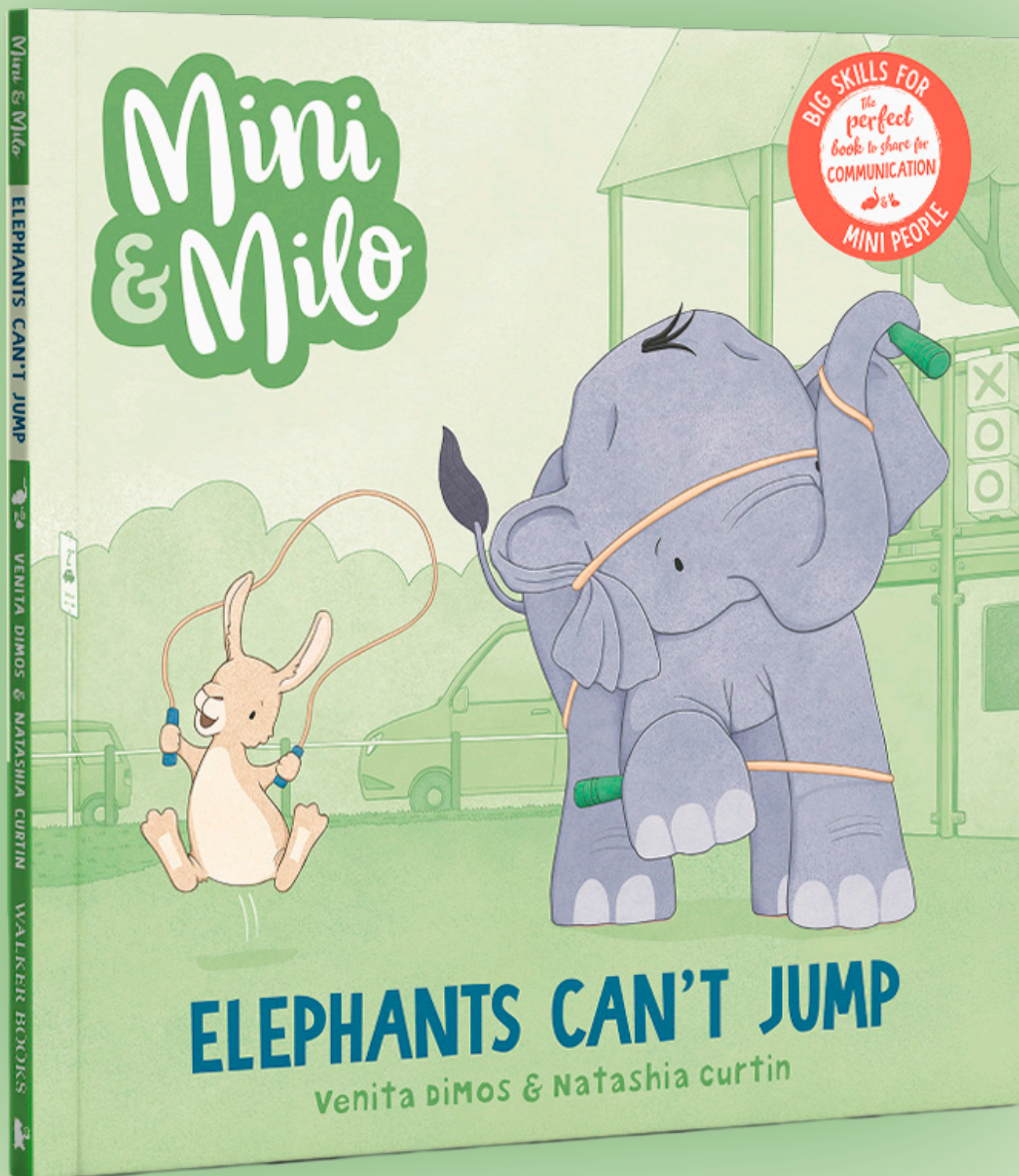




TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Venita Dimos

WALKER BOOKS

About the Series

MINI AND MILO: ELEPHANTS CAN'T JUMP
CREATORS: VENITA DIMOS AND NATASHIA CURTIN
ISBN 9781760656140 HARDBACK
MARCH 2024

Story-led, with humour and heart, this series follows the adventures of Mini the elephant and Milo the rabbit as they navigate friendship and all its ups and downs. Each book explores aspects of social and emotional intelligence, such as mindset, Self-Talk, listening, communicating about emotions and problem solving, with further books to come.

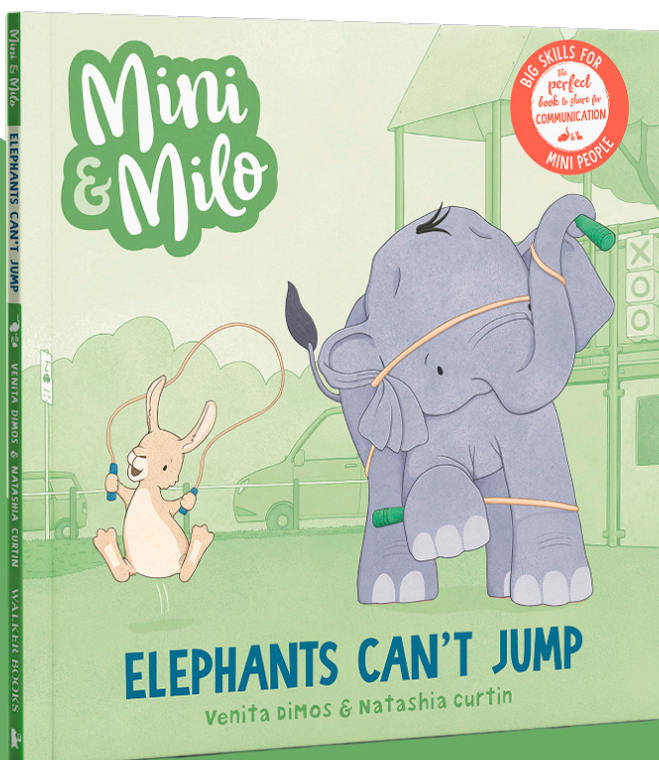
The books explore key life skills in a fun, humorous and imaginative way; with Mini the elephant finding a resolution for each problem through trial and error. This helps build young readers' confidence in problem solving.

The books reward repeated readings because of their humour, dynamic read-aloud texts and satisfying plot resolutions. The detailed illustrations supplement the texts and create a fully realised world for Mini.

They are ideal for early childhood settings, as well as classroom use up to Grade 3.

The perfect book to help children master communicating about emotions.

When Mini's friend Milo gives her a trampoline for her birthday, Mini is upset. She even stops speaking to Milo. Milo has no idea what is wrong – how could he? Mini realises that talking about a problem is much easier than running away from it.



THEMES INCLUDE:

- Listening and Communication • Friendship
- Problem Solving • Feelings/Emotions • Conflict Resolution
- Empathy • Inclusion, Respect and Co-operation

These notes are designed for using the book in grades 1-3 classrooms. They provide the following:

- Act as a guide for reading the book with a class;
- Offer detailed suggestions and scripts for exercises and activities to develop an understanding of effective communication about emotions and how to communicate calmly, with kindness. Worksheets and reflective questions are also provided (at the end of the document);
- Highlight other themes for discussion; and
- Link the book to curriculum focus areas such as reading comprehension, vocabulary and visual literacy.

About the Author:

Venita Dimos is an experienced Lawyer, Mediator and Neuroleadership coach. For over 20 years she has helped thousands of people solve complex problems and navigate difficult times in their lives. As a mother of three daughters, she is passionate about empowering children with the skills and resilience to navigate the inevitable curveballs that life throws at them. Venita's books explore key life skills in a fun, humorous and imaginative way. Her *Mini & Milo* series has been driven by the importance of teaching children emotional and social intelligence early on, so they arrive into adulthood armed with skills that support their future success and happiness.

Venita is an outright optimist, loves heartfelt conversations and has a penchant for all things chocolate.

Visit her online at www.mediationcompany.com.au, Linkedin and Instagram @venitadimos

About the Illustrator:

Natashia (pronounced NA-TAR-SHA) curtin is an upcoming illustrator who is developing a reputation for the charm and emotional clarity of her illustrations in books, including *Vernon the Penguin*.

Natashia grew up in a Yolngu township in the Northern Territory, and completed high school while living in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. She always had her nose in a book, or was drawing pictures – because computer games weren't invented yet, and it was stinky hot outside. She moved to Melbourne in the 1990s to study graphic design and learned how to live in a big city. While working as a graphic designer, Natashia met and married a lovely man, and they had two boys (who don't draw, because computer games were invented).

You can follow her on Instagram, Facebook or at natashiacurtin.com

Notes from Venita:

As a Family and Workplace Mediator, I have witnessed many people in damaged relationships who have been avoiding difficult conversations, causing conflicts to escalate.

Clients often share that they've been in conflict for months, or even years, but find it challenging to have those difficult conversations. Expressing our emotions can be hard, especially if we haven't been taught to do so from a young age.

My work led me to create a 3-step program for successful communication and conflict resolution for adults. Within these Teacher Notes, I've adapted the adult program into simpler language and activities, making the program kid-friendly, practical and fun!

I wanted to create a book that helped children understand that communication is a skill we learn, not something we're naturally born with, and that avoiding difficult conversations can make problems worse. 'Elephants Can't Jump' teaches children that we all have problems and big feelings sometimes – and even though it's tempting to avoid them, this can make things snowball!

Effective communication helps families stay stronger. It can mend strained relationships and create healthier connections with others. I hope this book inspires children to recognise and embrace their feelings, empowering them to engage in open and effective communication with empathy and kindness.

Reviews for the series:

"An important message for all of us."

Reading Time review of *The Teeny-Tiny Voice*

"Children will love the ideas put forward in this humorous tale: that you can do something about the negative voice in your head, that you can be resilient and positive."

ReadPlus review of *The Teeny-Tiny Voice*

"The Mini and Milo series is a must-have for home and school libraries, and I highly recommend The Big Flappy Ears."

Kids Book Review of *The Big Flappy Ears*

"Trial and error helps support decision making, while working together on a problem supports friendship and cooperative behaviour. The Mini and Milo series create situations where cooperation is at its centres and children reading will see that problems can be solved through cooperation and trying things out, particularly after asking a friend for help."

ReadPlus review of *The Big Flappy Ears*

"A gentle story told with warmth and empathy and delightful illustrations bursting with colour and energy will ensure children love spending time with this pair and learn plenty of things along the way. Problem solving, working together and how to be a supportive friend are at the heart of Mini and Milo's story."

A Word About Books review of *The Big Flappy Ears*

Teacher Notes

BEFORE READING – THE BOOK COVER

If this is the first *Mini and Milo* book you have read with your class, begin by pointing out the series name and book title.

The main characters in this book are called Mini and Milo. What does Mini mean? Based only on the cover, which character do you think would be called Mini? Mini is actually the elephant character. Are elephants small? Discuss this use of a joke/humour.

Alternatively, if you have read other *Mini and Milo* books with the class before, begin by reminding them about the characters on the front cover. Do they remember what happened to Mini in a previous book? Mini has a problem to solve in each book in the series – can they predict what the problem is in this book? Do they think Mini will be successful in solving it?

In the cover illustration of this book, the two friends are both jumping rope. Milo appears to be enjoying it, but Mini is struggling. How do students feel when they can't do something that their friends can?

WHILE READING

Pause and look at the illustrations on the preliminary pages of the book.

The first illustration shows Mini the elephant on her own, and she is having difficulty (she's tangled up in the skipping rope). This helps suggest that the book is about a problem Mini is having.

Older students might be familiar with the phrases 'being in a tangle' and 'getting yourself all tangled up', which mean you are arguing with someone, or you are confused about what to do.

Milo the rabbit is Mini's best friend. Notice that in the double page illustration of animals arriving with gifts, Milo is unloading a huge gift (partially hidden behind the imprint details). Can students guess what the gift might be?

On the page just before Mini opens the present, we are told that the thing inside is "*big and bright, colourful and bouncy, springy and hoppy*". Using these clues, can students make further guesses about what the gift is?

After Mini opens her gift, she is upset, but doesn't tell Milo how she's feeling or why. Pause on the words "*What's wrong, Mini?*" asked Milo. But Mini did not feel like talking. '*Nothing,*' grunted Mini."

Introduce the idea that sometimes when we are disappointed, angry, or hurt it can feel hard to interact with people as we normally do, and especially hard to face the person we think has hurt us. That's normal. But while we don't necessarily have to talk to them straight away, making sure the person knows how we feel is important.

Point out the fireball above Mini's head, which represents how she feels. Continue to point it out each time it appears in the illustrations.

When the animals are playing hopscotch, Mini thinks for a second time '*Milo should know ... Elephants Can't Jump.*'

Do the students believe Milo does know this? (If you have read other *Mini and Milo* books with the class, you could ask them to recall some of the ways Milo helped and looked after Mini in those books. He is her friend. Would he have chosen a trampoline for a present if he knew she couldn't jump?)

Introduce the concept of *Making an Assumption*: believing something is true without proof. Mini assumes Milo knows that she can't jump. When Mini is upset about the hopscotch game, Milo asks her again what's wrong, and again she says 'nothing'. Does this help Milo understand? What could Mini have done instead? (There is an exercise about Making Assumptions in the Communicating About Emotions section, below.)

Read the line "*Maybe running away from Milo was easier.*" Pause here and ask students to predict whether running away will help.

As you read, observe some of the fun things the other animals are doing in the background over the course of the story. Mini is missing out on these.

When Mini arrives at Milo's house, she discovers something that is "*big and bright, colourful and bouncy, springy and hoppy*" – point out that these are the same words that were used to describe the trampoline earlier in the story. Can students think of anything else that might fit this description?

Ask the students to come up with 3 sentences Mini could have said instead of: "*How could you do this to me Everyone knows.*" You could workshop this verbally as a group, or have older students write some sentences.

Notice that Milo now has an angry fireball above his head, too. Mini's emotions and anger have affected Milo also, and he has "caught" her anger. (See more on emotional contagion in the Communicating About Emotions section, below.)

'She thought... She thought... But she'd never told him.' Return to the idea of Making an Assumption.

Look at the wordless illustration in which Mini and Milo have their backs to each other and Mini has placed her trunk on Milo's shoulder. What do students think is happening here? This is an example of non-verbal communication: how we communicate with our bodies and gestures.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT EMOTIONS CALMLY, WITH KINDNESS

There are 3 steps to helping kids practice communicating about emotions calmly, with kindness: Face It, Show It and Say It. Suggested exercises for all 3 steps are outlined below, with the relevant template worksheets at the end of these notes.

The objective of this 3-step program is to teach students effective communication through *verbal and non-verbal language*. Students will learn about the importance of communicating calmly, and with kindness. They will also learn strategies for effective verbal communication and the impact of body language in non-verbal communication, including facial expressions and voice tonality. Students will be taught about emotional contagion and the impact our feelings have on others. They will be equipped with research-backed strategies for identifying feelings, calming anger, resolving conflict, and communicating their thoughts and feelings calmly and effectively.

Step 1: FACE IT (facing and understanding our feelings)

Let's face it, we all have problems and big feelings sometimes!

When we run away from our problems, they can get bigger.

Our anger can start like a small spark, and grow into a big fireball.

You have the power to calm down your fireball!

We 'catch' other people's emotions – so let's spread happy feelings!

Step 2: SHOW IT (understanding body language)

We can 'speak' with our body!

Our body language 'tells' others how we're feeling, even without words.

Our face, body and voice give clues as to whether we're happy, sad, angry or excited.

We can also learn how others feel by 'reading' their body language.

Step 3: SAY IT (communicating calmly and kindly)

It's easier to solve a problem when we talk about it!

Facing problems and talking about our feelings helps us learn and grow.

Listening to other people's feelings helps us learn about them too!

Remember using "I" words:

- is friendlier;
- doesn't make others feel blamed; and
- helps solve problems faster!

"FACE IT" Exercise 1 – Feelings Wheel

Research shows that recognising and labelling feelings helps children understand and manage their emotions. This activity lays the foundation for emotional intelligence and self-awareness in children. It improves students' emotional vocabulary which is crucial for social development and emotion regulation.

The provided template worksheet [worksheet 1] has a Feelings Wheel for students to colour. Colouring and personalising the Wheel gives children a safe and creative outlet for recognising and expressing feelings in a healthy and fun way. Encourage students to fill each emotion section with the colour they associate with that feeling. Perhaps yellow represents 'Happy' and red represents 'Angry'. The results don't have to be uniform: each student could choose different colours.

After the wheels have been coloured, re-read *Elephants Can't Jump* aloud, stopping on key pages and asking students to point to the emotion they think represents Mini's feelings. Students can use their fingers to point, OR, older students could cut out the pointer shape from the worksheet and use it.

Examples: Mini is about to open her birthday present. She could be feeling excited, happy or loved. Mini is trying to hide. She could be feeling scared, worried or angry.

Script

Just like there are many colours in a rainbow, there are many feelings we can have. The Feelings Wheel is a special, colourful circle that shows us some of those feelings. Each section of the wheel has a different emotion, and we can colour it to match how we feel. Our feelings can change quickly and it's ok to have different feelings during the day.

We can use the Feelings Wheel to help us talk about our feelings, share them with others, and also learn about how our friends are feeling.

Note: You could return to the Feelings Wheel again and again, at any time of day, to help the teacher understand, and students express, how each student is feeling at that time. This will help children build their emotional intelligence. Optionally, teachers could display their own Feelings Wheel and use it with students to expand emotional vocabulary. For example, “Who can guess what I’m feeling on the Feelings Wheel right now?”

Note that while the Feelings Wheel features 8 emotions, there is a vocabulary exercise below, which considers a broader range of names for emotions.

"FACE IT" Exercise 2: What Sparks Your Fireball?

This exercise helps students identify and understand the feeling of anger. Using the visual representation in the story of Mini’s anger growing like a fireball, students will learn that our feelings can start like a small spark and change or grow quickly. Students will increase self-awareness by recognising common triggers or situations that make them angry. They will also enhance social awareness, by considering the impact of their behaviour on other people.

Before doing this Exercise, revisit the book and point out some of the illustrations in which Mini is shown with a fireball over her head. This is a visual representation of her anger. Notice that through the course of the book, the fireball grows bigger.

Discuss with the students that we all feel upset, frustrated, or angry sometimes. When we feel just a little annoyed, it’s like a tiny spark inside us. But feelings can change quickly and if we don’t manage our anger, it can grow into a big, hot fireball!

For this exercise, have students think about the kinds of things that ‘spark’ their fireball or make them feel angry. How big is their fireball? Either read through the below list and have students respond by putting up their hand or ask students to complete the template worksheet [worksheet 2] below. The worksheet provides options for students to circle for each item: doesn’t spark my fireball, a small fireball, a bigger fireball.

- Someone uses your things without asking
- A friend won’t play with you
- Someone keeps doing something after you’ve asked them to stop
- You lose a game
- Someone pushes in and won’t take turns
- You get into trouble
- Someone teases you
- You feel left out of (excluded from) a game
- Someone sits in your spot
- Someone laughs at you

Next, discuss with students that sometimes, we say or do things without really thinking about it, and it can make someone else’s fireball get bigger. That’s when we accidentally add fuel to their fireball!

Again, you could read through the below list and have the class respond by putting up their hand if they think they might have accidentally done one of the items on it. Or, ask students to use the second page of the template worksheet [worksheet 2] to circle the items.

- Using someone's pencils without asking
- Not sharing your favourite toy
- Not listening to your teacher's instructions
- Forgetting to include someone in a game
- Interrupting while someone is talking
- Talking during storytime or quiet time
- Continuing to do something after someone's asked you to stop
- Yelling at someone
- Not cleaning up your mess in the classroom or home
- Laughing or making fun of someone
- Not waiting for your turn on the slide
- Forgetting to say "please" or "thank you"

Note: there are suggestions for further visual literacy and visual arts exercises focused on the fireball graphic, below.

"FACE IT" Exercise 3: Things that Cool My Fireball

Now that students are identifying and understanding the feeling of anger, this Exercise provides them with some science-backed coping strategies that help them regulate their anger in healthy, positive, and constructive ways.

You could either read the below suggestions out loud and discuss them verbally with the class, having them practice some (breathing, counting, a silly dance!) on the spot. Or, have students complete the provided template worksheet [worksheet 3], on which they can circle two 'Cool Downs' they would like to try.

Script

When your fireball is big, it makes your problems feel bigger. It's hard to make good decisions or communicate calmly when you're mad.

You might feel like you're about to explode! But you have the power to control your anger and cool your fireball.

Here are some ways to calm yourself down. It's like putting water on your fireball!

- Take 5 deep breaths, like blowing out birthday candles
- Use calming phrases like "It's okay" or "I can handle this"
- Close your eyes and imagine a happy place or memory
- Play with your pet
- Count slowly to ten
- Do a silly dance or listen to music
- Talk to someone you trust
- Draw a picture, paint or make something
- Take a break and go for a short walk or run
- Play a game or do a puzzle

Reflection/discussion for "FACE IT" Exercises 1-3

1. What does it feel like when your anger is only in the beginning, like a tiny spark?
2. How does it make you feel when your anger keeps growing and growing into a big fireball?
3. What are some things you can do to cool down your fireball and stop your anger from growing?
4. Why is it important to take deep breaths when your anger starts to grow?
5. What do you think might happen if you don't try to cool down your anger and it keeps growing like a fireball?
6. Can you think of a time when you had an angry fireball and did or said something you later wished you hadn't?
7. What's one thing you will try to do next time to cool your fireball and calm yourself?

"FACE IT" Class Activity: Catch My Feelings - Chain Reaction

This activity and the following exercise are intended to help children understand the scientifically-recognised concept of emotional contagion and the importance of spreading positive emotions to create a happier and more supportive environment.

Students will create a visual representation of emotional contagion, in a way that encourages creativity and emotional awareness. The result can be used as a lasting classroom display.

Before introducing this activity, revisit the section of the book where Mini says *"How could you do this to me Everyone knows."* Following this exchange, Milo has an angry fireball above his head, too. Mini's emotions and anger have affected him, and he has "caught" her anger.

Script for explaining emotional contagion

Have you noticed that when a friend is really happy, it can make you feel happy too? If someone is giggling, you might 'catch' their happiness and start giggling too! Or when someone starts yawning, you might start yawning too.

That's because just like catching a cold, you can "catch" someone's feelings and emotions! If someone is angry or upset, their feelings can sometimes also make you feel angry or upset.

Chain reaction

1. Cut out large paper links (chain links) from different coloured paper.
2. Provide students with two chains each.

3. Ask students to draw a facial expression on one of the paper links to represent the emotion "HAPPY" and on the other paper link, the emotion "ANGRY".
4. Once the emotion faces are drawn, use glue or tape to assemble all the links into chains, with the "HAPPY" links connected together in one chain and the "ANGRY" emotions connected in a different chain.

Attach the completed emotion chains to a wall space in the classroom as a visual representation of emotional contagion. The activity can be repeated with other emotions, such as "Excited", "Sad", or "Worried".

"FACE IT": Exercise 4 - Catch My Feelings

Kindness and happiness are contagious, too. Have students use the provided template worksheet [worksheet 4] to draw or write about one thing they could do to help someone 'catch' kindness and positivity and make the classroom a happy place.

Reflection/Discussion Questions following "Catch My Feelings" Activities

1. How can our emotions affect one another? (use the analogy of 'chain reaction', like the physical chain the students created).
2. How do you feel when someone around you is feeling mad or upset or crying? Does it make you feel like that too?
3. Why is it important to be aware of our feelings and how they can affect others?
4. How do you feel when someone around you is happy, positive or laughing? Does it make you feel like that too?
5. What can we do to help our friends feel better when they are angry, sad or upset?
6. How can we make sure we share our happy and kind feelings with others and not spread negative emotions?

"FACE IT": Exercise 5 - Making Assumptions

The objective of this exercise is to promote empathy in communication and teach students the importance of not making assumptions about other people's actions or motives. These activities encourage clear communication and emphasise that there can be different perspectives of the one event. Students will learn to suspend judgement and recognise the negative impact of making assumptions and jumping to conclusions about people.

Return to the discussion about Making an Assumption, from your first reading of the book. Making an Assumption means believing something is true without proof. Do students remember that Mini assumed Milo knew that she couldn't jump? Did Milo actually know this?

Talk further with students about assumptions. When we're feeling angry, we might assume things that are wrong. (If you have also read *Mini and Milo: The Teeny-Tiny Voice* with your class, you could remind them of how the Teeny-Tiny Voice tells us things that are not kind about ourselves or another person.)

We all want to be listened to. Just like we want people to listen and understand us, other people also want their feelings to be heard and understood also. When we are upset, we usually think that we're right and everyone else is wrong. But when we calm down and talk to the other person, we can usually see that there are two sides to every story!

It's important to talk and ask questions, instead of assuming that we know it all! Listening to other people's feelings helps us learn about them and their point of view. When we work together to talk and listen to each other, it helps us solve problems faster.

(Note that the teacher's notes for *Mini and Milo: The Big Flappy Ears* offer a strategy for helping students improve their listening skills.)

Draw a table on the whiteboard under the heading "Milo gave Mini a trampoline", with 2 columns labelled "Mini Thinks" and "Another Point of View".

Read through *Mini and Milo: Elephants Can't Jump* and have students identify some of the assumptions Mini made in the story. For each assumption, have the class brainstorm another point of view. For example:

MILO GAVE MINI A TRAMPOLINE	
Mini thinks	Another point of view
Milo knows elephants can't jump	Milo doesn't know elephants can't jump
Milo is being mean	Milo is trying to be helpful
Milo is doing it on purpose	Milo doesn't know what's wrong
Milo is not being a good friend	Milo is being patient and kind
Milo doesn't like me	Milo cares about me

With older students, you could also discuss how the statements in the 'Mini thinks' column are Unhelpful Assumptions. Sometimes, when we're upset or in a disagreement, we might jump to conclusions and think negative things about a friend (like thinking they did something to bother us on purpose).

These are 'Unhelpful Assumptions' because they are like guesses we make in our minds, even though we don't have all the facts.

Unhelpful assumptions usually don't make things better, and sometimes make the problem even bigger! For example, imagine you're playing a game, and someone accidentally bumps into you. An unhelpful assumption would be thinking they did it on purpose to annoy you.

The statements in the 'Another point of view' column are Helpful Assumptions, because making an effort to see another point of view usually cools down our fireball and lets us start to communicate better. We can then talk to the person and give them a chance to explain what happened, so we can understand their side of the story and work things out together.

Draw a similar table on the board for each of the below conflict scenarios. For each scenario, ask the guided questions below and encourage students to come up with Helpful/Unhelpful explanations or possibilities. Reinforce the importance of not jumping to conclusions about other people.

SCENARIO 1: "Sarah took my pencil without asking."

Guided Questions:

1. What unhelpful assumptions (guesses) can you make about Sarah?

Example: Sarah stole my pencil on purpose.

Sarah is going to break it.
Sarah is never giving it back.
Sarah did it on purpose to make me mad.

2. What helpful assumptions (guesses) can you make about Sarah?

Example: Maybe Sarah's pencil broke, and she needed one quickly.

Perhaps Sarah didn't realise it was mine.
Maybe Sarah just forgot to ask.

SCENARIO 2: "Matthew didn't say 'hi' to me today."

Guided Questions:

1. What unhelpful assumptions (guesses) can you make about Matthew?

Example: Matthew is rude.

Matthew doesn't like me.
Matthew did it on purpose to upset me.
Matthew is ignoring me.

2. What helpful assumptions (guesses) can you make about Matthew?

Example: Matthew is feeling shy today.

Matthew might be thinking about something else.
Matthew might not have seen me.

Reflection/Discussion Questions following Making Assumptions Exercises

1. What have you learned about making assumptions and not jumping to conclusions when we're upset?
2. Can you think of a time when someone made an assumption about you, and it wasn't true? How did that make you feel?
3. Have you ever made an assumption about someone without asking them about it?
4. Why do you think we make assumptions about people when they upset us?

5. How can you practice being curious and asking questions when something upsets you, instead of making assumptions?
6. What's one thing you've learned today that can make your friendships better and happier?

"SHOW IT" (Body Language): Exercise I - Body Language Detective

This Exercise and the one that follows are designed to help students understand how body language can convey different emotions and feelings. Students will learn about effective non-verbal communication and will learn to identify various non-verbal cues, including facial expressions, gestures, and posture. They will become aware of their own body language and how it may be perceived by others and practice using non-verbal cues to enhance their communication skills.

Provide students with a list of non-verbal clues and have them guess the emotion the person is feeling. Students could write or draw their responses on the provided template worksheet [worksheet 5]. Alternatively, you could read the list out (using the appropriate body language and tone of voice!) and have students brainstorm the emotions as a group.

Note: regardless of whether the exercise is completed on worksheets or in a group, there is no one "correct" answer, as body language can convey a range of emotions.

Script

Have you ever noticed that when someone is happy or excited, they might smile and jump?

Or when we're mad, we might cross our arms or stomp our feet. If we're feeling shy, we might look down and speak softly.

Body language is how we talk without using words. Our body (arms, legs, posture), our face and voice can all communicate how we feel. It's important to pay attention to how our body feels and how we are using it to show our feelings to others.

Are you ready to be a Body Language Detective? Can you use these clues to guess how I'm feeling?

1. My eyes are sparkling, and I'm jumping up and down.
Feeling: _____
2. My eyes are teary and my voice shakes when I speak.
Feeling: _____
3. I'm standing up straight and speaking clearly and confidently.
Feeling: _____
4. My eyes are wide, my eyebrows are raised, and I gasp.
Feeling: _____
5. I'm hunched over with my head in my hands.
Feeling: _____
6. My hands are shaking, and my voice is trembling.
Feeling: _____
7. I'm looking at the ground and speaking softly.
Feeling: _____
8. I'm standing tall with my chest out and a big smile.
Feeling: _____
9. I'm clapping my hands and smiling.
Feeling: _____
10. I'm frowning and my arms are crossed.
Feeling: _____

"SHOW IT" (Body Language): Exercise 2 – My Body Tells the Story

Please note that some aspects of the Exercise below, in particular being asked to look directly at a partner, and interpret non-verbal clues in person, may not be recommended for some students, in particular neurodiverse children. Please take into account the needs of your individual class and either modify the Exercise accordingly, or skip it.

Write the following list of emotions on the whiteboard: Excited, Sad, Happy, Nervous, Shy, Angry, Disappointed, Proud, Worried, Shocked, Scared.

Have students work in pairs and take turns to show their partner one of the emotions from the list. They can use their body, posture, face and eyes to convey the emotion but they must not use words. Can their partner observe face, eyes, eyebrows, mouth, hands, posture, legs, and other clues to identify which of the listed emotions?

Reflection/Discussion Questions following "SHOW IT" Exercises

1. What did you learn about how our body language can show how we feel?
2. Why is it important to pay attention to how people are feeling by looking at their body language?
3. Has someone ever guessed that you were sad or upset, even though you didn't tell them? How did your body show those feelings?
4. How can we tell if someone is upset or mad by looking at their face and body, even if they don't say anything?
5. How can we use our body language to be friendly and show we want to be friends with someone new?

"SAY IT": Exercise 1 – "I" Words

The objective of this 2-part Exercise is to help develop and practice communication skills, teaching students to communicate calmly, and with kindness. The worksheets also enrich student's emotional vocabulary. They teach students the crucial skill of reframing sentences and expressing negative feelings using "I" words, which can help communicate emotions effectively in challenging situations.

The provided template worksheet [worksheet 6] has two parts. In the first, students read a number of phrases and identify which use "I" words. In the second, students write some alternative statements for Mini to use.

If preferred, either or both parts could be presented as verbal exercises for the whole class. For part one, ask students to put up their hand when they hear an "I" statement. For the second, brainstorm alternative statements as a group.

Script for Explaining the Benefit of "I" Words

Everyone has problems and big emotions, even adults! Sometimes, when things get hard, we might feel like hiding away, just like Mini! But when we run away from our problems, it doesn't solve them and can make the problems even worse!

If someone keeps doing something that upsets us over and over, but you haven't told them what's wrong, it can make your fireball bigger. Facing our problems and talking about our feelings helps us learn and grow.

Remember what happened in *Elephants Can't Jump*. What if Mini had just said from the start: "Thanks for the beautiful present, I can't jump but let's have a picnic on it?"

It's okay if it feels hard at first to share your feelings! But talking about our feelings is important, and with practice, it will become easier.

Before you start, it's really important to make sure your fireball is under control! If it's big and raging it might be better to calm it down first (using our 'Cool Down' strategies). Because sometimes if your fireball is big your words will come out very angry too. That can make the problem even bigger!

When you talk about your feelings, it's a good idea to start your sentence with 'I' words. Doing that:

- shows you're talking about your own feelings;
- sounds more friendly and less like you're telling someone off;
- encourages you to take responsibility for your feelings; and
- helps you share your thoughts without making others feel blamed.

For example:

- "I feel upset" sound gentler than "this is all your fault!"
- "I need some quiet time" sounds kinder than "get out of my room!"
- "I feel angry" sounds nicer than "you always make me mad!"

Which of these sentences use "I" words?

This is all your fault. – I feel angry. – Look what you did! – I feel confused. – You made me sad. – You're confusing me. – You're annoying. – I feel sad. – You're making me mad. – I feel upset. – I feel lonely.

Imagine that Milo is explaining a maths problem, but Mini doesn't understand it. Instead of "You're confusing me", what could Mini say? ("I feel ...")

Imagine Milo is playing dodgeball but forgot to ask Mini. Instead of "You left me out", what could Mini say? ("I feel ...")

Imagine Mini loses a game she's playing. Instead of "It's not fair!", what could Mini say? ("I feel ...")

Imagine Milo uses Mini's favourite pink pencil without asking. Instead of "You are so annoying", what could Mini say? ("I feel ...")

Imagine Milo is explaining how to play a game, but Mini is confused. Instead of "You're not explaining it properly!", what could Mini say? ("I feel ...")

Reflection/Discussion following "I" Words Exercises

1. Why is it important to use "I" words when expressing your feelings?
2. How do you think the other person might feel if you don't use "I" words?
3. How would you feel if a friend said "you always make me mad" instead of saying "I'm feeling angry"?
4. What do you think might happen if you try to talk about your feelings when your fireball is big and about to explode?
5. How will you remember to use your "I" words more often?

Good Communication Classroom Poster

A printable poster is provided below, which you might like to display in the classroom on completion of the "Face It", "Show It" and "Say It" exercises. It summarises key things to be aware of when communicating, and lists some phrases students can use when they are upset, angry or sad.

Additional Communication Activity - Tone of Voice

Older students could complete this activity in conjunction with the Body Language activities above.

Our voice is powerful and communicates how we feel. For example, if we are feeling peaceful and happy we might use a kind, gentle, loving voice. But if we're angry, we might use a harsh, mean and loud voice. We can say the same words, but use a different tone of voice, and it can completely change our message and the way it makes the other person feel.

Ask students to work in pairs and take turns "changing the story" just by using their tone of voice. Read one of the below sentences in one tone of voice (perhaps a kind, caring or excited voice) and then read the same sentence in a different tone of voice (perhaps a mean, angry or loud voice). Try placing the emphasis on different words. Have their partner say how they think the meaning changed.

1. You want me to play with you? [Could place the emphasis on different words: You want **me** to play with **you**?]
2. I'm fine. [Could place the emphasis on different words: I'm **FINE**.]
3. We're having chicken for dinner again tonight. [Could place the emphasis on different words: We're having **chicken** for dinner **again** tonight.]
4. Let's play a different game now. [Could place the emphasis on different words: Let's play a different game ... **NOW!**]
5. That's my favourite book. [Could place the emphasis on different words: That's **my** favourite book.]
6. You're coming to my house today. [Could place the emphasis on different words: **You're** coming to **my** house today?]
7. I can't believe you did that! [Could place the emphasis on different words: I can't believe **you** did that!]

OTHER DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

Vocab and Language

Emotion and feeling words

Mini is angry and upset in the story. Workshop other words that mean angry (such as, furious, outraged, annoyed, cranky, ratty, impatient). This could be done verbally as a class group, or students could write individual responses.

With older students, you could introduce the idea that some of these are stronger feelings than others, for example being furious is a very strong emotion, being impatient is a lighter emotion.

Now, workshop adjectives that relate to how you feel when you are angry, such as hot, wild, uncomfortable, tight. Older students could write a free verse poem using some of their anger words and adjectives. The same exercise could be repeated for other emotions, such as *happiness* or *caring/friendliness*.

The Text

Review the spread in which Mini tries running away from Milo. Find all the words that mean she went fast:

- Ran
- Sprinted
- Bolted

Workshop more words with a similar meaning.

More advanced exercise: Both the trampoline and the jumping castle are described as "*big and bright, colourful and bouncy, springy and hoppy*". Can students think of other words that mean bouncy?

Return to the page where Mini is about to open her present. Consider the phrase 'wild with wonder'. This is an example of alliteration. How does this expression make students feel, and how does it sound when read aloud? What emotion does it suggest (excitement)? Workshop some other phrases you could use to describe excitement.

Making an Assumption

What does this expression mean: Making an assumption?

What does assume mean?

Humour

The messages in each of the *Mini and Milo* books are conveyed with wonderful humour. In *Elephants Can't Jump* the humour is less overt than in some of the other books, and Mini's emotional journey is foregrounded, but there are still funny aspects to this story and the accompanying illustrations!

Return to the discussion about the humour in Mini's name – she is definitely not small!

Look at the spread where the animals are bouncing on the jumping castle and notice the koala and echidna. Can students guess what the koala is saying?

Now, turn the page and look at what has happened in the background in the next double page spread. Can students write about this in 3 sentences?

Ask students to identify anything else in the book they find funny.

Perhaps it's something one of the characters is doing in the background, such as the cheeky pelican who has almost the entire birthday cake in his beak.

Or, the physical humour/absurdity of a giraffe on playground equipment, and Mini's attempts to hide her self.

Visual Literacy and Visual Arts

Illustrating Emotion

Consider the two illustrations at the climax of the book, "*Just then Mini realised*" and the following, wordless page. Notice these 2 illustrations focus on Mini and Milo, and don't show any other characters or any background detail. What effect does this have?

Notice the illustrative device of a fireball above Mini's head, indicating her growing anger. Look at how the fireball changes over the course of the story. What is happening to the fireball when Mini is too tired to hide or run? Towards the end of the story, Milo also has a fireball (see notes about emotional contagion, above).

Students could come up with an illustrative symbol to indicate "happy and excited"; and one to indicate "puzzled and worried". What would they look like? Which illustrations of Mini and Milo would students place these on? (The monkey character in the background is also frequently "happy and excited".)

Cover Design

If you have read other books in the series with the class before, ask them to look at the covers of all the books together. What do they notice about the background illustrations and the character illustrations? What effect does it have to see Mini and Milo in full colour, and the backgrounds in a single colour?

Discussion/Exercise: Tracing the Plot and Trial-and-error Problem Solving

(This suits classes which have read more than one book in the series)

After reading two or three books in the series, point out to the class that in each of the stories, Mini has a problem, and she tries various ideas to solve that problem – sometimes with help from someone else – before reaching a final solution.

Can students recall some of the things Mini tried?

“Problem and solution” is a common plot device. Older students might be able to think of other picture books or novels which use this device.

Mini’s problem-solving efforts also provide a great model for kids and can encourage them to develop resilience.

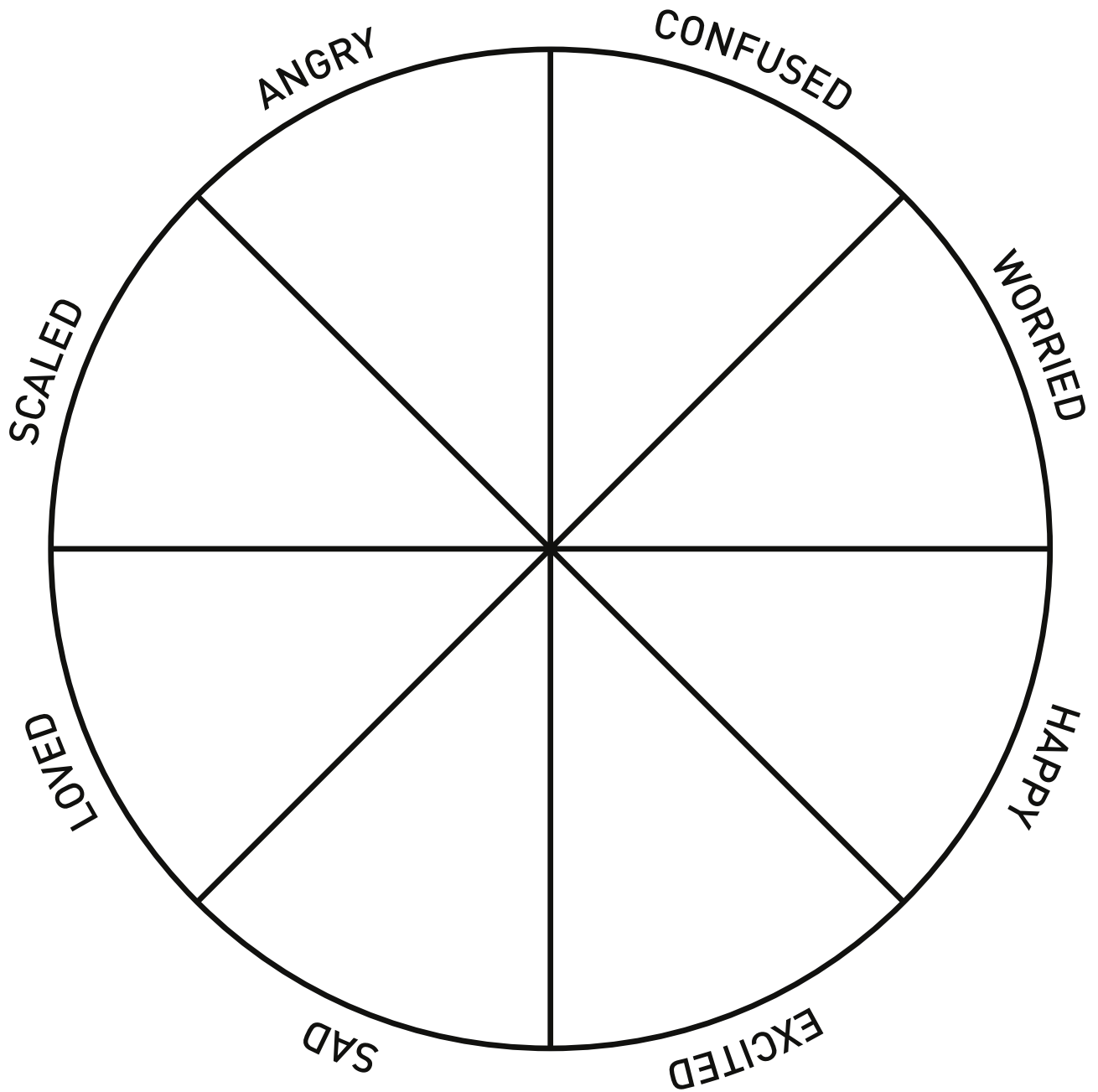
Discuss that if you have a problem, sometimes the first thing you do to try to solve it doesn’t work. That’s OK and it’s always worth trying again. Trying several things before you find the solution that works best is sometimes called ‘trial and error’.

Review one or two of the stories and make a list of the ideas Mini tries, and whether someone else helps her. You could do this verbally with the full group, or older students could create a list or table.

For example, in *The Teeny Tiny Voice*, Mini tries to distract herself and tries to run away, before she settles on creating rules for the Voice. In *The Big Flappy Ears*, she tries pinning her ears open, cleaning her ears out, writing sticky notes.... Sometimes we see Milo helping her, and Mr Snort provides a suggestion.



1. Feelings Wheel



2. What Sparks My Fireball - part 1

Circle the picture that best shows how you feel about each thing: it doesn't spark my fireball, it makes a little fireball, it sparks a BIG fireball!

Someone uses my things
without asking.



A friend won't play with me.



Someone keeps doing
something after I've asked
them to stop.



I lose a game.



Someone pushes in and
won't take turns.



I get into trouble.



Someone teases me.



I felt left out of a game.



Someone sits in my spot.



Someone laughs at me.



2. What Sparks My Fireball - part 2

Sometimes we can accidentally make someone else's fireball get bigger. Have you ever accidentally done any of these things? Circle 2 things you have done.

Used someone pencils without asking.

Didn't share my favourite toy.

Didn't listen to my teacher's instructions.

Forgot to include someone in a game.

Interrupted while someone was talking.

Talked during storytime or quiet time.

Continued to do something after someone asked me to stop.

Yelled at someone.

Didn't clean up my mess in the classroom or home.

Laughed or made fun of someone.

Didn't wait for my turn on the slide .

Forgot to say "please" or "thank you".

3. Fireball Cool Downs

When your fireball is big, it makes your problems feel bigger. You might feel like you're about to explode! Here are some ways to calm yourself down. It's like putting water on your fireball!

Circle your two favourite Cool Downs.

Take 5 deep breaths, like blowing out birthday candles.

Use calming phrases like "It's okay" or "I can handle this".

Close my eyes and imagine a happy place or memory.

Play with my pet.

Count slowly to ten.

Do a silly dance or listen to music.

Talk to someone I trust.

Draw a picture, paint or make something.

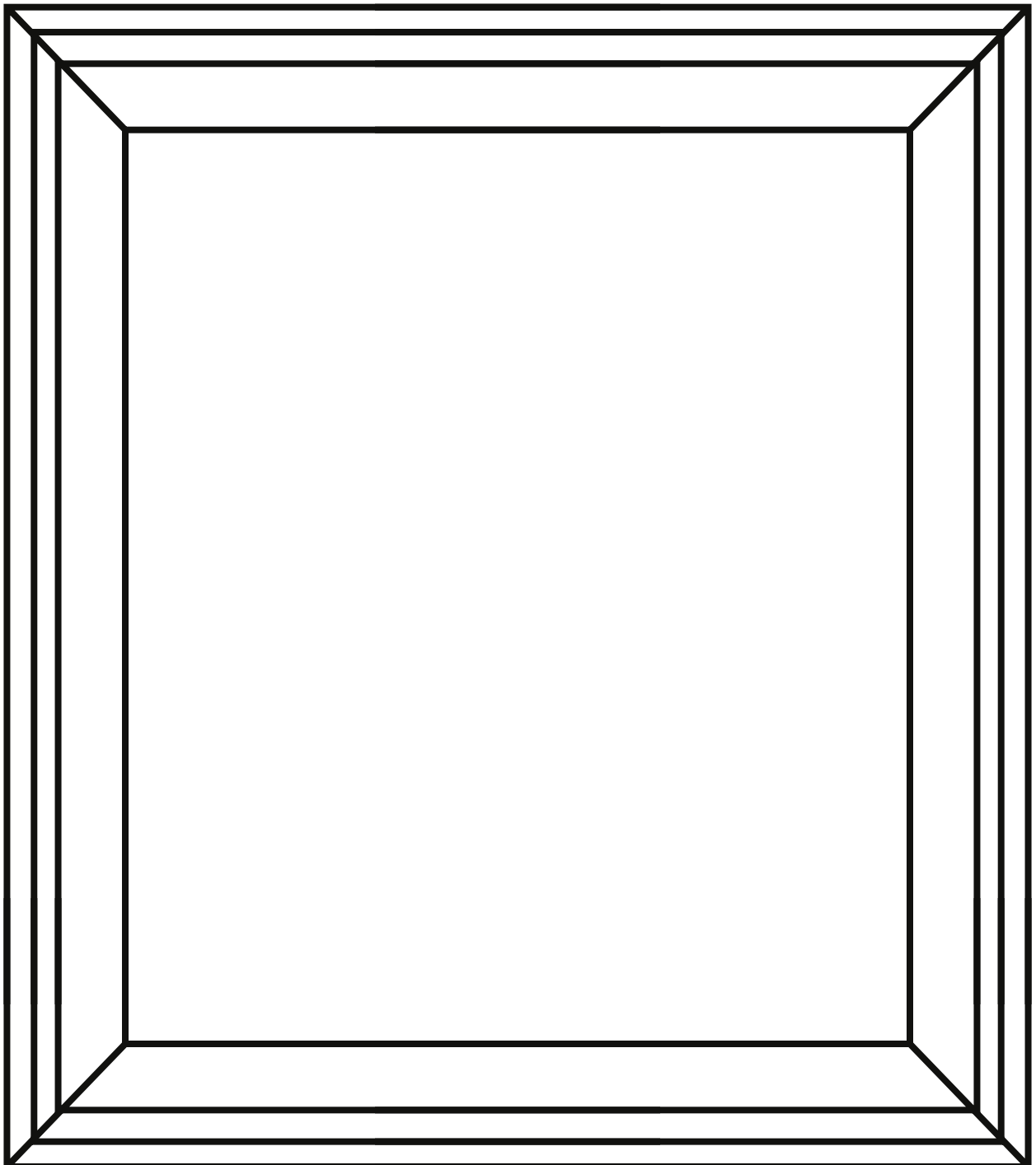
Take a break and go for a short walk or run.

Play a game or do a puzzle.

4. Catch My Feelings Kindness and Happiness

Your feelings can affect others. If you are cranky or moody, people around you might start feeling that too!

Let's spread happy feelings! Draw or write about things you could do to help someone 'catch' kindness and happiness.



5. Body Language Detective

Can you use the clues to work out how this person is feeling? Write or draw your answers in the spaces.

1. My eyes are sparkling, and I'm jumping up and down.

Feeling: _____

2. My eyes are teary and my voice shakes when I speak.

Feeling: _____

3. I'm standing up straight and speaking clearly and confidently.

Feeling: _____

4. My eyes are wide, my eyebrows rise, and I gasp.

Feeling: _____

5. I'm hunched over with my head in my hands.

Feeling: _____



5. Body Language Detective

Can you use the clues to work out how this person is feeling? Write or draw your answers in the spaces.

6. My hands are shaking, and my voice is trembling.

Feeling: _____

7. I'm looking at the ground and speaking softly.

Feeling: _____

8. I'm standing tall with my chest out and a big smile.

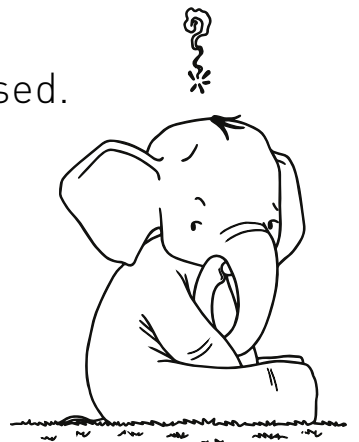
Feeling: _____

9. I'm clapping my hands and smiling.

Feeling: _____

10. I'm frowning and my arms are crossed.

Feeling: _____



6. "I" Words

Which sentences use "I" words? Circle them.

This is all your fault.

I feel angry.

Look what you did!

I feel confused.

You made me sad.

You're making me mad.

I feel upset.

I feel lonely.

6. “I” Words

Help Mini find “I” words to say how she feels.

Milo is explaining a maths problem, but Mini doesn’t understand it.

Instead of “You’re confusing me”,

Mini could say: I feel _____

Milo is playing dodgeball but forgot to ask Mini.

Instead of “You left me out”,

Mini could say: I feel _____

Mini loses a game she’s playing.

Instead of “It’s not fair!”,

Mini could say: I feel _____

Milo uses Mini’s favourite pink pencil without asking.

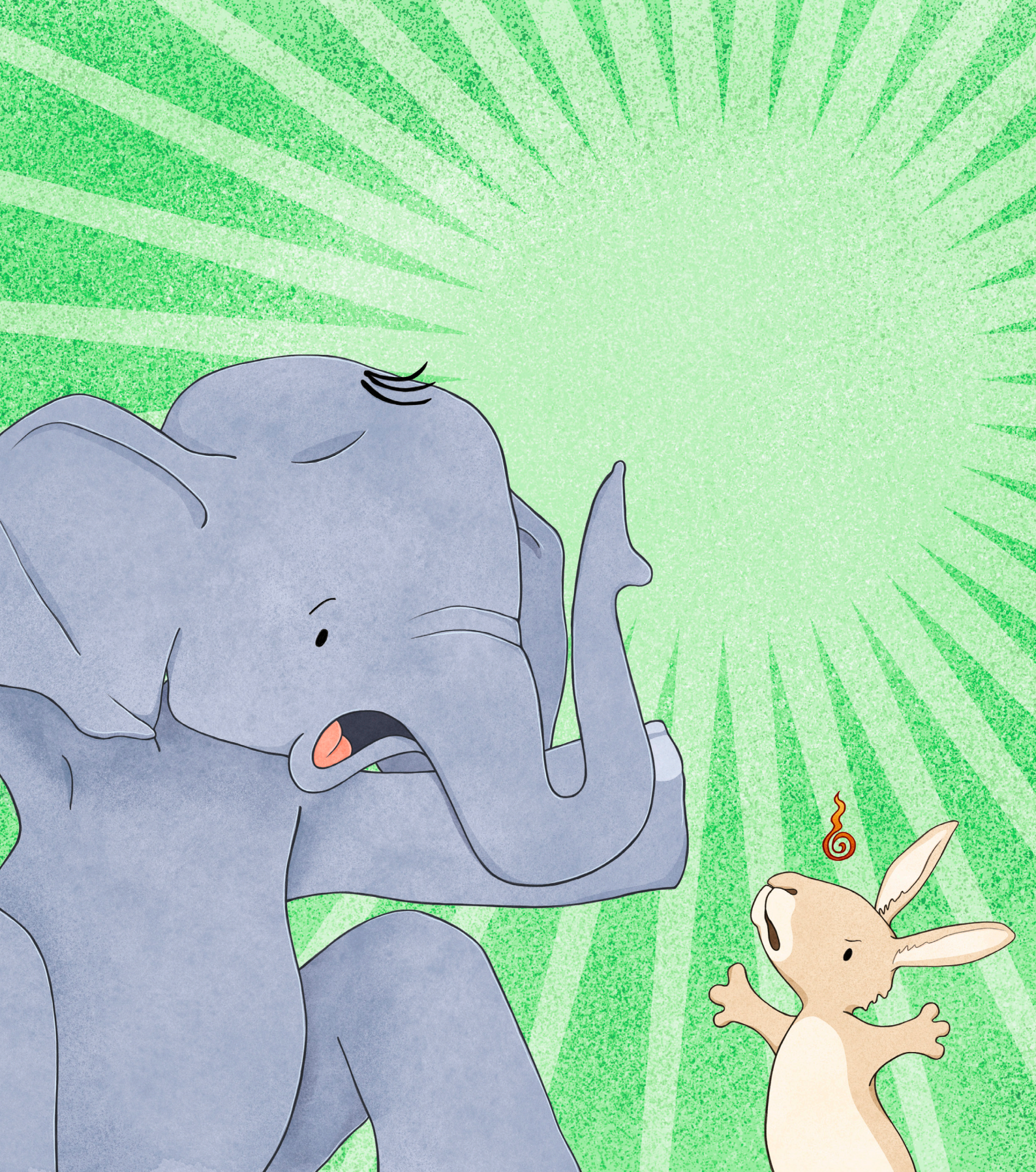
Instead of “You are so annoying”,

Mini could say: I feel _____

Milo is explaining how to play a game, but Mini is confused.

Instead of “You’re not explaining it properly!”,

Mini could say: I feel _____



**WALKER
BOOKS
CLASSROOM**



Free education resources written
to the Australian curriculum.

classroom.walkerbooks.com.au