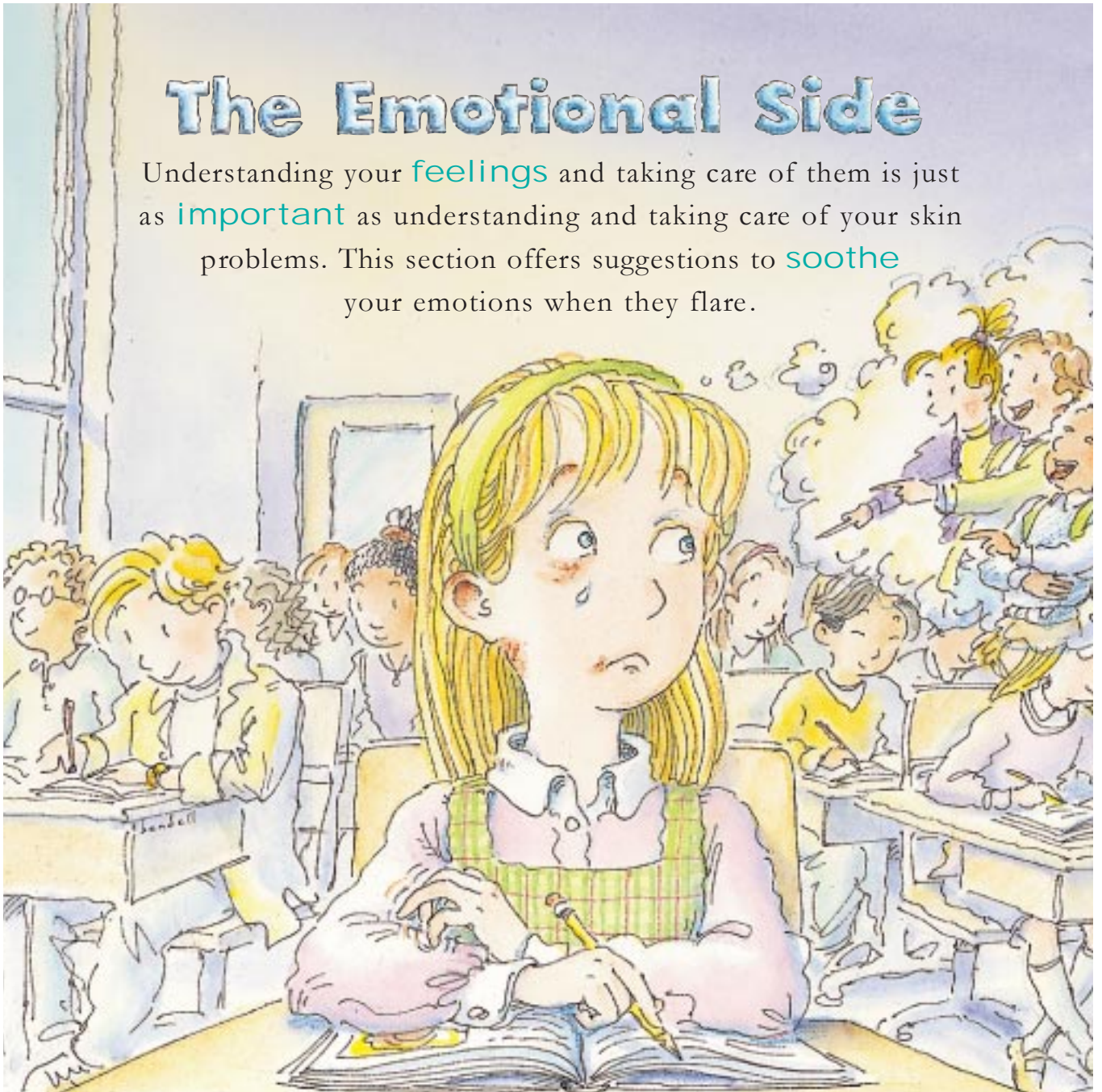


The Emotional Side

Understanding your **feelings** and taking care of them is just as **important** as understanding and taking care of your skin problems. This section offers suggestions to **soothe** your emotions when they flare.



A Flood of Feelings

Having AD can bring out a wide range of feelings in you. The reactions described on these pages are all normal. In fact, you may have felt several of these emotions at the same time.

I feel **embarrassed** when my skin flares—
I just want to hide.

I'm **confused** about what's happening with my skin.

I **worry** that my AD will get worse.

I **envy** other kids who have perfect skin.

I get **angry**—it's not fair that I have to spend so much time taking care of my skin.

I feel **guilty** because I scratch even though I know I shouldn't.

I'm **afraid** no one will want to be my friend.

I feel **alone**, like nobody understands what I'm going through.

I don't want to talk about it. There's **nothing wrong** with my skin!

Feeling Flawed

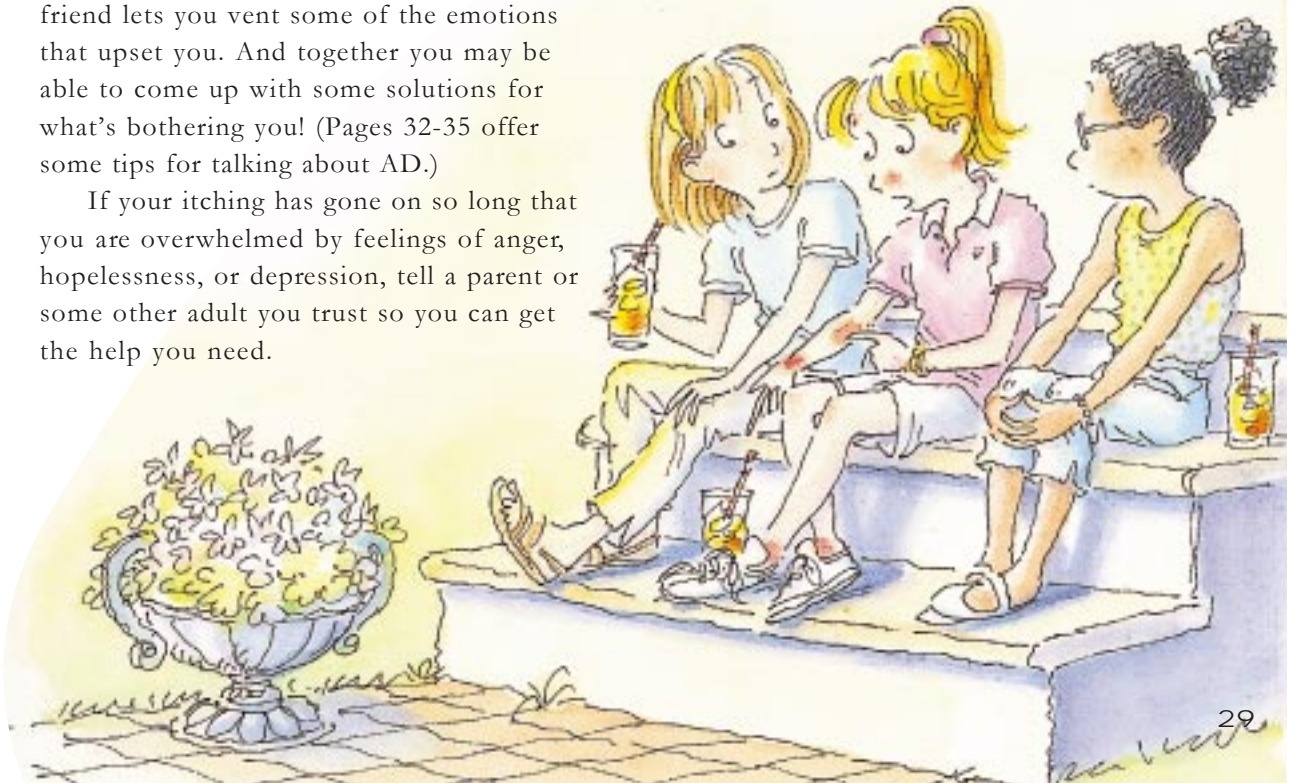
AD not only affects the outside of your body—it can also affect what goes on inside your mind. It's natural to feel upset sometimes. AD can be a frustrating disease—after all, you can't always control what it does to your skin. But you *can* try to keep it from controlling your emotions, too.

How can you gain power over your eczema? Talking about your embarrassment, anger, or worry can help. Sharing your feelings with a family member, doctor, or good friend lets you vent some of the emotions that upset you. And together you may be able to come up with some solutions for what's bothering you! (Pages 32-35 offer some tips for talking about AD.)

If your itching has gone on so long that you are overwhelmed by feelings of anger, hopelessness, or depression, tell a parent or some other adult you trust so you can get the help you need.

Accepting Reality

It may seem tough to accept the fact that your skin is not normal. Some kids with eczema won't admit they need to take special care of their skin. It's as by pretending they don't have AD, they can make it go away. This is also a natural reaction. But if you feel this way and don't eventually change the behaviors that harm your skin, there's a good chance your condition will just get worse. Think you could use a little help improving your attitude? Turn the page!



Have a Healthy Attitude

You may be stuck with skin problems right now, but you don't have to be stuck with a bad attitude, too. Having a healthy outlook is the first step towards having healthier skin!

Don't Be So Hard on Yourself!

If you feel like the whole world is staring at your flares, it's time to do a reality check. Most people are more focused on the flaws they see in *themselves* than the flares you see on your skin. Instead of hiding from people, tell them about your AD. (Pages 32-33 can help you find the words to use.) Other people will probably accept the fact that your skin isn't perfect—and you should, too!



"My mom says that everyone has something that they're embarrassed by or afraid of, so just be yourself. Sometimes my friends ask about my skin. When we talk, they remember that someone in their family has rashes, too."

Dominic P.
Age 9, Michigan



Don't Make Assumptions

Sometimes kids with AD think others are avoiding them because of their disease. Before you assume this is true, make sure you haven't withdrawn from others out of embarrassment or fear of what they might think. Other kids might mistake your nervousness as being unfriendly. Kids might also be staying away because they don't know what to say or how to act. They may need *you* to break the ice.



"Try to be friendly. Before you know it, you'll start playing with others and they won't even notice your skin. They'll just like you."

Jeffrey J.
Age 9, Michigan

Remember: there's much more to you than your AD. The qualities you have—such as your friendliness, sense of humor, or talents—are what other people like and admire in you. Eczema is just a small part of who you are.

Take Risks

Has your skin ever kept you from trying out for something you might enjoy, like a school play or a sports team? Sometimes kids with eczema unknowingly use their disease as an excuse for not trying something. It's easier to blame their AD than to face their fear of trying something new.

If this is true for you, here's a tip: go for it! It may not be easy, but refuse to let AD keep you in hiding. As you interact with people, your self-esteem will increase, you'll focus less on your skin, and others will get the chance to know the real you—*and* see that you aren't held back by your skin. An added benefit: your skin might even improve since you may scratch less because your new activity will keep you so busy!



Tips for Talking

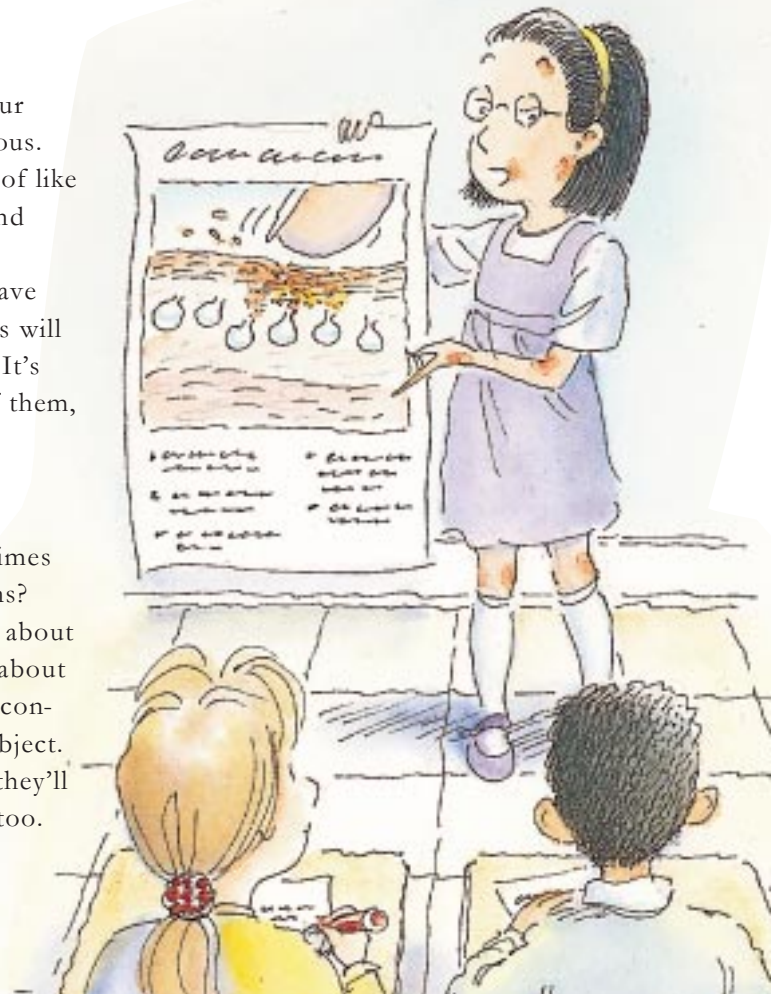
Wish others could understand what you're going through? Have a hard time putting into words how you feel? Don't know what to say when someone teases you? Here are some hints for handling the topic of AD.

What to Say

You may wonder what to say about your flares to friends or others who are curious. Try explaining it straight out. "It's kind of like an allergic reaction. My skin gets red and itchy, but it goes away after a while." Explaining AD lets others know they have nothing to be afraid of. And real friends will want to help you through rough times. It's not surprising—you'd be supportive of them, too, wouldn't you?

Teasing Troubles

Unfortunately, kids with AD are sometimes teased. What can you do if this happens? Some kids say that presenting a report about eczema in class helps. Talking openly about their disease shows they accept it and consider it an interesting and important subject. Once your classmates know the facts, they'll probably adopt your positive attitude, too.



Teacher Talk

Sometimes AD can interfere with schoolwork. A sleepless night of scratching might make it hard to pay attention in class the next day. A flare-up that's severe may even keep you home. If you miss a lot of school, you might have trouble keeping your grades up. What can you do?

You and your parents should meet with your teachers to discuss your AD. Teachers need to know that you may have trouble sitting still when your itching is at its worst. There may also be days a teacher needs to excuse you so that you can apply moisturizer or take medication.



Words of Wisdom

These kids don't let their eczema get them down. Read their advice for how to handle AD hassles.



"I explain that eczema is a skin rash that doctors don't know the cure for, but kids can't catch it from me. If you are teased, you should just say, 'I am like this and you'll have to deal with it.'"

Amy R.
Age 11, Connecticut



"Once I heard a boy's mom tell my teacher she didn't want her son to sit next to me because my skin sometimes cracks and bleeds. So my mom got a letter from my doctor that explains eczema. She gave copies to all the kids to take home. Now, the boy I told you about is my best buddy. He even goes with me to the school nurse when I'm itching and need medicine."

Eric R.
Age 7, Connecticut



"My friends like me because of what's on the inside of me. If your friends don't like you because of what you look like, they're not true friends."

Sharita B.
Age 11, Virginia




"Some kids at school are very caring and concerned. They help me when my eczema hurts me too much to do things."

Christopher D.
Age 8, Florida

Your Treatment Team

When you're up against AD, you need supportive teammates. Your doctor and family members are important players on your side. Here's a game plan for keeping communication open and effective.



 If you have questions about your skin or treatment at home, write them down in your Skin Profile on pages 44-46 and bring them to your next doctor's appointment.

Doc Discussions

You and your doctor are working together to keep your eczema under control. Be open and honest when talking about your skin. The more information you can give to the doctor, the better. If you've let your treatment slide, tell the truth—your doctor needs to know all the facts to care for your skin the best way he or she can.

It's also important that you understand your treatment plan and follow it carefully. If you're confused by or disappointed with some part of your therapy, talk with your doctor. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Your doctor will be glad you're interested and want to help you learn more about your skin.



"My doctor really understands how I feel. She treats me like a grownup and works hard to make me feel better. The office is even starting a support group for kids with AD."

Tyler V.
Age 12, Illinois

Family Matters!

Your eczema may sometimes lead to family arguments. If your itching is keeping you and other family members up at night, everyone may be moody. Family support is very important for anyone who has eczema, so here are a few things you can do to help everyone keep their cool when tempers heat up:

- If you feel your parents are hounding you about your treatment, realize that they're just trying to keep you comfortable by preventing your AD from flaring. Do your part to take care of your skin so your parents don't feel they must constantly remind you.
- Like you, your parents may feel frustrated. It's hard for them to watch someone they love struggle with eczema. Talk with your parents about your feelings. This will help all of you deal with problems you may be having.



"It helps to talk to my mom because she has AD, too. I got the gene from her."

Delynn D.

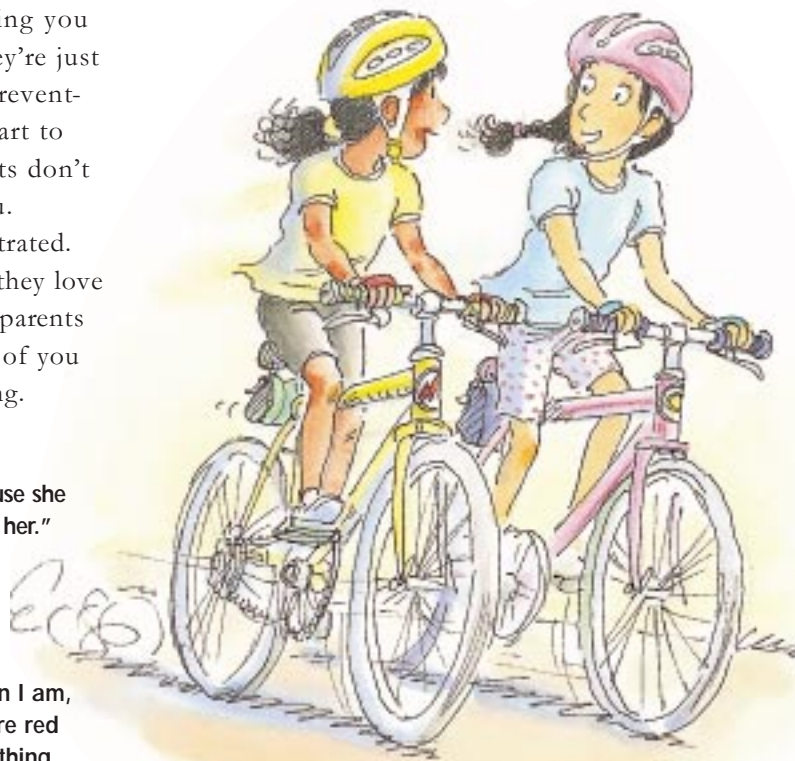
Age 11, Georgia



"My mom says it's what's on the inside that makes me the person I am, not my skin. My skin is just more red than other kids', and there's nothing wrong with that."

Danielle B.

- It's natural for you to feel envious of sisters or brothers who don't have skin problems. A sibling might also get upset with you or your parents if they spend extra time helping you take care of your skin. Try reading this book—or parts of it—with your siblings. Doing something fun together can also strengthen your relationship.



Create a Flare Calendar

You can use a calendar like this to help you discover what may be causing your skin to flare. Each week, jot down new or unusual things you do such as your first soccer practice or trying new foods. Also record any situations that make you emotional, such as a fight with a friend or a big test. Whenever

you notice a flare, write that down, too ("F"). Can you connect your flares to any of the events or situations you experienced? Talk with a parent about how you can avoid or better handle situations in the future that cause you to flare. Visit www.fujisawa.com to print calendars or use your own.

January

(month)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 New Year's Day	2 ☹️ School Starts F	3 F	4 F	5 F	6
7	8	9	10	11	12 Mom's birthday - ate chocolate cake	13
14	15 no school 😊 went sledding	16	17 Jack's birthday - drank fruit punch	18	19	20
21 spaghetti dinner F	22 F	23 F	24 F	25 Sheila's birthday - went ice skating	26	27
28	29	30 class field trip to museum	31			