

By Elizabeth Pinborough

(Based on a true story)

*"I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee" (Isaiah 41:13).*

**E**lla didn't like bedtime at all. When the lights went out, her imagination came alive. And the thing was, she couldn't stop it.

Ella tried to figure out what was making the shadow on her wall. Then she heard a creaking sound. She froze with fear. *What if something is under my bed?*

Ella rolled over so she couldn't see the wall. *Maybe if I stay really still, nothing will bother me,* she told herself. Dad and Mom were just down the hall, but she didn't want to wake them up.

Pulling her fuzzy blue blanket up around her face, Ella said a prayer to Heavenly Father. But the scary thoughts didn't go away.

Ella's muscles felt tight, and her stomach hurt. *Am I getting sick?* she worried.

The next day Ella couldn't keep her mind on her reading book. She wasn't even excited when Ms. Lopez showed a video about dinosaur fossils. What if she really was sick? What if she missed the test tomorrow? Her list of worries just got bigger and bigger.

At recess, an easy soccer pass rolled right by her. "Hey, Ella!" her friend Porter yelled. "What are you dreaming about?" Ella felt her face get hot. She wanted to yell back at Porter.

That night after Mom tucked her in bed, Ella lay awake with her eyes wide open. She tried thinking happy thoughts. She prayed again. She even sang a Primary song. It helped for a minute, but then the scary thoughts came back.

*Maybe it's my fault,* Ella thought. *Maybe Heavenly Father isn't answering my prayers because I've done something wrong.*

The next morning Ella wandered into the kitchen, rubbing sleep out of her eyes.

"Good morning!" Dad said as he stacked banana pancakes on Ella's plate.

Ella cut a bite of pancake and pushed it around in the syrup.

"Are you feeling OK?" Dad asked.

# ELLA'S WORRIES



Ella didn't answer. She just stared at her uneaten pancakes. Dad patted her shoulder. "You can talk to me about anything. I'll listen no matter what."

Ella felt a tear roll down her cheek. "Dad, I have really scary thoughts, and I can't make them go away," she said. "I pray really hard, but it doesn't feel like Heavenly Father answers. The scary thoughts don't go away!"

Dad hugged Ella tight. "Maybe Heavenly Father answered your prayer by helping you talk to me."

Ella nodded and rubbed her eyes.

"And about your scary thoughts," said Dad, "it sounds like your brain is having a hard time calming down after you have a stressful thought. That's called anxiety. Mom started having trouble with it when she was your age too."

Ella let out a deep breath. She didn't know anyone else felt like she did! But she was still a little worried. "Does it happen because I'm doing something wrong?"

"No," said Dad. "It's not your fault at all! A lot of people feel anxiety." He sat down next to Ella. "But we can definitely help you feel better."

"How?" Ella asked.

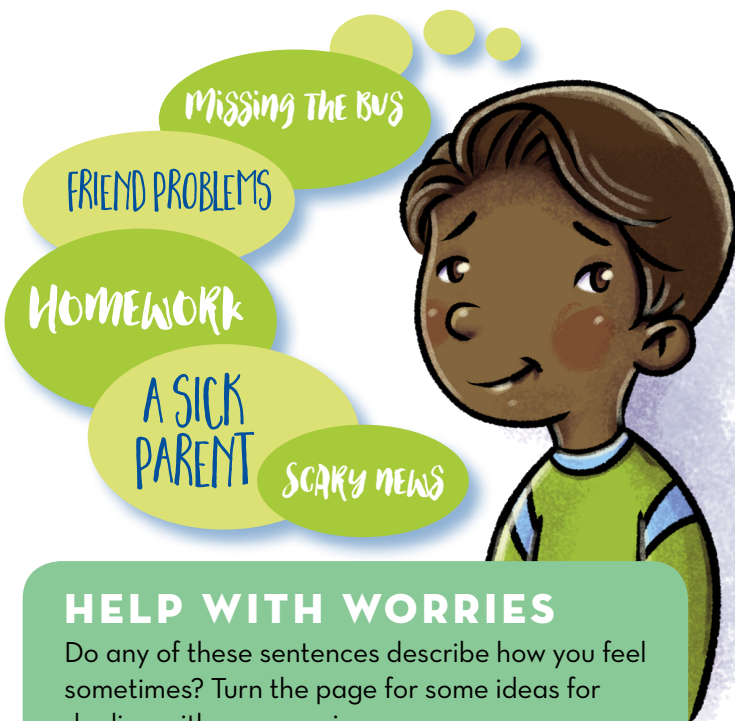
"Well, you already took the first step," said Dad. "Talking to me."

"How else?" Ella wanted to know.

"Maybe you can try some of the things that helped Mom. We can talk to your doctor about it too," Dad said. "I know one thing for sure. Heavenly Father loves you and cares about how you feel. Let's pray to Him to help us know what else we can do."

After they prayed, Ella smiled. "Eat up!" Dad said as Ella took a bite of a buttery, syrup-covered pancake. She felt peaceful knowing that Heavenly Father loved her—and that Dad and Mom could help too. ♦

The author lives in Utah, USA.



## HELP WITH WORRIES

Do any of these sentences describe how you feel sometimes? Turn the page for some ideas for dealing with your worries.

- I worry a lot almost every day.
- I worry about a lot of different things.
- I have a hard time sleeping at night.
- I feel tired or grumpy when I'm awake.
- It's hard to focus or pay attention.