





## Introduction

The Secret Formula teaches kids how to become aware of their feelings and actions. This awareness enables them to fill their minds with positive thoughts and their lives with positive actions, ultimately enhancing positive relationships.

This book is interactive. Set aside some time to read it leisurely with your child. Use the child's name to personalize the story and keep them engaged. A good place to say the child's name is at the reflection points. You can read this entire book within an hour if you only focus on the reflections, but it is highly recommended that you follow through with the activities throughout the book. This gives you quality time to enjoy valuable interactions with that important young person in your life.

Be sensitive to the fact that they may not be able to answer some of the questions. Be patient, and help them formulate some possibilities. The goal of this book is to begin a conversation, and help you learn more about them. Remember, the first step to opening up the lines of communication is to listen without any interruptions or judgment. The goal is to develop a relationship that lasts forever.

Research by the Search Institute shows that kids who thrive have two important supports: knowledge of what their "sparks" are, and adults who support the development of those "sparks." You can be that supportive adult for an important young person in your life. Several research studies show that creative arts, athletics, and learning are the top interests that kids identify as their personal "sparks." Other activities like reading, volunteering, nature and spirituality also spark kids' passions. By addressing the whole child, mind, body, and spirit, my goal for this book is to provide a message of hope for kids and the adults who care for them.

Kids who know and develop their "sparks" (and who have adults in their lives to help) have higher grades, better school attendance and physical health, empathy, social competence, concern for the environment, a desire to help others, and a sense of purpose (<http://www.search-institute.org/sparks>). A caring and involved adult who recognizes a "spark" and who is willing to cultivate that "spark" can help a young person thrive. For further information on developing strengths, check out Thrively (<http://www.thrively.com>).

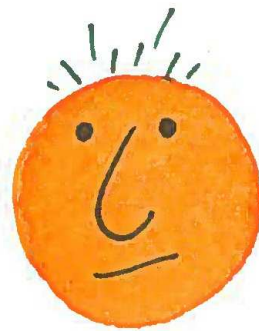
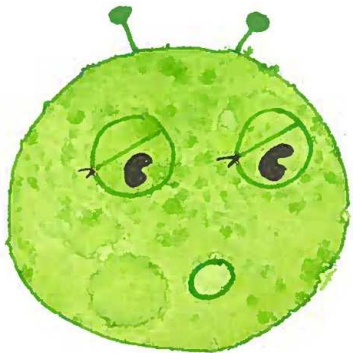


Finally, my own research on "School Violence Prevention: Climate and Moral Perspective" found that a caring and supportive adult makes a significant difference in the life of a child. You can be that person. Enjoy the book!

--Mrs. G, Ph.D.

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## Feelings and Emotions

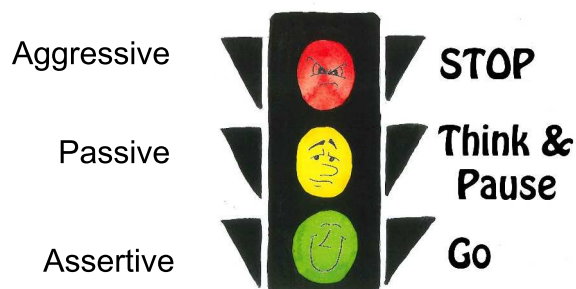
This is a book about feelings. Everyone has feelings. Sometimes we are happy, mad, sad or scared. Feelings usually fall into three categories. They can be aggressive, passive or assertive.

Think about a stop light with red, yellow and green lights. When the light is red, that is a signal to stop. We too, have STOP behaviors. They are described as aggressive behaviors. When we have STOP behaviors, we need to STOP and THINK (TTrue, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary or Kind)! Sometimes we feel sad and this is a time for caution! The yellow light is a signal to slow down, and PAUSE (Pactice Awareness Using Senses and Experience). This is when we need to focus our awareness on our thoughts and feelings and determine if they are based in reality. Is what I am thinking based on something that has happened, or is it an imagined thought passing through my mind? If it is not true, we need to let the thought pass, especially if the thought makes us feel mad or sad. Once we let the thought pass, we can return our focus to the present moment.

Usually, when we are feeling sad or blue, we are not taking very good care of ourselves. It is okay to feel blue sometimes, especially if we have had something sad happen in our life. However, we have to be careful to not always be blue, because stress chemicals are released into our body when we are sad or mad. These stress chemicals then multiply and end up creating a victim mentality, which can lead us to be in Victimville. When we are in Victimville, we feel sorry for ourselves and let people walk all over us. This is passive behavior and it is not fun.

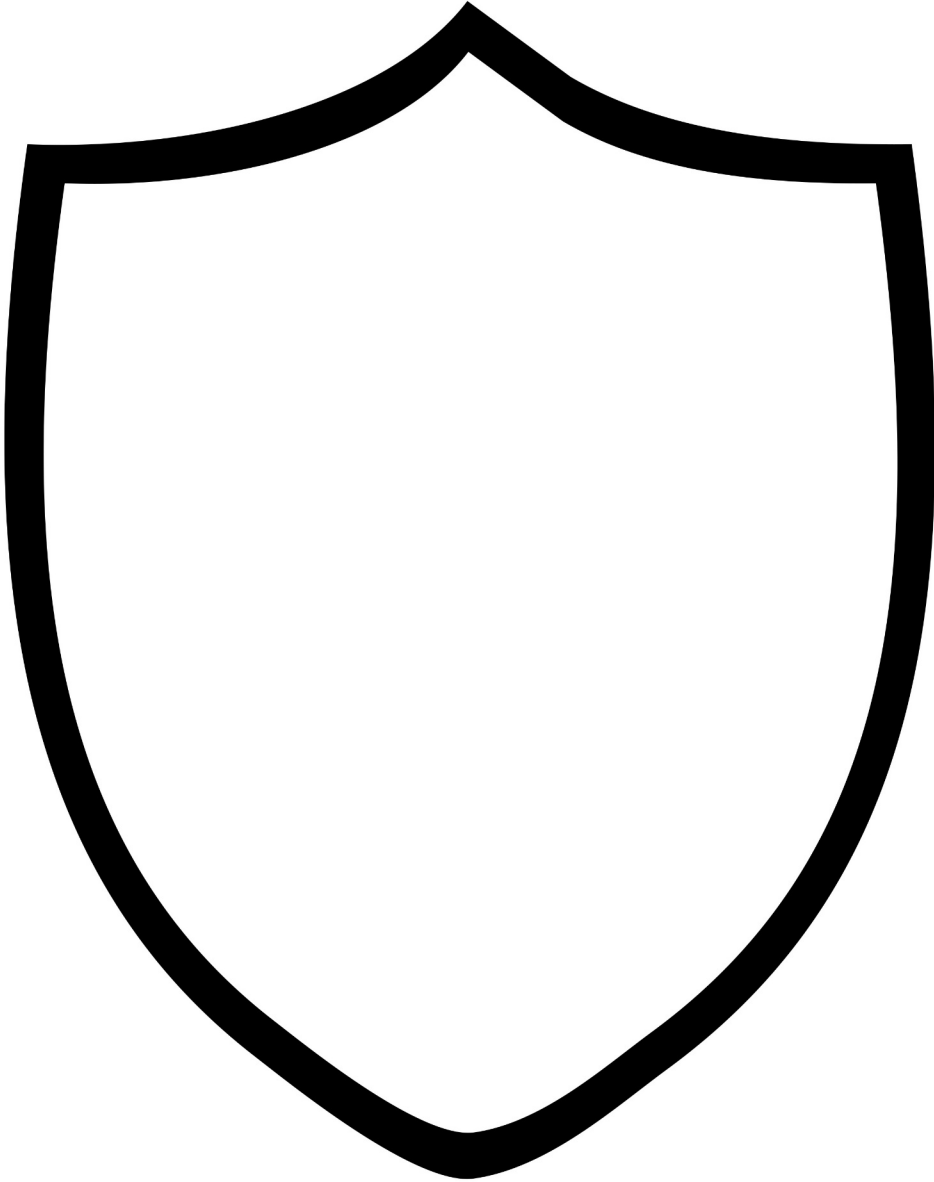
What we really need to have in life is a Victor, or Hero, mentality. Life is challenging, and we need to have a positive outlook to face life's battles. Our goal is to have GO behaviors as much as we can. GO behavior is assertive or responsible behavior. We have GO behavior when we treat others respectfully, while also taking care of our own needs.

As you can see, we all have three of these different types of behaviors and it is normal. Everyone has Aggressive or STOP behaviors, Passive or Sad behaviors, and Assertive or GO behaviors. The key to life is to be in a neutral state of mind and strive to have GO behaviors as much as you can.



*Reflection: Who is your Victor or Hero? Why?*

*Activity: Draw a picture of your Victor or Hero below.*



**MY HERO**

Victor - A person who defeats an enemy. Synonyms: Winner, Champion or Hero

# THINK

When you find yourself feeling mad or sad, that is a signal for you to STOP/PAUSE, and THINK. Become aware of how you are feeling, using your senses and the present experience to answer the following questions regarding the thoughts you are having.

Are your thoughts...

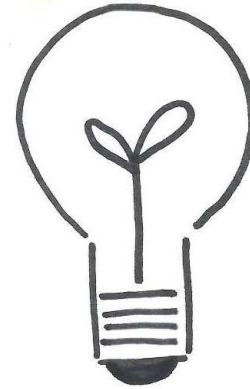
T – truthful? (Real or not real?)

H – helpful? (Do they make me feel good?)

I – inspiring? (Do they encourage me?)

N – necessary? (Do they serve a purpose?)

K – kind? (Do they promote joy?)



If the thoughts you are having are not true, helpful, inspiring, necessary or kind, then that is a signal for you to STOP what you are thinking or doing and change to GO behaviors instead. When you have GO behaviors, you will feel better and the people around you will feel better too!

*Reflection: Can you think of a time or a problem when you could have used the THINK process to make a better decision?*

*Activity: Make your own THINK sign to post in your room.*

Becoming aware of what is going through your mind is the first step to changing your behavior. The mind is the part of a person that thinks, reasons, feels and remembers things. Your mind is also responsible for your thoughts and feelings, and guides your actions. The mind is a powerful tool, it has the capability to control your emotions and thoughts, which affect your behavior. Because the mind also makes things up, we need to evaluate things based on the present situation. When we recognize our STOP and sad behaviors, we must PAUSE (Practice Awareness Using Senses & Experience), take some deep breaths, and THINK. This way we can become aware of what is really happening, acknowledge the feeling, label the feeling, and then change to GO behaviors instead.

## Feelings and Behaviors

Let's see if you can tell the difference between STOP behaviors, Passive behaviors, and GO behaviors. Take this quiz and see how you do. Put a happy face next to GO behaviors, a sad face next to Passive/Sad behaviors, and a mad face next to STOP behaviors.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| _____ Listens carefully                                 | _____ Asks for help                    |
| _____ Hits others                                       | _____ Is disrespectful to others       |
| _____ Follows directions                                | _____ Is thoughtful                    |
| _____ Is a good friend                                  | _____ Is a loyal friend                |
| _____ Blames others                                     | _____ Spreads rumors                   |
| _____ Shares  | _____ Is responsible for their actions |
| _____ Is kind   | _____ Studies for tests                |
| _____ Completes their work                              |  |
| _____ Cheats on tests                                   | (Add your own below:)                  |
| _____ Shouts out answers                                | _____                                  |
| _____ Stays in their seat                               | _____                                  |
| _____ Calls others names                                | _____                                  |
| _____ Is helpful  | _____                                  |
| _____ Gossips about others                              |  |
| _____ Posts insults online                              |  |
| _____ Pays attention in class                           |  |
| _____ Does nothing to solve their problem               |  |
| _____ Works to the best of their ability                |  |
| _____ Keeps their hands and feet to themselves          |  |
| _____ Does the right thing, even when no one is looking |  |



*Reflection: Sometimes, it is not easy to have GO behaviors, but you must try your very best to be the very best that you can be. Can you think of a time when it was difficult to have GO behavior?*

*Activity: Write about how you could turn the STOP behaviors on the list into GO behaviors (for example, "hits others" becomes "keep hands and feet to themselves").*

## The Secret Formula

It is best to have GO behaviors most of the time, but there will be times when you will feel blue or have STOP behaviors. It is normal. Remember, to PAUSE, THINK and ask yourself, is this feeling or thought I am having true, helpful, inspiring, necessary or kind? If not, then STOP what you are doing or saying, and *change your mind*. You need to gain awareness of these negative thoughts and create new positive thoughts and feelings. There will also be times when you will need to let others know how you are feeling, and that is not an easy thing to do.

A strategy that I learned many years ago to help keep my feelings and emotions in check is what I call the "Secret Formula." It goes like this:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when or because \_\_\_\_\_.

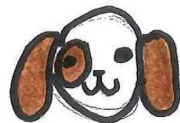
(Add feeling here) (Explain why you feel this way)

However, there is a secret to the "Secret Formula." Do you want to know the secret to the secret formula? It is very important that you remember this. The secret is, to not use the word, "YOU." As soon as you say the word "YOU," the person you are talking to may become defensive and not listen to you anymore.

*Reflection: Below are some examples of different feelings or emotions that we all have. All feelings and emotions stem from either love or fear. Circle all the love-based feelings below.*

*Activity: Make your own Emoji Chart*

- Jealous
- Nervous
- Lonely
- Scared
- Confused
- Happy
- Guilty
- Mad
- Fearful
- Sad
- Joyful
- Proud
- Anxious



- Shy
- Remorseful
- Frustrated
- Ashamed
- Bored
- Content
- Envious
- Excited
- Devastated
- Embarrassed
- Loved
- Connected
- Silly
- Calm



- Humiliated
- Terrified
- Surprised
- Overwhelmed
- Grateful
- Worried
- Powerful
- Hopeful
- Optimistic
- Peaceful
- Betrayed
- Shocked
- Disgusted
- Thoughtful



Illustrations by 8th grader Emily O.



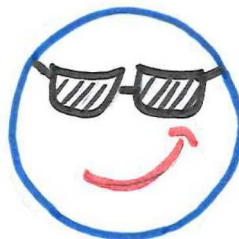
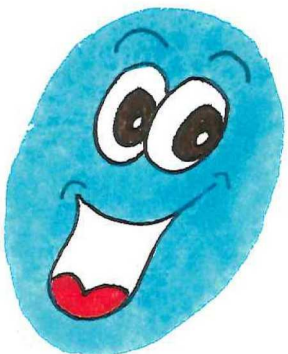
In the beginning, it is very hard to use the Secret Formula, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when/because \_\_\_\_\_, but the more you practice using the Secret Formula, the easier it becomes to share your feelings. Sharing your emotions will also help you get along better with others by communicating exactly what you are feeling inside of your mind.

*Reflection: How are you feeling today?*

*Activity: Practice using the Secret Formula, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when/because \_\_\_\_\_. You have to add an emotion in the first blank that describes what feeling you are experiencing and then explain why.*

There are some definite differences between the boy brain and the girl brain, but just remember, we all have feelings, and it is not easy to always be happy. An 8th grade boy reminded me of this one day as he came into my office to add a neutral or calm face to my feeling chart. He is right; contentment is a feeling that everyone should strive for. Sometimes, we want to “just be.”

However, there will be times when we need to let other people know how we feel and what is on our mind. We need to express how we feel when we are mad, sad, scared or anxious. There are many ways to change our mind too. When we are feeling mad or sad, that is the time we need to do things that make us feel good. The more we do things that make us feel good, the happier we will be. Use your imagination to get your creative mind going. Visualize what you want to become or what you want the outcome to be. You were designed for success. Happiness really is the best medicine. Now is the time to have some fun.



## Things to Do When You Are Feeling Blue

Look at the following list and circle some of the activities that you like to do. Add some of your own favorite things to do too! What activities spark your interests?

- |                               |                                |                                 |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Play on your phone            | Watch YouTube                  | Help someone                    |
| Organize your binder          | Call a friend                  | Be with nature                  |
| Tutor someone                 | Decorate your room             | Drink tea                       |
| Spend time with friends       | Play board games               | Text someone                    |
| Join a club                   | Rescue an animal               | Get/give a hug                  |
| Talk to someone               | Interview someone              | Dress up                        |
| Repeat your mantra            | Dream/imagine                  | Search for jokes online         |
| Sing your little ditty        | Do a random act of kindness    | Go to the beach                 |
| Go out for ice cream          | Ride a swing                   | Spend time with family          |
| Read the newspaper            | Practice yoga                  | Watch movies                    |
| Read comic books              | Make a smoothie                | Look at the clouds              |
| Shoot hoops outside           | Go to the mall                 | Paint your nails                |
| Play a sport                  | Watch anime                    | Look for good recipes           |
| Learn something new           | Give yourself a facial         | Go on Instagram                 |
| Draw                          | Organize your closet           | Take funny Snapchat pics        |
| Put on perfume/cologne        | Donate clothing                | Read the comics                 |
| Talk about your feelings      | Have a sleep over              | Visit the library               |
| Scream into a pillow          | Paint your sadness away        | Have a picnic                   |
| Go fishing                    | Go swimming                    | Look at beautiful photos        |
| Walk around the block         | Play hide and seek             | Sing really loud                |
| Drink water                   | Research quotes                | Say positive things to yourself |
| Visit a farm                  | Lay in the sun                 | Go bowling                      |
| Make potpourri                | Ride your bike                 | Visit a museum                  |
| Get rid of clutter            | Think positive thoughts        | Cry                             |
| Lift weights                  | Stay in bed and rest           | Blow bubbles                    |
| Give someone a gift           | Pop bubble wrap                | Make loom bands                 |
| Make plans for the future     | Soak your feet in hot water    | Breathe deeply                  |
| Color in a coloring book      | Swing                          | Play checkers                   |
| Make a gratitude list         | Plan on how to end a bad habit | Facetime someone                |
| Sit by a body of water        | Dance                          | Play cornhole                   |
| Play with young children      | Wear your favorite color       | Look at artwork                 |
| Clean your room               | Daydream                       | Visit the zoo                   |
| Change the sheets on your bed | Catch a ladybug                | Play card games                 |
| Go for a hike                 |                                | Climb a tree                    |

Make popcorn	Take deep belly breaths	Go for a run
Play kickball	Listen to music	Call your grandma/pa
Sing out loud	Pray	Play with a child
Keep a journal	Eat spicy food	Go to church
Ride a scooter	Look through your photos	Play chess
Volunteer your time	Make a collage	Watch the sunset
Plant a flower	Visit a cool store	Read a magazine
Work on a puzzle	Watch a musical	Do jumping jacks
Take a bubble bath	Walk around a garden	Meditate
Forgive someone	Tell someone you love them	Laugh with friends
Play backgammon	Find a hobby	Play hangman
Read a book to someone	Visit someone who is lonely	Watch T.V.
Clean out your backpack	Learn something new	Walk a dog
Compose a poem	Play an instrument	Decorate a cake
Celebrate something	Help a teacher	Think positive thoughts
Skateboard	Play video games	Eat something sweet
Play marbles	Go to an aquarium	Read a good book
Jump rope	Hug someone	Watch a cooking show
Take pictures	Paint in a paint by numbers kit	Cuddle
Try a cart wheel	Go to the movies	Watch Netflix
Tutor someone	Read the bible	Compliment someone
Spend time with friends	Fly a kite	Take a nap
Go on the Internet	Go to the park	Play charades
Go surfing	Make arts & crafts	Play with playdoh
Write a thank you note	Bake cupcakes	Learn to golf
Eat some chocolate	Make candy apples	Look at artwork
Make origami	Go rock climbing	

Remember, the more fun things that you do, the better you will feel. Researchers have found that engaging in fun activities boosts our mood and help us have a happier disposition. Having fun and laughing out loud gives our brain a chance to relax and refresh. Strive to laugh every day. Smiling is contagious and relaxes the facial muscles and calms the nervous system. Laughing sends more oxygen to the brain and triggers the release of chemicals called endorphins, which help you to feel better, and you'll look better too!

*Reflection: Is there someone you can do some of these activities with? Who?*

*Activity: Do 8 of these things by the end of the week. Do them with someone and have lots of fun laughing together.*

Researchers have found that more physical activity helps whenever we are feeling mad or sad by releasing endorphins and serotonin that are produced naturally by the brain. These chemicals help us feel positive, relieve stress, and elevate mood. That means we need to run, jump and play more outside, because the endorphins that are released into our body will help us feel better. Participating in any physical activity may help us feel better quickly, so go outside and ride your skateboard, walk the dog, play hopscotch, shoot some hoops or ride your bike. Just remember to let someone know where you will be ☺.

*Reflection: Tell me about your favorite outdoor activity.*

Research also shows that we need to eat better to feel better, because food is fuel for the body and the brain. When we eat a lot of junk food, our mind will produce a lot of junk. That is why we need to eat more produce<sub>1</sub> like fruits and vegetables. When we eat fresh produce<sub>1</sub>, we produce<sub>2</sub> more energy too. There are so many ways to eat better and feel better. Make sure that you eat foods that are fresh and healthy. Eating certain foods, such as chocolate can also release endorphins in the brain and cause a feeling of comfort. If you are feeling blue, eat a small piece of chocolate, it helps!

*Reflection: Tell me about your favorite comfort food to eat. What do you like best about it?*

*Activity: Find a recipe that uses two or more fresh ingredients, make it for someone you care about, and enjoy the meal together. Write about your experience in a journal.*

Homonyms - Produce<sub>1</sub>: fruits or vegetables that have been grown on a farm. Produce<sub>2</sub>: to make something happen/generate.

## Breathing Meditations

If you are having negative thoughts or behaviors and want to change your thinking, pay close attention to your breathing. It helps to think about your breathing when you are feeling intense emotions. Notice what your body is experiencing and become aware of your senses. Recognize that your thoughts and emotions do not control you and that you can do something about it. Calm yourself down by counting down from 10, slowly breathing in and out. Take the time to inhale deep, full breaths so that your stomach expands, and then exhale the air slowly, through your nose. While you are releasing the breath, focus on five things that you are grateful for in your life. When you practice gratitude for just five minutes, the part of your brain that worries shuts down, and shifts the nervous system toward a calm state.

*Reflection: What are five things you are grateful for today?*

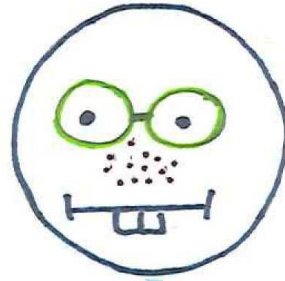
*Activity: Practice a breathing meditation, using the one above or the one below, or go online and search for one that resonates with you.*

*Inhale for four counts*

*Hold for four counts*

*Exhale for four counts*

*Hold for four counts*



Taking time to pause and slow down when we are feeling stressed also helps us self-regulate and relax. Sometimes when we feel upset, our reaction will be to fight, flee, or freeze. This does nothing to solve the problem. When we are feeling mad or sad, it helps to practice stress-reduction techniques, like breathing from the belly, or fake yawning. Fake yawning will lead you to yawn, which helps you to relax. You can also visualize a “happy place” that you can escape to in your mind until you are truly calm. You may want to draw a picture of your happy place to keep somewhere handy so that you can look at it when you need to.

*Reflection: Close your eyes and imagine your “happy place.” Where are you? Describe your happy place in detail.*

*Activity: Draw your happy place on a separate piece of paper and post it where you can see it. Just seeing it should spark some good feelings.*



## Inner Support Circle

Talking to someone that you trust really helps. It is important to have someone in your life that you can confide in and share your feelings. Now that I am an adult, that person is my momma. I call her when I am happy, mad, sad or glad. I am grateful to have her to support and help me when I need it most. I can also count on her to give me insight and guidance when I am struggling with an issue. Just having a listening ear helps and allows us to put things into perspective. When I was young and in junior high and high school, I had school counselors that were helpful in my life and put me on the path to college where I had more mentors. I am grateful for all the advice and assistance each one gave me. Even now, my yoga teacher is my mentor and she is a great role model for me. She is in her 80's and teaches two yoga classes back to back!

Having mentors in my life opened my mind to all that the world has to offer. I remember my first airplane ride with my high school principal, in a plane he built! We flew up and down the coastline with his buddy following us in his plane. That event triggered a passion for flying. In middle school, I cleaned for an elderly lady across the street who told me tales of her worldly travels and inspired me to travel and explore new places. Your mentor could be an educator, neighbor, a family member, coach, pastor, friend or a relative. Having a supportive adult in your life to be there for you, and to encourage you helps tremendously.

*Reflection: Do you have someone that you can trust and confide in? Who is that person in your life? What would you want them to know about you and how to help you?*

Making sure you maintain open lines of communication with your friends and family is another good way to express your feelings. Keeping STOP behavior feelings inside and stuffing them down and down may cause you to explode like a volcano or “fight, flee, or freeze,” and then everyone involved ends up hurt, mad, sad or possibly scared. What often helps to prevent this from happening is to stay connected with those you love by letting them know how you are feeling and what you are thinking inside of your mind. Remember the "Secret Formula?" And what's the secret to the "Secret Formula?" (Don't say the word you!)

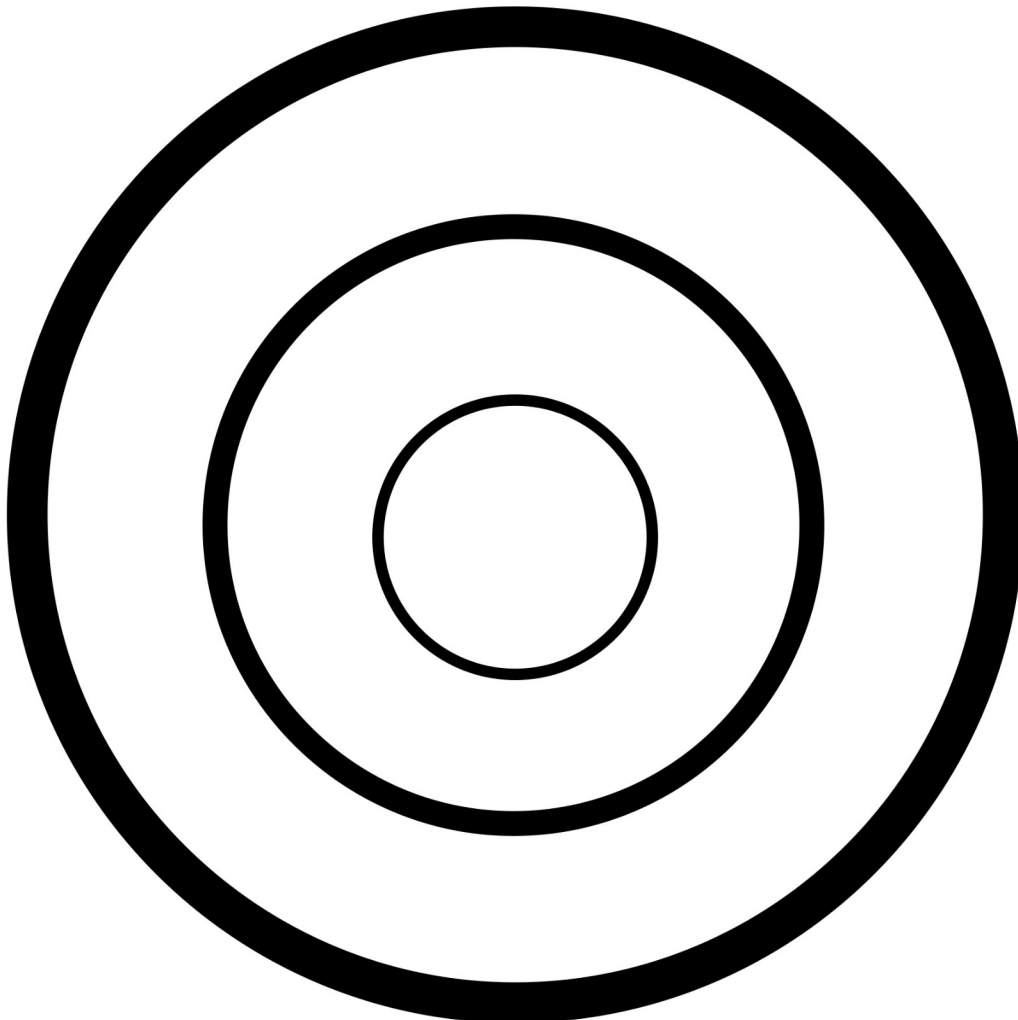
“I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when/because \_\_\_\_\_.”



When we are able to communicate with others how we really feel, we are able to become the very best that we can be. It is also important to have a strong support system in your life to help you and provide you with support when you need it.

*Reflection: Who makes up your support team or your inner core? Remember, your inner core could be family, friends, teammates, fellow club members, etc.*

*Activity: In the middle circle write the names of the people who make up your core, these are the people closest to you. Add names by expanding outward in order of importance to you.*



## Relationships

There will be times, however, when you and the person you are communicating with will not see eye to eye. You may think one thing, but they will be thinking another thing; that is called perspective. And no matter how hard you try, you may not come to an agreement, and that is okay! When this happens, it is important to call a truce. A truce is a signal that you agree to stop arguing for a certain period of time.

When my niece and I would get to a point where the conversation was heading into the danger zone, and we needed to call a truce, we said the word "key." That meant we had to stop the back and forth and let it go. When my son became a teenager, he would come up to me if I was heating up and pull on my ear, mimicking the release of hot air. It would make me laugh, and the climate would instantaneously change. My sister has told me she will twirl her hair, as a signal to me, to change the subject. Think of something that you can say or do to let the person know that it is time to stop the conversation, and break the pattern (same situation, same thoughts, same feelings, leading to the same behaviors), before it escalates into a situation that makes both of you uncomfortable.

*Reflection: Is there someone in your circle that you might need to call a truce with?*

*Activity: Think of a word or a signal that you can use with that person when the conversation needs a change of direction. When you are ready, share the word or signal with that person.*

You are the captain of your life and the more you express your feelings, and PAUSE and THINK about your actions and words, the happier you will be. Control your present thinking to produce enjoyment now. Let go of all the sad and bad things that have happened in the past. The moment that we change our mind and stop going back to the past, its mistakes and fears lose power over us. And don't fret about the future, 85% of the things that we worry about never happen anyway. Decide what you want in life, not what you do not want. Be present today and choose joy every moment.

Surrounding myself with positive messages has also been very helpful in my life. On the following page are some quotes that I like very much. I've covered my office walls with my favorites and I read them whenever I am feeling mad or sad. On the following page, I have listed some of my favorites, listen carefully, and see if any speak to you.



## Mantra Search

- There are more than 7.5 billion people on this planet, do not let one person ruin your day.
- Do not be negative. When you are negative, that starts drama and you lose friends.
- What people say or do is their karma. How you respond is your karma.
- Judge and be judged.
- If you do not like what you are thinking, think of something else.
- Point your finger at someone and three fingers point back at you.
- What goes around comes around.
- Be with the people who bring out the best in you, not the stress in you.
- The more you read, the more you will succeed.
- If you can think it, you can be it.
- Be a victor not a victim.
- Be a warrior not a worrier.
- Should have, would have, could have.
- Trying is lying. Either you will or you will not.
- He who gossips with you, gossips about you.
- A negative mind, will never give you a positive life.
- Just because it pops into my mind, does not mean it should come out of my mouth.
- Mean what you say and say what you mean.
- Make your life so interesting, that you do not have to comment on anyone else's life but your own.
- Do not let other people's crazies, make you crazy. (Thanks, Jill)



*Reflection: Did any of these speak to you? Why?*

*Activity: Do you have a mantra? What is it? If you do not have a mantra, go online and search for your own mantra that you like and post it in your room or in your school binder, so you can read it often. Repeating your mantra will help you when you need a change of mind. Write your mantra below.*

Mantra: A statement repeated frequently. Synonyms: slogan, motto, maxim, tag (line)

## Little Ditty Composition

Something else you can do when you have a problem that you keep thinking about in your mind, is to sing a little song to yourself. A little ditty that I have used for a long time is sung to the very old Christmas song *Let it Snow*. I have changed it to, “Let it go, let it go, let it go.” Sometimes, I have to sing that little ditty, over and over.

Students sing songs about "letting it go" or "shaking it off" in my office. At first they are apprehensive, however once they begin to sing, I can see the stress and negative feelings leaving them as they get into the song. You do not have to sing a whole song, just the parts about letting go or shaking it off and letting the negative feelings roll right off. Singing also helps us to feel better, and listening to music is one of the best stress relievers. Just make sure they are songs that bring out the best in you, not the stress in you!

*Reflection: What is your favorite song? Why do you think you like that song?*

*Activity: Write a little ditty or a short simple song in your journal. (Ex: “Let it go, let it go, let it go, if you don’t like what you are thinking, think of something else!”)*

Make every day matter and remember you are important! A wise woman, Eileen, shared the following thought with me, “We are each different, each talented and all to be valued.” Be the best person that you can be. Do not compare yourselves to others. My momma always said "there will always be someone smarter, prettier and more talented. So just be who you were meant to be and be proud of who you are." Everyone has unique talents that make them, be them. There is no one in the world just like you or me. You are an original, a one of a kind, wonderfully made.

*Reflection: What are your talents? If you could do anything in the future, what would you do? Or what superpower would you like to have?*

*Activity: Take the Thrively Strength Assessment at [www.thrively.com](http://www.thrively.com) and discover your genius.*

Have fun today. Choose joy. Do some of the activities on the "The Things to Do When You are Feeling Blue" list. Talk with someone that you trust and can confide in. If you do not like what you are thinking, think of something else. Form a picture in your imagination of the self you want to be and “picture yourself” in the new role. Imagine what you want to become and make it happen!



## Talents and Uniqueness

I consider myself an athlete. In my mind, I am in good shape and I can do anything. That thinking put me in the Los Angeles marathon. Halfway in, I was thinking, “What was I thinking?” It was very challenging. I knew with help, I could visualize the end and I would finish.

I saw a sign on the side of the road that someone was holding up, it read, “Pain is temporary, to give up is forever!” That message kept me going, so did seeing my family on the sidelines at different parts of the race. Having my nephew walking beside me also helped me to get to the finish line. With the support of my family, I was able to accomplish my goal.

*Reflection: Describe a time in your life where you had to do something very difficult that you thought you could not do; a time when you almost quit, but did not. How were you able to get through this difficult time?*

*Activity: Write in a journal about some things that you have accomplished in your life that you never imagined you could.*

Yesterday, I saw a sign in the store and it said, “Happiness is a lifestyle, not a destination.” My momma told me, “You can do anything in life, but with every action, there is a consequence.” It is best to have more actions that are positive so that you can enjoy more positive experiences and consequences. Ultimately, these positive experiences are what makes a life that matters. True success and happiness complement one another. You have the ability to do anything that you set your mind to and you will succeed if you continually do your best.

There is tremendous satisfaction and happiness from a life well lived and it is important to strive for a life that is meaningful to you. Dream big. Set your goals high. If you can dream it, you can be it. Remember we all have qualities that make us unique and we all have different talents as well. Our goal is to use these gifts and talents to help others. When we help others, we are helping ourselves too. Giving of your energy and your time is simple to do and volunteering will reap great rewards.

*Reflection: Is there someone, something or an organization that you can volunteer your time and energy to helping?*

*Activity: Do a random act of kindness today.*



## Goal Setting

It is important to have goals. I love setting goals. A goal is something that you want to make happen, happen. In order to reach your goals, they have to be specific and measurable. For example, if you want to raise your grade point average, your goal would be, "I want to have a 3.0 grade point average by the next report card." In order to do that, you have to have some daily goals.

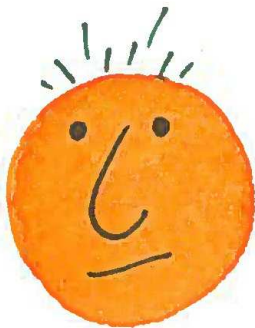
For example, some daily goals that you can do to raise your GPA are:

- Make sure you are keeping track of your assignments on a daily basis.
- Complete and return all assignments.
- Spend at least (10 minutes per grade level) on homework or studying for tests.

*Reflection: You can have fun goals too. Remember, having goals makes life fun and gives you something to look forward to in life. Sometimes people use their goals to accomplish once-in-a-lifetime activities, called a "bucket list." What would be on your bucket list?*

*Activity: Make a Bucket List - Once in a lifetime goals.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



*Activity: Take time to write down some short- and long-term goals for yourself. Make sure they are specific and measurable.*

Daily goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3-6 months from now

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

One year from now

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3-5 years from now

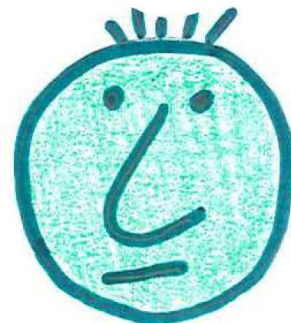
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

10 Years from now

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Long-term goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



## Me Box

On the last page is a “feelings cube” that you can make. Follow the pattern, cut it out, fold it, and secure with a piece of tape. Play with members of your family or friends, taking turns tossing the cube. Whatever feeling you land on, use the "Secret Formula" to describe what makes you feel that way.

Remember, every single person has feelings and these emotions steer our thoughts and direct our minds to action. There will be times in life when we feel mad, sad, overwhelmed, anxious, embarrassed, frustrated or depressed. It is how we react to these feelings that will give us consequences, positive or negative.

When we are experiencing an uncomfortable behavior, thought or feeling, THINK about it, and communicate how you are feeling using the "Secret Formula." Take time to do some of the positive activities on the "Things to do When You are Feeling Blue" list, and strive for GO behaviors. Be good and do good.

Practice mindfulness every day. Mindfulness means moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, emotions, how our body is feeling and our surroundings. Use the word PAUSE (Pactice Awareness Using Senses & Experience the moment) to help you check in with yourself. Just be! Practice being in the moment every day. Take deep belly breaths throughout the day, and take a few moments to recognize the good things in your life. Focus on the positive.

Make every moment matter, live in the moment and know that you are a blessing. Fill your mind with positive thoughts and your life with positive actions. Your mind is an amazing machine. If you fill your mind with positive or goal oriented ideas, your mind will help you to reach them. Visualize what you want to be, and your mind will design your destiny. If you can transform your mind, you will transform your life. Trust me, it works.

*Reflection: Whoever is reading this story please let the person listening know how much they mean to you, how unique they are, and what talents you recognize in them.*

*Activity: Make a “Me Box.” Fill a box with things that make you, you. In my “Me Box,” I would have the local newspaper, my favorite books, a rosary, a coffee cup, coconut macaroons with dried cranberries and nuts, a picture of my family, a yoga DVD, seashells that I have collected on my travels, a yo-yo (that is what my dad called me), and my Tahitian pearls. These are the things that make me be me. What items would be in your “Me Box?” You can also draw your "Me Box" on a separate piece of paper to share.*

The following list is a suggestion for teachers, counselors and other helping professionals to divide the information in this book into guided lessons. You can read this book individually to students, in a small group setting, or a classroom. The Secret Formula curriculum is being piloted in classrooms in both the USA & UK.

- Lessons 1: My Hero
- Lessons 2: THINK
- Lessons 3: Behaviors
- Lessons 4: Expressing feelings using the Secret Formula
- Lessons 5: Things to Do When Feeling Blue
- Lessons 6: Inner Circle Support
- Lessons 7: Mantra Search
- Lessons 8: Little Ditty Composition
- Lessons 9: Thrively Strength Assessment
- Lessons 10: Goal Setting
- Lessons 11: Feelings cube
- Lessons 12: Me Box

Lessons can be found at [dianediazgozmezphd.com](http://dianediazgozmezphd.com)

### **About the Author**

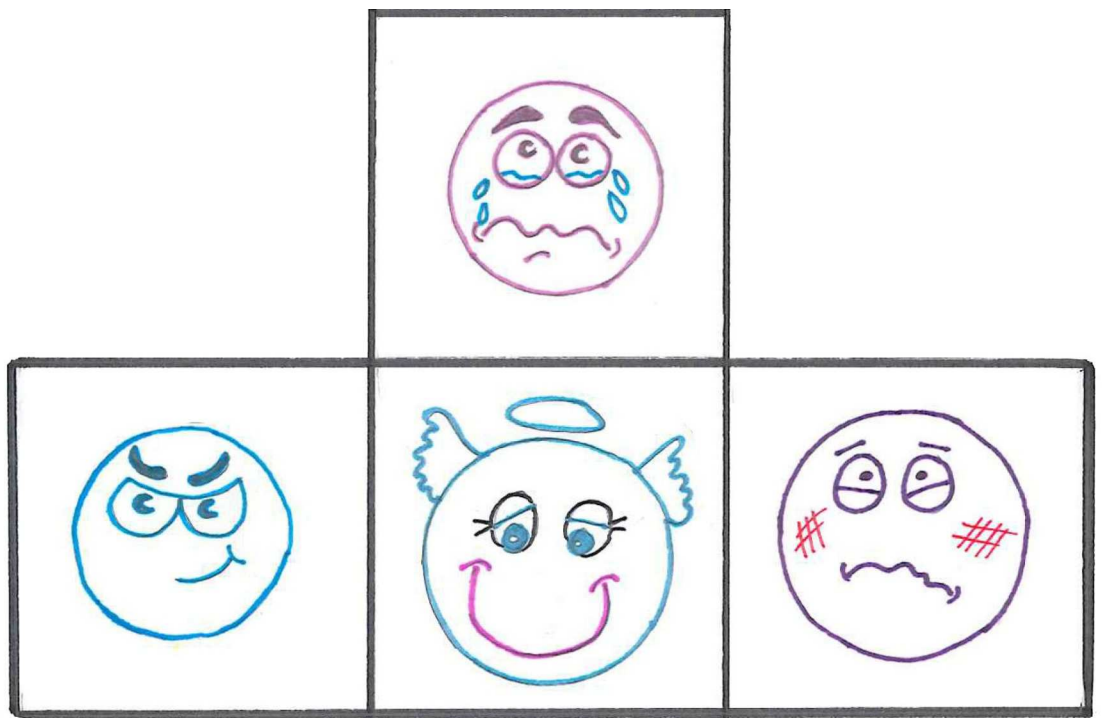
Diane Diaz Gomez has been a public school counselor for the past 31 years and the Secret Formula is the culmination of various activities that she has utilized over the years working with students in grades K-12. She currently works in a middle school, an incredibly difficult time for some students. Times have definitely changed. A 2016 study found that young adolescents are as likely to die from suicide as from traffic accidents. The study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that young adolescents suffer from a range of health problems associated with the country's rapidly changing culture. Half of all mental illnesses occur before the age of 14 and 75% occur by the age of 24. Many of these children are given powerful medications but not the tools necessary to filter their thinking. The Secret Formula teaches skills to STOP/PAUSE, THINK and GO because if we can transform our minds, we can transform our lives.

Here is what the Thrively Assessment Profile came up for Diane

You are not at all afraid to speak your mind and you know very well how to stand up for your rights and those of others. In fact, you take the initiative in doing so. You are not shy about sharing how you think or feel on subject matters and you take solutions into your own hands.

You realize that the world extends beyond the radius of your immediate experience, and you want to be an active part of it. You also have the resolve to bounce back from adversity. You are not going to let anyone or anything keep you down for long! You know how to make lemonade out of lemons and move on from disappointment. You take this world's challenges in stride and maintain an even disposition. You, my friend, have what we call... fortitude.

Diane is working on the companion book to *The Secret Formula*. It is called *The Magic Formula*, and other techniques for helping kids be at peace with themselves and others. Diane's plans are to continue writing books inspired by God, and her momma, LOL.



### Directions

1. Trace or copy this drawing.
2. Cut around the perimeter.
3. Add feeling words.
4. Fold at all of the seams.
5. Tape closed to form a box.

