

Resource reviews

by Angela Owens

Muddypaws and the birthday party

This children's picture book examines the concepts of friendship, dealing with change and managing fears and anxieties.

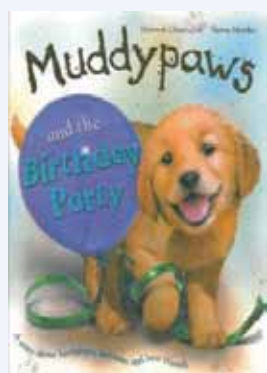
When he wakes up on the day of his owner Ben's sixth birthday party, Muddypaws notices that everything is different in his house, but he doesn't know why. Initially he is excited about all of the new things around him. He first delights in watching Ben blow up a balloon and he then steals a tasty sausage from the kitchen.

However, as each of these experiences take a turn for the worse and he is eventually sent outside by Ben's mum, Muddypaws begins to feel anxious about the changes going on around him. When he is finally invited to join Ben's party, 'all at once, Muddypaws didn't want to come inside'. But Ben knows just what to do to make his best friend Muddypaws feel happy and secure again.

The combination of a very cute puppy, a birthday party and 'the biggest, most delicious looking cake Muddypaws had ever seen' will grab and hold the attention of most children aged between two and five years.

Many children will also identify with the experiences of both Ben and Muddypaws; there is one memorable moment when Muddypaws discovers that pouncing on balloons is not a great idea.

Educators sharing this beautifully illustrated book with children will discover a wealth of possibilities for talking with them about emotions, the things that worry or frighten them and the value of friendship and kindness to others ■



Chancellor, D. (2009). *Muddypaws and the birthday party*. Bath, UK: Parragon Books Ltd.

Response Ability



The Response Ability program is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. It aims to promote

the social and emotional wellbeing and mental health of children. Early childhood educators and school teachers play an important role in laying the foundations for the future mental health and wellbeing of the children for whom they care and educate.

The Response Ability team supports the pre-service training of school teachers and early childhood educators regarding mental health issues in children and young people through:

1. Providing free, evidence-based multi-media teaching resources to Australian tertiary institutions
2. Providing additional information through conference presentations, on the website, and by other means
3. Providing professional support to tertiary educators to help them integrate mental health into their program.

Although the program is primarily targeted for pre-service training activities, the Response Ability website includes a multitude of resources and links that will assist educators currently working with early and middle childhood aged children.

The 'Guides and Factsheets' page of this website is particularly useful and relevant to child educators and carers, with an extensive list of downloadable fact sheets covering topics such as 'Anxiety and Anxiety Disorders', 'Resilience and Wellbeing' and 'Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)'. An occasional papers series, *Education Connect*, which explores issues relating to social and emotional wellbeing in educational settings, can also be downloaded from the Response Ability website ■

www.responseability.org