Illustrations of Child Anxiety

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Psychology and Art Departments- Sponsor: Gary Richman of Art and Art History Department

INTRODUCTION
Mental illness is extremely prevalent among children, with anxiety disorders being the most common. “Of the 74.5 million children in the United States, an estimated 17.1 million have or have had a psychiatric disorder—more than the number of children with cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined” (Child Mind Institute 2015). Books are not only used as an educational tool for literacy among children, but also as a way to introduce challenging topics. Combining my two majors, Art and Psychology, I aimed to create a real-life tool that exposes children to the topic of mental health. I created a character, Henry, who is 6 years old and has Germophobia, an irrational fear of germs. In this book I included examples of family therapy, breathing techniques, and exposure therapy to try and educate as well as offer tools for children on a cognitively appropriate level.

“Henry’s brain tells him the ground is full of germs and makes him feel afraid”

METHODS
• Researched common illustration techniques for children’s books
• Created a relatable character
• Created a storyboard with appropriate syntax
• Sketched out images and fine-tuned sentences
• Began carving 8x10 Linoleum plates
• Printed each plate on the printing press
• Made 5 paper copies of each image
• Scanned each image onto the computer
• Edited and cropped each image
• Created document with words and images

DISCUSSION
I worked to create sentences and compositions that translated a mature concept into one that could be understood by a child. It was a process of creating purposeful illustration through the use of a storyboard. The purpose of illustration is to build a connection between words and pictures. The combination of words and images allows for higher levels of comprehension by a child through targeting a diversity of senses. I chose this topic because of the existing stigmas and lack of resources surrounding mental health. It is important that children’s literature uses inclusion and positive stories of neuro-diversity to promote a healthier and more tolerant generation.

“The therapist tells Henry that when he starts to feel panicked, take three slow breaths: In out, In out, In out”

“Anxiety disorders affect one in eight children. Research shows that untreated children with anxiety disorders are at higher risk to perform poorly in school, miss out on important social experiences, and engage in substance abuse” (Child Mind 2015).

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LITERATURE CITED