

Tips for Parents in getting the most out of this book.

Chloe's parents show us how challenging it can be to raise a healthy and happy child in what is frequently an unsafe and changing world. During the time it takes to raise a family, many parents will experience mental health challenges that arise from not feeling safe. When a person loses their job, as was the case with Chloe's father, they do not feel safe. An argument with a spouse, explosive anger, depression and drinking too much alcohol can each become our adaptive responses to feeling dysregulated and afraid. These neurobiological and emotional changes are not our fault. Indeed, often, despite our best intentions, our bodies betray us. Nonetheless, an essential aspect of being a parent is to take all necessary steps to feel safe and then convey to our children those cues of safety so that we can help our children feel safe.

Each page in this children's book reflects stages of physical arousal identified in Polyvagal Theory. From moment to moment, our body feels safe and socially engaged or unsafe and ready to either react (fight or flight response) or shut down and become dissociative (freeze response). These emotions and reactions (e.g. anger) are not your fault, but rather your body's best attempt to cope with a threatening situation that might be real or perceived.

Following is a list of suggested ways this book can be used by parents with their children.

1. You can read it to your child/children as you would with any other story and then discuss or answer any of their questions.
2. When answering their questions, do your best to encourage curiosity and compassion. For example, when Chloe is afraid of the storm, her dad shows compassion on his face rather than judgment. It is far better to validate your child's experience, such as "Big storms are scary" rather than "It's only a storm, silly".
3. Have your child identify the emotions that are experienced by the characters in the book. Open up a discussion about which emotions they experience the most and which emotions they rarely experience. See if you can understand why this is the case and what might be done to reinforce this or change your child's lived experience.
4. The book shows that parents can be a source of threat and a source of safety. As parents, we need to increase the opportunities by which we are seen as safe so as to help our children feel safe. See if you can re-read the book, identifying situations and scenes that convey "cues of safety". Help your child identify these situations (e.g. when Madame Violette sits beside Chloe under the tree and puts her arm around her).
5. Teach your child to feel safe by copying what Chloe does; for example, practice breathing correctly. As a person breathes in, their heart rate increases; when they breathe out, their heart rate decreases. Practising the "sigh" (a short in-breath followed by a long out-breath) is a perfect way to calm an anxious nervous system. This is why Chloe is taught to blow bubbles. Singing, laughing, swimming or playing a wind instrument are also excellent exercises for using this type of breathing pattern. You can incorporate this type of breathing before a potentially anxiety-provoking situation. For example, some children benefit from doing a few minutes of bubble-blowing before going out shopping and then again when they return home.

6. Foster emotional regulation: Encourage your child to identify their emotions and develop strategies for self-regulation. Refer to the book's story and characters as examples of how mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, or engaging in calming activities can help regulate their nervous system. Co-regulate your child's emotions by staying calm and breathing slowly with them.
7. Develop a coping toolkit: Help your child create a personalised toolkit containing strategies to manage fear and anxiety. This toolkit may include visual reminders, a list of calming activities, or even excerpts from the book that they find particularly helpful. Regularly review and update the toolkit based on your child's evolving needs.
8. Encourage peer support: Facilitate opportunities for your child to interact with others who have similar experiences. This can be done through playdates, support groups, or even online communities where they can share their stories, gain insights, and learn from one another.
9. Integrate lessons into daily life: Emphasize the book's teachings in your everyday interactions. Encourage your child to apply the concepts they've learned from the book when facing challenging situations, whether they are at school, with friends, or during family outings.
10. Chloe suffers from auditory hypersensitivities. Loud noises, such as a dog barking, or environments such as shopping centres or school assemblies, make her body feel unsafe, and she is then more likely to tantrum or shut down. If your child suffers from similar auditory sensitivities, consider having them access the Safe and Sound auditory training protocol from a trained clinician in your country. (<https://integratedlistening.com>).
11. Finally, if your child has special needs and auditory hypersensitivities, wearing headphones or starting a new therapy routine can be challenging. Use the book prior to starting therapy with a Doctor, Psychologist or Therapist by reading it multiple times as a social story to help prepare your child for therapy.

Tips for Therapists in getting the most out of this book.

Essentially, applying the principles of Polyvagal Theory can change a person's life. You can help your clients and the parents of your clients by teaching why breathing and heart rate are strongly correlated and why regulating breathing is a critical prerequisite to feeling safe.

Teach parents that their children's nervous system is designed to co-regulate based on their parent's facial expressions, voice tone and proximity. Thus, parents must learn to re-regulate their child's anger (fear) with facial cues of compassion, which naturally arise when one validates another's lived experience. In addition, parents can learn to calm a child by adding more melody to their voice when making a request. Low, flat commands, such as when we are angry (yelling), serve only to reinforce the sense of threat in the child's nervous system and further destabilise an already difficult moment. Increasing distance when highly dysregulated and moving closer as the child's nervous system calms can also hasten social connection and safety.

Address any auditory hypersensitivity issues and ask a parent if the child has had a history of Otitis Media (ear infections) or grew up in a household with an angry parent. These potential life events are frequently implicated in people with auditory hypersensitivities and respond well to the Safe and Sound Protocol.

The Safe and Sound Protocol is an evidence-based therapeutic tool designed to reset and return the nervous system to safety. The SSP features specially filtered music that stimulates the vagus nerve and is designed to work with other therapeutic approaches and modalities.

Consider reading the children's story to adults with a trauma history. We have found reading the story to the adult's "inner child" during moments of shutdown in therapy has allowed insight to occur into the wounded part, which can then be integrated by techniques such as EMDR.

Mothers who present with a history of domestic violence report that their children feel a sense of validation ("Hey Mum, that's me in the story") upon having the story read to them. These children often request the book be read repeatedly as they attempt to integrate their feelings and experiences.

Families with a domestic violence history are often not permitted to talk about their violent family life. This book has been successfully used with adolescent girls who often have difficulty trusting adult clinicians. The book allows them to see that other children have angry fathers, and they discover that the experiences that they had (and perhaps continue to have) are not their fault. They also see an example of another child who improves through non-confrontational approaches such as breathing and "music therapy". The children's book can help increase adolescents' motivation to try therapy and experience improvement.

Finally, the book and its story can be used to educate school staff about the children in the classroom with a dysregulated autonomic nervous system. Understanding that the challenging behaviours witnessed in the child are not the child's fault but their adaptive

response to trauma and/or developmental hearing injuries, can create a profound shift in the educational relationship and outcomes.