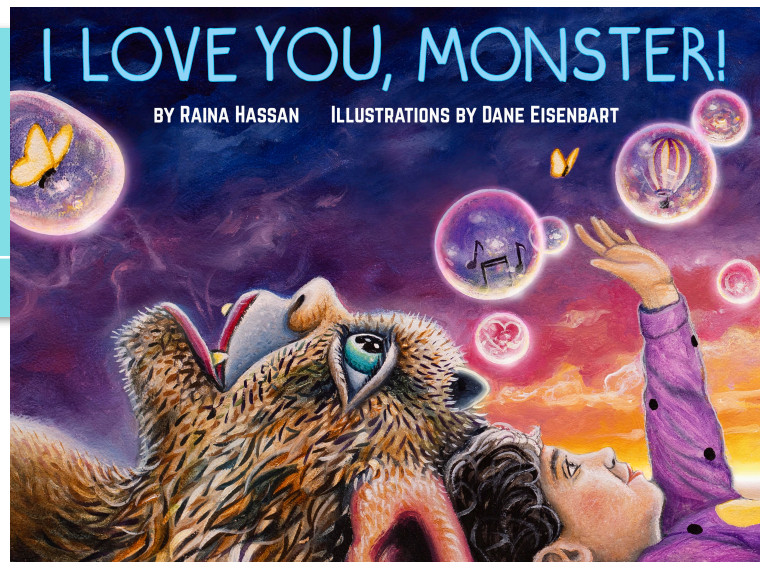


“I Love You, Monster!”

Reading Guide, Discussion Questions, & Activities



Dear parents, caregivers, therapists, and educators:

Thank you so much for reading to children! In an often polarized and fear-filled world, this book can be a tool for helping the little ones in your life learn how to identify and acknowledge their fears. With a Mindfulness-based approach, the book shows children how to check in with themselves, get centered, and connect with their heart-centered courage. By facing our fears, we can understand them better and learn how to resolve them or cope with them. This book was designed to help you facilitate the social-emotional learning and growth of the children in your life, and the content is suitable for children ages 2 to 9 years old. The rhyming verses and whimsical imagery make it appealing to younger children, while the metaphor of the monster offer you opportunities to help older children with fears and boundaries, as well as cultivating Mindfulness traits such as compassion, courage, curiosity, empathy, flexibility, and self-connection.

Consider creating an active dialogue as you read this book aloud, asking kids what they think is happening, how they think the characters are feeling, and what emotions they think they would feel if they were in the story.

Reading & Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you think it means for a monster to be a teacher?
- 2) How do you think a monster could be your friend?
- 3) How could a monster help you understand your feelings better?
- 4) When you think about monsters, what emotions do you feel?
- 5) When the main character starts to tell the monster to go away on page 10, how do you think the monster feels? When is it okay to tell someone to give you space? (See Activity #2 below)

Helpful words and phrases

Compassion:

Recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help.

Courage:

Having strength when you're afraid and showing bravery when you're struggling or are feeling hurt or fearful.

Curiosity:

The desire to understand something that you currently don't.



6) Instead of sending the monster away, the main character decides to show the monster love. How do you think the monster feels when that happens?

7) Have you ever faced something that you've been afraid of? What was it like to do that?

8) The book talks about speaking with your heart and the idea that our heart can have a voice, just like the voice that comes from our mouths. What do you think speaking with your heart means? What does the voice of your heart sound like?

9) When the main character is making the choice to listen to their heart, they take a deep, mindful breath and check in with their body on page 17. Do you know how to do that? (See activity #4 below)

10) What do you think would have happened if the main character had chosen to make the monster go into the cave?

11) After the main character invites the monster out, they do lots of things together. What's your favorite thing they do together and why?

12) What kinds of things would you want to do with a monster friend?

13) On page 26, the monster helps the main character understand the value of their tears. What do you think that means? How can tears and sadness be valuable?

14) The book talks about compassion and curiosity. Do you know what these two words mean?

15) When was a time that you showed compassion or curiosity when you were afraid?

Empathy:

The ability to understand and share the feelings of others; deeply understanding others' perspectives.

Flexibility:

The ability to adapt to changes around you and shift your perspective.

Self-Connection:

The experience of being aware of and in good relationship with your whole and worthy self.



Activity #1: Monster, Go Away or Come Out and Play?

Ask children to first draw a monster and give it a name. Next, ask them to turn the paper over and draw a line down the middle of the page. On one side of the page, ask them to draw what the monster would look like if they told it to go away. On the other half, ask them to draw what the monster would look like if they showed it love and invited it to come out and play. Ask them to name and write down the monster's feelings in both scenarios.

Activity #2: Helpful Fear Vs. Unhelpful Fear

This activity helps teach healthy boundary setting and the difference between the fear we need (e.g., something or someone that can hurt us) versus the fear we *don't* need (e.g., not being good enough, making mistakes, trying new things). We can tell someone to stop touching us or treating us in a certain way if we feel uncomfortable or unsafe. We can tell someone who is hurting us to "Go away!" when we are protecting ourselves. We don't have to allow others to do harmful things to us in order to avoid hurting their feelings. Ask children to draw a line down the middle of their paper. On one side, ask them to draw themselves saying "Please stop doing that!" or "No, I am not okay with that!" On the other half, ask them to draw themselves facing their fears instead of telling them to go away. Ask them to describe or write about the two scenarios.

Activity #3: Emotions and Facial Expressions

Ask children to draw a line down the middle of their paper. On one side, ask them to think about a time when they felt fear and draw what they think their face looked like when they were afraid. Next, ask them to think of a time when they felt love and compassion and draw what they think their face looked like when they felt those emotions on the other side of the paper. Ask them to write down all of the emotions they felt in both scenarios.

Activity #4: The Mindful Breath and Body Check-In

Ask children to either stand or sit with their legs crossed if they can, and take a big, deep breath, letting it out slowly. Ask them if they can feel their body move when they breathe, if they can feel the air come into and go out of their body, and if they can hear the sound of their own breathing. Lead them through a second and third breath cycle, asking them to pay attention to these sensations. Next, ask them to think about the top of their head and then touch it, and then think about their feet and then touch their feet.

Heart Voice:

The unique, clear, and kind voice that responds when you ask yourself what you should do.

Mindfulness:

Being compassionately aware of what is happening in the present moment without judgment.

Mindful Breath:

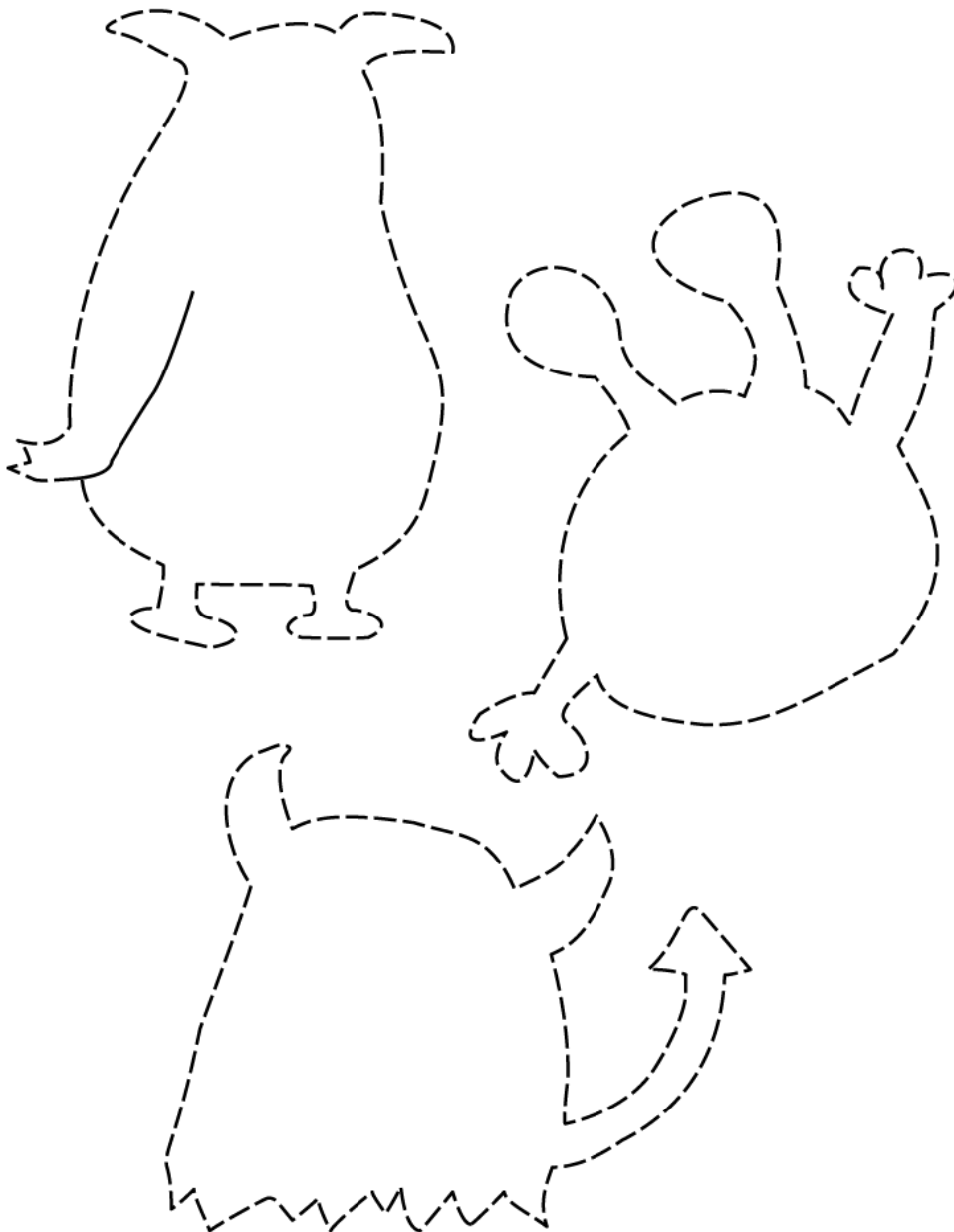
Going through one full inhale, pause, and exhale while noticing as much about your breath as possible (what it sounds like, feels like, etc.).



Activity #5: Make Your Own Monster!

Supplies needed (scissors, glue, popsicle sticks)

Make copies of the monster templates below and ask children to cut out some monsters, color them, and glue them to popsicle sticks. Then, they can play with them as they wish, or you can use the activity for a more intentional purpose. For therapists, you can use this activity in play therapy to help a child process an experience or express their feelings about a difficult event or situation.



Body Check-in:

Bringing your full non-judgmental awareness to your physical body, from the top of your head all the way down to your toes.

Interoception:

Awareness of the internal state of your body (tense stomach, full bladder, hunger, etc.).

Proprioception:

Awareness of the positions and movements of your body (being able to touch your nose with your eyes closed).

