

## **Mental Health Curriculum for School Age Children**

### **Module #5, Anxiety and Depression**

#### **Teaching Activity #4: Story of Tina with Anxiety**

Tina is 11 years old and in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Tina lives with her parents and 3 younger sisters. Tina has always been shy and is slow to make new friends. She worries about being liked and tries to be nice to everyone. After school, Tina goes directly home to take care of her younger sisters until her parents get home from work. Tina's parents moved to the United States from Puerto Rico before she was born and they are working hard to help their children succeed and get a good education. Tina sometimes feels guilty because her parents have to work so hard to make money to buy things she needs for school. In return, Tina studies hard at school. She is a good student and she is proud to bring home good grades. The night before a test, Tina sometimes gets a stomachache and has trouble sleeping. She knows that she worries more than most kids her age, but she thinks this is because her parents have big hopes for her future and she wants to please them. Sometimes Tina bites her fingernails when she is worried and stressed. When she has free time, Tina likes to go to the library and check out books. She especially likes to read adventure stories because they help her forget her troubles and relax. Someday Tina wants to become a writer and travel to the interesting places she reads about.

**What are things that Tina experiences as stressful? Have you ever felt like Tina?  
How does Tina cope with stress and anxiety? What resources does Tina have to give her resilience for coping with stress?**

One day, Tina's mother got sick and had to stay home from work. At first, it seemed like her mother just had a bad cold but when she didn't get better, Tina's father took her to the doctor and he said it was pneumonia. When Tina went to school, she worried everyday about her mother. She started to think, "What will happen to us if mother gets very sick and can't go back to work, and what if she has to go to the hospital and my father can't pay the bills, and what if something very bad happens to her?" Tina began to get stomachaches every day at school. She had trouble thinking and concentrating. Her teacher called Tina aside and said, "You are getting behind in your schoolwork. This isn't like you Tina. Is something wrong? Should I call your parents?" Tina said, "No, no, I'm Okay. Please don't worry my parents!" The next day Tina tried even harder to concentrate and catch up with her schoolwork. When the teacher called on Tina to give an answer in class, Tina felt her heart pounding very fast and she couldn't catch her breath. She felt dizzy and her hands started shaking. She tried to answer, but she couldn't get any words out. Someone sitting behind her giggled, and Tina felt very embarrassed. During the next week, Tina would suddenly feel tightness in her chest and have the feeling that she couldn't catch her breath, especially when the teacher started asking questions in class.

**What is happening to Tina? What symptoms is she having? Do you think Tina is coping okay now? What can her teacher and his parents do to help? If you were Tina's friend, what would you do to help?**