Anxiety weighs down the heart,
but a kind word cheers it up
Proverbs 12:25 – A Proverbial Story
By Ted Hildebrand and Chatgpt

The Worry Tree

In the little town of Willowbrook, nestled between green hills and sparkling streams, lived a boy named Liam. Liam was ten years old, with curly brown hair and a love for puzzles. But lately, Liam hadn't felt like solving any puzzles at all. Something was bothering him, and he couldn't quite figure out what.

He worried about school—what if he got a bad grade? He worried about his dog, Buster—what if he got sick? He even worried about his friend Mia—what if she didn't want to play with him anymore?

Every day, Liam's worries felt heavier, like he was carrying a backpack full of rocks. No one seemed to notice, not even his parents, who were busy with work. Liam tried to smile and act normal, but inside, his heart felt like it was sinking.

One afternoon, after school, Liam wandered into Willowbrook Park. He liked the park because it was quiet, and there was a big old tree in the middle with branches that stretched out like open arms. He sat beneath the tree and sighed.

"Hey," came a soft voice.

Liam looked up and saw Mrs. Maple, the kind librarian from school, sitting on a nearby bench with a book in her lap.

"You look like you have the weight of the world on your shoulders," she said gently.

Liam shrugged. "I guess I'm just… worried about stuff."

Mrs. Maple closed her book and patted the bench beside her. Liam hesitated, then joined her.

"You know," she said, "there's an old proverb that says, *'Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.'* I think that means sometimes, when we feel heavy inside, just hearing something kind can help lift us up."

Liam looked at her. "But what if I don't even know what kind of words I need to hear?"

Mrs. Maple smiled. "Let me try."

She looked him right in the eyes and said, "Liam, you are stronger than you know. You're thoughtful, creative, and kind. And whatever you're worried about, you don't have to carry it all alone."

Something warm stirred in Liam's chest. The weight didn't vanish completely, but it felt a little lighter.

"Thanks," he said quietly. "That helped."

Mrs. Maple nodded. "Sometimes, we just need someone to listen. And sometimes, we can be that someone for others too."

Liam thought about that all the way home. The next day at school, he noticed Mia sitting by herself, looking down at her lunch tray.

He sat beside her. "Hey," he said. "Are you okay?"

She gave a small shrug. "I'm just worried about the science test."

Liam smiled. "You're going to do great. And if you want, I can help you study after school."

Mia looked up and smiled. "Thanks, Liam. That really means a lot."

And just like that, Liam realized something special: kind words didn't just cheer *him* up—they could cheer others up too. And maybe, just maybe, he'd found the best kind of puzzle to solve after all—the puzzle of making hearts feel a little lighter.