

Overview

[The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University](#) (GHELI) supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods. This exemplar work was a final project for “World Health: Challenges and Opportunities,” a General Education course at Harvard College taught by GHELI Faculty Director Sue J. Goldie. For this creative assessment designed with support from GHELI, students systematically analyze a societal health challenge they care about and create a “real world” product intended to influence policy or motivate change.

Abstract

An illustrated book about an anxious fish, Bluey, to help children understand and reflect on their own emotions and worries and learn how to express what they're feeling.

Artist

Ashton Body (2022)

Caption

Anxiety is a problem for individuals of all ages and locations, however, for young children, it is increasingly detrimental. Anxiety can disrupt critical development periods and cause problems later in life. Anxiety delays can even prevent children from reaching typical milestones, especially related to social and emotional learning. In the context of an already high prevalence of anxiety in young children, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated its impact, doubling child anxiety rates globally. In the U.S. specifically, 14% of parents noticed declining mental health for their children, due to a complex combination of proximal factors, such as isolation, loss of schooling, uncertainty, and loneliness, in addition to larger structural factors, such as prohibitive costs, loss of insurance and childcare, lack of transportation, and mental health care related stigma. Structural factors act as immense barriers to accessing mental health care. These factors deeply affect families, resulting in only half of children in the U.S. receiving necessary treatment and mental health care, despite increasing prevalence of anxiety disorders.

Artist Lens

Anxiety disorders are a serious and growing problem for children in the United States, commonly presented as intense feelings of worry and fear. Global rates of anxiety have almost doubled since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic due to mass isolation, fear, uncertainty, and school closures, which have interrupted critical periods of development and socialization for children. Informally and educationally introducing mental health and anxiety into conversation with children may give them a better understanding and vocabulary for what they are feeling; thus, Bluey's Big Worries came to be.

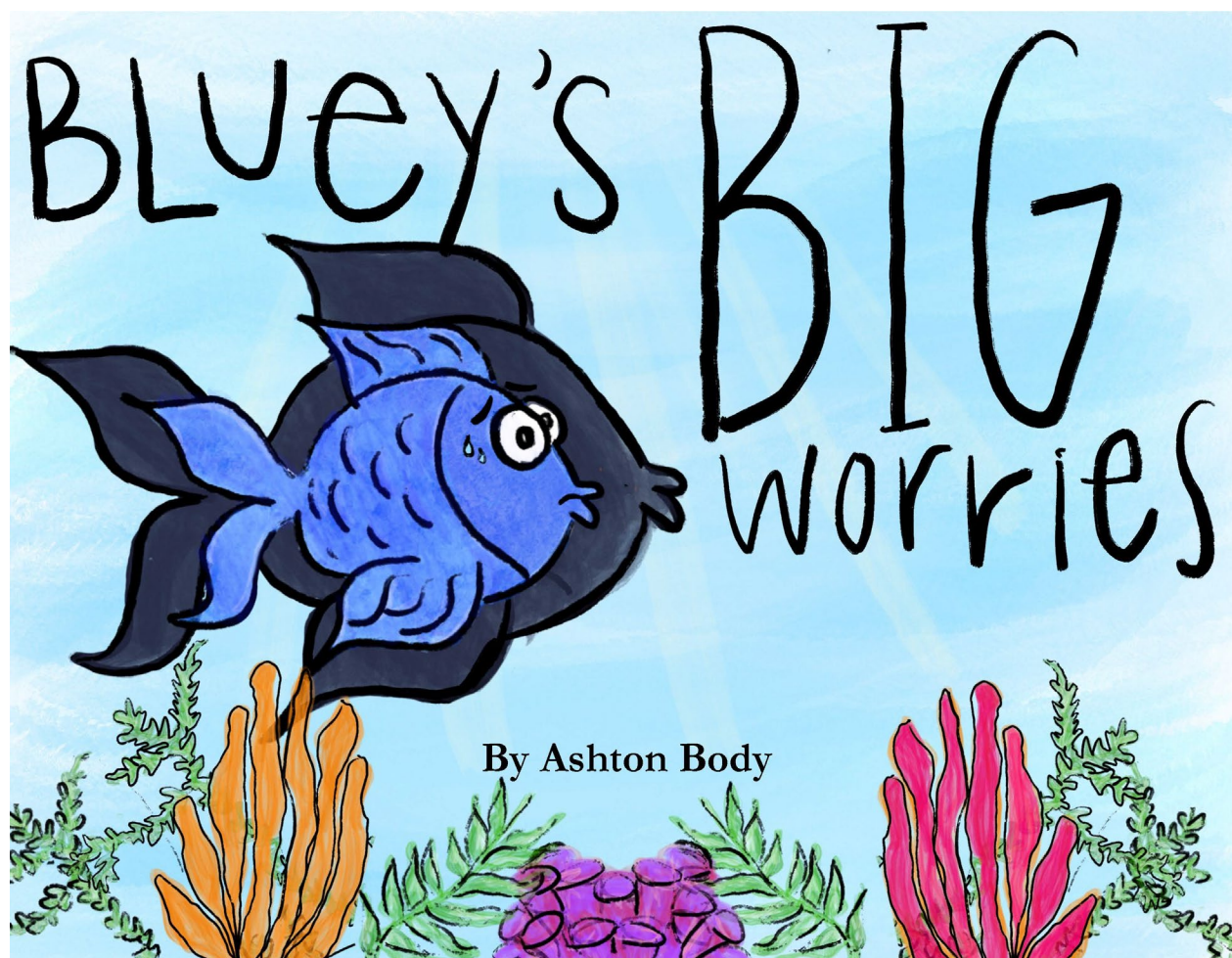
By creating a children's book centered around an anxious fish, Bluey, I hope children can identify with Bluey, understand and reflect on their own emotions and worries, and learn how to express what they're feeling. Bluey's constant worries are a dark shadow that follows him around and talks to him. The book introduces a

new coping mechanism to provide children and their caregivers with both vocabulary to communicate anxiety and a tool to manage it by trying to take the map away from their worries. The book is colorful and imaginative, designed to capture the attention of young children with a fun storyline and images. It uses the imagery of the shadow and the map of Bluey's day to describe both the worries and their control, visually presenting one way anxiety may feel. In creating this book, I hope to help children better understand their worries and anxiety through connection with Bluey's plight. This book was designed to provide accessible support for mental health care for children both within families and in schools, to combat the rising rates of anxiety significantly worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to help children sort through what can be big and overwhelming emotions.

[Watch Ashton Body Reflection](#)

Media

Illustration



[Watch Narration of Bluey's Big Worries](#)