

## **Author Bio.**

Sarah McAneney is an author as well as a psychologist, so the internal workings of her character's thoughts, emotions, and beliefs are important to her. She also likes to emphasise themes of kindness, empathy and self-compassion. She believes that children's books that teach ethical values and diversity are important, but that the storyline must be the priority as books that are too openly moralistic can bore young readers. She finds that children learn best through imagination and play and books that stimulate these through creativity and adventure are the most successful in engaging them.

As a mother whose kids are biracial - half New Zealander, half Lebanese - showing diversity and diverse family structures in children's books is something that is also very important to her, simply as a matter of fact and everyday life, not to impart a social lesson. Sarah finds that whereas many children's books provide a window for children to view stories about race or cultural differences, not many books provide a mirror for biracial children to simply see themselves, someone familiar, as a part of the story.

Sarah loves books that feature a strong female character with a conflict or struggle who overcomes and conquers in some way. Her book *Mina's Rain Dance* is a perfect combination of the story elements that matter most to Sarah. The book features Mina, a young biracial girl who is imperfect and subject to criticism, but who learns to have self-compassion and acceptance and thereby finds her inner joy—Mina's true victory. Sarah hopes her young readers learn from Mina that you don't have to be perfect at something to be able to enjoy it, and that we shouldn't seek approval or self-worth from those who do not embrace us along with our imperfections.

A New Zealander living in Australia, Sarah was inspired to write *Mina's Rain Dance* from the severe drought that Australia experienced in 2019 causing devastation through bushfires, loss of human lives and wildlife, evacuations, and which was followed by intense flooding and then the pandemic. The time seemed almost apocalyptic to Sarah, and the feelings of fear and helplessness struck creativity in her, resulting in her uplifting children's story about generosity, overcoming obstacles, and persevering.

When she isn't writing children's stories, Sarah works as a psychologist specialising in working with adults who have survived trauma. She lives with her two-year-old daughter and four-year-old son in Sydney, Australia where they enjoy spending time exploring different places together on what her son calls "Never Adventures"—places and things they've never done before