

# Mental Health Hero

The story of how one teen manages her anxiety disorder is paired with an interview with *Guts* author Raina Telgemeier

## About the Story

Lexile® 790L

For qualitative complexity factors,  
go to the Story tab.

**Learning Objective:** to synthesize ideas expressed in a nonfiction text and a Q&A

**Key Skills:** figurative language, cause and effect, key ideas and details, inference, synthesis, central idea

### Essential Questions:

- What is mental health?
- How can we promote positive mental health and wellness?
- How can we use negative experiences to create positive change?

### Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards:  
R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.7, R.9, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



## Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://scope.scholastic.com).

### Audio:

- Article read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

### Video:

- “Meet Raina Telgemeier”

### Slideshow:

- “Coping With Anxiety”

### Differentiated article:

- Lower-Lexile version

### Connected readings:

- “Over the Weather”
- “The Cabin”
- “When My Noisy Mind Quiets”
- “Taming the Fear Monster” and “Conquering Fear”
- “How Stars Beat Stress”
- “Bearing Up”

### Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Writing Planner: Coping With Anxiety
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Quiz\*
- Contest Entry Form

\*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

## 1. Preparing to Read

15 minutes

### Do Now: Journal and Discuss (5 minutes)

- Project the prompt below for students to respond to in their journal or on a piece of paper:

Fill in the blanks:

- ☐ I feel joy when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ I feel relief when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ A place where I feel safe and relaxed is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ My mind feels noisy when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ I feel worried about \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Talking about emotions is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Invite any students who feel comfortable sharing their responses to do so.

### Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Highlighted words: *liberating*, *simultaneously*, *subpar*, *vulnerable*. Optionally, print or share the interactive link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity before class. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud are embedded in the interactive slides.

## 2. Reading and Discussing

55 minutes

### “Mental Health Hero”

- Have a volunteer read the **As You Read** box that appears on page 18 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.

- Read the article once as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the **lower-Lexile version** of the article.*) Optionally, have students listen to the read-aloud while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the article again and respond to the following close-reading questions.

### Close-Reading Questions

(20 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **Jillian describes her mind as “noisy.” What does she mean by this?** (figurative language) *Jillian doesn’t literally mean that she hears noises in her head; she means that she has a lot of thoughts filling her mind, pulling her attention in many different directions. Change, imperfection, and social situations can all cause Jillian’s mind to become “loud.” In other words, she can have trouble managing her thoughts and feelings when she encounters these things.*
2. **What caused Jillian’s anxiety to intensify when she was younger? What helped her cope?** (cause and effect) *When Jillian was younger, the death of her sister caused her anxiety to intensify. After her sister’s death, joining the Girl Scouts and taking dance classes helped Jillian cope with anxiety. These activities gave her something to look forward to. Dancing also quieted her mind by forcing her to focus her attention on her body and be present.*
3. **Why did Jillian want to create a dance and movement room at her school?** (key ideas and details) *Jillian was tasked with solving a problem in her community as part of her Gold Award project for Girl Scouts. She used the opportunity to create a dance and movement room for her school not only because it didn’t have a room specifically devoted to this use but also because she knew how helpful movement could be in self-expression and dealing with challenging emotions. She had found relief and joy in dance, and she wanted others to experience that as well.*
4. **Why do you think Jillian says it was liberating to tell others about her struggles with mental health?** (inference) *In the last line of the story, Jillian suggests that having an anxiety disorder can feel lonely. Maybe this is because the disorder is difficult for others to understand, or maybe it’s difficult for the person with the disorder to talk about it because of fear over how others might react. Sharing her story was freeing for Jillian because it meant she was no longer keeping a part of herself hidden and isolated. Sharing her experiences made her feel open, seen, and connected to others.*

### “It Takes Guts”

- Read the Q&A as a class. Optionally, have students listen to the article being read aloud while they follow along. The audio read-aloud is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.

- As a class, discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions, some of which apply to both texts.

### Close-Reading Questions

(20 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- Consider Raina Telgemeier's illustration of the girl surrounded by words. How does this illustration connect to how Jillian describes anxiety?** (synthesis) *Telgemeier's illustration is of a young person surrounded by large, swirling words that represent her thoughts. The illustration connects to Jillian's description of having a noisy mind; it gives you the idea that these thoughts are very loud inside the girl's mind. What's more, among the words in the illustration are things that Jillian mentions: death, illness, not normal, and friends. The words also include things that are unique to Telgemeier, like intestinal surgery and vomit.*
- What is vulnerability? What do these texts express about vulnerability?** (synthesis, central idea) *Vulnerability is the quality of being vulnerable, that is, being open and allowing your weaknesses to be seen or known at the risk of being hurt physically or emotionally. Both of these texts express the idea that while being vulnerable can be difficult, it can be healthy and even feel good. Jillian created a space where dancers could be vulnerable and express themselves. In order to make mental health a big part of her project, she had to be vulnerable and share her story outside of her family and close friends, which she says was liberating. Starecheski describes Telgemeier's book *Guts* as vulnerable. In response, Telgemeier says it felt good to be completely honest and not hold back, but that it took many years to be able to do that.*
- What similarities do you notice between Jillian and Telgemeier?** (synthesis) *Both are able to quiet their minds by focusing on their bodies. Both express that opening up to others about their emotions brings them relief. Both share their stories in an effort to show others with anxiety disorders that they are not alone and to provide others with strategies for managing anxiety.*

### Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- Based on the texts, why do you think Telgemeier named her book about growing up with an anxiety disorder *Guts*? Why do you think Starecheski titled her interview "It Takes Guts"? What are things that "take guts" for you?** *Perhaps one reason Telgemeier titled her book *Guts* was to refer to the physical symptoms that accompany anxiety. Telgemeier says in the interview that anxious thoughts take over not just her mind but also her body, making her stomach hurt—and the word guts is used to refer to our bellies. ("Feeling Anxious?" the sidebar in "Mental Health Hero," also refers to the way anxiety can affect your stomach, noting that when you feel anxious, "your stomach might be doing flips" as part of your body's natural stress response.) The title *Guts* may also be a reference to courage: When something "takes guts," it*



*requires courage. Perhaps Starcheski titled her article “It Takes Guts” to refer to courage as well as to play on the title of Telgemeier’s graphic novel. Answers to the last question will vary.*

2. What makes you feel worried, stressed, nervous, or anxious? Is there anything that helps you, or that you think could help you, manage those feelings? *Answers will vary.*

### 3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete the **Writing Planner: Coping With Anxiety**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the prompt on page 21 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.

Connected readings from the *Scope* archives that promote positive mental health:

Poetry: [“Over the Weather”](#) (March 2022)

Fiction: [“The Cabin”](#) (February 2022)

Poetry: [“When My Noisy Mind Quiets”](#) (February 2021)

Paired Texts: [“Taming the Fear Monster”](#) and [“Conquering Fear”](#) (May 2020)

Short Read: [“How Stars Beat Stress”](#) (December 2018/January 2019)

Fiction: [“Bearing Up”](#) (February 2018)

### Social and Emotional Learning Extension

30 minutes

#### Share Coping Strategies

Project the following activity or share it with students in your LMS:

To cope with something means to handle it or deal with it. Jillian mentions some ways she copes with her anxiety disorder: through dancing, music, journaling, and therapy. Telgemeier uses a technique that relaxes her body or talks to someone she trusts. Check out the **slideshow “Coping With Anxiety”** at *Scope* Online for some suggestions from experts on dealing with stress and worry.

After viewing the slideshow, make an additional slide that you could add to it. Think about something you do (or could do) to deal with anxiety. Is there a song that helps you feel calm and focused? Is there a place in your home or neighborhood where you feel especially safe and comfortable? Is there a person you like to talk with when you’re stressed?



## Paired Texts, pages 18-21

**Featured Skill:** synthesis

On paper or a Google Slide, answer these questions:

- What's your strategy called? (For example, "Play the Piano," "Cuddle My Dog," or "Call My Sister.")
- When do you use the strategy? (For example, "I use this strategy when I'm so worried about a test that I can't focus on studying.")
- How effective is it? (For example, "It works most of the time.")

Add images or illustrations to your slide. If you feel comfortable, share the slide with the class. You might just help someone find a new way to deal with difficult feelings.