

A COMPANION GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS



BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS OR PARENTS

This book was inspired by a visit to Canuck Place Children's Hospice in Vancouver, Canada, where Poppy the therapy dog is a companion to children with life-threatening illnesses, their families, and the hospice's clinical care team.

This book tells the story of the positive impact a dog can make in a young child's life, particularly when faced with health challenges. The qualities of the dog are highlighted as she helps the boy feel more comfortable, safe and calm as he moves through his day. The story lends itself to opening discussions with children around the meaning and importance of compassion, support and being available to someone in need.

VOCABULARY REVIEW

Kindness
distractions

emotions
joyfulness

body language
self-awareness

strategies
support

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Before Reading

- Elicit answers to what the word compassion means. (Compassion is being a great friend, being aware and caring about other people's feelings and supporting others with care and concern).
- Look at the cover and title of the book and ask what the students think the book is about.

You show compassion when you:

- Notice and compliment others' talents and skills.
- Notice when someone seems sad or troubled.
- Put yourself in someone else's place or ask yourself how you would feel if it were happening to you.
- Take time to be a good listener.
- Invite a new friend to play with you or invite a new friend to play with you and your friends.
- Forgive others because you want to, not because you have to.
- Show kindness without expecting rewards.
- Tell and show others that you care.

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Vocabulary

- Go over the vocabulary based on the age level of the children to familiarize them with the meaning depending upon the activities selected.

DURING READING

When she saw me, for the first time, she wagged her tail.

- *Ask, "How did the dog first connect with the boy? What did the dog do to connect? How was she kind, inviting or friendly?"*
- When you meet someone for the first time, what are some ways you be kind, inviting, friendly and help make another person feel welcome?
- Smile; say hello; introduce yourself and ask their name; shake their hand
- Emphasize that being kind is important to create a positive environment and to begin forming positive friendships.

When I couldn't sleep I could hear her breathing.

- *Ask, "Have you ever had a hard time falling or staying asleep? Was there a reason you couldn't sleep? If so, what do you suppose might be some of the reasons you could not fall asleep?"*
- What were some things you did to help you fall asleep? Did you ask for help to fall asleep. What are some important things for you when you go to bed and fall asleep?
- The boy heard the dog's breathing and that provided the boy with a sense of calmness allowing him to fall asleep.
- *Ask, "What might be some other ways or strategies to help fall asleep?"*
Having a parent read a story before bed; being near a parent before bed; reading a book or magazine independently; having a warm bath; drinking some milk; playing some soft music

When I wanted to play in the garden she ran and picked up the ball I threw.

When we face challenges in life or life is hard for us, distractions are very helpful in helping us get through the day's routines. For example, in the story, the boy went outside to play with the dog. That is a very good distraction as his mind is focused on the fun he is having with the dog, breathing the fresh air, getting some exercise and just feeling joyful.

Ask, "Are there distractions that help you when you have big feelings or when you want to find fun things to do?"

Read a book; watch television; play games on your computer; walk outside or play outside; move to a new environment within the building; have family & friends visit; participate in such activities as painting; puzzles, drawing, board games;

When we went for a walk she came with us.

The boy really enjoyed being outside for a walk with his entire family and the dog was a very important member of that family. There is a comfort when family is all together.

Ask, "What kinds of activities do you enjoy doing with your family?"

AFTER READING

It is evident that the dog provided a lot of comfort and joy for the boy as he went through a series of emotions throughout the course of the day.

Ask, "Can you remember the various emotions the boy felt throughout the day?"

(Go back to the beginning of the book to provide a hint from the illustrations.)

- Shyness
- Sadness
- Feeling bad
- Being aware of our own emotions and the emotions of others is important.