



"Good morning! Breakfast is almost ready," said Zoey's mom.

"Thanks, Mom." Zoey hung her backpack on her chair and started eating her apple.

Zoey's mom said, "Guess what? Ms. Lyons had her baby last night."

Zoey's jaw dropped in surprise.

"I know," her mom continued. "She was a month early, but everyone is healthy. I guess your substitute is starting today! The email says her name is Mrs. James."





This straight-forward story arms parents and educators with a tool for talking with children about the heavy feelings they're carrying. It's an incredibly timely book that's so relatable, which means it's bound to help start important conversations of hope and healing for many.

Julie Beem

Executive Director, Attachment & Trauma Network, Inc.



All around us, children are carrying backpacks that are heavy with more than just textbooks. Each day, they also bear the weight of difficult life experiences and intense feelings.

Zoey Harmon just wants to feel light-hearted and carefree. Unfortunately, she keeps getting weighed down by pesky "books" in her backpack, like Worry and Shame. Much to her surprise, she's not the only one! Zoey learns that the adults in her life deal with difficult feelings too! Luckily, they have some ideas that can help her set aside the books she's not meant to carry. Will it be enough to help her unload the heaviest book of all?

"You look a little worried, kiddo," Zoey's mom said, giving her a squeeze. "Sometimes I need a bright thought to help me when I'm feeling upset. Here, try this." She slid a bookmark into Zoey's hand. Zoey looked down and read: Imagine with Hope.

"What's this?" asked Zoey.

"When we don't know what to expect, worry wants us to imagine with fear, to think about all the worst possibilities. This is a little reminder I use to think of the good things that might happen when I imagine with hope instead."

While there are no quick fixes for all of life's complex problems, *What's Inside Your Backpack?* highlights some of the ways we can nurture resilience in body and mind. Using the metaphor of books and bookmarks, author Jessica Sinarski offers gentle, effective strategies to help children impacted by trauma. By sharing their burdens with people they trust, kids can lighten their load and realize just how strong and courageous they really are!



JESSICA SINARSKI, LPCMH equips parents and professionals to be healers for hurting children. Weaving user-friendly brain science into everything she does, Jessica ignites both passion and know-how in audiences. Extensive post-graduate training and 15+ years as a clinician, consultant, and parent educator led her to create *BraveBrains*, a resource and training platform for home, school, and community. She is also the author of the *Riley the Brave* picture books.

Jessica partners with school districts and child welfare agencies across the country to better incorporate effective trauma-sensitive practices into their work. She also shares her expertise as a contributor to magazines, blogs, and podcasts. When not writing and training, she continues to work as a bilingual therapist and clinical supervisor at an innovative adoption support agency. Jessica lives in Delaware with her husband and three busy boys.

