



Annotated Bibliography of Books to Help Children Face Fears and Anxiety

Note: Unfortunately, the starred (*) titles, ones that are especially wonderful, are out of print...but are available in libraries and sometimes on Ebay.

- *Will It Be Okay? Crescent Dragonwagon, 1977
(ISBN 0-06-021-737-5)

Excerpt: "But what if you die? My loving doesn't die. It stays with you, as warm as two pairs of mittens on top of each other. When you remember you and me, you say: What can I do with so much love? I will have to give some away." A deceptively deep and comforting book.

- Night Light: A story for Children Afraid of the Dark , Jack Daltro, 1991
(ISBN 0-945354-38-X)

Excerpt: "The most persistent and bothersome fears we experience are often those that have no clear threat. Fear of the dark is one of these hard-to-define and troubling problems...Night Light is a creature story that taps the inner resources we use to calm our fears. Your child will use imagination to change images of fear to images of interest, fun, & comfort...by going into the very source of his fear, the fear becomes transformed into pleasure." Written for children from the Ericksonian perspective of clinical hypnosis.

- Some Things Are Scary (No Matter How Old You Are) , Florence Parry Heide, 2003
(ISBN 0-7636-1222-7)

The book lists scary things, quirkily illustrated by Jules Feiffer, such as "...skiing downhill when you haven't learned how to stop, getting hugged by someone you don't like, getting scolded...being with your mother when she can't remember where she parked the car...knowing your parents are talking about you and you can't hear what they're saying..." Speaks to fears that aren't always articulated.

- Wemberly Worried, Kevin Henkes, 2000
(ISBN 0-688-17027-7)

A charming book about a very shy and worried little girl entering Kindergarten for the first time. Excerpt: "Wemberly worried about Everything... she worried that if she didn't stop worrying..."

- *The Dream Stair, Betsy James, 1990
(ISBN 0-06-022787-7)

This lyrical poem-tale of dream tending: going up to wonderful images and swirling happiness, going down into the recesses of the warmth of the dark is quite comforting to many ages of children. Excerpt: "Safe in the Dark, safe in my Heart. Go up the stair, go down the stair, and tell me all about it in the morning."

- The Night the Scary Beasties Popped Out of My Head, Daniel & David Kamish, 1998
(ISBN 0-679-89039-4)

Beasties pop out of the child's "melon" (e.g., head) in this edgily drawn and fast paced book for boys and feisty girls. When the boy in the story tries to make friends with the Beastie, he quickly realizes "...nightmares aren't friendly"; and es-

capacities through the power of his imagination and pencil, erasing the night terrors away "...with a calm head and a plan, Dan had battled nightmares...and won".

- Bebe's Bad Dream, G. Brian Karas, 2000
(ISBN 0-688161-82-0)

Bebe's fears of being taken by aliens become all consuming, and she demonstrates many compulsive behaviors and obsessive thoughts as a result. Karas' very funny story is appropriate for a child with an older, bossier, more competent-seeming sibling; for Bebe learns that her anger with her brother can't persuade aliens to take him away, nor are the aliens able to take her - anywhere.

- *The Boy and the Cloth of Dreams, Jenny Koralek, 1994
(ISBN 1-56402-349-4)

This is an extraordinary story of how a boy must "forge his own courage", as his grandmother teaches him, in facing his nightmares. It reassures young children that they can renew their strength in facing fears in wonderfully expressive language and lovely (and sometimes very scary drawings of the "chain of nightmares") artwork.

- Note: Recommended with Strong Reservations: Jessica and the Wolf, Ted Lobby, 1990
(ISBN 0-945354-22-3)

The girl in this story has recurring bad dreams and her parents help her devise a plan to handle the dream: by confronting the dream wolf and commanding it to "Go away". The problems of children facing fears like these are not so easily solved. I stop reading the book halfway through the story. I then ask the child, "What do you think this wolf in the story wants?" Then we draw pictures and use imagery to tell the rest of the story, rather than finishing the book. This issue is handled exquisitely in the story Sofia and the Heartmender (see below).

- Into the Great Forest: A Story for Children Away from Their Parents for the First Time, by Irene W. Marcus & Paul Marcus, 1992
(ISBN 0-94535440-1)

This story handles, with great delicacy, the issue of separation from parents and the attendant worries of the child, elaborating on fears of the unknown.

- Scary Night Visitors: A Story for Children with Bedtime Fears, Irene W. Marcus & Paul Marcus, 1990
(ISBN 0-945354-25-8)

This book is based upon psychoanalytic principles, and helps children understand the origin of their bedtime fears if daytime projections of anger are at the root. Excerpt: "...shows the scary visitors to be the child's own unacceptable angry feelings, disowned and projected onto the outside world...unacceptable because of the child's worry and fear that the bad wishes could come true...wishes are not all powerful, children can feel safe enough to be angry...without worrying about bad consequences."

- The Brave Little Parrot, Rafe Martin, 1998
(ISBN 0-399-22825-X)

This story was based upon and adapted from the traditional Jataka tales of the Buddha's past lives, from India. Excerpt: "Do the little thing that comes from your heart", it says, "and everything might change, in ways no one could imagine."

- Mr. Worry: A Story About OCD, Holly L. Niner, 2004
(ISBN 0-8075-5182-0)

A mother of a child with OCD who “wondered if he was crazy” wrote this clear and well-presented story. She presents the recurrent thoughts and worries and repetitive behaviors as consuming more and more of the child's energy and time. Therapeutic interventions make use of cognitive behavioral strategies and medication.

- Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave, by Marianna Moore, 1994
(ISBN 0-688-517-56087-9)

This is an exceptional book based upon the Russian fairy tale of Vasilisa - “every girl”. It concerns the young girl's journey to listen to the still, small voice within and make her way in the world. It touches on facing the fear of being alone; of incorporating the heart voice, and of courage in the face of great danger from without and when girls are too “nice”.

- Blink Blink Clop Clop: Why Do We Do Things We Can't Stop? : An OCD Storybook, E. Katia Moritz, Jennifer Jablonsky & Rick Geary, 1998
(ISBN 1-88273272-3)

A careful, often wordy book for younger children using barnyard animals and the metaphor of “O.C. Flea” to speak about compulsions and obsessive thoughts.

- *Sofia and the Heartmender, Marie Olofsdotter, 1993
(ISBN 0-915793-50-4)

Sofia must make her own path to her personal Heartmender, to banish the Shadow Monsters and mend her Heart, which had broken in half. Excerpt: “...drawing is not a matter of paper or what teachers think...close your eyes and draw a map inside your eyelids. Then you will always know where it is, and you will never lose it.” The book closes with Verse 3.13.7 from the Chandogya Upanishad:

"There is a light that shines beyond
all things on earth beyond us all
beyond the heavens
the highest heavens
This is the light that shines in our Heart."

- Cat's Got Your Tongue? A Story for Children Afraid to Speak, Charles E. Schaefer, 1992
(ISBN 0-945354-46-0)

This book addresses the issue of children who experience stranger anxiety and are electively mute, choosing only to talk with family members. It looks at positive aspects of self-expression.

- Courage, Bernard Waber, 2002
(ISBN 0-618-23855-7)

There are many kinds of courage, elaborated on for children with wonderfully expressive drawings. Excerpt: "Courage is if you knew where there were some mountains, you could definitely climb them...Courage is a blade of grass breaking through the icy snow...Courage is holding on to your dream...Courage is starting over...Courage is what we give to each other."

- Up and Down the Worry Hill: A Children's Book About Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Its Treatment, Aureen Pinto Wagner, 2004
(ISBN 0-96773476-2)

An excellent resource for children and parents in storybook form.