

# THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: A LOCKDOWN STORY



Written by Alicia Stenard    Illustrated by Greg Matusic

**"There are times when explanations, no matter how reasonable, just don't seem to help."**

**Fred Rogers**



# THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: THE ROOM: A LOCKDOWN STORY



## Short Book Description

**The Elephant in the Room: A Lockdown Story is a frolicking tale of circus animals, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and a fun-loving teacher.**

**Enjoy this light-hearted story about a serious subject that prepares young children for lockdown drills without traumatizing them.**



# **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: A LOCKDOWN STORY**

## **Long Book Description**

**"How do I teach my students a lockdown drill without fear?"**

**As a kindergarten teacher I struggled with teaching my students the procedures of a lockdown drill. I knew they needed to react quickly and quietly, but I worried about frightening them.**

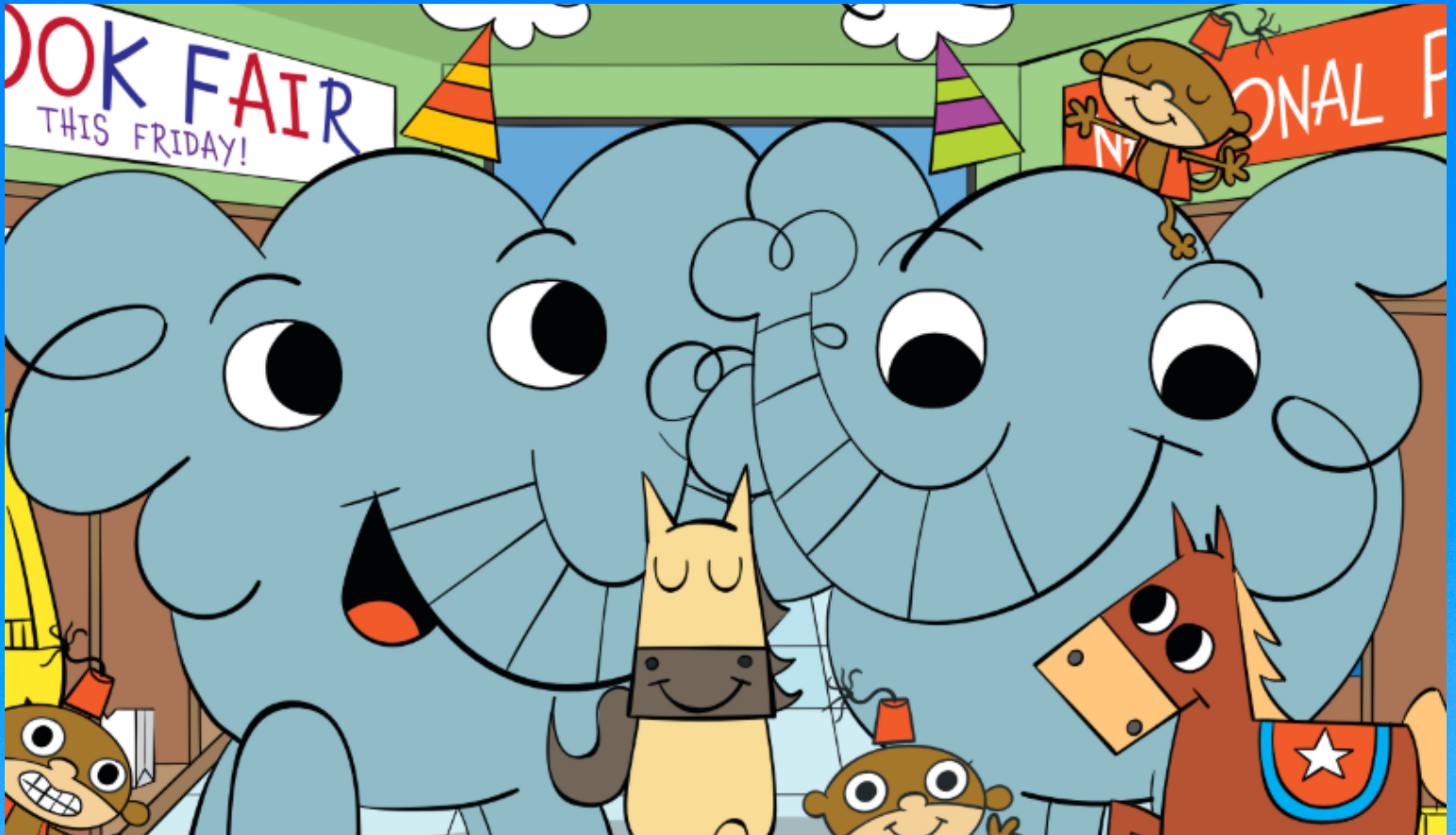
**Being prepared is essential, but it wasn't necessary to put terrifying images into their minds for them to take the drills seriously. I became frustrated at the lack of materials available that would protect my students from being traumatized by the implications of a lockdown drill. The reality was difficult enough, but it felt wrong to place that emotional burden on my students.**

**I decided to write my own lockdown story. It worked like a charm! My story created a sense of urgency, without creating a sense of fear. The Elephant in the Room: A Lockdown Story is a frolicking tale of circus animals, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and a fun-loving teacher. In this book children are protected from the harsh realities of lockdown drills while learning life-saving procedures.**

**The Elephant in the Room: A Lockdown Story is a light-hearted story about a serious subject for children.**



# LOCKDOWN DRILLS WITHOUT FEAR



**"We must change the way we practice lockdown drills with our students. We have put in place a system of practicing for threats at our schools that is far too realistic for children. Our methods are introducing tremendous anxiety in children, a feeling of helplessness and an overall sense that school is not a safe place to be. Our children are experiencing the emotional, psychological and academic consequences of this tremendously misguided approach.**

**My book addresses the need to teach safety measures while doing so in a gentle, age-appropriate way and has had excellent results."**

**Alicia Stenard**



# AUTHOR BIO



**As a teacher, Alicia had heard too many accounts of children being traumatized during lockdown drills. She didn't want her own students to have a negative experience and created a solution through storytelling. Alicia wrote *The Elephant in the Room* to prevent fear from lockdown drills for her students, while also assuring they learn to respond quickly and quietly. Alicia has had success for many years teaching her students lockdown drill procedures without traumatizing them.**

**Alicia Stenard brings two decades of experience to her children's books. Her experience as a teacher, parent coach and a mother of four creates the perfect inspiration for her characters and the situations they face during childhood. Children will appreciate the entertaining stories, parents and educators will appreciate the important, relevant issues being addressed in fun and relatable ways.**



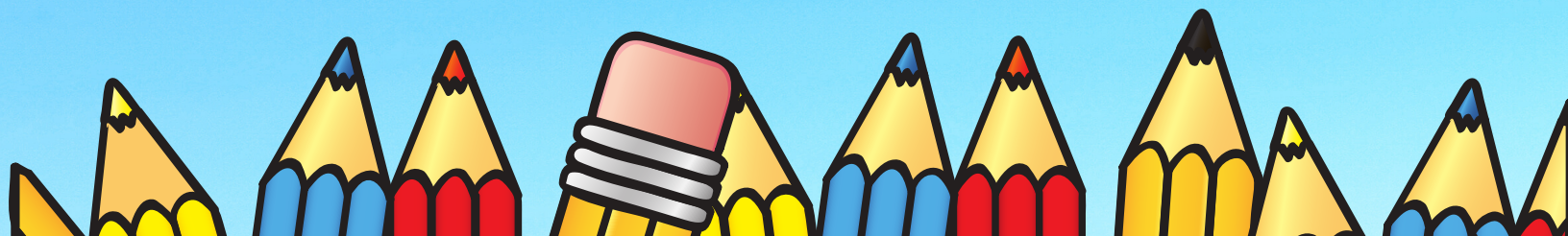
# ARE LOCKDOWN DRILLS NECESSARY FOR OUR YOUNGEST STUDENTS?

**1 IN 614,000,000**

**"THE STATISTICAL LIKELIHOOD OF ANY  
GIVEN PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT BEING  
KILLED BY A GUN IN SCHOOL." WASHINGTON  
POST, 2018**

**"ALTHOUGH AS ADULTS WE MUST TAKE  
LOCKDOWN DRILLS SERIOUSLY, WE DO NOT  
NEED TO BURDEN OUR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH  
THE FULL STORY. THE FACT IS, OUR CHILDREN  
CANNOT YET MAKE SENSE OF THE IDEA THAT  
WE ARE PREPARING FOR SOMETHING THAT  
'PROBABLY ISN'T GOING TO HAPPEN.'  
IF WE ARE PREPARING FOR IT, IT FEELS LIKE IT  
IS GOING TO HAPPEN."**

**Alicia Stenard**





# WHAT IS THE GOAL OF A LOCKDOWN DRILL?

**"THE GOAL OF A LOCKDOWN DRILL IS TO GET CHILDREN TO RESPOND QUICKLY AND QUIETLY. THEY DO NOT NEED THE 'BAD GUY' SCENARIO TO LEARN HOW TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOAL. IN FACT, SCARING OUR CHILDREN WILL MAKE THEM FREEZE."  
ALICIA STENARD**



**"The teacher calmly replied, 'Remember what we have practiced. Now is the time for lockdown.' The children remembered what this meant and they walked quickly to their safe spot."**

**The Elephant in the Room: A Lockdown Story**



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**What inspired you to write *The Elephant in the Room: A Lockdown Story*?**

**When our school district began requiring lockdown drills, I searched the internet for the best way to approach this with my kindergarten class. All I could find was the direct, brutally honest, “bad guy in the school” scenario. That was usually followed by the statement that I should remind my students it is very unlikely this situation would ever happen. Honestly, I thought this was terrible advice. Children can’t yet differentiate between “likely and unlikely.” In their minds, “if we are preparing for it, then it is going to happen.” So, out of a desire to protect my students from the fear associated with lockdown drills I wrote this story and I had terrific success with it! After just one reading of the story my class was consistently able to get into lockdown mode in 10 seconds- and never once with any tears or fear! I hope that my fellow teachers can also benefit from this gentle approach to this tough subject.**

**Describe your book.**

**The *Elephant in the Room: A Lockdown Story* tells the tale of a classroom of students, a circus truck with flat tires and a monkey with the key to the animals’ cages. The story takes place on National Peanut Butter and Jelly Day and the circus animals are on the loose! They come into the school building in search of the students’ lunches and the class must follow their lockdown drill procedures so the animals will not find their sandwiches. It’s a fun story with a lot of imagination and a healthy way to practice lockdown drills. The animals are looking for the sandwiches, rather than the children; and this was included so the children practicing a lockdown drill would not feel personally threatened.**



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## **How will this book help me in my classroom?**

**There is an exciting and fun feeling to the book, with an appropriate level of tension. Most importantly, it allows teachers to practice their lockdown drill procedures without causing an emotional disruption to the day. The first time I taught lockdown procedures using this book, my class was able to learn and practice the procedures and be back to our schoolwork in 15 minutes. After the first reading of the book my class could drop what they were doing and be in lockdown in 10 seconds! None of my students experienced a negative emotional response and it did not disrupt our learning. When I saw how effective my story could be, I wanted to share it with my fellow teachers. It is a better approach for everyone: for the children, teachers, administration and parents!**

## **How should teachers use this book in their classroom?**

**There are specific instructions, including a letter to parents explaining this gentle way to teach lockdown drill procedures, on my website [aliciastenard.com](http://aliciastenard.com).**

## **What issue are you confronting and ultimately solving with your book?**

**If our goal is to get children to respond quickly and quietly to a lockdown drill, then let's practice that. It isn't necessary to frighten our children in order to meet our objective.**



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Why does your approach work?**

**It works because our children's imaginations are the secret ingredient.**

**Why not embrace this and use this to everyone's advantage?**

**Developmentally, children between the ages of 2 and 7 are in a stage called Magical Thinking. This stage is the reason children believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy. It is the reason they believe they are Spiderman, not pretending to be Spiderman.**

**This fun stage of development allows us to put off the full explanation of lockdown drills until they are a little older. My book reinforces the lockdown drill procedures so children are prepared. Instead, it replaces the frightening scenario with something more age-appropriate and imaginative.**



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**What's wrong with the current way we are practicing lockdown drills?**

**There are many things wrong with it. The Washington Post recently published an article stating that a child has a 1 in 614,000,000 chance of being killed by a gun in school.**

**We all are aware of the horrific shootings that have taken place and I am not minimizing these tragedies in any way. However, we practice lockdown drills routinely, and do so in a very realistic, emotionally charged way. We prepare our children for something that is statistically unlikely while causing emotional harm every single time we do it. It's as if we have forgotten the objective of lockdown drills is to get children to respond quickly and quietly. Instead we put the focus on the terrifying situations that may lead to a lockdown.**

**We are not being considerate of our children's developmental stages or their emotional health. In addition, we are being much too forthcoming with young children about the "why" of lockdown drills. The result is we are terrifying our children and creating anxiety that has long-lasting repercussions.**

**Even though my book is geared toward our youngest students, I think extreme care needs to be taken in how we approach lockdown drills with all students. Lockdown drills are often too realistic and can be just as frightening to older children as well.**



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**What do you see as other negative consequences to the current lockdown drill procedures?**

**When young children are in school for the first time, they are trying to develop a sense of trust in their teachers, in their peers and in the school environment. This trust takes time and people need to be relaxed in order to develop trust. When we put the frightening scenarios in their minds with lots of real-life details regarding lockdown drills, we are interfering with this trust process. Children who are not relaxed in the environment do not learn as well. Ultimately, scary lockdown drills interfere with learning.**

**Additionally, anxiety is skyrocketing in children. Frightening and realistic lockdown drills may be a source of this anxiety and are certainly adding to it. It is a cruel thing to routinely practice realistic lockdown drills with anxious children.**

**In addition, these drills are especially difficult for children on the Autism Spectrum and with other special needs.**

**The bottom line is this: every aspect of a realistic lockdown drill has negative implications for children. It is unnecessary to scare someone to get them to behave in the right way. My book helps students behave in the right way, without frightening them.**



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**What is one thing you would like to say to teachers, administrators and parents about lockdown drills?**

**I would like to say this: please reassess how we practice lockdown drills with our children.**

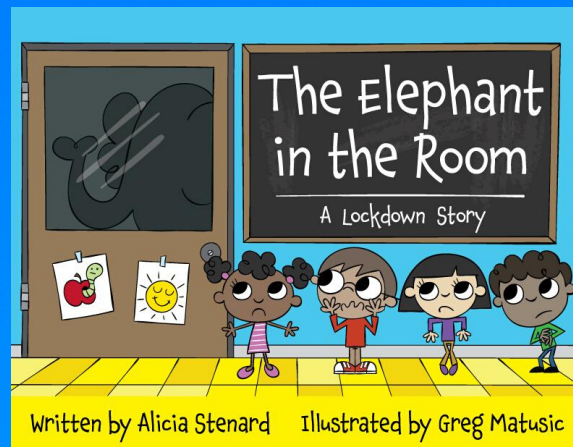
**Children of all ages feel the stress associated with lockdown drills and that stress can have long-lasting effects. There's a reason a whole generation of adults can quickly recall the fear of hiding under their desks during the Cold War: because it traumatized them.**

**Let's take what we know about the development of children, the children who already are suffering from anxiety or ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and show leadership and compassion in dealing with lockdown drills.**

**The Elephant in the Room: A Lockdown Story can solve the problem of the trauma lockdown drills cause in young children. It has worked for me for many years and I know it can work for young students everywhere!**



# BOOK DETAILS



**Title: The Elephant in the Room:  
A Lockdown Story**

**Author: Alicia Stenard**

**Illustrator: Greg Matusic**

**Publisher: St. Cyr Press**

**ISBN: 978-1-7339929-3-0**

**Library of Congress Control Number:  
2019951135**

**Copyright: 2019**

**First Edition**

**Fiction, softcover, 32 pages**

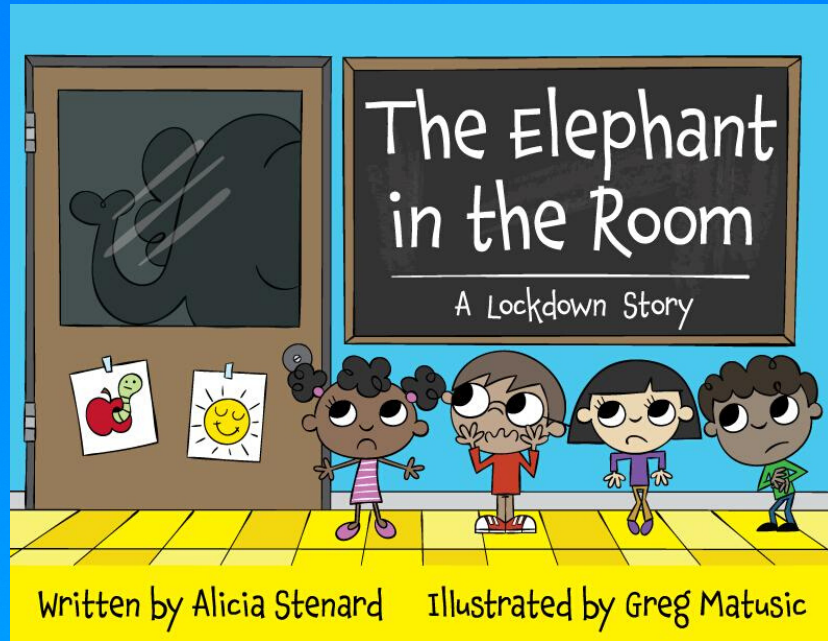
**Target Age: 3-8 years old**

**Book may be purchased from  
Amazon.com**





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