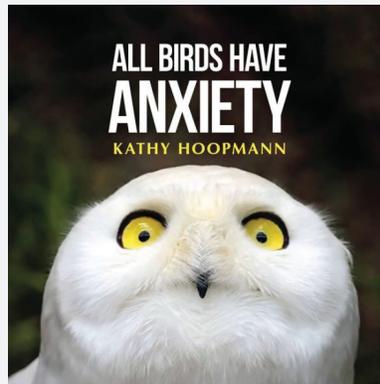


## First Opinion: The Promise of a New Outlook: Understanding Anxiety

Hoopmann, Kathy. *All Birds Have Anxiety*. Jessica Kingsley Publishing, 2017.

Leanne Evans



Imagine yourself in ancient Greece where library doors were inscribed with the transcendent phrase, “Place of Healing for the Soul,” or in many other places where books were revered as affirming, restorative, and medicinal. Throughout history, the therapeutic qualities of books have been understood as powerful to the human condition and healing. Books used as therapy, or bibliotherapy, assumes the reader will interact with text and visual elements in ways that will strengthen their spirit, influence their behavior, and guide them in understanding life’s challenges.

Kathy Hoopmann illuminates the therapeutic qualities of children’s literature in *All Birds Have Anxiety*, the fourth title in a resource series that includes *All Cats Have Asperger Syndrome*, *All Dogs Have ADHD*, and *Inside Asperger’s Looking Out*. From page one, Hoopmann empathizes with the circumstances of anxiety. She writes, “In a perfect world, everyone would cope with life just fine, and no one would be anxious or worried. But the truth is, we do not live in a perfect world and everyone experiences life in different ways” (1–2). This is particularly true for a large and growing number of children three to seventeen years of age who experience moderate to serious challenges related to living with anxiety (Ghandour, et al., 256).

*All Birds Have Anxiety* is filled with over sixty pages of vibrant and thoughtfully curated photographs of an abundance of bird species that are detailed and exotically captivating. On many pages, the birds look anxious, fretful, and overstrung. The great grey owl gawks wide-eyed at the reader with hovering text that explains, “Some people feel anxious and worried about anything and everything” (3). The camera captures the cavernous throat of a pelican,

in Hoopmann's choice to define anxiety as "being filled with a scream" (15). At first look, the personified birds evoke unease and tensi— but, maybe that's the point.

By the second and third reads, however, the depiction of anxious birds in this exposition earnestly works.

Far beyond documenting the idiosyncrasies of bird behaviors through the photographs, Hoopmann provides children, educators, parents, therapists, and librarians with a book selection that first describes what anxiety is, why it happens, and what it feels like. The text is genuine and straightforward. She writes, "So, it's like this. What you think affects how you feel. Then how you feel affects the way you act. Fearing the worst can make you feel and act as if you are helpless" (46). The consequences of unaddressed anxiety are clear.

Responsive to these consequences, there is the promise of safe spaces for children to be guided through their feelings, fears, and self-discoveries within the covers of Hoopman's books. The bibliotherapeutic quality of *All Birds Have Anxiety* lies in the strategies and suggestions for understanding and managing the complexities and daily challenges of living with anxiety. Taken under the wing of a caring adult, the pages of Hoopmann's latest book offer children the promise of a new outlook, as she concludes, "there will come a time when you can glide through your days without anxiety. Then you can look forward to whatever the future brings, and, even better, you can be happy living it" (63).

### **Works Cited**

Ghandour, Reem M., et al. "Prevalence and Treatment of Depression, Anxiety, and Conduct Problems in U.S. Children." *The Journal of Pediatrics*, vol. 206, 2019, pp. 256–67.

### **About the Author**

**Leanne Evans** is an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Her research and teaching interests focus on the convergence of language acquisition and literacy development. Prior to entering higher education, Evans was a reading specialist in a kindergarten through third grade dual language program for many years. Evans believes that emotional well-being should always be at the heart of any learning experience.