

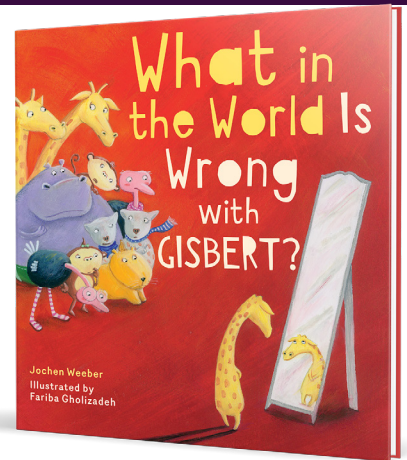
READ★PRAY★WONDER★PLAY

A GUIDE TO SHARING STORIES WITH CHILDREN

What in the World Is Wrong with Gisbert?

By Jochen Weeber & Fariba Gholizadeh

As much as this is a story about friends and verbal bullying, it is also a gentle story about family and how parents, or caregivers, know that something is bothering their child but struggle to help because the child cannot articulate the problem. Often the child doesn't know what is wrong, just that something is. While the focus of this story is Gisbert, his friendships, and his feelings throughout the story, pay attention to how Gisbert's parents interact with their child. They inquire but they do not rush to fix the problem. They are present and supportive, but they also provide space for Gisbert to figure out what's happening with his feelings in his own time and assure him that his feelings are valid. It may take time for a child to put their feelings into words. Be open to the idea that this story can help both adults and children who experience this.



★ ★ WONDER TOGETHER ★ ★

- How did Gisbert feel about his life at the beginning of the story? What changed?
- The story describes Gisbert as shrinking. Was he getting shorter or was something else happening to him? What do you think was happening to Gisbert? When is a time you have felt like you were shrinking?
- What do the other animals' comments do to Gisbert's feelings?
- Gisbert repeats that he is fine but inside he does not know what's happening to him. When do you feel that way? Who do you turn to for help or comfort?
- How do Gisbert's parents help him? How does someone who cares for you help you when you are sad?
- What did Gisbert's friends do to make Gisbert feel better?

★ ★ EXPLORE THE STORY ★ ★

- Act out the story with family members and/or stuffed animals and toy characters. Take turns playing the part of Gisbert, Gisbert's parent(s), and Gisbert's friends. What does it feel like through the story in these different roles?
- Wonder what feeling "tall" and feeling "small" are like. For Gisbert, small meant that his feelings were hurt and he was less of himself. Identify times when people may feel "tall" and "small."
- Do an image search for a "feelings wheel for children." Choose one that is age appropriate for your child and use it to identify Gisbert's feelings throughout the story. Print a wheel or make your own family wheel of feelings to share emotions at different times.

PRAY

Dear God, when people say hurtful things or treat us unkindly it can make us sad, and we may feel like we are shrinking inside. Thank you for always loving us and for helping us grow into kind and loving people. Thank you for all who love us and remind us of your love. Amen.



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Children are going to encounter mean-spirited or unkind words and actions as they interact with others, both peers and adults. Creating an emotionally supportive home will provide your child with tools for withstanding the verbal and emotional challenges and setbacks that might come their way. Use these five strategies to make a safe space for your child:

- Validate your child's feelings, even when you may not understand them or they can't articulate them well. Allow your child to express their emotions and be heard.
- Encourage your child to express their feelings in healthy ways, understanding the connection between their feelings and their actions. This awareness helps develop empathy, social skills, and self-regulation.
- Be present and available to your child. Practice active listening. Provide emotional space for your child to express their feelings with you.
- Offer comfort and reassurance, both for difficult situations and the feelings they create.
- Model emotional intelligence by expressing your own feelings and responding to your child's emotions in healthy ways.

With older children: Explore two Bible stories about bullying and consider how the person in the story handled being bullied. Read the Bible passage provided or the story from a children's story Bible.

- Joseph and his brothers—Read Genesis 37. Note Genesis 37:4.
- David and Goliath—Read 1 Samuel 17.

Read some passages about God's call to love one another:

- Proverbs 31:8-9—speak up for those being bullied.
- Matthew 5:44—pray for those who bully that they may find love and peace in their lives.
- Luke 6:31—the "golden rule," treat others as you would like to be treated.
- Romans 13:10—love protects and nurtures rather than harms.
- Colossians 3:12—practice kindness.

MORE TO READ & DO

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO LEARN MORE

ADDITIONAL BOOKS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE & EXPLORE EMOTIONS

- [*My Elephant Is Blue: A Book about Big, Heavy Feelings*](#), by Melinda Szymanik and Vasanti Unka
- [*Simon and the Big, Bad, Angry Beasts: A Book about Anger*](#), by Ian De Haes
- [*Grandpa's Window*](#), by Laura Gehl and Udayana Lugo
- [*Sidney the Lonely Cloud*](#), by Tim Hopgood
- [*Max and the Purple Worry*](#), by Kitty Black and Jess Rose
- [*One Thursday Afternoon*](#), by Barbara DiLorenzo

Guide written by Meg Elliot Rift and created in partnership with PC(USA)'s initiative "[Around the Table](http://www.pcusa.org/aroundthetable)" (pcusa.org/aroundthetable).



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