

TAKE TIME TO KŌRERO

MĀ TE KŌRERO, KA ORA

Mental Health
Awareness Week
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My elephant is blue: A book about big, heavy feelings

Szymanik, M., & Unka, V. (2021). Penguin Group (NZ).

My Elephant is Blue is an empathetic, heart-warming story written to help tamariki cope with heavy feelings. It is about a child who feels they are carrying a heavy weight on their chest - represented by an elephant. They wonder what they can do to shift this weight and seek advice from their whānau who try to help.

This story is a great way to help children understand their emotions and talk about their feelings, or to understand how someone else may be feeling. It encourages tamariki to recognise that these feelings are universal, they are not alone in their feelings, and there are little things they can do to help themselves when they are ready. It gives some useful strategies to help – practical, small steps such as putting two feet on the ground, going for a walk, spending time with family, feeling nature around you.

The book also acknowledges that these feelings may not go away but you can live with them. It is okay that these feelings are part of who you are, but there are things that you can do to move forward. We see this as the elephant evolves from sitting on the character's chest to walking beside her and in the elephant's changing colour from blue to pink or yellow when things feel a little lighter.

My Elephant is Blue is a New Zealand-produced picture book that beautifully articulates and illustrates the physical and emotional sensations of sadness, anxiety and depression. It is ideal for tamariki at preschool or primary school.

Reviewed by Charmaine Denney, teacher and mum to two boys.

The Mental Health Foundation's Information Service brings you reviews as part of the Good Reads feature for Mental Health Awareness Week. To view more go to <https://mhaw.nz/>