



When My Mom is Sad

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INTRODUCTION

When My Mom Is Sad is a story designed to help children deal with sadness in their parents. It began with the development of a preventive intervention for families with parental depression, Family Talk, which showed that family conversation and shared understanding about depression and resilience were both helpful and deeply valued by families.

More directly, When My Mom Is Sad is part of our work at Family Connections, a program to empower teachers to be able to deal with parental depression and related adversities which combines an early developmental lens on children, knowledge about depression in families, and a focus on center-based early childhood education. The Tell Me A Story project was developed as part of Family Connections as a way to focus on how children experience and talk about feelings and thoughts and how children's literature can encourage discussion of social-emotional themes. When My Mom Is Sad embodies our belief that breaking the silence can be very helpful to families.

When My Mom Is Sad has been written to reflect the concerns and questions a preschooler might have, and is structured to present a supportive conversation between a child and parent, in which the mother shares some important, age-appropriate information about depression. The story concludes with a reassurance that action is being taken in order to respond to the mother and child's needs, and therefore provides a responsive message of hope.

We hope that When My Mom Is Sad will help teachers, parents and children who read it to have the kind of discussion that will help them to find hope for the future and resources with which to build resilience in their children.

In the short papers for parents in the Family Connections materials, we deal more directly with depression, resilience, helping parents find the ability to cope, and the value of self-reflection for parents. We also cover similar themes in short papers for teachers.

We hope over the coming year to use When My Mom Is Sad in classrooms with children and their parents and receive guidance from parents and teachers about how it can best be of help.



My mom is sad lots of days.



Sometimes it seems like my brother and I are in trouble a lot. It feels like she is mad at us when she yells.



Sometimes it feels worse when she is quiet. When she is quiet like that and it goes on and on...and even when we ask her stuff or are nice on purpose – she still doesn't say anything, and doesn't smile.



It makes my stomach hurt and after a while, I want to hide somewhere.



**And I don't know why she is crying.
I think it is because I am a bad girl or
because my brother is being too loud.**



So I ask her, “Are you crying because I am such a bad girl?”



And then my mom looks at me
and I feel like I am seeing all the
way inside her eyes.



She tells me that I am not a bad girl. She says she is acting this way because she is depressed. She says depression is something she has – like when I had the flu and missed the Valentine’s Day party because I felt so yucky.



She says it wasn't my fault I had the flu
and it wasn't her fault I had the flu.
I just had it and I got better.



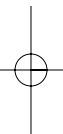
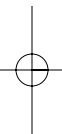
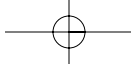
But I had to take care of myself to get better. My mom told me she is trying to get better too.



And then my mom does something I almost forgot she knew how to do. She smiles right at me. And I remember when she used to smile at me every day. It made my stomach ache go away.



I guess this means I am
going to feel better too.



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