
Big Feelings, Small Shifts - Magical Tools for Wonderful Kids!

Teacher Classroom Guide: Willa and the Magic Widget

Story Theme: Thoughts shape feelings — kids can shift their mindset with awareness and kindness.

Series Message: *Big Feelings, Small Shifts — Magical Tools for Wonderful Kids!*

About the Story

In *Willa and the Magic Widget*, Willa experiences a “twisty, jumbled” morning until a glittery gadget appears and helps her explore her feelings. Each button—Happy, Sad, Zing (excited), Mad—shows her a different emotional world. Through these magical moments, Willa learns that *her thoughts are the real magic*, guiding her feelings and actions.

The story helps students build *emotional literacy* and *cognitive flexibility*—essential skills for social-emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom.

Learning Objectives

- Recognize and name different emotions.
 - Understand that thoughts can influence feelings and behaviors.
 - Practice mindful breathing to calm and refocus.
 - Develop empathy and curiosity about others’ emotional experiences.
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Discussion Prompts

Use these after reading aloud or in morning meetings:

- “What feeling did Willa start with today?”
- “Which button would you have pressed? Why?”
- “What did Willa learn about her thoughts?”
- “Can we think of a time we felt better by changing our thinking?”
- “What might help you when your ‘feelings get stormy’ at school?”

Encourage descriptive feeling words and examples from daily life.

Classroom Activities

1. Thought–Feeling Chart

Draw two columns: *My Thought* / *My Feeling*.

Ask students to fill in examples (e.g., “I’ll never finish this” → “Frustrated,” then rewrite: “I can do a little at a time” → “Calm”).

2. Magic Widget Craft

Invite each child to design their own “Magic Widget” with 4–5 buttons labeled with their favorite emotional helpers: *Calm, Brave, Kind, Silly, Strong*, etc.

3. Mello Moment Practice

Start the day or transitions with “Three Mello Breaths”:

Inhale slow... Exhale slow... Whisper, “*My thoughts can rest, my body knows best.*”

4. Gratitude Circle

Tie in Willa’s growth by asking, “What’s one good thought we can grow today?” and let students share or draw it.

For Teachers

Normalize emotional experiences in the classroom:

- Model thought reframing (“This is tricky, but I can try again”).
 - Use Willa’s language (“That sounds like a Grumble moment!”).
 - Celebrate when students recognize or shift their feelings.
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Key Takeaway:

By helping children recognize the link between *thoughts and feelings*, you’re teaching them the foundation of emotional regulation — one of the most powerful lifelong skills for learning, friendship, and resilience.

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