

“*The Anxiety Workbook for Kids* is very child-friendly and engaging. It offers children and adolescents concrete and effective strategies for calming their fears and taking control of their lives. The workbook provides helpful techniques for children to become the bosses of their imagination so it serves them well. Children who use this workbook will undoubtedly master their worries, feel more positive about themselves and their lives, and interact more confidently with others. *The Anxiety Workbook for Kids* is a must-have for any therapist or counselor working with children, and for any family concerned about a child with anxiety.”

—**Nadine J. Kaslow, PhD, ABPP**, Emory University; 2014 president of the American Psychological Association “With inventive illustrations and activities, Alter and Clarke excel at explaining worry and cognitive-behavioral strategies to young readers. Whether a child’s worries are improbable or impossible, readers will benefit from these practical tools which engage the strength of imagination. A great resource for kids as well as parents and teachers.”

—**Andrea Umbach, PsyD**, clinical psychologist and author of *Conquer Your Fears and Phobias for Teens* “*The Anxiety Workbook for Kids* provides families with a wonderful tool for helping the growing number of children experiencing problems of anxiety: the child’s own imagination. Robin Alter and Crystal Clarke have created a much-needed resource that is not just thoroughly engaging, but extremely beneficial.”

—**Stuart Shanker**, distinguished research professor of philosophy and psychology at York University

# The Anxiety Workbook for Kids

Take Charge of Fears & Worries  
Using the Gift of Imagination

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CRYSTAL CLARKE, MSW  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY OLIVER BURNS

Instant Help Books  
An Imprint of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

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Distributed in Canada by Raincoast Books Copyright © 2016 by Robin Alter and Crystal Clarke Instant Help Books

An imprint of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

5674 Shattuck Avenue

Oakland, CA 94609

[www.newharbinger.com](http://www.newharbinger.com)

Cover design by Amy Shoup

Cover photo is a model used for illustrative purposes only.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

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## Dedications

I would like to dedicate this book to all of the children that my coauthor, Dr. Robin Alter, and I have been fortunate to work with, and learn from, throughout the years. From you, we've learned so much about how worries can get in the way of kids fully enjoying life, and about the creative ways that kids can take charge of their worries so they can build their confidence and enjoy more of what life has to offer. Without all of you, this book would not have been possible. I feel privileged to have been able to work with so many of you in this way, and I am constantly amazed by the strength, creativity, and imagination inside each and every one of you.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Robin Alter for adding fuel to my interest in helping children to empower themselves by partnering with that strong, creative force within themselves, rather than experiencing it as working against them. And for being my partner throughout our own creative journey of preparing this book in the hope that it may reach, and be of help to, many more children in the future.

*CRYSTAL CLARKE, MSW, RSW*

I want to thank all the children who were so generous and eager to share their imaginations with me, and the parents who were willing to give a new approach a solid try. All of you helped me to see the connection between anxiety and imagination, which led to my first book, *Anxiety and the Gift of Imagination*, and eventually to this workbook.

I want to thank my coauthor, Crystal Clarke, for her dedication and thoroughness in this project. She was on board with the imagination/anxiety connection even before we began our collaboration. Crystal's keen understanding of how children think and what will capture their interest and imaginations was integral to the quality of this workbook.

And to Dr. Christine Littlefield, my friend and colleague, who urged me to write a workbook and wouldn't let up until I did. Without you this book would never have happened. Thank you for that, and for so much more. You live on.

*ROBIN ALTER, PHD*

We would both like to thank our illustrator, Oliver Burns, for his attention to our vision. Oliver precisely captured each emotion and message that we wanted to

convey, while maintaining the simplicity that we felt was important in aiming to create a comfortable space for children as they are invited to add their own art to the workbook. Thank you, Oliver, for lending us your incredible imagination in bringing our imaginations, and our workbook, to life!

*CRYSTAL CLARKE AND ROBIN ALTER*



## A Letter to Parents

**W**e understand the concern and frustration that can come with wishing you could help your child manage anxiety and enjoy all that life has to offer. We've worked with hundreds of children, and have heard from as many parents about how difficult it can be for a parent to see a child incapacitated by fear and worry. Whether your child is unable to sleep, focus, get to school, or engage in experiences they might otherwise enjoy, we know your heart goes out to them. We want to give you and your child tools that can help you both when anxiety gets in the way.

*The Anxiety Workbook for Kids* is truly a workbook like no other. This book creates opportunities for kids to get to know their anxiety, and where it comes from, by engaging in fun activities that foster positivity. These activities will help children understand the roles that the mind and imagination play in anxiety. Because children usually view imagination as a positive trait and something that they can be proud of, they're often more open to interventions that use an imaginative and playful approach. When children are empowered by the idea that they can take control of their mind and imagination, they tend to show increased confidence, optimism, and strength when trying to understand and manage their anxiety.

This workbook begins by providing answers to the questions typically asked by children about anxiety, but in fun, engaging, and nonthreatening ways. It then moves on to helping children learn more about their own anxiety through art, activities, and games. Learning about anxiety in this way is important for kids—to manage anxiety, they first need to know how it impacts them, then how to recognize it, and finally how to deal with their anxiety using the strengths they already have!

This book includes a focus on skills and strategies that are known to be helpful for kids when dealing with anxiety: positive thinking, problem solving, communication and assertiveness, gradual exposure steps, and relaxation and mindfulness activities. However, what makes this book truly unique is that it also focuses on an area that's often neglected: the **imagination**. Children's anxieties sometimes have to do with real situations or events, but much of the time, their anxieties are related to things that are either impossible or extremely unlikely. In effect, children can become anxious about things they imagine are

happening. This book will help children understand the role their imagination plays in relation to their anxiety. It will help them become the master of their own imagination by directing it where they want it to go. This approach has proven to be an empowering resource for children, and we hope that this workbook will help your child learn to manage anxiety by using the powerful gifts of the mind and the imagination. By doing this, your child will be able to more comfortably and wholeheartedly enjoy life to the fullest!





If you feel like this sometimes, turn the page. This book can help!

## Chapter 1

# Questions and Answers



## What Is Anxiety?



You may be wondering (lots of people do)...what is **anxiety**? Is it the same as a **worry**? What about **fear**? Are these things the same or are they different?

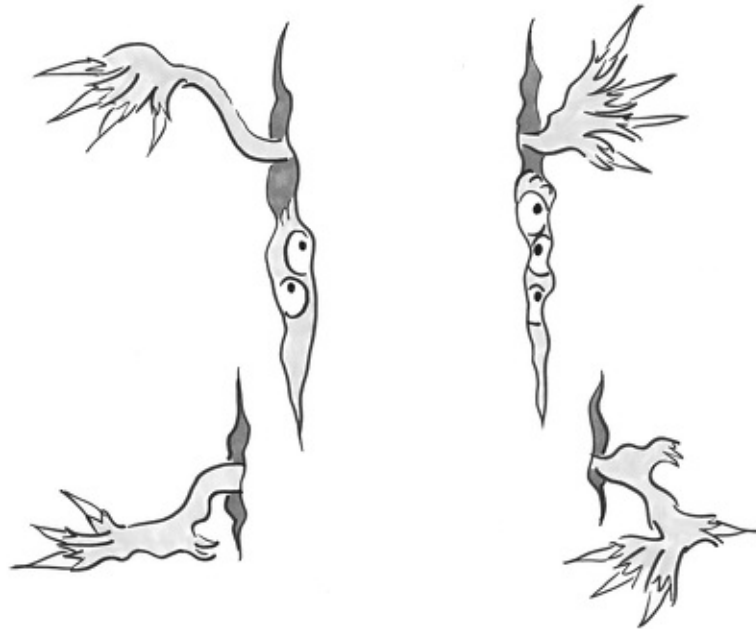
Let's think about these words for a minute...

*Fear* is the feeling we get when our body and brain tell us that we could be in some kind of danger. This is how humans stay safe—fear tells us to protect ourselves. But sometimes fear can also stop us from doing things we might enjoy.



This book will help you learn some ways to deal with fear!

Worry can feel like a type of fear that sticks around in our mind. Maybe it comes around a lot, especially in certain situations. We might worry about scary things we think *could* happen. We might worry about things that probably won't happen at all. We might even worry about things that we know aren't real or possible (like monsters under the bed). Even though we know some things aren't real, our worries can still feel very real!



Our imagination can be a lot of fun sometimes, but it can also get us to imagine lots of things to worry about. Keep reading...this book can help you practice ways to be the boss of your own imagination!

*Anxiety* is what we feel in our mind and our body when our worries hang around a lot. A thought about something bad that could happen might get stuck in our head and it might be hard to stop thinking about it. Our face might start to feel hot and sweaty, or it might feel like there is a big lump in our stomach. We might think that this is just the type of person we are. Sometimes we might feel anxious but not know why. At other times, we might have a reason to be anxious, but our reaction is too strong for the situation, and it gets in the way of us enjoying life. And sometimes, we imagine a reason to feel anxious—and it can feel very real!

Fear, anxiety, and worry are similar, so it's easy to see how people often talk about them in the same way. You can use the words that feel right for you.

## Why Do We Worry?



Have you ever wondered why we worry, or even panic, about some things that other people might say are “nothing to worry about”? Why do our mind and body tell us to worry?

Our brain and our body are pretty smart. We're born with certain **responses** or **reactions** that help keep us safe.

One example is hunger. It tells us that our body needs food for energy. We need to eat to be healthy and keep living! But sometimes we feel like eating even when our body isn't really hungry. Maybe the food just looks really good and we