

# WHAT to DO

when you're not sure  
what to do



DAVINA BELL + HILARY JEAN TAPPER

TEACHERS RESOURCES

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## Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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# INTRODUCTION

*'Find a you-shaped space. Let yourself!'*

This book is a gentle guide to negotiating life's little and big moments with empathy, courage and confidence when a child might feel unsure. From award-winning and much-loved author Davina Bell and with beautiful, heartwarming illustrations by Hilary Jean Tapper.

As in their previous collaboration, Hilary Jean Tapper, has created a series of charming vignettes depicting the moments described in Davina Bell's simple but meaningful text – moments drawn from a child's everyday experiences.

In each child's story, they are dealing with the decisions to be made in acting in response to those experiences. This is a charming book about a child's feeling of indecision and how they might overcome that feeling.

## THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

### HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

Several themes are relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/hass/>>

### EMOTIONS AND ACTIONS

**Discussion Point:** In each image in this book a child is confronted by a new experience, such as holding a baby, or carrying a goldfish home in a bag of water. Select any image and invite students to explain what it means to them; does the image remind them of something that they have experienced?

**Discussion Point:** Some of the images are 'cautionary tales'; they offer advice to young readers about how to translate their feelings into actions. For example: 'It's always good to ask first.' and 'If you go out and about let someone know.' and 'Some things need to be left alone.' Discuss any of the advice offered in this book, and how it might apply to your own life.

**Discussion Point:** Emotions explored include fear, uncertainty and sadness when faced with stressful situations. Discuss any of these feelings, when you have experienced them, and how you dealt with them. [See also **Worksheet 3.**]

**Discussion Point:** Discuss the various situations confronted by children in this text, such as going up an escalator, seeing a homeless man in the street, swimming in the ocean for the first time. Invite students to suggest how they might deal with any such situations. Then invite them to describe other situations where they have felt uncertainty and haven't known how to act appropriately.

### BEHAVIOURAL SKILLS

**Discussion Point:** The book canvases apparently 'good' behaviour (smiling at the shopkeeper when purchasing goods, or being quiet in a situation where quietness is appropriate, such as in a church) and potentially 'bad' behaviour (jumping on the seats of the train in excitement). But the book really demonstrates that children don't need to distinguish between such extremes and that careful thought can assist them in deciding how best to behave. Discuss any of the

situations depicted in the book and how your students might behave in them.

**Discussion Point:** Read other books about behaviour such as the hilarious *Meet Wild Boars* (2005) by Meg Rosoff and Sophie Blackall and *Shrieking Violet* by Emma Quay (2016, 2010). [See **Bibliography**.]

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

This is relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>>

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

**Activity:** Discuss the narrative person employed in this text, which is a combination of third person: 'It's always good to ask first.' (p 9) and second person: 'If you go out and about, let someone know.' (p 10)

**Activity:** Invite students to write their own brief text describing an incident they've experienced where they have felt unsure of how to act or respond, or where they have felt nervous or overwhelmed by strangers. (Use the texts in this book as a model.)

**Activity:** Test your students' **comprehension** by asking them questions about the written and visual text. [See also **Author's Notes** below.]

## VISUAL LITERACY

This is relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>>

The visual text of a book combines with the written text to tell the story using the various parts of the book's design and illustrations, as explored below:

**Discussion Point:** The **cover** of the book depicts a line of children enjoying themselves being physically active. They are seen jumping, skipping, standing on their heads, and piggybacking another child. The scene contrasts sharply with the uncertainties expressed in the book and offers hope to children who, when left to their own devices, understand the joy to be found in the small moments in life, and in the company of friends and family. Invite students to discuss what the cover scene suggests to them.

**Activity:** The **endpapers** feature a delightful image of a small child about to board a bus and looking nervously at the occupants. Have you ever boarded a bus or a train by yourself? How did that feel?

**Discussion Point:** The **title page** depicts a child holding a goldfish in a plastic bag full of water (an image repeated later in the book). Have you ever brought a pet home from a pet shop and been concerned about its safe transport?

**Activity:** Each child in this text clearly reveals via their **facial expressions** and **'body language'** their state of mind. Describe the feelings of any child depicted in this book.

**Discussion Point:** Read any of the pages in this book and invite students to comment on what the images mean to them. For example, 'Remember to look up! And look down.' (pp 12–13)

**Activity:** The **medium or style** employed by Hilary Jean Tapper is watercolour and pencil, and each image is hand-done. The **colours** used in this book are warm, charming pastels. Invite

students to interpret a scene in the book in a similar style and medium. Discuss the differences between each interpretation.

**Activity:** Invite students to draw, paint, or collage a scene to accompany the brief text describing an incident of uncertainty which they wrote about above. Create a classroom mural using all the images. [See also **Worksheets 1. and 2.** below.] [See also **Illustrator's Notes** below.]

## CREATIVE ARTS

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

- 1. Use puppets to act out a situation** discussed in class which has made a child feel uncertain. Role-play different responses to the situation.
- 2. Listen to a piece of music** and ask the students how the music makes them feel. Then encourage them to express that feeling in a dance of their own design.
- 3. Invite students to choose a feeling, write an acrostic poem about it, and then illustrate that.**
- 4. Create a poster** to advertise this book.
- 5. Create a Book Trailer** to promote this book. [See **Bibliography.**]

## LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

**Activity:** Research the topics above online.

## MATHEMATICS

**Activity:** Have fun counting things in this visual text. How many flowers are shown in the scene that illustrates 'A big breath.' (p 5)? How many biscuits are shown in the picture on page 9?

# FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

- Research the work of Davina Bell. Compare this to her other books.
- Research the work of Hilary Jean Tapper. Compare this to her other books.
- Students might research this book in comparison to reading other picture books about behaviours such as those listed in the **Bibliography.**

## CONCLUSION

This is a delightfully insightful reflection on children's feelings and how they translate into actions, by Davina Bell and Hilary Jean Tapper. Each of the images describes an active response to a situation in an evocative and suggestive way. Bell and Tapper have created another highly engaging work which will offer children strategies to employ when faced with the challenging situations they may encounter in their everyday lives.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

I wrote this book because I know that sometimes it's hard to know how to act when you are out and about in the world, away from your family and your home and the things you know well. Sometimes you might not know if you are allowed to do things. Sometimes you might not know what to do at all. And sometimes you might need a reminder that everything you do in the world has the chance to make it better. How you talk to people, how you look at them or smile at them, and how you treat your world and all the things that are in it – these things might seem small but they can make big changes. Whenever you're not sure what to do, maybe you can think about how you might make somebody's life a bit easier or brighter – including your own.

## ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES

One of my favourite parts of the illustration process is right at the beginning – reading through the story for the first time, imagining the scenes and sketching out ideas for the characters. Whenever I start a book, I grab a pile of printer paper and my mechanical pencil, and just sketch! It doesn't take long before the final characters appear on my page, and a rough outline of the story. It's a very creative and trusting process, and a lot of fun. I never really know where it is going, or how it will turn out, but something always comes.

For this book I used pencil, permanent ink and watercolour paint on watercolour paper. I create the outlines for the whole book before I add the paint, that way if I make any mistakes with the outlines, I can fix it or redo it before I begin painting. I paint all the backgrounds first across all of the scenes, and then each character, one by one. The painting process is very absorbing and takes a long time!

I find that I'm never satisfied, and always yearning for the next image. This can sometimes be frustrating, but I'm slowly learning that this is part of the creative process which inspires me to keep creating. I am inspired by the next character, the next scene, the next image, and I just love seeing each one come alive on the page.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Davina Bell** is a children's book editor and a writer for young people of many ages. Her picture books include *All the Ways To Be Smart*, *All of the Factors of Why I Love Tractors* and *Under the Love Umbrella*. Her debut young adult novel, *The End of the World is Bigger than Love*, won the 2021 CBCA Book of the Year for Older Readers and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards' Ethel Turner Prize for Young Adult Fiction. *What to Say When You're not Sure What To Say* was her previous collaboration with Hilary Jean Tapper, and it won the ABIA Award for Children's Picture Book of the Year 2023 and was a CBCA Notable Picture Book of the Year 2023. For more information, visit [www.davinabell.com](http://www.davinabell.com)

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Hilary Jean Tapper** is an international award-winning illustrator based in New Zealand. She creates picture books, works as a creative arts therapist, lecturer and researcher, and facilitates creative arts workshops. Her awards include the ABIA Children's Picture Book of the Year and Forevability Book Award. You can find out about Hilary and her work at [www.hilaryjeantapper.com](http://www.hilaryjeantapper.com), or Facebook and Instagram @hilaryjeantapper

# WORKSHEETS

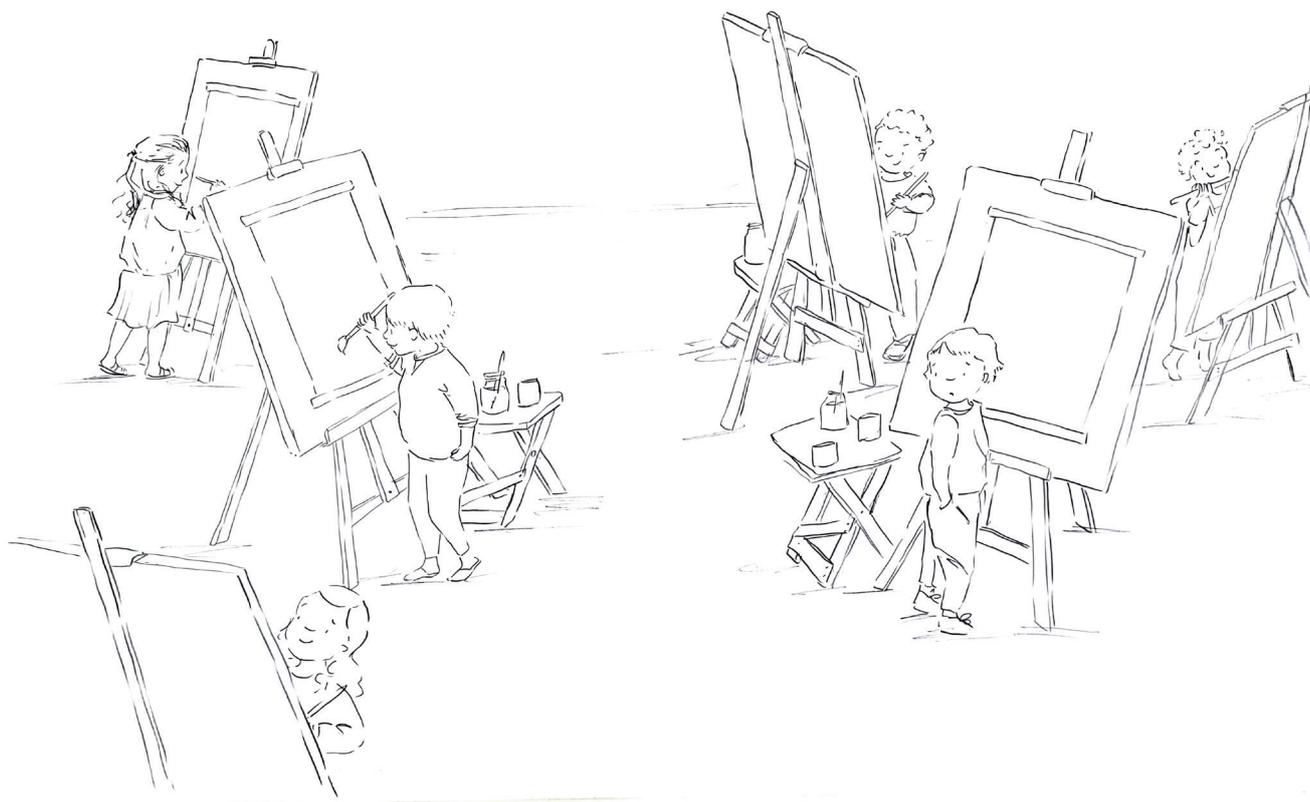
## WORKSHEET 1. COLLAGE THIS IMAGE

Enlarge the image below on a photocopier and then colour and collage it.



## WORKSHEET 2.

The image below is of children painting. Colour it in and then paint a portrait of your own class in such a painting lesson.



## WORKSHEET 3. SITUATIONS

Write a sentence describing your reactions to any of the situations below.

Being bullied.	
Buying something at a shop.	
Losing your dog.	
Finding yourself in the wrong place.	
Being late for school.	
Leaving your homework at home.	
Looking after a younger sibling in a playground.	

Then draw one of the situations above, below. Add a sentence to explain it, using the text in the book as a model.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM** operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021, she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.