

**Title:** Lessons of a LAC

**Subtitle:** It can be hard to stop worrying when you're a Little Anxious Creature!

**Author:** Lynn Jenkins

**Illustrator:** Kirrili Lonergan

**Publisher:** EK Books

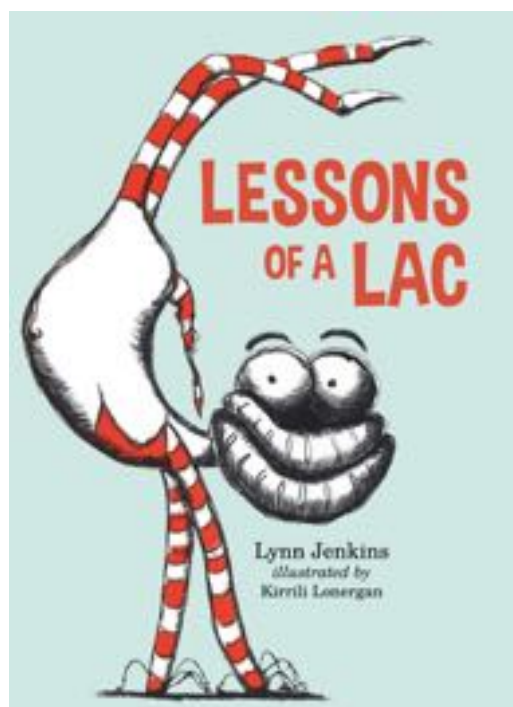
**Price:** \$19.99

**ISBN:** 9781925335828

**Publication date:** April 2018

**Audience age:** 4 to 9

**Key Curriculum Areas:** English, The Arts, Health and Physical Education



## **SYNOPSIS:**

*Lessons of a LAC* is an essential resource tool, presented in an engaging picture-book format, to help children manage their worries and anxieties. Through the characters of Lopyy the LAC ('Little Anxious Creature') and Curly Calmster, kids discover a useful way to think about their anxieties — the first crucial step in managing them. This is the first book in the gorgeous 'Lessons of a LAC' series, designed to give children ways to think about and manage common emotional difficulties.

**THEMES:** Anxiety, wellbeing, social and emotional well-being, perspective, early intervention, fear, feelings, happiness, calm, mindfulness, resilience, worry, strategies for managing anxiety and worry.

## **SELLING POINTS:**

- This book is a must for children, both at home and at school, especially those who are prone to worry. Early intervention is the KEY. BUT everyone worries — and big or little worries can all be managed the Lopyy and Curly way!
- Non-gender specific, appeals to both a national and international market.



- Anxiety and social emotional well-being are very topical.
- The author is an experienced and practising clinical psychologist and has a clear understanding of the type of issues affecting children.
- Part of a series that is used to run anxiety management workshops in schools.
- Simple characters that externalise anxiety chatter (Loppy) and its management (Curly). They are easy for children to relate to.
- Excellent resource tool and conversation starter for worries, anxiety, thinking styles, breathing, attitude and perspective.

**WRITING STYLE:** Conversational and educational in the realm of mental well-being.

**ILLUSTRATION STYLE:** Simplistic and eye-catching. There is continuity to it with the red-and-white-striped tail that flows from page to page throughout the entire book. Packed with visual representations of several emotions and body language.

**AUTHOR MOTIVATION:** Working for years in clinical practice, Lynn has developed a passion for early intervention. With her knowledge of brain development, she believes it is very important that children receive information about how to manage typical emotional difficulties in an accessible way, so they can grow up with a skill set and the confidence to deal with such issues as they come up in life.

#### **AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:**

## Lynn Jenkins

Lynn is an author as well as a practising clinical psychologist and mum, Lynn is very passionate about assisting children with social and emotional issues via the platform of picture books and their coinciding school visits.

She wrote *Lessons of a LAC*, *Brave* and *Perfect Petunias* — which are the first, second and third books in a five-book series — to give children a way to think about and manage worry and anxiety. The remaining two will be: *Grey Glasses-itis* (assisting with mood) and *Tree* (assisting with loss).

A further picture book by Lynn and Kirrili is *Ollie's Treasure*, which taps into another of Lynn's passions: mindfulness.

Aside from writing, Lynn teaches mindfulness (to children and adults) and children's yoga, and counsels children and their parents from her psychology practice, Life Matters Psychologists in Merewether, NSW.

## Kirrili Lonergan

Kirrili is a picture book illustrator, a former paediatric nurse and a mother of four. She is currently completing her Diploma in Art Therapy and she is passionately involved in the children's book community. She has been an active committee member of the NSW CBCA Sub-branch for many years and volunteers for Book 4 Outback ensuring good quality literature reaches children in outback NSW.

Together, Lynn and Kirrili visit schools to present the **Lessons of a LAC Workshops**. These workshops extend the lessons in the picture books and leave children with a clear understanding of what anxiety is and a tool-belt of skills to manage it. They believe that **EARLY INTERVENTION** is the key. They also provide professional development for teachers. Teachers' understanding about anxiety will increase. They will be taught simple techniques on how to manage anxiety in themselves as well as in children. For example, a variety of ways to calmly breathe and relax; mindfulness; self-talk. They will learn to draw emotions and how to teach children how to draw emotions as a way to express themselves. Teachers will generally be made more aware of anxiety in children and in themselves, and be armed with a variety of tools they can use straight away!

### INTERVIEW:

#### AUTHOR

#### What is the inspiration for this story?

Seeing anxious kids in clinical practice and the distress it causes them and their ability to move forward in everyday life activities. To give children characters they can relate to and learn from.

#### What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Seeing the characters of Lopy and Curly be turned into illustrations and then finger puppets and plushie toys. I have always thought of anxiety as a little creature and suddenly there he was!

#### What was the most challenging part of this project?

Probably working out the acronym LAC. I spent a good few days thinking about it and experimenting with various arrangements of words.



## ILLUSTRATOR

**What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.**

The illustrations were a mix of mediums including ink, pastels, charcoal and gouache.

**What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

The most rewarding part of the process for me was bringing the characters to life and trying to use facial expression and body language to express the various emotions. I feel that its visual simplicity helps to accentuate the message in the book.

**What was the most challenging part of this project?**

The most challenging part was lining up the striped tail from page to page but in saying that, it was also fun!

## TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

Fits into Mental Health and Well-Being (MH) and Relationships (RS).

1. Read 'Lessons of a LAC' to the children; discuss how the characters interacted and how Curly Calmster was able to help Lopy. Discuss with students to brainstorm ways they can show kindness to each other.

After the brainstorm have children draw a picture of themselves being kind and writing a sentence describing their picture.

**Optional/additional activity:**

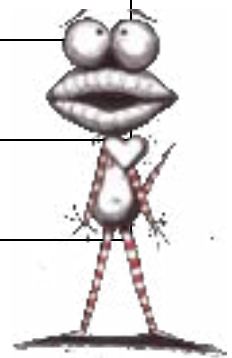
Create 'kindness cards' out of cardboard. Discuss the notion of 'random acts of kindness' as a way to show kindness to others. On small cards of teacher is kind and leave it for them on their chair/desk/bag/etc.

Perhaps brainstorm some reasons people would be described as 'kind' and list these on the board beforehand *e.g., play nicely, helpful, smiley.*

**RESOURCES:** Lessons of a LAC, cardboard, Kindness Page Worksheet

## Kindness

|  |
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2. Discuss feelings associated with being worried, e.g., sad, hurt, sick, angry, embarrassed.

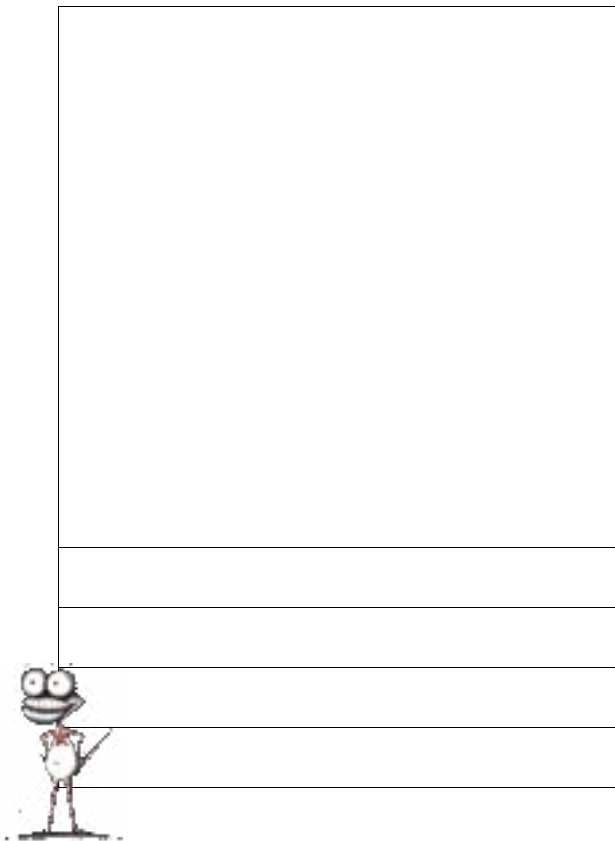
Draw 'worry'. Notice the size, the colour, the shape. Discuss with the children if Curly spoke to them, how would the size, shape, colour of their worry change (e.g., smaller, lighter colour, softer shape)? Go back over the pictures with the children and talk about the idea that the characters in this book show feelings. Talk about how the illustrator made the characters look worried or look calm. Go through the descriptions of the characters with the students and discuss how the illustrator showed this.

Ask students to create their own kindness critter. Using their brainstorm of how to be kind to each other have students design their own character that could make them or a friend feel happier.

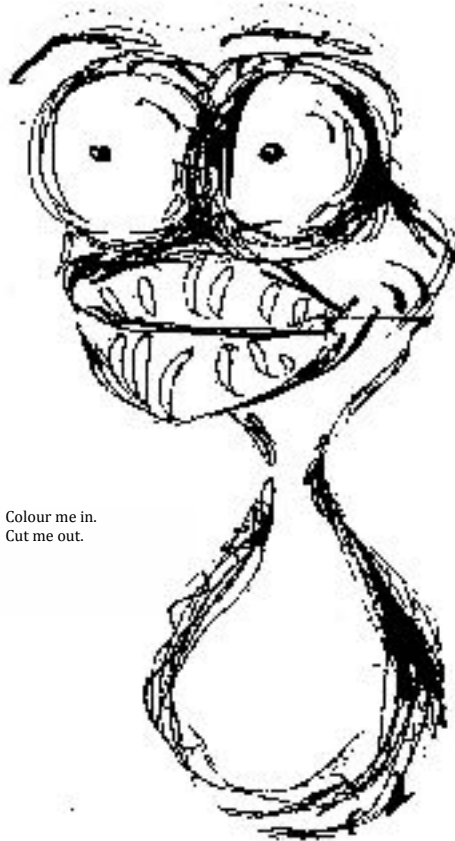
**Resources: Lessons of a LAC, paper and coloured pencils, and Kindness Critter Worksheet**

Session Five

Kindness Critter



3. Make your own Lopy using folded paper to make legs and arms. See attached.



1. Colour me in.
2. Cut me out.

Activity Sheet @ Lessons of a LAC 2014

# EK BOOKS TEACHER NOTES



1. Glue the end of the red strip to the end of the white strip at a 90 degree angle.



2. Fold vertical and crease then fold horizontal and crease.



3. Continue until you run out of paper. To make longer arms and legs strips may be glued together.



4. Once complete use sticky tape to attach arms and legs to Lopypy.



4. Brainstorm as a class what other feelings they associate with anxiety. How does being anxious make you feel? If Lopypy felt anxious all the time what other problems may occur? Have children fill out Lopypy the LAC brainstorm activity sheet filling it with feeling words (both emotional and physical) that they link with anxiety. After they have finished their brainstorm (both as a class and individually) have them complete the sentence at the bottom of the worksheet; I feel anxious when...

### **Differentiation**

To scaffold this lesson further complete the Lopypy the LAC activity as a class and have children complete Curly Calmster sheet on their own with brainstorming calming words, feelings and emotions. The Curly Calmster activity can also be completed as an extension activity.

**Resources: Lessons of a LAC. Lopypy the LAC worksheet, Curly Calmster worksheet**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Loppy the LAC

Brainstorm as many anxious words and feelings as you can and place them around Loppy.



I feel anxious when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Curly Calmster

Brainstorm as many calming words and feelings as you can and place them around Curly.



I feel calm when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



5. Discuss with the children the idea that the artist behind the book enhanced the characteristics of Lopy through the illustrations. As Lopy likes to watch for danger and talk about it, he has large lips and eyes.

Pose questions to the students about the illustration style within Lesson of a LAC highlighting different pages and compositions as you do.

- Why do you think the colours were limited?
- Does the colour red make you think of anything else? (danger, alarm, etc)
- Look at the cross hatching and shadows within the illustrations and ask why this is important to the characters?
- Could you predict the story by just reading the visual text?
- Compare the images of Lopy growing compared to Lopy when Curly is floating up towards him. How have simple facial expressions been changed to change the emotion of the character?

Have children complete the cartoon eye challenge page.

### **Differentiation**

Have students create simple stick figure illustrations with large eyes and have them try to get as much emotion into the characters as possible. Have them share their illustrations with a peer and see if the emotion can be identified.

**Resources: Lessons of a LAC, Cartoon Eye Worksheet**



## Using Eyes



Try to just draw eyes and eyebrows to get as much emotion as you can. Experiment and then try to match the feelings below with the correct eyes?

|                 |                  |                |                |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                 |                  |                |                |
| <b>Confused</b> | <b>Sleepy</b>    | <b>Sick</b>    | <b>Scared</b>  |
|                 |                  |                |                |
| <b>Thinking</b> | <b>Surprised</b> | <b>Sly</b>     | <b>Worried</b> |
|                 |                  |                |                |
| <b>Scared</b>   | <b>Angry</b>     | <b>Shocked</b> | <b>Happy</b>   |

6. Look the simplicity of Lippy's facial features. Identify shapes that make up his face and body (e.g., circles, boomerangs, rain drops). Using the shapes compare them to Aboriginal artworks, symbols and storytelling.

Discuss the simplicity of the black line work illustrations and how the simplicity has created character and emotion. Children may like to create their own characters using simple shapes. This encourages purposeful and creative play in a structured activity which gives a strong sense of well-being and develops a connection and contribution to their society.

7. Discuss worry, frustration, calm and happy as feelings in the book. Encourage children to show these expressions on their faces and in their body, and reinforce that when they listen to Lippy they feel a certain type of emotion and when listening to curly they feel another type of emotion. This fosters communication and interaction for health and well-being.
8. Discuss the characteristics of Curly – e.g, kind, helpful, supportive and how they impact on Lippy's frame of mind.
9. Use the book as a response to literature tool. Discuss acronyms using LAC – Little Anxious Creature as an example.
10. Note the punctuation and particularly the exclamation marks, and coloured text and how they are used to convey an emotion (e.g., worry, calm). This encourages language for interaction.
11. Read the book and role play the representations of Lippy and Curly – what would Lippy say and what would Curly say?. Discuss the differences. Further discuss how the text and images have worked together to give meaning in combination with the story and informative text.