



Feeling Good Here Now

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the parents, teachers, caretakers, health professionals, and researchers who passionately work to harness the world of positive psychology for our society's young people. We aim to teach and inspire children to develop positive habits for a lifetime. Today's youth will, in turn, pass these essential healthy and happy habits onto future generations.



Hi! My name is Mila. I live in an apartment on the third floor of a tall building with my mother and father and my favorite stuffed animal friends.

I enjoy acting out story games with my stuffies. Here is one of those stories.

Willow, the rabbit, has lost his favorite toy carrot. "I can't live without my carrot," he cries.

Gerald, the bear, comforts him. "Oh, Willow. I see you are very upset. Take a deep breath. I find that taking a deep breath helps me to feel better when I am sad or worried. Let's look for it together."

They look and look and they find it. "Yay!" They celebrate together!

I love to go to bed cuddling one of my stuffies. I don't want any of them to get their feelings hurt. That is why I make sure they take turns, a different one each night.

On weekdays my mother walks me to school. Right after school starts in the mornings, we read wonderful stories about the earth, plants, animals, and outer space. After lunch the teacher makes us do multiplication, which frustrates me. I am so happy when it's time for art so I can draw. It is so much fun to create flowers and animals from my imagination!

On weekends, when there is no school, I love to go to the big playground. It is far from where we live and my mom and I take a bus to get there. That is why I don't know the other children who play there. But I don't mind, I love that playground, because it has the rolling barrel, which is my favorite. I could run on it or just spin it with my hands forever.

Sometimes I stay home with dad while my mom goes out to visit a friend and to shop.

I can't wait until she comes home to see if she has bought bread. The bread comes in a transparent wrapper. I use the wrapper to trace pictures from my books and color them.

These are my favorite things. I enjoy my stuffies, going to school to learn stories and to draw, and playing at the playground on weekends.

But today, things are different. Everything changes. My mom picks me up from school and tells me we are not going home. She explains that we are going away.

"When will we be back?" I ask.

"I am not certain," she responds in a serious voice. Hearing it makes me a little anxious.

"But what about my stuffies?"

"They'll be alright," she reassures me." You can bring one with us. Bring your favorite one."

I choose Willow.

"Is dad coming with us?"

"He'll join us later," she says quickly and gets up, as if to stop the conversation. I feel even more nervous and a pang in my stomach.

My mom helps me pack some of my clothes - a dress, underpants, pants, and two shirts - into her suitcase. We go out to the hallway and she locks the door. Outside, as we are walking, a bus approaches, and we hurry to get on.

Sitting on the bus, I feel very sad. We get off the bus at the train station. We must be going far away. I again wonder where and when we will be back. I am afraid to ask my mom. Her serious voice at home earlier gave a hint that she might be scared and sad too. We might be in some kind of trouble. I do not want to upset her with my questions.

On the train, I enjoy looking out of the window. I love the tall buildings, then many red-roofed houses and green fields fly by. Just focusing on anything that passes by feels comforting. My worried thoughts about what might be happening calm down a little.

Mom gives me paper to draw on and a pencil and that helps me feel even better. I try to draw the things I see outside.

A little later we share a hummus sandwich. With my stomach full and the soothing way objects pass by outside, I lean on her shoulder and fall asleep.

When I wake up, the train is pulling into a strange, big station and my mother is taking down our suitcase.

“We’re going to stay here for a while”, she mumbles a little more cheerfully. But she speaks softly and slowly. She must be tired. Off the train, I notice people all around me are speaking words I don’t understand.

In front of the train station a man pulls up in a gray car and we get in. It’s dark outside. I can’t see anything but street lights and a few windows with lights on inside. The man and my mom are quiet. He drives us to a little house, where we quickly get out and the man drives off. This house is not like the apartment

in the tall building where we lived back home. We go straight to bed after this unusual and tiring adventure.

In the morning, I wake up and feel startled for a few minutes forgetting that we are in a new place. I look outside and am greeted by a big garden with lots of trees and flowers. I get dressed quickly.

“Mom, can I go outside and see the garden?”

“Yes, but please stay close to the house,” she cautions me.

I run outside eager to explore. This garden is not at all like the park back home which had flowers planted in neat rows. Here the plants seem wild and growing in a haphazard way.

The bright yellow and white flowers smell nice. The tree branches sway in a friendly way like they are waving their arms at me to say hello. There is a gentle breeze brushing against my cheek. The grass tickles my ankles. The sun feels warm on my back.

Many days go by. The man who drove us here occasionally brings groceries, like tomatoes, bread and cheese, but I am often hungry. My mom is quiet, often reading a book she brought.

I hope everything will be okay. I sometimes give her a hug, because I sense she needs it.

Every day I ask to play in the garden. Even though no one else comes around, I have a lot of fun, picking leaves with interesting shapes from the trees to trace on my drawing paper. I smell the flowers and breath in the air as I run around the trees.

One day, I wander a little farther away from the house closer to another house and I discover an apple tree. Oh, those bright red apples look so delicious. But I know they must belong to the person who lives in the other house.

I get back inside the house, feeling guilty. I admit to mom, "I ventured farther than I was supposed to, and I found an apple tree." I was afraid that she might get angry. To my surprise, she tells me "It's okay to pick an apple and try it."

The next day I ran over to the tree and chose the reddest one I could find. I tugged and tugged until it pulled off. Then I took a huge bite. Yummy, sweet and juicy. Eating the apple made me happy...What a wonderful present from my tree friend.

We live in that house for a long time. One day I get the courage to ask my mom about our plans.

"Mom, I really enjoy playing in the garden, but I miss home. When can we go home? It seems like we have been here forever."

She sighs and holds me tight. "I don't know how long we will be staying here. I am sure we will be alright, because we have each other."

She tells me she is happy that we are together.

"Soon we will be able to get together with papa," she reassures me.

"What do you do when you are scared or sad, mom?"

"I try to think of the things that are going well and what I can enjoy now."



I did notice that my mom often says thank you aloud - to the flowers, the trees, and the sunshine. Sometimes she even says thank you just to the air.

The next time I was out playing, I decide to try being thankful like my mom.

“Thank you for this nice house and garden. Thank you for my mom taking good care of me. Thank you to my soft pillow, and our big warm bed.”

I was amazed that just saying thank you in this way made me feel happy.

Each day goes by so slowly. I wonder what will happen next. One morning my mother wakes me up early and whispers that it is time to leave.

A different car picks us up and takes us to a big building with long hallways. Even though mom said not to run, I could not help it. I had to run in the hallway...what fun!

I feel hopeful that we will see papa soon. I laugh and giggle. It's fun to play anywhere! Outside, airplanes are parked. I have seen pictures of them in storybooks. Now I am going to get to fly in one.

We walk onto one of the airplanes and take our seats. It feels a little exciting, scary and strange all at the same time, as the airplane takes off into the sky. I peer out of the window. The clouds look so fluffy like cotton candy. I have the urge to bounce on them! Everything - the houses, the hills, and the trees - are so tiny down below.

The airplane ride lasts a long time. We have a bell pepper sandwich snack.

Mom surprises me with a new toy, a troll doll with soft, smooth pink hair. I name her Marta and I play with her hair. I feel calmer having a new doll friend. Then suddenly I remember my stuffed animals at home.

“Mom, what about my stuffies left behind at home?”

“They are okay. You now have a new toy.” I really like Marta the best. I close my eyes and wish my stuffies good luck back home. I also send them hugs, and I feel better. More relaxed, I nod off to sleep on mom’s shoulder.

When I awake, I find myself in a strange place and am frightened, shaking a little.

“This is our new home,” she says in an upbeat tone. She shows me the nice living room, kitchen and bedroom. It is smaller than the house with the garden.

“The last house belongs to a friend. This one is our very own.”

I’m still shaking and want to cry. Mom gives me a big hug and I hug Marta. Group hugs make me feel better.

She asks me to help her unpack. I am proud to be able to help like an older girl. I take our clothes out of the big gray bag and hang them up in the closet.

I also feel proud of my bravery in this new place, even though I continue to be a little scared.

The next day I hear a knock at the door. I am startled, but when mom opens the door, it’s papa. Yay papa! It is wonderful to be with mom and papa, all of us together, no matter where we are.



I am getting used to the new place. I have my own little bed in the corner of the bedroom and keep Marta on it.

I enjoy having dinner every night with mom and papa. The new place is starting to feel cozy.

One day mom tells me that she will be taking me to a new school next week. Just as I am getting comfortable, I must face another change. That familiar scared feeling with a pang in my stomach visits me once more.

The first day of school mom walks with me a few blocks from our apartment to a big brick building with many other children arriving. I hear lots of excited shouting and see hugs between parents and students. Mom also gives me a tight hug.

"I really think you will like learning new things, especially art time, and you'll make new friends," she exclaims.

The teacher leads me to a classroom where everything seems chaotic with other children talking and moving around.

It was strange to see many children with different colored skin...darker. I have never seen anyone with dark skin. I remember storybooks showed pictures of people with colored skin. They look even prettier in real life.

I do not understand most of what the teacher or the other children are saying. I recognize a few words from the English songs I learned at my last school. I will just follow what everyone else does.

The teacher smiles at me and shows me a place for my bag and walks me to my desk. I sit down looking around at the sea of strange faces.

The entire class sits down. It is hard not to be able to understand what the teacher is saying. She smiles, speaks my name to the class in a kind voice and points at me.

At break time, we go outside into the schoolyard. The children are playing a strange ball game that I do not know how to play. I watch, but I feel left out.

A girl with curly-hair in a pony-tail standing across the playground waves at me and smiles. I smile back and feel better right away.

After recess the teacher gives us paper and crayons to draw. I am always happy to draw and this activity is something I am able to do like the other students. It does not matter that I cannot understand what they are saying. I see that everyone is drawing their families. Having a family is something important for all of us, no matter where we come from or the color of our skin.

The teacher walks around and admires our creations. She nods at my drawing of mom, papa, me, and Marta and she smiles. She must like it a lot and I feel proud.

I am beginning to get accustomed to the new school. This place with the friendly teacher and students seems nice, as nice as my old school.

Suddenly, as we finish our drawings, the girl at the desk next to me looks up and frowns at me. "You don't belong here!" I did not understand her words, but her voice sounds angry. I ignore her, going back to my drawing.



At lunch time she reaches over and grabs a cookie from my lunchbox. Before the teacher sees her, she pops it into her mouth. That is so mean. I feel like crying.

As I calm myself, trying not to start a fight, the same girl who has often smiled at me in the playground walks over and gives me her cookie. She is so kind. I decide I would like to be her friend. Her name is Flora.

Every day Flora and I sit next to each other at recess and lunch time. We do not speak much, but just sitting together feels great. That is my favorite time of the school day.

At home I play with Marta, my troll doll. But I like having a friend better than playing with my toys. Flora makes me happy.

One morning, the mean girl who stole my cookie looks sad. I've learned that her name is Eva and she lost her favorite stuffie.

I have forgiven Eva and I want her to feel good. I smile at her and she smiles back. Being forgiving and kind makes my chest feel warm and fuzzy. I am now making more friends at my school. I no longer think about my old school; I like this one. I also have become friends with a girl who lives in our apartment building. We play catch in the courtyard on weekends.

For my birthday, I invite a few of my new friends from school and the neighborhood to come to our place. We enjoy a fun party. We play musical chairs, sing and eat cake. I am understanding more and more words they speak. It is nice to belong with this group.

Flora surprises me with a stuffed puppy.

“Thank you, I love it!” I shout with excitement. I name him Arfie. He plays with Flora's stuffed cat, Ben.

“Flora, I am so glad you are my friend,” I proudly say in English. I also thank everyone for joining the party. What a fabulous day!

It has been a scary time of change, but I am feeling alright. I am more comfortable with my new home and school and I like my friends. I feel brave and strong and I'm glad that we moved here.

Thank you, world, for everything nice you bring to me...Flora, soft cuddly
Marta, delicious apples, making fun drawings, wonderful hugs from mom and papa, and the friendly smiles at school that make me feel I belong.

I am feeling good here now.