

FAKING HAPPINESS, FEELING SADNESS

BOYS TOWN
Press

Boys Town, Nebraska

by JENNIFER LICATE
Illustrated by SUZANNE DEAKY



Faking Happiness, Feeling Sadness

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Summary: Sadness is a feeling Anika cannot shake. She feels as if her life has no purpose.

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Chapter 2

REVEALING My TRUTH

My friends are by their lockers, talking and giggling. "Hey girl! What's up?" Jade yells. I give her a half-hearted wave.

I don't have the energy to make it through the day. I can't match my friends' happy-go-lucky attitudes. It's so hard to put on a happy face or act all cheery like everyone else.

Jade sees I look out of sorts, so she pulls me aside. "What's going on with you?" she whispers. "You look so bummed out. You haven't been yourself for a while now, and it's kinda freakin' me out."

Before I can answer, Martina leans in and wants to know what's up. I can see the rest of my friends aren't paying any attention to us. I'm glad! I don't want anybody else joining the conversation. Jade and Martina are my best, best friends. If I'm going to spill my guts to anyone about how I'm feeling, it's them.



“I just asked Anika what’s goin’ on with her, cuz she looks so sad all the time,” Jade tells Martina, who nods like she gets it. “Yeah, I’ve noticed that, too. You’re so quiet. And not like the *shhh, I’m thinking* kind of quiet. More like the *I’m really sad* quiet.”

I look at my two besties, not sure how to explain myself or my feelings. “Nothing’s happened. I almost wish something happened,” I tell them. “That would make more sense. **I’M JUST SAD AND FEEL ALONG, AND I DON’T KNOW WHY.** There’s gotta be something I can do, but I can’t think of one thing to make myself feel better.”

Jade and Martina say nothing. But their eyes tell me they’re worried and want to understand. Then I make another confession. I admit to them that, for a long time now, I’ve just been faking being happy. But now I don’t even have the energy to pretend. I don’t think I’ll ever feel happy again, and it’s scary.

Martina hugs me. “Oh Anika! Maybe you’re just depressed?”

“You think? But why? Nothing’s going on to make me depressed.”

“Something doesn’t always have to happen though,” Jade assures me. “I learned a lot about emotions when my parents divorced. They had me talk to a therapist. I didn’t want to talk to her at first, cuz I didn’t even know her. But talking it out actually helped. I had lots of weird feelings going on, and the therapist actually did help me feel better.”

I can hardly believe Jade saw a therapist. She never told me about it before. Jade says it made her feel better and would probably make me feel better. Martina thinks so, too.

“How’d talking to a therapist make you feel better?” I ask.

“Well, it was nice to tell someone what I really thought about the divorce. I just thought I was sad, but I was pretty angry, too. I could talk without worrying about hurting Mom or Dad’s feelings. Everything I said was private. My therapist really encouraged me to get all my emotions out, and she helped me find ways to feel better.”

I pry a bit, trying to get more details. “But, Jade, how’d you find your therapist?”

“Not really sure. My parents took care of all that. Maybe talk to Mrs. Perez? She’s always saying come to her if you’re sad and want to talk. **MAYBE SHE CAN HELP?**”



SADNESS IS A FEELING ANIKA CANNOT SHAKE. AND NOW SHE'S DESPERATE TO FIND A QUICK REMEDY AND PERMANENT CURE.

Her smiles are just a façade, masking the despair and doubt she's felt for months. She bravely puts on a happy face in front of her friends and family, but the constant pretending has drained her physically and emotionally. She's tired, losing hope, and still so very, very sad.

In a pivotal moment with her two best friends, Anika confesses her struggles. They suggest a solution that is both surprising and intriguing. If Anika follows their advice, can she get her parents to go along with it? And will it ultimately lead her to the help and happiness she deserves?

Faking Happiness, Feeling Sadness is a gripping and empowering chapter book that captures the fears and challenges kids experience when faced with uncomfortable feelings. As Anika searches for relief, young readers discover they, too, have the power to strengthen, protect, and advocate for their own emotional health.



"*Faking Happiness, Feeling Sadness* perfectly describes how some of my students (Grades 5 to 8) are feeling. I am always in search of books that describe and offer guidance on how students can be their own advocates when they are unsure of why they have feelings of sadness, even when nothing has happened or changed in their lives. After reading this book, I know they will have the courage to voice their feelings and needs in healthy and positive ways. This book should be in every library and classroom!" — *Melissa A. Timm, MA, Chester County Intermediate Unit School Counselor*



JENNIFER LICATE channels her love of counseling and creativity to craft children's books with relatable characters and situations to help children of all ages navigate the challenges of growing up. Her *Navigating Friendships* series is a Counselor's Choice award-winner.

SUZANNE BEAKY studied illustration at Columbus College of Art and Design. Her expressive illustrations are commissioned by children's book, magazine, and educational publishers worldwide. She has received a number of awards and lives in Pennsylvania with her husband.

Pages 4-9 and 16-59 are not included in this excerpt.