

## **Module 4: Packing Your Mental Health Bag**

### **Teaching Aid: Story #2, 12 year old, Sam\***

*\* This story is based on fictitious people and situations. Any resemblance to a child's real life situation is unintended.*

12-year-old Sam lives with his parents and his older brother, Karl, age 16. Sam's older brother Karl is great at almost any sport, and he is on the Soccer Team and the Basketball Team. His parents enjoy going to his games and are very proud of Karl's abilities. Sam plays Soccer, but he isn't very good at it, and he never gets picked to start in a game. Sam's father pushes him to exercise and practice more so he will improve his game. But Sam would much rather play videogames with his friends and listen to music. He is closer to his mother than his father, and can usually talk to her about his problems. He has a couple of close friends who also like videogames. At school, Sam is an average student and attends every day, even though he dislikes Reading Class because he doesn't like to read aloud. Sam considers himself shy and he thinks he worries more than most kids his age. Sam got a guitar for his birthday and is taking lessons. His guitar teacher, Ben, is 27 years old and Sam thinks he is a really cool guy. Ben tells Sam he is a natural with the guitar, and Sam finds that playing the guitar helps him relax and feel good.

**Ask the Class: What do you think, does Sam sound like he is coping okay? What do you think are Sam's resources for coping?**

One day at school, Sam learns that they each will have to read a book and present a book report as a speech to the Reading Class. Sam's report is due in 2 weeks. Sam doesn't like to think about giving a report in front of the class, so he tries not to think about it. He keeps putting off choosing the book he will read. The day before the report is due, Sam suddenly gets very nervous. He can't concentrate and he still hasn't found his book. That night, Sam can't sleep and he asks to stay home from school, but his parents say he has to go. When his teacher calls on Sam to give his report, Sam can't think, and his hands begin to shake. He feels like he can't catch his breath, and his heart is pounding. He blurts out to the class, "I'm feeling sick. I have to go home!" Sam's teacher sends him to the nurses' office. The nurse asks Sam, "What's wrong?" Sam is embarrassed and just says, "I'm sick and I need to go home right now". He refuses to tell the nurse anything else, and she finally calls his mother. At home, his mother asks him what happened, and Sam reluctantly says, "I had to give a report in front of class and I just freaked out." Sam's mother says, "Oh Sam, I remember something like that happened to me too when I was your age. It seems to run in our family, because your Grandpa also hated to talk in front of people." Sam asks, "Do I have to go back to school and tell the teacher? She is going to make me do that report!."

**Ask the Class: What happened to Sam? What were Sam's stressors? What might have caused Sam to freak out in front of the class? What can Sam do to cope with his situation and build his mental health resources?**