

My Elephant Is Blue

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"I'm Blue," the elephant said.

"You're crushing me," I said.

"Yet I find you very comfortable," said Blue.

A Discussion and Activity Guide about Sadness

My Elephant Is Blue is an exploration of what it's like to live with feelings of sadness. In the story, a child wakes up to find they are crushed under the weight of sadness, which is personified by an elephant named Blue. Trying to push Blue off is useless at first, as is the advice the child receives from family, books, and experts. Gradually, the child learns more about Blue and is able to live with the elephant without feeling crushed. Yet Blue remains present, signifying that sadness can sometimes linger for a long while, even though it need not be debilitating.

This reading guide suggests ways for you to explore the story's themes further with children. Below are conversation starters and art activities to help children express their feelings. At the end of the guide, you will find a list of organizations that offer support for those who are impacted by sadness or depression. You can access this guide online at www.flyawaybooks.com/resources, where you can follow the links for more information.



Discussion Starters

- Who is the main character in the story? Who are the other important characters?
- What do you think this story is about? Why do you think that?
- Why do you think the author chose an elephant to symbolize sadness?

- Why is the elephant named Blue?
- The mom offers the child chocolates. Why are they heart shaped?
- Why do you think Blue cries in the story?
- Why do you think Blue never leaves?
- In this story, the color blue represents unhappiness, pink represents feeling good, and yellow represents happiness. What colors do you associate with these feelings?



- Food is mentioned several times in the story. What do you think the food signifies? There may be more than one answer for this! Why do you think the mom offers the child chocolate? What type of food would your parent or caregiver try to tempt you with if you were feeling sad?
- As the story progresses, the illustrations show us what's happening out the windows. What do you see, and what do you learn from this? Why do you think the illustrator chose to portray the world in this way?



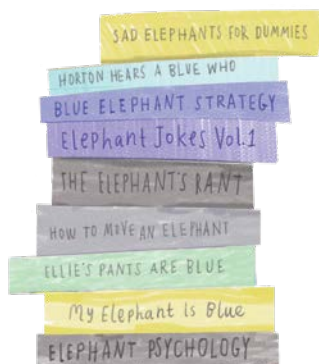
- When the brother reacts to the elephant's presence by saying, "Wow, that's different," the child responds, "I don't want to be different. At least, not like this." What are a few good ways to be different or interesting that the child might prefer?
- Getting outside for exercise helps to turn things around for the child and Blue. What are other things they could do that might help them feel better?



Activities

- Blue, pink, and yellow are used in the story to illustrate how the elephant is feeling. List four more colors and the feelings you associate with them.
- Write a poem about your favorite color and the feelings and emotions it stirs in you. Or if you prefer, create a piece of art showing how your favorite color makes you feel.

- Other countries and cultures have different views on what colors match with various feelings. Find out what the color blue signifies in other parts of the world.
- The story shows Mom reading from a stack of books that have interesting titles. Some are titles of actual books with the word *elephant* added just for fun! Come up with five more "elephantized" titles that you could add to the pile.



- The author picked an elephant to show the sadness the child is feeling. What feeling might other animals portray? For example, what feeling might a tiger represent? Or a monkey, cat, dog, or flea? Pick one, and make a drawing of the animal and the feeling you associate with it.
- Color the [drawing of the child and Blue](#). You can print and color it as many times as you like!



Organizations That Offer Support

National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.nami.org

The National Alliance on Mental Illness offers [resources for parents](#) and operates a nationwide network of [support groups](#) for family members of people who struggle with mental illness.

Child Mind Institute

www.childmind.org

The Child Mind Institute maintains an extensive list of [guides](#) to help parents and other adults support children who are struggling.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

www.aacap.org

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry's [Facts for Families Guide](#) provides concise, up-to-date information on many issues that affect children, teenagers, and their families.