

☆ Sam's Diary ☆

coping with anxiety



written by
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illustrated by
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About the author

Saffiya Hanslod is 17 years old and attends St. Wilfrid's Sixth Form, in Blackburn. She was born in Blackburn and has been a member of One Voice Blackburn since the age of 11. She is passionate about emotional health and wellbeing. This is her first book, aimed at primary school children.

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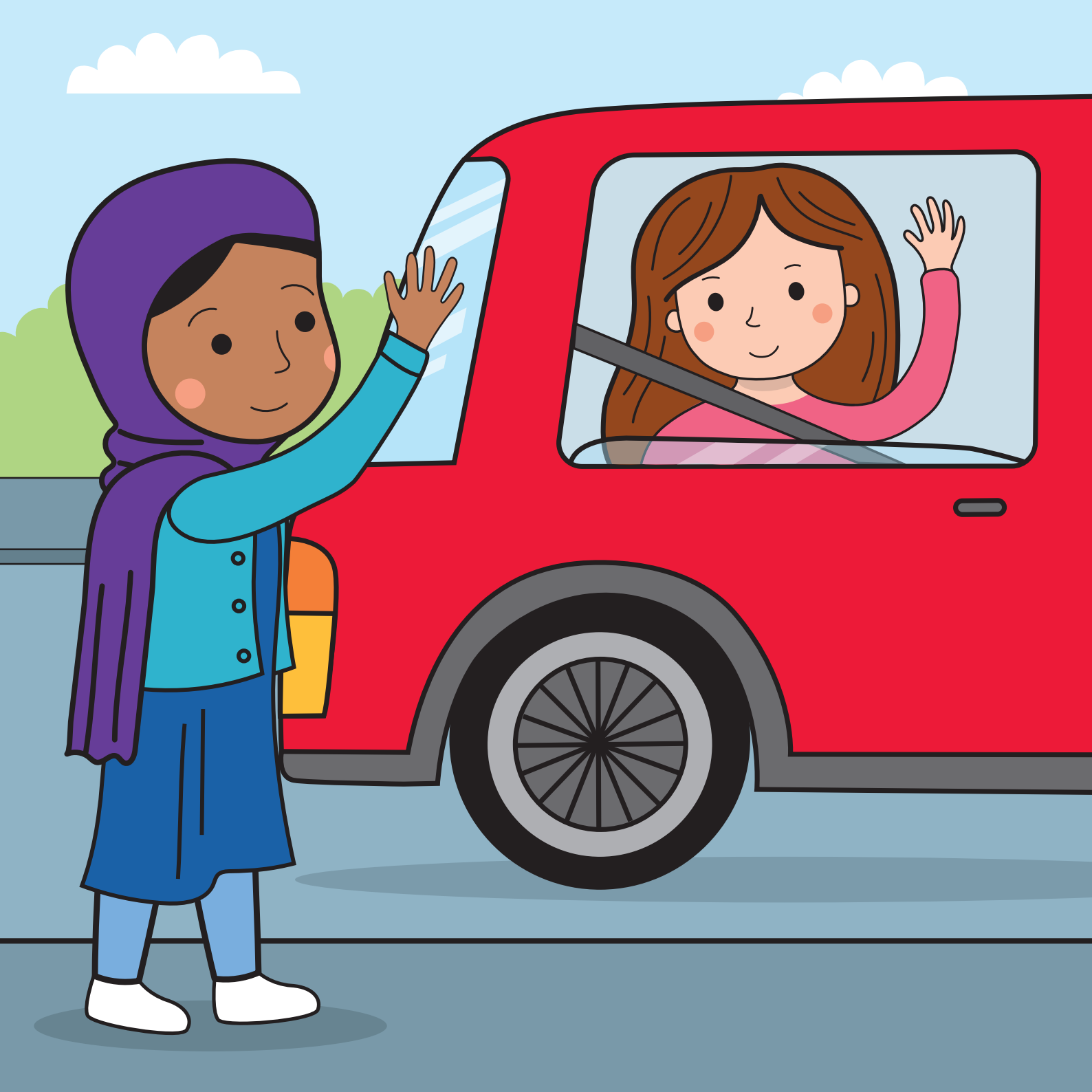
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Dear diary,

It's been a week since I last wrote, and how things have changed. After lots of tears with Asia, we said our goodbyes with big bear hugs and sad smiles. The moving van was all packed and the house was empty. It was so empty I could hear my echoes. I'm going to miss living next door to Asia. When it was time to go, I got into the car and wound down the window. "I miss you already!" shouted Asia as the car pulled out of the drive. I waved and waved until my arm was sore and she faded away. I felt a heaviness in my tummy as I realised that things are going to change, and my life would never be the same again.





SAM's
stuff

books

SAM

Diary

Dear diary,

Today we arrived at the new house. It smelt of fresh paint and new beginnings. My parents were bustling about, carrying boxes and discussing where to put the new furniture. I entered a room at the top of the stairs. This is going to be my new bedroom. The walls look bare, and the echoes of my footsteps make the space feel empty. The idea of starting school tomorrow feels even MORE daunting. I managed to unpack some of my belongings, but all I kept thinking about is Asia and my old school where I knew everyone and felt comfortable. I miss my friends and the familiarity of my old routines. The thought of walking into a new classroom full of strangers is making my heart race.

Dear diary,

Jess woke me up licking my face. I gave her a cuddle and I rubbed her belly (she likes that), she managed to make me laugh then I remembered it's the first day of school!



I brushed my teeth with thoughts of doubt flashing through my mind. Suddenly I can feel my heart thumping again, LOUDER AND LOUDER by the second.

I got changed into my new uniform and stood in front of the mirror. Blue isn't really my colour, but I attached my lucky pin badge Asia had given me to make it look better. I took a deep breath as I tried to calm the fluttering in my stomach. I went downstairs to eat breakfast. Mum had made me my favourite. PANCAKES, but I could hardly eat. She told me everything would be okay, but I wasn't sure. I thought about Asia and wished she was here with me.

My first day of school

The drive to school felt like an eternity. Trees and houses blurred together and my mind started to play the ‘what if’ game again ... What if people laugh at me? What if I cannot keep up in class? What if I get lost in the hallways. I could feel my heart pounding again. As we arrived the imposing brick building loomed over. It looked like fortress. I could see children laughing and chatting. “Good luck,” said mum as she leaned over and gave me a hug. “You’ll be fine.”

I wasn’t feeling her reassurance. I just nodded, got out of the car and walked towards the entrance. Each step I took felt heavier than the last.



Eventually I reached the entrance where I was greeted by a friendly looking face who introduced herself as Mrs Blossom. That's a pretty name I thought. She directed me to a classroom and pointed to an empty chair and suggested I sit there. I was the first to arrive. I took a deep breath and sat down. The chair felt cold and hard. I felt nervous. I fiddled with my friendship bracelet Asia made for me. This brought me some comfort as I started to think about our friendship and the happy times we shared over the summer. Slowly, more and more children began to fill the empty seats around me. A girl with red hair sat down next to me. She had an air of confidence that made me feel less adrift.

“Nice pin,” she muttered.

“Thanks,” I said feeling like I was going slightly red in the face.

There was an awkward pause. I could feel my heart pounding again. I took a deep breath and bravely asked her name.

She replied, “Joey.”

“You play football? She asked. “What’s your favourite team.

Wait don’t answer it yet. let’s say it at the same time 1, 2, 3!”

“Liverpool!” We both squealed at the same time.



This was the first time I felt a small sense of relief. We carried on chatting and discussing our favourite players and the latest match. Mrs Blossom took everyone on a tour around the school. It felt like a maze of unfamiliar faces in hallways, and I tried to blend in, but my heart raced as soon as someone glanced my way.

Surprisingly, lunchtime seemed to come around quickly. My new friend Joey asked me if I would like to have a kick about with her. Football has always been my sanctuary. The feel of the ball at my feet is like a familiar heartbeat so I immediately said yes. We found an expansive green field with freshly painted white lines. Joey had secured a ball from the sports room earlier and started passing it back and forth with me.

With each pass of the ball my worries of the day slowly went away as it was replaced with the familiar rhythm of the game I love. I was soon lost in my own world.





I noticed a group of kids watching and one of them called out, "Hey! Nice footwork. Mind if we join in?"

The group was a mix of boys and girls. The tallest of them, a boy named Jake stepped towards me with a friendly smile.

"I'm the captain of the school's football team. We were just heading out for practice. Want to join us?"

I could feel a sense of nervousness as he spoke. I looked at Joey and we both nodded. I tried to hide my nerves but with some inner courage I replied, "Sure, I'd love to."

As we began playing my fears began to dissolve. The team was welcoming, and my skills on the field spoke louder than any introduction! I scored a goal with a perfect shot into the top corner, my teammates cheered. The feeling was amazing.

After the game, Jake jogged over, still catching his breath.

"You're really good, Sam. We could use someone like you on the team. What do you say? Want to join?"

My heart swelled with a mix of relief and joy.

"I'd love to," I said with gratitude. The rest of the day seemed to fly by. When the final bell rang, I was excited to see mum and tell her about my day. When I got home, I cuddled up with Jess and read a book. It was nice to have some quiet time and reflect on all the good things that happened.

I realised that the day hadn't been the disaster I feared. I found a place where I felt at home but also gained a new group of friends who shared my passion.

It made me realise that sometimes, the best way to overcome anxiety is to lean into what you love. It was the simple love of football that turned my first daunting day into the start of something amazing. I'm looking forward to tomorrow.


Good night x





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