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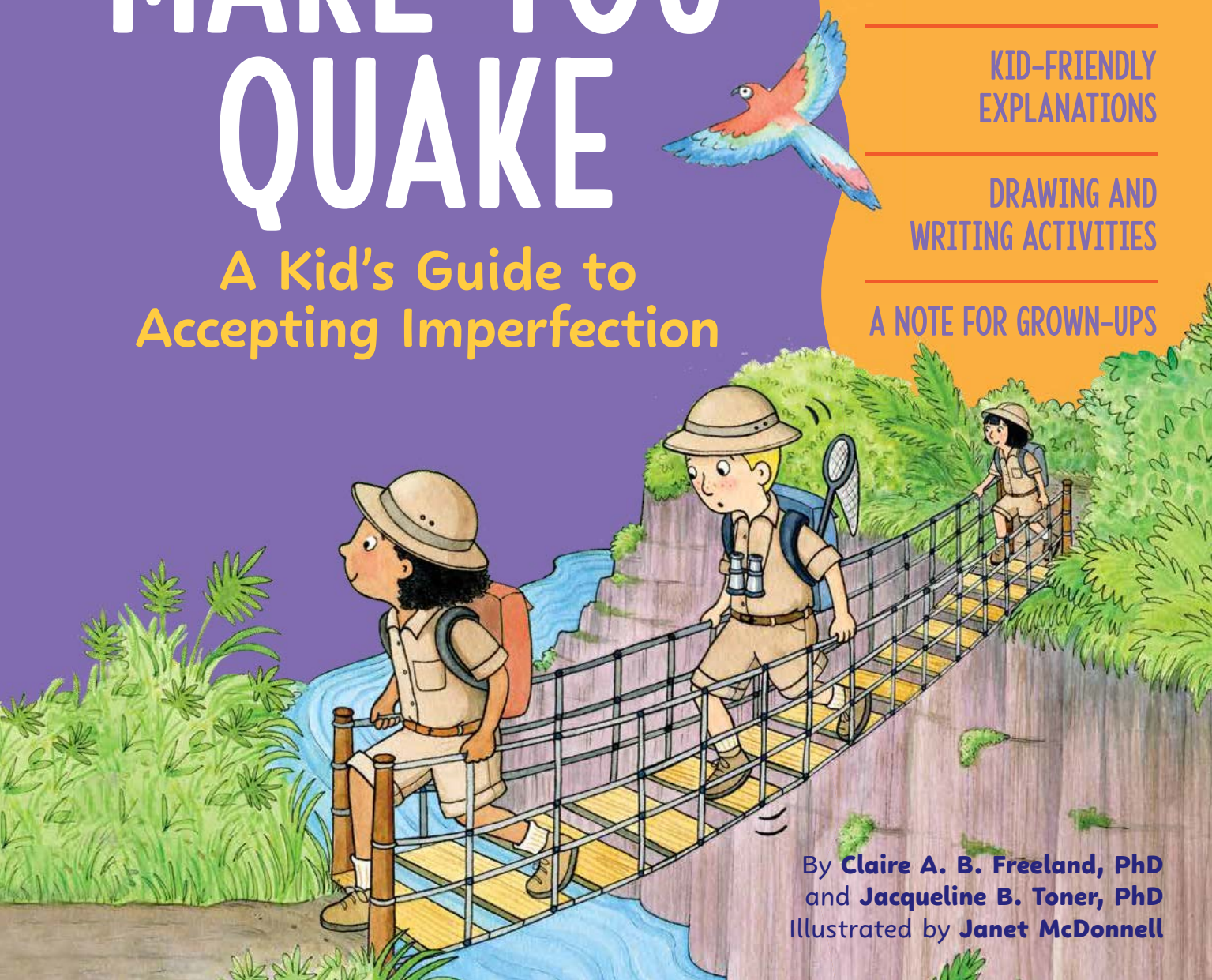
WHAT TO DO WHEN MISTAKES MAKE YOU QUAKE

A Kid's Guide to Accepting Imperfection

A WORKBOOK for Kids from the AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Includes:

- SCIENCE-BACKED SKILLS AND STRATEGIES
- KID-FRIENDLY EXPLANATIONS
- DRAWING AND WRITING ACTIVITIES
- A NOTE FOR GROWN-UPS



By **Claire A. B. Freeland, PhD**
and **Jacqueline B. Toner, PhD**
Illustrated by **Janet McDonnell**

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American Psychological Association

For Howard, with love and gratitude—*CABF*

For Henry, Julian, Lilly, and Margo as you face the many adventures ahead—*JBT*

Magination Press
Books for Kids From the American Psychological Association

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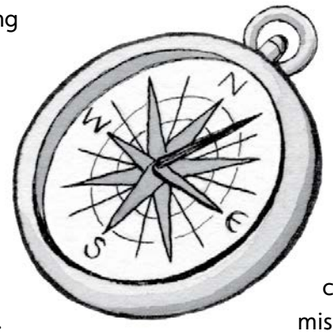
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NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



It's natural to be afraid of making mistakes. You may be afraid of saying the wrong thing during a meeting or getting lost when traveling in a new city. Kids can think this way, too. In fact, some kids are so afraid of making mistakes that they may hold back from challenges and blame others for their errors. A kid may forgo an activity for fear of not excelling. Or a student may fail to complete assignments on time due to erasing too much, rewriting, or overdoing the task in some way. Kids who worry about being wrong or making mistakes may try to control situations to ensure their success, blame others for their failings, see themselves in a negative light, or be critical in general. They may have trouble making decisions for fear of making the wrong one. It's exhausting trying to avoid mistakes—for you and for your child.

Understanding and accepting mistakes can help kids bounce back more easily from life's insults and encourage kids not to be afraid to learn new things. So what can you do when your child goofs, strikes out, or does not achieve the hoped-for goal? How can you as a parent foster a willingness to make mistakes, to deal with failure, and to accept defeat? How can you respond when you observe that your children are thrown off by worries that they won't succeed?

You may have said, "it's okay, everybody makes mistakes" and "no one's perfect" more times than you can count. You're on the right track when you reassure your child in this way. Next, you can further assist and support your child to learn a more balanced approach to life. You can help your children tolerate mistakes and gain knowledge and confidence from their experiences.

What to Do When Mistakes Make You Quake, Revised Edition will help you and your child examine the thoughts and beliefs that cause your child to worry about making mistakes. This workbook will offer strategies to think differently and be calmer in the face of life's inevitable challenges. The basic approach relies on the cognitive-behavioral principle that thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are interconnected. In other words—what one thinks affects one's emotions and, in turn, how one feels and behaves.

What do children who worry about mistakes think? It can be hard to say because these kinds of beliefs occur quickly and, typically, outside of awareness, and may be different for everyone. As you begin to help your child identify his thoughts, you can then help him notice the types of thoughts that get in the way. For example, suppose your child is refusing to learn to ride a bike. His underlying thought might be "I'll never be able to learn," or "I won't be able to do it and will really hurt myself," or "I'll look ridiculous," or "I won't be able to handle it if I don't learn right away," or something else entirely.

When your child refuses to try riding the bike, he is left with his thoughts—he denies himself the actual experiences that would give him a chance to see he can learn. Here's a different kind of situation: a child who spends an enormous amount of time studying because she feels she must not have any wrong answers. She may think, "If I don't get everything right, I'm a complete failure," or "I have to get everything right because everyone expects it," or "I'll get an answer wrong if I don't study for hours and keep re-checking to make sure I still know the information." Her very success convinces her that extra studying is necessary. You already know that pushing either child to make behavioral changes won't work; instead, we offer a gentle but effective way to make step-by-step progress.

Before you begin using this book, we suggest that you read through it yourself. Talk with your child about your own experiences growing up, how you coped with making similar kinds of mistakes to the ones they fear, and how you cope now. While your child is trying the exercises in the book, you can enhance the experience by giving them room to experiment with making mistakes or with trying something challenging.

Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind as you work through this book:

- Emphasize effort more than outcome.
- Let your child make mistakes—don't do your child's work.
- Model self-acceptance and lose gracefully.
- Comment on why you're okay when you make a mistake.
- Demonstrate a sense of humor.
- Balance work with play.
- Let your child's achievement be their own—don't measure yourself by your child's accomplishments (or mistakes).

You and your child are about to embark on an exploration of as-yet uncharted territory. Take it slow: read one or two chapters at a time. Encourage your child to do the exercises along the way. Talk together about how the examples and exercises from the book apply in real life. Be a patient partner in exploring new ways of thinking and being. And by all means enjoy this special time together. You and your child have some wonderful paths to travel together.

All kids have to deal with making mistakes; however, children who frequently and consistently struggle with worries about mistakes may be at high risk for an anxiety disorder, depression, negativity, frustration, or anger. You may find other books in the **What-to-Do Guides for Kids®** series useful to address related difficult feelings or problems. Check with your pediatrician or a mental health professional for additional resources, if needed.