



In the novel, Maggie expresses that she is struggling in these ways:

**Related to Anxiety:**

- "I freeze." (p.15).
- "The cheese sticks in my throat." (p.15)
- "My breath catches in the place that holds my worry." (p.20)
- "My voice coated with desperation." (p.20)
- "My body tightens." (p.20)
- "I search my brain but find only blank space." (p. 20)
- "My insides crumble thinking about losing one of the Original Five." (p. 41)
- "My whole body freezes." (p.58)
- "The panic rises from the place that holds my forever good-byes." (p. 71)
- "I swallow the voice that wants to scream." (p.99)
- "I don't want to talk about the weird mad that took over my brain when I saw my mom cleaning my room." (p.100)
- "My breath tightens." (p.107)
- "A tornado-like anger spins through my body." (p.117)
- "My lungs feel like they're squeezing all the air out of me." (p.118)
- "Then it happens. The anger drapes across my brain and digs like nails into my heart. I take the plate, plastic fork, shirt, perfume bottle, bath mat, and throw them at my mother, one by one." (p.123)
- "My body freezes. I'm scared." (p.138)
- "My feelings spin." (p.138)
- "My brain is flooded with loud bursts of I-don't-want-to-be-here, so I'm not sure I can even form actual sentences." (p.140)
- "I want to hide under my covers until my scary mad disappears forever." (p.152)
- "School feels like I'm sleepwalking. I'm here, but not really." (p.160)
- "My brain is full of worry." (p.160)
- "I let out a big breath I didn't know I was holding." (p. 205)
- "Goosebumps climb onto my skin. Fear taps my insides." (p. 236)
- "Pinwheels spin in my stomach." (p. 247)
- "My insides dip and dive." (p.281)

**Related to Loss and Grieving:**

- "Mom had a great big hole in her heart. I know because I had one, too. Mom said I shouldn't worry. Just needed time. To heal." (p.6)
- "I'd been forgotten. By someone who'd loved me my whole life." (p.24)
- "That day my heart shattered into a million tiny pieces." (p.24)
- "My insides crumble thinking about losing one of the Original Five." (p. 41)

## **Give and Take: An Educator's Guide to Anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive, and Related Disorders**

- "The panic rises from the place that holds my forever good-byes." (p. 71)
- "The sadness tugs at me." (p.83)
- "My insides are filled with a missing that can't be fixed with words." (p.85)
- "I hurt. All the way through." (p.86)
- "And wonder if there will ever be a time when good-byes don't leave a gaping hole in my heart." (p. 93)
- "School feels like I'm sleepwalking. I'm here, but not really." (p.160)
- "But when I look down the line, my insides sink when I see the gap where Belle used to be. A hole in our squad." (p.161)
- "The sadness squeezes my heart like the ivy that grows tight around the maple tree at the edge of the pond." (p.200)
- "I can't pretend everything is normal." (p. 201)

### **Related to Hoarding:**

- "It's my secret. A little something. To remember. So my memories don't disappear." (p.13)
- "The other boxes in my closet were too full to add even one more thing after I added the green bath mat from the garbage. Mom had thrown it away, like she didn't care about all those times my toes had touched the fuzzy kiwi-colored mat." (p. 25)
- "I wore it every day until the day she forgot me. Then I took it off and put it in one of my boxes. Where I could never lose it. Or forget it." (p.26)
- "When Nana died last year, I added a tassel from her favorite pomegranate-red scarf. And since then, I've added five gum wrappers, three bendy straws, sticks from a hike up Ridge Mountain, Wade Pond, and a walk with Charlie, a yellow plastic fork, half a red, white, and blue plate with a picture of fireworks on it, and a butterscotch candy wrapper. I've also filled the seven boxes in the closet, the three under my bed, and most of my school locker. Today I dropped in one teeny-tiny yellow sock. A little piece of Izzie. For me. To keep." (p.26)
- "Hidden. From everyone." -referring to her items under the bed- (p. 26)
- "I retrieved the containers, stuffed them in my backpack, took them home, and added them to my box." (p.40)
- "I open the lid and drop in the rock I took when I scooped up Bert at the field. It lands next to Izzie's sock. I close the lid. Tightly. My box is just for me. To hold. My stuff. For keeps." (p. 45)
- "Then I stuff the binkie with the green frog into my pocket. For keeps." (p.73)
- "I snuck into Gramps and Nana's room and slipped a bottle of her perfume into my pocket. That night I put it in the box. It was a little piece of her." (75)
- "I think this garden is like my boxes. A place where memories last and specks of happiness live forever." (p. 89)
- "I might not understand the anger, but when I think about anyone moving or touching my things, it's there. Stuck to me like sap." (p.130)

- “No one wants to be friends with someone who does weird stuff.” (p. 136)
- “I freak out when anyone goes near my things.” (p. 144)

## About Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal human emotion that may be experienced as unease, apprehension, nervousness, shyness, a feeling of impending doom, and/or fear. Like any emotion, anxiety can range from mild to extreme. However, general symptoms and signs of anxiety in school-aged children may include (but are not limited to) the following:

The child may...

- complain of frequent stomach aches and/or headaches
- have frequent absences or tardiness
- avoid a particular person, place, or thing they feel anxious about
- be shy or quiet around new people or new experiences
- become visibly nervous (red face, stammering, lack of eye contact, closed in posture)
- suddenly have a blank expression or “blank out” in class
- avoid using the bathroom at school
- not eat or drink at school (or does so rarely/ minimally)
- make frequent trips to the nurse or other supportive staff at school
- cry often or easily —more so than other peers their age
- not speak at school (or speaks only minimally)
- have oppositional behaviors (especially when the child has reached a fight/flight/freeze level of anxiety)

There are times when anxiety can become intrusive and disruptive to a person's life, either because the anxiety is so intense, and/or the anxiety is chronic. When anxiety becomes this pronounced it might meet the criteria for an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are common among school-aged children— in fact, 1 in 8 children will experience an anxiety disorder (<https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children>). Statistically speaking, if you have a classroom of 20 children, the likelihood is that you have a couple students experiencing a diagnosable anxiety disorder.

## About Anxiety Disorders

There are various types of anxiety disorders including the following:

- **Generalized anxiety disorder** in which the person experiences excessive worry and anxiety over an extended period of time.
- **Social anxiety disorder** in which the person fears social situations and interactions and may feel anxious about being seen, heard, and/or judged.

- **Phobia related disorders** in which the person experiences immobilizing fear toward certain things or situations.
- **Panic disorder** in which the person has recurrent panic attacks that may or may not be preceded by a known trigger.
- **Separation anxiety disorder** in which the person feels anxious when away from a person or pet they have an attachment to.

### **About Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorders**

Obsessive compulsive and related disorders are considered a different category than anxiety disorders although they often overlap or share similar traits. The following are examples of obsessive compulsive and related disorders:

- **Hoarding disorder:** Collecting and keeping items, which may or may not have material value. The person often has an emotional attachment to these items and experiences distress when organizing them or getting rid of them.
- **Trichotillomania:** Ongoing and repetitive act of pulling out one's hair (eyebrows, eyelashes, hair, body hair) resulting in hair loss.
- **Skin Excoriation:** Ongoing and repetitive act of picking one's skin resulting in lesions and scabs.
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder:** Unwanted, intrusive, repetitive thoughts and behaviors that disrupt a person's functioning.

All of the above are unwanted and intrusive patterns of thoughts and behaviors that disrupt a person's livelihood.

### **When to Refer a Student for Further Evaluation or Support**

If the symptoms and behaviors are getting in the way of the child's learning, relationships with peers, completing schoolwork, keeping up with classroom expectations—or if you're simply concerned—you can refer the child to the school's guidance department and/or school nurse and/or inform the child's parent or guardian about your observations and concerns. Parents and guardians can take this information to the child's pediatrician for further evaluation. There are medical conditions that can mimic anxiety symptoms so it's helpful, when communicating to parents and guardians, to report the facts and observations and not assume the child has anxiety or another disorder. Lead poisoning, head injuries, low blood sugar, seizures, and more can mimic anxiety symptoms—the pediatrician can assess what is going on and make any referrals needed.

## **Support for Students Who Experience Anxiety at School**

As you're well aware, 504 plans and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are those that provide guidelines for interventions for students with disabilities and/or mental health or behavioral impairments. There may be times you have a student displaying signs of anxiety who has not been identified for a 504 or IEP. Plan or no plan, there are ways that teachers might support a student with mild to moderate anxiety.

- Provide reminders prior to transitions (i.e. give a 5 minute reminder).
- Assign seating that reduces the child's anxiety (i.e. near the door, near the front of the room, near the teacher's desk).
- Make your expectations clear (behavioral and academic).
- Provide frequent check-ins.
- Do not require the child to read aloud or work at the board in front of the class.
- Allow recorded presentations in place of presenting in front of the class.
- Allow the child to present learned material to just a teacher or small group in place of the entire class.
- Allow extended time for tests.
- Allow tests to be taken in a separate, quiet environment (to reduce performance pressure and distraction).
- Allow word banks and equation sheets: These can be useful for children with test anxiety, who tend to "go blank" when taking a test. Also allowing one notecard for important facts, dates, etc. can also be helpful.
- Provide "Take a break" passes to take a break from the classroom if/when the child is feeling anxious. Examples might include a walk in the hallway, getting a drink of water, or standing outside the classroom door to take a few deep breaths.
- Break down assignments into smaller pieces.
- Set reasonable time limits for homework.
- Record class lectures in place of taking written notes.
- Allow a preferential group for field trips (i.e. the child is placed with a teacher, friend, or chaperone).
- Allow preferential seating in large assemblies (i.e. near the back of the room or near an exit).
- Identify at least one adult at school the child can seek out when feeling anxious (i.e. school counselor, if available).
- Assign a "buddy" or use a buddy system for transitions to lunch and recess (these less structured situations can trigger anxious feelings).
- Inform the child or parents ahead of time when you know there will be a substitute.

## **Journaling**

In **Give and Take**, Maggie uses journaling as a means for organizing her thoughts and setting goals. Journaling can be a wonderful means for sorting through ones thoughts, feelings and life experiences. It can also be used to organize, plan, dream, and set goals.

Consider leading your students through a journaling experience with the *Go On, Change the World: Journaling with Give and Take* guide available as a free download at [EllySwartz.com](http://EllySwartz.com). The guide includes journaling prompts created by LCSW Bonnie Thomas and *Go On, Change the World* labels for journal making.