

# THE GRAY

By Chris Baron



*The Gray* is a sensitively told middle grade story from Chris Baron about living with anxiety and finding ways to cope.

It's been a tough year for Sasha—he's been bullied at his middle school and his anxiety, which he calls the Gray, is growing. Sasha's dad tells him to "toughen up"—and he does, but with unfortunate, hurtful results. His parents and therapist agree that a summer in the country with his aunt might be the best medicine, but it's the last place he wants to be. He'll be away from his best friend, video games, and stuck in the house that reminds him of his beloved uncle who died two years earlier.

His aunt is supportive, and there are lots of places to explore, and even some potential new friends. When Sasha is introduced at a local ranch to a horse coincidentally—incredibly—nicknamed the Gray, he feels he's found a kindred spirit.

But his own Gray is ever-present. When one of his new friends disappears, Sasha discovers that the country is wilder and more mysterious than he imagined. He tries to muster enough courage to help in the search . . . but will the Gray hold him back?

## Praise for *The Gray*

"Sensory-rich settings and viscerally imagined depictions of anxiety manifest an immersive world without pulling punches, carving a hopeful path for Sasha's mental health management. An author's note shares Baron's lived experience with anxiety." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Baron also gets props for his sympathetic and evenhanded depiction of anxiety and the many different ways to treat it, from in-the-minute breathing exercises to appropriate medication." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Baron's often-quiet story is well-plotted, and the characters are empathetic, especially Eli." —*Booklist*

"A magical and important book" —Colby Sharp

"As someone who knows kids with anxiety, this struck home for me." —Betsy Bird, A Fuse8 Production

"A moving exploration of friendship, the travails of adolescence, and the possibilities of navigating difficulties with grace and strength." —Ben Guterson, author of Indie Next Pick *Winterhouse*

"A standout! I've never read a middle grade novel that captures anxiety in such a descriptive, thoughtful, and comprehensive way, giving words to how it transforms the mind, body, and soul." —Liza Weimer, author of Sydney Taylor Notable Book, *The Assignment*

"Guilt, grief and faith intertwine in *The Gray*, giving Sasha—and readers—a restorative summer they'll never forget." —Karol Ruth Silverstein, author of *Cursed*, winner of the Schneider Family Book Award

"A tender and loving portrayal of growing up with, and trying to grow through, anxiety." —Alyssa Wishingrad, author of *The Verdigris Pawn*

"*The Gray* bravely addresses the mental health topic of generalized anxiety and panic attacks, along with bullying, screen time, and video games." —Ben Gartner, author of *One Giant Leap*

"A magical moving story about anxiety, fear, change, and friendship." —Ally Malinenko, author of *This Appearing House*

"Filled with relatable, poignant descriptions of anxiety and panic symptoms, *THE GRAY* is a **remarkable addition to middle grade mental health book collections.**" —Sofiya Pasternak, author of *ANYA AND THE DRAGON*, a Sydney Taylor Book Award Honor title

"**A beautiful story told in a lovely, lyrical voice.**" —Stacy Nockowitz, Middle School Librarian, author of *The Prince of Steel Pier*, winner of the 2022 National Jewish Book Award

"**This book will help so many kids feel less alone**, heal, and find their way. There is so much power in this story."  
—Elizabeth Blye, Middle School Library Media Specialist, Chappaqua Children's Book Festival board of directors

"**A hugely important book and conversation for our times**, both for the increasing number of kids struggling with anxiety and the adults in their lives." —Sam Subity, author of *The Last Shadow Warrior*

**Chris Baron** is a professor of English at San Diego City College. He's also the author of the (adult) poetry collection, *Lantern Tree*, which was published as part of a poetry anthology, *Under the Broom Tree*, winner of the San Diego Book Award. He lives in San Diego, California, with his wife and their three children. He's the author of *All of Me*, *The Magical Imperfect*, and *The Gray*.

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