

Library Highlights Books on Mental Health
Aurora Ropp and Kris Wiley for The News Review

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and Roseburg Public Library has books for youth of all ages that can help increase their awareness of mental health and wellness.

Picture Book

It can be difficult to talk about abstract concepts of feelings with young children. In “I Am Stuck,” Julia Mills makes that concept tangible with a stuck turtle.

Turtle is stuck on his back and cannot get turned right side up. All different kinds of animals come by turtle and give suggestions of what they do to get unstuck, but none of them work for turtle. Finally, along comes possum, who asks if turtle is hurt instead of giving advice on how to become unstuck. Possum hangs out with turtle, who says he feels lonely. They chat, weather a storm and laugh so much that turtle becomes unstuck!

The story shows how what works for some doesn't work for all, and being with friends who stick it out in good and bad times helps you feel better and get unstuck. It's a great story to share with kids 3 to 8 years old.

Junior

“Louder Than Hunger” is a novel in verse by John Schu that takes elements of his own experience with anorexia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and depression to create a deeply moving story.

It's 1996, and eighth grader Jake is admitted to an eating disorders unit. He has been restricting food as a way to cope with bullying from classmates and troubles at home, and the Voice in his head reinforces every negative thought Jake has.

Jake wants to get better, especially so he can spend time with his beloved grandmother, but recovery is a slow and bumpy process. Fortunately, Jake makes a friend in the hospital, his parents step up to support him and he does the hard work in therapy to silence the Voice.

“Louder Than Hunger” is an amazing book about a resilient kid. I recommend it for older tweens and as an intergenerational book club read.

Young Adults

“I Loved You in Another Life” by David Arnold is a romance with a twist of magical realism.

The contemporary story focuses on Evan, who lives with his mom and brother because his parents split up. He looks forward to moving to Alaska after graduation to take part in a special program before college until his mom reveals her cancer diagnosis, which exacerbates his anxiety.

The other protagonist is Shosh, who planned to move with her sister to Los Angeles after graduation and become an actress. Then her sister died in a car accident, her parents became husks of themselves, and Shosh started drinking to cope.

Evan and Shosh meet, and there are sparks. Still, there is a lot for both of them to work through just as they're coming of age. They take turns narrating their chapters so the reader better understands their perspectives and struggles.

The magical part is music and lyrics that only Evan and Shosh experience. It turns out that the music, which you can listen to online, connects meant-to-be couples over multiple generations. Throughout the book, we learn about how some of those couples ended up together.

All of these books are available at the library. Place holds at roseburg.biblionix.com, or contact library staff at library@cityofroseburg.org or 541-492-7050 for assistance.

This Month's Youth Programs

3-5 p.m. Tuesday, May 14 – Maker Space Time

3-5 p.m. Thursday, May 16 – Teen volunteer hours