

The Day My Daddy Lost His Temper - Reading Guide

Author: Dr. Carol S. McCleary, PsyD Illustrator: Naomi Santana

Themes: witnessing interpersonal/domestic violence

Lesson/Notes: Laura witnesses her dad's violence and anger toward mom. The story normalizes children's feelings in this situation and teaches it's okay to be angry but not hurtful, it's okay to love your parents but dislike their behavior, and it is not the child's fault. Laura's mom gets help after being hospitalized due to the dad's violence, and the dad does not return to live with them. Laura also visits a therapist/doctor. This story can help a child who has gone through a similar experience; it is best used as a complement to individual therapy as witnessing violence can be traumatic for children.

Discussion Questions

- *What did you notice in that story?*
- *Laura's daddy made some bad choices. Whose fault was it? (Her dad's. We are responsible for our own choices and behavior.)*
- *Is it okay to feel angry? (yes)*
- *Is it okay to be mean if you feel angry? (no)*
- *What helped Laura?*
- *Would you like to tell about a time you felt like Laura?*

Activity: Art

Suggested Supplies: colored pencils (or markers, paint, etc.), craft paper

- Invite the child to draw about his/her experience like Laura did.
 - The illustrations tell Laura's story through her own eyes. Children may want to draw their story or draw about how they feel.
- Ask the child to share about the drawing(s), but do not push him/her to share.
 - Children may not be ready to talk (or draw) about their experience, and that is okay.
- Next, ask the child to think of a place (real or imagined) where the child feels safe and calm.
 - *Like Laura, we can help ourselves feel more calm by imagining a safe, peaceful place.*
 - Invite the child to close his/her eyes (if comfortable) and imagine what could be seen, heard, smelled, and felt in this calm place. Take your time, and feel what it is like to "be" there. (For more info/ideas, look up positive/guided imagery for kids.)
- Encourage the child to draw the peaceful place to remember a way to feel safe and calm.

