

VIOLET

THE

SNOWGIRL

A STORY OF
LOSS AND HEALING

Lisa L. Walsh • Illustrated by Wendy Leach

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PUBLISHING®



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Walsh, Lisa L., author. | Leach, Wendy, illustrator.

Title: Violet the snowgirl : a story of loss and healing / Lisa L. Walsh ; illustrated by Wendy Leach.

Description: Minneapolis, MN : Free Spirit Publishing, [2020] | Audience: Ages 5–10.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020008140 (print) | LCCN 2020008141 (ebook) | ISBN 9781631985171 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781631985188 (pdf) | ISBN 9781631985195 (epub)

Subjects: CYAC: Snowmen—Fiction. | Loss (Psychology)—Fiction. | Brothers and sisters—Fiction.

Classification: LCC PZ7.1.W3582 Vio 2020 (print) | LCC PZ7.1.W3582 (ebook) | DDC [E]—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020008140>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020008141>

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Edited by Christine Zuchora-Walske
Cover and interior design by Shannon Pourciau

Free Spirit Publishing

An imprint of Teacher Created Materials

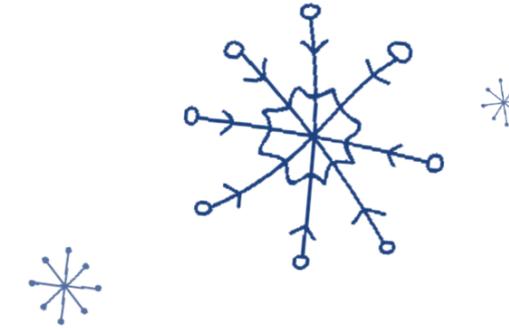
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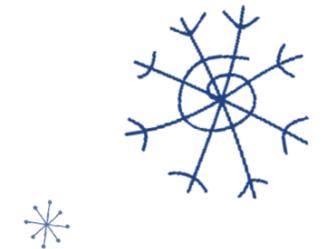
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To my children.
Aleah and Hannah, you have endured
big changes with courage and great heart.
Daniel, you taught me that it is possible to love someone thoroughly,
long after they have parted from this world.





Every year, Jerzie's birthday arrived on a wave of party preparations. Excitement built and built, until it crashed over her on one glorious day. Then too quickly, it was over. She had to wait a whole year for the next birthday.

Jerzie woke up and opened her eyes. Then she remembered. Today was the day after her birthday. This was always a boring day.

Jerzie took a breath and checked her feelings.
She felt sad. Her birthday cheer was gone.
The countdown of days, the visions of presents—*poof!*
Jerzie lay still in her warm, snuggly bed. She closed her eyes.
A soft knock interrupted Jerzie's thoughts.
Her chatty little brother probably wanted to do something boring.
"Go away, Josiah!" Jerzie grouched.



Jerzie looked out her window. She noticed fluffy
snowflakes tumbling and twirling by.
The door slowly opened. As soon as she saw a
purple coat and scarf through the crack,
Jerzie's heart leapt—and so did she. *Grandma's here! Yay!*

Tending to the Emotions of Children Experiencing Loss: A Guide for Caring Adults

Loss is part of life for all of us. Children can experience many types of loss, from moving homes or schools to the death of loved ones or pets to divorce. These losses may be difficult to handle. With help and safe places to discuss their emotions, children can learn skills to cope with their losses and manage their complex feelings.



Here are some important issues related to loss and grief raised in *Violet the Snowgirl*:

- ❖ **Even during hard times, good things can happen.** If we know to look for them, we can enjoy them. When Jerzie woke up the day after her birthday, she expected it to be a bad day. It turned out to be a great day. Jerzie was excited to see the snow, and then to see her Grandma. It can be confusing to experience pleasant feelings, such as being happy, in the midst of grief. It may even cause guilt. Teaching children that it is okay to feel these pleasant feelings when they come along is an important source of support.
- ❖ **We all need permission to be sad sometimes.** Both Josiah and Jerzie were sad when Violet melted. It was the end of something important to them. It's hard for adults to see children sad—but when adults acknowledge children's sadness, anger, or other uncomfortable emotions, this acknowledgment can allow them to feel that emotion and move on. Being with children through their uncomfortable feelings of loss, rather than encouraging them to feel something more pleasant, is validating for them. We can help children understand that their sadness will not last forever. But for as long as these uncomfortable feelings last, children have permission to feel them.



- ❖ **Children can learn to recognize their feelings.** The ability to identify emotions is a valuable skill for children to learn. Teaching them to reflect on how they feel, and giving them the language to express these feelings, helps them cope. Children are then able to figure out which coping skills to use and what help they can ask for. In *Violet the Snowgirl*, Jerzie takes deep breaths and checks her feelings.
- ❖ **Grieving is hard work.** It is a big, important task that takes a lot of energy for children and adults alike. Some things that helped Jerzie and Josiah deal with their sadness were being with their loved ones, talking about and drawing memories, and having a chance to experience their feelings and talk about them. Keep in mind that children may sometimes need extra support, such as from a counselor, social worker, or therapist. Remember—and help children understand—that people grieve loss in many different ways, and that's okay.

The feelings and experiences of Jerzie and Josiah can apply to many other types of losses. After reading *Violet the Snowgirl*, you can help children process important losses by asking them all or some of the following questions. Please feel free to use the story and modify the questions to best fit the needs of the children with whom you are working. Here's one question that can be helpful for processing all kinds of loss:

- ❖ At the end of the story, Jerzie checked her feelings and discovered that she felt grateful. Can you think of any reasons to be grateful even in this hard time?

MOVING

- ❖ What were some good things that happened to Jerzie on the day after her birthday?
- ❖ At the end of the story, Jerzie felt both sad that Violet melted and happy that she had time with the snowgirl. Have you ever had more than one feeling about the same thing? What are some examples of that? What are some feelings you have about moving? (This is a good time to use the Loss Wheel.)
- ❖ What good things do you think you might find in your new home or school?
- ❖ What are some things you will miss about your old home or school?
- ❖ Who are some people that you can talk to about this big change? (This is a good time to use the Circles of Support.)