**WOE IS ME: THE WILD ADVENTURES OF WOE THE WORRIED**
Written by: Matt Casper, MFT

GRADE LEVEL: 2-5
AGES: 7-12

TOPICS: Stress, Anxiety, Emotional Expression.

OVERVIEW
Woe “The Worried” wasn’t always worried. In fact, he used to be quite relaxed. But after a traumatic experience, Woe begins to change. Woe begins to have both physical and emotional symptoms of stress, and yet is scared to share his new anxious feelings with others. While attempting to cover up his true feelings, Woe must face his own fears along with a crew of anxiety-provoking creatures, including a frigidly nasty creature called, The Icemaker. Along the way, with the help of his friends such as Super “The Confident” and Mixy “The Confused”, Woe learns to identify, express and regulate his fears and anxiety. He learns that emotional expression is important and that feelings are always changing.

BACKGROUND
Emotes are a unique race of creatures that live inside the internet. Each Emote possesses a special “superpower” that is characterized by a specific emotion. Emotes work together to keep the internet and the entire universe safe from the villain Dr. Viro—an evil genius that attempts to steal the emotions from the Emotes and use their powers to rid the universe of feelings forever.

OBJECTIVES
- To teach the importance of understanding feelings
- To teach how to identify “worry triggers” – events that elicit anxiety
- To normalize the experience of stress, worry and fear
- To encourage the outward expression of internal feeling states
- To teach practical ways to manage and decrease anxiety

DIRECT TEACHING:

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Be aware of the setting and group dynamic to insure that it is a safe space for children to express their feelings. Be careful to not allow vulnerable emotional sharing in a group that might shame or tease others for having worried or fearful feelings.**

1] Change to: Introduce the concept of worry. You might ask students to define worry in their own words. What are some other words for worry? (EX: stress, anxiety, fear)
2] Normalize these feelings, emphasizing that everyone has these feelings sometimes… including adults!
3] Ask the class for examples of things or events that could be scary to people or that could cause people to worry. If the space seems safe for personal sharing, perhaps ask the class for examples of things that might make them anxious or afraid.
4] Introduce the Emotes and background of the Emotes.
5] Introduce the character of Woe “the worried.”
6] Read the book aloud to the class: You might read chapters or sections in multiple sessions, pausing afterwards to facilitate an open discussion of the thoughts and reactions of students to the material.
7] Discussion could be based on the sample questions below.
8] Change to: Complete an interactive activity or guided visualization to integrate the material in an engaging way.

**COMPREHENSION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Woe usually ate lunch with his friends, but after he battled the Doughnut Virus, he ate by himself and hid in the library. Why do you think Woe felt like hiding?

- Woe had scary dreams. Have you ever had a scary dream? What happened in the dream? What do you think dreams are?

- Every Emote has a different emotion in their name [EX: Woe “the worried,” Super “the confident,” Boom “the angry” etc.] If you were an Emote what would YOUR name be? What would be your superpower?

- Woe tried to hide his worried feelings from his friends. Why do you think he wanted to hide his feelings? Is it a good idea to hide your feelings? Why or why not?

- Ick was concerned about Woe. He tried to help Woe by talking to him about his feelings, but Woe ignored him and wouldn’t let him inside his house to talk. How do you think this made Ick feel? Why? Have you ever tried to make a friend feel better when they felt bad? What did you do to help? What would you like a friend to do or say when you feel scared?

- Woe created a forcefield around his house and wanted to be left alone. Have you ever felt this way, like you just wanted to be alone? When does that feeling happen? Is there anything that makes those feelings go away?

- Can you remember some of the things that help Woe to feel calm and relaxed? (P. 160). What helps you to feel calm and relaxed?

- Can you remember some of the things that make Woe feel more worried and upset? (P. 162) What are some things that make you feel worried and upset?

- At the end of the book, Woe says that he is thankful for his friends and for his pet rock. What are some things that YOU are thankful for?

**ACTIVITIES**

“Phony Phobia”:
We have learned that a phobia means to be very very afraid of something. For example: Hyrdrophobia means to be afraid of water and Arachnophobia means to be afraid of spiders.

Using your creativity, can you make up the name of a phobia? A word to describe something that someone might be afraid of? How about drawing a picture of what your phobia describes?

**Materials:** Paper, crayons, colored pencils, markers etc.
“Musical Masterpiece”: In the book, Woe describes the music his friends play for him. He says that the music sounded “sweeter than a candy bar dipped in sugar and then covered with more candy” and that it was “like butter... soft and delicious.” After listening to each of these pieces of music, how would you describe what the music feels like or how does it make you feel in your body? What kind of music helps you to feel calm and relaxed. What is your favorite song or band?

Play several different kinds of music for the class. You might have students free associate and write down words or make drawings to represent the feelings that are elicited in response to the various styles of music.

**Materials:** Music player of some sort with speakers, several short clips of music of various styles; ex: calming classical music vs. chaotic rock and roll.

“You ROCK!”

In the book, Woe had a pet rock named Rocky (and Rocky II). Having Rocky as a pet helped Woe to feel more safe and secure and not alone with his worries. How about creating your own pet rock to be your pal and friend when you feel worried and alone?! Have students decorate their rocks to transform them into “pets” that can help them to hold their worries.

**Materials:** Medium sized rocks, paint, felt, feathers, googly-eyes, pipe cleaners, glitter etc.

“Mind Journey” A guided visualization to relieve and release anxiety

This is an exercise that can be taught to students as a practical tool to use when they are feeling worried, anxious and overwhelmed. It is a mindfulness exercise that aims to relax the body as well as decrease mental chatter and fear.

**GUIDED VISUALIZATION**

This exercise is intended to help students learn how to better regulate stress and anxiety. Guide students through this visualization, emphasizing at the conclusion that students can use this technique on their own when they are feeling overwhelmed with stress and worry.

1) Have students find a comfortable place to sit or lay down. Instructing students to do whatever feels most comfortable for them.
2) Adjust lighting so that it is NOT completely dark, but that the light is subdued and not too bright.
3) Use a calm and even tone of voice to read the following out loud once the room has settled...
Begin to pay attention to your breath. Listen to your breath as the air goes in through your nose and out through your mouth. Feel your belly fill with air, and then slowly release it out.

Now slowly breathe in again, imagining with every breath you take in, that what you are breathing in isn’t air, but rather a glowing yellow light. This light is warm and soft. It is gentle and peaceful. Imagine this warm light flowing slowly through your body. Feel the warmth flow down to your toes and then imagine your entire body slowly filling with this warm light with each breath you take. Each breath brings more relaxation, and more glowing light to warm your body, from the tips of your fingers to the top of your head.

As you slowly breathe out, let the air escape through your mouth, and with it, imagine that all of your fears and worries are leaving your body. Any stress that you might be feeling from today leaves you, any anger that you have been holding escapes from you and disappears into the air.

Breathing in continues to fill you with peace and calm. The warm yellow light fills you. Breathing out releases all of your worries and fears.

Take a few moments to feel the warmth of the light. Notice where on your body you might be feeling tense and tight. Maybe your toes are scrunched up or your stomach feels tied in knots. Take a breath and then send the warm light to those parts of your body, helping them to feel warm and relaxed and loose.

As you continue to slowly breathe in and out, enjoy the peace and calm that this light brings. Now, imagine this light on the back of your eyelids. See the warm yellow light in front of you. And slowly, slowly, it turns into a movie screen.

Imagine now a place where you feel safe and happy. Maybe it is the bed in your room, or perhaps the beach or an imaginary place somewhere in a beautiful garden. Imagine that a picture of this place appears on the movie screen, and then you enter into it.

What does this place smell like? What do you hear? Imagine a warm breeze blowing past you, it feels like a gentle touch on your face.

Take some time to be here in this safe place with this peace and calm. Enjoy being here, here in your special place. Look around you and remember this place where you’ve come to in your body and mind.

Now, watch as this picture slowly, slowly shrinks and turns into a tiny tiny box. Imagine yourself holding this box. See the box in your hand and then picture yourself putting this box in your pocket. This place is yours to keep.

Whenever you are feeling scared or worried or confused, remember that you are carrying this place with you always. You can always come back here to find your peace and calm once again.

Now, when you are ready, begin to slowly move your body. If your eyes are closed, keep them closed. Wiggle your toes and your fingers. You might slowly stretch your arms above your head. Now, slowly open your eyes.

Welcome back.

**Upon completion of the guided imagery, lead a discussion of the experiences of the students.

- What was it like to go on this journey?
- What feelings were you aware of?
- How do you feel now as compared to before the journey?
- When might be some times in the future that you could try going on this journey again on your own?