Luba and Rex are feeling? What makes you think this?
    - What is the important message Lesedi reminds Luba of before he goes to play with Rex?
    - Look carefully at the illustration on page 31. Where did Lesedi go when he left Luba? Where do you think imaginary friends live when we are not playing with them?
    - Luba learns **feeling my feelings is okay.** Do you agree that it is okay to feel all feelings? Why or why not?

## Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Ask your children:
  - What did you like most about this story?
  - If you were writing this story, what would happen to Luba next?
  - What did you learn from reading this story?
  - Is there anything about this story that reminds you of your own life? If so, what?
  - What is something you like to do that makes you feel better if you are feeling sad?
  - Who would you most like to read Making Friends with Feelings with? Why?
  - Who do you think should read this story next and why would you recommend it to them?

## Activity ideas for after reading the story

- Download the Feelings Poster from the Otto Foundation resource page. Use the characters from the feelings poster to explore different feelings with your class.
- Encourage your children to express how they are feeling and why.  
For example:
  - I feel sad when...
  - I feel calm when...
  - I feel frightened when...

- *I feel surprised when...*

- Brainstorm ideas with your children about which trusted caregivers they can speak to when they need support with big feelings.
- Create a feelings collage. Ask your children to draw themselves expressing different feelings and display their pictures under the heading 'Feeling my feelings is okay!'.
- Read other books with your children about characters who are experiencing different emotions to increase their emotional vocabulary and context for reference.

**Please see the following pages for Grade specific CAPS aligned skills covered in these teaching notes.**

## CAPS skills covered in teaching notes

### Listening and speaking

#### Grade R

- Listen to stories
- Listen and respond to simple questions
- Listen without interrupting
- Talk about pictures
- Participate in discussion and asks questions
- Ask questions
- Give explanations

### Reading

#### Grade R

- Use pictures to predict what a story is about
- Predict what will happen in a story through pictures
- Recognise and point out common objects in pictures
- Interpret pictures
- Make up own story by 'reading' pictures
- Pretend to read
- Make links to own experience when reading with teacher
- Discuss and describe characters in a story
- Describe characters in stories and give opinion
- Answer questions based on the story read

### Listening and speaking

#### Grade 1

- Listen to and express feelings about a story
- Listen without interrupting, taking turns to speak and asking questions of clarification
- Respond to pictures
- Listen to stories with interest and enjoyment, drawing on a picture to show understanding
- Listens for the detail in stories
- Talk about personal experiences and feelings
- Answer closed and open-ended questions
- Participate in discussions

### Reading

#### Grade 1

- Develop book handling skills (holding the book and turning pages correctly)
- Uses book cover to predict what a story is about
- Use pictures in the book for understanding
- Make up own story by 'reading' pictures
- Discuss a story identifying main idea and characters
- Ask questions related to a story told and read
- Recognise cause and effect in a story
- Give an opinion on what was read
- Answer open-ended questions based on text read
- Interpret information from pictures

## Listening and speaking

### Grade 2

- Listen to stories and answer higher-order questions
- Listen to a story with enjoyment and answer questions related to the story
- Listen to stories for a longer period with enjoyment
- Listen without interrupting showing respect for the speaker
- Use ever increasing vocabulary when answering questions
- Understand and use appropriate language in context
- Ask questions and comments on what was heard
- Talk about personal experience
- Express feelings about a story
- Answer closed and open-ended questions and justify answers
- Participate in discussions, asking and answering questions and suggesting ideas

## Listening and speaking

### Grade 3

- Listen for main ideas and detail in stories
- Listen to story for cause and effect
- Ask questions for clarification
- Express feelings and opinions about text and gives reasons
- Talk about personal experiences
- Answer open-ended questions and justify answer
- Answer higher order questions based on text
- Participate in discussion
- Engage in conversation as a social skill, accepting and respecting the way others speak
- Listen without interrupting

## Reading

### Grade 2

- Read books as a class with teacher
- Use the cover of a book to predict what a story is about
- Use pictures in the book for understanding
- Identify key details in what was read, such as main characters and setting
- Express whether a story was liked and justify response
- Express personal response to a text read
- Give opinion on what was read
- Answer open ended questions based on text
- Answer higher order questions based on text read
- Recognise cause and effect in a story
- Describe main ideas in a text
- Identify key details in what was read
- Discuss different cultures represented in a story

## Reading

### Grade 3

- Read books as a class with teacher
- Discuss main idea, characters, plot and 'problem' in a text
- Answer a range of higher order questions based on text
- Express whether a story was liked and justify answer
- Interpret information from pictures
- Use illustrations in text to increase understanding