children’s books ireland reading list

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

AGE RANGE 0–YA

#EveryChildaReader
ALICE MELVIN
I AM: A BOOK ABOUT FEELINGS
TATE PUBLISHING 2018 (BOARD) 20PP £6.99 ISBN 9781849765930
A wonderful tool for helping little people put into words the emotions they’re experiencing; from the ‘excitement’ of the opening page to the ‘tiredness’ at the last, the range of emotions explored are characteristic of almost every toddler who will share this book with their parents or carers. This is a smart, visually rich book which celebrates play as a way of making sense of the world and of our emotions. (Age 0–4)

RŪTA BRIEDE illustrated by ELĪNA BRASLIŅA
THE DOG WHO FOUND SORROW
THE EMMA PRESS 2018 (HBK) 40PP ISBN 9781910139547
A touching story of a brave dog who suddenly finds his town thrown into sooty darkness when the sorrows come and spread their smoke of sadness, permeating the air and suffocating all happiness. Determined to save his community, and his beloved rosebush, our fearless hero climbs high into the cloud, and face-to-face with the sorrows. (Age 0–4, 5–7)

EVA ELAND
WHEN SADNESS COMES TO CALL
Eland’s début picturebooks uses simple illustrations and text to explain a difficult and sometimes complicated emotion, sadness. Here, Sadness is personified and illustrated as large and imposing. Its arrival is unexpected, towering over the child character. The book highlights the importance of sitting with Sadness instead of trying to hide from it and not only opens up a conversation about Sadness, but also offers practical suggestions of things to do with Sadness when it calls, such as listening to music or going for a walk. (Age 0–4, 5–7)

TOM PERCIVAL
RUBY’S WORRY
Ruby is a brave and upbeat little girl until one day she meets a worry. Ruby’s bright world slowly begins to drain of colour as her worry grows. This gorgeous and memorable picturebook reminds children of how important it is to talk about their worries and is perfect for raising the issue of mental health with little ones. (Age 2–4, 5–8)
EOIN COLFER illustrated by MATT ROBERTSON
ANNA LIZA AND THE HAPPY PRACTICE

Anna Liza wants to help people, like her psychiatrist mother. Dressed professionally in a white coat, she practices in her mother’s waiting room. There she meets Edward, whose dad is very sad so Anna Liza decides to help with ‘the Dad problem’. Important issues are presented gently, thoughtfully and hopefully, and Colfer’s sparky, funny writing works beautifully with Robertson’s colourful, humorous illustrations. (Age 5–8)

JULIAN GOUGH illustrated by JIM FIELD
RABBIT AND BEAR: THE PEST IN THE NEST
HODDER CHILDRENS BOOKS 2017 (PBK) 112PP £5.99 ISBN 9781444921717

After a peaceful winter sleep, Rabbit, who is clearly not a morning person, is rudely awoken by a woodpecker hammering a nest in a tree. Enraged by the noise (among numerous other things), Rabbit needs his friend Bear to show him how to look at the situation positively. Another laugh-out-loud story with a mindful message, expertly brought to life by Jim Fields’s gorgeous illustrations. (Age 5–8)

KYO MACLEAR illustrated by ISABELLE ARSENAULT
VIRGINIA WOLF

Loosely based on the relationship between writer Virginia Woolf and her painter-sister Vanessa Bell, this picturebook poignantly depicts depression through literal and metaphorical representations. Maclear’s text deals gracefully with the sensitive topic, while also making use of charming descriptions and gentle humour. Arsenault skilfully uses colour, mixed media and handwritten lettering to explore the emotional terrain of the story. (Age 5–7, 8–10)

ALICE JAMES illustrated by STEPHEN MONCRIEFF
THE UNWORRY BOOK
USBORNE PUBLISHING 2019 (HBK) 96PP £8.99 ISBN 9781474950770

Everybody worries; it’s a fact. Children worry more than we might like to think. This book acts as a toolkit to help them deal with their fears and anxieties with practical action that really does help. Designed as a book to use, not simply read, there are pages to write and scribble in and mindfulness activities such as colouring, doodling and puzzles. An exceptional resource for every home and classroom. (Non-fiction, Age 9+)
SITA BRAHMACHARI illustrated by JANE RAY
WORRY ANGELS
BARRINGTON STOKE 2017 (PBK) 80PP €5.99 ISBN 9781781126950
There have been so many changes in Amy-May’s young life. The family has separated from her wonderful, yet troubled artist Dad; they’ve moved house far from her lovely cottage with a garden and fresh sea air; and now, she is so filled with anxiety, she can’t go to school. This tender story addresses a number of complex issues that young people deal with every day. Family separation, relocating, the refugee crisis; but mostly it deals with anxiety and stress. With incredible story-telling skill, Brahmachari handles all of this seamlessly, gently, while taking the reader on a journey towards peace and understanding. (Age 9–11)

HORATIO CLARE illustrated by JANE MATTHEWS
AUBREY AND THE TERRIBLE YOOT
FIREFLY PRESS 2016 (PBK) 208PP £7.99 ISBN 9781910080283
Aubrey’s fun-loving father, Jim, has fallen under a horrendous spell. Listless and moping, he can barely leave the house and seems to sink further and further under the spell of a mysterious force that Aubrey soon identifies as the Terrible Yoot. How can a young boy possibly hope to defeat the seemingly undefeatable – despair itself? This skilful and sensitive handling of a tricky theme – parental depression – benefits from adroit illustrations by Jane Matthews that add another dimension in bringing this determined and adventurous tale to life. (Age 9–11)

RODDY DOYLE illustrated by CHRIS JUDGE
BRILLIANT
Brilliant is beautifully written, with a lot of heart. This completely original story is fairy tale-like, yet is underpinned by the important theme of depression. Based in Dublin, it looks at issues facing many families who are struggling with financial hardship. With striking and evocative images by Chris Judge, Brilliant is not only a joy to read but a very important work. (Age 9–11)

LISA THOMPSON
THE GOLDFISH BOY
SCHOLASTIC 2017 (PBK) 400PP £6.99 ISBN 9781407170992
Matthew spends most of his time shut up in his bedroom, his terror of germs and the outside world keeping him a prisoner. From his window he watches the neighbours – the rector’s widow, his former teacher, the children he was once friends with. An engrossing and thought-provoking read, dealing with mental-health issues in a highly relatable way. (Age 9–11)
MIKE VAN WAES

PEEVES


Slim thinks life can’t get any more stressful, between his parents’ divorce, a new school and panic attacks. That is until his pet hates or ‘peeves’ actually transform into contagious little monsters that take over his home town. A witty, action-packed adventure on the surface, this book is much more than that, as the author raises pertinent questions about anxiety and how it’s treated. (Age 9–11)

JUNO DAWSON with advice from DR OLIVIA HEWITT

illustrated by GEMMA CORRELL

MIND YOUR HEAD

HOT KEY BOOKS 2016 (PBK) 208PP £7.99 ISBN 9781471405310

A warm, frank and supportive guide for young people, offering welcome insights and practical tips on how to manage their thoughts and when and how to seek help. Linking real-life stories to discussion about anxiety, depression, addiction, self-harm and personality disorders, this book is a welcome and useful addition to the self-help bookshelf for young people. (Non-fiction, Age 12+)

ALICE JAMES and LOUIE STOWELL

illustrated by NANCY LESCHNIKOFF and FREYA HARRISON

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH


Using short chunks of well-written text, striking graphics and illustrations, and humour, this excellent book discusses mental health in an accessible and straightforward way. There is plenty of useful, reassuring information and practical advice on topics such as body image, bullying and self-esteem, and outlines of common mental-health problems such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders, with an emphasis on the importance of getting help. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, YA)

HOLLY BOURNE

ARE WE ALL LEMMINGS & SNOWFLAKES?

USBORNE PUBLISHING 2018 (PBK) 400PP £7.99 ISBN 9781474933612

Olive struggles to live a ‘normal’ life as she comes to terms with her fluctuating mental health. When she is given the opportunity to visit Camp Reset, a new state of the art mental-health facility, she hopes this could be her ‘magic pill’. The themes of mental health and self-kindness are expertly handled and balanced by a lightness and humour that make this not only an important read but also an enjoyable one. (YA)
DEBI GLIORI  
**NIGHT SHIFT**  

*Night Shift* is a rare beast, a picturebook aimed at young adults that functions somewhat as a guide through difficult times, the reader represented as a girl being tormented by the seemingly unbeatable dragon. With appealing illustrations and wise words, this book is a novel weapon for banishing the darkness. (YA)

SOPHIE KINSELLA  
**FINDING AUDREY**  

Sophie Kinsella’s first venture into YA is pitch-perfect. Fourteen-year-old Audrey’s recovery from severe anxiety, aided by both her therapist and a sympathetic boy, is handled beautifully, with uneven progress and no quick fixes; despite the serious subject matter it’s an absolutely hilarious and ultimately uplifting read. (YA)

CEYLAN SCOTT  
**ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN**  
CHICKEN HOUSE 2018 (PBK) 256PP £7.99 ISBN 9781911077244

Tamar is admitted to Lime Grove, a psychiatric hospital for teenagers, where doctors try to help her come to terms with the trauma that haunts her. Suitable only for older, mature readers, this is a searingly honest account of a journey back into mental health, full of emotional power and told in a voice that demands to be listened to. (YA)

LISA WILLIAMSON  
**PAPER AVALANCHE**  
DAVID FICKLING BOOKS 2019 (PBK) 375PP ISBN 9781910989968

*Paper Avalanche* is about hoarding – a topic that can be seen sensationalised on television but is not often discussed in everyday life. Fourteen-year-old Ro lives with her hoarder mother Bonnie. Ro struggles with her mother’s issues, torn between the need to care for her whilst resenting the difficulties that Bonnie’s hoarding brings to Ro’s life. The novel explores the themes of isolation, loneliness, emotional abuse and family dysfunction and Williamson deals with these issues in a sympathetic and realistic manner. (YA)
Children’s Books Ireland produced this resource with the expert assistance of Kim Harte. We also wish to acknowledge the work of our Inis magazine and Recommended Reads Guide reviewers.

[childrensbooksireland.ie](http://childrensbooksireland.ie)

*This list was published in 2020.*