

**a
kids
book
about
school
shootings**

by Crystal Woodman Miller

**a
kids
book
about**

better together*

***This book is best read together,
grownup and kid.**

akidsco.com

a kids book about

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For my kids.

Intro

Over the years, school shootings and the practice of lockdown drills have increased in number, along with the frequency in which we (grownups and kids) worry about them. For many, the fear alone can be all-consuming and has challenged the fundamental belief that we are safe in our schools and community. Though it can be an uncomfortable topic to address, kids need grownups to acknowledge how difficult it is (even for us), and then offer a safe and healthy place for them to ask questions and navigate their thoughts, feelings, and emotions without judgment.

The chances of a shooting at an elementary school remain very small, and grownups have the responsibility to not only teach kids how to respond appropriately to potential danger but, more importantly, to assure them that they're safe and call attention to their bravery and resilience. It's important to teach kids that even if they are unable to control the circumstances around them, they can develop tools that will allow them to feel safe within themselves, by practicing some of the techniques in this book, as well as using some of your own.

Let's move bravely forward together.

Have you ever heard of a school shooting?

Maybe on the news or at school?

Maybe you've heard the grownups
around you talk about it at home?

**A school shooting is
when someone goes
into a school with a
plan to hurt or kill
people with a gun.**

You might be wondering,
why would somebody do this?

Well, there's no good reason
and we don't really know why.
But if you'd like to learn more,
talk with your grownup about it
so you can try to learn and
understand together.

My name is Crystal.

When I was a kid, there was
a shooting at my school.

I was 16 years old and a junior in high school.

It was very difficult to understand what was happening and I felt very scared and sad.

Even after it happened, I was still scared and sad for a long time.

But I have learned a lot since then—and I'm still learning!

Which is why I wanted to write this book, to help you understand school shootings a little better and the feelings you might have when you think about them.

First off,
school shootings are actually

super

rare.

It's true! The chances
of a school shooting
happening at your school are...

Very
Very
very
very
very
very
very
small.

I know it may feel like they happen more often, but that's because we hear about them all the time.

And it's easy to understand why. They're so big and scary, and we don't want them to happen.

(And they shouldn't.)

But just because
school shootings happen,
it doesn't mean it's going
to happen to you.

And worrying about it all the time
takes away from you being able
to enjoy yourself and make
happy memories.

However,
it's good to have a plan
in case of a school shooting
to make sure you're safe.

The same way that you wear a
helmet when you ride your bike
just in case you fall.

Or wear a seatbelt when you're
in the car in case you're ever
in an accident.

It doesn't mean it's going to happen.

But if it ever does, you'll understand what's happening and have the tools to help keep you safe.

That's why your school may have a plan that they've talked about in your class and maybe even practiced.

This is called a **drill**, an **active shooter drill**, or a **lockdown drill**.

That will look a little different for every school, but know that it's not meant to scare you.

It's there as a tool to help you in case of an emergency.

Some of the things you may
do during a drill are:
lock the doors,
turn off the lights,
and **get very quiet.**

But remember that grownups
are in charge of making the plan—
you don't have to worry about that!

Those could be your teachers,
principals, parents, or other
people in charge.

It's your job
to just

be a

kid

and pay attention to
the grownups' instructions
so you'll be ready in case
of an emergency.

That being said

— it's OK to feel afraid.

Or
worried,
sad,
mad,
frustrated,
confused,
panicked,
out of control,
anxious,
restless,
stressed,
angry,
or any other **emotion***
you can think of.

Or none of these.
Or all of these all at once.

It's OK! That's SO normal.

You're not alone.

The idea that a school shooting
could happen can cause
a lot of emotions.

**Emotions are something that you feel in your
head and in your body at the same time.
This is why they can be so overwhelming!*

No one can tell you how to feel.

Because your emotions are true
for you and their job is to protect
you and keep you safe.

That's why it's important
to listen to our emotions,

**but we don't have to
let them control us.**

This is something I had trouble with as a kid, especially after being in a school shooting.

It took me a */ooooooooooooong* time to learn that my emotions do not get to tell me what to do.

So if you're ever feeling
overwhelmed by your
emotions when you think about
a school shooting happening,

5 things that
here are
I like to do that you can try...

I

I look around the room and try to really notice all the details...

and try to find 5 things that I can hear, see, and feel.

Something like:

I can hear my heart beating in my chest and the clock ticking on the wall.

I can see my friend sitting next to me and all the posters in the room.

I feel the rug between my fingers or toes and the breeze from the fan hitting my face.

2.

**Repeat a sentence, a word,
or even a sound to myself
over and over again.**

This helps me calm down
and feel better sometimes.

What I like to say to myself is:

**I am safe and free from
the chaos around me.**

Sometimes I put melodies to it
and sing it like a new song!

3.

Give myself a really tight hug.

When I do that, I can feel
the fear falling right out of me!
This may seem silly, *but it works!*

4.

Take slow, deep breaths.

Really focus on the air and
how it feels going in and out.

Like blowing candles out
on a birthday cake.

5.

**Remember happy memories
and the people I love.**

Like going on a trip with my family!

Whenever I feel like I can't breathe,
or my hands are shaking,
and my body feels tense,
no matter where I am,
I remember these things and
I slowly start to feel better.

It takes a lot of practice,
but don't give up!

It might feel really weird at first,
but after a while, you'll start
to feel more in control.

XO

We've covered a lot of stuff so take a moment and talk to the grownup reading this book with you about your emotions, or concerns you may have about school shootings, and practice some of these exercises together.

Welcome back!
How'd it go?

While being prepared and learning how to handle all of the big emotions that come with the fear of a school shooting, it's important to remember—

**you're not
alone in this.**

You can use **your voice** to
express yourself and let other
people know how you feel,

but you can also use **your voice**
to make a change in your school,
or community, or even the world!

You can...

Write a letter

to the people who make decisions (like your local senators or governor) about how to prevent school shootings.

Talk to your grownup

about a plan in case anything like this should happen so you both know what to do.

Ask for more support
from people who are experts in dealing with school shootings.

Like your principal, school safety officer, or school counselor!

If somebody tells you that they

want to hurt you or someone else, please tell a grownup. You should always reach out to a trusted grownup when something doesn't feel safe.

And so much more!

Maybe you could get together with
your classmates and your grownups
and see what you can come up with!

If there's anything I've learned
from my experience,

it's that your voice matters.

Your emotions
Your experiences
You

matter:

And you don't have to live in fear.

Outro

You did it! You have begun an important conversation that you will probably revisit over and over again. And that is a good thing! It's a topic that dominates headlines, and therefore the minds of our kids. So be gentle, be patient, and listen to their questions, such as, "How does someone become a shooter?" or, "What do I do if I am in a shooting?" Address each question with age-appropriate answers, and then encourage kids to make a difference and create lasting change wherever they are.

As grownups, we have the privilege of reframing the conversation to help move kids from a place of fear, trauma, and anxiety toward a feeling of security, peace, and joy. I believe there is hope for kids to experience the innocent, carefree childhood they deserve without the incessant worry of being involved in a shooting. Once kids discover they have the power to inform their own minds and bodies and choose which emotions have power and which ones don't, then they will understand what it is to be safe within themselves, and they will likely be less impacted by the things that feel unsafe around them.

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