

# Wilma Jean *the* Worry Machine Activity and Idea Book

*published by*



**National  
Center for  
Youth Issues**

Practical Guidance Resources  
Educators Can Trust



## A Note to Parents and Educators:

Anxiety is a subjective sense of worry, apprehension, and/or fear. It is considered to be the number one health problem in America. Although quite common, anxiety disorders in children are often misdiagnosed or overlooked. It is normal for everyone to feel fear, worry and apprehension from time to time, but when these feelings prevent a person from doing what he/she wants and/or needs to do, anxiety becomes a disability.

The purpose of this book is to offer creative activities for counselors, teachers, and parents strategies that can lessen the severity of anxiety in children. The ultimate goal is to provide children with the tools they need to feel in control of their anxiety.

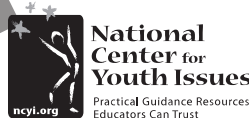
I hope you enjoy doing these activities as much as I have enjoyed creating them. Now, take a deep breath, and let the fun begin!!!

BEST!

Julia Cook

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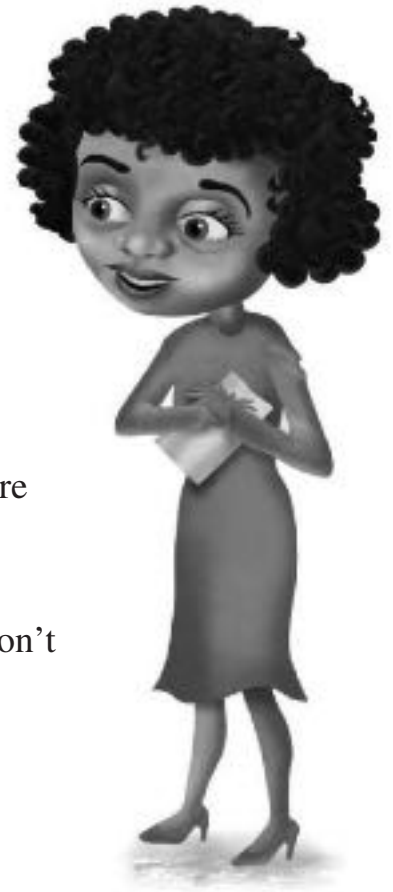
Summary: A supplementary teacher's guide for *Wilma Jean the Worry Machine*.  
Full of discussion questions and exercises to share with students.

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# Helpful Tips for Dealing with an Anxious Child

- Genuinely accept your child's concerns.
- Listen to your child's perceptions and gently correct misinformation.
- Patiently encourage your child to approach a feared situation one step at a time until it becomes familiar and manageable.
- Always try to get your child to events on time, or early – being late can elevate levels of anxiety.
- Continually set equal expectations for all kids anxious or not. Expecting a child to be anxious will only encourage anxiety.
- Role-play strategies – how to react in certain situations. Explore both best case scenarios and worst case scenarios using realistic evidence.
- Build your child's personal strengths.
- Help your child organize the next day's school materials the night before.
- Allow and encourage your child to do things on his/her own.
- Allow extra time on tests and/or allow students to take tests away from the other students.
- If a child is going to be singled out for a classroom activity, let that child know a day in advance so that he can feel more prepared.
- Designate a "safe person" at school that understands your child's worries and concerns.
- Try not to pass your own fears onto your child.
- Work together as a team (family members, teachers, child, day-care providers, etc.).
- Set consequences – don't confuse anxiety with other types of inappropriate behavior. Set limits and consequences so that you don't allow anxiety to enable your child.
- Have reasonable expectations.



# The Amazing Worry Doll

## Materials

Small plastic doll for each anxious child – may be new or used. (Easy to find at hobby or craft stores)

## Directions

Your worry doll is AMAZING! You can tell her/him anything! Hold your worry doll in your hand and just start talking. Tell your doll everything you are worried about. As soon as you tell your doll a worry, you have given that worry away to the doll and she/he will hold it for you until you need it back. YES, your doll will worry for you so that you can be worry free!!!

- If you worry at night, tell your doll your worries before you go to bed. Then tuck the doll under your pillow and enjoy a good night's sleep!
- If you worry at school, tell your doll your worries. Then put the doll inside your coat pocket or inside your desk and enjoy a worry free day!
- Your worry doll will work any time and in any place!

If you ever want or need your worries back, just hold your doll in your hand, close your eyes, and let your worries transfer back into your head.



# Square Breathing

## Materials

- Paper
- Pen or pencil.

Sometimes, when we feel anxious, we start to breathe too fast. This activity will help you slow down your breathing and help you to relax.

## Directions

Draw a clockwise square as you breathe in and out. Start in the left hand bottom corner of your paper. Inhale slowly as you draw a line up. Hold your breath as you slowly draw a line across to the right. Exhale slowly as you draw a line down toward the bottom of the paper. Pause your breathing as you draw a line to the left completing the square. The bigger your square, the slower you breathe.

Try it on paper a few times and then do it in your head without paper. If you want, you can draw your square in the air with your finger as you breathe.

