



**PINK SHIRT DAY**  
**FRIDAY 16 OCT 2020**

## Feel a Little: Little poems about big feelings

Jenny Palmer (2017). Little Love, NZ



Feelings are a big topic in our household. Our household consists of myself and my two tamariki, a 12-year-old with an awesome Aspergers brain and a delightfully demonstrative six-year-old. Our little whānau of three have also suffered some big losses and changes in the last 18 months so talking (or attempting to talk) about feelings has been somewhat of a focus.

*Feel a Little* contains 14 poems, each one about a different feeling with illustrations to match. The day I brought the book home I suggested to my 12-year-old he may like to read some of the poems to his sister. Much grumbling ensued, but he was persuaded to read just one of his choice. So he started with 'happy'.

*Happy is a warm glow,  
It's a gleam inside your chest;  
Then a beam ignites a sparkle,  
You feel light and right, your best*

It may have been the bright, bold illustrations or the easy upbeat rhythms, but many more poems were recited, one after the other with much enthusiasm. However my six-year-old lost interest quickly, perhaps a few too many feelings being described 'at her' all at once. A few days later when I sat down with her one-on-one and focused on one poem she engaged better but still struggled with some of the more complex ideas. One of my favourite children's books about feelings is *My Many Coloured Days* by Dr Seuss, which very simply captures our changing emotions through only a few words and luscious paintings.

*Feel a Little* clearly has an older target audience in mind. I found many of the poems beautifully captured the essence of an emotion, the physical sensations as well as the nuance of how people may experience a feeling. I connected with some more than others, for instance "curious is pointy, you're prickling to know" didn't resonate with me at all. However, that was also a wonderful aspect of the book, as it enabled reflection and discussion with children about how they personally experience and feelings. What words would they use to describe an emotion?

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My twelve year-old really liked how some of the poems gave some advice about how to manage an emotion such as, 'angry':

*Look out for your boiling point,  
The rumbling and the heat;  
You will find the warning signs  
That only YOU can beat.  
Maybe it's just one deep breath,  
A count to ten, a walk;  
Maybe there's a friend or grown up  
There to have a talk.*

Although I agreed with him, I did find some of the advice contained a few too many "shoulds" and could be a little prescriptive. But a part from that I think the book is a fantastic way to get children (and adults) to reflect more about their emotional world. Giving children a way to explore, discuss and express their feelings, in my opinion, is one of the greatest gifts you can give your children and 'Feel a little' provides an excellent medium to do just that.

**Review by Amanda Schulze, Mental Health Foundation Community Engagement/Health Promoter**



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