

Book review

Jemma's Journey

Category: Book Reviews / Children & Youth

Author: Janet Peters, illustrated by Janet Jeanes

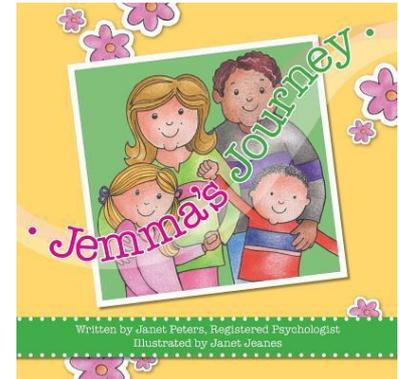
Year: 2013

Publisher: Wakkajak, NZ

ISBN: 9780473268398

Audience: Supporting Others, For Mental Health Workforce

Summary: An illustrated book to help children of parents who live with mental health issues



Several copies of Janet Peters' lovely children's book *Jemma's Journey* landed on my desk a few weeks ago, generously donated to us by a kind benefactor. We were given so many that we decided to give some away on Facebook and asked people to tell us why they or their organisation would like a copy.

The responses were lovely, and really drove home the need for resources explaining mental health and mental distress to young children whose parents are unwell. A few examples:

"What an amazing sounding book. I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder 21 years ago and have a 6.5 year old. He's an incredible kid but very sensitive. I'm in good health but have times when things are tough. This would be a great way to explain it to him."

"I 'need' a copy for my wonderful 7-year-old son. He's so kind and loving, writes me love notes and makes me things out of coloured card when I'm not doing too well, but I don't know how to explain in an effective way what is wrong and it really hurts me for him to see me 'not well'."

"I work in an acute adult mental health inpatient service and whilst we have some awesome people and services we can refer to, we have very limited resources on the unit for children whose parent/caregiver is in crisis. I would love a copy!"

Aimed at very young children, *Jemma's Journey* tells the story of Jemma, a little girl whose mother "has mental health problems" and sometimes "would cry, be suspicious, and say weird things".

Author Janet Peters is a registered psychologist who, as a child, had a parent with mental health issues. She clearly knows what children worry about when they know their parents are ill – is it my fault? Will I get sick, too? Will mum ever come home from hospital?

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Beautifully illustrated and thoughtfully written, this little gem is a great resource for parents who want to start a conversation with their children about mental health. It subtly guides parents about how to reassure worried children and lets young readers know they are loved and cared for no matter what. I loved this little book and I think you will too.

Reviewed by Sophia Graham, Communications & Marketing Manager at the Mental Health Foundation

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