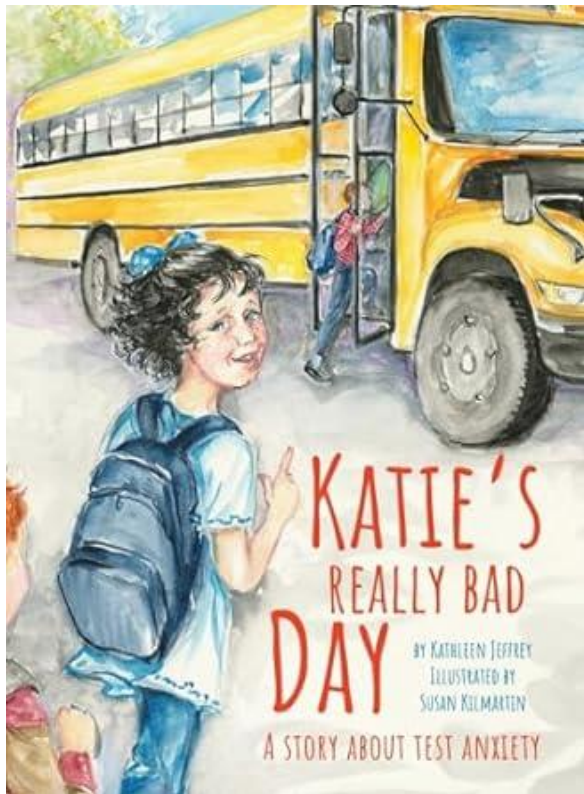


An Author's Debut Children's Book Tackles A Significant And Growing Problem In Our Two Youngest Generations: Test Anxiety.



"An important and well-illustrated consideration of a common problem among kids."

— *Kirkus Reviews*

"This lovely picture book gently touches upon the issue of test anxiety. The tools presented to help Katie are easy and effective for many types of anxiety. The superb illustrations beautifully support the text enabling the reader to feel Katie's emotions, as well as her classmates. I highly recommend this book for parents, teachers, and guidance counselors of primary and elementary age students."

—Margaret Habel; B.A. Elementary Education; Ed. M.
Reading Specialist/Consultant

Stomach pains. Cold sweats. Feeling like you can't sit still. Filled with fear.

These are some of the symptoms kids today are feeling in school, especially when it comes to taking a test, participating in a spelling bee, or speaking before a classroom. Luckily, a mom of three, who has a degree in elementary education and psychology, has created a wonderful resource to help children confront and treat their feelings of stress, *Katie's Really Bad Day: A Story About Test Anxiety*.

The book's inspiration came from her own childhood challenges.

"I was an anxious child in school," confesses Jeffrey. "Eventually this anxiety developed into test anxiety that stayed with me through college. It didn't matter if I knew the answers, the panic still set in!"

In the book, cheerful, fun-loving Katie sometimes gets anxious before tests, even when she knows the answers. One day, when Katie's feelings are so enormous she disrupts the entire class.

Luckily, with the guidance of her teacher, Katie discovers calming tools to soothe her nerves. Pretty soon the whole class is joining Katie to beat that test stress.

Beautifully illustrated, this relatable story replete with teaching points and practical advice for anxious kids, leaves young readers, parents, and teachers with a dose of optimism.

“Many children experience anxiety in school for various reasons,” says Jeffrey. “In researching for this book, it was wonderful to learn of the many resources and tools available today for teachers to help their anxious students. Some students are very good at concealing their test anxiety feelings and may suffer needlessly while also thinking they are the only ones. In addition, test anxiety can lead to a pattern of underachievement.”

“I hope Katie's story will help children identify their own anxious feelings, know that they are not alone and encourage them to tell their teachers and caregivers what is going on before their anxiety leads to a really bad day.”

Jeffrey will share with your listeners the following:

- * How to properly recognize the symptoms of test anxiety in children
- * Advice to parents and teachers on how to help children overcome stress
- * Why Generation Alpha is uniquely challenged and anxiety-riddled
- * How the author dealt with her own test anxiety
- * Why her book emphasizes this message: “Be Kind, Work Hard, Know That You Are Loved.”
- * How a pattern of underachievement can follow kids into adulthood if not treated

“Test anxiety is a major, often overlooked, performance anxiety health concern among younger students,” concludes Jeffrey. “We live in a society that can decide a person's future by their performance on standardized testing. It is imperative that our community of educators, counselors, parents and childcare providers come together to understand how test anxiety may afflict our children and provide the support and love kids need to combat stress.

Bestselling Children's Book Author

"Katie's Really Bad Day, A Story About Test Anxiety, is a readable, relatable story for any child experiencing anxiety. Including several practical self-help tips, this gentle tale belongs on every parent's and every educator's bookshelf."

—**Glenys Nellist, author of Little Mole Goes to School and Little Mole Finds Hope**

Educational Consultant and Researcher

"Childhood anxiety is on the increase. Kathleen Jeffrey captures the feelings and experiences of Katie, a second grader, who is on the verge of developing school avoidance. With wisdom and sensitivity Katie's parents, teacher, and classmates team up to teach Katie an even more important lesson than taking a spelling test. Katie learns how to calm her fears and anxiety.

—**Marsha A. Stevens, B.A., Ed. M.**

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Kathleen Jeffrey

Biography



Kathleen Jeffrey is the author of a children's book, *Katie's Really Bad Day: A Story About Test Anxiety*, which was inspired by her own bout with the affliction.

A mother of three, she earned her BA in Elementary Education from Rhode Island College. After a career in US and international media sales, Jeffrey left the corporate world and worked for the Glastonbury Abbey Bookstore in Hingham, MA, enjoying a 12-year indie bookstore adventure.

She's enjoyed a three-decade career in sales and marketing for a variety of publishing companies, including Thomas Publishing Company, Ziff Davis Publishing, Cahners Publishing, Reed Business Information, and Advanced Business Media.

Jeffrey was an active fundraiser for ALS after her dad passed away of the disease. She was a board member for 3 years of the MA chapter of the ALS Association.

A member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) since 2017, and the Independent Publishers of New England (IPNE), she enjoys traveling, hiking, canoeing, snowshoeing and wildlife sanctuaries. Her two dogs, a lab and a westie, provide her with peace and happiness. Several years ago, she became a lay Benedictine Oblate with Glastonbury Abbey, representing the Abbey at the 4th International Oblate Congress in Rome.

Born and raised in Rhode Island, Jeffrey has also lived in Pittsburgh, PA; Severna Park, MD; and Osterville, MA. She has resided for the past 32 years in Hingham, MA with her husband. For more information, please consult: www.KathleenJeffreyAuthor.com

Kathleen Jeffrey
Q & A
Katie's Really Bad Day:
A Story About Test Anxiety



1. What is your children's book, *Katie's Really Bad Day*, about? Katie is a cheerful 2nd grade girl who sometimes gets anxious, especially before taking tests. Her teacher, Miss Julie, does not know this until one day, Katie panics as she is about to take a spelling test, scribbles on her desk and just can't do the test at all. Miss Julie gently handles the situation and learns more about why Katie worries before taking tests. They work together on calming techniques and eventually the whole class gets involved belly breathing with Katie before a test. It's a cheerful story overall about a very relatable issue. Katie's classmates are kind and sympathetic. Everyone benefits from realizing they are not the only ones who worry!

2. You were an anxious kid in school. How did you deal with it back then? I had very supportive parents. My Mom was an elementary teacher and understood anxiety personally. We would talk through the worries as they arose. Overall, I liked learning, was capable and socially adept, but there was an underlying school anxiety. While researching this book and writing a bio, I traced it back to separation anxiety that started in the early days of kindergarten. Like Katie, I had a very bad second grade day, so my mom brought me into

school the next day. She had a chat with my teacher who hadn't realized how upset and sensitive I was, mostly I think because my cheerful personality hid my anxiety. The problem was resolved that year, however, eventually I developed test anxiety. Also, back then we did not have classroom calming centers like today and anxiety was not an open topic.

3. What can children do today to combat test anxiety? Practicing basic test taking strategies and studying skills that are taught in the classroom. Parents can reinforce this at home. Kids can also do practice tests at home. Mindful breathing techniques before or during a test. Tell the teacher and caregiver if they are anxious about a test coming up and ask for help. Teachers have many resources for anxious kids including calming activities available in the classroom for all students as the need arises.

4. What signs should parents or teachers look for when a child may suffer from test anxiety? School avoidance, IE: not feeling well on test day; A child knows the answers but blanks out in the test; Overstudying, never feeling prepared; Puts off studying to the last minute; Fear of failure or doom before or during tests; Physical symptoms, sweating, nervous stomach, nausea, headache, etc., before or during tests; Lack of confidence; Seeing a pattern of underachievement from a capable child.

5. Do children try hard to cover up their test anxiety? Yes, not only are they feeling fearful, but it's also embarrassing, and the child feels inadequate even though they've learned the material. Many kids study hard but worry they won't remember the answers. The familiar panic sets in, they may freeze or go blank, then underachieve on the test because of it. I remember the feeling well. Studies have shown that test anxiety affects reading comprehension affecting test scores.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5487000/>

6. Though test anxiety may afflict a certain number of children of every generation, are we seeing a lot more of it now? Yes. A 2019 article reported "test anxiety is the number learning challenge of students today affecting over 10 million kids in North America."

<https://www.weareteachers.com/test-anxiety/>

Also, research has been showing there is a link between the increase in standardized testing and an increase in test anxiety. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/2258/>

7. What impact might Covid, and learning deficits and social awkwardness, have on Generation Alpha and Gen Z? The time spent zooming from home vs. face-to-face classroom time, plus masking in the classroom, during formative years of socialization would affect social cues contributing further to social awkwardness. Also, special services provided in the classroom for learning deficits would be affected as well. On top of this, kids are exposed to smartphones at an early age which also hinders face to face socialization and social skills. Teachers tell me anxiety in school since covid, is at an all-time high.

8. Throughout your book, there's a message that appears multiple times. It says: "Be kind. Work hard. Know that you are loved." What does that mean to you? Being kind is a basic human behavior critical to our health and wellbeing. We all need to give and receive kindness, and children must learn to practice this especially when another child is upset or had

an embarrassing moment like Katie. Working hard is energizing and encourages enthusiasm for learning and challenges. It's also a necessity for living life well, supporting fruitful, sustainable work and contributing to society. Children need to know they are loved, which sends the message that this means in school too! Some children may not feel loved outside of school so it's a message that the classroom is a safe loving place.

9. You offer free “breathing boards” for download on your site,

www.kathleenjeffreyauthor.com. What do these do? Breathing boards are an easy exercise that feels like a fun game and has a calming effect. The child traces a figure eight, triangle or other shapes with their finger following the arrows, breathing in and out. It's another way to encourage mindful breathing that is also visual, sensory and tactile.

10. What makes kids so anxious about spelling bees or taking a quiz? Spelling requires sounding out the words but also memorization. Even if a child likes spelling and is good at it, they can still worry they won't remember the answers if they tend to be anxious. Spelling bees can add even more pressure since you are performing in front of others.

11. If children can't learn to deal with their anxiety, how does this affect their adulthood? It can affect so many aspects of life and could lead to an adulthood anxiety disorder. Early intervention is so important.

12. Do you believe medication is the answer for nervous kids? It depends on the child, if there is a diagnosis, a medical professional's recommendations, and then it's up to the parents to decide what is best.

13. Your college degree is in elementary education and psychology, but you didn't become a teacher. Why? When I graduated there was a shortage of teaching jobs. While pursuing teaching positions, I worked in a gourmet cookware shop on Cape Cod. When funding fell through on a new kindergarten teaching position I had been promised, I decided to take up the store owner's suggestion, based on his observations, that I pursue a sales career. It was the best advice and a perfect fit for me.

14. Is your book teaching a great lesson now? Yes. Kids must be encouraged to speak up to let their teachers and caregivers know they are struggling. Also, they need to understand they are not alone, that many kids worry before tests and there are calming tools to help. It also brings more awareness to test anxiety that can start between 2nd and 4th grade. It may carry through into college and beyond if not addressed. Early intervention is the key in any school related anxiety as that can lead to test anxiety eventually.

15. You raised three children. How did you help them avoid or deal with test anxiety? I encouraged them to let their teachers know if they did not understand something and to ask for help. To let my husband and I know as well and ask for help when studying. We would practice with them when having to memorize material. Procrastination was always the big red flag for test distress. Even though my office was at home, after school homework/project tutors who made everything more fun with less resistance was a very good strategy as a working mom. Luckily my kids were good test takers overall, which I clearly envied,

especially for the SATs! I also taught them how to read before kindergarten and early on paid attention to any signs of distress that I could relate to as an anxious school kid.

16. What do you say to critics of our young generation, where they say that kids are too soft and coddled, how they only know video games, social media, their phones, and Netflix?

Between the helicopter parenting of my generation that started with our millennial children, smart phones and all the alluring addictive technology and algorithms, adults, children and society overall need a better balance. Jonathan Haidt, the author of the new bestseller, 'The Anxious Generation,' 'How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness,' shows an alarming increase in mental health issues among teens, from the time smart phones were introduced in 2010. Full access to the internet through smart phones has created a virtual "phone-based childhood" vs. the unstructured "play-based childhood" of my generation and before. This book is informative, and the author's research compelling. I think every parent should read it.

Test Anxiety: What You Need to Know

One National Institutes of Health study revealed that as many as 25-40% of US students experience test anxiety.

Physical Symptoms of Test Anxiety

- Headache, Nausea, Excessive Sweating
- Shortness of Breath, Rapid Heartbeat
- Lightheadedness, Feeling Faint

Signs of Test Anxiety

- Lack of Concentration
- Irrational Fear Before Tests
- Negative Self-Talk
- Low Performance Despite Preparation
- Trouble Sleeping
- School Avoidance
- Procrastination

Possible Causes

- Low Self Esteem
- Perfectionism
- Performance Pressure
- Fear of Failure
- Feeling Unprepared
- Repeating Cycles of Test Panic
- Fear of Judgement by Others

Result

Some children avoid a test, stress out in preparation for an exam and have difficulty concentrating and performing during the test. For some students, anxiety can become so overwhelming or even debilitating that they are prevented from performing their best. Lack of concentration leads to lower test scores, negative self-image, and burnout.

Solution

Author Kathleen Jeffrey offers useful resources to treat test anxiety at www.KathleenJeffreyAuthor.com/resources/. In addition to downloadable coloring sheets and breathing boards, she offers uplifting guidance and practical exercises and tips to help children lower their anxiety and increase their test scores.

Helping Kids Overcome Test Anxiety

- Encourage Positive Focus on Effort & Preparation
- Reinforce Positive Self Talk
- Practicing Calming Techniques
- Deep Breathing Before & During Tests
- Test Taking Strategies/Practice Tests
- Review Test Results for Improvement
- Professional Therapy if Problematic

5-Star Amazon Review Sampling

A must read for kids with anxiety!

Katie's Really Bad Day" is a heartwarming and empowering children's book that beautifully addresses the common challenge of test anxiety through the eyes of a young girl named Katie.

A Wholesome Read-Aloud!

I was impressed by the positive message and wholesome vibe of Katie's Really Bad Day. This visually appealing read-aloud book offers practical strategies to help children overcome the common problem of test anxiety.

Katie's Really Bad Day: A Beautiful and Thoughtfully Written Story

Katie's Really Bad Day not only has beautiful illustrations that draw the reader in but also has a wonderfully important message about anxiety in children.

A well-written and lovely book for children learning to cope with anxiety.

This book was wonderfully written. Katie receives love, patience and constructive coaching from teacher Miss Julie who helps Katie overcome test anxiety. I love the way the author does not talk down to the readers (5-8 years old) while at the same time is gentle.

Thoughtful message for children with test anxiety

This is such a beautifully illustrated children's book with a compelling message for children who deal with anxiety. Test anxiety is very real for some children and learning coping skills is most beneficial. The book's text and illustrations make the message very relatable.

Great message

This book was perfect to read with both my 5-year-old and 7-year-old daughters. My 5-year-old loved the artwork and my 7-year-old loved the message as she is a very anxious kid. Thank you for writing this book!

Coping with Childhood Anxiety

Having been a clinical social worker for kids for more than 40 years, I was delighted to read this touching story that so beautifully captures the emotions of a little girl experiencing a real-life mental health dilemma.

Teacher's support help Katie to have a really good day!

Katie's Really Bad Day tells the story of Katie who becomes anxious when it's time for testing. Kathleen Jeffrey's story narrates the importance of recognizing early signs and symptoms of anxiety.

Engaging and Practical

This was a beautifully drawn, well-written book about a young girl suffering from test anxiety. The reader follows Katie through a spelling test, which causes her a great deal of anxiety, and then shows how supportive parents and teachers can give her support and tools.

A Wonderful Resource to Aid Young Children and Anyone Supporting Social Emotional Learning

This book is very well written with beautiful illustrations. It is an engaging way to communicate to a child having test anxiety and reinforces how to overcome it.

A Resourceful Read Aloud!

Kathleen Jeffrey's new children's book, Katie's Really Bad Day, tackles the topic of test anxiety in a comforting and relatable manner. Kathleen's story is successful in demystifying the subject of anxiety and helps young students.

Everyone has been a Katie at one point or another

Everyone can relate to Katie! Through this easy to read and well-illustrated book, this author brings to light the feelings that many children have experienced in school. In addition, it demonstrates positive ways in which parents, teachers and peers can support others.

Such a great book!

My little ones love this book, Kathleen did such a beautiful job writing a story that can help millions of kids struggling with test anxiety.

Wonderful classroom library addition!

Katie's Very Bad Day is a beautifully written and illustrated story and would be a wonderful addition to classroom libraries of any level. The test anxiety Katie displays is so common in many of our students, and her story and the tools to help her and her fellow students are so relatable! As a special educator, I would recommend this book to both colleagues and parents in our current testing-focused environment. Reading it together will promote a healthy discussion, the opportunity to let students know that they are not alone, and help them with the tools they may need to deal with challenging situations.