



TEACHER'S GUIDE  
***UPS and DOWNS***

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↑  
**UPS**

**and**

**DOWNS**  
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GUIDE BY

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TEACHER'S GUIDE  
***UPS and DOWNS***



Book Level Age 3+, Preschool+

Discussion Prompts and Activities Provided for Grades 1+

ISBN: 978-1-77260-386-6

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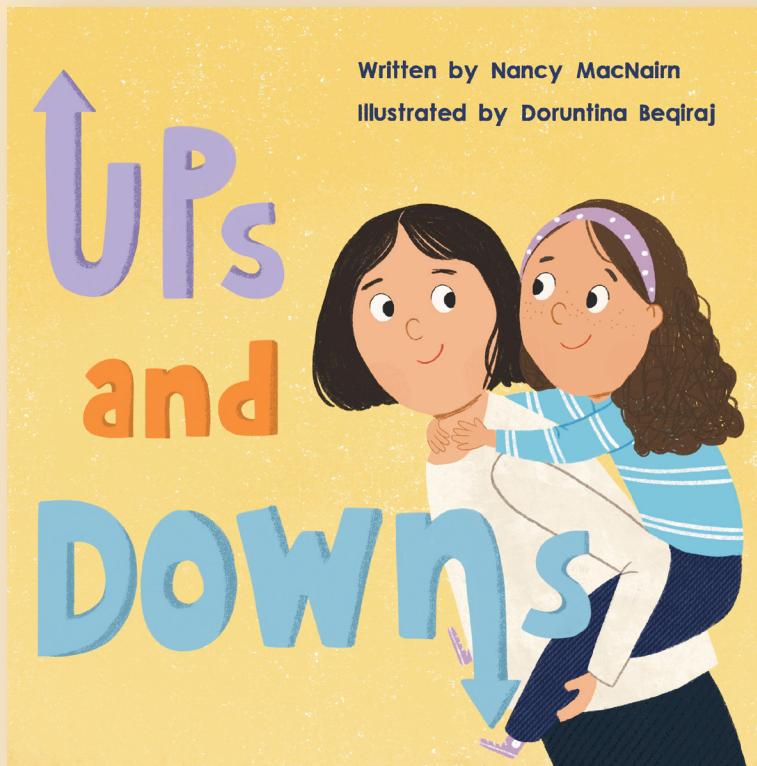
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## ***Book Summary***

A young girl weathers the highs and lows of daily life with her mother, who has bipolar disorder. Her mother's moods affect her and her brother deeply, and sometimes it can be hard. *UPS and DOWNS* is an autobiographical story that shines a light on the power of a mother's enduring love for her family. It addresses the challenges and stigma of mental illness with kindness, care, and hope.

## ***Author's Note by Nancy MacNair for Teachers***

The "UPS" and "DOWNS" from this story are part of the mental health disability called bipolar disorder. My mom had "ups" and "downs," which showed up in her mood and amount of energy. Bipolar disorder is a serious—but treatable—mental health disorder that nearly 400,000 Canadians and 2.3 million Americans have.

*UPS and DOWNS* is autobiographical. I wrote it to show that even though there are sometimes big struggles with living with bipolar disorder, there is still hope. My aim is that this book will shed light on an often-misunderstood illness and provide reassurance that love conquers over all.



## ***Learning Opportunities***

- Nurture students' understanding that mental health and well-being are interconnected with every aspect of development (social, cognitive, emotional, physical).
- Identify strategies to support students' well-being, including self-care and reaching out to helpful adults and friends.
- Build awareness of mental health, and reduce stigma associated with mental illness.
- Honour diversity in families and family structures.



## ***About Bipolar Disorder for Teachers***

[Bipolar disorder](#) is a medical condition that involves changes in brain function leading to dramatic mood swings, which include depression and elevated moods (called mania).

Everyone experiences emotional ups and downs, but the mood swings for people with bipolar disorder are often more intense and last longer. These mood swings can be so severe that they affect normal functioning at work, at school, and in relationships. Mood swing episodes may occur rarely or multiple times a year. Episodes may also be “rapid cycling” in which the bipolar moods/energy shift frequently, sometimes every 24–48 hours. The cause of bipolar disorder is unknown and may include genetic or biological traits. Bipolar disorder is a lifelong condition that is managed by a treatment plan that may involve medications and counselling.

People with bipolar disorder often experience stigma, despite society's growing awareness about mental illness and well-being. As educators, our role is to support and prioritize students' well-being in a learning environment that is caring, safe, inclusive, and accepting. *UPS and DOWNS* is an enriching picture book and teaching tool that helps to promote understanding about mental health, social-emotional learning, and inclusion.





## **Curriculum Connections**

[Mental Health Literacy](#) and [Social-emotional Learning](#) are interrelated aspects of school-based health curricula that focus on skills and understanding about mental health, including:

- How thoughts, emotions, and actions can affect mental health.
- How the body and brain respond to challenging or uncomfortable situations.
- How external factors contribute to a range of strong feelings.
- How to manage mental health and well-being with self-care and advocacy strategies.



## **Note for Teachers about a Culturally Responsive and Trauma-Informed Classroom**

This teacher's guide provides classroom activities to support an inclusive, caring, and meaningful environment that nurtures students' understanding about well-being, mental health and strategies. [Social-emotional learning](#) needs to be situated within [a culturally-responsive and relevant framework](#). Educators are encouraged to centre students' identities (i.e., race, class, gender, religion, etc.), cultures, world views, and life experiences. In doing so, we can better support students with accessible and [inclusive mental health resources](#). [Learning Through Play: A Guide for Educators](#) by Right to Play provides asset or strength-based social-emotional activities, as well as educator self-care planning tools.

Educators may observe a range of students' behaviours, moods or responses during the school day. These may include diverse stress responses across a range of emotions, such as fight, flight, freeze, and fatigue. For example, a worried student may often have their head down on a table or appear to have low energy. In an asset-based approach, this student is engaging in a self-care and coping strategy that educators may find ways to support. Trauma-sensitive education practices are available for teachers, including the [Canadian Teachers' Federation](#) and the [Child Trauma Research Centre](#). Consult with your school administration or special education team to respond to your students' well-being and concerns regarding individual students.



# Discussion Questions

## Before Reading

### Minds On about Feelings (in a whole group or partners):

- What does feeling 'up' or 'down' mean?
- When do you feel up? When do you feel down?
- How can you tell when your friends or family members feel up? Or, when they feel down?
- What is your energy level like when you feel up or down?
  - How are moods and energy levels linked? (e.g., there is a range of comfortable and uncomfortable moods. This is usually alongside a range of high to low energy. Someone in a sad mood may feel uncomfortable and have low energy. In a happy mood, they may feel comfortable and have higher energy.)
  - What do you do when you have high or low energy? (e.g., playing tag with high energy or feeling 'up' vs. snuggling with stuffed toys with low energy or feeling 'down'.)

## During Reading

- What are some of the mom's talents?
  - What are your talents? What talents do your parents have?
- How do the illustrations show when the mom is feeling up or down (page 6)?
- How does the mom's ups and downs affect the main character?
  - What are some worries that she has?
  - How does the main character deal with the daily activities at home (e.g., making breakfast, interactions with her brother)?
- What do you notice about the mom's energy level (page 9)?
  - When the mom has an 'up' night, she usually has a 'down' day afterwards, not in terms of mood, but rather with her energy level, since she is often sleepy.

- Energy levels and moods are different but connected—the [Mood Meter](#) activity in the Classroom Activities section of this guide provides further opportunity to identify these connections.

## After Reading

### Text-to-Self Connections:

- Ask students to think of a time when they have been worried. What are some ways that help you feel better when worried? Brainstorm ideas in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class.

### Classroom Inquiry:

**(Note to Teacher:** When introducing difficult topics, it is important to use students' questions as a guide for a responsive inquiry-based approach.)

- Ask students: If we could ask any of the characters a question, what would you like to know?

### Text-to-World Connections:

- Read the Author's Note at the end of the book.
- CAMH has a resource for children with parents who have bipolar disorder that responds to children's questions. [Use this CAMH guide](#) to provide developmentally appropriate information for questions such as:
  - What is bipolar disorder?
  - What may I do to help my parent?
  - Will it happen to me?
  - Can you catch bipolar disorder?
  - What should I do if I am scared?





# Classroom Activities about Feelings

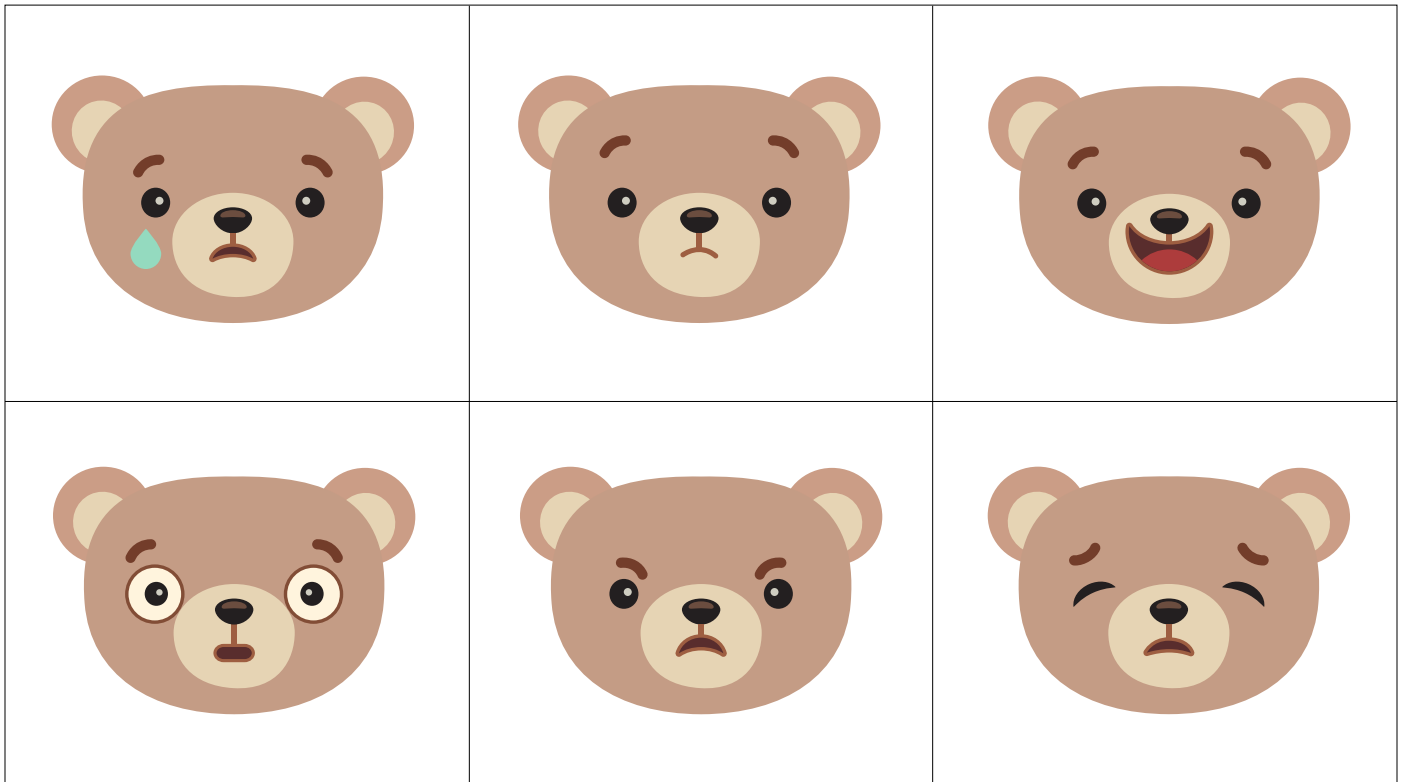
## All About Feelings

Here are three introductory classroom activities to support learning about feelings. Identifying a range of feelings helps to nurture a caring, accepting, and inclusive class environment. These activities may be integrated with a regular class circle conversation focused on mental health (e.g., a mental health check-in):

## Teddy Bear Feelings

Print this [Teddy Bear Feelings template](#) for each student and give them the following instructions:

- Circle or colour the teddy bear that best shows how you are feeling.
- After, write the name of the feeling for each teddy bear.



# Emoji Feelings

Here are suggestions on ways to use emojis as a way to express students' feelings.

## MATCHING GAME:

Print two copies of this [template of emojis](#) for a pair or small group of students to play a matching game. Teachers can choose which emojis and how many to use, depending on the level of their students. Provide the following instructions:

- With your partner or group, cut out the emojis to make cards. (**Note for the teacher:** alternatively, cards can be cut by the teacher beforehand.)
- Shuffle the cards and place them upside down.
- To play the game, students can flip two cards each turn to try and find its matching emoji.
- If you do not find a card's match, flip the cards back upside down. Try again until all the matches are found.

## LABEL THE EMOJIS:

In pairs or individually, students may write the name of different feelings on each emoji.

## CREATE A FEELING EMOJI:

In pairs, students can also draw new emojis on the blank cards template.



## Mood Meter

Use this [Mood Meter template](#) or draw an axis or two intersecting lines on a board or flip chart.

- Label each end of the horizontal line “comfortable” and “uncomfortable.”
- Label each end of the vertical line “low energy” and “high energy.”
- Have students write or draw feelings that match each of the quadrants of the Mood Meter. For example, ‘feeling excited’ belongs in the ‘comfortable and high energy’ section; ‘sad’ will be in the ‘uncomfortable and low energy’ section.

## Feelings and Self-Care Wheel

In this activity, students create a personal Feelings Wheel to help identify a range of feelings and self-care strategies.

Each Feelings Wheel has three parts, attached with a split-prong fastener. Make or print a template for each section of the Feelings Wheel such as [this example \(on page 6\)](#).

- The top circle has an opening to view a Feelings section (I Feel) and a Strategies section (I Will).
- The middle circle has six feelings that students may choose on the template. Examples of feelings include silly, angry, worried, scared, happy, sad, etc.
- The outer circle has six self-care strategies, such as: drink water, rest or sleep, read a book, build something, talk with a friend, etc. The [SMHO](#) and [Kids Help Phone](#) provides additional [self-care strategies](#).
- Students may rotate the different sections as a self-care tool.



For younger students, this activity may be simplified to a single section (feelings or self-care) and the spinner can be made with a paperclip or paper arrow attached to the split-prong fastener in the centre of the circle.

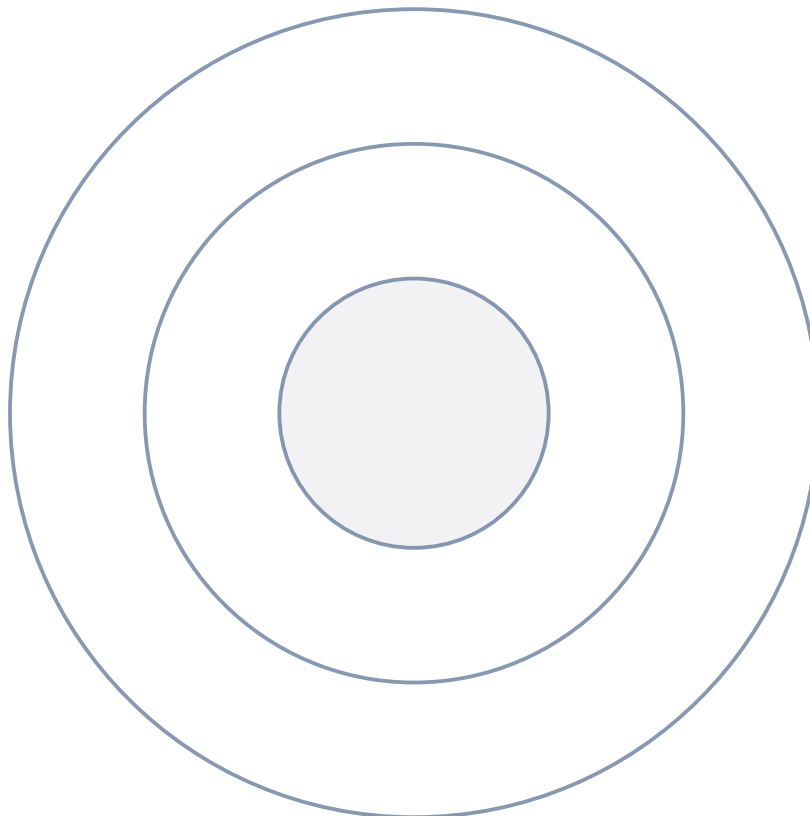


# ***Classroom Activities about Who to Ask for Help***

## Social Atoms

This activity supports students to identify people they can go to for help.

- Make a template with three concentric circles for each student. Students may also cut out three circles (small, medium, large) to glue onto a large piece of paper.
- In the centre, students write their name in the smallest circle.
- On the medium circle, students write the names of people who they usually ask for help (e.g., friends, family members, sports coaches, teachers).
- On the outer or largest circle, students write the names of helpful people who they could approach for help, if needed (e.g., neighbours, librarians, [Kids Help Phone](#)).
- This may be used as a personal activity for students to keep in a personal writing journal, in their cubby, or desk as a reminder for who they can go to for support.
- The students' social atoms may also be used in class discussions in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class.



## Garden of Feelings and Helpers

As a class, create a paper garden of flowers and plants called the 'Garden of Feelings and Helpers.' Everyone experiences a range of feelings, especially when we are growing up!

- Use a template for flowers (on construction paper or a paper plate). Or students may make their own paper flower.
- On each paper flower, students write a feeling for when they feel calm on one side, and a feeling when they feel challenged on the other side.
- On another paper flower, students write someone who they may ask for help (roles may include: a friend, a neighbour, a relative, a teacher).
- Attach each flower to a skewer, straw, or dowel for the stem. Decorate a large cardboard box and insert the stems into the box for a class display of the 'Garden of Feelings and Helpers.'

## Guided Self-Care Strategies in a Classroom Setting

Here are three simple guided visualization and breathing strategies that students may use when feeling worried or stressed. Use these in large or small groups to practice self-care strategies in the classroom community.

### CALM PLACE

Students may sit in a comfortable position. Follow these prompts:

- Take some calming, natural breaths. Students may close their eyes or place their hands on their belly, over their heart, or in their lap.
- Where do you feel the most relaxed? Imagine you are there.
- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- Are there any smells, tastes, or textures that are calming?
- Students may think of their Calm Place to help them feel at peace during stressful moments.

## WORRY TREE VISUALIZATION

Follow these prompts:

- When feeling worried, imagine a tree that can hold our worries.
- Think of the worry and hang it up on the tree, on a branch or leaf.
- By placing your worry on the tree, you let the worry take up less space in your mind.
- When your worry is on the tree, you are taking care of yourself by letting the worry stay on the tree to think about later.
- Give yourself time to visit the tree and to think of the worry, then hang it back up on the tree, so you do not need to worry all of the time.
- Other ways to visualize your worries:
  - **In a bubble** – place your worry in a bubble and let it float away or pop to let them go.
  - **On a leaf in a stream** – let your worry float down the stream.

## FIVE SENSES GROUNDING BREATHS

Take a breath and then with the next breath, count from five while thinking of each of your senses.

- **5** - what can you see?
- **4** - what can you hear?
- **3** - what can you touch?
- **2** - what can you smell?
- **1** - what can you taste?



## ***Additional Resources about Families with Bipolar Disorder***

- [When a Parent has Bipolar Disorder](#) is a CAMH resource that responds to children's questions.
- [Understanding Life with a Parent with Bipolar Disorder](#) provides helpful FAQs for children.
- [Living with a Family Member with Bipolar Disorder](#) is a compassionate article for further learning about themes addressed in *UPS and DOWNS*.
- [Having a Bipolar Parent: Effects and How to Cope](#)
- [Things to Remember when a Parent has Bipolar Disorder](#)
- [Helping Someone with Bipolar Disorder](#)



### **Mental Health Resources**

- [School Mental Health Ontario](#) provides this resource of additional classroom activities to manage strong feelings.
- [Children's Mental Health Ontario](#) provides a wide range of tips for families to support students' mental health at school.
- [Mind Your Mind](#) provides information about bipolar disorder, as well as a [digital tool kit](#) for young people to access strategies and resources for well-being.

### **Mental Health Resources in a Culturally Responsive and Relevant Framework**

- [Mental Health Coalition's Resource Library](#), including those for 2SLGBTQIA+ and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities.
- [Mental Health and Wellness Resources for Indigenous Children and Youth.](#)
- [Race, Ethnicity, and Bipolar Disorder](#) summarizes research on the impact of systemic racism in healthcare in relation to bipolar disorder.

