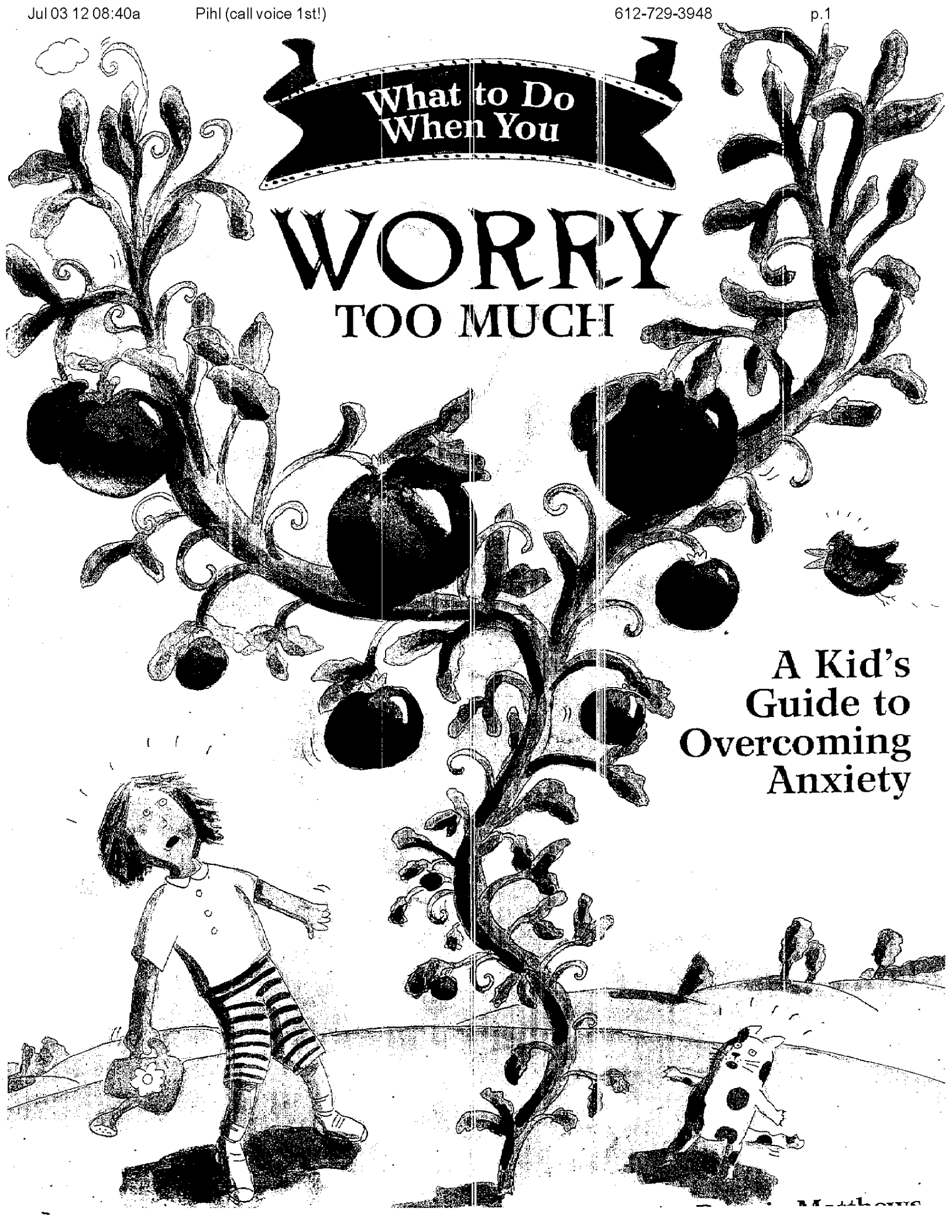


What to Do
When You

WORRY TOO MUCH

A Kid's
Guide to
Overcoming
Anxiety



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Introduction to Parents and Caregivers

If you are the parent or caregiver of an anxious child, you know what it feels like to be held hostage. So does your child. Children who worry too much are held captive by their fears. They go to great lengths to avoid frightening situations, and ask the same anxiety-based questions over and over again. Yet the answers give them virtually no relief. Parents and caregivers find themselves spending huge amounts of time reassuring, coaxing, accommodating, and doing whatever else they can think of to minimize their child's distress.

But it doesn't work. The anxiety remains in control. As you have undoubtedly discovered, simply telling an anxious child to stop worrying doesn't help at all. Nor does applying adult logic, or allowing your child to avoid feared situations, or offering reassurance every time the fears are expressed.

Anxiety has a way of growing, spreading, shifting in form, and generally resisting efforts to talk it out of existence. But there is hope. *What to Do When You Worry Too Much* will teach you and your child a new and more successful way to think about and manage anxiety. The techniques described in this book will help your child take control.

You and your child are accustomed to dealing with anxiety in a particular way.

Changing these patterns will take some time and will require diligence on both of your parts. Reminding your child to use the techniques presented here is one of the most important things you can do. Use humor when you can. Stay positive, and encourage all efforts in the right direction.

A basic understanding of the psychology underlying the techniques presented in this book will help you to most effectively coach your child. All of the techniques are based on cognitive-behavioral principles used extensively by therapists to reduce widespread anxiety. The techniques have been adapted to children and are presented with explanations that will make sense to them, but you might find yourself wondering how or why these things work.

The techniques in this book are based on three principles known as *containment*, *externalization*, and *competing demands*. To understand containment, begin by picturing a gallon of milk. In its carton, a gallon of milk doesn't take up much space. You can put it on the counter or into the refrigerator and go about your business. Now imagine that same gallon of milk without the carton. Uncontained, it would make a huge puddle that you would endlessly be stepping around or through. What a mess!

Anxiety is like that gallon of milk. Without a container, it spreads out and becomes nearly impossible to avoid. Anxiety needs to be contained. Creating a Worry Box and scheduling Worry Time, described in the chapter "Spending Less Time on Worries," are the psychological equivalents of keeping milk in a jug rather than letting it run all over the floor.

Next, think of anxiety with a capital A, as if it were a separate entity with its own name rather than an integral part of your child. Think of Anxiety or The Worry as an unwanted visitor that you and your child are tired of hosting. This book will teach your child to see it this way, too. Externalizing anxiety in this way sets the stage for exerting control over it, as described in the chapter "Talking Back To Worries."

The principle of competing demands holds that a person can't be both relaxed and anxious at the same time. Staying involved in something fun is a powerful deterrent to anxiety. Distraction is one of the most useful tools a child can use to break

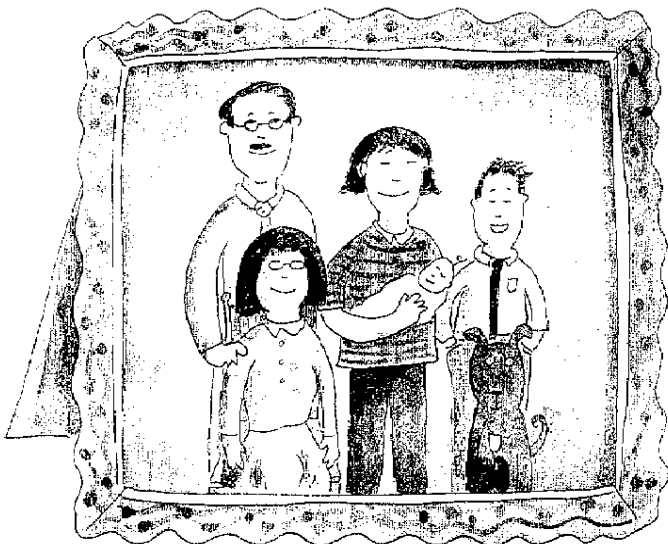
free from anxiety. When a child is absorbed in playing with toys, testing his wits against a computer game, riding her bike, and so forth, there is less room for The Worry to creep back in, even if nothing about the feared situation has changed.

What to Do When You Worry Too Much will be most effective when read out loud. Sit with your child, read slowly, look at the pictures, and do the activities as directed. Read just one or two chapters at a time. Wait a day or two before moving on in the book, as children need time to absorb new ideas and practice new strategies.

There is often a genetic component to anxiety, which means that if you are the parent of an anxious child, you might be an anxious person, too. Feel free to join with your child in using the worry-fighting techniques described in this book. The basic principles work as well with adults as they do with children.

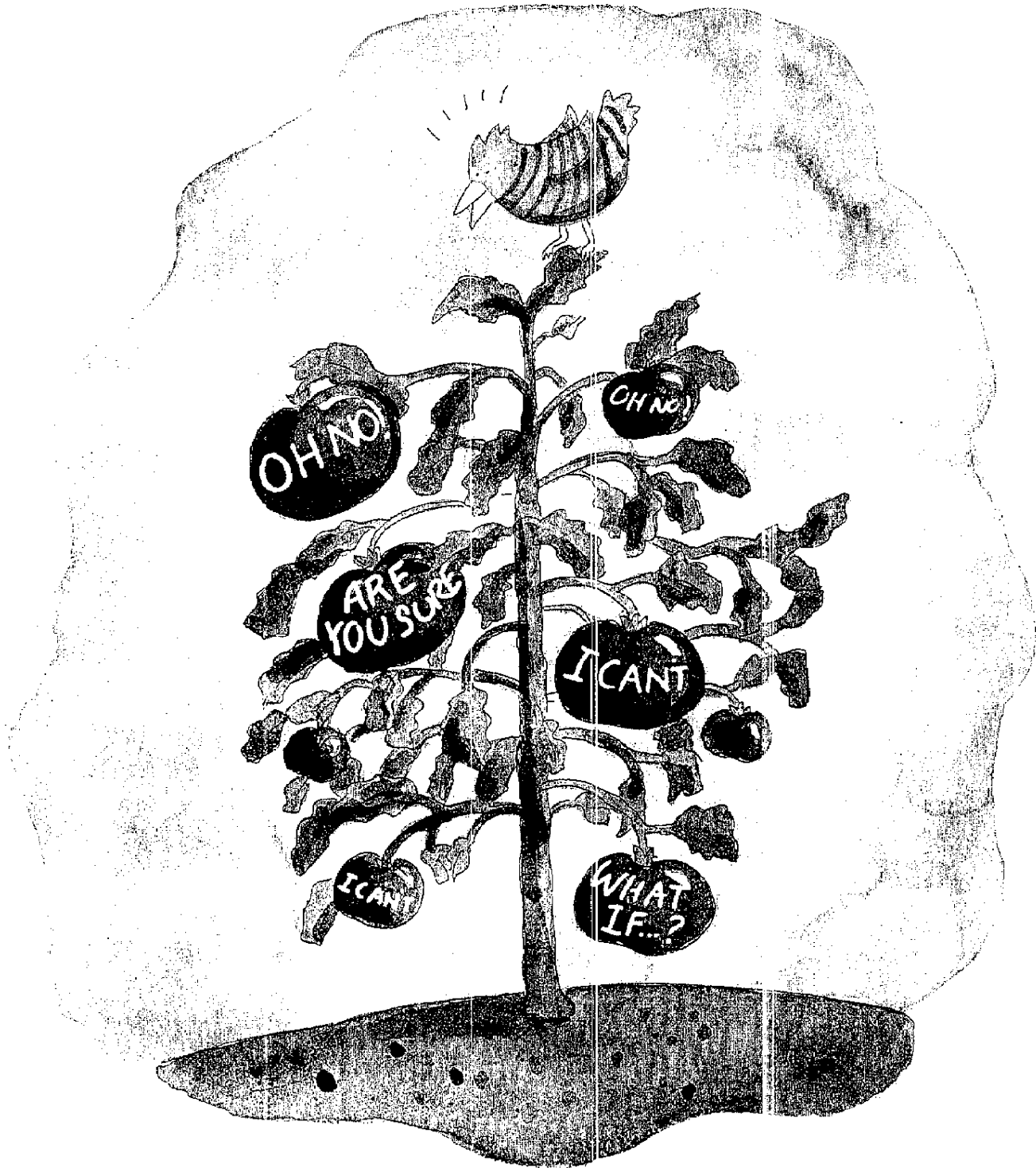
If, however, you feel highly anxious in response to your child's anxiety, you might find it helpful to consult with a therapist, who will be able to provide you and your child with some additional guidance and support. Please also consult with a therapist if anxiety is significantly interfering with your child's life.

From the moment you present this book to your child, remember the power of positive thinking. Maintain faith in your child's ability to grow strong against The Worry. Project an air of confidence. You are moving toward the day when you will be able to say that your child *used* to worry too much, but not any more. Won't that feel good?



CHAPTER
ONE

Are You Growing Worries?



Most things grow when you tend to them.



Have you ever planted a tomato seed? If you cover your seed with rich, dark soil and water it and make sure it gets plenty of sunlight, pretty soon a little green shoot will appear.

If you give it more water each day, the green shoot will turn into a big stalk with leaves and flowers. And then one day, a tomato will appear!

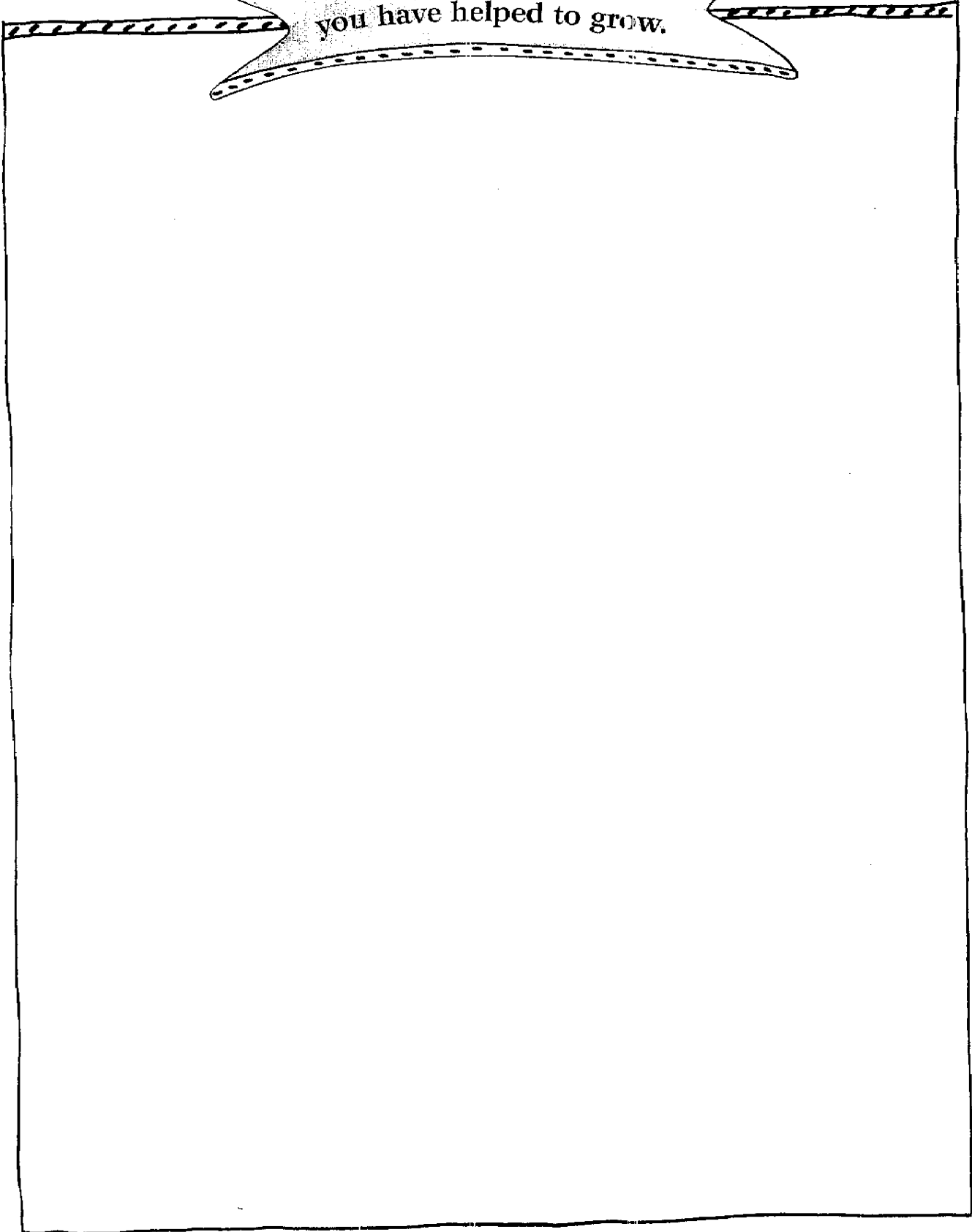
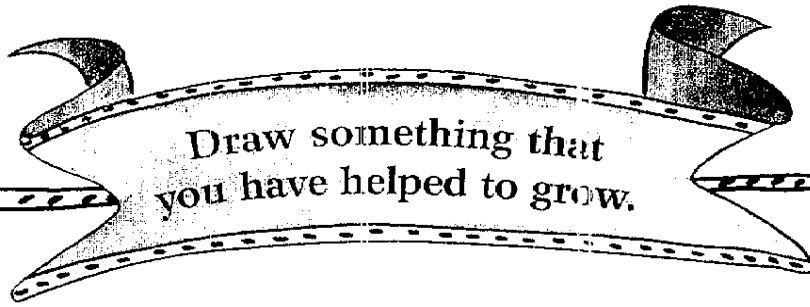
If you keep tending to your plant, more and more tomatoes will appear. Soon you will have so many tomatoes that you might have to go to the library for a tomato cookbook so you can learn to make tomato sauce and tomato soup.



Tomatoes will appear in your salad and next to your tuna fish. You will find tomato sandwiches in your lunchbox, tomato juice for a snack, and tomato pasta for dinner. And one day, there will be so many tomatoes that your dad will suggest chopping them up to make tomato ice cream and tomato cookies!

All of those tomatoes will have come from one little seed that you planted and tended every day.





Did you know that worries are like tomatoes? No, you can't eat them. But you can make them grow, simply by paying attention to them.

Many children tend to their worries, even though they don't really mean to. And pretty soon, what might have started as just a little seed of worry has become a **HUGE PILE OF PROBLEMS** that you don't know how to get rid of.

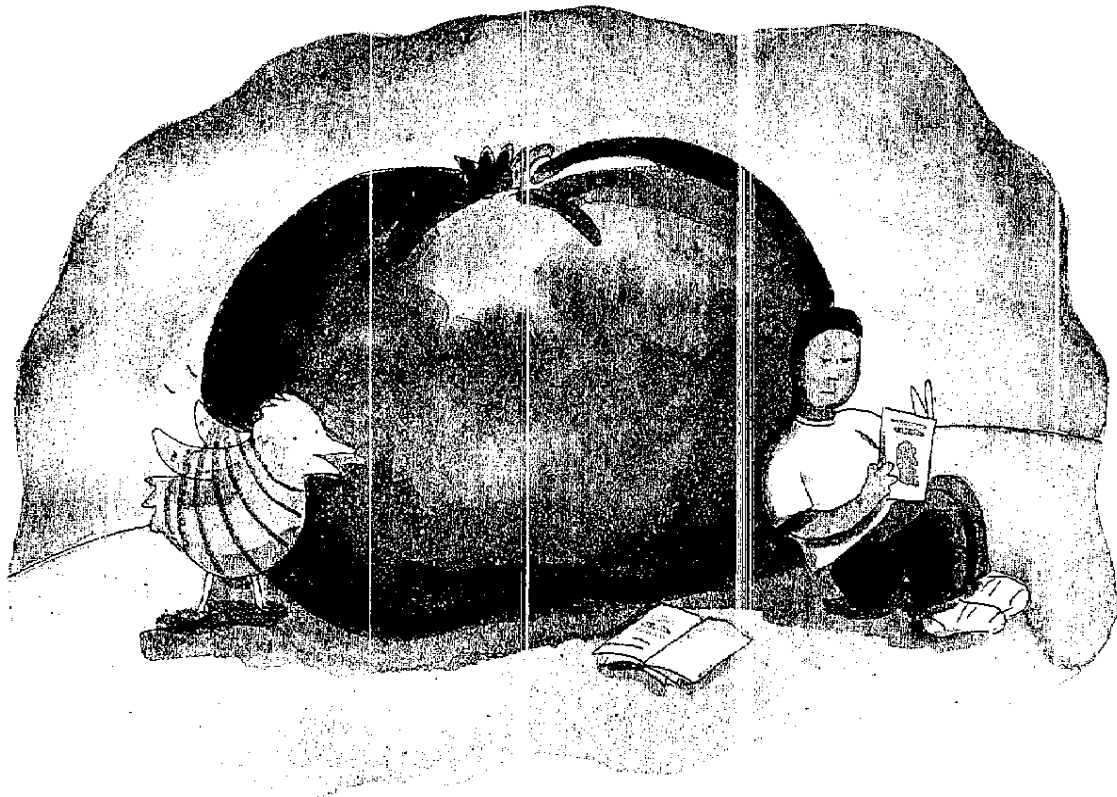


If this has happened to you,
if your worries have grown so big that
they bother you almost every day,
then this book is for you.

The bad news, as you know,
is that worries can grow pretty fast
and cause a lot of trouble.

The good news, which you may
not know, is that you have the power
to make the worries go away. You do.

Keep reading and you will learn how.



CHAPTER
TWO

What Is a Worry?



Grown-ups sometimes call worries anxiety or stress. People who worry a lot are said to be **NERVOUS** or **ANXIOUS**.

Whatever you call it, a worry is a thought that upsets you and makes you feel bad inside.

A worry can be a specific thought that makes you feel scared, like “What if Mom forgets to pick me up after my soccer practice?” Or it can be more general, like getting a **FLUTTERY**, sick feeling in your stomach every day before school, even though you aren’t quite sure what is upsetting you.



Everyone feels worried sometimes.

It's normal to feel worried on your way to the doctor if you think you might be getting a

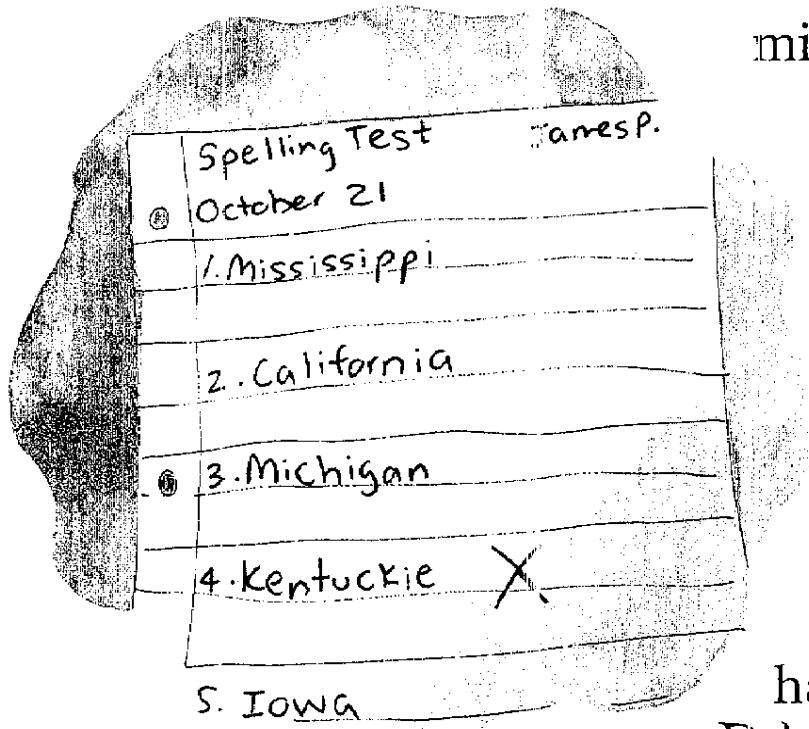
SHOT, or before a **SPELLING TEST**

if the words are really hard. Most kids worry a little if they are having a **NEW SITTER**

watch them for the first time, or if they

have to walk into a **DARK ROOM** with no

lights on at all.



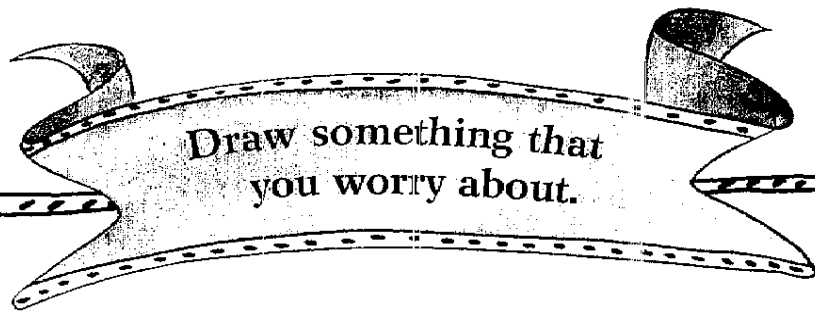
Lots of worries don't make sense, though, like worries about **MONSTERS**, which don't really exist. Or worries about **NO ONE LIKING YOU**, when you know that kids play with you every day.

Whether or not a worry makes sense to other people, it sure seems real to the person who is feeling it. And isn't it nice when a hug or some reassurance makes the worry go away?

But some worries don't go away.

Kids who have trouble with worries find that their worries get stuck. Even if their mom or dad is always there to get them after soccer practice, even if they aren't due for a shot at the doctor's office, or even if they have had fun with the sitter in the past, the worries just go on and on.



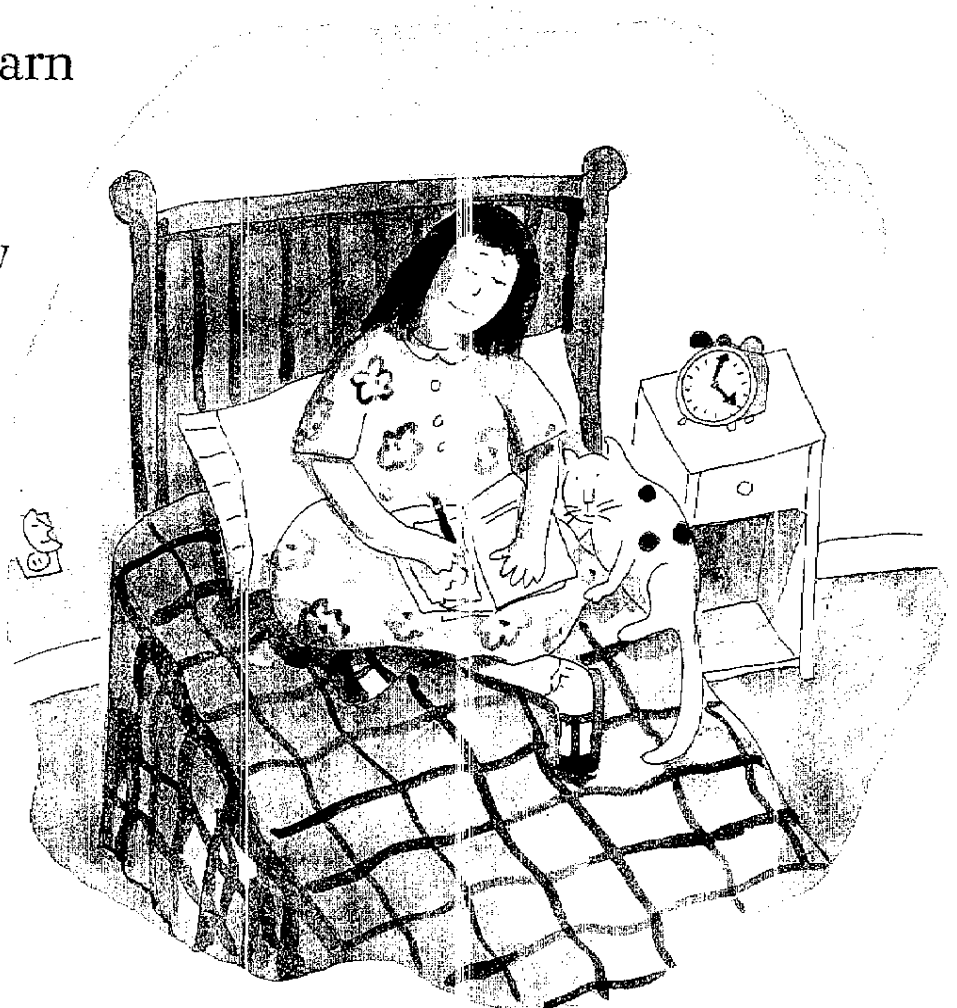
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If you are reading this book, you are probably a kid whose worries get stuck. You probably have worries that other people don't quite understand. And your worries probably last longer than other people think they should. People probably say, "Don't worry about it" all the time, but it isn't easy for you to just stop worrying.

It isn't easy.

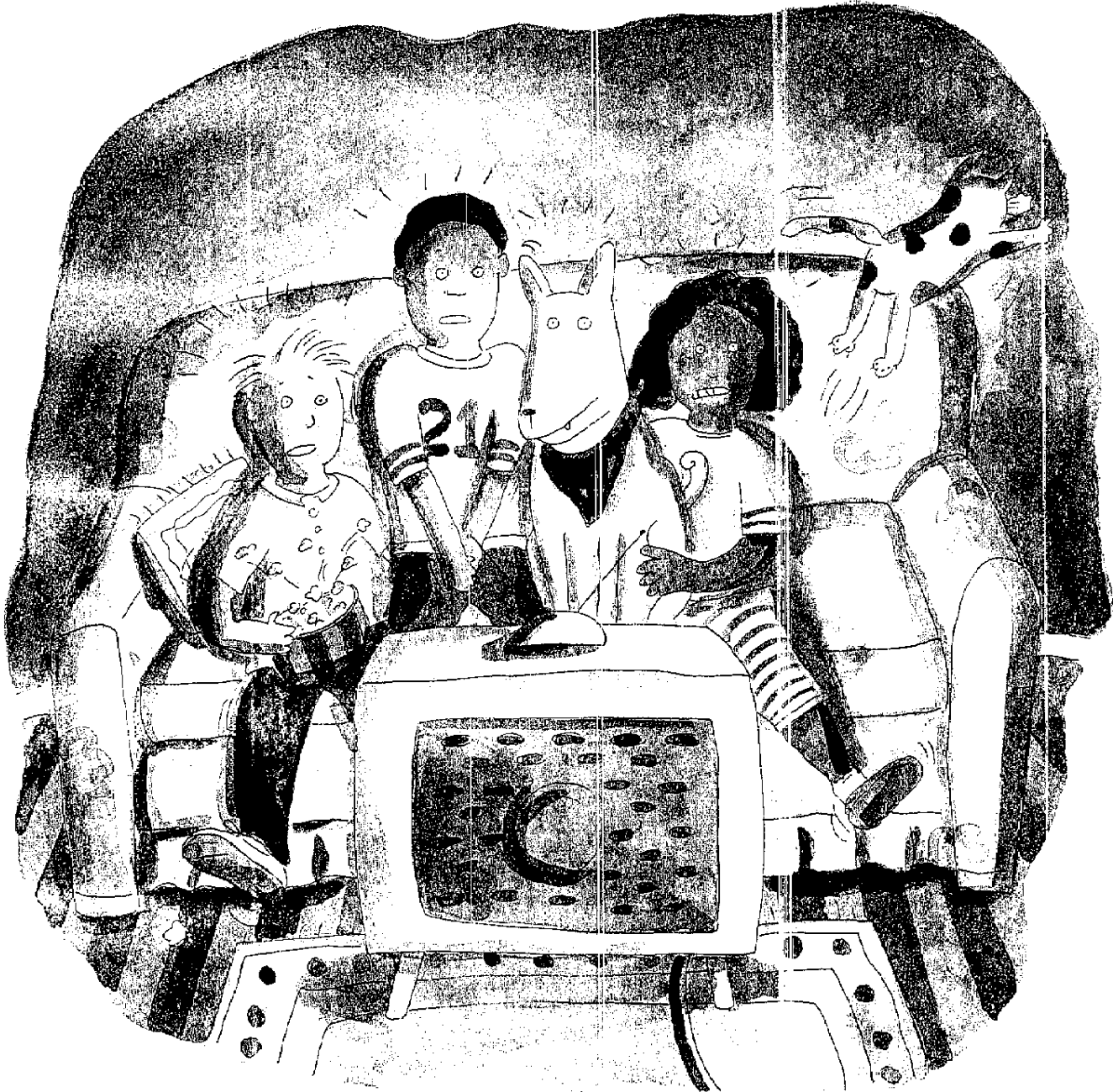
But it is possible.

Once you learn a little more about worries, you'll be ready to start working on making your worries go away.



CHAPTER
THREE

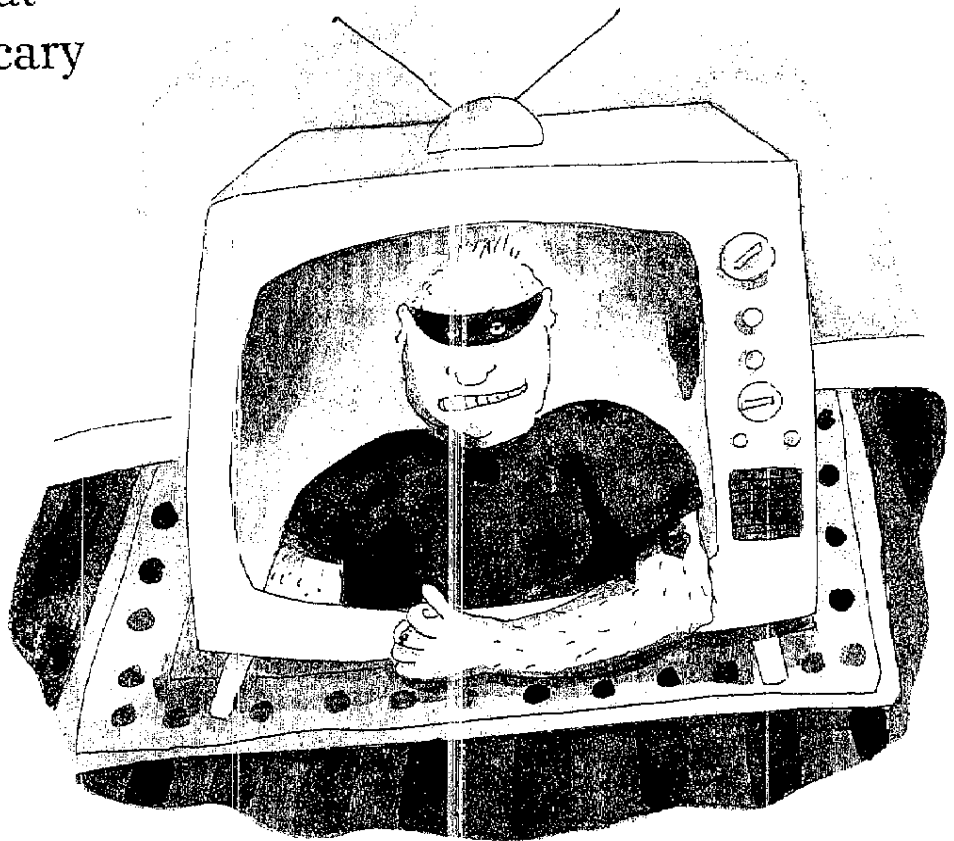
How Do Worries Get Started?



Seeing or hearing about something scary can make a worry get started. Watching **POLICE SHOWS** or **MOVIES WITH BAD GUYS** can make kids think that something bad is going to happen to them.

Sometimes bad things really do happen, like someone dies or parents get divorced or your best friend stops liking you.

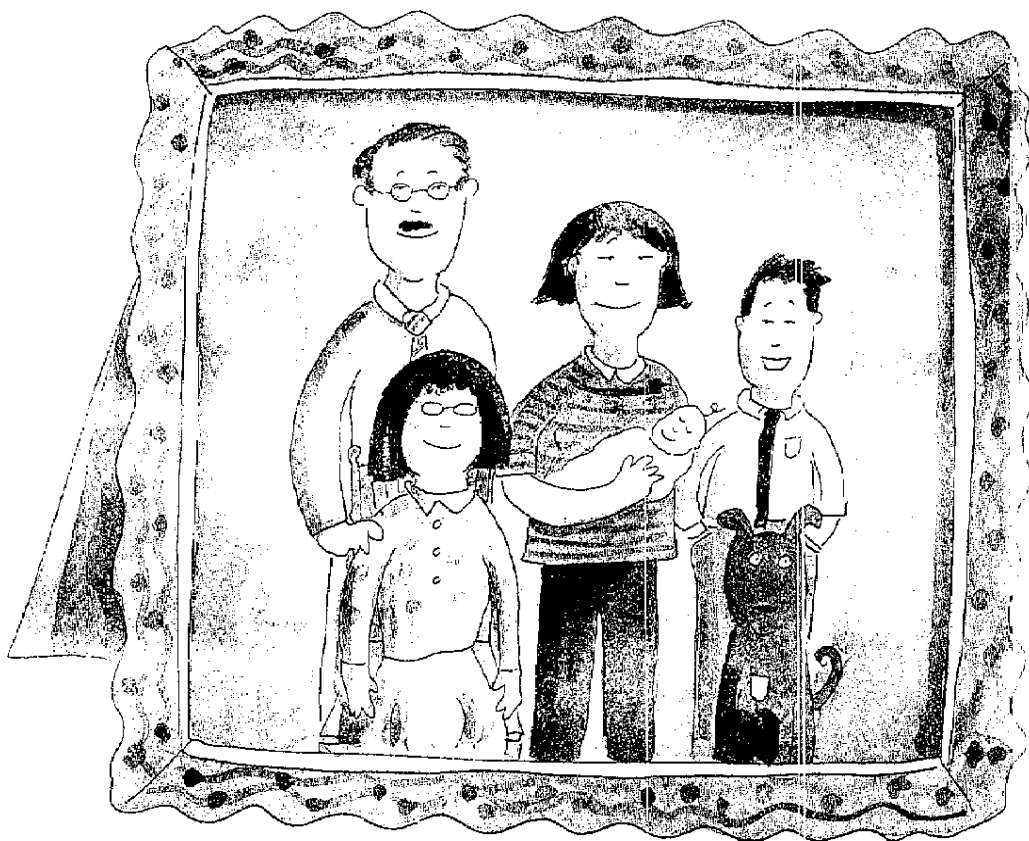
When something scary or sad happens, or when you hear something that makes you think that something scary or sad could happen, worries can get started.

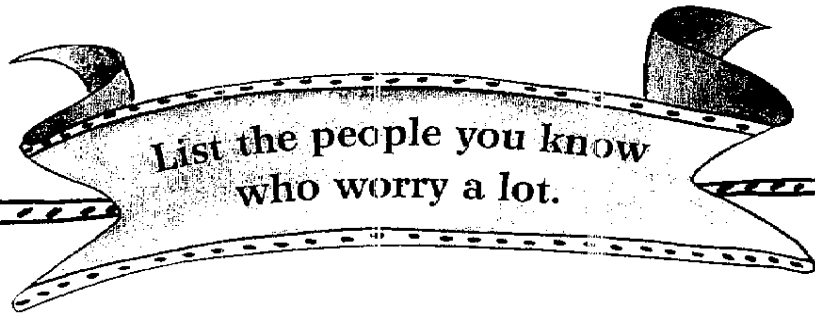


Difficult or disappointing things happen to everyone from time to time. Many kids feel bad for a while, and then they start thinking of something to cheer themselves up. Some kids are good at reassuring themselves and finding ways to solve their own problems. Often, kids can talk to someone, and then they feel better. But some kids—kids a lot like you—might try to do these very same things and they still end up worrying.

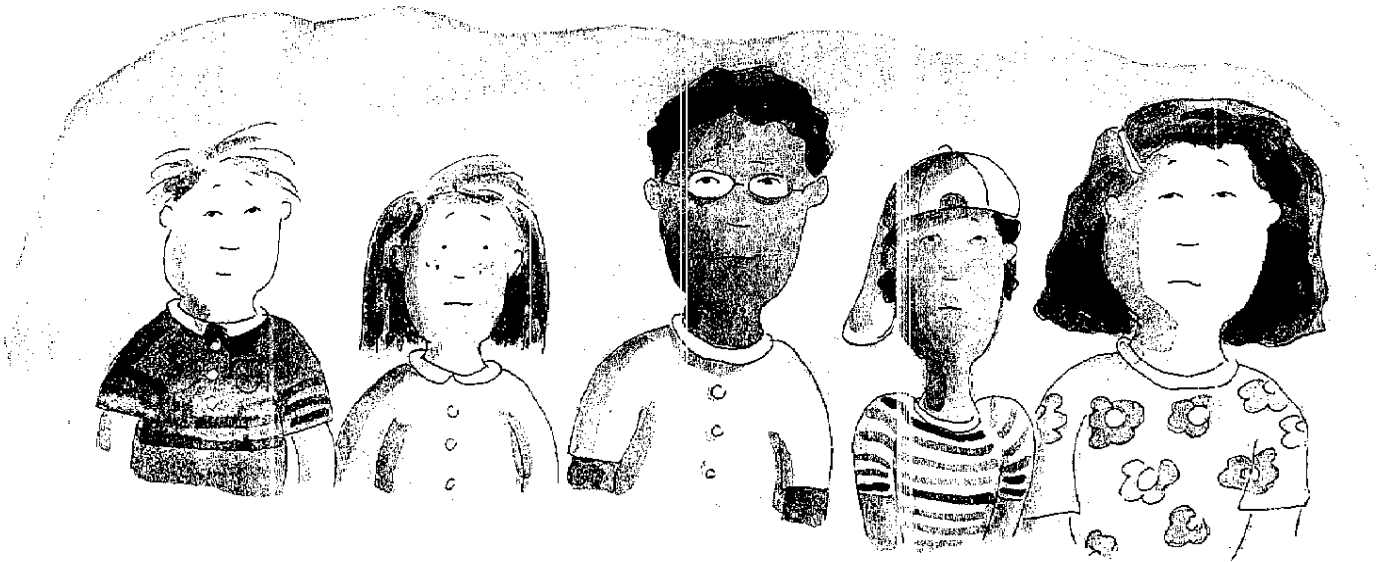
Sometimes kids who worry a lot have a mom or dad or some other relative who also worries a lot. The tendency to worry is something you can be born

with, just like you are born with a certain eye color or the ability to curl your tongue.



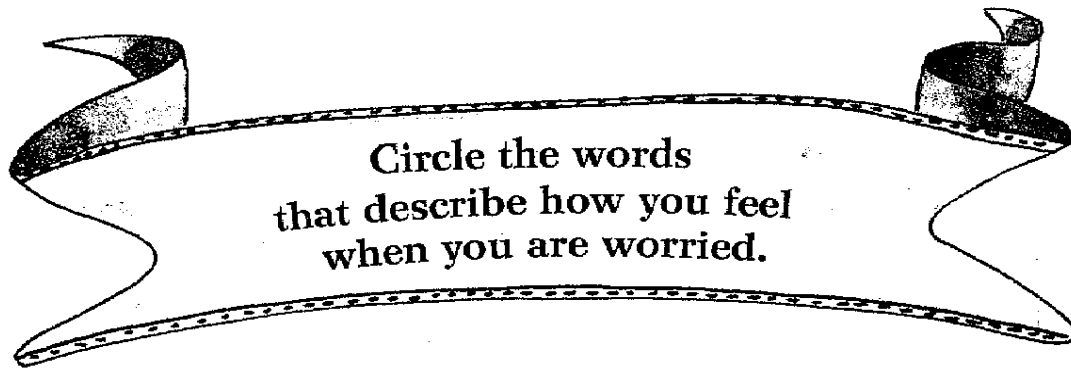


A large, empty rectangular box with a simple black border, intended for the user to list people who worry a lot.



Some people think that worries are
ALL IN YOUR HEAD,
but they are not!

If you are a child who worries a lot, you know that worries can make your body feel bad. Worries can cause a sick feeling inside. They can make your stomach hurt, and make your head ache, too. They can make you sweaty and cause your heart to pound. Worries can make you feel shaky or dizzy, like you are going to faint or throw up. Actually, some kids have these bad feelings in their bodies and don't even realize that worries are causing them!



headache

dizzy

tearful

nauseous

breathless

racing heart

sweaty

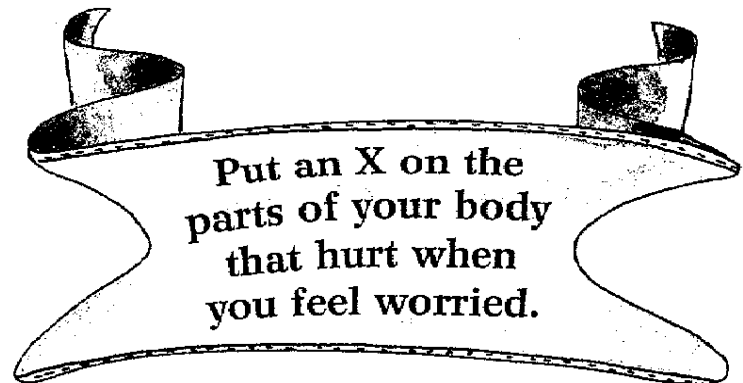
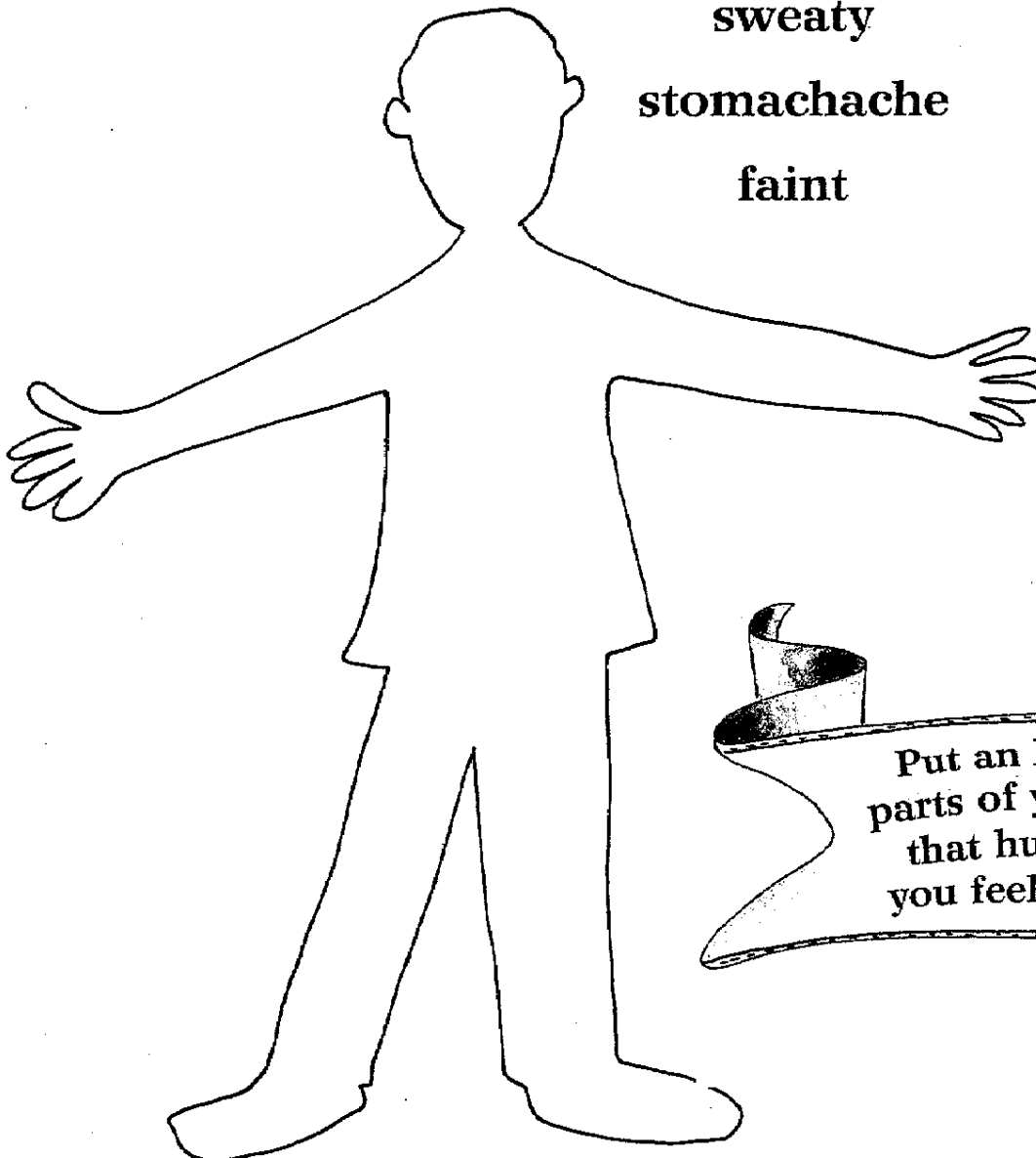
tingly

stomachache

cold

faint

weak



No one wants to have lots of worries. It isn't any fun, and it can make your body feel bad. Did you know that worries can cause other problems, too?

Kids who worry a lot often feel best when they are right next to their mom or dad or someone else they know really well. They avoid things that other kids think are fun, like going on **SLEEPOVERS** or **PLAYING AT FRIENDS' HOUSES**.

Kids who worry a lot have trouble doing things that other kids can do more easily. It is hard for them to get on the bus to go to school or to fall asleep alone. So kids who worry a lot miss out on things that other kids get to do.

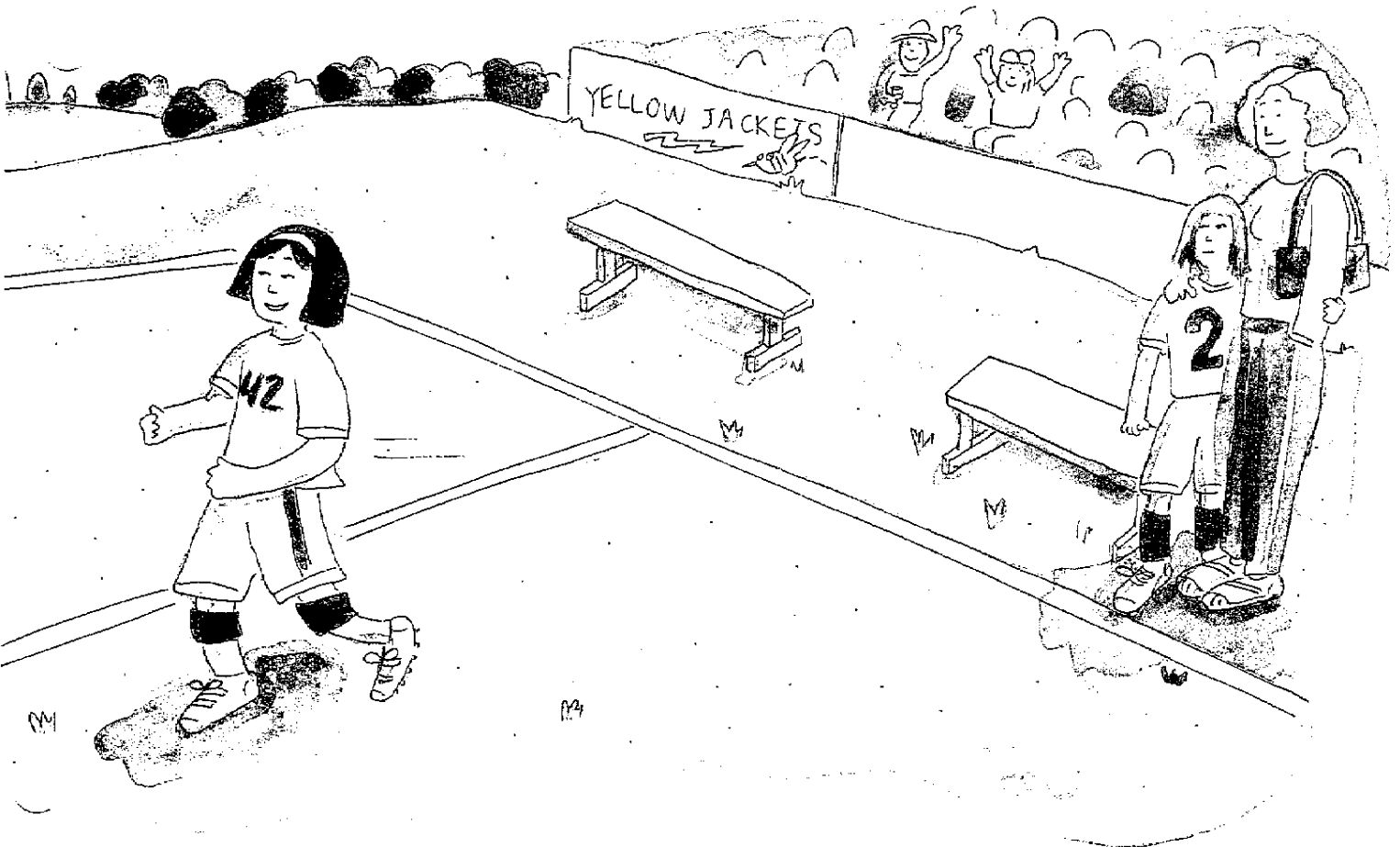


Even worse, kids who worry a lot find that grown-ups get kind of mad at them.

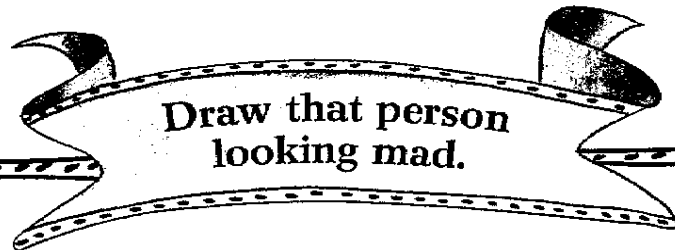
Moms get **ANNOYED** when you ask the same worry questions over and over again.

Dads get **TIRED** and **GROUCHY** when your worries make it hard for you to sleep on your own.

Teachers get **FRUSTRATED** when you say you need to go to the nurse every day because your stomach always hurts.



Has someone gotten MAD at you for problems caused by your worries?

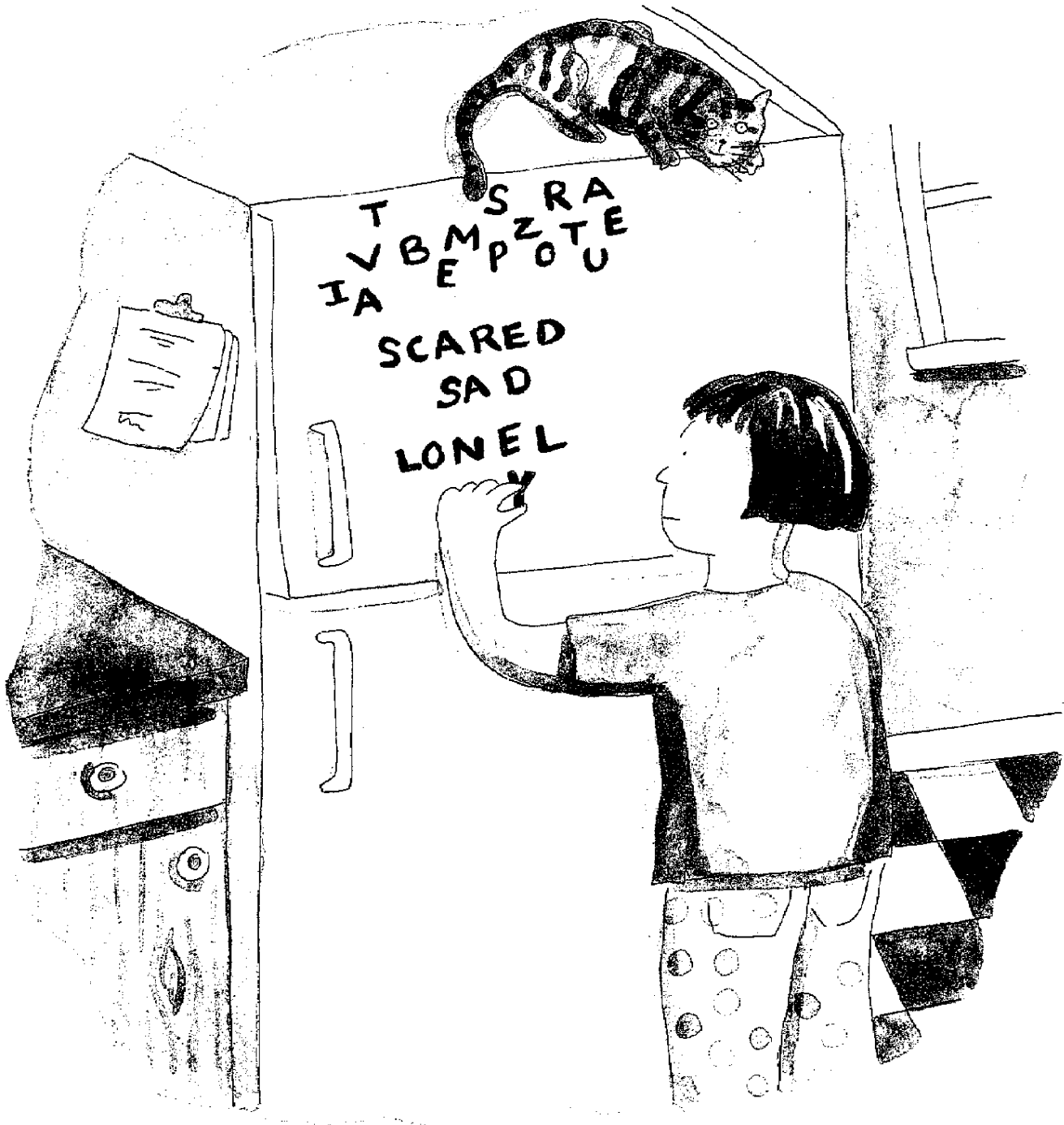
A large, empty rectangular box with a solid black border, intended for drawing a person looking mad.

Well, enough about the
bad news about worries.
Now let's talk about how to
make your worries go away.



CHAPTER
FOUR

Making Worries Go Away



The first thing to do when you have a worry is put it into words. You can talk to yourself about the worry. Or you can find a helpful person, like your mom or dad, to talk to about it.

Then use **LOGIC** to make the worry less powerful.

Logic is when you think about what is really true instead of what you're afraid might happen.

Logic is reminding yourself that really bad things don't happen very often.

Logic is knowing that even if something that's a little bit bad does happen, you can get through it.

When you use logic, you can make a plan that helps you feel calmer and less worried.