



### **MY BODY IS MY HOME**

Written by JASPER PEACH

Illustrated by BECI ORPIN

**RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 3–7 YEARS OLD (PRESCHOOL & LOWER PRIMARY)**

**GENRE:** Picture Book

**THEMES:** trusting one's sense of self, all bodies belong, flourishing and thriving looks different for each person, following instincts, understanding that the body we are born in will be with us always

#### **CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:**

- English: Literature, literacy and language
- Health & Physical Education
- Science
- Visual Arts

**NOTES WRITTEN BY:** Jasper Peach

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

*My Body Is My Home* is for young readers aged 3-7. It explores the myriad ways a person can belong – in their own skin, a group, their family and in a community. From the physical to the emotional, the exterior and interior, the themes encourage fostering a sense of self and honouring one's gut instincts. Body neutrality, consent and bodily autonomy are promoted throughout, showing rather than telling, culminating in the understanding that all bodies belong. That wherever we go, whatever happens, we have a body that will always be home.

## JASPER PEACH ON WRITING THE BOOK

'Like many people, I am a late-diagnosed AuDHD person. Parenting my young children has been a beautiful opportunity to reparent myself and notice what might be missing. My hope is that they will find belonging in any setting, as well as encouraging others to feel the same.

'My kids were coming home from kindergarten and telling me that if they eat their vegetables, they'll be healthy and strong forever. I wondered if I could de-simplify the messaging around health. Weaving the notion of body neutrality into the narrative of health being something people experience in all sorts of ways, with no value attached to how your body reflects your genetics and environment.

'Creating *My Body is My Home* was possible due to a research and creation grant from Creative Victoria. Looking into titles already available, I found the book I had assumed I would write already existed several times over. I decided to dig deeper and then sideways, and consider what was really missing – and what I wish I could have gone back in time and told myself as a child.

'I worked with a child psychologist, a scientist with multiple doctorates in biology and nutrition, a kindergarten teacher and a primary school wellbeing officer. We had deep discussions over months about how to distill what we wish we'd known into a story for all children (both the inner children of our adult selves and children growing up in the present).

'While in the research phase of this project, I ran into beloved Wiradjuri poet and artist Jazz Money at my local library. We had a chat about what I was trying to achieve, and Jazz gifted me the title of the book. From there everything fell into place.

'The result is *My Body is My Home* – an exploration through the emotional and physical spaces that make a person, and how we interact with everything around us.

'I have physical and psychosocial disabilities, complex trauma, and I often find the world to be a scary place. But I have always had a felt sense that things would get better – and they have in so many ways. Understanding my brain, how my body and its chronic pain reacts to different things, how to be compassionate and caring to myself and others. Having a beautiful family and community of friends who understand each other and celebrate each other where we're at. Engaging in work that is meaningful to me and offers something to the broader community.

'It is my deepest wish that readers of any age know that who they are is exquisite, that they matter and they truly belong. That wherever they go, they have a body that has been there with them all along, loyal and true. That home is wherever they decide it will be.'

## ACTIVITIES FOR EXPLORING *MY BODY IS MY HOME* IN CLASSROOMS AND AT HOME

### ENGLISH

#### Front Cover – Description & Analysis

The cover features a bold, high-contrast illustration of a bright yellow, childlike figure with closed eyes and a calm, content facial expression. They are gently holding a green house shape against their body, visually reinforcing the central message of the title: *My Body is My Home*. This metaphor is immediately accessible to young readers, positioning the body as a safe, personal space that belongs to the individual.

The use of simple shapes, thick lines, and vibrant colours reflects early childhood visual literacy, making the cover engaging and easy to interpret for younger audiences. Playful elements such as a small ladybug (which is a repeated image for children to find in each spread inside the book), swirling patterns, and soft pink cheeks add warmth and approachability, while also suggesting joy and curiosity.

Figures in the book do not look like a specific human, but visually communicate shapes and emotion that any child can relate to. Through this technique, no child will feel excluded by the illustrations, deftly and cheerfully created by accomplished and respected artist Beci Orpin. Beci used collage to create the artwork in the story, a medium accessible to young children for its playful layering of image and colour. Collage gives depth and a 3D visual, mirroring the layering of feelings and sensory input children experience every day.

Typography is large, rounded, and highly legible, with emphasis on the words *MY BODY* and *HOME*, guiding readers to the core concept of bodily autonomy. The placement of a red heart at the base of the house symbol subtly reinforces themes of care, safety, and self-worth.

Overall, the cover communicates a reassuring, child-centred message about ownership of one's body, emotional safety, and self-acceptance. It signals that the book will support conversations about consent, boundaries, and wellbeing in a gentle, age-appropriate way.

#### Front Cover – Guided Questions

- Can you name all the colours on the cover?
- Do these colours make you feel like this story will be happy or sad?
- How do you think the character on the cover is feeling?

- What expression on their face tells you that?
- What shape is in the middle of the cover?
- What does the idea of home mean to you?
- Can you spot the tiny insect on the book's cover?
- Can you see the little red heart? Where is it, and what do hearts make you think of?
- The character has their eyes closed and is smiling — when do you feel that happy and peaceful?
- What might it mean for your body to be your home?

### Language Analysis, Visual Literacy, Representation and Themes

My approach was to be less didactic and more invitational through gentle rhyme. The child can identify with the childlike figure in the book in many different ways, and it is always their choice what to take on and what to discard.

Repetition of the title throughout the story provides an anchor for each theme. No matter what is happening around us, what we juggle internally, there is a constant. Our bodies will always be there, and how we feel about them has no bearing on this. The focus on body neutrality is important here – and has overtaken body positivity as best practice.

Neutrality lends itself to the notion that every body can belong. Body positivity can put pressure on people to display performative love for a body that can be experienced as challenging due to pain or a lack of acceptance and access from the broader community.

When we strive for body neutrality, words like 'disabled' and 'fat' are simple descriptors like 'tall' or 'blonde'. They're neutral and acceptance of variation is supported. The more neutrality is encouraged and woven through narratives for children, the more belonging will be fostered for all members of the community and humanity at large.

We start with the notion of body as home, moving into physical elements like heart and lungs that will be familiar to children. From here we combine the notion of heart as something that pumps blood, to a feeling that we follow. The duality of purpose and power in a heart is that it is both mechanical and wise.

Some inclusion of guts, poo, farty sounds and bright bold shapes represent the interior in a child-centric way, then shows the duality of everything under the skin of a person being perfect just as it is. There is no hierarchy in the story – only bodies that move through life in their own wondrous individual ways. Even when we experience illness or a shape that is viewed as incorrect or atypical, we can overthrow these value judgments by grounding in the title phrase: '*my body is my home*'.

Individuality and reflection of feelings are represented with different shapes and colours, with a narrative of bringing the feelings out by sharing them.

The mind is represented by a small being looking upward towards floating thoughts – musical notes, an echidna and a pencil – showing movement in learning. Knowledge and memory are described as ‘treasure’.

Safety is symbolised through the ladybug wearing a hard hat on a scissor lift – showing that sometimes we need tools and help.

The story also explores emotional shifts and self-regulation, including asking for help from trusted others (people, pets, toys).

Food is represented neutrally, including both wholefoods and snack foods, acknowledging experiences such as ARFID and neurodivergence.

The narrative then moves outward into nature (garden imagery, dandelions, Californian poppy), reflecting learning, growth and unexpected education.

The story acknowledges difficult emotions and external conflict, reinforcing self-kindness and resilience. It aligns with strengths-based approaches (DEECD), showing a child navigating challenges and building capacity.

The final page includes a mirror with the affirmation:  
*‘I am at home in my body. Wherever I go, I am home.’*

### Language & Visual Literacy – Guided Questions

*‘This is my body – it’s my home.*

*I will live here my whole life long.*

*Every part of me belongs.’*

- What colours do you see on these pages?
- How do the colours make you feel?
- What different things do the shapes with eyes remind you of?
- What are the differences between the different shapes on the page with the green, pink, blue and yellow backgrounds?
- There’s a face that’s made of puzzle pieces – what are the pieces that make a person?
- The pieces that make a person can be things we can see, and things we can feel. Can you describe the difference?
- What does it mean to belong?

*‘Here is my heart, pumping blood.*

*Night and day it goes thud-thud.*

*Here are my lungs, breathing high and low.*

*Deep and slow is the way to go.'*

- These pages describe the different jobs that the heart and lungs have. What are some other parts of your body, and what jobs do they have?
- When the heart pumps blood, do you notice that feeling?
- Where can you feel your heart?
- Can you count your pulse?
- What does it mean for lungs to breathe high and low? Can you feel your lungs when you breathe, and how the breath moves? How about slowing down your breath, can you have a go?
- Why is it good for the lungs to breathe deep and slow? What happens when we do that?

*'I follow my heart. My breath anchors me.*

*My body is my home.'*

- What does it mean to follow your heart?
- How can breath be an anchor? Can you feel your breath? Would you like to try to describe it?
- Why is the character feeling happy here?

*'Over here are my insides, see? Guts and poo, gas and wee.*

*Under my skin and all within is truly, perfectly, precisely me.*

*Every day I grow and change. My body is my home.'*

- What noises do your insides make?
- Can you name some organs?
- What does 'truly, perfectly, precisely me' mean?
- Do grown-ups often tell you that you've been growing?
- Do you notice your body growing sometimes?
- How does it feel to be a child in a growing body? Does it make you feel tired, or hungry, or happy, or other feelings entirely?

- The character on the second page is reaching up towards the sunlight – do you like to stand in the sun?

*'Inside and out, we are differently made.*

*All bodies have their own special ways.*

*Every body is one of a kind.*

*Our bodies are our homes.'*

- Can you tell me what you see on these pages?
- What are the differences between the characters?
- Can you describe the shapes and colours?
- What do they have in common?
- Do they all look like they belong?

*'My feelings can be fast or slow.*

*Silly, happy, mad or low.*

*When I share what's going on, or how a big feeling is scary or strong, it helps it change and move along. My body is my home.'*

- Can you describe what you can see on the pages around the words?
- What do the different shapes and colours remind you of?
- Which shape or colour do you feel most like at this moment?
- Do you remember another feeling you had earlier today? Was there a big change?
- How many different feelings do you think you had yesterday, or this morning?
- Do any of the shapes or colours remind you of nature, or movement, or sounds?

*'My mind is where the learning goes.*

*Things I hear, and then I know.*

*I remember songs and faces, stories and jokes and special places.*

*Names for different kinds of birds, and zillions and trillions of brand-new words.'*

- Do you remember the last time you learned something new?
- How did you learn it?

- The story describes hearing and seeing, but there are other ways to learn too. Can you name them?
- Can you name some different kinds of birds you see on the page?

*'The treasures I've hidden, I know where to find.*

*They live right here within my mind.*

*No matter what I pop up top, my brain tells me X marks the spot.*

*My body is my home.'*

- Do you have treasures in your mind? Or special memories?
- What are some of your favourite things to think about?
- Why is the ladybug wearing a helmet on the scissor lift?

*'When my head feels hot and tight, there might be something not quite right.*

*I can ask for help or have a think.*

*I might need a snack, or water to drink.*

*I stop and take a slow deep breath, then ask myself what to do next.*

*My body tells me what I need. My body is my home.'*

- The character on the first page looks different to the one on the second page. How are they feeling on each page?
- Do you feel like your head feels hot and tight sometimes?
- What helps you feel better?
- If you take a slow, deep breath, does that help you feel better?
- Do you like the snacks on the second page?
- What's your favourite thing to eat when you feel hungry?

*'When I was a baby, milk helped me grow.*

*Now I'm a kid, I eat the rainbow.*

*Crunch and munch, snack and devour – so many foods that give me power.*

*I feed my body every day. My body is my home.'*

Note: It's important to keep discussions about food neutral, especially for neurodivergent children. By this I mean referring to any food or preference as good or bad, healthy or unhealthy.

- What are some of the foods on the page called?
- Is there one you like? And one you don't like?
- Do you have a favourite food that goes in your lunchbox?
- Did you ever try something you had never eaten before and found something new you liked?
- Is there something you wish was on the page but isn't?

*'Like a flower grows from a tiny seed, I started off little – then grew like a weed!*

*Here is my garden with shelter and plants.*

*Just like my body, it can sleep and dance.*

*My body is my home.'*

- Can you name either of the plants on these pages? (Californian poppy and dandelion)
- What do plants need in order to grow?
- Are there things you need that plants need too?
- Have you ever planted a seed that grew into a plant?
- Where is the ladybug?

*'When the world is cross or sad, it can be hard to understand.*

*Feelings flying here and there: some are loud and some aren't fair.*

*I can be kind to myself and say, with a gentle voice: 'It will be okay.'*

*My body is my home.'*

- What are some of the shapes you can see on the left page? What colours are they?
- How is the character on the left page feeling?
- On the right page, the green being looks different. What happened?
- What does being kind to yourself mean?
- Can you think of some ways you can be kind to yourself today?

*'Here are the beings I adore.*

*People, pets, toys and more.*

*I am safe with my special folk, to cuddle or cry, be quiet or joke.*

*Whatever I need, it's okay to be me.*

*My body is my home.'*

- This page has some pets – what animals can you see?
- How is everyone on these pages feeling?
- What does being safe with people feel like?
- What does the story mean by 'it's okay to be me'?
- Can you find the sweet potato on this page?

*'There's a special voice inside of me that tells me who I'm meant to be.*

*Whenever I am feeling blue, I stop and listen to what's true.*

*A steady sound, a certain feeling – my body tells me what to do.*

*My body is my home.'*

- What does it mean by 'a special voice inside of me'?
- How can we listen to what's true?
- Can you describe the picture on the second page?
- How do you feel when you look at these pictures?

*'My dreams and hopes will travel with me – to all the places I will be.*

*Some will come and some will go, but there's one thing I'll always know.'*

- Do you have a dream that you'd like to come true one day? (Children can answer yes or no, they can keep their dream private if they wish.)
- What does it mean when it says 'some will come and some will go'?
- What do you think the being has in their sack?
- How old do you think they are?
- Where do you think they're going?

*'I am at home in my body. Wherever I go, I am home.'*

- What do you notice in a mirror?
- Can you change how you feel by imagining something different?
- What makes you uniquely you?
- What does *'wherever I go, I am home.'* mean?

## **HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Being Healthy, Safe and Active**

*'Inside and out, we are differently made.'*

*All bodies have their own special ways.*

*Every body is one of a kind.*

*Our bodies are our homes.'*

All humans have exquisite value, and measurements of health have no bearing on this. One of the core messages of the text is body neutrality. In offering this theme, it's my hope that educators can sidestep the homogeneity of what 'healthy' and 'active' are prescribed to mean.

For many children, eating breakfast isn't wanted or accessible. Moving their bodies in playful ways can be hard when extra-curricular sports aren't affordable or physically accessible. Nobody was ever given a magically healthy body by following the food pyramid or doing whatever their PE teacher said they should be able to do, when shamed in front of their peers. Nobody ever got stronger and 'fixed' what was different about them through being shamed. There are untold factors in each person's physicality, wellbeing and ongoing growth.

When we foster the notion that every body is included and every body belongs, we do away with harmful rhetoric such as the (racist and scientifically debunked) BMI, even though this is still used in medical settings every day.

Mixed messages about what is correct and true, versus what a child can be, given genetics, environment, socioeconomic factors and climate emergencies, can be very harmful and lead to internalising shame and guilt. This creates its own harmful health outcomes that perpetuate and accelerate well into adulthood.

*My Body is My Home* is the continuation or beginning of many conversations to be had with children, as well as deeds and actions that will foster a strong sense of belonging for every child, as well as a compassionate and inclusive gaze for their peers.

## Communicating and Interacting for Health and Wellbeing

The story includes some important moments that reflect these themes. We can feel like a moment will be the way we will experience life forever, but by assessing what we need, we can move through it into the next.

Beyond the internal discussion that occurs between 'me, myself and I' comes the moment of asking for help. The story reflects that where the presence of a safe adult is sometimes helpful, what is equally true is the ability to find safety with a peer, a pet or a toy.

Communication brings the thoughts and feelings from the interior to the exterior, where we can access a different perspective and move through the moment towards greater ease and sometimes (but not always) solutions.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

Some children are not safe at home. Their safe haven might be found at school or in extra-curricular activities, and sometimes even the library. The story reflects the reality that if you're having a rough time as a child, it can also be true that the child knows better things are coming. They just don't know when. Holding on to that belief can mean the world, and encouragement from teachers, carers and community to trust one's intuition also feeds into this buoying notion.

For me, this was always the case. A kind English teacher here, a school camp volunteer there, even one year a wonderful PE teacher helped me along by seeing that I was profoundly sad and felt out of place, but that I could believe in myself and a happier future.

## SCIENCE

### The Human Body

All humans have exquisite value, and measurements of health have no bearing on this. One of the core messages of the text is body neutrality. In offering this theme, it's my hope that educators can sidestep the homogeneity of what 'healthy' and 'active' are prescribed to mean. There are clearly defined human body parts in the story that have dual reality – a heart pumps blood, and is also representative of instinct and intuition. *'I follow my heart. My breath anchors me. My body is my home.'*

By age four, children understand their thoughts are their own and distinct from everyone else's. We can empower children to know their own minds by reflecting and encouraging this. *'There's a special voice inside of me that tells me who I'm meant to be.'*

### Biological Science – How Living Things Grow and Change Over Time and What is Needed to Thrive

In the story, the childlike being moves from experiencing challenging emotions, to identifying that they need help. That they themselves can identify what they need, or they can ask for assistance, like asking for a snack and a drink of water. Recentring by refuelling and taking a moment with a deep breath can shift the child's experience. These acts also help them to grow and change. *'When my head feels hot and tight, there might be something not quite right. I can ask for help or have a think. I might need a snack, or water to drink.'*

Children know that they used to be completely reliant on an adult and milk for nutrition as babies, and now can most likely reach for something they choose.

*'When I was a baby, milk helped me grow.*

*Now I'm a kid, I eat the rainbow.*

*Crunch and munch, snack and devour – so many foods that give me power.*

*I feed my body every day. My body is my home.'*

Our biological realities are reflected in nature, starting off tiny as a full-stop and growing into a fetus, a baby and then a child. To do so, we are first defenceless and then become empowered to gradually learn to do things on our own. We do so with care, shelter, rest, food, water and movement.

It's important to note that movement is not prescriptive – for children who experience paralysis, movement may refer to eye movement. These words apply to each child in the way that makes sense to them and how they interact with the world.

*'Like a flower grows from a tiny seed, I started off little – then grew like a weed!*

*Here is my garden with shelter and plants.*

*Just like my body, it can sleep and dance.*

*My body is my home.'*

## **VISUAL ARTS**

### **Helping Students Communicate What They Have Learned From the Book Through Visual Media**

**Discussion:** Reading the story, talking about how all bodies are different even if you're an identical twin. Sharing perspectives around population numbers all coming from stardust, different cultural traditions to celebrate ourselves and where we've come from, where we're headed and how we feel in the present moment. Focus on not needing to sit still, that listening looks different for every child, and communication can be clear in all sorts of ways.

Every child can have access to paper and art supplies, and can be encouraged to express themselves visually while joining in the chat.

**Body Scan and Collage Creation:** Each child to trace (with help) their outline using butcher's paper and a big texta. (Or you can use a generic template body outline on A4 or A3 paper). Draw or craft your own reflections of what feelings live in your body, and where

they're located. It doesn't have to be biologically accurate or even neat – use your imagination and all the colours and textures you relate to. You'll need paper, glue, fabric, glitter, colourful card, scissors (including left-handed scissors), pencils, textas, crayons, cotton balls, string, yarn, etc.

Beci Orpin, illustrator and artist, has used collage to create the images in the story. Collage is a wonderful way to express the myriad layers of what we experience internally, externally and in community with others.

**Suitcase Creation:** Creating a suitcase of resources drawn and created by each child to assist each individual to feel at home in their own body, linked to the themes in the story.

You'll need paper, glue, fabric, glitter, colourful card, scissors (including left-handed scissors), pencils, textas, crayons, cotton balls, string, yarn, etc.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**JASPER PEACH** is a trans, non-binary and disabled writer, speaker and parent. They are passionate about equitable access and inclusion. Their first book, *You'll be a Wonderful Parent*, was published in 2023 and is a celebration of rainbow families of all kinds.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**BECI ORPIN** is a Melbourne-based designer, artist and maker.