



Synopsis of children's book 'Go Away, Mr Worrythoughts!'

By Nicky Johnston



At five years old, Bayden's life is difficult. He struggles to sleep, eat and laugh. He stands out from a crowd, not because of the things he does, but because he appears quite, disengaged and often isolated. Bayden is fearful of failure, fearful of how others view him and fearful of many things in his future. Bayden is like thousands of kids around Australia today. He struggles with anxiety well beyond that which the majority of children and adults experience. Yet for Bayden, there is hope. It comes in the form of a simple 'externalisation' technique that, when used, allows Bayden to take control of his anxiety. A technique detailed in Nicky Johnston's best-selling children's book, *Go Away, Mr Worrythoughts!*

Nicky first wrote *Go Away, Mr Worrythoughts!* to assist her eldest son Bayley, who suffers from Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). This simple story tells of his battle with anxiety and the simple technique he has learned and used for over six years to beat his 'worry thoughts'. The book was written to remind Bayley that he has the power to take control of his anxiety and live a happy life.

Anxiety and the experience of worry thoughts can consume the life of a child, robbing them of fun, laughter and freedom. The story details a 'cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) technique', taught to Bayley by Melbourne based Child Therapist, Charmaine Holmes, that allows Bayley to control and manage his worry thoughts. A technique that thousands more children around Australia are using, thanks to Nicky's books.

In Short, *Go Away, Mr Worrythoughts!* tells the story of Bayden who is consumed by anxiety and worry thoughts. It describes how he struggles to eat, to sleep and to find joy and laughter in the things that most other children take delight in. The book uses the character Mr Worrythoughts, an awful ugly monster, as the manifestation of Bayden's anxiety. Mr Worrythoughts is ever-present, telling Bayden he is bad, he will fail, he is not liked and that bad things will happen.

Then one day, Bayden stands up to Mr Worrythoughts. He recognises Mr Worrythoughts for what he is, a small voice that can be controlled and silenced simply by recognising he is feeling anxious and intentionally changing his thoughts to shift his negative feelings to positive ones. The book describes this as Bayden finding his 'superpowers' and reflects the very premise of CBT which suggests that we can all change our thoughts to change our feelings.

The ends showing a happy, confident Bayden enjoying his favourite book in a comfy seat. He knows Mr Worrythoughts is likely always to be lurking around, but armed with his superpowers, he has the power and the confidence to face any situation.

This parallels the life of Nicky's son who is arguably the 'poster child' for children living with anxiety. Bayley has successfully been 'managing' Mr Worrythoughts for six years now and lives life as a happy, confident and fun loving child. He is proof all children have superpowers against worry thoughts, they just need to learn to use them.