

Worried

WOLVER



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# About the Author

**Francis May** has worked in education for many years.

Initially training for the younger age range, he has since gained wide experience across the Primary sphere, including management roles. He has headed up Special Needs departments and has acted as Deputy Head and Head teacher in several schools, mostly working in improving schools with previously poor OfSTED inspections.

Francis has several degrees in education specialising in the psychology of education and early years and it is these interests that have led to his research into all aspects of behavioural problems: anger management; anxiety; poor social interaction etc. His links with Mental Health teams and psychologists have supported and extended his own research into these areas; many of his ideas have also been generated from pupils with whom he worked over the years. His ideas are therefore grounded in active research coupled with successful current practice.



# Worried **WILBER**

## Teacher's Notes

Anxiety is a natural, normal feeling that everyone will experience at some point in their life; it relates back to cavemen times when we were faced by some sort of physical danger and we had to decide whether to run away or stay and defend ourselves. This 'fight' or 'flight' decision was helped by a rush of adrenaline that filled us with energy and prepared us to leap into action. Much of the stress of everyday life doesn't present as physical danger but our bodies' response is the same so, when we feel threatened or worried, we start to breathe quickly, our hearts race and we may feel sick or need the loo. All these symptoms actually make our bodies more able to move quickly by lightening the load (emptying the stomach, bowel and bladder) and forcing more oxygen round the body (breathing and heart rate increase) but can be frightening when they suddenly happen to us when we're anxious. Severe attacks of anxiety can result in a panic attack which can feel very frightening indeed to the sufferer. Some level of anxiety could therefore be said to be 'normal'; how then do we decide when it is not?

Childhood and adolescence is a wonderful time.....when you can look back at it from the elevated position of adulthood! However, when we really think back we can all remember times when we were worried: about being chosen for a team; when our parents argued; a looming test or exam; a visit to the dentist or doctor and many more occasions. If our anxieties were respected and handled sympathetically, we were not only able to cope on that occasion, but used the experience to build up skills in order to cope better in the future. This is a part of normal development: facing a challenge with help in order to be able to face it on your own later in life, thereby acquiring survival skills.

However, some people are more prone to worry than others: this could be genetic; it could be learned behaviour from someone else in the family; they may have suffered trauma or bereavement. They are then likely to get stressed or overanxious more easily. When this anxiety interferes with their daily life, i.e. affects school attendance, limits friendships, causes actual physical symptoms, affects eating and/or sleeping patterns, they need help in dealing with it.

These notes give ideas on two levels: firstly there are some general suggestions for you to help your child; more specific ideas relating to the individual situations on the Worried Wilber cards are included at the end. The specific ideas relate to both home, i.e. are for parents, and school, i.e. are for teachers. They also include suggestions for books which cover the individual topics.

Should you feel you need more professional help, the following websites are recommended:

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

[www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)

# Basic Guidelines in dealing with an anxious child

There are some simple steps that you can take to make life easier for an anxious child both in reducing stress caused by their environment and in handling their anxiety.

## Environmental

### Monitoring the input

Anxious people of all ages are very susceptible to information fed into their minds; this is especially true of an anxious child. The world is a worrying place with many unpleasant occurrences. Unfortunately in this technological age, graphic details are available 24/7 both in printed media and, more accessible to children, through television and the Internet. As the adult, **you** are responsible for monitoring this input; you do need to ensure that images seen and sounds heard, even inadvertently, are not going to result in more anxiety, always remembering that children see and hear far more than we ever think they do. They will, for example, observe and hear as they walk through a room with the television on; they will see pictures on a newspaper casually discarded on a table; they will glance at a computer screen as they pass by. Distressing scenes and facts are then likely to remain in their memories and provide the stimuli for anxiety: famine; war; child cruelty; violence in films; ill-treatment of animals as well as less frightening (to us) themes such as job loss (worry about the parents' jobs); lack of money etc. Parents are frequently amazed when children have picked up on marital discord: *'But we've never talked about it in front of them'* A child notices far more than we ever realise so we have a responsibility to protect them from unsuitable material and information.

## Routine

Anxious people tend to like predictable situations so it is important that life is well-organised for them. If you are dealing with an anxious child, you need to establish a regular routine and follow it. You can then introduce small changes gradually so that the child develops flexibility as they grow in confidence. Therefore, have regular mealtimes and bedtimes and follow the same routine each time: give the child little jobs to do towards the meal (getting out plates, setting the table etc.). Prepare school clothes, dinner money, PE kit etc. the night before to prevent panic in the morning. It is helpful if you have a timetable on display to illustrate what will happen each day - this is appropriate for both home and school. If a child knows what is going to happen, it will relieve some of the anxiety.

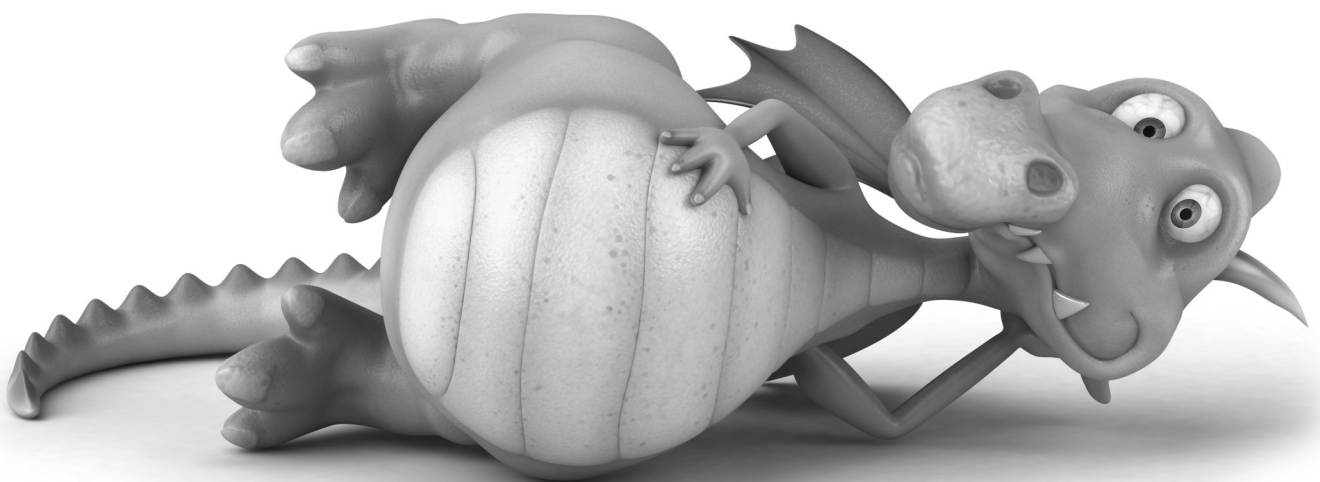


## Bedtime and Sleep

Tiredness can be one of the major causes of a rise in anxiety levels but anxious people may find it difficult to 'switch off' and let their minds relax into sleep.

The following ten suggestions may help:

1. The bedroom itself is important: it should be warm but not too hot; the bedclothes light
2. The room should be quiet but try playing a quiet CD
3. Establish a bedtime routine: perhaps a warm bath then brushing teeth
4. Have a chat to allow the child to express any anxieties they have about the day past or the following day
5. Read a book - but avoid 'cliff-hangers'
6. A light snack will help: avoid heavy food or snacks; cereal or milk are both good
7. Use a calm voice and be reassuring (sometimes difficult when you're tired yourself but worth it if it means your child settles quickly)
8. If you can avoid it, don't use the bedroom as a 'time out' room: you want the child to associate it with calm and peace
9. Leave the child with a nice image in their mind - remind them of something nice about the next day and reinforce their self esteem by giving praise of something that's happened that day, e.g. 'You were so good tidying your room for me'
10. Have one phrase you use like a mantra, e.g., 'I hope the angels give you lovely dreams'; 'Night, night sleep tight'



# Response and Techniques

## *Voice*

Always use a soft tone of voice and respond calmly, even when the same worry is repeatedly told. It can become very tedious especially when everything you say appears to be ignored but do try to sound calm even if you're not!

## *Gestures*

Use reassuring gestures, such as touching the child's arm, giving them a hug, etc. A gesture will often convey far more than words.

## *Options*

Don't give options to withdraw from the situation as this will reinforce the idea that there is a danger but instead show that there are options available on ways of dealing with it and that you are there to help and support.

## *Limits*

Setting limits is really important for any child but especially for an anxious child: it is very difficult to feel safe and secure when you don't know the boundaries or when these change from day to day. Hence the need for you to be clear about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and to ensure the rules are followed each time.

## *Encouraging positive 'self talk'*

Mantras have been shown to work with adults in developing self-confidence and self-belief: they can also be used positively with children. Help the child to recognise when they have tried a new skill, played well, learned something new, applied effort, or achieved a small step. Before a daunting event, help them see any links to things done/achieved previously. Show them what they can already do; what they have the potential to do. If you identify these, gradually the child will identify them for themselves.

## *Dealing with anger*

An anxious child can present as an angry child, especially if they lack the language skills to express their feelings. They can also get angry when they think you don't understand why they are anxious or if they feel you are not trying to deal with the situation. It is important you remain calm and appear in control. 'Timeout' strategies won't help as the child needs reassurance not further time for reflection. Allow them to talk it through and try to show the positive side: for example, if they are worried about a new class, discuss the advantages. You are aiming to enable the child to have a different 'take' on it; to see it from a more positive viewpoint.

# Strategies

## Preparation for a specific situation

### *Rehearsal*

Go through what's going to happen in detail. Let the child imagine the event in their mind's eye by describing it to them and encouraging their input. Repeat this.

### *Use positive self-talk*

Help the child to identify the similarities between this event and previous ones: encourage them to see what skills and knowledge they already have and then how to transfer them to this new situation.

### *Pre-visit*

If possible organise a pre-visit to a new place and meet any relevant people etc. Locate important spots: the toilets, the Lost Child meeting place etc.

### *Organisation*

This is key! Make sure everything needed is prepared well in advance so there is no need for last minute panics and nothing is forgotten which will cause worry later.

### *Last minute prep-talk*

Talk through what's going to happen again reminding the child of the sequence of events.

### *Draw up a Plan B*

Think through with the child what they could do if anything doesn't go to schedule, for example, getting lost, needing the loo urgently etc. Then list all these as bullet points on a small card for the child to take in their pocket; even if the child doesn't need to look at them they'll feel more secure knowing it's there.



# Comforting routines

## Talisman

Encourage a younger child to choose a Teddy or favourite toy to take with them. If the child is older this could be a piece of jewellery, or other inconspicuous item, such as:

## Worry beads

These are really useful as they give fidgety hands something to do. Worry beads have been used around the world for centuries both for meditation and to relieve stress. Use round beads, approximately 8mm, and get the child to thread them onto elastic. Whenever they feel anxious they can move the beads along the thread.

## Painted pebble

This can be kept in the pocket and handled when the anxiety starts to build up. First find some pebbles that are fairly smooth. If they are to be carried in the child's pocket they will obviously need to be reasonably small but otherwise they could make one to keep in their room. To paint it, you will need to use acrylic paint. When dry you can glue on eyes and features (googly eyes are fun!) to make it into a Pebble Friend which the child can then name.

## Friendship bracelet

Doubly useful as the child can touch it and remember the particular friend who helped to make it.

For basic instructions see:

[www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Friendship-Bracelet](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Friendship-Bracelet)



# Techniques to control breathing

Controlling the breath is an essential part of calming techniques: faster breath means more intake of oxygen and a quicker heartbeat. Whilst adults can be taught to count and inhale through the nostrils, etc., it is easier to teach children to breathe in a more controlled way through play activities.

**The following are useful ways to try:**

## *Pot of bubbles*

Use a pot of bubbles for the child to blow: these can be bought easily and cheaply. Let the child blow quickly which will produce erratic small bubbles, then show them that long slow breaths will produce bigger bubbles.

## *Bubble painting*

There are various methods of doing this:

1. Mix equal amounts of paint or food dye and washing-up liquid. You may need to add a little water if necessary. Pour the mixture into a small tray and ask the child to blow gently into it with a straw to create lots and lots of bubbles. When they have had some fun doing this, place paper on top of the bubble and take a print. When dry this will make an attractive picture which can be displayed as it is or used as wrapping paper. If you are feeling adventurous and to vary the activity, several colours could be used to make multi-colour prints.
2. Get a large cardboard box and put some paper on the bottom of it. You will then need to cut a small hole in the side through which you can push a straw. Make a solution of bubble mixture and add a little colour (watercolour inks or food dye both work well) and then get the child to blow through the straw into the box. The resulting bubbles will fall onto the paper and make a pattern.
3. Mix a thick solution of washing-up liquid and paint: it needs to be fairly viscous for this technique to work. Put a teaspoonful on a large sheet of paper and get the child to blow it around to make a pattern. You can use several colours, a teaspoonful at a time. Again this will make an attractive picture to keep.



## Teach the recorder

The recorder is a relatively easy instrument to learn but needs steady breathing and so teaches this technique.

There are some excellent primers available:

*Recorder from the Beginning John Pitts*

Fast, uncontrolled breathing produces squeaks: the steadier the breathing, the better the sound!

## Mind training

### Calm Place

Think of a calm place for retreat: it could be a real place the child knows, or an imaginary one. Work with the child to think about this place. Ask them to close their eyes and describe it. Tell the child that, whenever they feel themselves getting stressed, to close their eyes and remember this special place.

### Use the senses

Ask the child to name five favourite things, one for each sense :

- Taste
- Smell
- Touch
- Hear
- See

A worksheet has been included on the CD to record these ideas.



# Suggestions for using the Worksheets Activities for home or school

## *Worried Wilber Puppet*

Encourage the child to use this as a 'mouthpiece'. Explain that Wilber has worries too, so Wilber will understand.

Ask the child to cut round the dotted grey line; stick this onto a piece of card then attach a flat stick to hold it (a lollipop stick is ideal). The child can then either tell their worry to Wilber or pretend to listen to Wilber's worries and offer advice.

## *Wilber's Wriggles*

Print some of these and leave them available together with a pen for the child to write down their worries and 'post' them into a tin. Once they've been posted, explain that the worry can now go to the back of the mind as it's being dealt with. Off-loading is an excellent way to reduce a worry.

## *Wilber book in classroom*

Use a large plain book and stick the label on the front. Explain to the children that, whenever they have a worry, they can write it in Wilber's book. Check the book daily to monitor the worries. Encourage the child to write down what happened later: i.e. how the worry was resolved. This can also be used at home.

## *Worry Gauge*

Use this with the child when you're talking through a worry. Ask them to think how worried they are about the specific worry. Gradually they will understand that not all worries are of the same severity.

## *Wilber's Helpers Balloons*

Encourage the child to think of five people they could turn to, to help them with a worry then record them by writing the names on the balloons - one on each.

## *Let Wilber burn your worry away*

Sometimes, with worries, all we can do is put our faith in an outside force - for some of us this is God; some of us 'Let it float in the ether' ; some of us just 'hand it over'. Tell the child that sometimes we can't do anything about a worry but just have to trust it will work out alright. Ask the child to write the worry on a post-it note then stick it on the flame: then explain that Wilber will burn it away.

## *Wilber says Thank You*

A state of almost permanent anxiety can eat away at life's pleasures. If the child can think of other positive things, they cannot be anxious as it is very difficult to focus on two emotions at the same time. A quiet time of reflection built into the routine regularly, will help them to identify the positive things in their life, and recording them will remind him/her of them. You could put this in a prominent place as a constant reminder to think positively.

## *My Calm Place*

Ask the child to think of the calmest, most peaceful place they know or can imagine: this could be somewhere well-known, from a book/TV programme, or from their imagination. Ask them to close their eyes and describe it: ask questions to encourage as vivid a picture as possible. Then ask the child to draw/write about it on the worksheet included. Remind the child that, when life gets worrying they can retreat to the Calm place in their imagination.

## *Using the Senses*

Ask the child to think of five favourite things, one for each sense: This will enable them to become fully mindful of the present and help to bring a sense of balance.



# Worried

# WOLBER

About  
the  
Cards



## Being Picked Last

This is a difficult concept for anyone, child or adult. If this is happening at school and you are the parent, do speak privately to the teacher: generally you will find them very helpful as they perhaps haven't noticed this in a class situation. If you *are* the teacher, this is a fairly simple worry to counteract as you can ensure the child is chosen for special tasks. However, it is also just as important to talk this through with the child and explain that, throughout life, there are some occasions when one is chosen last, or not at all and it isn't a reflection of their ability but usually for other reasons. Explain that we all have strengths and weaknesses and then help the child to consider their own talents and strengths. You can talk about times when you yourself haven't been 'picked'.

***Recommended Read: Always Picked Last (Choose your own Adventure—Dragonlarks) RA Montgomery***

## Being different

This is a relatively easy concept to deal with in the classroom situation as it lends itself to lots of different topics: surveys on hair and eye colour; measurement and comparisons of height. Work on different ways of feeling: one event will result in a range emotional responses.

It's alright to be different: in fact it's healthy to be different, and it is very important that even young children learn this so that they are able to cope with peer pressure as they grow (becomes important from around 9yrs) and know they don't have to follow the crowd.

Encourage individuality in your child: let them choose their own clothes to wear even if they choose an eccentric mix! Choose positive language when discussing differences and show them you like quirkiness. A child brought up in an accepting home, who is encouraged to demonstrate his own tastes and preferences, will be less likely to suffer from a fear of being 'the odd one out'.

***Recommended Read: It's OK to be different Todd Parr  
The Boy in the Dress, David Walliams and Quentin Blake***

## Dentist

Dentists these days are very aware of the need to be child-friendly; many give out stickers and spend time putting the child at ease.

Basic tips are:

- Choose a dentist with a good reputation for treating children - ask other parents
- Contact the dentist before you go and explain that your child is nervous
- Take the child with you whenever you go for treatment
- Buy fun toothbrush and toothpaste

Generally a child will only be nervous before their first visit: assuming all is well, the anxiety should resolve.

***Recommended Read: Sophie's First Trip to the Dentist, Michelle Rogers***  
***Luca Lashes and the First Trip to the Dentist, Luca Lashes and Kim Stace Thomas***  
***My First Trip to the Dentist, Katie Kawa***  
***Peppa Pig Dentist Trip***  
***Open Wide, Jen Green and Mike Gordon***

## ***Germs***

It is important to teach the child about hygiene and hand-washing but some children can become very anxious over the idea of 'germs'. Buy antibacterial soap and explain that this will kill off germs. Allow the child to get dirty and don't be fussy about clothes getting dirty: these are ideas that children absorb and can help them to become overstressed about getting dirty. Don't become too stressed yourself about the child avoiding germs and dirt.

***Recommended Read: Germs are not for sharing, Elizabeth Verdick***

## ***Things That Sting***

A difficult one to deal with as many adults remain frightened of 'creepy-crawlies', the author included! Have sting relief to hand that you know works and take it with you wherever you go so that the child knows you can deal with the problem should it arise. Use insect repellent when going out; lemon scented candles will also discourage flying insects. Encouraging the child to learn more about insects may also help: bees in particular make a fascinating study. Knowing that insects only sting when they are threatened may help. The important thing for you to remember is that this is a very real fear.

***Recommended Read: More Pet Bugs: A Kid's Guide to Catching and Keeping Insects and Other Small Creatures, Sally Kniedel***

## ***Swimming***

Water confidence begins early in life: babies who are taken swimming almost from birth develop huge water confidence. If your child is nervous of water try the following tips:

- Make regular bath-time fun and encourage them to get their face and hair wet.
- Take the child swimming with you - get into the water with them - but don't make them do anything unless they're clearly ready
- Use floats/armbands until they're really confident to try without
- Book individual lessons if you can afford to

***Recommended Read: Peppa Pig goes swimming***  
***101 Cool Pool Games for Children, Kim Rodomista & Robin Patterson***



## Animals that bite

Many children develop this fear as they grow older: sometimes it can be because they have been frightened, for example by a large dog as an unthinking owner has allowed it to jump up: a 'friendly' dog may not seem so to a toddler who is dwarfed by it! The fear may be a primeval fear relating to safety long ago when dangerous animals were a very real threat. Having a pet may also prove positive; also learning of stories where animals have proved to be Man's Best Friends.

***Recommended Read: National Geographic Kids 125 True Stories of Amazing Animals: Inspiring Tales of Animal Friendship and Four-Legged Heroes, Plus Crazy Animal Antics***

## Hospital

Going to hospital can be very stressful to us all, but especially to an anxious child. However, there are various steps you can take to relieve some of this anxiety, if the visit is pre-planned, not an emergency:

- Drive there beforehand and show the child what the building looks like, where the entrance is etc.
- Introduce play with Doctor and Nurses outfits, doctor's set, etc.: the child could bandage a favourite toy
- Encourage him/her to take the favourite toy with them
- If at all possible, don't discuss the visit with other adults in front of the child

***Recommended Read: Going to the Hospital, Anna Civardi and Stephen Cartwright  
Howard Goes to the Hospital, Howard Bennett and Michael Webber***

## Sleeping at other people's houses

It is really important that a child is accustomed to staying overnight at another house *without* their parent, as at some point, this could be unavoidable, and it is much better that it first happens in a planned way than as a last-minute emergency.

The following tips may help:

- Use a trusted relative or close friend: perhaps a grandparent.
- Plan the stay well in advance
- Plan the bedtime routine with the host: copy the home routine as much as possible
- Use a special bag to pack night clothes, toothbrush etc. and let the child help.
- Remember the favourite toy and favourite bedtime story
- Talk through what's going to happen
- Try to avoid phoning up to check during the evening but assume, no news is good news!

***Recommended Read: Staying Overnight, Kate Petty and Lisa Kopp  
Little Critter's Staying Overnight, Mercer Mayer  
Eli the Elephant Stays Overnight, Lisa Stroud-Collinsworth***

## Riding a bike

Don't try and rush into this before your child is ready: some children have better balance than others and are therefore younger when they learn and quicker to achieve the skill. As with riding a skateboard, use appropriate clothing: long trousers to protect the knees and long sleeved top; sturdy shoes; protective helmet. However, don't stress that these are for safety or suggest there is anything threatening in the activity: just that it's the rule that these are worn.

Encourage the child to take the bike on short trips, e.g. to the park.

**Recommended Read: *I'd Rather be Riding my Bike*, Eric Pinder and John Cardinal**

## Using a skateboard

As with riding a bike, use appropriate clothing: long trousers to protect the knees and long sleeved top; sturdy shoes; protective helmet. However, don't stress that these are for safety or suggest there is anything threatening in the activity: just that it's the rule that these are worn.

**Recommended Read: *Skateboard Gran*, Macdonald and Reid**

## Getting told off

An anxious child may feel they are being 'told off' even when they're not; they may feel they are in the wrong if the teacher reprimands another child. Do let the teacher know if your child becomes over-worried about this as a little reassurance goes a long way: if the teacher needs to speak to the whole group, she could have a word with the anxious child beforehand to reassure them that they is not directing their words at them.

If you do have to reprimand, be short and concise about what the child has done wrong and then don't dwell on it or refer to it again. If you say 'Now that's an end to it' it draws a line under the incident.

**Recommended Read: *Clarice Bean Spells Trouble*, Lauren Child**

## Being wrong

Explain that everyone is wrong at times and it is only through getting things wrong that we actually learn. If we are afraid of being wrong we will never try anything new. Try to give praise for trying rather than for achieving. Make tasks fun and laugh when things go wrong. Always admit when you yourself are in the wrong: this will help the child to learn that we all make mistakes and that there is no shame in that, or in admitting it.

**Recommended Read: *Timmy Failure: Mistakes were Made*, Stephen Pastis  
*Walter the Wolf*, Marjorie Weinman Sharmat**

## The dark

Dark can be very frightening for a child but it is relatively simple to offer help: use a night light in the room and let the child know you are within earshot. Whilst it is not necessary for the child to see you, just to hear your voice is generally sufficient.

A study of nocturnal animals is fascinating and will teach that the dark is necessary. A fun activity is to play games using a blindfold.

**Recommended Read: *The Owl who was afraid of the Dark*, Jill Tomlinson  
*Where are the Night Animals?* Mary Ann Fraser**

## Being high up

A difficult one as some of us remain afraid of heights.

Fairground rides can help here: children generally enjoy simple roundabout rides and these include small aeroplanes that will rise gently as the child pushes the button. Children will often enjoy this activity, even if afraid of heights, as it puts them in control.

**Recommended Read: *The Giraffe Who was Afraid of Heights* - Ufer and Carlson**

## Scary things on TV

Be careful not to let them see anything scary even if they come down when you are watching: nervous, anxious children need to be kept from the news, violent programmes, even soaps where there is a lot of shouting. The recommended book below has many ideas to help with this fear, set out in an expert way so it has been felt unnecessary to repeat them here.

**Recommended Read: *Teddy's TV Troubles*, Joanne Cantor and Tom Lowes (Highly recommended)**

## Going too fast in the car

Many people feel uneasy when being driven: the speed can frequently feel greater when you are a passenger than when you a driver, possibly because the passenger doesn't have control. Appreciate this with the child and drive slightly slower if necessary. Always try to drive smoothly with no sudden braking or acceleration. Try to avoid any confrontation: we all have a tendency to mutter about other road users when we feel they have intruded upon us in some way but this is best avoided with a nervous passenger. Obviously avoid discussing anything negative relating to driving: reports of accidents, problems with the car etc.

**Recommended Read: *Mr Gumpy's Motor Car*, John Burningham**

# Thunder and lightning

Storms, thunder and lightning can be terrifying, even to many adults! However, they are easier to cope with once the causes are understood. Find a book with weather experiments for children (see suggestions below\*\*) and have fun!

## **Recommended Read:**

**\*\*Flash, Crash, Rumble and Roll, Branley et al**

**\*\*The Everything KIDS' Weather Book, Joe Snedeker Med**

**Franklin and the Thunderstorm, Paulette Bourgeois**

**Thunderstorm, Arthur Geisert**

**The Thunderstorm, Tara Merkel**

# Having no friends

Children will only begin to play interactively with each other after around four years old. Prior to this they will generally engage in 'parallel play' when they may be engaged in the same activity but have virtually no contact with each other. The issue of friends therefore doesn't usually become an issue until they start school. After this they become aware gradually during playtimes and breaks, after school or with birthday parties.

You can take a positive role by arranging 'play dates' after school. Within the classroom it is easier to promote different friendships: encourage children to work with a range of others by using flexible activity groupings. The teacher can also put children into pairs themselves rather than always allowing them to choose their own partner. It is very useful to keep an informal record of the social groups chosen by the child as you are thereby able to prevent a child from being excluded.

If children see you interacting with friends, they are more likely to do the same as they not only see friendship as being an important social structure but they will mirror the interactive social skills you model.

## **Recommended Read:**

**How to be a Friend: A Guide to Making Friends and Keeping Them, Laurene Krasny Brown and Marc Tolon Brown**

**I Want a Friend, Tony Ross**

**Friends, Helme Heine**

## Being late

Some of us are naturally well-organised, punctual and well-prepared: some of us are not! However, punctuality is a key skill needed in the workplace and therefore needs to be encouraged from an early age.

A child is developing their sense of time and so need frequent 'count-downs' to a set deadline, i.e. 'Ten minutes before we leave', 'five minutes', etc.

Make sure everything is ready beforehand so there are no last-minute panics.

If you are late, try not to get flustered or show any sense of panic which will only increase the child's own level of anxiety. Nothing dire will generally happen because you are late, but disasters could happen because you panic about it - bumping the car for example!

**Recommended Read: *Late for School*, Steve Martin**

## Shops and busy places

Life is bustling and hectic: busy shopping malls have noise, lights, bright colours and lots of people rushing about. This can be terrifying to a small child; to prove this, try squatting down at the child's height in the middle of a busy shop! It is really best to leave the child at home if possible. If not, make your shopping trips short and plan a pleasant rewarding break in a café. Don't try to rush round but involve the child in conversation about the shopping, where you're going etc. Point out little things of interest to the child. Make it a shared activity, one to be enjoyed rather than endured by you both.

Busy places such as airports and stations can be similarly scary to a small child. Always talk about it beforehand and explain what is going to happen. Involve your child in packing their own small case or rucksack adding a favourite toy. Time spent in preparation here will prevent a lot of time being wasted on tantrums and tears later.

Make sure the child has had plenty of rest before the trip so that he/she isn't tired to start; include rests, drinks and snacks to prevent overtiredness, hunger or thirst during the trip.

**Recommended Read: *Going Shopping*, Sarah Garland**

## Bad dreams

Bed and sleep should be a welcome rest at the end of a busy, happy day. However, to some children it can be stressful as they suffer from bad dreams. Generally such children have vivid imaginations and therefore need quiet relaxation before bed.

The following tips may help:

- Have some gentle music playing softly, (our family favourite was Pachelbel's Canon).
- Don't read a scary story at bedtime
- Don't let them see any upsetting TV even in the background: the News can be terribly frightening.
- Give them a warm drink

- If a bath relaxes them incorporate one into the bedtime routine (for some children a bath can be invigorating)
- Have a familiar routine which you stick to - familiarity will breed content not contempt!
- Give the child your uninterrupted attention for them to talk over anything that's bothering them—sometimes this is told to another trusted adult rather than the parent, e.g. Grandma

**Recommended Read: *Bad Dreams*, Anna Fine (slightly older)  
*The Berenstain Bears and the Bad Dream*, Jan and Stan Berenstain**

## Family and friends being sad

Sadness and grieving are part of life and we can't always protect children from them: grandparents die, a much-loved pet dies; family and friends become ill. However, we can teach them how to cope by allowing them time to grieve and giving them an opportunity to express their feelings.

It is natural and normal for a parent to cry in front of a child when a sad event occurs and this teaches the child that it's 'ok' to grieve. However, there is then a responsibility to show outward strength and keep the tears and grieving for private times, remembering that the child will forget much more quickly than the adult and it is perfectly right for them to do so.

**Recommended Read: *I Miss You*, Pat Thomas and Lesley Harker**

## Being loved

Parents are often amazed when their child expresses a doubt that they are loved. Young children will test this out by misbehaving and then saying '*Do you still love me?*'. Always deal with misbehaviour by saying you don't like the behaviour although you still love the child: '*I love you very much but I didn't like what you just did*'.

Little expressions say more than dramatic gestures: gives hugs and cuddles; a child can't be 'spoilt' by such expressions of love.

Don't just praise the child when they achieve but show you appreciate the effort they have put in.

A child may say '*I don't love you any more*', when they have been refused a request; don't say '*I don't love you either*' but '*That's a shame as I really love you*'.

**Recommended Read: *Guess how Much I Love You*, Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram  
*I Love You as Big as the World*, David Van Buren and Tim Warnes**

## Eating at other people's houses

Fears of eating at other people's houses may involve: being scared of being sick; having food they don't like; feeling uncomfortable with other people present. However, coping with social eating is a lifelong skill and good habits start early.

There are lots of ways you can help the child to overcome this fear:

1. Eat out in public with them from an early age: this could just be a drink and cake/biscuit to get them used to it.
2. Eat out with them occasionally at a family/friend's house so that they learn that different families have different routines and procedures
3. Teach them how to hold a knife and fork correctly
4. Always ensure that the other parent knows any special likes/dislikes
5. Plan the event in advance and prepare the child by talking through what's going to happen; who's going to be there, what to do in an emergency etc. (see Strategies)

**Recommended Read: *Eating Out*, Helen Oxenbury**

## A new baby

A new baby can cause immense anxiety to a child, especially if they have been the only one prior to this. They can feel a range of emotions including feeling jealous, neglected, distrustful, wary, scared; however, if they feel that the new baby is 'theirs' as much as Mummy's or Daddy's, the birth can be just as exciting for them as for everyone else. It is normal for a young child to regress after the birth of a new baby. An older child may worry whether Mum and Dad will still love them or whether they're no longer needed. There may be some embarrassment especially when the child is aware of how the baby got there!

Constant reassurance; inclusion into preparation and caring for the new arrival, together with lots of preparation, patience and understanding will all help smooth the way.

**Recommended Read:**

***The New Baby*, Anna Civardi  
and Stephen Cartwright**

***Susie's New Brother*, Katie  
Semple**

***Sophie and the New Baby*,  
Laurence and Catherine Anholt**

***What's Inside Your Tummy  
Mummy?*, Abby Cocovini**



## New school

Starting school for the first time and changing school can both be very stressful events for any child. Schools recognise this and try very hard to make the transition as smooth as possible.

### Some tips that may help:

- Do arrange some visits before the child starts, both to look round and then to actually spend some time in the classroom
- Talk about school with the child in a positive way (NOT *'Wait till you get to school, you won't be allowed to do that!'*)
- Take advantage of a home visit if offered one as it allows the teacher to see the child in their own surroundings and is also reassuring for the child.
- Buddy systems are great if the school runs one: an older child acts as mentor or 'buddy' for the new arrival
- Try not to criticise the school or a member of staff in front of the child: this leads to conflict of loyalties and can be very distressful to the child
- Involve the child in buying the new uniform, lunchbox etc.
- Try to avoid tears when you leave - from you not the child!

***Marshall Armstrong is New to our School, David Mackintosh  
Going to School, Anna Civardi and Stephen Cartwright***

## People arguing

It is extremely upsetting to hear people arguing, even for adults; when the arguing people are parents the child can become very upset and even worried about whether Mum and Dad will split up. Anger has undertones of threat and a sensitive child will pick this up and can become very frightened. Unfortunately scenes of violence have become commonplace on the television and these too can promote the same feelings; they are therefore best avoided when children are around.

If your child does witness an argument (and which of us goes through childhood without?), take time to reassure them that it has all been resolved and that they were not to blame, it's a common misconception of children that somehow they caused the row.



## *Being left on their own*

A child can be very frightened of being left on their own and may need lots of reassurance that this won't happen. However, it is also important that children become used to adults looking after them, other than Mum and Dad, so this needs to be achieved in a planned, careful way.

The mother/child bond can be very strong and it may well prove just as difficult for Mum to leave the child as vice versa! However, it is important that the child only sees a positive face, especially if they are anxious about the separation as it is very easy for the parents to add to this anxiety by reflecting their own.



# Worried

# WILBER

# Worksheets

## Included on the CD

- *Front Cover of Wilber's Worries book*
- *Worried Wilber Hand Puppet*
- *Wilber's Wiggles to print off*
- *Wilber's Helpers Balloons*
- *Wilber's Worry Gauge - how Warm is your Worry?*
- *Wilber says Thank You*
- *Let Wilber Burn Your Worry Away*
- *My Five Favourite Things*
- *Five Top Worries*
- *My Calm Place*



# WILBERT'S

## Worry Book





Cut along the  
grey line then  
stick the picture  
onto a wooden  
stick to make a  
hand puppet of  
Wilber



Wilber's Wriggle today  
is...



Wilber's Wriggle today  
is...



Wilber's Wriggle today  
is...



Wilber's Wriggle today  
is...



Wilber's Wriggle today  
is...



Wilber's Wriggle today  
is...



Wilber's Wriggle today  
is...



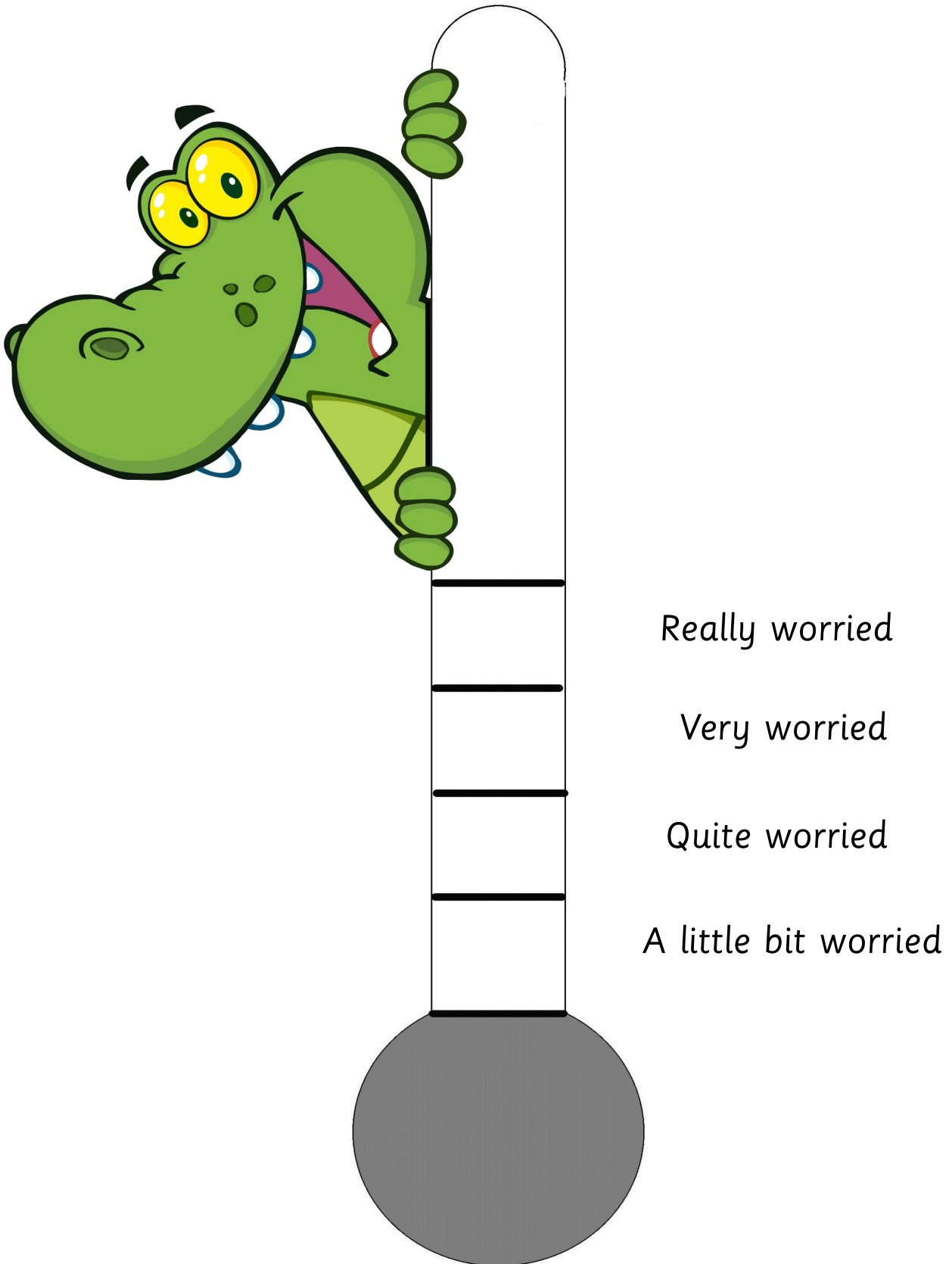
Wilber's Wriggle today  
is...



Write the name of someone who can help you on each  
balloon

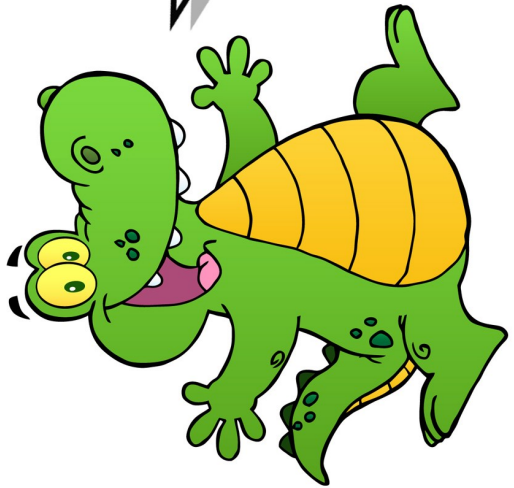
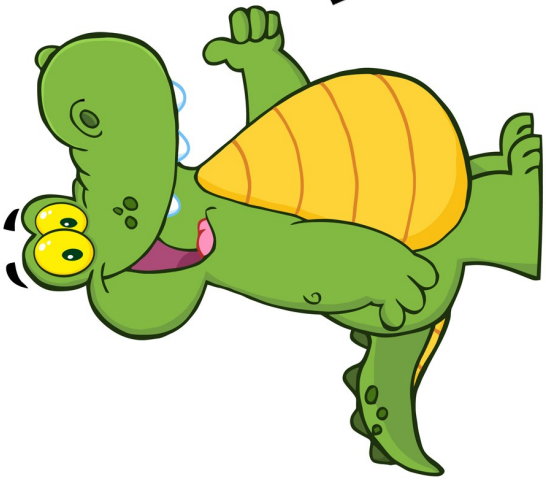
## **Wilber's Helpers Balloons**

How **worried** are you about this?



Wilber's Worry Gauge - How warm is your worry?

# Wilber says Thank You

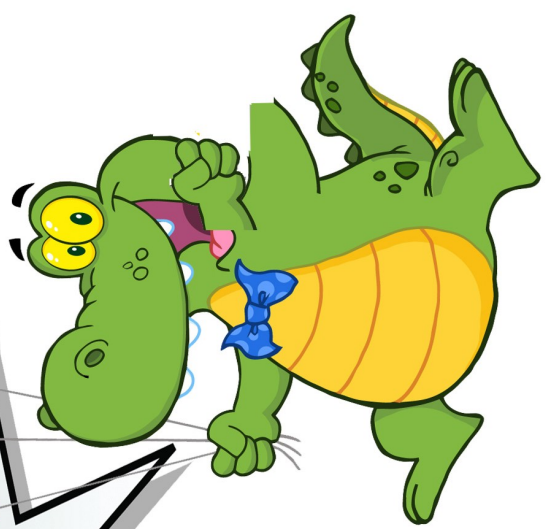
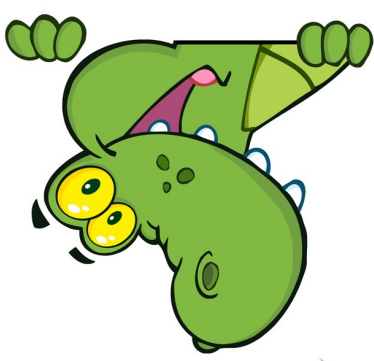
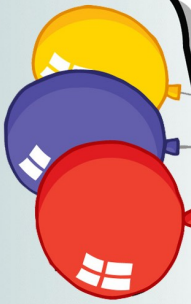


Thank you for ...

Thank you for ...

Thank you for ...

Thank you  
for ...





Let Wilber burn your worry away!

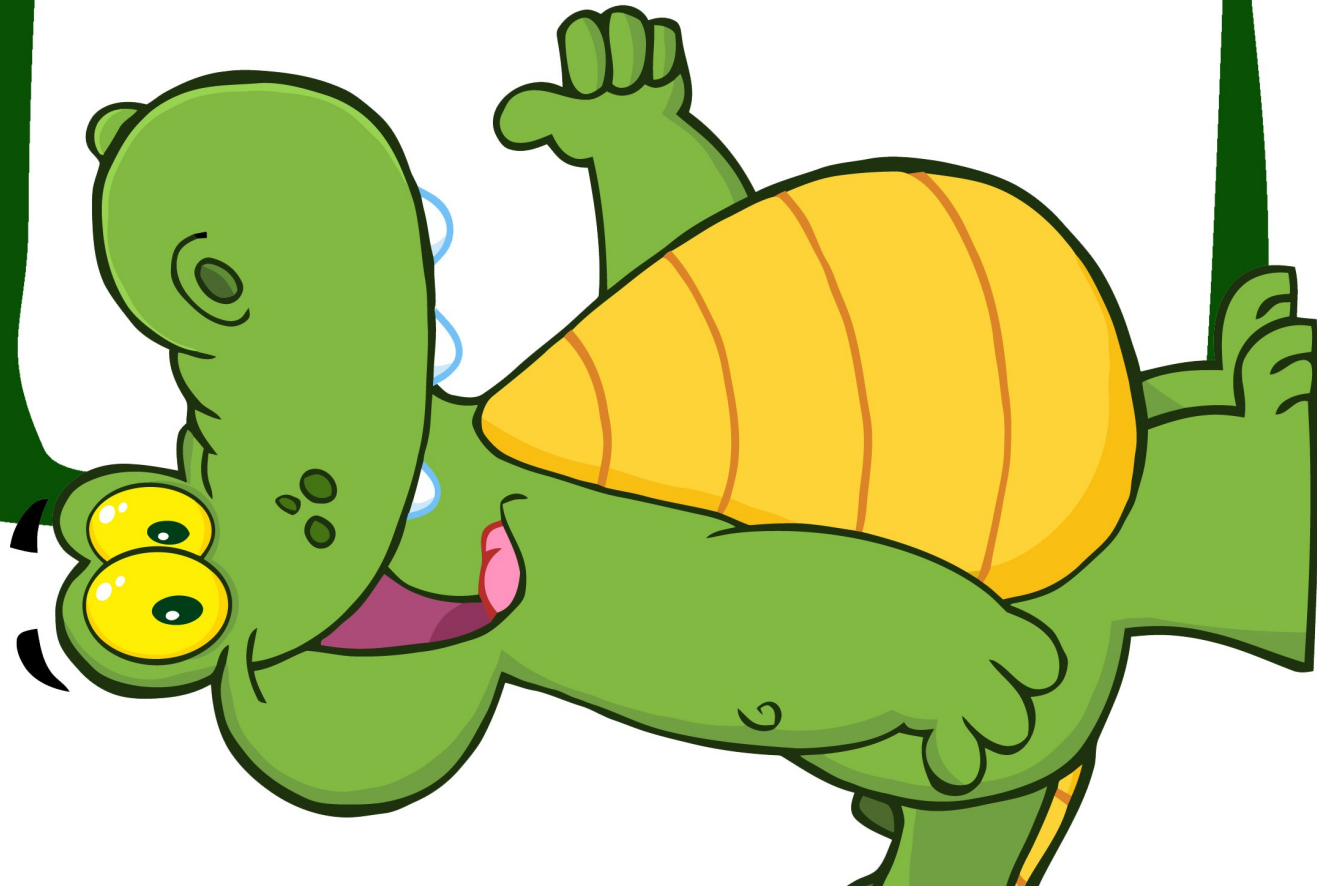


Wilber can breathe fire and burn your worry away.

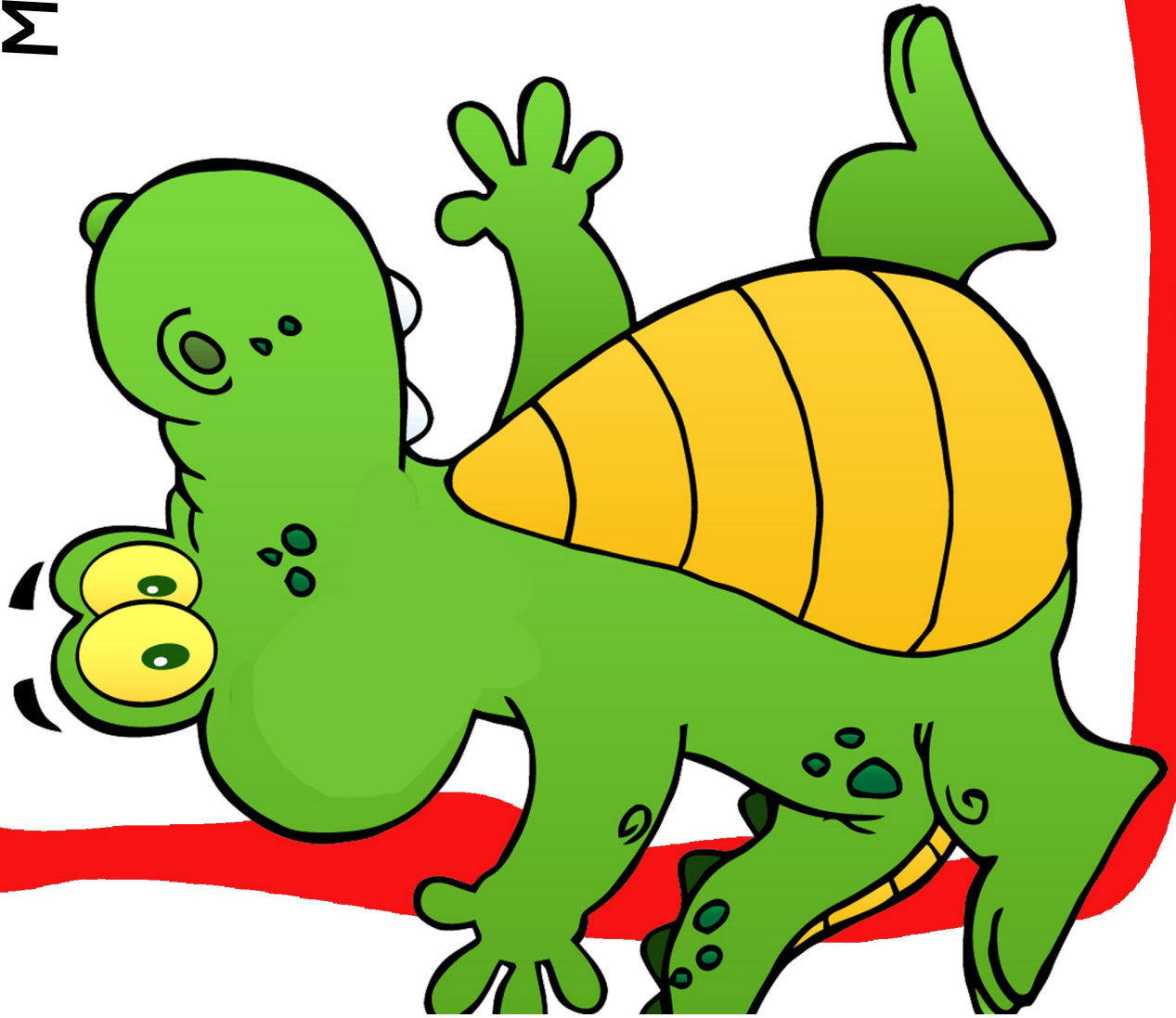
Write it on a piece of paper and put it on Wilber's breath.

Watch it burn away!

My 5 favourite things...



My 5 top worries...



**My calm place...**

