101 Healing Stories

FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Using Metaphors in Therapy

GEORGE W. BURNS

Praise for

101 Healing Stories for Children and Teens

George Burns is a highly experienced clinician with the remarkable ability to create, discover and tell engaging stories that can teach us all the most important lessons in life. With *101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens*, he strives especially to help kids and teens learn these life lessons early on, providing them opportunities for getting help, and even learning to think preventively. Burns has made an invaluable contribution to helping young people build good skills and good lives.

Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.
Author of *Breaking the Patterns of Depression* and *Hand-Me-Down Blues*

101 Healing Stories for Children and Teens is a must read for everyone working with this age group. George Burns takes the reader on a wonderful journey, balancing metaphor, good therapeutic technique, and empirical foundations during the trip. Given that Burns utilizes all three aspects of the Confucian story referred to in the book—teaching, showing, and involving—any reader using this resource should increase their understanding of how stories can be used therapeutically.

Richard G. Whiteside, MSW
Author of *The Art of Using and Losing Control* and *Working with Difficult Clients*

Burns has done it again, even more thoroughly and usefully than last time! I *loved* the structure, the content, and the stories—particularly the child-generated metaphors and collaborative tales. This book is going to be invaluable to all clinicians who work with children of all ages, and shines with the clear and genuine love that allowed its writing. Thanks, George.

Robert McNeilly, MBBS
Director, Centre of Effective Therapy, Melbourne, Australia
Author of *Healing the Whole Person*

101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens is a fantastic idea, well executed, by a master! Burns systematically leads readers through every step of constructing and delivering therapeutic stories in general, and then outlines and provides examples of stories for achieving a wide variety of specific goals. This book is a wonderful gift for psychotherapists but it should also be in the hands of every parent who spends loving time with their children.

Stephen Lankton, MSW, DAHB
Executive Director, Phoenix Institute of Ericksonian Therapy
Author of *The Answer Within* and *Tales of Enchantment*.

Information helps youngsters DO different things but stories create experiences that help them to BE different. George Burns is an international expert, and a voluble and vulpine raconteur. *101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens* is a masterwork—easy to follow, easy to effect. A treasure-trove for parents and professionals in the child-development fields.

Jeffrey K. Zeig, Ph.D.
Director, The Milton H. Erickson Foundation

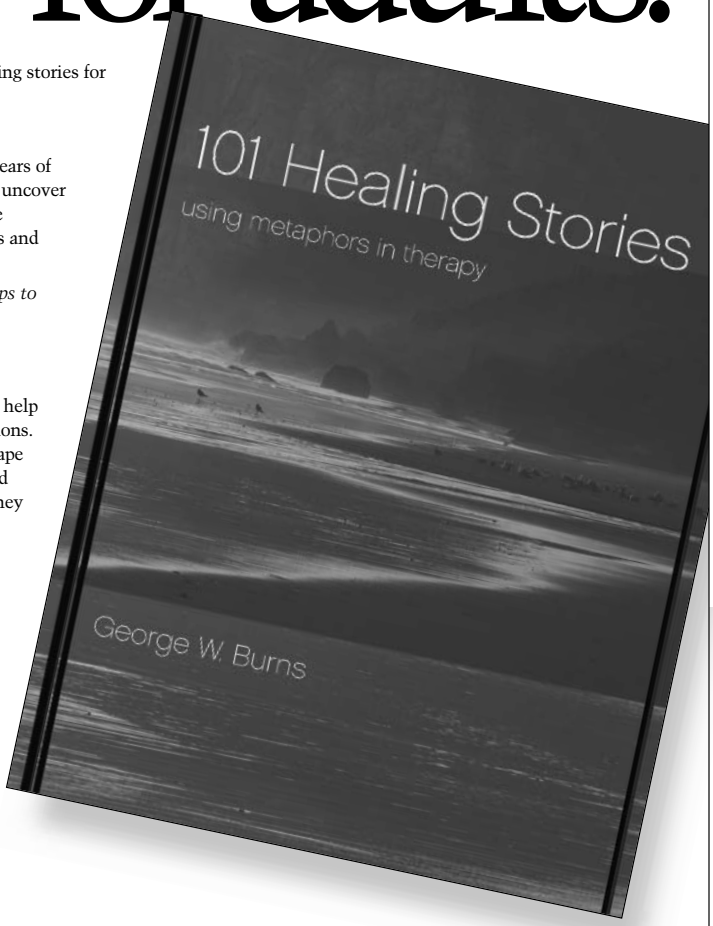
Inspirational stories for adults.

"George W. Burns is indeed a master in the art of using stories for healing purposes."

—*Metapsychology Review*, January 2003

"This is George Burn's best book yet. He leverages years of professional therapist experience to help individuals uncover insightful and practical solutions to the everyday life challenges encountered in the real world. The stories and metaphors hit the mark again and again."

—Dr. Brian Alman, Author of *Self-Hypnosis, Six Steps to Freedom* and *Thin Meditations*



101 Healing Stories: Using Metaphors in Therapy celebrates the rewards of using parables, fables, and metaphors in therapy as a non-threatening means to help clients discuss problems and consider possible solutions. Just as stories have the power to enrich our lives, shape the way we perceive and interact with the world, and reveal the wonders of the human spirit, so too can they play an important and potent role in therapy. They can help people develop the skills to cope with and survive a myriad of life situations.

In this enriching guide, George W. Burns, examines the healing value of using metaphors in therapy and provides motivating story ideas that you can adapt immediately and share with your clients.

This inspirational, yet practical, book explains how to tell stories that engage your client, make your stories more metaphoric, and where to find sources for inspirational tales. You learn that using metaphoric stories and folktales in therapy can facilitate treatment, especially for clients unresponsive to other approaches.

This beneficial book includes:

- 101 stories grouped by desired therapeutic outcome
- Talking points such as specific insights, outcomes, or skills
- Shaded tabs for easy reference and selection

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101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens

Using Metaphors in Therapy

George W. Burns

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This one is dedicated to kids,
kids of all ages, all cultures, all religions, everywhere,
especially to Tom and Ella,
and one who is yet to be.

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Children have and do enrich my life greatly—my own children, my grandchildren, the children I see as clients—for they are ready to offer an unconditional smile, accept you into their world, and share tales of their experience. When my children were young I thought it my responsibility as a father to teach them what they needed for life. With my grandchildren I am discovering I have a lot to learn from what they can teach me. As William Wordsworth said to his own five-year-old boy in "An Anecdote for Fathers:"

Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.

Introduction

Tell me a story. How many times have you been asked to do this? If you are a parent, teacher, grandparent, uncle, aunt, babysitter, child-care worker, or anyone who has contact with children in some way, I am sure you have not escaped this frequent childhood request. But have you ever wondered what kids want when they make the request? Are they just seeking entertainment? Are they wanting to journey into a world of fantasy? Do they want the intimacy of the special relationship that exists between storyteller and listener? Do they seek to identify with a character that may model what they would like to be? Are they requesting examples of how they should behave, relate, or cope in life?

There is a general principle here: Kids love stories—for many reasons. If we need proof, just listen to them asking, "Tell me a story, please." Look at the rows and rows of books of children's stories that fill our bookstores and libraries. Look at the stories that come to life in popular children's movies, or the tales of conflict, struggle, and victory that tend to be the theme of so many video games. Such is our hunger for stories that we never stop asking to hear them, even though the nature of the questions may change a little—"Can I get a new book?" or "Can we rent a DVD?" Given this desire to learn, to be informed, to acquire problem-solving skills through stories, the prime question addressed by this book is this: If we are constantly sharing stories of learning, health, healing, and wellness with our young clients, how can we do that in a way that is most effective and helpful?

WHAT THIS BOOK OFFERS

Just as artists need two prime ingredients if their work is to have an impact, so the metaphor practitioner also needs those same ingredients: skill and art. *Skill* for the painter is knowledge and use of

the laws of perspective, color, and tone. For the teller of metaphors, it is in the principles of constructing a therapeutic tale that will engage the child, facilitate the child's identification with the problem, and have the child joining in a search for the solution.

Art goes beyond the skilled application of principles. It is what makes a painting stand out from the crowd, or gives a story its personal, relevant impact for an individual listener. The art is in crafting the tale specifically for the child and the child's needs, and communicating it in a way that offers both involvement and meaning.

In this book, I want to cover as comprehensively as possible both the skills and the art that will enable and empower you to work confidently and effectively with healing stories for your child and adolescent students or clients. I want to answer questions I often hear in the workshops I run on metaphors, like "How do you come up with story ideas?" "How do I engage a child in listening?" "Where do you find the materials or sources to create appropriate stories?" "How do I tell a healing story effectively?" Fortunately, there are practical, learnable steps for answering these questions, and my aim is to offer them as clearly as I can in the following chapters which will show you how to tell stories effectively, how to make them metaphoric, and where to find sources for therapeutic tales. There are guidelines for communicating stories and using the storyteller's voice so as to most effectively engage the client and commence the journey of healing. The book gently guides the reader through these pragmatic processes, and on to methods for creating metaphoric stories from your own experiences and other sources.

If you want to work with stories, I recommend you start collecting them right away. Look for them in bookshops, videos, or the computer games children play. Keep a note of the meaningful, significant, and humorous interactions you have with a child that may benefit another child. I *love* to collect stories, for they have long intrigued me with their powerful, yet subtle ability to teach and heal. Look for cultural and children's stories when you travel, scan the bookshelves of friends with children, and look at what children are writing themselves. Listening to the many tragic and triumphant tales children relate to you in your office can teach you about children's strengths, resilience, and capacity for coping. Humbly, we can learn from these youthful experiences of life if we take the time to listen to the creative and imaginative tales of our clients or other children. Often they have known none of the restrictions and structures imposed by adults on what should be told (and what should not) or how it should be told. If you have the opportunity to sit with storytellers, join a storytellers' guild, or attend a storytellers' congress, you will be able to observe their art and absorb their message. Stories with salient metaphor content can be discovered in anthologies, folktales, children's books, and in the jokes or tales that circulate on your e-mail. As with any kind of collecting, there is an acquired skill and art to learning which to discard and which to adopt and nurture for their intrinsic merit—a process that I encourage you to follow, not only with the stories you read here but with any you encounter in the future.

For experienced therapists, this volume will hopefully introduce a variety of new story ideas on which to construct meaningful therapeutic metaphors. It will provide techniques for honing skills, enhancing communication, and making the effectiveness of what we do more empowering and more enjoyable.

For novice metaphor therapists, who are just discovering the potency of therapeutic metaphors, this book offers step-by-step procedures, case examples, and a rich source of therapeutic stories that will enable you to apply them immediately in your work no matter what your theoretical back-

ground. As well as learning about the methods of applying metaphors, you will be able to cultivate competence in the art of therapeutic communication, processes of change, and the rewards of facilitating outcome.

A WORD OR TWO ABOUT WORDS

By *metaphor*, I refer to one form of communication (along with stories, tales, and anecdotes) in the story genre in which an expression is taken from one field of experience and used to say something about another field of experience. To describe a bully as being as angry as a bear with a sore paw does not mean the bully and bear are literally alike but that the description, phrase, or story about the bear and its demeanor communicates an imaginative image of the bully and his or her behavior. It is this symbolic association that gives metaphors their literary and therapeutic potency.

Metaphors in therapy and teaching are designed as a form of indirect, imaginative, and implied communication with clients, about experiences, processes, or outcomes that may help solve the child's literal problem and offer new means of coping. The therapist may talk about what a person needs to do to protect himself from a bear with a sore paw as a means for managing the circumstantial or emotional issues the listening child is encountering with a bully. Such metaphors may include stories, tales, anecdotes, jokes, proverbs, analogies, or other communications. Some of these different tools and techniques for communicating in metaphors with children are expanded in Chapter 3. What distinguishes therapeutic metaphors from other tales, stories, or anecdotes is the combination of (a) a purposefully designed, symbolic communication and (b) a specific healing or therapeutic intention.

It is not my objective in this book to be too pedantic about the differential characteristics of stories, tales, and anecdotes. In fact, most times I will use the terms synonymously. Where I employ the words *metaphor, healing story,* or *therapeutic tale*, it is with the purpose of emphasizing that this is neither just a casual, anecdotal account nor an inconsequential tale such as we may relate at a party. By *metaphor* or *healing story* I refer to a deliberately crafted story that has a clear, rational, and ethical therapeutic goal. It is, in other words, a tale that is based on our long human history of storytelling, grounded in the science of effective communication, demonstrating specific therapeutic relevance to the needs of the client, and told with the art of a good storyteller.

ORAL VERSUS WRITTEN STORIES

While I have long been told stories by my parents and in turn told them to my children, grandchildren, and clients, both young and old, I have found that story*telling* and story *writing* are two different processes. In fact, it feels strange to be communicating with you about storytelling in a written format. Once stories are written, in black and white, they tend to take on an immutable quality as though that is the way they always have been and always should be told. The reality is that stories are dynamic. They evolve, they change, and they adapt from teller to teller as well as from listener to listener. Hopefully, you will discover that you never tell a similar story idea exactly the same way twice, for the power of the story is often in its flexibility and adaptability to the needs of the listener and the listener's circumstances.

Therefore, I cannot guarantee the stories in this book are as I originally heard them or initially developed them. Nor can I guarantee that the way you read them is the way I told them to my last client, or will tell them to the next. May I suggest you see in the stories I have written their themes, ideas or meaning rather than the exact words with which they have been expressed in this format. Look for the therapeutic message in each story rather than trying to memorize or relate it to a child verbatim. These stories were not designed to be told and retold as an actor may faithfully memorize and reiterate the words of a playwright. I hope you will allow the tales to evolve and, along with them, your own stories and storytelling skills. Stories emerge from within us, they communicate about our own experiences and, in turn, help define us as individuals. In stories it is possible for us, and our young clients, to find happiness and well-being, as well as the means for creating and maintaining positive emotional states.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

The book is divided into four parts to allow ready referencing of the sections you may want to revisit for story ideas when working with a particular child in therapy. Part One, "Effective Storytelling for Kids and Teens," examines the magic of metaphor to inform, educate, teach values, discipline, build experience, facilitate problem solving, change, and heal. There are guidelines for effectively telling stories and using the storyteller's voice. The last chapter of this section discusses useful tools, techniques, and vehicles for communicating therapeutic messages metaphorically. How do you use books, drama, videos, puppets, toys, play, humor, collaborative tales, and other media in metaphor therapy?

Part Two, "Healing Stories, Teaching Stories," is divided into ten chapters, each containing ten stories (except for Chap. 4, which contains 9) relevant to the therapeutic-outcome theme of that chapter. Each chapter is prefaced with a brief description of the nature of the outcome theme and concludes with an exercise to record and develop your own story ideas for that particular outcome goal.

The topics around which the stories of each chapter are woven represent a common therapeutic goal. These topics are not meant to be all-inclusive or totally definitive of pediatric therapeutic goals. They are derived from experience in my own clinical practice, from discussions with other clinical, educational, pediatric, and developmental psychologists, and from the results of an unpublished study I conducted of congress attendants in which they were asked to list what they saw as the ten most common therapeutic goals. The outcome goals I have used just happen to be a convenient framework for me to structure my healing stories. I hope they will provide a guide on which you can develop metaphor ideas of your own—but I want to offer the caution that they are not the *only* therapeutic outcomes and may not be relevant for you or your young clients. If they are helpful, please feel free to use them but, if not, do not limit your stories—or therapy—to what happens to be a convenient structure for someone else.

The stories in Chapter 13 are an exception to the general format of this section, as they are stories *by* children rather than stories by an adult *for* children. They mainly come from a project with a school in which children were asked to write their own healing stories.

Part Three, "Creating Your Own Healing Stories for Kids," guides you through the processes

for developing your own outcome-oriented stories. It discusses some of the pitfalls to avoid in structuring metaphors, and some of the pathways that may be helpful to follow. You will be introduced to various sources from which you can build metaphors, and offered simple, how-to-do-it procedures for creating, structuring, and presenting effective therapeutic metaphors. The final chapter is devoted to how to teach parents to use metaphors as a way of enhancing the efficacy of these therapeutic interventions for their children.

The emphasis of this book is on the pragmatics of how to tell stories, how to find metaphor ideas, and how to structure your own therapeutic tales, rather than on the reiteration of the research underlying metaphor therapy. As both the art *and* science of metaphor therapy are important, I have provided a detailed resources section at the end of the book that will enable interested readers to further explore the nature of metaphors as a language form, the research into their efficacy, and the variety of their therapeutic applications. It will also help you to find further therapeutic story material in a variety of sources, from children's books and traditional folktales to Internet Web sites.

An additional reference feature of the book is that the major sections have shaded tabs on the pages' leading edges to enable rapid accessing of the outcome-oriented chapters and other information you may wish to revisit. By structuring the book in this way, I hope it will provide a source of readily available ideas for working with the child sitting in your office with you at any given time. Writing it and structuring it in this way has also posed me with a dilemma. I have wanted *101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens* to be clear, practical, and accessible without being, or even seeming to be, too prescriptive. I hope to communicate that for a metaphor to be relevant it needs to be personal, it is best developed collaboratively with the individual child, and it needs to take into account that child's character, problem, resources, and desired outcome. I hope you enjoy your journey into children's metaphors as much as I have enjoyed writing about them.

STORY 1

A Story of the Story

Let me introduce you to a character you will encounter several times in stories and discussions throughout this book. His name is Fred Mouse, and he lives in a hole in the wall in the corner of the house as he always has done since he first joined our family two generations ago. He came along one night when my daughter wanted a bedside story but was not interested in the tired old storybooks she had heard time and time again. He came from nowhere in particular, a necessity of the situation, and told a simple tale that replicated her activities of the day. The next night, despite a fresh supply of colorful storybooks from the library, my daughter wanted Fred Mouse . . . and he stayed, entertaining and informing my daughter, my son, and my grandson, and is just entering the life of my little granddaughter.

For a tiny—and sometimes timid—mouse, Fred has two special qualities that make him such a good storyteller. First, he listens with his heart, and second, he spins a story based on his observations. Once, for example, he told a tale of a special adventure with his very dear friend Thomas (my grandson) that began when Fred found a fragile, dusty old treasure map while exploring the hidden gaps in the walls of the house. Carefully, he and Thomas unrolled it on the floor and began to study it.

"Look!" said Thomas, "It is right here near Grandpa George's house."

"And it has a dotted trail leading to Mount Thomas," added Fred.

"I know where that is," exclaimed Thomas, "because I climbed it and Grandpa George named it after me."

So Fred and Thomas followed the map to the summit from where they heard, way below, a heavy thump, thump, thump, and peered down to see a huge, mean-looking dinosaur stomping around squishing people under his bigger-than-elephant feet. The people called him Tyrannosaurus *Bad* Rex, and as they ran to escape him they were stomping on ants. What a disaster! The dinosaur

was squishing people, and the people were squishing ants, and none of them heard each other's cries for help.

The map pointed Fred Mouse and Thomas to a secret cave just below the summit that was easy to enter for a mouse of Fred's size, but a tight, wriggly squeeze for Thomas. Inside, they were in a different world, walking through swamps and jungles, along beaches and over islands until they found a big, old wooden treasure chest, right where the cross was marked on the map.

Can you imagine their excitement? And then their disappointment to discover the old wooden treasure chest was secured with a rusty old padlock for which they had no key. Thomas climbed down to Grandpa George's house to borrow a tool box, and with a lot pushing and tugging, pulling and shoving, banging and twisting, the padlock eventually popped open, allowing them to lift the stiff lid with a long, slow *creeeaking* sound.

Imagine how much more disappointed they were to find the chest held no gold or precious jewels. Just as well, thought Fred, for gold and jewels could not help them save the people or the ants from Tyrannosaurus *Bad* Rex. Thomas had hoped for a mighty sword with which, heroically, he could slay the bad dinosaur, but the chest contained nothing more than a story. They were about to drop the lid shut when the Story spoke.

"Wait," it called, "I am a magic story bestowed with all the powers of every story that has ever been told or written. As you have discovered me, it is my duty to help you. Tell me what I can do?"

"Well," said Fred Mouse, "we have a *very* big problem," thinking of the size of Tyrannosaurus *Bad* Rex when viewed from the lowly height of a mouse, and he told how people, who were squishing ants, were being squished by a big bad Tyrannosaurus.

"Let us visit the ants," said the Story, so they followed a long, busy line of ants to their nest where ants chaotically scurried in every direction—for someone had stood on the nest, squishing their homes and many of their friends. As Fred Mouse and Thomas gently handed the Story to the queen ant, it began a tale in the ants' own language. Silence fell on the confusion as ants stopped scurrying and gathered to listen to a tale Fred and Thomas could not understand. Silence remained for a while after the story finished, then the ants spoke in hushed voices among themselves and with the Story. Fred and Thomas saw them nodding as if in agreement.

Eventually the Story said, "Let us go visit the people."

They, too, were running about in confusion. Tyrannosaurus *Bad* Rex had just stomped through their village, flattening cars, knocking down houses, destroying schools, and squishing people. Fred Mouse and Thomas listened to their distress and, not knowing how else to help, gave them the Story. Again the Story brought calm to the confusion as people stopped to listen, entranced, comforted, encouraged, guided, and hopeful.

"Now," said the Story, "It is time for us to find one Tyrannosaurus *Bad* Rex."

This was a scary suggestion for a tiny, timid mouse like Fred and even a boy as brave as Thomas, but it wasn't hard to follow the trail of a careless dinosaur whose huge feet punched imprints into farmers' paddocks, flattened bushes, and knocked over trees, finally leading to a tall tree under which Tyrannosaurus *Bad* Rex lay snoring peacefully. Thomas quietly crept past his long greenish tail, around his big strong legs, past his fat belly, and up his neck, and placed the Story gently by his ear. The Tyrannosaurus pricked up his ear, slowly opened an eye, and listened to a story in dinosaur language. A tear rolled from his eye and down his cheek, dropping to the ground near Fred Mouse and

Thomas, who had to duck quickly, for it was like someone throwing a bucket of water at them from an upstairs window.

"Come," beckoned the Story, "Climb up on Rex's head. We are going back to visit the people and the ants."

Wow! How exciting! Fred and Thomas had never dreamed of riding on a dinosaur's head. How carefully he placed his feet to avoid flattening farmers' crops and people's homes. Back in the village the Story broke down the barriers and bridged the gaps, translating among dinosaur, people, and ants in a way that all could understand.

"Let's celebrate," someone shouted, and they put on the weirdest party you could imagine. Rex blew up the balloons, for he had more puff than anyone else. The people supplied the food that they had cultivated and stored, while the ants offered to clean up the scraps after. And everyone felt happier than they had for a long time.

In a quiet moment, Fred Mouse and Thomas asked the Story, "How did you do it? What was the story you told?"

"It is easy to become so involved in our own story," replied the Story, "that we don't hear the stories of others. As our stories shape the ways we see things and the ways we respond to events, I simply told the ants the people's story: how, like the ants, their homes and lives were being destroyed—so they were not deliberately squishing ants but, in looking up and watching out for the Tyrannosaurus *Bad* Rex, they were not looking down to see what they were doing to the ants. Then I told the people the ants' story, and the dinosaur the people's story, for he, wrapped in his own loneliness, had not realized what he was doing to the people.

Hearing the stories, the ants offered to help the people by cleaning up after them if the people took care where they stepped, and the people offered to befriend lonely Rex if he watched where *he* stepped, and Rex offered to tread carefully if the people and ants would be his friends.

"Stories," continued the Story, "can make and stop wars, destroy and build friendships, confuse and inform our thinking, burden and enrich our world. Used as carefully as Rex has learned to walk, they have the power to solve our problems and shape our lives."

If there was more to hear from the Story, Fred Mouse and Thomas didn't hear it for in gratitude, everyone had begun to thump the table, calling, "Speech! speech!" to Fred. Rex was so enthusiastic that he almost smashed the table before reminding himself it was okay to be enthusiastic carefully. When Fred spoke he thanked everyone for listening to, and acting on, the stories. He announced that Rex should henceforth be known as Tyrannosaurus *Good* Rex, and that the Story should no longer be hidden in a dusty old chest but be available as a treasure for everyone.

PART ONE

Effective Storytelling for Kids and Teens

CHAPTER 1

The Magic of Metaphor

WHY TELL HEALING AND TEACHING STORIES TO KIDS AND TEENS?

Do you remember what it was like as a young child to have a parent or grandparent sit on the side of your bed at night and read a story that gave you permission to journey into your own fantasies? How the magic of the story engaged you, entranced you, changed you into a different yet somehow familiar character, and took you into experiences you may not yet have encountered? How, in the process, you discovered something new about yourself, felt the emotion of reaching the tale's conclusion, and shared a special intimacy with the teller?

From time immemorial, stories, legends, and parables have been effective and preferred methods for communicating information, teaching values, and sharing the important lessons of life. Just hearing those often-expressed four words *"Once upon a time . . ."* is like an instant switch from reality to pretense or to an altered level of processing. They are like a hypnotic induction, an invitation to participate in a unique relationship with both the teller and the story's characters. They are words that invite the listener on a journey into a world of imagination where reality may be suspended, and learning can be potent. They are an invitation into a special realm of experience where listeners are entranced, attention is focused, and one can share the emotions of the fictional hero. They invite participation in a relationship in which teller and listener share an interactive bond.

Stories have many important characteristics of effective communication:

1. They are interactive.
2. They teach by attraction.
3. They bypass resistance.
4. They engage and nurture imagination.

5. They develop problem-solving skills.
6. They create outcome possibilities.
7. They invite independent decision making.

In these ways they replicate many of the characteristics we seek to create in our therapeutic relationships with children, for as we engage in the process of listening to stories our relationships with self, others, and the world at large are likely to change. While we may or may not notice it, the sharing of stories can build relationships, challenge ideas, provide models for future behavior, and enhance understanding. In the characters and teller we may see some of ourselves and be influenced, little by little, by their attitudes, values and skills. It has been said before that once we have heard a story we can never unhear it, that something may have changed forever. Thus, stories are a logical and productive means for therapeutically communicating with kids.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TEACHING TALES

From long before our ancestors began to paint on the walls of caves, chisel symbols into stone, or print words on paper, elders have passed stories on to younger people. Perhaps some of the oldest living tales can be found in the legends of the Australian Aboriginals. One that provides an explanation of natural phenomena such as fire, stars, and crows, and has a strong moral message, begins with seven women who control fire, and Wakala, a man who manipulatively steals the control for himself. Now powerless, the women flee into the sky, becoming the constellation of the Seven Sisters, while Wakala selfishly refuses to share his fire with anyone, mocking them by calling out, "Wah, wah," whenever they ask. In a fit of temper he throws coals at some men who ask, starting a wildfire in which he himself is incinerated. As the men watch, his corpse is transformed into the blackened body of a crow, flies into a tree, and sits there calling "Wah, wah."

Through such seemingly simple tales, elders communicated to the younger generation messages about not stealing, being selfish, or losing your temper. Through stories they shaped the ideas, beliefs, morality, and behavior of a whole culture, generation upon generation. Telling children stories is as ancient and entrenched as the history of communication itself.

San Diego-based psychologist Michael Yapko, in writing about effective methods of communication with hypnosis, claims that "Stories as teaching tools have been the *principal* means of educating and socializing people throughout human history" (Yapko, 2003, p. 433; italics added). Over time and across all cultures they have been used as a form of effective communication and education, passing on from generation to generation the attitudes, values, and behaviors necessary for survival and success in life. Stories like the biblical account of creation, the Australian Aboriginal dreamtime legends, or the myths of ancient Greece explain how our world came into being, how human beings were created, and where animals came from. We, as a species, have used stories to explain our world and its origins. These stories help us to define and understand much of what otherwise might be unexplained. In so doing, they also enable us to *create* our world. If our stories of the world are based on creationist theology, we may live our lives with fear of damnation to hell and desires of reaching heaven. If our stories of the world are about the interconnectedness of all livings beings with the planet, we may tread gently and with respect for both the earth and its creatures. If we are brought

up on stories about animosity and hostility between religions and cultures, we may be more prone to conflict with our neighbors and, thus, destined to a life of hatred. As our stories define the world for us, so we are likely to see it . . . and create it.

Just as stories explain, so they can teach about values, standards, and acceptable patterns of behavior. They educate us in how to cope with the situations we are likely to experience in life and how we can best manage the challenges that lie ahead. Imagine, if you wish, ancient hunters coming home from a day chasing and capturing a wild beast. As they sit around the fire at night, roasting their freshly caught meat, they communicate the tales of their activities, describing the successful strategies they used, detailing the events that caused one of their members to be gored or injured. In this way they are sharing their experiences with the young people of the tribe who sit there listening to the tales, learning the things to avoid and the things to ensure a successful hunt. These stories short-circuit our learning processes. The wide-eyed children listening to the hunter's tales do not need to have trapped wild animals themselves to learn about those processes that work and those that do not.

The power of stories to communicate effectively has meant that they are, and have been, the preferred medium of some of the world's most renowned teachers. Jesus and Buddha did not lecture; instead, they used parables. Sufis and Zen Buddhists are renowned for their profound teaching tales. Although the Bible provides us with some very direct and prescriptive instructions, such as the Ten Commandments, its main form of communication is in the relating of stories. Indeed, storytelling has been the universally preferred style of teaching through which to pass on life's important lessons from generation to generation.

Whether for learning or entertainment (and perhaps there is no clear distinction), we crave stories. We buy books, visit libraries, and read tales of fiction or fact. We go to plays, the ballet, and the opera to relive familiar classics that have survived the centuries. How many times have we heard the story of Romeo and Juliet, yet still find the ending tragic each time we experience it? As much as we are entranced by the old, so we seem to crave the new story line as well. Teenagers watch the stories of pop songs acted out in video clips. Children, adolescents, and adults are entranced by movies that visually and audibly spin a story of suspense, romance, or humor, turning actors—our modern-day storytellers—into folk heroes and role models.

Stories are an integral part of life. Through the ages, they have been an inseparable part of human culture, learning, and values. Regardless of our language, religion, race, sex, or age, stories have been, and will remain, a crucial element in our lives. It is because of stories that our language, religion, science, and culture exist. Stories may fulfill our dreams; and, indeed, our dreams themselves are stories. They accompany us throughout our existence, from cradle to cremation. As one of Salman Rushdie's characters said in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, "When we die all that remains are the stories." If life and stories are so mutually embracing, then their adaptation into counseling and therapy is both a logical and practical extension of an established and effective medium of communication.

HOW STORIES INFORM

Dappled sunlight sparkles and twinkles from a mysterious source partially obscured by fern fronds and gum leaves. Wide-eyed and excited children rush forward into the bushland reserve, enveloped by the sights, sounds and smells of the bush—birdsong, water gently cascading over

> rocks, silver-gray gum leaves rustling overhead and then they see her—a vision of glitter and rainbow hues, a beautiful bush fairy with jeweled wand hovering on a ledge of mossy sandstone by the creek. The children are mesmerized by the tantalizing spectacle. The fairy smiles and invites them to join her for a bush walk. How could they resist?
>
> But first, fairy uses her wand to scatter magical fairy dust over the participants to focus on each sensory modality (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch). The magic is to enhance the sensory experience, to encourage and challenge them to see and hear more, to search beyond the obvious and to engender wonderment. The children respond immediately with "sightings"—is that a possum tail dangling from the tree? What bird is that? Why is that leaf speckled and twisted? Where has the spider gone from the web? What was that rustling in the long grass? Is that more fairy dust sprinkled near the fungi? So much excitement, anticipation, questions. The children are engaged through their senses into heightened awareness and valuable interaction has begun. (Lalak, 2003, p. 72)

For the past six years Nadia Lalak (2003; Eva & Lalak, 2003), a psychologist, landscape consultant, and environmental educator, has enchanted schoolchildren with environment-oriented fairy stories. Her project aims to raise environmental awareness, inspire ecological consciousness, facilitate an enhanced experience of landscape, and develop a child's sense of place in the world. Local resources, such as bushland reserves, are used to provide children with a direct experience of an easily accessible, natural world. Through tales of the bush fairy, the children develop an understanding of the landscape, nature's interrelationships, and the impacts of urbanization.

Lalak bases her approach to informing environmental awareness on the Confucian proverb that says,

> Teach me and I will forget.
> Show me and I remember.
> But involve me and I will understand.

For her, stories are an integral part of that process of involvement of children in understanding information. She says, "Away from a classroom and whiteboard, children respond enthusiastically to creative interpretations of landscape and ecological issues and the opportunity to be involved in magic, mystery, storytelling, role-playing, environmental games and fun" (Lalak, 2003, p. 73).

HOW STORIES EDUCATE

Imagine for a moment that you are attending your first week of school and your teacher tells you, "One plus one equals two," while writing some strange symbols on a board. Now imagine a different teacher who says, "Jill got home from her first week at school. She was feeling tired and hungry, but no sooner had she stepped in the door than she could smell the cakes Mom had been freshly baking. Before she had a chance to ask, her mother said, 'Would you like a cake?' Excitedly, Jill munched her way into the still slightly warm cake. When she finished she was still hungry, so she asked, 'Can I have another, please?' 'What?' replied her mother. 'You have eaten one cake. If you have another

that will mean you have eaten two cakes.' One cake plus another cake equals two cakes. And that is exactly what Jill ate."

Which lesson has most meaning for you? Which involves you—and your senses, experiences—more in the learning process? With which do you have greater association, or find your attention more absorbed?

Learning skills in therapy follows similar processes as learning facts in school. Let's say you have a young enuretic client and you choose to take a behavioral approach to managing the case. You can instruct the child and his parents in strategies such as "Do not drink for a certain period before going to bed, empty your bladder before going to bed, retain your urine as long as possible during the day," and so on. You could recommend an enuresis alarm with prescribed instructions for its use. You could give your suggestions very clearly and directly.

Compare this to telling the child a story: "Andy was a boy I saw not very long ago. He felt embarrassed to talk about his problem and I guessed he felt a little different or odd. He didn't know anyone else who wet the bed—or not any who had told him so, anyway. It felt uncomfortable to wake up in a cold, wet bed every morning. He hated having plastic liners on his bed when his sister didn't. At times she teased him. He couldn't sleep over at his friends' houses when other kids did and he feared they would tease him, too, if they knew. His parents had told him it was time he grew out of it. They said they would put sticky stars on the calendar in his bedroom for each night he was dry, but he never got any. They offered him extra pocket money for dry nights but still it didn't work. He felt bad, like it was his fault. He wanted to please them but nothing seemed to work and he didn't know what else he could do."

Having thus set the problem and, hopefully, gained the listener's involvement, you can start to describe the choices that Andy had *available* (i.e., the behavioral steps that you could have given in a more direct but perhaps less readily accepted form). Maybe describe the choices Andy *made,* offer suggestions, perhaps with some humor ("Would it have helped for him to stand on his head all night?") or ask the listener for suggestions ("If standing on his head wouldn't work, what else could he have done?"). An example of how this can be done is provided in Story 26, "Learning New Tricks."

HOW STORIES TEACH VALUES

Recently I led a group of colleagues on a workshop/study tour of Bhutan, a high and tiny Himalayan kingdom north of Bangladesh and south of Tibet. While there, I was interested to discover that this is a country with an unofficial national story. The Four Faithful Friends is the country's most loved story, told to the young and repeated among the mature. It hangs as a painting in many homes and is depicted on the walls of temples, public buildings, medical clinics, and even banks. It was a mural above the headboard of the very first hotel bed in which I slept.

The story as I have told it in "The Four Faithful Friends" (Story 34) may not be the same as one you'd read in a book of Bhutanese folktales or hear told by a local. That is part of the fascination with the oral tradition of storytelling, in which the details of tales may vary depending on the teller, listener, context, and intent with which it is told—while still maintaining the essence and integrity

of the message. Knowing this, and using this, will help contribute to your skills as a teller of healing stories.

"The Four Faithful Friends" tells of a pheasant, a rabbit, a monkey, and an elephant—four unlikely associates—who find a seed and combine their abilities to plant it, cultivate it, and, eventually, harvest the fruit. It is a tale that teaches the values of cooperation, using your abilities, helping others, and harvesting the fruits of your mutual efforts.

There are similar tales for communicating social values across many cultures. The aboriginal tale mentioned earlier of Wakala's stealing, expressing anger, and being selfish is one such value story. From your own cultural background it may be possible to recall the stories with which you were brought up. One for me that has a somewhat parallel message to the Bhutanese Four Faithful Friends was The Little Red Hen—but the means the two stories provide for getting there are almost polar opposites. The tale of the Little Red Hen tells you what will happen if you *do not* cooperate. Failure to lend a helping hand when the hen requested assistance meant her barnyard peers were punished by being denied the freshly baked bread. Conversely, the Bhutanese story of the Four Faithful Friends talks of the benefits that you *will* gain through the positive action of cooperation. It emphasizes the values that can be derived from mutually caring relationships, instead of the negative aspects of not caring for others.

Table 3.1 in Chapter 3 lists some examples of classic value stories, their authors, and the values they contain.

HOW STORIES DISCIPLINE

Stories have long been used not only to shape behaviors but also to present listeners with the disciplinary consequences of compliance and noncompliance. Live a good life, say the traditional stories of Christianity, and you will be rewarded with a heavenly eternity; but fail to follow the teachings of the faith and you will be punished with damnation in hell. Be good, we teach children in tales of Christmas, and Santa Claus will bring you presents—but misbehave and you face the prospect of a season devoid of presents. Do not steal or be selfish, says the Aboriginal tale of Wakala, or you could be turned into a crow. Help out a friend in need, or miss out on the rewards, says the story of the Little Red Hen. Many such tales teach not just the socially or personally appropriate behaviors in which to engage but also the consequences of failing to do so.

Effective skills in discipline are seen as one of the key parental ingredients in determining that a child does not experience conduct problems (Brinkmeyer & Eyberg, 2003; Dadds, Maujean, & Fraser, 2003; Sells, 2003). Yet, in an age when governments talk of banning spanking, threats can be seen as emotionally abusive, nagging is ignored, and harsh disciplinary action can see a child-carer facing litigation, what is a parent to do? Mothers in Nepal have resolved this problem by customarily avoiding the use of corporal punishment such as smacking (Sakya & Griffith, 1980). Yelling or screaming at errant children is frowned on. So how do they discipline their children?

The control of childhood behavior comes in the form of stories. To keep a child quiet, or to dispense discipline, children are told fearful stories of terrifying characters who may be humans, animals, ghosts, or evil deities. Given our cultural perspective, we may or may not agree with this practice. From a background of current Western attitudes to child rearing, it may sound cruel or even emo-

tionally abusive to tell children tales of terror; but for Nepalese parents it may seem equally cruel for children to watch violent TV cartoons without any clear moral message or disciplinary function.

The practice of using tales as a primary method of discipline is described here, not as a question of what is right or wrong (depending on our cultural view), but to illustrate two points. The first is to portray the way that stories are used traditionally in cultures other than our own. The second is to highlight the power they may have in the control of behavior—a factor relevant to their therapeutic use.

HOW STORIES BUILD EXPERIENCE

One of the things that differentiate children from adults is their level of experience. For a young child, life's experiences are still few. The older we get, usually the more experiences of life we encounter; consequently, one of the major roles of parents, teachers, and therapists is to provide the sort of experiences that are going to equip the child for what lies ahead. This is one of the basic processes of learning for our species: We learn through experience; experience is one of the best teachers; the more we experience, the greater our potential to learn; and the greater our ability to handle life's various, challenging situations.

Some of the experiences of childhood are positive: the intimacy of suckling on a breast, the smiling face of a parent looking at a young child in a crib, times of play, or the discovery of a new ability like standing on your feet for the first time. There are also experiences that may be negative or unpleasant: death or separation from a parent, an environment of conflict or hostility, the pain of illness, or rejection by peers. The way a young child learns to respond to these life experiences will be determined by how prepared they are for such an experience; and that, in turn, will determine to a large degree how they handle their adulthood, for our quality of life is largely a product of how we manage experience. The more experiences we can create for a child, and the better equipped they are for handling experience, the more we help ensure their well-being for the future.

It has been said—perhaps cynically, but also with some veracity—that experience is what you get after you needed it. Metaphors are one way of providing children with experiences that they may not yet have encountered and of equipping them with skills for such real-life situations when they arise. Therapeutic tales can anticipate challenges or problems a child may yet have to encounter, and model problem-solving skills or potential methods for managing such challenges, thus helping to prepare the child for when the need is present.

Throughout Part Two, you will find a variety of healing stories that are designed not just to deal with a situation when it occurs but also to prepare the listener for a potential occurrence. A child may be helped to prepare for the death of an aging grandparent or much loved pet through stories about managing grief (see Stories 51 and 52) that communicate it is appropriate to grieve, that describe the rituals of burial, and that find strategies for saying good-bye—experiences a child may not have encountered or be prepared for. Other as-yet-to-be-experienced situations may include dealing with an issue of morality (Stories 61 and 62, "Facing a Moral Dilemma"), being confronted by a trauma (Stories 71 and 72, "Overcoming Adversity"), starting at a new school (Story 87, "Facing Changes"), being involved in a motor vehicle accident (Story 88, "Getting Back on Your Feet"), encountering drugs (Story 86, "Finding Solutions," and Story 90, "Learning to Care for Yourself"), or experienc-

ing suicidal thoughts (Story 89, "Facing Thoughts of Suicide"). The more your stories can anticipate such experiences, the feelings they might engender, and the types of things the child might do to handle them effectively, the more you are giving your child to better manage such experiences when they do come along—and the more you are helping prepare him or her for a future as an effective, functional adult.

HOW STORIES FACILITATE PROBLEM-SOLVING

In planning and writing this book, I have consulted with many colleagues, and a universal theme came through many of those conversations that was most clearly expressed by fellow clinical psychologist Elaine Atkinson, who said, "Children who can work symbolically or metaphorically are the best problem solvers. Those who have difficulty thinking metaphorically also struggle with problem-solving tasks." Thus, by helping develop a child's ability to think and work metaphorically, we may facilitate the development of problem-solving skills—one of life's most essential skills. No one's life, whether we are born with the proverbial silver spoon in our mouths or not, is without problems. In fact, you may have heard it said that life's problems can be so complex even teenagers do not have the answers!

In workshop training, Jay Haley has stated that therapy ought to help a person overcome this current set of problems in a way that better equips her or him to overcome the next set. This perspective does not deny the fact that life for children, as well as for adults, has its problems. It does not offer the false promise that when you get over this current situation of bullying, abuse, parental separation, attention problems, or whatever, life will be a bed of roses . . . though that is probably an appropriate metaphor: Life has its beauty *and* its thorns. For a child to be properly equipped for life, this is essential information for him or her to have. Haley's perspective on therapy makes it clear that this current set of circumstances, no matter how distressing, can be an important learning experience from which a child is capable of developing enhanced skills for problem resolution. If therapy does this, it has served a valuable function, for people who are content know that life has its beauty and its thorns. How you handle it is what matters. . . . And this is where building problem-solving skills is so essential for kids and teens.

Fortunately, we have nature on our side. We are born problem-solvers. From infancy we solve our problems of hunger, soiled diapers, or discomfort by crying and thus gaining parental attention. We grow to become better problem solvers by developing different cries for different problems, thus getting quicker and more specific attention to our needs. We learn to solve the problem of early immobility by discovering how to stand on our own two feet and walk. By the time adolescence comes around we have gone from crying when faced with a problem of hunger to a whole new set of resolution skills: standing in front of the fridge, door open, complaining there is no food in the house until someone comes with something to put in our hands.

Some of the problem-solving skills that kids have learned may be very helpful and adaptive, whereas some may not be so useful. At times kids may encounter problems for which they have not yet developed the appropriate competencies—something that can happen right through our lives, but especially in childhood and adolescence. This is where outcome-focused stories may be helpful. Tales of role models or effective problem-solving heroes like Sherlock Holmes, Harry Potter, a sci-

entist, or an explorer may help provide the listener with the possible means for getting from the problem to the outcome. What would they do in a similar situation to your young client? How do they handle the difficulties your listener is encountering? How can they prepare themselves for similar experiences in the future? What are the things they do that might be useful for you to use?

HOW STORIES CHANGE AND HEAL

In *101 Healing Stories* (Burns, 2001), I told the case of Jessica, a six-year-old who reminded me of something about the power of stories to change. Because the power of stories to connect with people who may have chosen not to connect in other ways continues to fascinate me, I will repeat Jessica's story in a summarized version, first, because you may not be familiar with it and, second, because (even if you are) I now have a follow-up to the story that was not available when I last wrote about her.

At her tender young age, Jessica was considered different, abnormal. She had been labeled an elective mute: a child who chose to speak only to whom she wished—and, for Jessica, that meant only her immediate family, who considered her vocabulary, sentence structure, and fluency of speech to be comparable to that of her peers. However, her teachers were bound by an educational system that demanded measurement and accountability. There, Jessica was not playing by the rules. She could not be assessed on verbally based measures of academic progress or intellectual functioning.

She had attended a school psychologist and private clinical psychologist who tried to assess and treat her with most of the current, standard approaches. I was told they attempted to measure her IQ, tried to get her to talk through puppets, and set up a behavioral reinforcement schedule for her classroom . . . but because she provided no speech whatsoever at school, there was nothing to reinforce. Jessica remained an elective mute, and as I listened to all that had been tried and failed, I was not sure I had any additional strings to my therapeutic bow.

As I spoke with her mother, Jessica sat on the floor drawing, thus giving me the opportunity to address her indirectly while apparently conversing with her mother. My therapeutic intent was, first, to normalize selectivity of speech, and second, to set an expectation of change, so I talked with Jessica's mother about how we all choose with whom we want to speak and with whom we do not. Some people we like and, thus, communicate with openly and easily, while others we may not want to talk to at all. My aim was to confirm Jessica's power to be selective, and reassure her about the normality of choice.

To set an expectancy of change, I told her mother a true story about a childhood classmate of mine, called Billy. Nobody at school had ever heard him speak, but there was a rumor he spoke at home. Billy was teased by other kids. They poked fun at his silence. But nothing changed . . . until one day.

At this point of the story Jessica stopped her drawing and looked up at me. I continued to keep her mother's gaze and proceeded with the tale.

That day the door of the cupboard at the back of the classroom was ajar and a feather duster protruded through the gap. As we filed into class, Billy's eye fell on the protruding feathers and, without thinking, he exclaimed, "Sir, there's a hen in the cupboard!" Everyone laughed and after that Billy spoke.

Jessica, who had stopped drawing to listen to the story, picked up a fresh sheet of paper and, in a few moments, passed me a drawing of a bird.

"What's this?" I ventured to ask.

"Tweetie," came the reply.

"Who's Tweetie?" I pressed gently.

"My canary," she answered.

Jessica's mother looked as incredulous as me. I was the first adult Jessica had spoken to outside of the family in her whole six years. At the next session, she bounced into my office so chatty that my secretary asked, "Can you reverse this process?"

Jessica's story of resolving her elective mutism did not end there. In some ways that was just the beginning. Though she had extended the range of people with whom she spoke by two (myself and my secretary), she still needed to expand that ability into other situations in her life. While it was great that she would chat garrulously to my secretary and was eager to relate to me the events since our last appointment, she had still not generalized this into the classroom or playground environment, and so I spoke with the school principal, who was very cooperative and keen to assist. She gave Jessica's teacher permission to come to an appointment. With just the three of us present, Jessica was happy to talk with her teacher. They had been studying the solar system and when the teacher began to ask her questions, Jessica readily and casually listed off the names of the planets—much to her teacher's surprise.

The challenge then became how to generalize her speech into the classroom, a process I began with successive approximations through further stories, role-play with my teddy bear, and therapeutic exercises. There were many questions I asked her. When she began to speak at school, to whom would she speak first? And after that person, who next? Would she talk softly, loudly, or normally? Would she say just one word or a whole sentence? We agreed on softly to one or two close friends. Each step was reinforced and the next encouraged as she began to extend her abilities to more people and more situations.

Since I first wrote about this case, Jessica's grandmother, who initiated Jessica's consultations with me, reported she now speaks with neighbors, has friends visit for sleep-overs (at which her mother has to tell them to stop talking and go to sleep!), and has even stood up in front of the class to give news. Her grandmother's words were, "Since she has started, she hasn't stopped."

Three years after she attended sessions with me, I was surprised to open my mail one day and find a letter from Jessica herself. It read as follows:

> Dear George. Remember me Jessica. I saw you when I was six. I hope you are going well. You helped me a lot in talking a bit louder at school. I've got a lot more friends now because I've been talking louder. I spoke on the Broadcast on the Microphone.
>
> Thank you for helping me.
>
> From Jessica.

A year later I phoned her mother to seek permission to publish Jessica's letter, and also spoke to Jessica. She was bright, cheerful, and animated in her conversation. According to both Jessica and her mother, she has continued to maintain her progress.

In the case of this six-year-old, I was powerfully reminded how metaphors can hold a unique

ability to facilitate connections where other language forms may not. The empowerment for Jessica to change an established pattern of behavior had come not just through a story, but through one told so indirectly that it was apparently being communicated to someone else.

WHEN NOT TO SPEAK IN STORIES

I think it also needs to be said that metaphor therapy may not be relevant for every child. Some children, depending on chronological age, mental age, and cognitive development, may be more concrete and less abstract in their thinking. If you can give a child a clear directive and he or she follows it, why bother messing around creating and telling stories (except for the fun of it)? Similarly, I do not want to give the impression that metaphors are the *only* way to do therapy. Though stories have a universal appeal and their effectiveness as a teaching tool has long been demonstrated, there are children (particularly teenagers) who may not appreciate or benefit from such indirect approaches to treatment, perhaps seeing them as evasive, condescending, or irrelevant. There may be parents who do not understand the process and even become angry that they are paying their hard-earned cash for you to "do nothing" but tell stories to their child. It is important to watch carefully for such signs and—in the art of all good therapy—adapt your interventions to the needs and responses of your clients. Often the problem may not be in the *process* of storytelling, which has a universal appeal, but in the relevance of the *content* for that particular child. In general, the more strings you have to your therapeutic bow, the easier it is to make those adaptations, and the more effective your interventions. Metaphor therapy is just one of those strings—and may not be the best or only one necessary to reach the child's therapeutic goal. Further discussion of the pitfalls in metaphor therapy and pathways that may be followed to enhance therapeutic effectiveness can be found in Chapter 14.

Let me summarize this chapter on the magic of stories with a favorite tale that has its origins back in 1794, when a small boy underwent surgery for the removal of a tumor. Can you imagine what thoughts would have been going through the mind of a nine-year-old child facing the prospect of a surgeon's knife more than 200 years ago? Of course, he did not know that antibiotics were yet to be discovered or that Louis Pasteur had not yet enlightened the medical world about the need for sterilization. Chemical anesthetics for the control of pain were to remain unknown for another century and a half.

In the absence of anything else to offer the child, he was told a story to help distract his attention from the procedure. So intriguing was the tale that he later avowed he had felt no discomfort whatsoever.

Could a story be that powerful, and could its power linger? For that child, it certainly did. Eighteen years later the very same boy handed one of his own stories to a publisher. What was his story? Snow White. Yes, the boy was Jacob Grimm, who went on to become one of the world's most famous tellers of fairy stories—stories that continue to be retold in words, in print, in plays, and on movie screens two centuries later.

In this chapter I have attempted to illustrate just *some* of the ways stories can inform, educate, teach values, discipline, build experience, facilitate problem solving, change, and heal. These are just some samples, like a plate of food randomly selected from an extensive smorgasbord, and not meant to be a comprehensive list of the values of stories. Other examples of the power of stories to invoke

emotions, to inspire, or to create mind-body feats are given in Burns (2001). The question to occupy the next chapter is, how do we communicate such healing stories effectively?

EXERCISE 1.1

Reflect on the stories that you heard as a child. Recall which particular stories had a significant impact on your life. How did they

- inform you,
- educate you,
- teach you values,
- provide discipline,
- build experiences for you,
- facilitate problem solving,
- facilitate change, or
- offer some aspect of healing?

Understanding the impact of childhood stories on you will help you understand and appreciate their influence on your young clients.

CHAPTER 2

Guidelines for Effective Storytelling

I enjoy the story of the new prisoner spending his first night in jail. The evening meal was a somber affair until one prisoner arose and called out "Thirty-seven." The dining room erupted in hysterical laughter. Another rose and won instant hilarity by saying "One hundred and fourteen."

"What's going on?" the new prisoner asked his cellmate.

"Well," he replied, "the prison library has only one book of jokes and, as everyone has memorized them, all we have to do is call out the page number of the joke."

Keen to win favor with his compulsory companions, the new prisoner borrowed the book and started to memorize the jokes. Within a couple of weeks he felt confident to join in. At the end of a somber meal he rose and called out "Ninety-seven."

The silence was palpable.

"What's wrong?" the new prisoner whispered to his cellmate.

"Well," came the reply, "you picked a good joke, but it was the way you told it."

Delivering your story—the art of effective storytelling—is analogous to learning any new skill, such as driving a car. You begin by driving up and down a driveway before tackling rush-hour traffic on a wild, wet, winter's night. At first you need to concentrate, deliberately, on how to slowly release the brake with one foot, while depressing the accelerator at just the right speed with the other. At the same time you need to keep your eyes on the road, shift gears with one hand, switch on the blinkers with the other—and also keep your hands on the wheel. At first the complexity of the task may seem daunting, but as you acquire the behaviors they become second nature and you drive through heavy traffic without consciously having to think about when you depress pedals or put on blinkers. You may have heard people say, "Oh, he or she is a good storyteller," as though that ability is something that is innate and unattainable by most others. I find it more helpful to think that

storytelling, like driving and many other skills in life, is learned or acquired. If some can do it, it is possible for others.

There are three prime variables in effective storytelling. The first is the teller, the second is the listener or listeners, and the third is the process of communication that goes on between the two. In this chapter we will be examining and seeking to develop the skills of the first (i.e., the storyteller). I have provided some guidelines and tools that will help you develop or refine your skills of communication in this area. If you take the time to listen to a masterful storyteller, these are the skills you are likely to observe him or her using. What that storyteller has done to develop mastery is what any actor, athlete, or other competent professional has done. He or she has studied role models, worked at building the appropriate skills, and then practiced, practiced, and practiced. Maybe he or she started right where you are at this moment. Good practitioners of any art are worth observing, for in them we can see the things they do to make their art so effective.

Listen to and observe your friends or colleagues as well. Who relates an experience—say, of a recently seen movie—in a way that has you yawning in the first thirty seconds, and who does it in a manner that has you rushing out to purchase a ticket to the next session? What are the differences in their styles? Who do you rate as a good storyteller of either a joke or a day-to-day event? How do they capture your attention in the first place? What do they do that holds your attention? What use do they make of their voice and how do they deliver the punch line? From your observations, what behaviors can you model and what should you avoid? Observing and experimenting with these things may contribute to your own skills in the art of storytelling.

TEN GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

1. We Are All Storytellers

We are all telling stories all of the time. Not only do we constantly tell stories, but we also constantly ask for stories . . . thus inviting others to be storytellers, too. We ask our partners when they arrive home, "How was your day?" We ask a colleague at work, "What did you do on the weekend?" We ask a child arriving home from school, "What did you learn today?" In these ways we are seeking stories and expecting the other person to tell us a tale from their experience. Through such stories we share our emotions and experiences. We tell of our frustrations and achievements, our joy and our sadness, our pain and our pleasure. The events that have meaning to us, challenge us, or enrich our journey through life are the things that we want to, and do, share with others. For them, hearing our tales, and for us, hearing their stories, is a sharing of experiences that enhances everyday living for each of us.

As well as hearing and learning from others' stories, we also hear our own stories, and the more we tell them, the more they are likely to become a reality—both desirably and undesirably. Take, for example, the child who has a morning dental appointment. When he arrives late to school, it is in the middle of a spelling lesson. Almost as soon as he enters, his teacher asks him to spell a certain word from a list that he was supposed to have memorized overnight. He is a reasonable scholar and to spell a word is not normally a problem, but the distractions of an uncomfortable dental visit, the late arrival in class, and the sudden shock of being put on the spot sees him stumbling over a relatively easy word. "What," exclaims his teacher, "has the dentist pulled out—your wisdom tooth?" The whole

class laughs and the young boy shrinks in embarrassment. He later relives the late arrival, the teacher's words, and the laughter of his peers. Over and over he tells himself the same story, becoming more withdrawn and less inclined to put his hand up to answer questions in class. He tries to make himself look small and insignificant when the teacher is looking for volunteers. The story that he tells himself about making mistakes in public, about being put down, and about feeling embarrassed continues to be relived again and again in his mind. It is a story that told not only what *had happened* but began to determine what *would happen* in the future.

Conversely, let us take the example of a child with a particular skill in athletics. She wins most of her races at school and has received accolades from parents, teachers, and peers. The story that she tells herself of a particular win determines how she will approach the next school competition. Her story of past success is likely to enhance her feeling of confidence, and thus contribute to her future success.

As we are constantly telling stories to others and ourselves, as we are constantly hearing stories from others, so we are defining not only what the past has been but what the future will be. Our expectations when asking for a story from someone are not unrealistic, for we are requesting something the other person *is* capable of providing: We are all storytellers, and have been all our lives. We do not have to start from scratch when it comes to the art of storytelling because we are already in a position to enhance and refine this skill, and to use it effectively in therapy. It is not a question of whether we can tell a story so much as *how well* we do so. The guidelines in this section are designed to help hone some of those skills.

EXERCISE 2.1

- Practice telling a story of something that occurred during your day, whether it was an experience from which you learned something, an incident that was humorous, or something you want to share with a special person.
- Listen to the stories that other people tell about their day-to-day experiences.
- Observe particularly how children use stories. If you have children in your life, ask them about their day, and listen to the stories that they tell and how they communicate the things that are important.

2. Use Your Own Enthusiasm Rather Than Techniques

If you are going to tell stories, make it fun. Kids love stories, they are a great audience, and it is easy with such enthusiastic and relatively uncritical listeners to make it an enjoyable process, both for you and for them. Start by telling stories that you get pleasure in telling. Do not concern yourself so much with the techniques or steps for storytelling but simply use the most important ingredient: your own enthusiasm—the sort of story that begins "Wow, you wouldn't believe what happened to me today." It is this enthusiasm that adds the mood or feeling to the story. It is what gives it its spontaneity and life. It is what captures and holds the listener's attention.

Let your stories express what you want to say with enthusiasm, enjoyment, and reality, rather than focusing on the techniques of how they are told at this stage. The techniques you can learn and

polish as you continue to build your storytelling abilities. Right now it might be helpful to select a story that you enjoy—whether one from your own experience, something you have read in a book, or a tale you have heard from another person. Tell it to some children of different ages, different genders, and different interests. How is the story received? What do your listeners respond to? Are they responding to your techniques or simply your enthusiasm?

EXERCISE 2.2

- Find a story that you like or enjoy and practice telling it to other people, enthusiastically. Let yourself express your feelings, your involvement, and your enjoyment.
- Do the same with a child. Practice telling a story you can relate enthusiastically.
- Tell another story that you do not find stimulating, enjoyable, or exciting to tell. Watch for the verbal and nonverbal feedback from your listener.

3. Use Your Intelligence, Integrity, and Ethics

Stories do not need to be factual. The sky can be green, trees can talk, elephants can fly, and fairies can exist; but, despite the fantasy, stories contain a reality that communicates a truth, a value, or a way of being. This is part of a story's beauty and the joy of working with stories. They offer the listener the paradox of suspending reality testing at one level while presenting a very real message at another.

Take, for example, the traditional story of the Three Little Pigs. Both storyteller and children who are listening accept, at least for the length of the tale, things they otherwise would hold to be untrue: that pigs can talk among themselves and even with wolves; that pigs can build houses as well as any qualified builder; that they can walk around on two legs and use their front feet for dexterous skills such as laying bricks or putting big pots of water on a fire. But amidst this fantasy, the tale communicates some very real values: If you do something, do it well; hard work has its rewards; solid is better than flimsy; goodness and intelligence can triumph over cunning and evil.

Therapeutic storytelling needs to assume a responsibility and accountability to our clients—especially our youngest ones. It needs to offer messages that responsibly help children achieve what they want or need. Having the child's therapeutic outcome in mind helps to communicate a story with intelligence, integrity, and a sound base in ethics. Setting outcome goals for metaphors will be discussed further in Chapter 16.

EXERCISE 2.3

- Experiment with being both responsible and bold in your storytelling.
- If you have a relationship with a child, whether personal or therapeutic, in which storytelling has not been a common part of your communication, test it out: Tell a story and see what difference it makes for both you and your listener.

4. Make the Story Fit

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are three basic elements to storytelling: the storyteller, the listener or listeners, and the processes of communication. The story is going to be most effective if it fits or matches all three of these variables.

First, it facilitates identification with the story if there is a match between the character of the story and the character of the client. A colleague, clinical psychologist Elaine Atkinson, who helped contribute with several conversations during the planning of this book, works with different metaphor material at different age levels for the children she sees. She commented that preschool children tend to communicate metaphorically in play with toys. In early primary-school years, animal stories tend to be more popular, whereas after that age group, children get into hero stories whose protagonists may vary from cartoon characters to movie characters like Harry Potter or Frodo Baggins. Based on your knowledge of these characters and their significance in the life of your child or teenage client, it is possible to construct a hero story that quickly and effectively facilitates identification with the story. Further discussion of this can be found in the section entitled "Metaphors Built on Heroes" in Chapter 15.

To give some ideas of how to adapt a story to fit children of different developmental stages, genders, and interests, I have based the first two stories in each chapter from 4 through 12 on a similar theme, with the first of each pair directed toward kids and the second to teens. Stories 2 and 3 both speak about how children can make a difference, with the first being a fantasy that has similarities to the familiar story of Goldilocks and the second being the true tale of a teenage boy. Stories 11 and 12 have the common problem of being in an unfamiliar, fearful situation, with the character of the kid story being a young octopus out of its depth and the character of the teen story an adolescent who's gone too far from shore on his new surfboard. While the therapeutic characteristics of the stories remain much the same, the characters and context change to match the listener.

Second, in addition to the story's fitting the client, it helps if the story fits for the teller. Only by telling a story that you enjoy, one that presents you with a challenge or that involves your enthusiasm, can you tell it effectively for your listener. I invite you to see the stories I have provided in Part Two as "story ideas" rather than immutable tales. They just happen to be stories that I have used with one child at one point in time. They are stories I *like* telling, and are comfortable or enjoyable for me to tell. If you find an idea that you consider worth adopting please feel free to develop it into your own story. The child listener is more likely to enjoy and be absorbed in the story if the storyteller is also absorbed and interested in the tale.

EXERCISE 2.4

- Practice adapting a story to fit your young listener. One way of doing this is to take an ordinary storybook tale and read it to a child. Observe the verbal and nonverbal cues of how well the story matches the listener.
- Retell the story to the child, this time adapting the main character to match the listener's age, gender, or interests. For example, if telling the Three Little Pigs story to a child who enjoys riding a bike, the pigs could bicycle from house to house rather than run. Observe what differences this may make to your listener.

5. Make the Story Real

The popular children's fiction writer of such loved tales as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The BFG (Big Friendly Giant)*, and *The Twits*, Roald Dahl wrote a lesser-known short story entitled "Lucky Break." In it he described how he came to be a professional writer when, while at school, a career in that area seemed as far away as the planet of Pluto. When he was 14, his school report for English Composition declared him "incapable of marshalling his thoughts on paper." A year later his English master saw no improvement: "A persistent muddler. Vocabulary negligible, sentences malconstructed. He reminds me of a camel." By the time he was 16 his report recorded, "This boy is an indolent and illiterate member of the class" (Dahl, 2001, p. 180).

Consequently, writing—and even tertiary studies—was not even a consideration for Dahl, who worked for a petroleum company in East Africa before joining the Royal Air Force when World War II broke out. After he was shot down, sustaining head injuries and subsequent migraines, his flying career ended and he was sent to be an assistant air attaché in Washington, D.C., where he unexpectedly met C. S. Forester, the creator of Horatio Hornblower and other nautical tales. Forester asked Dahl to jot down notes about his flying experiences that Forester would then write up as an article for the *Saturday Evening Post*. "Let me have plenty of detail," said the master. "That's what counts in our business, tiny little details, like you had a broken shoelace on your left shoe, or a fly settled on the rim of your glass at lunch, or the man you were talking to had a broken front tooth" (Dahl, 2001, p. 190). Dahl followed Forester's advice and the article was published under Dahl's name without Forester's altering a single word—and one of the twentieth century's greatest writers was born. As Forester said, detail is what gives a story reality.

Aesop's fable The Hare and the Tortoise has a simple story line: The hare and the tortoise have a race and the tortoise wins. But what a boring, uninteresting, and meaningless story it becomes if told so succinctly. How much more engaging and meaningful the story is when you add detail, like this: One day, the tall, proud Hare was teasing and mocking the old Tortoise for being so slow and cumbersome on his feet. "If that's what you think," responded the Tortoise, "I challenge you to a race. In fact, I bet you a crisp, new bank note that I win." The Hare threw back his furry head and laughed out loud. "OK, slowpoke." At the starter's command, the Hare was first to sprint from the line scratched with a stick in the dry earth. Soon the Tortoise was so far behind as to be out of sight. "This is a piece of cake," the Hare thought to himself. "I have time for a rest and can still beat the old Tortoise." With that he lay down on the cool, soft grass under a gnarled, spreading tree and soon fell asleep. Meanwhile the Tortoise plodded by methodically, careful not to disturb the sleeping Hare. When the Hare awakened, he made a quick, breathless dash to the finish but was too late. The slow and steady Tortoise had already won the race.

The more detail you add, the more real the story can be for you and your young listener. Descriptive words, adjectives that tap into the senses, and the use of dialogue all add to the reality, as do the tone, the mood, and the emotion of the story. To help include these it is useful to use your senses, envisioning and communicating to your listener the subtleties of light, color, shades, and shapes that help define and enhance awareness of the visual sense. Describe the sounds and all the varieties of auditory experience. Be aware of the smells, aromas, and fragrances that are part of the tale. Include tactile sensations—not only what the characters of the story touch, but how they are *touched* by the breath of a breeze, or the warmth of the sun. Where appropriate, bring into the story

sensations of taste, for all of these senses add to the story's reality, facilitating your own visualization of the story, and, consequently, your ability to communicate those images that best involve your listener.

Instead of just giving the *facts* of the story, the addition of detail helps communicate the *experience* of the story. By visualizing it yourself, you permit the listener to participate more meaningfully in the experience and the message inherent in that experience.

EXERCISE 2.5

- Tell a story to a child.
- Then tell it a second time, bringing in the five senses to add color to the sky, fragrance to the flowers, and sounds to the animals.
- Retell it a third time, this time bringing in the emotions and feelings.
- See how each story feels for you and observe the impact on your listener.

6. Make an Outline of the Story

You do not need to write out a story verbatim, hold it in your hand, or read it out like an actor faithfully reciting a Shakespearean script. It may be easier to develop a story outline and then elaborate on it in a way that allows you to communicate collaboratively with the child, thus permitting a more interactive process. To help establish this outline and know where the story is going it may be helpful to ask yourself four basic questions:

- What is the outcome of the story?
- What are the steps or processes to reach that outcome?
- What is the challenge or problem that begins the story?
- What character can match the listener and reach that outcome?

Since a story does not become a story until it has an ending, I find it helpful, in outlining a story, to begin at the end. An example of a story beginning at the end occurred when I made a recent phone call to Tracey Weatherhilt, a school psychologist who generously shared time and conversations in the planning of this book. Her secretary answered the phone, "Department of Education." While I waited to be connected to Tracey, the on-hold music came on—and what happened next made this telephone conversation into the story worth repeating. From the Department of Education's phone I found myself listening to the Pink Floyd song "The Wall," which goes: "We don't need no education. We don't need no thought control. No dark sarcasm in the classroom. Teachers, leave those kids alone." When Tracey came on the line and I told her the story she had a good laugh, saying, "Wait till I tell my colleagues about that!"

We both had a story to tell because of the *ending:* an anti-education song heard while on hold with the Department of Education. Without that, there would have been no story to tell and I would not have this example to highlight that the ending is what makes the story. I will discuss the planning of the story's outline in greater detail in Chapter 16.

EXERCISE 2.6

- Plan a storytelling session with a child.
- Make a note of the way you want the story to end.
- Jot down the obstacles or hurdles the character needs to overcome in the process of reaching the goal.
- Note each of the steps the character has to take to get there.

7. Rehearse the Story

When you have a story outline, tell it to yourself, speak it out loud, and listen to how it sounds to you before testing it on someone else. Begin to experiment with it, play with it, develop it. Adapt the outline for different age levels, different genders, different cultural backgrounds, different types of interests . . . and then rehearse it again. The principle is simple: The more familiar you are with any material, the easier it is to be flexible, spontaneous, and adaptive in using that material in your healing metaphors.

Stories are never-ending, constantly altering and changing as you tell them from one child to the next. In fact, one of the difficulties for me in writing this book, as it was in writing *101 Healing Stories* (Burns, 2001), is that the tales that make up Part Two are fixed in print, captured at one particular moment of their telling. In the oral tradition of storytelling, tales change and alter with their teller, with their listener, and with the circumstances in which they are related—even though they may be grounded in a core theme. By becoming familiar with your material, by knowing what the core idea is that you want to communicate, you are free to be flexible and adaptable in the telling.

EXERCISE 2.7

- Find a new children's story that you enjoy, maybe one from this book.
- Practice it in your mind, rehearse it out loud, and put it into your own words.
- Tell it to a child without recourse to the written version.

8. Tell It to Someone Else

Once you have developed an outline, familiarized yourself with the material, and rehearsed it to yourself, then try it out on an audience. Tell it to your partner over a meal, test it on your child as a bedside story if appropriate, or share it with a friend over a cup of coffee. There is no need to produce any great, meaningful metaphor because right now we are simply looking at developing the skills of storytelling. If the tale is for a child or children then they will be your best audience. You may like to borrow a kid if you do not have one, or volunteer to do some story reading or storytelling at your local school, preschool, or children's hospital if your own workplace does not give you the opportunity.

Although it may be helpful to get some feedback from your listener, or even to provide some self-feedback, remember that what you are hearing is one person's opinion of how the story affects *that person* and may not be the way it affects another person. If providing some self-evaluation, you may ask whether you are satisfied with your storytelling, if there are aspects you could improve, how you could better use your voice, whether your voice was pacing the story, or what you could do to enhance the presentation. While such feedback may be useful, what is important at this point is simply storytelling with an audience. To use the learning-to-drive analogy with which I began this chapter, it is like you are familiar with the automobile's controls, have driven up and down the driveway, and are now ready to join other traffic on the roads.

EXERCISE 2.8

- Find a child to whom you could tell a story.
- Observe your own experience of telling and the experience for the listener.

9. Observe Your Listener

Milton Erickson, the master of metaphor therapy, when asked what he considered the three most important variables of therapy, is said to have replied, "Observe, observe, observe." When you feel confident telling stories to children and teenagers (whether to one or a group), start to observe their behavior. See what holds their attention, be aware of when they start to lose focus, see how you can regain that attention, and observe the impact of your tale. Find other listeners. Observe the different responses to your story from individual to individual, and group to group. Fortunately, children tend to be more expressive and less socially constrained than adults. During your storytelling, they may be attentive, wriggly, or easily distracted, or may interrupt with questions, displaying a good amount of observable responses as to whether they are interested, bored, or excited by the tale. The observation of these responses offers vital clues about how to adapt your tale.

For more than twenty years, I have participated in a regular radio talk show and, in all that time, there is something that has not gotten any easier for me—hearing people's voices through the headphones and not being able to observe the expressions on their faces, or the look in their eyes. It is similar to trying to define the emotion behind the words in an e-mail, at times. That is because we communicate with *more* than our words. Take away the words—which is what happens when you have a silent listener—and you have the reverse of my radio experience. You have only the expressions. Herein will lie the cues and feedback as to how your story is being received.

Observe that feedback. How connected is the child with you and your story? Is his (or her) gaze one of fixed and unbroken attention? Does his respiration match the pace and emotion of the tale? Have his bodily movements slowed so the child is less fidgety or active than before this story began?

If attention is distracted, gaze wanders away from the storyteller, or fidgeting increases, these are signs for the storyteller to examine his or her own behavior. Am I telling too much? Am I not communicating enough? Does the story need more or less involvement of senses and emotions? What is relevant for my listener? What needs to be expanded and what needs to be deleted? Does

the character fit or need to be changed? Is the story too close for comfort, or too removed to be relevant?

EXERCISE 2.9

- Children will tell you—verbally or nonverbally—how your story is being received.
- Watch their behavior, posture, level of attention, eye contact, fidgeting, muscle tone, and rate of respiration.
- How attentive are they? What feedback does this give you about the content of the story and the way you are telling it?

10. Be Flexible

Because stories permit and nurture creativity, because they allow for adaptability, there is no right or wrong way to tell a story, just as there is no right or wrong way to play music. Once you have acquired the basic skills of an instrument, you can play classical, jazz, rock, rap, or folk, following a score note-by-note or improvising your own composition. When you play a tune, there are different ways to do so, some more effective and some that are less effective. Consequently, I have called the topics of this chapter "guidelines" rather than rules. For every child your story is likely to be different and the style in which you tell it is also likely to be different, because no one child, circumstance, problem, or outcome is exactly the same as another. At first this may seem a formidable challenge, not just to the process of using metaphors but to any process of therapy, but as you think of the story as constantly evolving for you and your young clients, flexibility grows easier.

I have sought to provide examples of building flexibility into stories in some of the examples in Part Two through the use of questions that engage the listener and guide the direction of the story. Story 73, "Collaborative Problem-Solving," is based on a case in which I told one child (I shall call him Darren) of another child (true story) with a similar problem of insomnia. Through the story, Darren was engaged in helping the other child find a solution. As we discussed what might and might not be useful for this other boy, Darren would go home, test them out himself, and come back to discuss what we could discard from the story and what might be worth offering. He made it clear when he thought something would not work or whether the other boy was not ready to take that step yet. The story—and its outcome—was developed collaboratively, adapting and changing as Darren learned the skills for sleeping more comfortably in his own room. Research affirms that metaphors developed with the client have the greatest efficacy (Martin, Cummings, & Hallberg, 1992), and this is explored more in the sections on Child-Generated Metaphors and Collaborative Tales in Chapter 3.

The flexibility of stories is relieving news for the both the novice and the experienced metaphor therapist. A perfect healing story does not have to be there in your mind instantly and completely just when you may need it. It can evolve over a period of time, can be thought about between therapy sessions, and can be developed in conjunction with your client. . . . And children generally have an

unbridled creative imagination that makes collaborative storytelling both easy and effective. Give them the opportunity to be an active part of the storytelling and usually they jump at the chance.

Step back a little and observe how your stories evolve. Let yourself be surprised by how differently you tell a story to a teenager this week or a younger child next week. Allow yourself the opportunity to see what works best for you and the child you are working with at that time. Keep the door open to experiment and discover.

Following our analogy of learning to drive, we have moved from the basic steps to the multiple skills required by a regular commuter. Following the guidelines presented in this chapter, we have progressed from developing confidence in our storytelling abilities to telling tales with enthusiasm and integrity. We have examined how to create outlines for telling stories that fit with detail and reality, while observing the listener's responses and being flexible enough to adapt the tale to the needs of the moment. Hopefully, you will have discovered that while telling an interesting and meaningful tale it is also possible to observe your client, ask yourself questions about the processes that are going on for the child, and adapt the story to most effectively fit his or her needs.

EXERCISE 2.10

- Practice being adaptable or flexible with your stories.
- Tell the same story differently to different people. Look at adapting it to the child and how you can use it to engage that individual listener.

SIX GUIDELINES FOR THE STORYTELLER'S VOICE

If you have ever told the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears you already know something about using the storyteller's voice. When Goldilocks wanders into the home of the Three Bears and says, "I am so hungry," you probably used a high, gentle, childlike voice. When the Three Bears get home and Papa Bear asks, "Who has been eating *my* porridge?" you may have adopted a deeper, louder, masculine, even growl-like sound. When Mama Bear asks, "Who has been sitting in *my* chair?" your voice was probably medium-sized, feminine, and maternal. When Baby Bear asks, "Who has been sleeping in *my* bed?" and then declares, "And she is still there!" your voice is likely to have been high-pitched, squeaky, infant-like, and maybe even excited with the last discovery.

For the storyteller, voice is the main professional tool, the primary mode of communication. Even if you are using other aids such as books, puppets, or toys (these will be discussed more in Chap. 3) the voice is still the main instrument to communicate the therapeutic message and, thus, to bring about the therapeutic change.

The use of the following guidelines may help enhance that effectiveness, but, as I mentioned in the "Ten Guidelines for Effective Storytelling," do not get caught up in the techniques. If you are involved in the story, then it is likely that you will be spontaneously using these guidelines in much the

same way as you were in telling the tale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. I offer them merely as pointers that may enhance that process.

1. Select Your Style of Storytelling

Let me give some examples of how voice adapts to the style of the story. First, if the content of the story is a cognitive activity such as thinking through a problem, your voice may model the thoughtful, ponderous nature of the story, being slow, considered, and deliberate. If you are telling a story of physical activity such as in running a race, your voice style may include the energy, the breathlessness, and the activity of participating in the race.

Second, style can be influenced by the emotions the story seeks to communicate, as it does spontaneously—our voice sounds different when we are angry, sad, anxious, excited, or relaxed. Have you had the experience of answering the phone with a simple "Hello" when feeling tired, sad or in grief and had the caller, who knows you reasonably well, respond with a concerned enquiry, "Are you okay?" He or she has heard the emotion in just a single word, heard a story in your affective expression.

If you are telling a child a story that begins with the problem of fear, your speech may be rapid, your breathing shallower, and the tone of your voice higher; but as you model the resources of relaxation, your speech can be slower, your respiration more comfortable, and your tone a little lower. Reaching the desired outcome, your style of speech may parallel the joy of achievement, expressed in a lighter, happier tone of voice.

Third, have you noticed how you speak differently to your lover than to your boss, to one gender than to the other, to a child than to an adult? How you use different voices for the different characters in Goldilocks and the Three Bears? We need to look at how we adapt the style of our storytelling to the story's characters as well as to the listener to whom the tale is addressed. Your style of storytelling may be different if the listener is a 2-year-old or a 12-year-old, a girl or a boy, or someone with different cultural or religious values from your own. The bottom line here is to ensure our voice is appropriate to the context, emotion, characters, outcome, and listener of the story.

EXERCISE 2.11

- Observe your own styles of communication. Do you talk differently to an adult or child, a boy or a girl, a teenager or a young kid?
- Look at using those differences in your storytelling styles to match both the child and the content of the story you wish to communicate.

2. Choose Your Rate of Utterance

What happens to the rate at which you observe children speak when they have something exciting to tell you? How does that rate of utterance alter when they are reluctantly confessing to having just

broken your favorite piece of crystal-ware? The content of communication, and the emotion that accompanies that content, naturally influences our rate of speech. How quickly you speak if a child is about to step onto a busy road is likely to be different from the rate at which you tell that same child a soporific bedtime story. Observing and understanding those differences in others, and ourselves, is helpful information to have when adapting your rate of utterance to match the content of the story you might be telling. If you are telling a child a metaphor to enhance relaxation, induce clinical hypnosis, or facilitate guided imagery, the rate of utterance is most likely to be effective if it begins by pacing the child's level of arousal, then gradually leads into slower and more tranquil experiences. If you are telling an exciting, engaging tale, your rate of utterance would better reflect the pace of enthusiastic arousal. This is simply a matter of adjusting the speed at which you speak to the content and emotion of your story. While telling of the three little pigs running from the big bad wolf, your speed of speech may reflect hurried little trotters fleeing from one house to the next. Once safely inside with the door bolted behind them, the rate can become more relaxed, more relieved.

EXERCISE 2.12

- Vary your rate of utterance when telling your story. Speed it up, slow it down.
- Notice how you feel about the differences.
- Notice how the listening child responds to the differences.

3. Modulate Your Intonation

There is a story of a professor of English who wrote a sentence on the board and asked his students to punctuate it correctly. The sentence he wrote on the board was, "Woman without her man is nothing." When he came to collect the assignment at the end of class, all the men had written, "Woman, without her man, is nothing." Checking the women's work, he found they had written "Woman! Without her, man is nothing."

I use punctuation as an example here because it is easier to illustrate in the written format of this book, and because, like the intonation of sounds, punctuation adds and diminishes emphasis, at times altering meaning and communicating very different messages.

Intonation refers to the emphasis and tone of voice placed on a word or letter. Intonation distinguishes a statement from a question. It may be used to put accent or weight on a particular word. It can, as seen in the example above, cause the same words to give two totally different meanings. This adjustment or variation of tone is perhaps more common in languages other than English. English does not have the same subtlety of intonation as languages like Chinese or Vietnamese, but, nonetheless, we do modulate language to alter the amplitude of our speech, its frequency, or its tone, thus putting greater emphasis or meaning on an expression. Using intonations, thoughtfully, can enhance the effectiveness of our communication.

EXERCISE 2.13

- Audiotape yourself telling a story to a child, whether a client or not.
- Listen to your own voice.
- Make a note of the differences in your
  - rate of utterance,
  - modulation of intonation, and
  - adjustment of volume.
- Where do you use these changes spontaneously?
- How can you make use of them constructively to better communicate the story?

4. Adjust the Volume of Your Voice

Voice has a volume control just like your television, home stereo system, or car radio. We turn the volume up and down depending on the circumstances and the messages we want to communicate. It is a useful exercise to observe how children use their voices spontaneously and then consider how those volume adjustments can be utilized effectively to express your story. Children often whisper when sharing a secret, shout when cheering for a sports team, speak in hushed tones when confessing guilt, raise their voices when angry, and sound flat when sad. For adults, while there may be cultural differences, speaking in soft tones to a lover implies a message of intimacy, a bonding of two souls, and loud shouting is commonly seen as an expression of anger. A raised voice, generally, is something people find uncomfortable and want to avoid, yet communicating quietly tends to trigger a listener's acuity—unless the volume is so low that the listener has difficulty tuning in.

As well as observing children's adjustment of volume, notice how you tune in to or switch off the volume of voice of other people in your life. Listen, too, to the way the volume of your voice communicates the message of your story. How is it affecting your child listeners? Are they craning to hear, or backing away? Is it facilitating an appropriate listening response from the child?

5. Incorporate Affective Involvement

If you have the opportunity, observe how an infant reacts to a smiling face and a frowning face, perhaps with a game of peek-a-boo. Developmentally, children express and relate to affect long before they discriminate the sounds and meanings of words. Incorporating appropriate emotion into stories for children taps into a natural childhood process of experience, contributes to the reality of the story, involves the child, and effectively communicates the story's message. If the story is set in summer, allow yourself to *feel* the heat and let your voice express it: "Phew, it is *so* hot." If you are describing an activity that you *really* love or feel passionate about doing, bring the passion into your voice. If your story begins with stress and arousal, experiencing the arousal yourself will allow it to be reflected in your voice. As you lead the content of the tale into a state of tranquility it will be *heard* and *experienced* more by your listener if you are also experiencing and expressing it.

Your story will have greater reality for the child if he or she can really *feel* what is happening instead of just hearing the words. Hearing the content is a cognitive experience, whereas feeling the

emotion is an affective experience—and affective learning is often more powerful. For a child, encountering a big, barking dog (hopefully secured behind a fence) is more likely to induce fear and avoidance behavior than a parental warning to keep away from strange dogs. The feeling of achievement from scoring a goal for your school at a sports event can be a more powerful encouragement to train than any parental nagging. If we combine both the cognitive *and* the affective we maximize the potential for effectively communicating the story's message.

6. Align Affect with the Story

By *aligning affect,* I mean that the story needs to tell of the same emotion in its *content* as in the storyteller's *voice*, that the expressed emotion is *congruent* with the emotion of the story. Children, being emotionally responsive, are quick to read any misalignment of emotions. Take the example of little Johnny, who has accidentally broken Mom's most prized possession. She has heard the crash, races into the room, and sees the shattered pieces of her beloved object. Within a nanosecond, her jaws have clenched, her face reddened, her teeth clamped together, her hands knotted in fists as if ready to punch his lights out. She says through gritted teeth, "Don't be frightened. Come here to Mommy." What do you think little Johnny is going to believe and respond to—the emotion in her body language, or the content of her words? If he has any sense of self-preservation, he is probably out of the door and running.

People read body language and affect long before they hear the words. In infancy, prior to the development of speech or the understanding of words from the parents, children survive by reading the overt expression of emotions. There are times to be close and times to back off. Times to express your needs and times to be quiet. Learning to discriminate between them is important to our early and subsequent well-being. What this means for the storyteller is that we need to ensure we not only have affective involvement in the story, but that the involvement is appropriate, and the feeling tone is aligned to the story's content.

EXERCISE 2.14

- Bring in emotion and have it aligned with the content of the story. Make use of the five senses.
- Include the emotion. Is the day hot or cold? Is the atmosphere tense, sad, or relaxed?
- Listen to the audiotape of yourself telling the story again, and ask how involved you are in the emotions of the tale and how congruent your emotions seem to the content of the story.

CHAPTER 3

Tools and Techniques

In the last chapter we examined guidelines for effective storytelling along with how to make optimal use of the storyteller's voice, the emphasis being on the oral tradition of storytelling. While most stories are oral and have long been communicated in words, that is not the only way to relate stories, especially to children. Our ancestors made their stories come to life visually by painting them on the walls of caves and chipping them into rocks—the precursors of symbols that are our present-day books and movies. They put on masks, decorated their bodies, and told their tales in song and dance—the beginnings of modern theater. Maybe, as they sat around with their listeners, they sketched their tales in the sand—a forerunner of the blackboard—or made rudimentary clay models of story characters, animals, and implements—the origins of today's toys.

In this chapter I outline some of the many ways by which you can present stories to heighten their auditory, visual, and kinesthetic impact, and thus engage the child in a more interactive learning process. In exploring the use of books, drama, videos, toys, play, humor, experience, and collaboration in pediatric metaphor therapy, I cover stories presented by parents, teachers, and therapists; stories written or told by others (such as those from the classics); and stories created by the child. All such tools and techniques can help facilitate the listener's identification with the problem and, consequently, the steps taken toward its resolution.

BOOKS AS A SOURCE OF HEALING STORIES: BIBLIOTHERAPY

There is an abundance of children's books available with new ones coming out all the time—and some of these provide excellent metaphor stories. Below I have listed two categories (classic value

stories and specific self-help books) to illustrate the types of books available and the ways they might be used.

Classic Value Stories

Remember the story (or the movie) of *The Wizard of Oz?* Of Dorothy's searching for something, somewhere over the rainbow? Of a lion who found his courage, a tin man his heart, and a scarecrow his brain? Of a wizard who was not what he appeared? Of Dorothy's discovery that "there's no place like home"? There have been countless books, documentaries, and even university courses about this single, classic children's tale, which was made into one of the most watched movies of all time. And the reasons for its success can be found in its core values that address the insecurities if childhood, have a central battle between good and evil, encourage the discovery of personal resources, and empower a positive outcome—all with humor. In Table 3.1 I have provided other examples of classic value stories, including the authors' names and some of the values the story communicates.

Therapists, teachers, or parents who want to teach values through stories can thus read these classic tales to a child, or direct the child to read the story him- or herself as a homework exercise. The story can then be discussed (if appropriate) following the reading or at the next therapy session. Such a discussion may employ questions like: Which character did you like the most? What did he or she do to help resolve the problem? Who had the best/most helpful/most practical ideas to fix things up? What did he or she do? If you were in the same position, what would you have done? What else do you think might be helpful? How do you think the main character felt when everything worked out well?

Table 3.1 Some Examples of Classic Value Stories

Book Title	Author	Values
The Jungle Book	Kipling, R.	Respect, friendship
Jonathan Livingston Seagull	Bach, R.	Perseverance, compassion
A Girl Named Helen Keller	Lundell, M.	Perseverance
The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe	Lewis, C. S.	Motivation, restraint, truth
The Little Prince	de Saint Exupery, A.	Kindness, humanity, love
Anne of Green Gables	Montgomery, L. M.	Honesty, kindness
The Wind in the Willows	Graham, K.	Friendship
Black Beauty	Sewell, A.	Forgiveness, perseverance
Louis Braille	Davidson, M.	Faith, perseverance
The Adventures of Pinocchio	Collodi, C.	Determination, love, devotion
Cinderella	Perrault, C.	Faith, harmony
Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel	Burton, V. L.	Faith, perseverance
Lassie Come Home	Knight, E.	Determination
The Secret Garden	Burnett, F. H.	Optimism
Harry Potter (series)	Rowling, J. K.	Friendship, goodness

Specific Self-Help Books

A number of self-help books deal with specific problems and the development of problem-solving skills in children, covering problem areas such as loneliness, worry, fighting, feeling angry, dealing with bullies, separation/divorce, or coping with cancer or other health issues (e.g., Amos, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1997; Amos & Spenceley, 1997a, 1997b; Braithwaite, 1997; Brown & Brown, 1998; Moses, 1997; Thomas, 1999). Some look more at outcomes like how to be brave, happy, and confident.

Most of the self-help messages are presented in a metaphor story such as "Johnny had a problem. This is what he did about it. And this is what happened when he did." It is possible to direct children to the stories relevant to their situations, either in bookstores or local libraries. If you are working in a specialized capacity with kids in these areas, you may want to look out for the series that best suits the needs of your clients. You can then present the messages by

- reading the story to the child in the therapy/teaching session,
- lending the child a copy to read between sessions, or
- lending a copy to the parent to read with the child, thus involving the parent in the process and, hopefully, benefiting the parent-child relationship at the same time.

EXERCISE 3.1

- Keep up with the children's literature that might be relevant to the clientele you are seeing.
- Build your own list of books with the values or self-help outcomes they contain.
- Read them to the child in therapy or set them as homework exercises for the child to read.

DRAMA AS A SOURCE OF HEALING STORIES

What young child does not like to play dress-up or put on a play for parents or visitors? To have children act out a story from either a book they have read, a story that has been read to them, or a story they create around a particular topic helps those children identify with the character, discover the means to resolution, and attain the outcome. If you are communicating through stories in a group or classroom setting, there is a good opportunity to develop various characters and perhaps even put on a play in front of the parents or the rest of the group or class. If you are consulting on a one-on-one basis, it is still possible to act out a scenario by setting up a two-character dramatization of an outcome story. For example, a therapist working with a child who is being bullied may ask, "Who is the person who annoys you the most? Of the people you know, who is the one who can best handle that person's annoying behavior?" Here we are seeking a role model with whom the child may identify and, hopefully, from whom he or she may learn to replicate successful coping strategies. "What do you think he or she would do? Let's make up a little play about it. I'll pretend to be the annoying person. You can pretend to be the person who handles it well. Let's see where the story goes."

It may take some prompting or guidance along the way to help move the child from the problem toward the outcome, but ways to assist with this are elaborated further in Chapter 16. It is important when casting a child in a role that he or she becomes the problem solver or character who reaches the desired outcome. Sometimes it may be helpful for the child to assume (as in the current example) the role of the annoying or bullying person to perhaps understand that person's perspective a bit better. However, it is better to complete the story with movement toward, or attainment of, the desired outcome rather than just an understanding of the other perspective.

A second use of drama is to recommend that parents take children to live theater productions of plays that may be relevant to the therapeutic outcome, such as *The Wizard of Oz* or *The Lion King*. This means the therapist needs to be aware of what is happening in his or her community at the time and to recommend those productions that may be beneficial or therapeutic. Such stories can then be discussed at subsequent therapy sessions in much the same way that a storybook might be discussed.

EXERCISE 3.2

- Plan to act out a story, perhaps in collaboration with a child.
- Find the outcome or point at which the story will end.
- Explore the journey or steps the character needs to reach that outcome.
- Find the crisis or challenge where your story will begin.
- Seek out the character or characters that are most likely to communicate the story's message.

VIDEOS OR DVDS AS A SOURCE OF HEALING STORIES: VIDEOTHERAPY

Rent a Kids' Video

If, as a parent or a therapist making a therapeutic recommendation to a family, you suggest a family pizza-and-video/DVD night, how many children are likely to turn it down? Hesley and Hesley (2001) have written a very pragmatic book about using video movies in adult therapy to allow clients to identify with problems similar to their own and to build strategies for working their way through that situation. Clients are requested to rent relevant videos and then talk about the topic in their next therapy session.

> A close relationship exists between VideoWork and a clinical use of therapeutically constructed metaphors. Both involve surprise that disrupts habitual responses, both use rich images that require a client to supply personal content in order to construct meanings that are relevant, and both involve implied directives for change. (p. 9)

These authors say there is a difference between watching videos for entertainment and viewing them therapeutically. To ensure the latter, the therapist needs to help prepare the client for watching

the video, then ask specific questions in therapy about which characters the client identified with and what methods they learned for resolving their own problems. This involves knowing your client well *and* knowing the video you recommend for viewing. Not all have clear or unequivocal messages. Recommending teenagers watch *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* may be beneficial if your intent is to communicate messages about competence in computer and social skills, caring for friends, having fun, and being independent. However, there are aspects of Ferris's character you may not want your client to model—like his deceit, his unlawful use of other people's property, his conceitedness, and his manipulation. Care needs to be taken that the video is likely to communicate the desired message, or that the client has the discriminatory skills to differentiate what is beneficial from what is not.

In child and adolescent videotherapy, therapists need to be mindful of *what* they select as age-relevant videos and *how* they communicate with the child about them. Since waiting a week until the next session may not be practical, using small video clips during the therapeutic session or asking parents to show the child the video the evening prior to the next appointment can lead to more immediacy of discussion. Follow-up questions are likely to be along the lines of: Which character did you like (identify with) the most? How do you see yourself as being like him or her? How would you like to be more like him or her? If they were in your place right now what do you think they would do? How would they fix things? How could you do what they do?

In Table 3.2 I have listed some children's movies with a brief description of their therapeutic characteristics, including examples of the types of problems they address, the competencies and resources they develop, and the outcomes they offer. This is just a brief list to give an example of the metaphoric value of certain movies. Check out what kids and teens are currently watching and can access at the cinema or rent through a video/DVD library. Assess their potential therapeutic messages for the ages and types of kids you work with, then test out their therapeutic benefits.

Make a Video

With a simple cape and mask, my grandson standing on a rock backed by a blue sky, and a video camera turned on its side (carefully omitting the rock), Batman would appear to fly to the rescue of a character in whatever distress we dreamed to create. With a black top-hat, a menacing laugh, and a bit of editing, a malevolent magician could trick Grandpa George into a cardboard box and saw him in half (appropriately accompanied by screams of pain) before turning into a good magician who could solve the problem by putting Grandpa George back together. Having children act out the story helps them identify with the character and the message of the tale. By our videotaping these performances, not only do children have the excitement of seeing themselves portray that character but,

EXERCISE 3.3

- Keep abreast of children's movies.
- Build your own lists of available videos and their therapeutic characteristics.
- Recommend for viewing those that match the therapeutic goal or goals of your young client.

Table 3.2 Some Examples of Movies as Metaphor

	Therapeutic Characteristics		
Movie Title	Problems Addressed	Resources Developed	Outcomes Offered
A Bug's Life	Intimidation	Building strengths	Courage
	Self-doubts	Coping with challenge	Leadership
Toy Story 2	Temptation	Valuing options	Joyfulness
	Indecisiveness	Making decisions	Acceptance
Finding Nemo	Rebelliousness	Accepting help	Self-confidence
	Loneliness	Making friends	Family values
	Fear	Becoming brave	Problem-solving
The Lion King	Death	Self-reliance	Confidence
	Loss	Happiness	Self-esteem
	Grief	Courage	
The Never-Ending Story	Bullying	Personal resources	Inner hero
	Unhappiness	Courage	Happiness
Babe	Self-doubt	Accepting support	Achievement
	Uncertainty	Persistence	Winning against odds
		Belief in self	
Watership Down	Fear	Facing fears	Arriving at goal
	Distress	Overcoming obstacles	Success
The Emperor's New Groove	Arrogance	Kindness	Better self
	Lack of care	Gentleness	
The Wizard of Oz	Being in an unwanted place	Self-reliance	Acceptance
		Problem solving	Confidence
	Insecurity	Making friends	
Harry Potter (series)	Personal challenges	Friendships	Good triumphs
	Unexpected crises	Problem solving	
Spiderman	Disability	Using your strengths	Confidence
	Feeling different	Gaining acceptance	Helping others
The Hulk	Uncontrolled anger	Managing anger	Productive use of energy
		Discovering love	Self-worth
October Sky	Being different	Maintaining focus	Achievement
	Non-acceptance	Coping with failure	Acceptance

additionally, they are able to relive the message of the story each time they view it. My grandson would literally be hopping from foot to foot with excitement as we showed the tape to other family members.

PUPPETS, DOLLS, AND TOYS AS METAPHOR

Cath, the astute mother of ten-year-old Tim, recently told me a nice, illustrative story of how she used a toy metaphorically. Tim was a keen and capable young soccer player, but after his team lost the

national final—despite neither team's scoring a goal—Tim began awakening in the night, screaming out loud, and going into his parents' bedroom, disturbing them. One night Cath led him back to his room, picking up a jigsaw puzzle from the family room on the way through. She sat at Tim's bedside, spread the pieces out on a tray, and said, "Sometimes when we have a problem, it is like a jigsaw. There may be pieces everywhere that don't seem to make sense. When we put them in the right places, we can solve the problem and see it for what it is." Together, mother and son sat on the bed solving the puzzle.

The next morning, over breakfast, Tim explained to his mother that his state team had played poorly in the national final, leaving the weight on his shoulders as goalie. Conversely, he had played his best game ever—not allowing a single ball to sneak passed him. As the opposing team accepted the trophy, their coach made a speech in which he said the trophy should really be Tim's as he was the player of the day and would undoubtedly go on to be a national champion. Tim began to have nightmares, constantly worrying, "But what if I let a goal through one day?" And this was why he was awakening, screaming in the night.

Following the nocturnal jigsaw solving and his discussion of what had happened, he declared to his mother, "Only I can help myself." "Then what do you need to do to help yourself?" she replied. Tim talked to his coach, changed positions, began to enjoy his soccer again, and was soon sleeping well.

Cath illustrated nicely how the use of aids, toys, and games, combined with one or two simple, presuppositional questions (i.e., questions that presuppose an outcome in contrast to asking why a behavior is occurring), can be used metaphorically to help resolve a problem.

Similarly, teachers and therapists can use puppets, dolls, and toys to structure and communicate outcome-oriented stories. This is a different process from using them diagnostically to interpret the psychodynamic symbolism of childhood play. In metaphor therapy, the stories acted out by the puppets, dolls, or toys will (a) identify the problem, (b) communicate means for resolving the problem, (c) model the types of skills and resources necessary for such resolution, and (d) offer a potentially attainable outcome. In Chapters 14 and 15 I will explore how to structure such outcome-oriented metaphors—whether communicated verbally through books, videos, drama, puppets, toys, or other aids.

EXERCISE 3.4

- Build a collection of resources that you might use for working with children of various ages: dolls, blocks, toys, jigsaw puzzles, etc.
- Plan the outcome of your play-based story.
- Use the objects that are relevant and interesting for your child.

PLAY AS METAPHOR

Once, a famous teacher was returning home from an important lecture he had just delivered to a group of esteemed colleagues, and was absorbed in the accolades he had received. His route took him along a beach-side boardwalk where something caught his eye. A young boy on the beach was build-

ing the largest and most elaborate sand castle the teacher had ever seen. The child was respectfully scooping the sand up in his hands, then patting it firmly yet gently into place. He had carefully created towers and turrets, dug a moat, and raised flags, in total absorption.

When the boy completed his impressive work of art, he rested back on the sand, appearing to admire his own work. Then, suddenly, he leapt forward, jumped on the castle, smashed it down, spread it over the sand, and watched as wave after wave washed away any evidence of its existence. It was as though the castle had never existed.

The teacher was shocked. What a waste! Why should such an achievement be obliterated? Why would a creator destroy his own work? He walked across the beach and asked the boy, "Why do you spend so much time and effort building such a huge and elaborate castle only to break it down?"

"My parents have asked me the same question," confided the boy. "My mother sees something very symbolic in it, but then that is my mother. She tells me that each grain of sand is like each aspect of humanity. Together they can form something impressive but, when we forget about our relationships with others and try to exist like a solitary grain of sand, something is destroyed in much the same way that I destroy a castle, or that the ocean breaks it up into millions of pieces and disperses it along the beach.

"My father says it is a way of learning about life. Nothing lasts forever. Like sand castles, everything is created and destroyed, exists and vanishes, is impermanent. When we appreciate this we can begin to enjoy the time that we have available. He says that building sand castles is a way that children intuitively come to learn and understand these important lessons of life.

"For me?" asked the boy. "For me, I am just playing. I just want to enjoy what I am doing and have fun."

The lecturer untied his shoelaces and cast aside his footwear. He peeled off his socks and rolled up his trousers. He un-knotted his tie and sat down beside the boy, asking, "May I stay and play with you?"

In an award-winning article entitled "Playful Metaphors" in the *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis,* Dr. Julie Linden claims, "It is through play that children develop, and when development has been interrupted therapeutic play can heal" (2003a, p. 245). Play is thus presented as essential to the process of maturation *and* the process of healing, serving several functions. Biologically, play provides exercise, develops physical skills, and offers release of energy. Intrapersonally, it helps develop personal mastery, mind-body interaction, and conflict resolution. Interpersonally, it facilitates the development of identity and social skills, while socioculturally, it models culturally appropriate behaviors and roles (Schaefer & O'Connor, 1983).

When you set out to communicate a healing story through play or playful activities, several therapeutic benefits are almost inherently present:

- Play is likely to create a good mood or feeling in your work, thus shifting the unpleasant, negative associations the child may have with the way the therapeutic "issue" has been tackled by direct parental injunctions in the past.
- By the time the child is hauled into our office and we are instructed to "fix" him or her, relationships between the key players and the "issue" are often negative. Play is one quick and effective method to modify that situation, enhancing and facilitating positive relationships between therapist and child as well as between parent and child.

- Play helps establish a desirable context for learning. If children enjoy—and feel good about participating in—a playful experience, they are less likely to be resistant toward the potential learning from that experience, and more likely to be absorbed in the experience of that playful interaction.
- Play can heighten children's awareness of their resources and competencies as well as help them develop new skills they did not possess previously, thus better equipping them for their journey through life.

Play, and its therapeutic benefits, has been the subject of many useful books over a long period (Boik & Goodwin, 2000; Norton & Norton, 1997; O'Connor & Braverman, 1997; O'Connor & Schaefer, 1994; Schaefer, 2003; Schaefer & Cangelosi, 2002; Schaefer & O'Connor, 1983). Using play as metaphor (Linden, 2003a) has specific advantages in that it can facilitate many of the desired goals in child and adolescent therapy. It is about pleasure, enjoyment, and joyfulness. It is an activity, involving a child in the process of doing. It incorporates exploration, experimentation, and problem-solving skills. It is a powerful process of learning and a necessary process of healthy growth. But here my aim is not to give a thorough coverage of one topic so much as to provide a smorgasbord of the various ways you can communicate, and enhance the communication of, healing stories for both children and adolescents.

HUMOR AS METAPHOR

What are the jokes the children you know are telling? What humorous books are they reading? What comedy shows do they watch on television? What commercials do they see as funny? Using humor, jokes, and funny stories can quickly engage children and teenagers, communicating a powerful therapeutic message in a seemingly light-hearted manner. This is because, as Yapko says, "Humor involves reframing as the vehicle for the joke. The punch line inevitably causes us to look at the incidents in the story differently" (2003, p. 736).

Developmentally, laughter is an early human activity, first revealing its presence around the age of four months. Isn't this interesting? The response to humor is there long before we develop the sense of humor. From early in our development, we do not have to understand humor to be able to laugh. Because it is a natural, built-in, feel-good emotion, employing humor and laughter in therapy not only puts nature on our side but also serves some very pragmatic functions.

We have long thought that in situations such as bereavement and trauma it is common, and appropriate, to experience emotions of sadness or anger. To many, laughter following the death of a loved one may seem to indicate a lack of respect, or may even be considered pathological; but a University of California associate professor of psychology, Dacher Keltner, found from interviews with mourners that people who could laugh or smile through their periods of grief made healthier long-term adjustments than those who did not. Laughers experienced less anxiety and depression than non-laughers two to four years after the bereavement. Instead of being pathological, laughter seems to be a helpful and functional mechanism for coping with life's difficult times (Wellner & Adox, 2002) and thus one that is healthy to promote in children.

Burns and Street say,

> We use humor to cope with the various situations we encounter in life, to help change our feelings, and to connect with other people. It can help develop group esteem and coherence, enhance the quality of our interactions with other people, and build the basis of a good relationship. Humor can also help pacify conflicts, change a mood, and improve our perception of life. (2003, p. 215)

If humor holds such beneficial, inherent qualities, is it not a useful therapeutic goal to help children and teenagers build laughter, a sense of humor, and the ability to see the funny side of life? For this reason you will meet such humorous characters as Mr. Grumblebum, Wally the Wacky Wizard, and a grumpy genie in Part Two, because using such characters, jokes, funny stories, and humorous metaphors provides a win-win outcome. In addition, I have heard it said that humor can be an effective way to tell people what they do not want to hear in a way they want to hear it. While communicating using both the positive affect and effect of humor, it is possible to deliver a potent therapeutic message as in Story 47, "Flying Off the Handle." In *101 Healing Stories* I devoted a whole chapter to using jokes and humorous tales with adults (2001, pp. 200–213), while in Chapter 15 of this book I discuss examples of the humor-based healing tales for children presented intermittently through Part Two.

EXERCISE 3.5

- Listen to children's jokes.
- Observe the TV programs they find humorous.
- Use funny stories and jokes to communicate your therapeutic message.

EXPERIENTIAL METAPHORS

"Pairing action with metaphor to achieve change is crucial to work with children" (Linden, 2003b, p. 150). Metaphors need not just be in the *telling* of a tale but may also be in the *doing*. We have probably all heard it said that experience is the best teacher. You learn to drive a car by having the experience of sitting behind the steering wheel, pressing the pedals, using the blinkers, and coordinating all those necessary eye-hand skills to make the vehicle move successfully and safely. Children may *know* that their enuresis, aggressive behaviors, or drug use are inappropriate, but until they *experience* what it feels like to wet the bed at a sleepover at a friend's house, they meet someone stronger and more aggressive, or they are rushed to a hospital because of an unintentional overdose, they may not appreciate the need for change. Similarly, until they *experience* a dry night, calmness in a stressful situation, or the strength and confidence to say "no" to drugs, it is difficult for them to appreciate that change is possible. A core ingredient of therapy, therefore, is the creation of the experience of possible change, and experiential metaphors are ones crafted to create such beneficial experiential learn-

ing by setting up an assignment that has the metaphoric intent of helping clients develop the appropriate levels of competency to reach their desired outcome.

If a child needs time out for processing certain life events, is it helpful to assist him in finding a time, a place, and the means for doing so? If a child wants or needs to develop problem-solving skills, would it be beneficial to set her an assignment such as exploring a maze, bicycling around an unfamiliar suburb, doing a jigsaw, or tackling another kind of puzzle? If the therapeutic goal is building a new skill, whether in bladder control, aggression management, or saying no to a drug supplier, could the child first build competency in a metaphoric task like learning to juggle, ride a unicycle, or sail a wind-surfer? If children want to stop biting their nails, or grow friendships, would it be helpful to set them the experiential metaphor of buying a seedling and learning what is necessary for its healthy growth and development? (How do you prevent insects from eating it? What does it need to nurture it?)

Some of our most important learning is experiential. No one has to tell children how to walk. Parents may lend a hand, but children acquire the skill through their own experience. They experience the unsteadiness, the falls, perhaps the hurts, and the initial difficulties of attempting to put one foot in front of the other. Each time they fall, they get up a little stronger, a little more confident, a little more capable, until soon they are running, hopping, skipping, and dancing. If there is some validity in the statement that experience is our best teacher, then it follows that the more experiences we have in life the more we are capable of learning. One important way of helping our young clients grow in skills, competence, and confidence is to create and facilitate opportunities for them to have a broader range of novel experiences. And one useful way of doing this is through experiential metaphors.

This subject is elaborated, with much greater detail, in *Nature-Guided Therapy* (Burns, 1998), in which a whole chapter is devoted to the subject of experiential metaphors and their application with adult clients. The principles for setting up such therapeutic assignments are much the same for children and can easily be extrapolated for the different age groups. Setting experiential metaphor assignments for children needs to be done with special regard to ethics and safety. As well as being therapeutically relevant, the assignment needs to be age relevant and competency relevant, and may even need to be carried out under parental or therapist supervision. Parental consent and involvement is important even with adolescent clients.

EXERCISE 3.6

- Find the things a child can *do* that will metaphorically represent both the resources they need to develop and a therapeutic outcome.
- Set the assignment as an experiential metaphor, an activity for the child to go and do.
- Follow up with questions about what they learned from the experience and how they can use that learning to benefit them in the present and future.

CHILD-GENERATED METAPHORS

Stories will be most personally relevant for the child if they are able to match the child's personal experience and interests. A bottom line for using storytelling in therapy (or for any therapeutic strategy) is that, the better you know your client, the more relevant you can make your interventions. Communicating in the language, mind-set, and interests of the child makes your story a lot more personal and a lot easier for the client to identify with. It has relevance and meaning that is quickly incorporated, rather than requiring a child to start to search for meaning outside the level of his or her own experience.

In a book simply entitled *Metaphor Therapy*, Richard Kopp (1995) provides a six-step plan for listening to, joining, and utilizing the metaphors that your clients generate. This approach makes life a lot easier for the therapist: The onus is not upon you to create some rich and fanciful tale. Instead, by joining the client's experience, the therapist can be more effective in supporting the development of a reframed narrative. To do this, Kopp offers six steps that I have paraphrased here, and to which I have added my own child-relevant examples.

Step 1: Listen

Listen to the metaphors that children bring into therapy. So often they slip by, particularly if we are trying to interpret or analyze what is being said rather than just listening. Observe carefully if a young child in play builds an enclosing wall of blocks around a doll. Observe when a teenager says, "I'm battering my head against a brick wall trying to get through to my parents." Listen for the words, expressions, and affect that indicate the importance of the metaphor to the client.

Step 2: Explore the Client's Image

Explore the client's metaphoric image with questions like, "What is dolly doing inside the walls?" or "How would you describe the image you have in your mind when you say you are battering your head against a brick wall?" Kopp sees this as an important step because it is the client's image that is more important than the therapist's understanding or interpretation of it.

Step 3: Explore the Senses

Where appropriate, explore the sensory associations that go with the metaphoric image. Ask the child, "As you think about that, what else might you be you seeing (hearing, smelling, tasting, touching)?"

Step 4: Explore the Feelings

Examine the feelings and experiences associated with the metaphor. For example, "How does it feel for dolly to be inside those four walls?" or "What are you feeling as you imagine battering your head against that brick wall?" With the younger child who does not have the verbal skills to answer such

questions the therapist will need to carefully observe what emotions (calmness, anxiety, anger, sadness, etc.) accompany the play.

Step 5: Change

Assist the child to transform the metaphor into a more acceptable image. "How could dolly rebuild those walls—with an opening, windows, or doors—so she would feel happier?" or "What could you do to break down the brick wall, get over it, or work your way around it?"

Step 6: Consolidate

The final step is to ratify and consolidate the therapeutic changes brought about by the client. "How can you and I help dolly make those changes?" or "How can you start to put those changes into practice?"

In sum, it is a process of listening to children's language, listening to their level of experience, listening to their style of thinking, and joining them on their journey, much as you might fall into the style and pace of a friend while out walking together. Once you have this step-by-step process for attuning yourself to a child's self-generated metaphors, you have a simple and effective tool that helps validate the child's experience, builds the therapeutic bond, and provides the basis for the child to develop empowering strategies for change.

EXERCISE 3.7

- Listen to the child's own story.
- What is the language he or she uses?
- Join the language or metaphor of the child and start to shape the story toward the desired outcome, perhaps using the steps described by Kopp (1995).

COLLABORATIVE TALES

When tales are developed collaboratively with a child they have more therapeutic impact than if they are seen to be imposed by the therapist, because the child is an active participant in the creation of the story, the resolution of the problem, and the attainment of the outcome. Collaboration in storytelling can be gained by some simple strategies.

Involve the Child in the Telling

Once you have commenced the story with a problem that may parallel that faced by the child, it is possible to ask, "What do you think happens next?" Keep the child exploring possible solutions with questions that presuppose a satisfactory outcome, such as "What does the character need to do to fix

this problem?" "How do you think he or she wants to think, feel or behave?" or "What would he or she have to do to get out of this trouble and be happy again?"

Set a Homework Assignment

If you know a child has enjoyed a recent Harry Potter movie and is currently facing a problem of feeling socially ostracized at school, you may set up a homework assignment by talking about Harry Potter's returning to school. Did he feel different because of who he is? Was he picked on by *some* of the students (being specific)? Were there others who liked and appreciated him (finding exceptions to the problem)?

The child can be asked to go home and complete the story before the next session, exploring questions like "Who do you think can help him solve this problem?" "What will he/they need to do to overcome it?" and "What will be the outcome and how do you think they are going to feel when they get there?" If the child is old enough, and has the appropriate literary skills, he or she may be asked to *write* about the story. If the child has good verbal skills you may ask him or her to come back and *tell* you the completion of the story at the next session. If the child's talents are more in the artistic area, he or she might be asked to *draw* a story of the characters and processes that take the story through to completion. You do not need to specify which medium a child uses, but allow the choice of each child's own mode of expression.

EXERCISE 3.8

- Invite the child to join you as an active creator of the story.
- Rather than have a fixed direction for the story in your own mind, ask the child questions.
- Seek his or her solutions.
- Incorporate the child's ideas. Test them out in the story.
- Be flexible and adaptive in your approach.

TO DISCUSS OR NOT TO DISCUSS?

That is the question. Do you talk with children about the story after you have told it or not? In the literature you will find some different opinions about whether it should be discussed afterward, with perhaps the majority opting to "let the story tell its own tale." Berg and Steiner (2003, p. 82), for example, state emphatically, "After you finish reading the story, make sure there is no discussion about it—just read the story and then end the session. There should be no discussion about what the story meant to the child; trust their intuitive ways to understand the meaning and to find useful ways to incorporate this story to their life situations." This is indeed the type of directive I was given in my early metaphor training.

Such metaphor practitioners consider that discussing the steps for resolution may tend to impose

the storyteller's ideas rather than allow the listener to search for his or her own meaning—and this is a real concern about which we need to be cognizant. Obviously, if the child is contemplating the meaning of the story or appears reluctant to discuss it, that response needs to be respected. Sometimes it may be better to allow listeners to engage in their own search for meaning than to interrupt what might be a useful time of processing.

On the other hand, there are metaphor therapists who consider that discussing the story helps make it practical and relevant for the child. I do not know that there is any hard or fast rule on this issue. It is not about having a rule that you *always* follow, as suggested by Berg and Steiner, but more a matter of listening to the needs of the child. If the child *wants* to talk about the story, not doing so seems to devalue his or her needs. If the child says something like, "It was funny when the little lioness found she could roar as loud as the other lions," or "I liked it when the lonely, lost little bear found his way out of the forest," the child may be opening the way to talk about his or her own experience of the tale. This gives a therapeutic opportunity to follow up with some outcome-directed questions like, "What was the most helpful thing the lioness or little bear did to help fix the problem?" or "If those characters were in a similar situation in the future what do you think would work best for them then?" This is not interpreting the story for the child but helping listeners find means for *applying* their own important learning from the story.

I think part of the confusion here arises out of the fact that two issues are involved and often get lumped together without being clearly differentiated. The first is the meaning the child attributes to the story. It is important to bear in mind that there is no one necessary conclusion or outcome, and that the intent that you had in telling the story may *not* be the message that the child derives from it. Healing stories are likely to have their greatest impact when you assist listeners to seek, and find, their own meaning—and that may be by quietly letting them discover it for themselves.

The second consideration has to do with how the child incorporates that learning in a useful and practical manner. Here some discussion and guidance may help the child take a valuable learning or insight and apply it usefully for the resolution of his or her problem.

PART TWO

Healing Stories, Teaching Stories

CHAPTER 4

Enriching Learning

Milton Erickson claimed that every child has a driving need to learn and discover, that every stimulus constitutes for the child a possible opportunity to respond in some new way (1980), from which we may conclude that pediatric psychotherapy's goal is appropriately directed at facilitating and enriching such learning opportunities. Learning how to learn is one of life's essential skills, equipping the child with knowledge, shared experiences, strategies for coping, meaning, enjoyment, and well-being in life. My definition of *learning*, thus, goes beyond the three R's that are the basis of our educational systems to include building on and utilizing the child's natural curiosity and desire to learn as a foundation for the acquisition of values, prosocial behaviors, problem-solving strategies, and other necessary attributes that are incorporated—or not—during childhood.

In this chapter I have provided stories about empowering children to make a difference, about developing positive attitudes toward life circumstances, and about learning to be self-reliant. There are stories about learning to use the skills, resources, and abilities a child has available, as well as about how to take a realistic approach to being happy (Burns & Street, 2003; Seligman, 2002).

STORY 2
KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feeling helpless
- Feeling powerless
- Seeing what you can't do

Resources Developed

- Caring for others
- Acting with kindness
- Believing you can help
- Taking the first step

Outcomes Offered

- The joy of caring
- Discovery of your own abilities
- The rewards of kindness

I am sure you have heard the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears—but have you heard of Grandpa and the Four Bears? When Goldilocks visited, a long time ago, there were only three bears. Now there are four—Little Bear, Big Brother Bear, Mama Bear, and Papa Bear. Since Goldilocks' visit, Grandpa Bear had come to stay with the Bear family, too. He was a frail old bear whose coat had turned gray, whose paws shook when he tried to eat, and whose shoulders bent forward as if he was tired of standing.

Little Bear *loved* Grandpa Bear. Grandpa Bear always listened to Little Bear when everyone else was too busy rushing off to gather honey or something. Grandpa Bear would never say "No" when Little Bear wanted to sit quietly on his lap and be told a story . . . and Grandpa Bear had some great stories.

Little Bear also felt sorry for Grandpa Bear, whose paws shook so much at times that his spoon might miss his mouth and spill porridge all over his fur. Sometimes he would drop his bowl on the hard floor, smashing the bowl and making a big mess.

Mama Bear and Papa Bear would get annoyed with him. Apart from the fact that he was breaking the all bowls Goldilocks had made famous in her story, they had to clean up after him. "As if there isn't enough for us to do already," they would complain.

Big Brother Bear would say things like, "Grandpa Bear's got CRAFT's disease—He Can't Remember A Flaming Thing," and laugh out loud. Little Bear knew Big Brother Bear was teasing her, but still it hurt and she hated him for it. She wanted to help Grandpa Bear, but what could she do?

One day when Grandpa Bear had dropped his bowl yet again, Little Bear got down on the floor and picked up all the pieces. She then asked Papa Bear if he had any glue.

"Why do you want glue?" asked Papa Bear.

"So I can stick Grandpa Bear's bowl back together and keep it for you and Mama when I have grown up," answered Little Bear.

Papa Bear quietly sat back in his Papa-Bear chair and looked at Mama Bear in her Mama-Bear chair. For a moment they just looked at each other. After that Little Bear noticed they were kinder to Grandpa Bear. They bought him a special grandpa plastic bowl that wouldn't slip off the table so easily and wouldn't break if he did drop it. They didn't seem to care so much if he spilled porridge down his fur or made a mess on the tablecloth. They talked to him more and listened to his stories, even if they had heard them before.

So our story has a happy ending. With thanks to Little Bear, Mama Bear and Papa Bear were happier. Big Brother Bear . . . well, he was much the same as he always was. Grandpa Bear was certainly happier. And Little Bear was happier, too.

STORY 3
KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: *A TEEN STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feeling helpless
- Feeling powerless
- Seeing what you can't do
- Having goals too high or too distant

Resources Developed

- Appreciating what you have
- Caring for others
- Looking for solutions
- Sharing what you have
- Believing in your abilities
- Building resources step-by-step

Outcomes Offered

- The joy of caring
- Discovery of your own abilities
- The values of community
- The rewards of kindness

You know, sometimes when you are a kid, it is easy to feel pretty helpless or powerless. Indeed, if you stop and think about it, there are so many things that you can't do. You can't stay up as late as your bigger brother or sister. You can't play sports as well as your football or basketball heroes. You can't do some of the stunts that other kids do at the skate park. You can't get the results at school that your parents seem to expect that you should. Sometimes it is hard to see that you even have the potential to develop any of these abilities. How could you ever get to be a league football player when you fumble every time you try to pick up the ball? What you want to achieve may seem such a long way in the future that it feels you will never reach it.

Well, I once heard an inspiring story—a true story, I believe—about a boy named Trevor. It shows there are little things kids can do that make a big difference. One night Trevor was doing what a lot of other 13-year-old kids would be doing: He was watching TV. On the news he saw a story about some homeless people sleeping out in the cold on the streets, in a downtown area of Philadelphia where he lived. Trevor had never really stopped to think how fortunate he was to live in a fairly well-to-do suburb of the same city. The story of the homeless people touched his heart and he began to wonder what he could do to help these people.

It might have been easy for Trevor to forget about it. There are so many sad stories that you see on TV at times. This could have been just another that he ignored.

Trevor also might have thought, *Well, what can I do about it? I'm just a kid*, but he didn't. Instead

he began to wonder how he might help and that led him to remember there were some spare, unused blankets in their garage. So he went to his father and asked if he could take them to the people downtown who had no homes to go to for the night.

Trevor's father might have thought the request a bit strange. It is easy for us to want to hang on to the things that we have, easy for adults to think that they've worked hard to get what they own, so why should they give it away? I guess it is much the same as a kid thinking, *It took a long time to save up my pocket money to help buy this new bike, so why should I lend it to a friend who needs to get home in a hurry?*

Now, Trevor's dad was a kind-hearted guy. He drove Trevor downtown to hand out their few surplus blankets to some of the people on the streets. I guess when it came time to curl up and sleep that night the people were pretty happy for the added warmth of the new blankets.

Trevor was happy, too. He felt good about giving out the blankets. He felt an inner warmth, almost like he had been wrapped up in an emotional blanket himself. But he realized there was a risk—it might feel so good that you'd want to do it again.

The next day Trevor went to his local grocery store and other public places in his neighborhood where there were notice boards. He put up signs asking for people to donate any spare blankets or food they didn't need. The result was surprising. Kindness was contagious. Trevor found so many people were willing to help that within a week he had filled his dad's garage with food and blankets. What Trevor had started with his kindness grew and spread throughout the community. It wasn't long before people's generosity overflowed from his dad's garage and Trevor and his dad had to look for a bigger building to house all the gifts being donated. Would you believe there are now a number of special warehouses throughout Philadelphia that stock food and blankets to feed and warm the homeless? They are all called "Trevor's Place."

STORY 4
FEED WHAT YOU WANT TO GROW

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feelings of inner conflict
- Struggling between others and self
- Kindness versus greed
- Love versus hatred

Resources Developed

- Developing awareness of the conflict
- Separating out the struggle
- Nurturing what you want to grow
- Building responsibility

Outcomes Offered

- Nurturing yourself
- Nurturing positive values
- Finding resolutions for inner conflict

A grandfather sat down on a rock in the sunshine beside a babbling stream with his grandson. "Tell me a story," asked the grandson.

"This is a story about two wolves," said the grandfather. "As we grow up it sometimes feels like there are two wolves inside us struggling to take control. You might imagine the first wolf with soft gray hair, a kindly look in its eyes, and maybe even a gentle smile on its mouth. It is a wolf that hardly ever bares its teeth and is willing to stand back to let the little ones feed. We might call this the wolf of peace, love, and kindness, for the wolf thinks that, if we all live peacefully with each other, every animal and every human will be a lot happier.

"For this wolf, love is what matters more than anything else. You see, it knows that without love our world of animals and humans would cease to exist. It is because a mother loves her baby that she cares for it, feeds it, clothes it, shelters it, and protects it from danger. We arrive in the world as an act of love and we grow through the love that parents show us. We long to be loved and our lives are nurtured and enriched when we love and are loved in return.

"The wolf, too, seems to know that kindness is part of that love. When we are kind to others they are likely—though not always—to show kindness back to us. Smile at someone and there is a good chance they will smile back. Go out of your way to be helpful and the one you help is more likely to help you when you need it. Wolves are a bit like humans and live in groups. They mix with each other and, generally, feel better when they are mixing in a warm, harmonious way.

"But," continued the grandfather, "let's imagine that there is another wolf in the pack who doesn't think the same way. This wolf has a really mean, nasty face. It pulls back its lips at times to bare its teeth threateningly toward other animals. When it does they usually feel fear rather than love and respect, for this is the wolf of fear, greed, and hatred. Maybe it is frightened or afraid, and that's why it's always on guard. Unfortunately, it hasn't learned that by being so angry or aggressive to others, by thinking of who or what it hates rather than who or what it loves, it builds a lot of bad feelings in itself and among the other wolves. This wolf is out for number one, whereas the wolf of peace, love, and kindness is looking out for others' happiness and well-being as well as its own.

"As you can imagine, two such wolves in a pack might be in a struggle to see which one gets its way. The wolf of peace, love, and kindness wants to share those values with everyone, but the wolf of fear, greed, and hatred cares only for itself. It feels bad in itself and leaves the others around it feeling bad.

"Let us continue to imagine," said the grandfather, "that two such wolves are in a struggle inside you."

The little boy looked up at his grandfather, wide-eyed. "Which one will win?" he asked eagerly.

The grandfather looked down, kindness in his eyes, softness in his voice, and answered, "Whichever one you feed."

STORY 5
LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Unrealistic wishful thinking
- Dependence on others to satisfy our needs
- Lack of self-initiative

Resources Developed

- Observing what successful others do
- Building your own skills
- Learning to be more self-reliant
- Taking responsibility for your own needs

Outcomes Offered

- Doing rather than wishing
- Greater independence
- Personal responsibility

Have you heard the story about the five little chickens? Well, once upon a time there were five little chickens who lived with Daddy Rooster and Mommy Hen. One morning the five little chickens woke up feeling hungry, like most of us do first thing in the morning or when we get home from school in the afternoon.

The first one said, "I'm starving. I wish someone would give me a big fat worm." He began to dream about the big fat worm, was longing to peck it up in his beak and feel it slithering into his stomach, as I guess you would if you were a hungry little chicken. Not quite what I would prefer for breakfast! What about you?

No matter how much the first little chicken wished someone would give him a big fat worm, however, no worm arrived and the hungrier he felt.

The second little chicken also felt hungry and, hearing her brother talk about a big fat worm, said, "I'm famished, too. I wish there was a big fat slug slithering along here in front of me right now." She looked at the ground in anticipation. She looked and looked . . . and grew even hungrier.

The third little chicken felt as hungry as his brother and sister. "Cheep, cheep," he called out, hoping someone would hear. "I wish the farmer would bring us a big bowl of those yummy chicken pellets that he sometimes delivers." With that thought in his head he stood watching the gate into the coop, hoping and hoping the farmer would appear . . . and feeling hungrier as he did.

"Or," said the fourth, joining in the wishes of her brothers and sister, "that the farmer's wife would bring out one of those big bowls of food scraps from last night's dinner, as she often does." Like her brother, she stood watching the gate into the coop, wishing and wishing for a big bowl of scraps . . . and growing hungrier.

All this talk about food had the fifth chicken feeling so ravenously hungry he thought he was going to faint. "What I wouldn't give for a big bowl of crunchy grain," he added. "I wish I had some

wheat, oats, or barley." His eyes were fixed on the tin tray where the farmer sometimes spread some grain. He stared and stared at the tray, growing hungrier by the second.

Overhearing the five little chickens' wishes, Daddy Rooster called, "Come here." Gathering the five little chickens around him, he continued, "Have you noticed what Mommy Hen and I do when we are hungry? If you want breakfast, follow us out into the garden patch. There you can learn to scratch and peck for your own food like we do."

STORY 6
COME UP LAUGHING

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Meeting the unexpected
- Being stunned or knocked back
- Having your path blocked

Resources Developed

- Laughing
- Relating with laughter and joy
- Seeing the funny side

Outcomes Offered

- Laughter
- Positivity

Something interesting happened at my home recently. Where I live, in a hillside suburb, I am lucky to be surrounded by a lot of trees, and even luckier that those trees are home to a variety of birds. One of those birds is called the laughing kookaburra. It is actually a big kingfisher, but that doesn't mean that it lives just on fish. In fact, I don't know that it eats fish at all. It certainly does like to catch snakes and lizards in its strong and powerful beak.

The kookaburra's head and chest are white whereas its wings and back are rusty brown with blue tinges along the edges of its wings. If I put out scraps of meat on a feed tray the kookaburras fly down to eat them and, at times, land on my arm to eat from my hand. However, I think the thing I love most about the kookaburras is the way that they laugh at sunset. My bird book describes their call as a "loud chuckling laugh." Often they laugh in chorus with each other so that their merriment ripples around the twilit trees a bit like the "wave" the fans do at a sporting event. I believe they do this to establish the boundaries of their territory at night. How wonderful it would be to laugh yourself to sleep every night.

I mention kookaburras because of something interesting that happened at my home recently. I was inside my home when there was a loud bang against a window. I walked out the door and around the veranda to see what had happened. A kookaburra was sitting on the wooden floorboards of the veranda, looking extremely stunned after having flown into the window. It must have seen the reflection of the trees and thought it was continuing to fly through the woods when it hit the glass and

came to a sudden halt. What a frightening shock to be flying freely through the air, then sudden stopped in your tracks by something you hadn't even seen coming. As I stood back a little distance, wondering what to do, the stunned kookaburra shook its head, raised its beak in the air, opened its mouth, and burst out into a loud, hearty laugh. I thought what a wonderful thing it would be to learn how to lift your head up and laugh after such a frightening surprise.

STORY 7
IT'S IN THE WAY YOU DO IT

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Changing behavior
- Shouting and loudness
- Belligerence and anger
- Resistance

Resource Developed

- Gentleness and kindness

Outcome Offered

- Change achieved through kindness

The other day I was talking to a friend I have known for a long time and was surprised to learn something about her that I had never known before. When she was a young child, her mother would sit on her bedside telling her stories, many of which she still remembers—and many of them she tells to children today. She said she doesn't know where her mother heard the stories but maybe they were from her mother, or even her mother before her.

As we talked she began to tell me some of the stories her mother had told. They had stayed in her memory all that time from her early childhood. One was about the wind, the rain, and the sun. One day the wind, the rain, and the sun were talking about how to get someone to change what they are doing. Sometimes it can be a big problem if you are doing things you don't really want to be doing, or doing things that are not helpful for you or others. Well, this is exactly what the wind, rain, and sun were discussing.

"Let's play a game," said the sun. "See that boy down there wearing a jacket? Let's see who can get him to take it off."

"Let me try first," said the wind eagerly. The wind began to blow past the boy's ear, whispering gently at first, "Take off your jacket. Take off your jacket." When the boy didn't take off his jacket, the wind began to blow a little stronger and call a little louder into his ear, but the stronger it blew, the colder the boy became and the more snugly he wrapped his jacket around him. The wind began to howl louder in his ear. It was not asking any more but roaring orders at him: "Take off your jacket! Take off your jacket!" The more the boy ignored it, the louder the wind shouted . . . and the more

the boy ignored it. The wind puffed itself out, blowing and shouting, but the boy snuggled deeper into his jacket, holding it tighter around his body.

"Here, give me a go," called the rain. "Obviously what you are doing isn't working. There is no point screaming at him because the more you do, the more he holds his jacket closer." The rain began to do what it did best. It started to drizzle softly, calling as it dripped past the boy's ears, "Take off your jacket. Take off your jacket." But instead the boy pulled the hood up over his head and zipped up the jacket to seal his body from the rain. Frustrated, the rain was determined not to give up. It seemed to forget the good advice it had given to the wind. "If he won't listen to me, I'll beat him into taking his jacket off," said the rain, angrily, and with that began to pour heavily. Raindrops pelted against the boy: "Take off your jacket! Take off your jacket!" but still the boy refused to listen. The rain turned into hail and lashed at him, angrily shouting at him to take off his jacket. Instead, the boy tried to cover every part of him that the jacket could hide and looked around, searching for shelter.

"It must be my turn," said the sun quietly. Without speaking a word it started to shine down, drying the boy and his jacket. The sun began to caress the boy in warmth, just gradually raising the temperature of the air without making it too hot. At first the boy slipped back the hood. As the sun continued to gently warm the day, the boy undid the zipper of his jacket. Caringly, the sun raised the temperature another degree or two, all the while caressing the boy in warmth, so that it wasn't long before the boy slipped out of his jacket altogether to enjoy the comfortable warmth of the sunshine.

STORY 8
MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT YOU ARE GIVEN

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fear and panic
- Being stuck in a difficult place
- Feeling helpless and hopeless

Resources Developed

- Using what is available
- Looking for alternative solutions
- Doing what you can in the circumstances
- Accepting progress in small increments

Outcomes Offered

- Lateral thinking
- Patience
- Persistence
- Success

Once upon a time there was a farmer who had a small farm not far from a country village. He owned very little, but from this small farm he was able to support his family. Of the few things that

he did own, one was an old mule. For years the old mule had helped him plow his field, carry his produce into the village, and, harnessed to a cart, drive his family to church every Sunday.

The village near where the farmer lived liked to celebrate all the annual festivals, and for the coming New Year decided to have a fireworks display. Nobody stopped to think about how this might affect an old mule in a nearby paddock.

The mule was standing in his paddock, head drooped toward the ground, eyes closed, slumbering peacefully on New Year's Eve when suddenly the sky exploded with weird flashes of light and cannon-like bangs that could have heralded the start of a war. The poor mule, thinking the world was coming to an end, fled in terror, blindly running across the paddock. As it happened, there was an old well in the paddock. It was dry and unused, having failed to continue its supply of water many years ago. Normally the mule would have avoided it with great care. But in the pitch black of the night and overwhelmed by terror, the mule stumbled and fell down the narrow well. Fortunately, he landed unharmed at the bottom.

The next day the farmer was surprised to find his mule missing and began to search around his property. It wasn't long before he heard a faint, echoing bray coming from the depth of the well and to his dismay found his mule at the bottom. There was no way he could safely climb down the old well to get to the mule. There wasn't a long enough ladder in the village to reach the bottom and, even if he had been able to get down, how would he get the mule out? He called his farmer friends to help. They thought of rigging up a winch to lower the farmer down to the mule, but the walls of the well were too old and crumbling. It was too risky. Even if they had lowered someone down, how could he attach a harness to lift the mule out, in such a small space?

The farmers stood around the well peering down, scratching their heads. "It's hopeless," said one. "Impossible," said another. "He is just going to die a slow, miserable death down there," said a third. "Best put him out of his misery." So the farmers picked up some shovels and started to throw soil down the well to bury the mule.

At the bottom of the well, the mule felt this weird stuff, like dry rain, falling on his back; he gave himself a shake and the soil fell around his hooves. The mule stomped around a little and the soil hardened underneath his hooves. More soil fell on his back. He shook it off and again stamped around some more. He was surprised to find that, after doing this for a while, the bottom of the well had risen an inch or two. He was looking at the wall a little higher than he had been before. The more soil the farmers shoveled in, the more the mule shook it off and trampled it firm under his hooves—and the higher he rose up toward the surface, bit by bit. Yes, as you have guessed, the mule eventually made his way to the top—and was saved.

STORY 9
DOING WHAT YOU CAN

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Finding yourself in trouble
- Facing a new situation

- Feeling fear and panic
- Being stuck in a difficult place
- Feeling helpless and hopeless

Resources Developed

- Being adventurous
- Exploring new experiences
- Having fun
- Thinking ahead
- Being determined
- Exploring all the possibilities

Outcomes Offered

- Lateral thinking
- Patience
- Persistence
- Success

Sometimes it is easy to find yourself in trouble when you don't expect to be. Sometimes, when we face a new situation, we don't know what to do, simply because we have never had to face it before. That's what happened to Ms. Teresa Frog. When she was small, everyone used to call her Little Tessie Tadpole. Now that she was bigger she preferred Ms. Teresa Frog.

Ms. Teresa Frog lived in a pond on a farm. She was a rather adventurous young frog who liked to go exploring. Some described her as nosy, or a "sticky beak." Her mother often told her she stuck her nose in where she shouldn't. "Mark my words," her mother would say. "One day you will be in big trouble." But Teresa *had* to explore. She just had to discover things she didn't know.

After all, it was fun to leave her pond and go hopping around the farmyard. It was always fun to watch the comical chickens busily scratching and pecking their way around the coop. She wouldn't like to be confined like them, she thought to herself.

She had discovered that visiting the pigpen nearly always gave her the chance to catch a plump fly or two. There were so many around that the quick flick of her long tongue almost always guaranteed a meal.

One particular day, Ms. Teresa Frog (formerly known as Little Tessie Tadpole) was hopping past the dairy when she smelled the fresh fragrance of cream. Following her nose, she found the tempting smell coming from a bucket on the floor. Wanting to taste the cream, she jumped toward the rim of the bucket but didn't leap quite high enough. She tried again, putting in all her effort. This time she overdid it, leaping right over the rim and landing in the lush cream with a soft *plop*.

The cream was thick and warm. It felt so much nicer than swimming in her cold pond. Even better, it tasted good to drink. She flicked out her long tongue, lapping up several rich mouthfuls. But, after playing for a while and drinking her fill, Ms. Teresa Frog thought it was time to head back to her home in the pond. This was when her trouble began.

You see, Ms. Teresa Frog hadn't thought very far ahead. She'd thought about getting *into* the bucket but she hadn't given any thought to getting *out* of the bucket. The sides were steep, her cream-

covered feet were too slippery to get a grip, and she couldn't just leap over the rim. She was stuck, felt helpless, and didn't know what to do.

She could just go on swimming, she told herself. But, although she might enjoy herself for a while, that wouldn't fix her problem. She could wait for someone to come and rescue her, but that might be a long time and, if the farmer found her, he might not be too happy about finding a frog who had just visited the pigpen swimming in his cream. If she gave up and stopped, she might drown. Oh dear, it all felt too tough for poor little Ms. Teresa Frog.

Not knowing what to do, she did the only thing that she could do: She kept swimming. She swam round and round in the cream, doing the frog kick, as frogs tend to do. She kicked and she kicked. She kicked and she kicked. Then she kicked some more. Ms. Teresa Frog was determined that she wasn't going to give up and drown. She had to keep going, so she kicked and kicked some more. As she did, she started to notice that it was becoming harder and harder to swim through the cream. At first she thought she was just getting tired, but then she realized that the cream itself was becoming thicker. Her kicking was turning the cream into butter!

With this, her hope was restored and she swam harder and stronger, continuing to circle round and round in the bucket until the butter became so firm that she could stand on it and leap . . . right over the rim of the bucket. Tired as she was, she joyfully bounced back to the pond. As she bathed in the pond, washing the butter off her body, Ms. Teresa Frog thought to herself, "I've always liked cream, but I love butter better."

STORY 10
SEEKING HAPPINESS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Unhappiness
- Loss of interest
- Boredom
- Loneliness

Resources Developed

- Learning to laugh, play, and have fun
- Discovering the value of friendships
- Exploring the nature of happiness

Outcomes Offered

- Knowing that we do not always get what we want
- Learning that happiness is more than what we possess

Once upon a time there was a princess who had everything . . . well, almost everything. She lived in a huge palace. After the king and queen, she was the most important person in the whole

country. Of course, being the princess, she had everything that she could ever possibly dream of. Could you imagine it? If she wanted something, all she had to do was ask and it was given to her. Being a modern-day princess, she had all the latest in modern toys. She had a specially built toy palace that she filled with Barbie and Ken dolls and all their accessories. She had the latest in computer games that were played on a big plasma screen that filled a whole wall in her playroom. And her playroom alone was as big as the houses in which some of the families in her kingdom lived. Yet despite all this, she often lost interest, got bored, or felt lonely.

At times the princess would open the window of her playroom and look down into the streets below. There she saw other kids playing hopscotch or tag, laughing, chattering, and singing.

"Why are those children making all those sounds?" the princess asked her royal nanny one day.

"I guess it is because they are happy," replied the royal nanny.

Looking down at the kids again, the princess said, "I want to be happy, too. What will make me happy?"

The royal nanny had never found herself in such a difficult position before. If only she could let the princess out into the streets to play with the other kids, the princess might begin to learn to laugh and have fun, too. If only the princess had some friends with whom she could share stories, talk about her feelings, or just do some of those things that are nice to do with a friend.

The nanny even began to think some thoughts that were perhaps too wicked for a royal nanny to have. She wondered whether the princess would enjoy having a playful snowball fight with other kids in the streets, or whether she would laugh about paddling barefoot in the mud along the river bank and perhaps getting one of her pretty little dresses dirty. What would it be like for her to not worry about her appearance or what other people thought about her? But of course these were not things that a royal nanny could say to the princess and still keep her job. Besides that, the princess would never be allowed to do them, no matter what the nanny thought.

So what did the royal nanny say? She had to think of something to answer the princess's question. Looking down in thought, she saw her shoes. Perhaps there was the answer. Finally she said, "If we could find the happiest child in the kingdom, you could stand in that child's shoes, maybe even walk in her footsteps, and know what it is like to be happy."

The princess instantly demanded the king send off a whole battalion of his guard to search for the happiest child in the kingdom. "When you have found him or her," said the princess, "bring me the child's shoes immediately."

The king's guard searched and searched. The princess was impatient as the hours turned into days and the days turned into weeks. Several times every day she asked, "Have they found the happiest child yet? Where are the shoes you promised me?"

The waiting had the princess wondering. What would the shoes of the happiest child look like? Would they be dress shoes, fashionable boots, or brand-name sneakers? What color would they be? Pink, red, blue, yellow? Happy shoes surely had to be colorful. Would they be decorated with flowers, bows, or bells? Would they have flashing lights like some shoes she'd seen advertised on television? She couldn't wait.

Well, day after day went by and the princess kept asking her royal nanny, "When will they bring me the shoes?" Finally the day arrived. The royal nanny came running into the princess's chamber with the news, "Your Highness, I have some good news and some bad news."

"Give me the good news first," cried the little princess, excitedly.

"Well," said the royal nanny, "I am pleased to say we have found the happiest child in the whole kingdom."

"Then, where are my shoes?" demanded the princess, impatiently.

"That is the bad news," replied the royal nanny. "The happiest child in the kingdom didn't have any shoes."

EXERCISE 4.1

Throughout Part Two, these exercises will focus on recording your own thematic story ideas. As we read or listen to stories, they often remind us of our own experiences, trigger memories of similar stories we have heard in the past, or elicit creative ideas for a metaphoric tale that fits for a particular client.

Therefore it may be useful to have a notebook handy to jot down any such ideas. While reading the stories in this chapter, what thoughts came to mind about helping to enrich learning in children? Of the tales you have read, what might be adaptable to your own work? There is no need to write out the whole story; simply jot a note of the theme or the therapeutic characteristics.

CHAPTER 5

Caring for Yourself

Feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and lack of control have been identified as major characteristics, if not causes, of a number of psychological disorders in both children and adults. They may be the basis of depression, anxiety, relationship difficulties, suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, acting-out behaviors, and general dissatisfaction with life. As illustrated in Story 14, "Let Joe Do It," it can be easy for children—unwittingly and unintentionally—to acquire patterns of self-doubt or self-denigration. From a child's perspective, parents, elder siblings, teachers, or role models can seem so much more capable that children may interpret this as their own inadequacy.

Learning to care for the self—as well as caring for others—serves both a curative and a preventative function. The more children can learn to nurture and look after themselves, the less likely they are to suffer from low levels of self-esteem or self-confidence. A balanced attitude toward self-nurturing reduces the probability of depression, anxiety, and unhappy interpersonal relationships. A good sense of self-worth enhances feelings of empowerment and confidence, thus equipping the child for challenging situations in the present or future.

The stories in this chapter are about increasing the child's self-evaluation and self-acceptance. They tell tales of moving on from challenging situations as well as of recognizing one's own abilities, strengths, and uniqueness. They give examples of learning to accept compliments and to acknowledge that it is okay to be good without having to be perfect.

STORY 11
SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Indecision
- Dependency
- Being in the depths of despair
- Being caught in unfamiliar territory

Resources Developed

- Letting go of a burden
- Learning acceptance
- Discovering new resources and abilities
- Being in the moment
- Creating empowerment
- Reaching beyond expectations

Outcomes Offered

- Letting go of the past
- Freedom from fear
- Independence
- Focusing on new heights of achievement
- Future-orientation
- Empowerment

Once upon a time a little octopus lived in warm, shallow waters close to a sandy beach. Do you know how many legs an octopus has? Yes, eight. And do you know what they are called? That's right. Tentacles. Well, this little octopus loved to wrap its tentacles around things and hang on. It might grab hold of a fish and go for a fun ride. It might hang on to a solid rock that felt strong and secure.

One day, as the little octopus was out exploring, it saw a strong, sturdy anchor hanging below a ship. Immediately, the little octopus wrapped its tentacles around the anchor and hung on.

Then something scary happened. The anchor began to drop, sinking down into darker, colder waters where the little octopus had never been before. The little octopus didn't like it but didn't know what to do. What do you think you would do if you were the octopus? Would you hang on or let go?

Well, the little octopus hung on until, with a thump, the anchor landed on the sea floor. Then it hung on tighter. It was frightened and scared of this strange place, and still didn't know what to do.

Just then it saw a friendly-looking fish swimming toward it in a gentle, relaxed motion. "Help," called the little octopus. "Can you help me?"

"Yes, I can help you," said the fish. Its eyes seemed kindly and caring. "But, first, you have to help yourself. You need to let go of that anchor, before I can show you a way."

Still the little octopus didn't know what to do. The anchor felt strong. If the octopus let go, it would be alone in the water all by itself. It looked at the fish. The fish nodded encouragingly, and the little octopus began to slowly peel off one tentacle at a time. Having so many legs or arms (and a tentacle is a bit like both) can be nice if you want to hug someone you love, but can make hard work of it if you want to let something go. The last one was the hardest. It needed to hold on just a little longer before building up the courage to set itself free.

The kindly fish waited, encouraging and congratulating. When the little octopus let go of the anchor the fish said gently, "Follow me." It swam back and forth, gradually making its way up toward the bright, warmer waters, guiding the little octopus in a way that it could repeat if ever it got caught out of its depth again.

The little octopus felt stronger and happier as it swam on. It caught up with the fish and, for a while, they swam side by side. No longer did it need to follow. At times it began to swim ahead, taking the lead and making its own way forward. No longer did it feel out of its depth. In fact, this had been a real adventure.

Before long the fish said, "No longer do you need me. You can swim on strongly by yourself now. Enjoy."

The little octopus thanked the fish and swam on upward. The waters continued to grow brighter and warmer. Light rippled off the surface and shone into the sea, highlighting the yellows, reds, and blues of the tiny fish that darted in and out of the colorful coral. The things around the little octopus seemed much the same as before, but now the octopus felt different, stronger, more confident.

Then it did something an octopus doesn't usually do. It crawled up onto the beach and stretched out on the sand, basking in the warm sun. It felt nice to relax for a while and do nothing in particular.

The little octopus looked at the limestone cliffs behind the beach. Maybe it had learned to like having adventures. Maybe doing something new didn't feel as scary as it had before. The cliffs looked tempting. The little octopus wondered what it would be like to climb to the top.

Carefully, it began its climb toward the cliff top. The going was not always easy, but the little octopus was excited by the challenge. At times it was a struggle but the little octopus pressed on, and wow, what a feeling when it stood on the top.

A cool breeze blew in from the ocean. As naturally as if it had been doing it all its life, the little octopus spread its tentacles out like wings and began to lift on the breeze. Like an eagle it soared into the air, riding the gentle currents, experiencing the joy of flying.

Looking down, the little octopus saw the ocean below. That was where it had come from.

Looking up it saw the clear, blue sky above. That was where it was going. Who would have guessed that an ordinary little octopus could have flown to such heights?

STORY 12
SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS: *A TEEN STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Indecision
- Being out of your depth
- Dependency
- Being caught in unfamiliar territory

Resources Developed

- Letting go
- Accepting advice
- Following directives
- Independence
- Discovering new resources and abilities
- Being in the moment
- Finding empowerment

Outcomes Offered

- Letting go of the past
- Conquering fear
- Becoming independent
- Focusing on new heights of achievement
- Looking ahead

Dave had always loved the ocean, ever since he was knee-high to a crab. His family had vacationed at the beach for as long as he could remember, and you wouldn't believe how excited he had been at Christmas when he saw a gift-wrapped board-shape standing by the Christmas tree. He couldn't wait to get to the surf.

But when he did, something scary happened. Dave thought he knew the water well, but when you're on a board it can be different from when you are swimming. The board began to drift. It—and Dave—were caught in the riptide that swept along the beach, out past the headland into the deep, dark, cold waters behind the surf. Dave didn't like it but didn't know what to do. He felt powerless against the current. Should he try to paddle out or go with it? Should he hang on to the board or let go and swim for it?

Dave hung on until the current eased, leaving him "out the back"—far from shore and behind terrifying, mountainous waves. He gripped the board tighter. This was a strange and frightening place to be. Still, Dave didn't know what to do. Should he put his hand up and call to the lifesavers for help?

Just then another surfer confidently paddled up beside him. "Can I help you?" he asked. Dave recognized him. It was Surfer Mike. His picture had been in the paper last season because he'd risked his own life to save a drowning kid. He was a local hero.

"I can help you back to shore, if you want," he continued, "but you have to help yourself as well. Look at the way you're gripping the board. First, you need to let go of that fear and relax a little. You're going to be okay. I can show you a way."

Dave wasn't sure how he could relax. He felt secure gripping the sturdy board. If he let go, would he fall off and be alone in the water? Those waves looked big and scary. He looked at Surfer Mike. Surfer Mike nodded encouragingly, and Dave began to relax his grip.

"Good," said Surfer Mike. "Don't try to stand at first. Let the wave pick you up, then shift your weight forward on the board. As you start to build up speed move your weight back until you feel balanced, then just lie there and enjoy the ride."

When Dave reached the shallows he was bursting with excitement. Wow! What a ride.

Surfer Mike accompanied him out again, using the riptide to get behind the surf. Dave was fascinated that the current that had terrified him was seen by Surfer Mike as a helpful way to get out back.

A few more rides with Surfer Mike at his side and Dave was on his feet. He'd got the hang of this, and it wasn't long before he felt okay without Surfer Mike beside him. He was right to be cautious of the riptide and the big waves, but no longer did he feel out of his depth, or scared. In fact, this was a great adventure.

"Looks like you don't need me any longer," said Surfer Mike. "You are a natural. Have fun."

Dave paddled back out by himself. He took a last wave, riding it confidently all the way in to shore. When he hauled out, he thanked Surfer Mike and used some of his pocket money to buy him a burger and drink at the surf club.

Afterward, as he basked on the beach, recuperating from all the effort he'd put into conquering those waves, he quietly enjoyed the sun on his body, the sounds of the waves crashing in the background and swishing up the sand. It was nice to just take some time out after the experience he'd just been through. Watching the signs of the riptide in the water and looking at the size of the waves out back, he realized they hadn't changed. They were the same as before he'd been caught in the current. It was Dave who was different—stronger and more confident. The self-doubts that he'd had about being in a scary place had given way to joy and exhilaration.

As he lay there, resting, he thought back over what he'd done—and somehow that scared, frightened boy who'd got swept too far out just a short time before seemed almost a distant dream, a foggy memory. He had a new feeling of strength and confidence. He knew he could do it again, and maybe even try new beaches or bigger waves.

Behind the beach he noticed hang-gliders taking off from the hills behind him, soaring on the sea breeze, lifting like eagles on gentle currents of air, and thought how he'd love to do that. Perhaps he would ask Dad next vacation.

STORY 13
RECOGNIZING YOUR ABILITIES

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feeling unimportant
- Being one of the crowd
- Reacting with anger
- Wanting attention (even if negative)

Resources Developed

- Wondering how to change
- Wanting to be nice
- Learning to use your abilities
- Doing what you can do, well
- Attempting something new when all else fails
- Discriminating when behaviors are helpful and when not

Outcomes Offered

- Positive self-evaluation
- Recognition of abilities
- Discrimination
- Contributing to others' well-being

Once upon a time there was an ant who lived on a farm. Would you like us to give the ant a name? What shall we call him or her? Ali? Ali the Ant? Fine.

Ali the Ant had a problem. You see, Ali didn't feel like a very important ant. Sometimes when you have lots of brothers and sisters—like, I guess, an ant does—there can't be much time for a mom or dad to give that special time a little ant may want. Besides, there are millions and millions of ants—more of them than us people, I am told. Ali felt like just one of a big crowd . . . and not a particularly important one. He was also small—so small that lots of other creatures didn't even notice him—well, not unless he bit them. They sure noticed him then. They would yell at him, swat at him, be angry with him, but that really wasn't the way he wanted others to notice him. He wanted to be nice to others. He wanted to do something special, but how could he when he felt so tiny and unimportant? He wondered what he could do.

One day Ali the Ant was going about his business, unnoticed in the crowd, when he heard some loud noises coming from the vegetable garden. You see, the man and woman who lived on the farm that Ali called home liked to eat nice fresh vegetables, so they grew their own. Their garden was their pride. They had fenced it off to keep the farm animals out, but on this particular day a big billy goat (Shall we give him a name, too? What about Billy? Is that okay?) had broken through the fence and started to gobble up their prized vegetables.

The farmers did everything that they could to chase the goat out. They pushed and they pulled.

They shouted and coaxed. They tried to dangle a carrot in front of Billy, but he remained as stubborn as an old mule and refused to leave.

The man and the woman asked the speckled, red-combed rooster if he would help. The rooster was big and proud. He ruled the roost in the chicken coop, but when he screeched at the goat, "Get out of the vegetable patch!" Billy refused to go. The rooster flew at him, squawking, pecking, and flapping his wings in his most terrifying way, but Billy just butted the rooster over the fence and went on eating.

The man and woman turned to their faithful brown sheepdog who had no trouble herding flocks of thoughtless sheep across the paddocks. "Can you help?" they asked. Surely he would have no trouble with just one wayward goat. The dog barked, yapped, and growled in his most ferocious voice. He bared his long white teeth and snapped at Billy's heels. "Get out of the vegetable patch!" woofed the dog. But the billy goat turned, looked at the dog, butted it over the fence, and went on eating.

The man was getting so distressed to see the vegetables disappearing into the goat's mouth that he thought he needed the biggest and strongest help he could get. He ran off to one of the paddocks and brought back his biggest, most powerful bull. The bull was *huge*. Surely he would strike terror into the heart of the goat. The bull snorted and pawed at the ground, bellowing to Billy, "Get out of the vegetable patch!" But when the goat started to butt at the bull with its sharp horns, the bull turned around and ran away like a coward.

As the man and woman stood there wondering what else they could do, Ali the Ant marched up to their feet and asked, "Can I help?" At first, they didn't even notice where the tiny voice came from. When they looked down and saw the little ant, they burst out laughing. "What can you do that the fearsome rooster, wise sheepdog, or powerful bull could not do?" they asked.

"Maybe there are things I can do that they can't, just as I can't do some of the things they can do. Maybe you don't have to be big and strong, but just be able to do what you do well," replied Ali the Ant.

Well, the farmers didn't know what else they could do. They were at their wits' end and their vegetables were continuing to disappear into Billy's mouth even as they watched. "We have tried everything else," they acknowledged, "and that hasn't worked. Have a go if you want."

"Sometimes," said the ant, "when you have done everything you can, you need to try something new."

With that, Ali the Ant walked off through the vegetable patch toward the goat. Ali was so tiny Billy didn't even see him coming. He climbed up the goat's hairy back leg so carefully that the goat didn't even feel him. Ali gently and gingerly marched along the goat's backbone, right up to its head. Even more carefully, he crawled across to Billy's right ear, found a piece of soft, tender flesh . . . and bit hard. The goat leapt in pain and fright, and fled from the vegetable garden, never, ever returning to eat the man and woman's vegetables again.

Ali felt very important when the farmers thanked him for using his abilities so helpfully and for doing what no other animal had done. All the other ants thanked Ali, too, because the man and woman let them wander through the vegetable patch to eat and drink whenever they wanted. And after that the farmers were very careful never to tread on an ant when they were walking around the farm.

STORY 14
LET JOE DO IT

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Being put down
- Not feeling valued
- Doubting yourself
- Being scared
- Engaging in avoidance behaviors

Resources Developed

- Learning from the beginning
- Learning that practice enhances skills
- Learning to enjoy what you do
- Thinking through what others say about you

Outcomes Offered

- Thoughtfulness
- The benefits of practice
- Enjoyment of learning
- Positive self-evaluation

There was a familiar saying that the family had about Joe when he was young. In fact, it even persisted when he got older. From what they said you might think they meant something different but, over a long time, Joe had come to know what they meant.

His mother and father said it first, then his sister picked it up, and now even uncles, aunts, and cousins were saying it. . . . And mostly they laughed when they did, leaving Joe to feel even worse. He grew to dread it but knew it wouldn't be long before someone said it yet again.

What they said was, "Let Joe do it." Now, an outsider may have thought they were giving Joe a compliment, suggesting that he was competent and capable of doing things, that the family could trust Joe to do it. In fact, it meant just the opposite. If Joe was to turn on a tap, the water was likely to come out in a great rush, splashing all over him or the floor and making a mess in his mother's kitchen. Seeing it, the first thing she would say is, "Oh no, let Joe do it." If he was drying the dishes and dropped one, it was always a piece of her best crockery. "Let Joe do it," she'd say. Reaching out to pick up a glass, his movement was likely to be too quick or too awkward no matter how hard he tried to get it just right, and even as it fell to the floor, smashing glass and spilling his drink, he could hear the words, "Let Joe do it."

Of course, there were other sayings, too. Whenever they went on summer vacation it was almost a daily routine for the family to play softball on the beach. If he was fielding, there might be a nice gentle hit of the ball off the bat, arching high in the air, falling softly toward him with Joe in the perfect position to make a catch. Somebody would call out, "Watch it, Joe will drop it," and sure

enough, he did. If he was batting and he had a dead-easy shot pitched to him, all that was needed was for someone to call out, "Joe will miss it," and his bat would somehow swing wrong and hit a foul ball to the sound of someone's excited cry, "How's that?"

It is probably little wonder that Joe began to doubt himself. He felt reluctant to do things. He was scared that if he tried something it would go wrong and he would hear those dreaded words again. He began to think that he was no good at ball games and he started to use every ploy he could to avoid participating in team sports at school. When he had to do sports, he chose individual activities like running and swimming, where he was not so likely to be put down yet again—at least not by a whole team.

It was not until he got to high school that Joe began to discover things could be different from what they had been. Some of his friends decided to form a lacrosse team and asked Joe to join them. "No, I'm no good at ball sports," came his quick reply. They answered, "Neither are we. None of us have ever played before. We're all in the same boat." When he still declined, they pressed him. "We know how good you are at running, and we need a good runner."

Joe reluctantly gave in to their pressure and, to his own surprise—while learning from scratch with his friends—he found he could run and play a ball game at the same time. They all fumbled a bit at first, struggling to catch or scoop up the ball in their rackets. And Joe found he was not much worse than anyone else. They practiced as a team twice a week and Joe even practiced in his backyard almost every day, without telling the others. In their first competitive game, Joe surprised himself by being the first to score a goal. Their coach was excited. Joe became their hero and found that, not only could he do it, he *enjoyed* doing it.

You see, there was something that Joe did not realize at the time when people used to say, "Let Joe do it." He was young and growing up. You have to *learn* to turn on a tap so that it doesn't rush out too fast. You cannot necessarily expect to be perfect the first time—or even at all the later times—you try to do something. You have to *learn* how to hold a plate so that it doesn't slip from your fingers when you're washing or drying up. You have to *learn* how to judge the right distance and speed to move your arm when picking up a glass of water. Joe didn't know this because everyone around him was bigger than he and had already learned how to do those things. He just expected—as everyone else seemed to expect—that he should be as good as they were.

He hadn't realized when he was playing softball on summer vacation that his father and uncle and cousins were all older and physically more mature than he was. Joe was the youngest and, consequently, you really couldn't expect him to be as skilled as they were in managing the coordination between his eyes and hands, could you? But as he grew up he became as equally capable of doing the sorts of things they could do. Maybe not all of those things, but certainly some of them. Maybe he could even learn to do things that they couldn't do.

He doesn't often hear people say "Let Joe do it" anymore. On those few occasions when he does, however, he is able to smile to himself and think, "Yeah, that's just part of growing up."

STORY 15
DISCOVERING YOUR SPECIALNESS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Not feeling special
- Sibling rivalry
- Feeling inadequate
- Comparing yourself to others—unfavorably

Resources Developed

- Learning that helping others can help yourself
- Showing kindness
- Accepting your own abilities
- Listening to how others value you

Outcomes Offered

- Self-acceptance
- Being yourself
- Discovering your own specialness

If there was one thing Jill could wish for, it was to feel special, because she couldn't remember that she ever had. Of course, there probably had been times in her life when she had felt very special, but those times were ones she did not remember easily. Maybe there were times when she was a really young baby and her parents were so pleased and proud that she had arrived. She probably didn't remember how her mother, father, grandparents, and others leaned over the cot and made funny baby-sounds at her. She probably didn't recall what great delight they took in watching her begin to crawl, walk, and talk. I have no way of knowing when things began to change—whether her parents changed, or Jill changed, or it was a bit of both. Maybe it had something to do with when her little sister was born and Jill started to think that this new baby was getting all the attention. It seemed that everyone thought she was more special than Jill.

Going to school didn't help. It always seemed that there was someone better than Jill, someone whom others took more notice of than her. She wanted to be special herself.

Jill was not the top student in her class, like Emma was. While she was certainly not at the bottom of the class, either, she wished she could be more like Emma, who always topped every subject. Jill noticed when report cards were handed out at school that Emma's mom was always at the gate waiting for her. After studying Emma's card, her mother would give Emma a big hug and promise her a reward, like buying her a special gift or taking her to see a movie. But Jill's report card always said, "could do better" or "could try harder." Her parents said the same when she got it home: "We are pleased to see that you passed everything, but maybe you can do better next term."

Jill didn't feel special at sports, either. She could run and swim all right, but she never got selected for the school teams like Penny did. Consequently, Jill often found herself wishing she could be more

like Penny. Penny was the fastest runner at school and also the fastest swimmer. Anything that anyone could do, sports-wise, Penny seemed to be able to do better. Sometimes Jill thought it wasn't fair that Penny could do so many things so well. Compared to Penny, Jill thought of herself as a "fumble foot" and, after a while, she just gave up trying to get on the sports teams.

Jill didn't even feel special at having lots of friends. Kathy was the one in the class who seemed to do that much better than anyone else . . . and Jill wished she could be more like Kathy. Kathy was the clown, she was a lot of fun, she was always laughing and joking and telling stories. Everyone wanted to be her friend. She had more kids for sleepovers than anyone else in the class. Mind you, Jill was not without friends; she had several close friends. It was just that she didn't get invited to *every* sleepover like Kathy did. She didn't get invited to *every* birthday party. So when some kids were asked, and she was not, she felt decidedly unspecial.

As it happened, one afternoon when they were about to leave school Jill walked passed Emma, who was desperately pulling all the contents out of her bag, spreading them out on the bench, searching and searching. "What's the matter?" asked Jill. "I lost my math homework sheet," said Emma, "and it's due in tomorrow. I don't know what to do." Jill said, "Mine is at home. I haven't done it; I was finding it difficult. If you want you can come to my home and we can do it together." Emma went to Jill's house and together they worked on the math assignment. Emma explained to Jill some of the math concepts that Jill had never understood. When they had completed their homework and Emma was about to go, she said to Jill, "Thank you. Without you, I wouldn't have got it done and might have failed." Jill felt just a tiny, sneaky feeling of being special for helping someone she admired like Emma.

Emma turned to go home but then paused a minute, and said to Jill, "You know, it's hard always being at the top of the class, your parents and teachers expect so much of you. I often wish I was like you and didn't have all these pressures."

Long before the school's track-and-field day arrived, Jill had given up trying to compete, but she offered to help out and was assigned the task of ensuring that everyone got from the locker room to the start of the races on time. As she was doing this, Penny, the school's fastest runner, called out, "Oh no!" Jill asked, "What's wrong?" Penny replied, "I left my running shoes back in the classroom but I need to change and I don't have time to get them before the start of the race." "Then I will," said Jill, and raced back to the classroom faster than she had ever run in her life. She found Penny's shoes and brought them back to the locker room in double-quick time. Penny grabbed them in a hurry and flew out to start her race. When she came back with her winning ribbon, she said, "Thank you, Jill. I wouldn't have been able to even start the race without you. You must have run to get my shoes like a true champion."

As she packed her clothes back in her bag, she turned to Jill and said, "You know, everyone expects me to always win the races. There are many times that I wish I was like you."

A day or two later Jill came across Kathy crying in the girls' restroom by herself. "What's the matter?" asked Jill. "Everyone always expects me to be funny," said Kathy. "They expect me to be happy and jovial all the time but there are times, like everyone, when I feel sad or just simply don't want to be funny. The other kids don't seem to understand. If I'm not what they expect it seems I'm not their friend any more." Jill sat and listened while Kathy talked about her feelings and how she felt the pressure to live up to the expectations of others.

When the tears had subsided, she said, "You know, Jill, there are many times when I wish I was just like you."

Jill was surprised that Emma, Penny, and Kathy could wish they were just like her. She was even more surprised when Kathy gave her a big hug and said, "Thanks." It surprised Jill, too, how she began to see things differently after that. Maybe she didn't need to be tops at any one thing. Maybe she didn't need to be special at anything in particular. Maybe it was enough just to know that she was special being who she was.

STORY 16
THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCEPTING COMPLIMENTS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Low self-esteem
- Rejection of compliments
- The complications of false modesty

Resources Developed

- Learning to value yourself
- Accepting compliments

Outcome Offered

- Self-worth

One day, a pretty young snake was bathing at the edge of a lake. Having washed, she stretched out on a warm rock to dry and began to preen herself. A fly buzzing by looked down, saw her, and commented, "My, your scales are gleaming so attractively in the sunlight. You look sleek and clean. You are such a beautiful snake."

The snake, shy and embarrassed, slithered off seeking somewhere to hide. Seeing a hut nearby she disappeared through the thatched grass walls. She didn't realize it was the home of the village sorcerer. He took fright at the sight of the snake, grabbed his drum, and started beating loudly to frighten away this evil intruder.

A tortoise that was slowly journeying across an adjoining field heard the rhythmic beat of the drum and began to dance. An elephant, seeing this unseemly display from such a sedate creature, stood on the back of the tortoise. The tortoise excreted fire and the fire ignited the sorcerer's tinder-dry grass hut. Black clouds billowed up into the sky, darkening the land. A deluge of rain fell from the heavens, but quickly abated, allowing the sun to disperse its warm and drying light. A mother ant, seizing the opportunity to dry her eggs following the flood of rain, spread them in the sun. An anteater, quick to see an opportunity for a meal, gobbled down the ant's eggs.

The ant took the anteater to court. Seeking redress under the laws of the land, she approached the judge of the jungle, the king of beasts, and described her problem. The lion convened a court, calling together all the parties involved.

First he addressed the anteater. "Anteater, why did you eat the ant's eggs?"

"Well," the anteater replied, "I am an anteater. I was only doing what came naturally, what anteaters do. What other alternative was there for me when the ant spread her eggs so temptingly in front of me?"

Turning to the ant, the lion asked, "Ant, why did you spread your eggs where they might tempt the anteater?"

"It was not my intent to tempt the anteater. Surely you can see I am a better mother than that, but what else could I do to care for my young?" replied the ant. "They got wet in the heavy deluge of rain. They needed to dry out when the sun shone so warmly."

Looking to the sun, the lion continued his investigation. "Sun, why did you shine?"

"What else could I do?" asked the sun. "It is my job. The rain had poured and, as everyone knows, the sun must follow the rain."

"Rain, why did you pour?" asked the lion in his search to unravel the truth.

"What else could I do?" responded the rain. "The sorcerer's hut was on fire, the whole village was under threat. I only wanted to help."

"Hut, why did you catch on fire?"

"I couldn't do anything else once the tortoise excreted fire on me," answered the charred remnants of the sorcerer's hut. "I was made of grass. I had stood there for years. I was very dry and had no resistance."

"Tortoise," inquired the king of beasts, "why did you excrete fire?"

"It was the only thing I could do. The elephant stood on me. With her weight, my life was threatened. I had to do something to try and escape."

The lion looked up at the elephant. "Tell me, elephant, why did you tread on the tortoise?"

"What else was there to do?" asked the elephant. "She danced so wildly. Her behavior was most unbecoming and inappropriate for a tortoise. I thought she had gone crazy or something. I didn't intend to hurt her. I just wanted to help settle her wild mood."

The lion turned back to the tortoise. "Why was it you were dancing so wildly?"

"What else could I do?" responded the tortoise. "The sorcerer was beating out such rhythmic and compelling dance music on his drum, I had no choice. I just had to dance."

"Sorcerer, why were you beating your drum?"

The sorcerer answered, "What else was there for me to do when the snake entered my hut? She frightened me. She was dangerous. Serpents are the representations of evil forces and bad omens. I had to chase its evil presence out of my home."

"Snake," inquired the king of beasts, patiently working his way through the line of witnesses, "why did you enter the sorcerer's hut?"

"What else could I do?" answered the snake. "The fly embarrassed me with its words of praise. Somehow, somewhere I had to hide my face, and the grass hut of the sorcerer was the closest refuge."

Finally the lion, lord of jungle justice, turned to the fly and asked, "Fly, why did you praise the snake?"

The fly did not address the king of beasts but instead turned to look at the snake and asked, "What, don't you know how to take a compliment?"

STORY 17
WHAT YOU GIVE IS WHAT YOU GET

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Impulsivity versus consideration or reflection
- Sneaky behaviors
- Going against parental standards
- Covering up guilty behaviors

Resources Developed

- Remembering to think before you act
- Taking responsibility for your behaviors
- Facing the consequences of your actions

Outcomes Offered

- Finding that what you give is what you get
- Learning the law of cause and effect
- Being considerate of others

Brett and Cameron were brothers. Brett was the older and the more adventurous. He was the one who tended to jump in and have a go at things, not stopping to think what might happen until after. Cam was the younger and more cautious, thinking ahead about all the possibilities that could happen.

One day Brett and Cam found themselves at home, alone. Their parents had gone out somewhere and thought the boys were old enough to be trusted by themselves now. Some of Brett's friends at school had been talking about being allowed their first drink of alcohol. Brett and Cam's dad liked to have a beer when he got home from work some nights. Their mom didn't drink at all. Whenever Brett had asked if he could taste his dad's beer, his mom jumped in quickly, saying, "When you are older."

Now that their parents were out, Brett thought it was a chance to see what alcohol tasted like. He didn't dare touch any of his dad's cans of beer since Dad would know how many were in the fridge and would notice if one was missing. He knew Mom kept a bottle of brandy in the cupboard that seemed to have been there forever. Brett poured Cam and himself a glass.

"What if Mom finds out?" asked Cam.

"Don't worry," answered Brett, encouraging his brother to drink up. They drank a little . . . and a little more. It tasted hot and fiery. Brett didn't know if he liked it or not—but he had to pretend to be macho in front of his little brother, didn't he?

Again, Cam voiced his worry. "What if Mom sees the level has dropped in the bottle?"

Brett hadn't thought that far ahead, but now he had a brilliant idea. "We'll pee in the bottle," he said. "It is the same color as brandy and Mom doesn't drink it. She'll never know."

Cam felt guilty for drinking the brandy without his mom's knowing, and more guilty for peeing in the bottle. Every now and then he would check the bottle in the cupboard—and was horrified to see the levels dropping. Someone must be drinking it! Was Mom a cupboard drinker?

He told Brett. "Don't worry," his brother said, but Cam did worry. He couldn't bear to think of his mom drinking what was in the bottle, so eventually he built up the courage to ask her. "Mom, I see the brandy in the cupboard has been going down," he tried to say casually. "I didn't think you drank."

"I don't," she answered. "I have been using it to cook your meals."

STORY 18
GOOD, NOT PERFECT

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Wanting to be perfect
- Setting excessively high standards
- Needing to face fear
- Making mistakes

Resources Developed

- Practicing desired skills
- Overcoming anxiety
- Managing mistakes

Outcomes Offered

- Knowing not to expect perfection
- Feeling good about what you *have* done
- Enjoying your achievements

Tom was confident at the audition for the school play and felt pleased to get a role. It wasn't a major role; those had gone to the senior drama students and, after all, this was only his first year at high school. It just felt good to be in the play, even if he had only four or five lines.

He worked hard at perfecting those lines. He repeated them over and over again. He put in the emphases and intonations that his drama teacher had suggested and, because he was on stage much longer than for just his four or five lines, he had many actions to rehearse and perform.

"Do them in front of a mirror," his drama teacher had advised him. "Watch how you look; practice and rehearse as often as you can." Tom did just that. Drama was not just an interest. He wanted to be a movie star, to make it his job.

He worked and worked at it. It was fun and exciting rehearsing. He enjoyed the time with the older students. Then finally the big night came.

Suddenly, things felt different. The theater was full of people. As he dressed, he could hear the chattering and noises of the audience in the auditorium—something that hadn't been there during rehearsal. He looked around at the other, more experienced actors and saw that the confidence they'd shown at rehearsal seemed to have vanished. Everyone was on edge, anxious, and worried. Had they

got their makeup right? Was the costume done up correctly? What if they forgot their lines? Would they remember their cues?

The more people talked about their anxiety, the more edgy everyone became. The worries bounced from one person to another—like a baton being passed in a relay race—until the whole of the backstage area seemed to be buzzing with tension and worry.

Tom was onstage early, at first performing his nonspoken role in the background with several other guys around the same age. They slipped into their roles and did what they had done at rehearsal over and over again. When, suddenly, Tom heard his cue, the lights were bright in his eyes; he couldn't see the audience but knew there were hundreds of people out there all watching him. The words that had flowed so easily standing in front of a mirror in his bedroom didn't want to come, and when they did he found himself hurrying into them. He tried to slow down his thoughts and his words but, thinking about doing that, he suddenly realized he had missed a sentence. What should he do? Go back and start from the beginning? Try and add the sentence in where he was, or just go on as though nothing had happened?

He chose to carry on, but when he finished and left the stage his hands felt sweaty and his heart was racing. He didn't think about what he had achieved—performing his first solo part in a major production. Instead he was beating himself up for the sentence that he'd missed.

The audience, of course, didn't know he had missed a sentence. They made no gasps of horror, sounds of rebuke, or peals of laughter at his mistake. His fellow actors had just carried on as though nothing had happened and, after the play had finished, they were so busy talking about their own performances that no one commented on Tom's missed sentence—apart from his drama teacher.

"Well done," she said. "Acting is a like learning to ride a bike. You may not get it perfect the first time. You may fall off a few times, yet each time you get back on you do it better. Your performance may not have been perfect but, for your first time, it was great."

Tom felt reassured. It seemed like his teacher was saying it is okay to learn. You don't have to be perfect, especially when you start something new.

Tom caught the look of his face in a mirror—the face that he'd seen many times as he'd rehearsed those lines, over and over again. It was smiling back at him with a sense of satisfaction, for there was much with which to be satisfied. First, he'd been selected for the production. Second, he'd worked and worked to prepare himself. Third, he'd performed in front of the biggest audience he'd ever faced in his young life. Finally, he'd learned that it was okay to be good without having to be perfect.

He looked at his face smiling back at him and raised two hands with his thumbs up.

STORY 19
BE YOURSELF

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Lack of self-worth
- Self-denigration
- Comparing yourself to others

Resources Developed

- Listening to helpful advice
- Using your unique skills
- Helping others
- Making friends

Outcomes Offered

- Being yourself
- Valuing your resources
- Being self-accepting

Gemma was a giraffe who felt awkward about being a giraffe. She looked at other animals and thought how she would like to be more like them. When she saw the zebras running at a gallop she wanted to run in a smooth, fluid motion like they did rather than in her own ungainly gait. When she saw the elephant, she wished she had a trunk with which she could vacuum up water and then spray it playfully over her own back or over her friends. When she saw the gazelle, she wished that she were as sleek and elegant as one of them.

She looked at her own reflection in a pond and thought what long, spindly legs she had. Her neck looked like a piece of chewing gum that had been held between two fingers and drawn out until it was as long as it could get without snapping. Of course, she didn't know what a piece of chewing gum was, but she did think that there wasn't another animal around with a neck as long or as ugly as hers. And then she had those two funny little horns at the top of her head. They weren't as big or strong as an antelope's horns. What good would they be if she had to defend herself? Then, too, her skin looked as though she were covered in rust-colored vinyl tiles that were distorted in shape as if her image had been reflected by those weird mirrors in a funhouse.

"Hey, you're a giraffe," her mother tried to reassure her. "This is the way that giraffes look. Just be yourself."

One day she came to a nice sandy patch and felt like rolling in the sand. Remembering her mother's words about being herself, she decided that was exactly what she would do. She lay down and began to flop from side to side, her ungainly legs kicking in the air. To an outsider she may have looked like a marionette that had been accidentally dropped by the puppeteer, the strings tangled, the master attempting to regain control of his wayward puppet. Of course, Gemma wouldn't have known what a string-controlled marionette was, but she did hear a laugh and turned around to see a pack of hyenas that had crept out of the woods and were sitting in the grass laughing at her antics.

She struggled to her feet, walking away with her nose dragging the ground and thinking to herself, "So much for being yourself." Then, as if by magic, right in front of her appeared her fairy godmother. I'm not sure what a giraffe's fairy godmother looks like, but since this is our story I guess you can imagine her how you want.

"Your mother was right," said the fairy godmother, as if reading Gemma's thoughts. "It is important to be yourself, but it is also important *how* you be yourself. It isn't so much a matter of what you are *not* but who you *are* that makes the difference. It doesn't really matter if you can't gallop like a zebra, look like a gazelle, or play water games like an elephant. What is important is what *you* are good at. What is important is what you can do." And with those words the fairy godmother disappeared.

Gemma kept walking, her nose just a little higher off the ground, wondering what that was all about, when suddenly she saw a lioness running toward her. At first Gemma was frightened, but the lioness called out, "Don't panic! Please help me. My little cub has climbed up the tree and I can't get it down." Gemma stood on the tiptoes of her long spindly legs and stretched her elongated neck high up into the tree. In her mouth she gently picked up the little lion cub by the scruff of the neck, much like a mother cat might carry its kitten, and lowered it carefully to the ground.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," cried the lioness, so overjoyed at having her cub safely back in her care.

Gemma hadn't traveled much farther before she saw a distressed monkey jumping up and down on the edge of a cliff, crying out for help. "Gemma," called the monkey, "my baby has fallen over the cliff. She's down over the ledge, hanging on to a tree root, and I can't reach her. If someone doesn't get her soon, she may fall to her death."

Gemma knelt down on the edge of the cliff and stretched her long neck over the edge. "Grab hold of my horns," she said to the baby monkey. The young monkey reached out one hand at a time to grasp the fist-sized horns on which Gemma lifted her back over the ledge to safety.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," cried the mother monkey, overjoyed at having her baby safely back in her care.

Gemma was walking home, carrying her head a bit higher now, when her fairy godmother appeared in front of her again. "I guess there is no need for me to tell you," said the fairy godmother, "what you have just learned by doing the things that only you could have done. Cheetahs have become the fastest animals on earth not by wanting to be like a turtle but by developing their skill at running fast. By doing what you are good at, by building on your strengths, then truly you can be yourself.

"But I think that maybe you have learned more," continued the fairy godmother. "By using your unique skills to help those who may not have the same abilities, you have made some special friends. Indeed, it is even possible—as you did with the lioness—to make a friend of an enemy."

And with that Gemma's fairy godmother disappeared again.

Gemma walked home, with her neck stretched so high that those little horns at the top of her head (which were just big enough for a monkey to grab hold of) may have even been scratching the bottom of the clouds. Gemma felt proud to be herself.

STORY 20
INCREASING SELF-AWARENESS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Self-doubts
- Negative self-talk
- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Undervaluing the self

Resources Developed

- Seeing alternative ways of thinking
- Seeking others' opinions
- Engaging in reality checks
- Looking beyond your own perception
- Incorporating what you learn
- Learning to compliment others

Outcomes Offered

- Skills in reality checking
- Enhanced self-perception
- Positive self-talk
- Improved sense of self-worth
- Giving back to others

I have a friend who is also a psychologist. At times he does some tricky things to help the kids he meets look differently at the way they are thinking. He believes that, if something goes wrong, there are many possible different ways that we can see it—some of them helpful, some of them not so helpful. Let me give you an example. If someone does badly on a particular question in a math exam they could think, *I've always been hopeless at math, and this just proves it*; or they could think, *I sure did badly on that one question but I did pretty well on all the others*. The first thought isn't very helpful because you won't feel very confident at math with thinking that way, whereas thinking the second thought can be a lot more helpful.

Similarly, if you get into trouble for not doing something at home, you could think, *I'm always in trouble and never do anything right*, or *It's true that sometimes I get into trouble for forgetting to do things but mostly my parents are good and loving to me*. I guess the question is, how do we shift our thinking from what is not helpful to what is more helpful?

Roxie was one of those people who tended to think the worst of herself. She was heard to say at times, "No matter what I do I *always* get it wrong," "I'm *never* any good at school work," "The other kids are *always* picking on me," "I'm *useless* at whatever I try." If somebody phoned and asked, "Who's that?" Roxie would say, "Only me," as though "me" wasn't very important.

Roxie's parents got a little worried that she was unhappy and took her to see my psychologist friend. He figured Roxie had to learn to feel better about herself and that just talking to her about what she should do wasn't the best way to help her feel happier. So he did something I thought was pretty tricky.

He asked Roxie, "Do you have a tape recorder at home?" When she said yes, he asked if her parents would let her borrow it for an experiment. He had learned that she was studying science at school and that she knew experiments were used to find out things—that there were no right or wrong answers.

"Over the next week," he continued, "I want you to pretend you are an interviewer on the TV news and use the tape recorder to interview your parents, your brother and sister, and maybe one or two of your friends. What you are to say is this: 'I am doing a documentary on Roxie. What are the things you most like about her?'"

"I can't do that," she protested. "They'll think I'm conceited."

"Just tell them you are doing an assignment. You are being an investigative journalist and you have to know what they honestly think. You can't let them get away with just giving you just one single answer, either. You need to find out *all* the things they like about Roxie and what brought them to this conclusion.

"Like an investigative journalist or scientist, you will need to gather your data. Play back what you have recorded in the quiet of your own bedroom. Take some time to listen to what your interviewees have said. What do they like about you? Were they things you were expecting them to say? What comments did you like the best?

"Write down the most important things they like about you. It may be helpful to make a list of the top ten. When you have the list, stick it on your dressing table mirror or the wardrobe door so that every morning when you get up and every night before you go to bed you can remind yourself of the things you most like about you."

I wonder, if he had asked you to do something similar, what you think those important people in your life might have said about you? If you were to write out a list, like Roxie did, what would be included?

My friend can be sort of tough in what he asks of people at times, too. "One more thing," he said to Roxie. "There is a condition. If people are helping you with your experiment, it's only fair that you give a little back. At the end of each interview you are to give a compliment back to the person you have just interviewed. Tell them something *you* really like about *them*."

EXERCISE 5.1

What stories of self-caring have you observed in children, be they your own children, your clients, or the neighborhood kids? How would those observations fit the therapeutic goal or goals of a child you are working with at the moment? As you jot the ideas down in your notebook, keep in mind the outcome of the story and the way your observations may help a child reach that outcome.

CHAPTER 6

Changing Patterns of Behavior

One of the main reasons that parents bring children to therapy is to modify troublesome behaviors, be they enuresis, stealing, lying, eating disorders, drug abuse, aggression, or withdrawal. Such conduct problems may affect relationships with parents, siblings, peers, or teachers and cause unhappiness not just for the child but for those in the near vicinity of the child.

Helping a child or family change a pattern of behavior has long been a core, and well-researched, goal of psychotherapeutic interventions. As a result there are many cognitive, behavioral, and strategic approaches that have been developed to assist children to bring about the desired changes (Kazdin & Weisz, 2003). Such evidenced-based approaches provide steps, strategies, and interventions that can be readily adapted into metaphors for change. Telling a story about how to modify a pattern of behavior can often have a greater effect for a child than setting what might sound like an onerous homework exercise.

The following stories seek to illustrate this by describing ways of facing and overcoming fear. They talk about thinking your way through challenging problems and learning how to build on the things that you are good at doing. They show how a simple gesture can make a big difference, or benefit a large number of people. They provide techniques for modifying old behaviors and shaping new patterns.

STORY 21
FACING FEARS: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fear of what you do not know
- False beliefs
- Lack of reality testing
- Thinking the worst of others

Resources Developed

- Learning to control thoughts
- Developing positive thinking styles
- Changing old beliefs
- Changing through successive approximations
- Being open to new experiences

Outcomes Offered

- New skills for managing old fears
- Positive thought patterns
- Methods for reality testing
- Willingness to experiment

There was a story that all the kids at Caroline's school told. I don't know if they believed it but some of them certainly acted as if they did.

On the way from Caroline's home to school there was a little old cottage, hidden back on a big block of land. Even the size of the land made the cottage seem different and scary because most of the land around it had been divided into smaller blocks for bright, modern homes with neat little gardens. You could only just see the little old cottage, as if it were trying to hide itself behind the gnarled trees and shrubby garden that no one seemed to care about any more. There were tall, tangled, prickly rose bushes, and weeds as high as a kid's head.

At times, but not very often, the children had seen a little old woman make her way along the cracked, leaf-covered path from the front door to the mailbox. Her fingers were twisted in funny, knotty shapes, her body was bent over and her back hunched. She shuffled along at a slow pace and, if she lifted her head to look at you, her face was all wrinkly. Wispy gray hair grew out of her chin. Sunken eyes followed you with a gaze that—as the story went among Caroline's friends—would put you in a trance if you looked back at them.

"The witch at Number 97" was how most kids spoke of her. "Don't look in her eyes," you could hear them say. "She'll capture you in a magic spell, take you into the house and never release you again." Many gruesome tales arose about what happened to kids who got captured, but if you asked anyone to tell you the name of someone who had been captured, of course, they couldn't.

As a result Caroline's friends would never pass the house alone. What if the witch at Number 97 looked at them? Would they be strong enough not to look back?

Going to school in the mornings they would gather on a corner a block or two away and hurry by in a group. At the end of the day they'd meet in the schoolyard and again go home in a group. They felt safer and more secure in numbers.

Now, Caroline played the recorder so well that she was asked to join the school band, and that meant staying after school one afternoon a week to rehearse. No one else in the band lived in her direction, so after the first rehearsal she had to walk home, past Number 97, all by herself. The late afternoon was cloudy and that clear light of day that often helps your confidence had disappeared from the sky. Caroline set out as she normally would but as she began to approach the little old cottage it looked scarier than ever.

The tall trees surrounding it blew in the breeze and cast moving shadows on the sidewalk that she walked along. For a while she hesitated, not knowing what to do. How was she to face this fear of the witch? What might happen to her if the witch of Number 97 came out and looked at her? She thought about going back to school. If she hurried she might get there before all the teachers left. She could perhaps call her mother to come and pick her up. But what if some of the older kids were still there? If they learned she was too scared to walk home by herself she would be the laughingstock of the school.

There was another way home, but it was longer and the evening was getting dark. She could go that way, but it would be scary in the dark, too. She could, but didn't want to, turn back to school. She could, but didn't want to, find another way home in the dark. No, she thought, she had to be brave and press on past the witch's cottage at Number 97.

As she got closer, the little old cottage, partially hidden behind the unloved garden, seemed to grow bigger and more menacing. She wanted to run but felt she really needed to just walk her way through the experience. She took some deep breaths and tried to think of something different: home, Mom and Dad waiting for her, her favorite supper, the comfort of her own bed when she snuggled into it tonight. While thinking of those things the ominous look of the old cottage seemed to fade. It didn't feel so scary.

When she started looking at and thinking about the witch again, the cottage loomed big and frightening in her thoughts. In fact, the more she looked at it, the worse she felt. "No," she said to herself, "concentrate on how good it will feel to get home," and with that she started to feel easier. Caroline smiled to herself. She was enjoying this little trick she had learned to play in her mind.

But then, as she reached the front gate to Number 97, Caroline's heart almost stopped. She forgot about her thoughts of home. The little old woman was out in the garden . . . looking at Caroline! Caroline tried not to look back but from the corner of her eye saw the little old lady was smiling at her, warmly. She noticed the woman seemed smaller and less threatening than when the other kids were around telling frightening stories about her. Nonetheless, Caroline kept walking, thinking of home and letting the fear subside as she thought of those nice feelings of having a warm supper with her family.

Maybe that is a good enough place to leave the story, but that is not quite where it ended. Each week as Caroline walked home by herself the little old woman of Number 97 was there to give her a smile. Caroline, thinking she didn't seem as scary as all the stories the other kids told, began to smile back. She almost jumped out of her skin the first time the little old woman said hello, but it wasn't long before Caroline looked forward to stopping and talking with her on her way home from school. The little old woman had so many interesting stories to tell. Actually, her name was Mrs. Walcott, she told Caroline.

Before the end of the term, Caroline asked Mrs. Walcott if she could interview her for a history assignment her class was doing on the local neighborhood. She sat in the little old cottage with her gentle new friend, sipping lemonade and eating cookies while she found out more than any of her friends learned. She even got an A+ for the assignment.

At first her friends didn't believe that she was friends with witch at Number 97 or that she'd visited the little old cottage and returned. Perhaps, they said, she was entranced and one day might be captured forever. They seemed to want to hold on to their own beliefs that the old woman really was a witch who stole children. One by one Caroline led them past the house and introduced them to Mrs. Walcott. It wasn't long before they, too, were all able to dispense with their fears. Stories about the witch of Number 97 and disappearing children began to fade into distant memories.

STORY 22
FACING FEARS: *A TEEN STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fear of what you do not know
- False beliefs
- Lack of reality testing
- Thinking the worst of others

Resources Developed

- Learning to control thoughts
- Developing positive thinking styles
- Changing old beliefs
- Changing through successive approximations
- Being open to new experiences

Outcomes Offered

- New skills for managing old fears
- Positive thought patterns
- Methods for reality testing
- Willingness to experiment

Charlie had heard a story that he didn't know whether to believe. It was just that all the other trainees on the sailboat seemed to believe that the ship had its own ghost. *Ghost stories are for kids*, thought Charlie, *not teenagers*.

For as long as Charlie could remember, he had enjoyed boats and the sea. He would look enviously at sailboats cruising by on the ocean. He looked at them in magazines, read books about sailing, and drew sailboats in the backs of his schoolbooks when he should have been concentrating in class. He had joined the Sea Scouts (which was sort of like Boy Scouts with a special interest in boats

and sailing) as soon as he was old enough and he was now on this old, square-rigged sailboat for a week's training as his Christmas present from his parents.

Years and years ago, according to the story Charlie had just heard, an old-time sailor had gone crazy while on crow's-nest duty at the top of the main mast. Any other crew member sent up to relieve him of his post was attacked. In one of the scuffles that ensued the old-time sailor fell from the top of the mast to his death. His ghost, people said, still resided in the upper reaches of the rigging, attacking any solitary climber of the mast. As it happened there had been several mishaps of sailors slipping from the rigging, being buffeted by unexpected winds on their ascent, or hearing terrifyingly strange sounds through the rigging —like the scream of someone falling to his death, it was said. Consequently, none of the crew would climb to the crow's nest alone. They always escorted each other up in pairs or threes. This was an unspoken rule.

Late one afternoon, as they were approaching the harbor, clouds filled the sky as light faded with the approach of sunset. The wind howled in the rigging. Wild seas rocked the ship violently and the captain ordered all hands on deck. They needed a lookout . . . and Charlie was sent to the crow's nest. As the rest of the crew was busy preparing to enter harbor, he had no choice but to climb alone. Hooking his safety harness onto the rigging, he started the ascent. The wind tore at his clothes, the mast swayed more the higher he climbed, and the stories of the old-time sailor filled his mind. Fear struck at his heart. There might not be a ghost, he thought, but stories often have a basis of truth. Perhaps it was a bad-luck ship. The knowledge that his safety harness was securely attached didn't help ease the thoughts. The fear of falling to his death like the old-time sailor refused to leave him.

What was he to do? He could descend, but disobeying orders was a serious business on a ship and he would be the laughingstock of all the other trainees when they got into harbor. There was no other alternative, no one free to accompany him, no way around the scary situation. *No,* Charlie said to himself, *it is something I need to do, and do alone*. As he climbed on, slowly, steady step by steady step up the rope rigging, thoughts of the ghost kept coming back to him. What if he should slip from the rigging? What if he should fall to his death? What if there was a ghost, or just the ship's bad luck awaiting him?

Yet again he checked that his harness was securely fastened. He looked up at the crow's nest and he began to think how much safer he would be when he was there. He started to anticipate the calm and peace of arriving in harbor. He remembered the feeling of achievement and exhilaration he had felt on reaching the crow's nest in the company of others on calmer days during the trip. Thinking about such thoughts, he began to forget about the ghost, at least for a while.

When thoughts of the old-time sailor's ghost and questions about whether the stories were true popped back in his head, the terror again struck his heart. But Charlie had learned something: By thinking about the safety and exhilaration of being in the crow's nest, by anticipating his arrival, by realizing that he would be the tallest person on the ship when they docked to awaiting parents and friends, he found that the fear again began to subside.

The rigging trembled beneath him. If he let himself imagine it, it could almost feel as though a ghost were trying to shake him off. He didn't know whether it was the howling wind vibrating the ropes or his own fear. *No*, he thought, *it isn't a ghost*, and again began to think about reaching the safety of the crow's nest. As he climbed, the crow's nest grew closer and closer. He chose not to look back or think about what might happen if he fell, but rather to think about how much closer he was getting and how much better he would feel when he arrived. When he finally stepped from the rigging into the crow's nest, he felt a sense of relief and joy.

This is probably where our story could finish, but in reality that is not where it ends. You see, Charlie saw something that nobody else saw and couldn't see from the deck below . . . and it certainly wasn't a ghost. He lifted his binoculars to his eyes to make doubly sure. There, floating dead ahead, was a large, semi-submerged metal container that had obviously fallen from a cargo ship. Charlie called his warning, the captain ordered the helmsman to alter course, and the ship—along with all its crew—was saved.

Charlie was a hero. Not only had he saved the ship, but he had also conquered the myth of the old-time sailor's ghost seeking to destroy any solo climber on his way to the crow's nest—for himself as well as for others. He became a regular member of the crew after that, showing new trainees how to climb alone to the crow's nest without fear of the old-time sailor's ghost. "It's not just a matter of checking for safety and taking it step by step," he told them, "but how you direct your thoughts. Look ahead, imagine where you want to be, think how it will feel when you arrive, and the ghost won't bother you."

And, do you know, the story they tell aboard now is different? It says that when they got to port at the end of Charlie's voyage, the ghost jumped ship and was never heard of again.

STORY 23
SEE FOR YOURSELF

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fear
- Imagining the worst
- Not assessing accurately
- Failure to reality test
- Believing what you think
- Listening to others without discrimination

Resources Developed

- Learning to discriminate
- Learning to reality check
- Learning when to use fear
- Learning when to let fear go

Outcomes Offered

- Skills in discrimination
- Reality testing
- Personal growth through learning
- Management of fear

A timid white, fluffy rabbit once lived by the shore of a sparkling blue lake. Would you like to give the rabbit a name? Or shall we just call it the little white fluffy rabbit?

For as long as it could remember, the little white fluffy rabbit had felt scared and timid, and although the little white fluffy rabbit didn't enjoy feeling that way it knew that feeling scared and timid could sometimes be a very helpful thing—especially if you are a little white fluffy rabbit. If the little rabbit heard a sudden, loud noise, he would feel scared, run like fury, and dive into the safety of his burrow. If a sudden dark shadow fell over him, he would feel scared, run like fury, and dive into the safety of his burrow.

One day as he was quietly drinking beside the lake there was a loud splash that sounded like *Keeer-plunk!* The little white fluffy rabbit felt scared and ran like fury, but in his panic he forgot where his burrow was and so just kept running. "Help!" he cried, to warn others. "Run! I heard a loud *Keeer-plunk*. It's after us."

A monkey saw the little white fluffy rabbit running beneath its tree and heard it cry out in fear. Dreading that something dangerous was about the happen, the monkey leapt from the tree and followed the little rabbit, joining in his cry: "Help, help! Keeer-plunk. It's coming after us."

A deer stopped grazing as the terrified pair ran past. The deer, too, took flight, crying out, "Run, run for your life! Keeer-plunk is coming after us."

They fled past a hippopotamus wallowing in the mud at the side of the river, a giraffe grazing from the tender leaves of a treetop, a rhinoceros foraging through the undergrowth, and an elephant showering itself with water from its trunk. All joined the frightened stampede. All joined the terrified chorus of screams: "Help, help! A Keeer-plunk is chasing us."

The stampede and shouts awakened a lion who was sunbathing on a warm rock. "Stop!" roared the king of beasts. All the animals ground to an instant standstill, more frightened of the lion than of the Keeer-plunk. "What's all this noise about?" asked the lion, hoping to bring some order and peace back to his jungle.

"A mean and horrible Keeer-plunk is chasing us," said the elephant. "The rhinoceros told me as everyone went charging by."

"Yes," confirmed the rhinoceros. "The tall-necked giraffe told me as it fled with all the other animals."

"I heard it from the hippopotamus," said the giraffe. "It must be serious for a hippopotamus to leave his mudhole and run."

"When I saw the deer running," said the hippopotamus, "I knew something had to be terribly wrong. Deer only flee when there is serious trouble, so I ran like she was."

"It was the monkey who told me," said the deer, looking back over her shoulder to the monkey. "He called out that Keeer-plunk was after us and we had to flee, in a hurry."

"Yes," said the monkey, "I just followed the little white fluffy rabbit. He was the one who warned me. He was running and screaming in such terror."

"Well?" asked the lion thoughtfully as he directed his gaze toward the little white fluffy rabbit, "where is it? Where is this Keeer-plunk? I can't see anything. There doesn't appear to be anything chasing any of you."

"It's there," said the little white fluffy rabbit, pointing behind him and turning to see nothing but an empty trail. "I *did* hear it," he tried to say reassuringly, but did not quite feel reassured himself. "It frightened me. It truly did."

"Where did you hear it?" asked the lion, kindly.

"Back by the lake," answered the little white fluffy rabbit. And with that the lion began to lead

the animals back along their tracks. They looked and searched every step of the trail along which they had come but found no sign of a Keeer-plunk. In fact, they found nothing unusual at all.

When they got to the sparkling blue lake where the little white fluffy rabbit had been quietly drinking before the Keeer-plunk had scared him into running so fearfully, everything was still and quiet. The monkey, the deer, the hippopotamus, the giraffe, the rhinoceros, the elephant, and the lion all gazed around but there was no sign of any Keeer-plunk. Then, just as they were about to leave, a stone rolled down a cliff on the other side of the lake. It bounced out in the air, falling into the lake with a loud *Keeer-plunk*.

"There it is!" the little white fluffy rabbit shouted out, gathering his back legs under him, ready to run again.

"Wait," called the lion amidst a roar of laughter. The little white fluffy rabbit felt embarrassed when he learned what had caused the Keeer-plunk. The other animals felt ashamed that they had just believed what they had been told and not checked it out for themselves.

The kindly lion, however, sat on a rock near the water's edge and explained there was no need to be ashamed. "Fear," he began, "is something all animals and people experience for a very good reason. Look at the little white fluffy rabbit, for example. It doesn't have many ways of protecting itself from some of the big, dangerous creatures that might want to hurt it, or even eat it. Little rabbits do not have sharp teeth or long claws or big bodies. So, if the Keeer-plunk had existed it might have been dangerous, and it was wise of the little white fluffy rabbit to run and warn others. But sometimes," continued the lion, "we get frightened by things we imagine, things we do not need to fear, or things that do not even exist. We need to learn to tell what we really need to be scared of and what we do not. If we find ourselves hearing a Keeer-plunk like the little white fluffy rabbit, it might be helpful to stop and ask, 'Is this something I need to be afraid of?' If it is, then it is important to protect yourself. If not, there is no need to fear."

The little white fluffy rabbit learned to quietly sip water from the sparkling blue lake even when there was an occasional Keeer-plunk. In fact, the Keeer-plunk brought a smile to his little white fluffy rabbit's mouth because it reminded him of something important he had learned.

STORY 24
LEARNING TO THINK FOR YOURSELF

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Dependency issues
- Failure to think for yourself
- Set patterns of thinking and doing
- Being put down

Resources Developed

- Developing creativity
- Seeking your own solutions

- Thinking independently
- Building problem-solving skills
- Dealing with put-downs

Outcomes Offered

- Independent thinking
- Self-reliance
- Solution-focused thinking

Once there was a boy . . . or it could have been a girl. In fact, we can make it about whomever we want because I am sure there is still something important in the story for you whether you think of it as about a boy or a girl.

Once there was a boy who lived at home with his mother. He and his mother were both poor and he did not have a father, though I don't remember that I ever knew why that was. All his life this boy had always done whatever his mother told him to do and never really learned to think for himself. At first, many parents might think it would be wonderful to have such an obedient child, but as we shall see, it may not always be helpful.

Just why this boy didn't think for himself I don't know, either. Perhaps we could make some guesses—like, his mother might have always done the thinking for him, or he might have felt scared to think for himself, or he might have worried about doing something wrong if he made his own choices, or it might have been easier to go along with what he was told, or perhaps he just couldn't be bothered to think for himself. There could be many reasons, but whatever they were, that was where he was at the time of our story.

Because the boy and his mother didn't have much money, his mother needed him to work to help pay for their food and rent. Each day after school and on the weekends, the boy would go looking for jobs in his community. One Monday he found work in the local hardware store stacking bags of cement. It was hard, but he was a reasonably strong boy for his age and when he had finished the shop owner gave him $10 for his efforts. As he was carrying it home in his hand it dropped out of his grip and blew away before he had the chance to catch it. When he got home and told his mother, she told him off. "You silly boy," she said, "you should have put it in your pocket."

"I promise I will do as you say next time, Mother," he answered.

On Tuesday he got a job in the village grocery shop. It was much easier work than stacking bags of cement, but the rewards were not the same, either. At the end of the day the shopkeeper gave him a nice box of chocolates for his efforts. Remembering his promise to his mother, he put the chocolates in his pocket and made the long walk home. When he pulled the box out to show his mother, all the chocolates had melted. Again his mother told him off. "You silly boy, you should have carried them in a plastic bag."

"I'm sorry, Mother," he apologized. "I'll remember to do what you say next time."

On Wednesday he got a job in a pet store. He enjoyed working with the animals and, seeing this, the pet store owner thanked him for his efforts by giving him a cat. Remembering what his mother had told him, the boy put the cat in a plastic bag and started to carry it home, but the cat quickly clawed its way out and ran away. When he told his mother the tale she told him off again. "You silly boy, you should have tied a string around its neck and led it along behind you."

Again the boy apologized, saying, "I'll remember to do what you tell me next time."

Well, on Thursday he got a job working for the butcher. At the end of his work, the butcher gave him a leg of beef. The boy thought his mother would be pleased with his efforts today and, doing what she'd told him, he tied a bit of string around his payment for the day and dragged it all the way home. As he did all the neighborhood dogs followed him, gnawing at the leg of fresh meat. By the time he got home there was nothing but a bare bone. His mother, who was running out of patience, told him off once again. "You silly boy, you should have carried it on your shoulder."

Once more he apologized and promised to do as she told him next time.

On Friday there were not any jobs in the town shops, so he wandered out into the country and helped a farmer working on a farm. At the end of the day, the man gave him an old donkey for his efforts. Remembering what his mother had said, he tried to lift the donkey onto his shoulders but found it was too big and heavy. When that did not work, he tried to remember her other directions. "Put it in your pocket," he recalled her saying one day, but the donkey was too large to fit. "Carry it in a plastic bag," she'd said on another day, but there was no way a donkey was going to fit in a bag any more than in his pocket. Even if it could've, he remembered that the cat had clawed its way out of the plastic bag and run away. He didn't want to disappoint his mother that way again.

Perhaps he could put it on a string and lead it home. Surely, the dogs would not eat a living donkey like they had the leg of beef. But the donkey dug its heels into the ground, as stubborn as a mule, and refused to move. The boy did not know what to do. He had run out of instructions that his mother had given him. Nothing she had told him was going to work in the situation in which he now found himself.

What do you think he did? How do you think he might solve his problem? If you were in his place, what ways could you find to get the donkey home? And what do you think the boy might learn from this to help him in his next job?

This is an open-ended story designed to facilitate the child's own search for the means to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Therefore it has no specific conclusion itself. It can be used to help elicit children's solutions, develop their creativity, facilitate reality testing, join their responses, shape their problem-solving skills, and build the resources necessary to reach an appropriate outcome—in a enjoyable, interactive process.

STORY 25
BUILD ON WHAT YOU ARE GOOD AT

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Being bullied
- Lack of achievement
- Failure to build on resources
- Self-doubt and uncertainty

Resources Developed

- Listening to helpful advice
- Discovering what you are good at
- Building on your strengths and resources
- Using your resources successfully

Outcomes Offered

- Enhanced skills
- Personal empowerment
- Success in what you're good at

Jack's parents sent him off to see the school counselor. He wasn't sure why. Perhaps it had to do with the fact that he was being bullied by some of the other kids at school, or that he wasn't doing very well in his schoolwork, or that his parents were constantly calling him lazy. I'm not really sure, either.

The school counselor gave him some tests, asked him lots of questions and then she said, "Jack, what you need to do is find what you are good at and then build on that."

But what was he good at? Phil was the best runner in their class, Jemima always made the best grades, and Matt was the football star—but Jack? He couldn't think of anything he was good at.

When he got home from school, he kicked off his shoes. "My goodness," exclaimed his father, holding his nose, "you're sure good at creating smelly feet."

His mother added, "If you were as good at anything else, you could conquer the world."

Jack wanted to protest that his feet didn't smell, but he just gave up and sulked off to his bedroom, where he flopped on the floor in the corner. Mrs. Meow, his cat, walked up to him, sniffed his feet . . . and passed out.

Jack got up and moved away, and Mrs. Meow woke up. "How curious," he thought, walking back to put his feet under her nose. She passed out again. That night he went to sleep thinking about his counselor's words.

In the morning he woke up with an idea for an experiment. The next few days he went without changing his socks. When his mother questioned why he hadn't put any dirty socks in the laundry basket, he pulled some clean ones out of the drawer and dropped them in the basket to keep her from getting suspicious. He ran a lot, especially on hot days when his feet would get sweaty. He avoided showering, just running the water for a while and wetting his hair to make his mother think he'd washed. He didn't want to spoil the effect. He wore his sneakers to bed at night . . . until he thought it was time for the experiment.

In his room, he lay on his bed, took his socks off, looked at his clock, then held the socks to his nose. He looked at the clock again. Exactly 53 minutes and 27 seconds had passed. It worked! They could knock a boy out, just like they had Mrs. Meow. For the ultimate test, however, he knew they would have to be stronger. Then he had the best idea yet.

He snuck some Gorgonzola cheese from the fridge and spread it in his socks. He continued to run, and wear his sneakers to bed, waiting for the right day. Soon it happened. Two school bullies cornered him in the toilets, teasing him, poking at him, and throwing some light punches. Cool Jack

bent down, kicked off his shoes and pointed his feet in their direction. "Yuk," they screamed together and, before they had a chance to run, all three passed out—just like Mrs Meow.

"This is great," thought Jack. He didn't need to worry about being bullied anymore, but he knew he had to keep building on his secret weapon.

Arriving home from school one day, he found a strange car in the driveway. The house door was open. That shouldn't be; his mom and dad were at work and he should have been the first one home. Quietly, he snuck inside, peeked around a corner, and saw a robber going through the drawers in his parents' bedroom. Cool Jack undid his shoes, pulled off both socks, and crept up behind the robber, pushing his socks into the robber's face. The poor guy didn't stand a chance. He collapsed immediately. Jack called the police and then his dad.

That night he was on TV. Next morning the newspaper heading read "Jack Socks It to Thief." He was the hero!

Jack was pleased he had gone to the school counselor. He now knew what she'd meant when she'd said, "Find what you are good at and build on it."

STORY 26
LEARNING NEW TRICKS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Behavioral problems
- Seemingly uncontrollable problems
- Self-doubt

Resources Developed

- Learning new skills
- Discovering capabilities
- Building self-confidence
- Tackling problems from a different angle
- Learning that practicing improves performance
- Focusing on abilities, not problems

Outcomes Offered

- Success through practice
- Confidence in abilities
- Practical strategies for change

Andy was a boy I knew who felt embarrassed to talk about his problem. You see, he didn't know anyone else who wet the bed, or not that they had told *him*, anyway. It felt uncomfortable to wake up in a cold, wet bed every morning. He hated having plastic liners on his bed when his sister didn't. At times she teased him. He couldn't sleep over at his friends' homes when other kids did and was

embarrassed at making excuses or having his mom do it in hushed tones to the other kids' moms. He feared that if they knew they would tease him like his sister did.

His parents had told him it was time he grew out of it. Heck, it wasn't like he wanted to be doing it. They said they would put sticky stars on the calendar in his bedroom for each night he was dry . . . but he never got any. They offered him extra pocket money for dry nights but, despite his trying to do everything he could, he didn't get any extra money. He felt bad, as though it were his fault. He wanted to please them but nothing seemed to work and he didn't know what else he could do.

One day what Andy dreaded the most happened. His best friend, Ben, invited him to a sleepover for Ben's birthday party. Andy desperately wanted to go but he couldn't help thinking about what would happen if he wet his bed with all his friends there. The thought was horrifying. He would have to say no . . . but then he didn't want to upset Ben. What if Ben thought Andy wasn't going to the party because he didn't like him?

Andy was surprised—and pleased—when Ben didn't seem upset. He just said, "That's cool, how about you come around this Saturday instead and we'll have the afternoon to play by ourselves?" Andy readily accepted. He liked going to Ben's house. He'd been there before and was always fascinated. You see, Ben's father owned a circus, and so the house was always full of all sorts of exciting things. There were costumes to dress up in and pretend you were a lion tamer, trapeze artist, ringmaster, or magician. There were hats to pull rabbits out of (if only you knew how), big clowns' shoes that you couldn't wear without tripping over them in bursts of laughter, one-wheeled cycles on which you could hardly ride for three seconds before falling off, juggling batons that always seemed to want to fall on your head when you tossed them in the air, and whips that Ben's dad could crack really loud but from which Andy—and even Ben—could not raise a sound.

Often when Andy visited, Ben's dad was away working ("on the road" as Ben called it), but this Saturday he happened to be at home. "Hi, Andy," he shouted jovially, when Andy arrived. "Good to see you. I was just teaching Ben to juggle. Would you like some lessons, too?"

With that, he threw Andy two hand-sized balls filled with beans. At first Andy kept dropping them, but as he listened to Ben's dad's instructions he began to get better and better. At the end of the afternoon, Ben's dad said, "You are a fast learner, Andy. You've got the two-ball cascade perfect in just an afternoon. Take them home to practice if you want. Show me what you can do next time you come visiting."

Well, Andy practiced and practiced all week. He was so interested in learning to juggle that he almost forgot about his bed-wetting. He didn't have any more dry nights but he did think about it less. Whereas before, he would drift off to sleep worrying about whether he would wet the bed again, now he found himself dreaming about being in a circus like Ben's dad.

Next Saturday Andy was back at Ben's and when he showed Ben's dad what he could do, he was heaped with praise. "Fantastic!" shouted Ben's dad. His voice was always loud but jovial and hearty, like he was still in the circus arena addressing a crowd. "Hey, you certainly are one of the fastest learners I have ever taught to juggle. Just one week and you're ready for the three-ball cascade and shower."

With that, he tossed Andy another ball, showing him how to keep it in the air with the first two. At the end of the afternoon, Ben's dad said, "You're great. But as every true circus performer knows, to be the best you have to practice, practice, and practice some more. Take them home. They're yours to keep."

Andy couldn't have been more delighted if he had won a million dollars. He took the juggling balls home and practiced, and practiced, and practiced some more. At times he dropped them. At times they collided in midair. "That doesn't matter," he heard Ben's dad's voice assuring him in his head. "Learn from what you do. Each slip-up just helps make you better next time you try, if you are willing to persist."

Andy would pick them up again and practice once more, getting better and better by the day. Within a few weeks Ben's dad started him juggling with real circus clubs instead of beginners' balls.

Nonetheless, Andy couldn't deny a growing feeling of uneasiness. He liked Ben and his dad but was feeling pretty bad about not going to Ben's sleepover. He hadn't even offered a decent excuse. He had to do it, he thought to himself. Tough as it may be, he would have to explain to Ben.

"I am really sorry I didn't make it to your party," Andy said when he and Ben were alone.

"That's okay," answered Ben. "I know why you didn't come."

Suddenly Andy wished the earth would open up and swallow him in a great big hole. His mom must have told Ben's mom, and she must have told Ben. Who had he told? His secret would be out.

"Don't worry," said Ben, reassuring him. "I won't tell anyone. I used to wet the bed, too." This was a surprise to Andy, who had never even thought that some of his friends might have had the same problem. "It's a bit like learning to juggle," continued Ben. "You can't expect to get it right at first, but the more you practice—step by step—the more you're likely to succeed. You see, my dad told me some things to do. He wet the bed when he was a boy, too."

If Andy was surprised to learn his secret was out and then to find out that Ben had wet the bed, the news about Ben's dad floored him.

Ben kept talking. "Dad said he'd read where some professor dude at one stage had said that learning to control the bladder was so difficult that he was surprised lots more kids didn't have a problem. What you have to do, he told me, was to train your bladder in just the same ways that you train your eyes and hands to juggle. You train it by not having anything to drink for a couple of hours before you go to bed at night. You train it by making sure that you go to the toilet and work hard at emptying your bladder. You train it by going straight to the toilet if you wake up through the night or early in the morning rather than just thinking you want to have a pee and rolling over and going back to sleep.

"He also taught me a game that he used to play as a boy. He said that the game was to go for as long as possible between having pees during the day. He said that rather than just going to the toilet out of habit, he'd wait and wait almost until he could wait no longer. That way, he said, he was training his bladder to hold on. You know, if you can learn to juggle, you can learn to do other things, too."

Andy committed himself to training his bladder as much as he'd committed himself to learning to juggle. He practiced and practiced and practiced some more. He didn't always get it right—at least at the beginning. As Ben had said, it didn't happen straight away. Like learning to juggle, you might drop the clubs or make a mistake now and then. That's okay. By learning from the mistakes Andy began to get better and better.

One Saturday, when Andy arrived at Ben's house, Ben's dad asked, "How has your week been, Andy?"

"Perfect," answered Andy. "I didn't have a single mistake."

"Ah," said Ben's dad wisely, "the more you practice your juggling, the better you become."

Andy didn't say it out loud, but he'd been talking about more than just his juggling.

"If you keep this up," said Ben's dad, "You'll be good enough to get a job in a circus."

STORY 27
A GESTURE THAT CHANGED A WHOLE SUBURB

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fixed patterns of behavior
- Need to change feelings
- Lack of influence
- Powerlessness

Resources Developed

- Joyfulness
- Happiness
- Communicating warm gestures

Outcomes Offered

- Awareness that simple gestures can have big influences
- Awareness that happiness can be communicated, effectively
- Knowing that one person can make important changes

Do your parents drive you to school in the morning? Is there a crossing guard holding a red stop sign where the children have to cross the street? Where I live all the kids call the crossing guard the lollypop man. It seems a strange thing to call a crossing guard, doesn't it? I think the name comes from when they used to hold a round stop sign on a long pole that looked like a big lollypop. The lollypop man at my son's school, through one simple thing he did, changed the behavior of a whole suburb. The first time I remember noticing him was when he waved to me as I drove my son to school. I think he must have been a new crossing guard for that school.

He presented me with a puzzle. He posed me a mystery—all because he waved to me like someone does on seeing a really close friend. A big, broad smile accompanied his wave. For the next couple of days I tried to discreetly study his face to see if I knew him. I didn't. Perhaps he had mistaken me for someone else. Perhaps he thought he recognized my car as that of a friend. By the time I contented myself with the conclusion that he and I were strangers, we were smiling and waving warmly to each other every morning like old friends.

Then one day the mystery was solved. As I approached the school he was standing in his orange safety vest in the middle of the road holding out his stop sign. I was in line behind about four other cars. Once the kids had reached the safety of the sidewalk on the opposite side, he lowered his sign and motioned the cars through. To the first he waved and smiled in just the same way he had done to me over the last few days. The kids in the first car were familiar with the warm morning greeting. They already had the window down and were happily leaning out to wave their reply. The second car got the same greeting from the crossing guard, and the driver, a stiff-looking businessman in a dark suit, gave a brief, almost embarrassed wave back. Each following vehicle of kids on their way to school responded more heartily.

Every morning I continued to watch the lollypop man with interest. So far I have not seen anyone fail to wave back—even if a bit stiffly like the businessman or strangers to our suburb. How did they feel, I wondered. What difference does the warm friendliness of a stranger make to your morning? I find it interesting that one person can make such a difference to so many people's lives by doing one simple thing like waving and smiling warmly. I know I certainly began to look forward to the pleasure of a greeting from this friend I had never met. His cheerfulness warmed the start of my day. With a friendly wave and smiling face he had changed the behavior, and I suspect the feelings, of a whole suburb of morning commuters.

STORY 28
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Difficult circumstances
- Overwhelming odds
- Uncertainty about where to begin
- Feelings of powerlessness

Resources Developed

- Kindness and compassion
- Finding a place to begin
- Looking for the attainable

Outcomes Offered

- Seeing what *can* be done rather than what cannot
- Learning that reaching a goal may be a step-by-step process
- Finding a place to start
- Taking one step at a time
- Learning that even little steps may be important

Two boys were playing on a beach, seeing who could skim a rock out the farthest. This was their vacation, and it was good to find the sea flat this morning, particularly after several days of wild storms when the sea had been whipped up to a frenzy. Turbulent waves and high tides had washed lots of poor sea creatures ashore. The boys found themselves walking through jellyfish, sea slugs, starfish, crabs, and other little animals that coated the beach like a dying blanket.

At the end of the beach the boys noticed a girl frequently wading in and out of the water. Curious to see what she was doing, they headed off in her direction. As they got closer, they saw that she would bend down and pick up one of the sea creatures. She cradled it gently in her hands, waded out into the water, and released it back in its home. Then she returned to the shore, picked up yet another creature, and gently carried it back into the water.

The boys began to laugh. It was just the sort of silly stuff they could expect a girl do. "Hey," they

called out, "what are you doing? Can't you see you ain't gonna make any difference? The beach is covered with thousands of dead and dying creatures." And they laughed some more.

The girl seemed to ignore them at first. She picked up a lifeless-looking young octopus, nursed it carefully in her hands, and walked back into the ocean as if the boys didn't exist. She lowered the octopus into the water, tenderly washing away the sand and seaweed that had collected over it and entangled its tentacles. Slowly dropping her hands a little lower, she let the little creature feel the refreshing caress of the sea. It spread its tentacles as if feeling good to be back home once again. Supportively, the girl's hands cupped the young animal until it mustered the strength to propel itself forward. She stood watching, a faint smile on her face at the pleasure of seeing another creature safely on its way.

Only then did she turn and retrace her steps to the shore. Finally, she seemed to notice the jeering boys. Looking them in the eye, she said, "It sure made a difference for that one!"

STORY 29
CHANGING PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fear
- Need to build new behaviors
- Need to build trust

Resources Developed

- Willingness to learn
- Patience
- Taking things step-by-step
- Putting yourself in another's place
- Using reason and knowledge
- Looking for solutions
- Managing emotions

Outcomes Offered

- Knowing that patience can lead to success
- The joy of succeeding
- Helping another change

For as long as Chad could remember, ever since he was a little boy, magpies had landed on the railing of the balcony of his house. Maybe it was because his mom and dad often put out scraps of their leftover food for the magpies to eat.

When Chad was really little, he'd been frightened of the magpies . . . and the magpies were frightened of him. When the birds came near, he got scared they might peck him and so pulled away quickly. When he moved quickly, the magpies moved quickly, too. Both were frightened and so both kept away from each other.

I don't think there was any great turning point when Chad suddenly stopped being afraid of the magpies or the magpies stopped being afraid of Chad. Maybe they just started getting used to each other a bit more. As they did, Mom would hold Chad's hand out with a piece of food, protecting it from a wayward peck. Chad was surprised by how gently the birds took it—something he wouldn't have learned if he had allowed his fear to dominate. Discovering this, he felt a little more confident to hold out a bit of meat by himself, and the magpies seemed a little more confident to come and take it, gently. That big, pointy beak wasn't used to harm him, as he had feared. As his mom explained, their beak was like his fingers and mouth wrapped up in one. They used it to pluck the food gently from between his fingers just like he might use his fingers to lift something fragile. I am not sure he would have believed it if anyone had told him that the magpies wouldn't hurt. Like with a lot of things in life, it was something he needed to discover for himself.

As he went on feeding the magpies, he learned things about them . . . and things about himself. At first, he thought magpies were magpies. He hadn't learned to stop and notice the differences between them. Perhaps his fear had limited what he saw. When he began to take notice, some things became obvious. He learned to pick out the adult males, who were distinctly black and white in their colors. They were bigger than the females, whose backs were flecked with black-and-white patterns. The young ones were gray and noisy, squawking constantly until food was poked down their throats, and then they seemed to stop their noisy squawking only long enough to swallow the food before they started to demand more. Chad thought to himself that he wouldn't want to be a magpie mom.

It was usually the biggest and oldest male that came in to feed first. Chad could recognize him because he had a bent leg with a knobby lump on it. Mom said she thought he might have broken it. Because of that, Chad called him Pegleg.

One day Chad said to his mom, "I bet I could get Pegleg to stand on my hand and eat."

"I bet you can't," his mom laughed, "You haven't got the patience."

Chad was determined and, when his mom said that about his patience, he was even more determined. Each day afterward he would feed Pegleg, holding the meat in his right hand and keeping his left hand, palm down, between the meat and the bird. At first, Pegleg would either hop over his left hand or fly around to the other side of the balcony railing, avoiding Chad's hand. It wasn't going to be as easy as Chad had thought, but he wasn't going to give up.

He began to look away while he held out the food. This was because of something else he noticed in watching the magpies. The younger magpies didn't seem to like you looking at them while they were coming to get the food. He tested it out: Stare them in the eyes and they keep their distance; turn your head away they pluck the food from your fingers. It is interesting what you notice when you take the time to be patient, and Chad was being very, very patient, more than his mother thought that he could be.

Riding his bike to and from school he would think about how he might tempt Pegleg to eat from his hand that night. Maybe the hand had been too close to his face. He realized that, if he put himself in the place of a magpie, the face is the danger zone. That is where their beak is, that is what they attack with. If another bird attacked them, it would come from the face. Perhaps Pegleg would feel safer farther from Chad's face, like on his foot.

Chad sat in a chair and put his feet up onto the verandah railings, his legs stretched out as far as he could make them. He held the meat out at full arm's length and looked away. He wanted to watch and had to discipline himself not to. It sure took patience, and several times Chad thought of giving

up. It was several days before it happened. Pegleg hopped onto Chad's ankle, stretched his beak out as far as he possibly could, and plucked the bit of meat from Chad's fingers. Chad sat with his leg and arm as still as if they had been frozen. In fact, about his only movement was his breathing. Day by day he inched his hand closer toward his body, and day by day Pegleg came just a little closer.

Pegleg isn't a slow learner, thought Chad. *He's just scared. He has to learn to trust me. I need to go slow and let him build up his confidence.*

Chad put his left hand on his thigh while he fed Pegleg with his right. As Pegleg got used to the left hand being there, it was only a matter of days before he was standing on the back of Chad's hand. The next step was difficult, but Chad took it slowly and patiently. With Pegleg standing on his hand, Chad tried to lift it, ever so gently, off his thigh, but immediately Pegleg hopped off. Chad wondered if he would ever get past that spot but, sure enough, in time Pegleg would stay on Chad's hand just a few inches above his thigh.

There were many more weeks and many more patient steps before Chad walked out onto the back lawn one day, holding his left hand in the air and some meat in his right. Pegleg swooped down from a tree, landing right on Chad's outstretched hand. Can you image how it must have felt for Chad? It must be hard to know you have to stand as still as a statue when you want to jump over the moon. Chad couldn't even yell for Mom to come and have a look. He didn't want to frighten Pegleg after all the time they had taken to trust each other. He had to discover what it was like to be excited and be still at the same time, what it was like to enjoy the moment.

Of course, Chad's mom and dad both got to see, though they didn't quite believe what they saw at first. Sometimes I still wonder who got to learn more. Was it Chad's parents, Pegleg, or Chad?

STORY 30
I'M NOT AFRAID ANYMORE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Fear of the unknown
- Expecting the worst
- Reluctance to engage in new experiences

Resources Developed

- Learning about the protective value of fear
- Discovering new, positive experiences
- Learning things may not be as bad as imagined
- Shifting fear to excitement

Outcomes Offered

- Willingness to give something new a try
- Acceptance that being scared can be okay
- Acknowledgement that fears can be overcome

"I'm not afraid anymore," Tom announced as we were driving back to our tent, which was pitched at a tiny campsite right on the edge of the ocean. We had come here to see the coral reef, and swim with a huge shark.

Just two weeks before, my grandson, Tom, had been holding my hand tightly and didn't want to let go. We were snorkeling over another reef and, admittedly, this was only Tom's second or third attempt at snorkeling. New things can often be scary, and Tom didn't know what to expect. Feeling scared can be nature's way of protecting us from getting hurt. Tom certainly wasn't a wimp, just careful. It wasn't until after our snorkel that Tom told me he'd been thinking there might be sharks around . . . and felt scared. Better to be scared than eaten, says nature.

The day before Tom told me he wasn't scared anymore, we had been snorkeling again over the coral reef, when we saw a turtle at arm's length below us. Tom lifted his head, pulled out his snorkel and asked, "Can I touch it?" Wishing I could say yes, I shook my head. This was a national park. "Just look and enjoy."

But, the day of my story, something really changed. Tom and I swam with a huge shark. Called a whale shark, they can grow up to 20 yards long, though the one we swam with was only a young fellow at a mere 6 yards long. If he had been a human, he would still be in elementary school. The captain of our boat said they don't even begin to look for girlfriends until they get to about 9 yards.

Unlike a whale, which is a mammal and has to come up to breathe, the whale shark can keep swimming below water forever. It looks like a shark and has a big tail fin that sweeps side to side, unlike that of a whale, which moves up and down. It has a mouth big enough to swallow your average teenager but—thank goodness—unlike your average shark, it eats only tiny plankton and krill. It swims along with its mouth open like a gigantic vacuum cleaner, sucking up the microscopic food as it goes.

As we swam alongside this "gentle giant," as they have been called, Tom didn't even hold my hand! He was as excited as one could be for someone with a snorkel in his mouth and head underwater. He had just swum with the biggest shark in the world, and fear had given way to excitement. So when Tom announced, "I'm not afraid anymore," I was curious.

"What do you think has made the difference?" I asked him. "What has happened from just a couple of weeks ago, when you were gripping my hand with fear, to now? What have you done to snorkel confidently and excitedly on your own?"

"I don't know," Tom answered, thoughtfully. "Maybe it was just that I did it. Once you give it a go you discover that the fears are all in your head. I still felt a bit scared when I first saw the whale shark but then I realized it wasn't interested in us. I felt excited, too."

EXERCISE 6.1

Here is the chance to record ideas from your own stories of change and the professional knowledge that you have about changing patterns of behavior. As you do so, it may be helpful to do the following:

- Think about and write down the desired therapeutic outcome of change as your first task.
- Once this task is completed, assess the type of resources or abilities the child will need to achieve that change.
- If the child has those abilities, ask yourself how can they be used to reach the desired change.
- If not, ask yourself how the metaphors might help develop and employ appropriate resources.

CHAPTER 7

Managing Relationships

As social, interactive beings, our ability to create and maintain warm, caring, empathic relationships is one of the essential building blocks for future psychological and social maturity and happiness (Burns & Street, 2003; Thompson & Gullone, 2003). Several authors claim that the highly valued individualism of modern Western culture is not conducive to the development of prosocial behaviors (Burns & Street, 2003; George, 1999; Gullone, 2000). When children develop empathy, caring, and compassion for another person, they are less likely to engage in violence, aggression, or other conduct disorders. Learning positive relationship skills is healthy, both emotionally and physically, as it improves immune system functioning and lowers rates of cancer, cholesterol, and premature death (Seligman, 2002; Valliant, 2002).

The stories here seek to address questions like, What do you do when you find yourself caught in the middle of a conflict, such as a parental battle for custody of you? How do you effectively make and maintain friendships? How do you learn to work cooperatively with other people? When faced with an impasse, how can you negotiate a solution? How do you learn to take time for yourself? How do you find ways of expressing tenderness, or learn how to put yourself in someone else's place?

STORY 31
CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Parental separation
- Custody battle
- Feeling caught in the middle

Resources Developed

- Seeking solutions
- Looking for compromises
- Accepting what cannot be changed
- Finding the positives
- Seeing yourself as lovable

Outcomes Offered

- Acceptance
- Self-worth
- The sense that "I am okay"

Once there was a doll, a very beautiful doll by the name of Pollyanna Priscilla Ponsenbury the Third. Pollyanna Priscilla Ponsenbury the Third was one of a kind, a specially made doll that any collector of beautiful dolls would have loved to own—except, it seemed to Pollyanna Priscilla Ponsenbury the Third, her current owners. As a result, poor Pollyanna Priscilla Ponsenbury the Third didn't think of herself as being special. In fact, she thought of herself as plain old Polly the dolly.

One day Polly the dolly found herself in an auction. Do you know what that is? You might have seen auctions on TV where several people want to own the same thing and they each offer more money until the highest offer is accepted.

Polly didn't really understand how she had come to be in this position and several times wondered if there was something she had done to cause her to be here. Somehow the auction didn't feel right, but there was nothing Polly could do to prevent what was happening, and that didn't feel very good either.

On one side of the room was a man who was bidding for Polly the dolly. He appeared to be a nice, kindly man who seemed to truly love her and to want her to be in his home with him. On the other side of the room was a woman who was also bidding for Polly. She, too, seemed nice and kindly and was equally determined to have Polly the dolly in her house with her. As they each made their bids it was almost as though Polly could hear them saying, "Come and live with me. I'll take care of you. I'll look after you. I want you in my home." If a doll could look sad, then poor little Polly certainly would have looked sad . . . because that was the way she felt. She didn't like being caught in the middle, not knowing which home to live in, not feeling she had much choice, and not really wanting to make that choice even if she had it.

As the man bid on one side and the woman bid on the other, Polly the dolly began to think of alternatives. *Wouldn't it be nice*, she found herself thinking, *if they got together and I could live with both of them. If that wasn't going to happen, maybe I could live with one part of the time and the other for part of the time. Maybe there is a way for both of them to be happy.*

The man became louder in his bidding. The woman became more desperate in hers. Polly the dolly began to think it might be better if she fell off the shelf where she was displayed. If she was cracked or broken, maybe the fighting for her might stop. Then she realized that, if that happened, no one would be happy, not even Polly herself.

Why was the man getting so loud and the woman so desperate, she wondered. Was it because each of them loved her so much that they thought they could be happy only if she was solely theirs? As Polly thought about them loving her and wanting her, she began to feel better. No matter who won and no matter who she went to live with, there was something that would remain unchanged: The man and woman were both bidding because they wanted Polly, because she was special and unique, because she was loved and valued.

Whatever happened in the auction room that day, or in the days before, or the days that followed, Polly the dolly knew she was—and would always remain—special. Sometimes she forgot it, but in those times she found it helpful to remind herself, *They might not agree, but they do love me*. Yes, she could be loved and valued, and somehow it helped to remind herself of that. She felt some pride in the fact that she was Pollyanna Priscilla Ponsenbury the Third, and comfort in the fact that she was Polly the dolly—but more important, she thought, it felt good just to be herself.

STORY 32
CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE: *A TEEN STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Parental separation
- Custody battle
- Feeling caught in the middle

Resources Developed

- Seeking solutions
- Looking for compromises
- Accepting what cannot be changed
- Finding the positives
- Seeing yourself as lovable

Outcomes Offered

- Acceptance
- Self-worth
- The sense that "I am okay"

You know, as we talk, I am reminded of someone I will call Karen who was in a very similar situation to yours. You remind me a lot of Karen because she was one of those young people who are a joy to meet. She might have had doubts about herself, but my guess was that she was the sort of person that others of her age wanted to have as a friend. There was something nice and beautiful about her as a person. She had a level of genuineness and caring—the sort of qualities that other people value highly in a friend.

Unfortunately, Karen, like you, found herself in a position she didn't want to be in. She didn't really understand how she'd come to be in that position and, as we often do, Karen wondered whether she might have done something to cause it. You see, her parents were fighting over who should have custody of Karen. She didn't want to be in that position. It felt like being the rope in a game of tug-of-war, but she felt powerless to prevent it. Her parents were going to court and it was all about her.

Her dad was a nice enough guy in himself and he kept telling Karen how much he loved her and wanted her to live in his house. Her mom was doing exactly the same; each of them was putting the pressure on her. "Come and live with me. . . . I'll take care of you." "I'll look after you." "I want you in my house." They both said the same things.

Karen had lots of feelings: She felt sad, hurt, disappointed, and misunderstood. She was old enough, by law, to make up her own mind with whom she stayed but she didn't want to have to do that. She didn't like the feeling of being caught in the middle, not knowing which parent to live with. No matter what she did, for one of them it was going to be right and for the other, terribly wrong.

Although they both kept saying that she had the choice it didn't feel like it and she didn't want to make it if she did have it. She began to think of other alternatives and even suggested them to her parents. She thought to herself, *Wouldn't it be nice if they got along with each other, if they forgot about their squabbles, and if we could all just live together as the happy family that we used to be.* Unfortunately, she knew that was not going to happen, and so she suggested that maybe she could live with one of them for part of the time and the other for part of the time. She wished she could make both of them happy and, indeed, feel happy herself.

Unfortunately, that wasn't to be. It seemed that they both wanted all or nothing. When they were unwilling to compromise, her dad got louder and angrier in his arguments. Karen didn't like seeing him like this. Mom was different. She seemed sad and desperate—and that perhaps swayed Karen her mother's way a bit, but she didn't want to side with one or the other.

She wished she could disappear and wake up tomorrow, finding it had been a bad dream and that it hadn't really happened. She'd even thought to herself that she wished she were dead. It felt scary but, if she were, they might stop fighting over her. But a part of her realized that wasn't the answer. It wouldn't make Mom or Dad happy, and she didn't want to be dead.

She began to wonder why her dad was fighting so aggressively and her mom so desperately. Perhaps, she thought, they each wanted her because they loved her and didn't want to let her go. Their expression of their love might have been strange, but it helped her feel a little better to know that their love of her was the reason she was feeling caught in the middle.

She began to think that no matter what her mom or dad did, no matter where she ultimately lived, there was something that would remain unchanged: They both wanted her because they both loved her. She was a unique and special part of their lives. If she weren't important and they didn't value her, they wouldn't have been fighting in the first place. Yes, she thought, no matter who wins,

or whatever the judge decides, I will remain special to each of them. There was no changing the fact that Karen was her mother's daughter *and* her father's daughter. She was a special person, loved and capable of loving no matter where she lived. Sometimes she might forget it and, in those times, she'd find it helpful to remind herself: *They might not agree, but they do love me*. Yes, she could be loved and valued, and somehow it felt good to remind herself of that.

STORY 33
MAKING AND MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIPS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Seeing the differences in others
- Letting mistakes affect relationships

Resources Developed

- Forgiving others' mistakes
- Being compassionate toward others
- Helping a friend in need
- Seeing the benefits rather than the differences

Outcomes Offered

- Forgiveness
- Acts of kindness
- Friendships that accept the differences

The lion, king of the beasts, was dozing under a shady tree, on a hillside that looked out over his kingdom. It so happened that a little mouse, scampering around looking for food, stumbled into one of the lion's paws. The king of beasts awakened. "What are you doing disturbing my siesta?" he roared.

The little mouse squealed in fear and said, "I am sorry, your Majesty. I wasn't looking where I was going. I didn't mean to disturb you. Please don't eat me."

"Lucky for you," said the lion, "I have just had a big meal and feel satisfied—but why shouldn't I crush you for disturbing my sleep?"

"Please," the mouse pleaded, "let me go. If you do a good turn for me, then maybe one day I can do a good turn for you."

The lion roared in laughter at the thought that the humble little mouse could ever help the king of beasts but, as he wasn't hungry and the mouse had given him a good laugh, he decided to let it go.

Weeks and weeks later the lion was out stalking prey when he, too, stumbled—right into a hunter's trap. A net fell, totally entrapping him. He struggled to break free but the more he did, the more entangled he became. He roared in pain and fear.

As it so happened the little mouse heard the lion's cries and ran to his rescue. With its sharp teeth the mouse gnawed through the strands of the net, cutting out a hole big enough for the lion to escape.

"You were right," said the lion, thanking the mouse, "being kind can have its benefits. Do you think it is possible for a mouse and a lion to be friends?" And it is said that the lion and the mouse remained friends to this very day.

STORY 34
THE FOUR FAITHFUL FRIENDS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Tackling a task

Resources Developed

- Building cooperative endeavors
- Making offers to help others
- Discovering how individual skills can contribute to a whole
- Learning the values of friendship
- Accepting differences

Outcomes Offered

- Cooperation
- Consideration
- Friendships
- Acceptance of differences

When I was trekking in a tiny little country called Bhutan, in the Himalayas—the world's highest mountains—I heard an interesting story that children there hear from the time parents first start to tell them stories. It is called the story of the Four Faithful Friends and tells a tale of a pheasant, a rabbit, a monkey, and an elephant. It goes something like this.

One day the pheasant, a very beautiful bird with long, colorful feathers, found a seed and decided to plant it. As the pheasant was scratching at the ground to dig a hole for the seed, a white, long-eared rabbit came hopping by and asked, "Is there anything I can do to help you, my friend?"

"That is a nice offer," answered the beautiful pheasant. "When I plant this seed, would you be kind enough to water it?"

"Certainly," said the long-eared rabbit. He took to his task with honor and pride, ensuring it received plenty of water, especially throughout the dry season when he had to haul the water from a nearby river.

A brown-furred monkey, spotting the pheasant and rabbit working away so industriously, swung down from his tree and asked, "What are you doing, my friends? Can I help you?"

"We are planting this seed," said the beautiful pheasant.

"And watering it," added the long-eared rabbit, proudly.

"Perhaps I could fertilize it and weed it," offered the brown-furred monkey.

While all three were helping to tend to the seed in their own ways, a wrinkly-skinned elephant swayed by. "Can I help you guys, too?" asked the elephant. "If I stand guard to protect it, no one will dare eat or damage it while it is growing."

Together all four friends nurtured the seed, watching it break through the surface of the earth as a tiny shoot, grow into a young sapling, and mature into a tall, strong tree. Before long, it seemed, the tree's branches were laden with an abundant crop of fruit.

Just as the four friends worked together in planting and caring for the tree, so they now worked together to help harvest the fruit.

"Here," said the wrinkly-skinned elephant to the brown-furred monkey, "climb up on my back so that you can reach closer to the tree." Having got in position on top of the elephant, the monkey extended a hand to the long-eared rabbit.

"Hop up on my shoulders. That way we will get a little closer," he said to the rabbit.

Finally the pheasant took its position on the back of the rabbit. By forming this ladder of friends, they were able to reach the fruit and pluck enough to feed them all.

STORY 35
NEGOTIATING A SOLUTION

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Conflicting wants
- Stalemates in a relationship
- Failure to see the other's perspective
- Lack of negotiation skills

Resources Developed

- Looking at things from the other's perspective
- Building strategies for negotiation
- Finding acceptable compromises
- Learning to gain win-win outcomes
- Making negotiation enjoyable

Outcomes Offered

- Negotiation strategies
- Win-win solutions

Suzi wanted to go to a party. Who wouldn't? Especially as this was no ordinary party. It was a beach party. It had been almost the only thing her friends had been talking about for the last couple

of weeks. What they would do, who would be there, what they would wear. It was going to be the best party of the year, perhaps the best party of her life.

But there was a hitch . . . and a big hitch. Her mom had said no. Suzi was desperate, and the more desperately she pleaded her case, the more emphatically her mother said no.

"But everyone is going," pleaded Suzi.

"I don't care who's going," replied her mother. "Even if the Queen of England were going, you are still not going."

Suzi was disappointed. No, worse than that, she was heartbroken. This was her best friend's party. How could she tell her that Suzi's mom wouldn't let her go? She'd look a real dork if she was the only one not there. The other kids were bound to tease her. Heck, they might even dump her as a friend if she didn't join in and participate in what they were doing.

Sunday dinner came around and Suzi's grandmother joined the family for the meal, as she nearly always did on Sunday. Gran noticed how glum Suzi had been looking during the meal but didn't say a thing. It was Suzi's turn to wash up and Gran said, "Let me help you," while the rest of the family shifted into the living room to watch a video.

"What's up?" asked Gran as Suzi dumped the dishes into the foaming water. Gran wiped a plate with a tea towel.

"Mom won't let me go to my best friend's party," said Suzi, sadly.

"Has Mom explained why she doesn't want you to go?" asked Gran.

"No," replied Suzi.

"Then for a moment, put yourself in her position," said Gran. "If you were Mom, what would your objections be?"

Suzi hadn't stopped to think about her mom's side. All she had seen was what she wanted. "Well," she answered after thinking for a moment or two, "it's a beach party. Maybe she doesn't trust us or thinks we'll get into trouble. Maybe she thinks we'll drown or something, but we all know how to swim and look after ourselves."

"Are there going to be any adults there?" asked Gran.

"No," said Suzi, "who wants their parents hanging around when you're trying to have fun?"

"Might it just be," said Gran, "that your mother is concerned and doesn't want anything to happen to you?"

"Nothing will happen," objected Suzi.

"Maybe you're right," said Gran, "but maybe Mom's worried in case it could. You know, when your mother was your age, we used to play a bit of a game. I think we both knew what was happening but we still played it out any way, as if neither of us knew. If she was going out somewhere, I would ask what time she wanted me to pick her up. She would always add an hour or two to it, saying maybe eleven or twelve o'clock, thinking I wouldn't know what she was doing. I'd tell her that was far too late and that I wanted her home by nine. She'd object and we'd both come to a compromise at ten or ten-thirty, which was around what both of us had been thinking all along.

"That way, neither of us was the winner or loser; that way, she got to have time out as she wanted and I got to see her home at a reasonable time. By finding a compromise we both got something, though maybe not completely, of what we wanted.

"I am wondering how you might reach a compromise with your mother on this one. What do you think she wants?"

"I think that she wants to see that we're supervised," answered Suzi, quickly adding, "but we don't need an adult around."

"Then how can you reach a compromise," asked Gran, "where Mom is happy that you are being supervised and you don't feel you have an adult peering over your shoulder all the time. How might that happen?"

"I don't know. It can't," said Suzi. "Mom wants to be there and nobody else wants an adult there."

"Then maybe think of some compromises," suggested Gran. "What if Mom dropped you off and sat in the car park in her car, spending the time studying for the course she is doing? What if she took her laptop into the café at the beach and worked on her studies, while glancing out over the beach at times to make sure you're not drowning? Perhaps she could take a walk along the beach and still not be seen by your friends while you're having your party."

Gran could see the possibilities being thought over by Suzi. "When can you make the time to have a chat with Mom about what her concerns are, what you want, and what sort of compromises you both can make?" asked Gran.

They quietly finished off the dishes and joined the rest of the family to watch the video. Next Sunday over dinner, Gran was delighted to hear Suzi happily recounting the beach party details of the day before. She was also delighted to hear Suzi's mom telling about how she had enjoyed a walk along the beach and some quiet time sitting in the café working on her laptop. Suzi came into the café and joined her at the end of the great party.

STORY 36
NEW FRIENDS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Undesirable friendships
- Loss of old friendships
- Grief

Resources Developed

- Reassessing old friendships
- Learning to discriminate
- Making choices
- Building social skills
- Taking interest in others

Outcomes Offered

- Discrimination skills
- Social skills
- Decision-making skills

Have you noticed how sometimes parents can be as subtle as a sledgehammer? Sometimes they might not even consciously be aware of the effects of what they are saying . . . but just say it anyway. Sometimes, too, it is easy for kids to take what they say in a way that it might not have really been intended. I'm not sure what the problem was for Rob.

His parents are friends of mine and I happened to be sharing a meal with them one night around their kitchen table. Somehow conversation moved on to Sally, the daughter of a mutual friend who wasn't very happy and hadn't been for several weeks. Rob's mom said that Sally had been getting into trouble for a while and that her parents didn't approve of the company she had been keeping. Then, suddenly, all her friends had dumped her and she was sad. For a while afterward she just sat at home and didn't want to go out. She didn't want to go to school, and when her mother and father tried to make suggestions, she'd snap back a reply like, "Get off my case."

Then something interesting happened, though Rob's mom said she didn't know what had made the difference. What happened was that Sally began to take a serious look at her friendships. For so long, she had just drifted along with her old friends without even questioning whether they were the best friends for her to have. Being dumped didn't feel good, but it did give her the chance to rethink whom she wanted to spend her time with and whom she didn't. She then thought about which kids she really wanted to be her friends. She made the effort to speak with them a little more often than she had done previously. She smiled when they passed in the corridors and she started to dress in a similar, though not identical, way. She paid attention to what TV programs they talked about, what boys they discussed, what teachers they liked or didn't, and the sorts of things that they did on their weekends . . . and she began to ask them questions about these things they were interested in. She found she started to enjoy the conversations and liked doing the things that they liked doing.

Rob's mom had said that Sally came home one day after school and said to her mother, "You know, I never realized it before, but I didn't really like my old friends. Some of them were always getting into trouble in class, some were experimenting with drugs, and some were always talking negatively and angrily about their parents. I can see now that some weren't nice people to be mixing with. My new friends are so much nicer. They want to get ahead and the fact that they apply themselves to homework and study means I feel more interested in doing it, too. I wasn't happy at the time when my old friends dumped me but I'm sure happy with the new friends I've made."

As Rob's mom finished telling the story, Rob folded his arms, looked down at the table, and said, "Okay, I know what you're saying."

Isn't it interesting how we all can see things a little differently? Maybe we hear our own messages in what's being told. For me, sharing dinner with them, I thought Rob's mom was just telling me a nice, positive story about Sally. Rob obviously thought she was sending a pointed message his way about the sort of friends he keeps. Of course, I don't know what she had in mind in telling me, but I was interested that Rob saw it so differently.

STORY 37
FINDING TENDERNESS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Anger and defensiveness in relationships
- Lack of intimacy

Resources Developed

- Discriminating between safe and unsafe situations
- Discriminating between safe and unsafe people
- Choosing when to be defensive
- Choosing when not to be defensive
- Building tenderness and affection
- Sharing your resources with others
- Learning to have fun

Outcomes Offered

- Management of anger and defensiveness
- Discrimination skills
- Mutual, sharing relationships
- The joy of having fun

Once there was a mouse, called Fred Mouse, who lived in a hole in a wall in the corner of the house. One chilly morning as Fred Mouse was eating his toasted cheese sandwiches for breakfast, there was a knock on the wall near the hole into his home. "Can we come in?" called a squeaky voice, and through the hole poked a long, slender nose that Fred recognized as Ernie Echidna's.

"Sure, come in," said Fred, sounding a little more confident than he actually felt. He sure liked Ernie, but he was also a bit frightened of him because echidnas, like hedgehogs and spiny anteaters, have lots and lots of prickly quills, and Ernie's quills always seemed to be standing up, even at the best of times.

Ernie had to squeeze and wiggle his way through Fred's tiny door-hole but, as echidnas are used to burrowing, he finally popped inside . . . and, as soon as he did, up popped his sharp, prickly quills. Now, Fred was one of those friendly sorts of mice that like to give their special friends a big, warm hug to greet them, but Ernie was one person from whom he stood back.

"Can I come in, too?" asked another long slender nose, poking through the hole.

"Sure," said Fred.

Emma, Ernie's friend, popped through the hole, too, her prickles standing up like Ernie's. Fred noticed that their quills were quivering.

"What's wrong?" asked Fred.

"It's so cold," said Ernie. "The night has been freezing and up on the hillside in the high country where we live it has even been snowing. So we rolled ourselves into a ball and tumbled down the hill as fast as we could to see if we could come and warm ourselves in your cozy little home."

Fred could imagine Ernie and Emma rolling down the hill. You see, if echidnas find themselves in danger, they have two ways of getting out of trouble. First, if another animal is threatening them, they can lift up their quills so that nothing or no one can get close to them and hurt them. Perhaps a bit like when children get angry, it sends a message that clearly says, "Back off or else."

The second thing echidnas do if they're scared looks pretty funny to someone who is watching. They roll themselves up like a ball so that if they are near a little hill or incline they roll down to get away from danger. This is how they got to Fred's house—like a couple of beach balls rolling down from the high country. Fred thought it must be a fun way to get from one place to another.

"Even in our burrow," continued Ernie, "it was freezing cold."

Emma added, "When I tried to get close to him, his prickles stuck up. If only we could cuddle together, we would probably keep each other warm during the night."

"So, we thought we'd come down and visit you," said Ernie. "Your home in the hole in the wall in the corner of the house is nice and snug and not only that, you are also a good friend. We hoped that you might be able to tell us what to do to solve our problem."

It was still early in the morning, and Fred needed to think a while before he answered, so he offered Ernie and Emma some toasted cheese sandwiches for breakfast. They didn't feel as fond of toasted cheese sandwiches as Fred did, so they politely declined, saying they would go sniffing around outside for their own food when the day got a bit warmer. However, they did accept his offer of a warming cup of hot chocolate.

"The first thing it seems to me," said Fred, "is that your bristles serve the real function to help protect you from bigger animals that might set on you and hurt you. That is helpful if a wild dog or soaring eagle begins to think you might make a tempting meal for them. It is important to have them if you want to survive, but how often are you actually under threat like that?" he asked.

Ernie and Emma turned toward each other and shrugged, "Not very often, really," said Ernie.

"And while it is important to have your bristles standing up sometimes," said Fred, "there are a lot of times that you don't need them. I'm just a little mouse and know there is no way I could hurt you, but your bristles are standing up like arrows sticking pointy-end-out of a target. As a result, I keep a lot farther away from you than I really want to . . . and when I would love to give you a hug.

"While some times and in some situations," he continued, "it might be helpful to be bristly, it's not helpful to be so prickly all the time in all places. Maybe you could try to just let your guard down for a little and relax those bristles while you are safely in my home. Nothing or no one is going to hurt you here."

Ernie and Emma tried. They tried hard. They even tried *really* hard, but their bristles had been sticking up for so long that it was exactly what they kept doing.

"I don't know what else to do," said Ernie. "It feels like this is just what I have always done."

"Close your eyes for a moment," said Fred, "and think that a big lion is coming to eat you."

"But there are no lions in this country," objected Ernie.

"All right then, close your eyes and think about a ferocious, hungry-looking dog, slowly coming toward you."

As Ernie and Emma closed their eyes, their bristles that were already sticking up became even more upright.

"Good," said Fred. "Now think of a safe place or safe time, maybe down in your own burrow on a pleasant day when you've just had a nice meal and can think of relaxing or having a little siesta."

As Ernie and Emma pictured that safe place, their quills began to droop just a little, not too much at first, but just a little.

"Good," said Fred. "Now continue to practice." Fred sounded a bit like a doctor giving them a prescription for some pills. "It might help to practice this every morning as soon as you wake and every night before you go to bed. Practice thinking of situations where you need to have your quills up, and then of safe times, safe places where you can let them down. Stop and ask yourself if you need to put them up around each other or friends like me."

A few weeks later when Fred was eating his toasted cheese sandwiches for breakfast one morning, as he always did, there came a knock on the wall beside his entrance hole. A long, slender nose stuck through the hole and asked, "Can we come in?" and in burrowed Ernie and Emma. As their quills were lying calmly down against their bodies, Fred gave them each a big hug without fear of being spiked. And they hugged him back.

"The weather has been cold," said Fred, "but you aren't shivering as much as you were when you visited last time."

"No," replied Emma. "Now that we are not as bristly around each other we can cuddle up tenderly and keep each other warm through the cold nights. It is so much nicer."

"Yes," agreed Ernie. "Because you helped teach us that there might be times when it's okay to be prickly and times when it's good not to be, we thought we'd like to teach you something."

Fred wondered what they were going to do as he followed Ernie and Emma back up the hill to the high country. With their bristles down, they taught Fred how to roll himself up into a ball and the three of them went somersaulting down the snowy hillside, flopping into the soft snowdrifts at the bottom, where they all laughed heartily.

STORY 38
GOING INSIDE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Boredom
- Anger
- Problematic relationships

Resources Developed

- Taking time out
- Developing relaxation skills
- Learning to ask presuppositional questions

Outcomes Offered

- Relaxation skills
- Strategies for managing relationships
- The joy of positive relationships

Tess was a little sea turtle who had been nicknamed Tess the Terrible. As with people, there are important things that a little turtle needs to learn, so Tess had to go to school. Unfortunately, she didn't like school. School was boring with a capital "B." It was boring sitting in class all day and it was boring listening to the teacher going over and over the same sorts of things, again and again—how to swim most efficiently, how best to catch jellyfish for dinner, how to avoid sharks that may want you for their dinner, and so on.

Now, when Tess got bored, she got restless, and when she got restless, she tended to stir up a bit of trouble. At least it added some interest to the boring day. She might give other turtles a shove when they were standing in line, or poke them with a pencil under the desk, or hide the books they needed for the next lesson. But when the other little turtles did the same sort of thing back to her, she would get angry and snap.

Turtles are good at snapping. A turtle's mouth is actually called a beak, and turtles can snap their beaks really well. They are built hard and tough for grinding up food. I know I sure wouldn't like to get my finger in the way when they snap—especially a snap by Tess. She would have been a gold medalist if it had been a game in the Olympics.

The other little turtles teased Tess about the way she snapped. And, of course, the more they teased her, the more vicious her snaps became. This was why she was nicknamed Tess the Terrible.

Unfortunately, Tess wasn't happy. Being bored and angry isn't fun. Other little turtles poked fun at her. They seemed to have lots of friends. She didn't, and she didn't know what to do about it.

Swimming home after school one day, lost in her thoughts, Tess also lost her way. The waters were getting deeper and darker, and she was frightened when a huge, dark figure slowly paddled out of the gloom toward her. It was a big, old turtle and, from her size, Tess guessed she must have been hundreds and hundreds of years old. She'd heard her parents talk of a wise old turtle who had cruised all the oceans of the earth, learned everything there was to learn, and now shared her knowledge with those in need.

"You look so sad," the old turtle gently greeted Tess, as if reading her mind. Tess found herself telling the old turtle all her troubles like she had never told anyone before. She couldn't have told her teacher. She didn't tell her mom and dad, and the last ones she felt she could talk to were the other little turtles at school.

"I am always in trouble," answered Tess. "I get bored and angry and snap when I shouldn't."

"Oh!" said the old turtle, a distant look of memory in her eyes as she thought back to her own times at school. "Most of us have known that problem," she said understandingly. "It took me a long time to learn the answer, but I have a feeling that you might be quicker than me."

Tess listened eagerly.

"It was a long time before I realized I had the answer all along. I was carrying it around with me every day, every minute," the old turtle said as she reached out a flipper and gently patted Tess's shell. "If you feel like you're getting upset or irritable, pull your head in," suggested the old turtle. "Go inside your shell. I learned to do it when I was about your age. I have lost count now how many years I've been swimming around the oceans, but I still do it whenever I need to take time out or just have a little bit of peace and quiet to myself. The trick is learning to remind yourself to do it as soon as you feel those feelings you don't want to have.

"When I do," continued the old turtle, "the first thing I do is just take three deep breaths and then let my breathing relax slowly and comfortably. When I feel calmer, I ask myself if what I was

thinking and feeling before I went inside is helpful. If it isn't, then I ask myself what I could do to make things different when I pop my head out again." With that the old turtle caressed Tess's back once again with her flipper and then swam off, slowly fading into the deep blues of the ocean.

The next morning, school seemed just as boring as it had ever been. Tess had barely arrived before the other little turtles started to tease her again, and she had already opened her beak, ready to snap, when she remembered the wise old turtle's suggestion. She pulled her head in, retreating her flippers at the same time, and took three deep breaths.

Hey, she thought, *something is happening*. She found herself becoming calmer and more relaxed. She asked herself if it was helpful to be angry and thought, *No, it really isn't*.

She then recalled the wise old turtle's question: Ask how you might make things different when you pop your head out again. She thought she could try smiling and being nice to the other little turtles instead. When her head popped back out from her shell, she wore a nice smile of contentment. The other little turtles saw it and started to smile also.

As she kept practicing the wise old turtle's advice—going inside, relaxing, and asking how you can change things for the better—Tess found herself feeling calmer and happier. She stopped annoying the other little turtles and, as a result, they stopped teasing her. She made so many friends and was having so much fun that she actually began to look forward to going to school—and, you know, the other little turtles changed the nickname they had for her. Instead of Tess the Terrible, she is now called Tess the Terrific.

STORY 39
PUTTING YOURSELF IN SOMEONE ELSE'S PLACE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Being the youngest child
- Feeling bossed around
- Feeling left out
- Envying others

Resources Developed

- Putting yourself in another's place
- Looking at things from a different perspective
- Developing compassion for another
- Reassessing an egocentric focus

Outcomes Offered

- Understanding another's experience
- Compassion for others
- Being cooperative

It is not always easy being the youngest in the family. At least, that was what Michelle told me. She was the youngest of three children and felt that her two sisters and her parents were always bossing her around. Her sisters, Tessa and Marie, got to do more things than she did and, though at times she felt angry toward them, she really wished she could be in their shoes and do the things that they were doing. Being the youngest just wasn't fair.

Fortunately, things changed on her birthday. Her parents gave her a witch's costume for a present, and along with the costume came a book of magical spells. Michelle began to shut herself in her room more often, dressing up in her witch's costume and practicing magic spells. One spell, *Wishus Fulfilus*, was described as the most powerful, magical, wish-fulfilling spell. She followed the book's instructions step by step and then at the end, as the book instructed, said out loud, *"Wishus Fulfilus Tessa."* To anyone who doesn't understand a witch's magical-spell language this meant something like, "I wish I was my sister Tessa."

Instantly she found herself in Tessa's room. She looked down and saw that she was in Tessa's clothes. She looked in the mirror and she definitely looked like her next-eldest sister. Just as she was being amazed at her own power to make a wish come true, there was a knock on the door and in walked Michelle. Michelle was whining and began to pull at Tessa's things. Tessa started to get annoyed—maybe it wasn't quite so cool being the middle sister and having a whining young kid sister. *This is not so great*, she thought, and said, *"Wishus Fulfilus Marie"*—I wish I was my sister Marie.

Instantly she was Marie, the eldest sister, in her eldest sister's bedroom. Again, she looked down at her clothes and in the mirror. Yes, she definitely was Marie. "Marie," her mother called from outside, "come and do the dishes." "Why me?" asked Marie. "Why can't Tessa or Michelle do them?" "Because you are older," said her mom, "and you have to be learning to take more responsibility."

Michelle began to think that it wasn't so much fun being Marie but decided to stick with it. She got to stay up a bit later that night than she would have done had she been Michelle, but Mom made her spend those extra hours doing really hard homework. She sat down and looked at it. There was math and science. There were symbols and words she didn't understand. It was such hard work being Marie that she found herself thinking, *Mom gets to stay up late with nobody to boss her around. It must be fun to be Mom.* So she said, *"Wishus Fulfilus Mom."*

Well, no sooner had she wished it than she found herself in Mom's place. By now Michelle would have been tucked up in bed and, indeed, both her elder sisters would also be in bed asleep. As Mom, she thought she would at least get to watch a late-night TV program that she, as Michelle, normally wouldn't be allowed to watch . . . but that wasn't to be. Instead, as Mom she was putting away the dishes, ironing shirts for Dad to wear to work in the morning, and cleaning up the kitchen after the family dinner—and then she was feeling so tired she just fell into bed. The alarm rang when it was still dark and cold; she hurriedly pulled on some clothes and was soon making sandwiches for Michelle, her sisters, and Dad for their lunches. She was waking the kids, getting them showered and seeing them off to school. She felt so tired she wished she were Dad. Dad managed a company and surely there was no one to boss him around. So she said, *"Wishus Fulfilus Dad."*

Instantly Michelle found herself sitting behind Dad's desk, looking into a computer screen with confusing, complicated facts and figures. His secretary walked in with a big bundle of mail, dropping it into two piles on his desk, saying that one was urgent and needed to be tended to today and the other not so urgent. Michelle looked at the big pile and wondered how it would ever get done. The phone rang. It was Dad's boss. Dad had a boss! He was telling Dad that the company was facing some

cutbacks and Dad would have to fire several of the staff. These had been his friends for a long time, Dad answered. How could he tell them to leave when they had mortgages to pay and children to feed? "Sorry," explained Dad's boss, "It has to be done." Even before Michelle had hung up the phone she was wishing she were no longer Dad. So she said, *"Wishus Fulfilus Michelle."*

She just wanted to be herself, and with that wish she was. She was back in her classroom at school among her friends, looking at books that she at least understood to some degree. Her teacher could be a bit bossy at times, but to Michelle, she didn't seem all that bad now. In fact, it didn't feel all that bad when Michelle got home from school that night and walked into her own room. Things looked a little different from what they were before. Not that the room had changed, but maybe Michelle had changed a bit. Knowing how it felt to be in Tessa's and Marie's place, she didn't whine around them so much. She also felt it would be nice to take a bit more responsibility like Tessa and Marie. It might help her feel a bit more grown-up and give Marie more time to cope with all that difficult homework. Knowing all the things that Mom had to do made her a bit more understanding when Mom got bossy at times, and she also had a better understanding of what had been happening in Dad's day when he came home grumpy from work.

When next she opened her spell book again, it wasn't with the thought of changing things for herself. In fact, it now felt pretty good just being who she was. With her magical wish-fulfilling spell she was now sending good wishes to Tessa, Marie, Mom, and Dad.

STORY 40
MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Loneliness
- Lack of friends
- Lack of social skills

Resources Developed

- Openness to doing something different
- Willingness to explore new relationships
- Learning what works and what does not
- Giving compliments
- Accepting compliments
- Helping others
- Contributing from your unique abilities

Outcomes Offered

- Mutual friendship
- Enhanced social skills
- The benefits of cooperation

Sometimes it can be lonely, if you are a mouse who lives in a hole in a wall in the corner of a house all by yourself. Maybe it can be lonely even if others live in the house with you.

There were times Fred Mouse enjoyed being alone, especially when he had a plateful of toasted cheese sandwiches to eat all by himself. But sometimes Fred Mouse thought he might like to have a friend with whom he could play. Deep in these thoughts one day, he wandered out of his house and down the road to the bay, where he sat alone at the end of the jetty looking at the rippling water. He hadn't been there long before Sleek-Fin popped his dolphin head out of the water, rolled on his side, and looked at Fred with one big, glassy eye. "Hi, Fred," he said with a smile on his face. "What are you doing sitting on the jetty?"

"I was just wondering how to find some friends to play with," replied Fred.

"You can always play with me," said Sleek-Fin.

"How?" asked Fred. "We are so different. You are a dolphin and I am a mouse. You live in the water and I live on the land."

"Oh," said Sleek-Fin, seeming a little sad at first. Then, brightening up, he added, "Maybe there is a way we could make it work. If you sat on my back near my fin I could take you for a ride without ducking under water and getting you wet . . . well, without getting you too wet . . . maybe." As Fred laughed and enjoyed his ride on Sleek-Fin's back, he thought this was one fun way to make friends—doing something that both of you can enjoy together.

Almost as if reading his mind, Sleek-Fin said, "I've been thinking about it, too. You know, there are a couple of things that you need to avoid if you want to make friends. You see Leaper out there?" he asked, pointing with his nose out toward the sea. Fred had already seen Leaper riding the waves, standing up almost vertically on his tail as he finned his way down. He watched as Leaper caught the next wave and did a backward somersault over the top of it. Sleek-Fin said, "It doesn't help to show off. Leaper doesn't have many friends because he thinks he is so much better than everyone else. But then, it doesn't help to be too shy either. There's another dolphin in our pod, Shy-Swimmer, who you won't see out there showing off like Leaper. He always swims at the back and waits for others to approach him, and he doesn't have many friends, either."

Fred began to wonder: If there were things you needed to avoid, what could you do to build more friendships? He remembered that when Sleek-Fin had come up to him earlier at the jetty, smiled, looked him in the eye, and asked about how he was feeling, it had felt good. *Maybe it helps to be interested in the other person*, thought Fred, *to ask how they are feeling and thinking*. When Sleek-Fin did, Fred had felt special. So what could Fred do to help Sleek-Fin feel special, too?

He couldn't invite him to visit. There was no way a dolphin could make it across land to Fred's home, let alone squeeze through the tiny little hole in the wall in the corner of the house, was there? If Sleek-Fin could have done that, Fred thought that might have shown Sleek-Fin he really liked him. Maybe Fred could help Sleek-Fin feel special by telling him things that Fred liked about him.

"It was nice that you took an interest in me when I was sitting by myself on the jetty," said Fred.

"That's fine," said Sleek-Fin. "What are friends for? Friends are the people who are willing to stand by you at times when you are happy and joyful as well as the times when you feel sad or lonely."

"Not only that," said Fred, "you are very thoughtful and considerate. When we were out swimming you took so much care not to get me wet. You never forgot I was on your back and never dived under the water."

"Thanks," said Sleek-Fin, accepting Fred's compliment.

Fred was taken by surprise. He had been taught to be modest, and he might have denied it if someone had given him a compliment, saying something like, "I'm not really," or "Obviously, you don't know me well." Yet he felt good when Sleek-Fin accepted his compliment and it appeared that Sleek-Fin felt good, too.

Just then Fred noticed something. "Did you know you have a bit of seaweed stuck in your blowhole?" asked Fred. He wondered why he hadn't seen it while they had been out swimming.

"Yes," replied Sleek-fin, "I have been trying to get rid of it for days. I have blown and I have coughed but that didn't shift it, and without any arms I haven't been able to reach up and pick it out."

"Let me help," said Fred. So, as Sleek-Fin blew, Fred used his tiny little paws to pull the seaweed out of Sleek-Fin's blowhole.

"You were right earlier when you said we were different," commented Sleek-Fin. "I can swim and you can't, but I can take you for a ride if we are friends."

"And I can use my paws to clear seaweed from your blowhole if we are friends," added Fred.

After that, Fred always knew that when he was sitting alone in his house and wanted company all he had to do was take a walk down to the jetty on the bay. It wouldn't be long before his friend would turn up, looking up at him caringly, smiling gently, and talking about the things they cared about in each other. They were very different, but it didn't matter so much what the differences were so long as they could share the things they had in common. A dolphin and a mouse!

"A strange relationship," said Sleek-Fin.

"And a great friendship," added Fred.

EXERCISE 7.1

What are the skills and resources that a child needs to develop appropriate social behaviors? Have the stories in this chapter triggered ideas of your own? What stories can you offer to help build the qualities of empathy, kindness, consideration toward others, and genuine human caring? Stories on this theme are likely to include the following:

- The discovery and acquisition of such prosocial behaviors
- The cultivation and development of these qualities
- The application for establishing and maintaining effective, happy relationships

CHAPTER 8

Managing Emotions

". . . [P]ositive emotions have an undoing effect on negative emotions," asserts Fredrickson (2000), adding that desired feelings such as joy, interest, and contentment broaden a person's thought-action repertoire, in turn building enduring resources for survival and well-being. This is much the same principal as Joseph Wolpe established with reciprocal inhibition and systematic desensitization: You overcome the undesired emotion by creating the desired one. For parents, teachers, and child therapists this means that the more you help a child discover and experience his or her potential for creating happiness and well-being, the less likely that child is to experience anxiety, depression, or anger. Appropriately managing emotions also involves learning that there are times when grief, though painful, may be an appropriate process of adjustment, or that fear, though uncomfortable, may prevent a child's entering into a dangerous situation.

Since fear, grief, and guilt are dealt with in other chapters, the emphasis of the stories in this section is on helping to build positive emotions. There are tales that focus on the awareness and appreciation of sensory experiences (Burns, 1998), and that talk about fun, humor, and laughter. They look at how to cultivate contentment, how to change feelings by changing posture, and how to express emotions congruently. There are also stories about managing anger in a way that delivers the message with humor.

STORY 41
HEIGHTENING PLEASURE: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- A need to increase pleasurable experiences
- A need to heighten sensory awareness and enjoyment

Resources Developed

- Focusing on sensory pleasures
- Appreciating the five senses:
  Sight
  Sound
  Smell
  Taste
  Touch
- Enjoying life's simple pleasures

Outcomes Offered

- Pleasure
- Contentment
- Happiness
- Self-initiated self-caring

Do you enjoy your vacations? What do you usually do with them? Sandy was a boy I met who looked forward to his summer vacation more than anything else. His family usually went to the beach, and he loved it so much.

Sandy's real name was Alexander, though everyone had called him Sandy for as long as he could remember. When he did learn that Alexander was his real name, it came as a surprise. It was difficult to understand how "Sandy" could be derived from "Alexander." The two names sounded and, when written, looked so different. He preferred to think that he was called Sandy because he loved the sandy beach so much. Thinking that made it feel like he and the beach were meant to be together, that they belonged together. The beach was sandy and he was Sandy.

At the start of the summer vacation, the family drove from their home in the city to the beach house, usually arriving late in the afternoon. By the time the car was unpacked, everyone was settled in, and dinner was cooked, it was time for bed. Sandy didn't mind being sent to bed because he couldn't wait to get up early the next morning. He couldn't wait to run along the beach and feel the wet sand under his feet. He couldn't wait to get down on his knees and feel his hands scooping up the soft grainy sand. He knew the feel of patting it into a sand sculpture, of its growing firmer with each pat, of smoothing his hands down the sides and shaping the creation that he was making.

Sometimes it was a castle, sometimes he might make a dinosaur, and sometimes he would create a sandman. The sand felt coarse, heavy, and cool when damp, warmer and lighter when dry. He was free to imagine and build whatever he wanted.

He loved the comforting warmth of the summer sun on his skin, though he was old enough to know, without being told, to cover up, put on a hat, and apply sunscreen so the sun didn't burn his skin a painful red. Wow, what a feeling as he ran down the beach and jumped into the cool, salty water! He would lie on his back and float without a care, as though some loving hands were supporting him. Floating in the sea felt so much easier and freer than when he'd tried it at the swimming pool where he went with his school for swimming lessons. At the end of the day, the cooling sea breeze turned his skin goose-bumpy.

He enjoyed all the differing sounds that he never heard at home. That first night sleeping at the beach house was always special. It was so wonderful to drift off to the sound of the waves lapping the beach, especially when you never quite knew just what mood they might be in. Sometimes they would be crashing, strong, and powerful, while at other times they were gentle and relaxed—a soothing, swishing sound across the sand. Sometimes they were regular, wave after wave, and at others they would be chaotic and confused. Sandy lay in bed playing a game of matching his breathing to the waves. It was often the last thing he remembered before awakening in the morning to the comical squawking and squabbling sounds of the seagulls fighting over a scrap of leftover food.

As they drove to the beach house, he would roll down his car window, waiting for that first salty smell of the sea. Often he could smell it in the air before they'd crossed the scrubby sand dunes and got their first glimpse of the water.

Early in the morning, Sandy explored what the high tide had washed up on the shore. He might find sun-bleached cuttlefish shells, a colorful starfish, or knotty bits of driftwood covered in weird-shaped barnacles. One vacation, he found the large, round, greenish shell of a turtle's back. In the clear, shallow rock pools were smooth pebbles, scurrying crabs, and tiny, darting fish. He imagined that the twisting white foam left behind by the waves was a bubbly serpent. In bunches of brown, slimy seaweed, he might find little seaweed balls that he could pop between his fingers. Sandy felt at home on the sands of the beach, and I guess that's why he thought it was from there that his name really originated.

STORY 42
HEIGHTENING PLEASURE: *A TEEN STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- A need to increase pleasurable experiences
- A need to heighten sensory awareness and enjoyment

Resources Developed

- Focusing on sensory pleasures
- Appreciating the five senses:
  Sight
  Sound
  Smell

Taste
Touch
- Enjoying life's simple pleasures

Outcomes Offered

- Pleasure
- Contentment
- Happiness
- Self-initiated self-caring

Have you ever been backpacking or camping in the woods? Shelley never had. She was a city girl. Her dad would never take his car off a paved road, and her mom would never stay anywhere except in a luxury hotel. Then her class teacher, Ms. McKay, announced they were going on a hiking trip: four days trekking through the woods, three nights camped out in tents. How could she get out of it?

Well, the fact was she couldn't, and so she found herself tramping along with a pack on her back that she was sure even a Sumo wrestler would struggle with. It was a burden she didn't want to bear but she also knew it carried things essential for her survival, so she found herself needing it and hating it at the same time. Was she ever glad to dump it when they finally got to their campsite!

Ms. McKay called the girls together. "When you have set up your tents"—*great, how do you do that?* wondered Shelley—"I want you to explore the woods near camp. Don't wander too far away." *No worries about that,* thought Shelley. "I want you to look closely at what you see. Let yourselves discover the colors, the shapes, the shades, the tones, and the movements. Let us make this a silent exercise. While you walk and look, no talking for the first ten minutes." *You have to be joking*, Shelley mouthed to the friend standing beside her. She didn't know if she had been silent, ever, for ten minutes in her life, apart from sleeping.

She looked up at the trees. Hey, the leaves weren't all green. Each one was a different shade of green—light green, dark green, yellowy-green, blue-green—and they were different sizes and shapes, and moved differently in the breeze. The tree trunks weren't brown. They were gray and brown, and black and green. Some had smooth bark over which you could run your hand, while others were too lumpy or splintery. One tall tree had a hollow trunk just big enough for a teenage girl to hide in. Checking it out to be sure it was free of spiders and snakes, she slipped inside. At least she could hide here till the ten minutes were up, then jump out and startle a passing friend. As she sat there, she watched a shiny beetle making its way up the inside of the trunk; she was fascinated as its delicate legs climbed over mountainous ridges and deep valleys—at least for a beetle—*on a journey to where?* she wondered. When she heard other kids chattering again she felt reluctant to leave. There was something peaceful about her tree-trunk hideaway and she didn't want to leave her beetle. For a while, she stayed on.

After supper (along with carrying a backpack, she could live without the camp food, Shelley thought) Ms. McKay asked everyone to quietly sit around the campfire, close their eyes if they wished, and listen to the sounds of the forest. The crackle of the fire sounded friendly and warming. The breeze rustled the leaves of the trees. Strange, thought Shelley, how she had not noticed it before. Now it seemed overwhelmingly present. Someone let off a loud fart—that was the baked beans for supper! Giggles rippled around the campfire before the quietness of the woods settled again. Sev-

eral sort of birds were calling: whistles, twits, songs, and then the hoot of an owl. Despite all the sounds she still thought of it as silence . . . and it felt good to listen.

Over the next few days, Ms. McKay asked them to be aware of the smells around them (*not after you feed us baked beans again,* Shelley said to herself). The woods smelled . . . how would she describe it . . . yes, they smelled *green*. Damp, fresh, clean, fragrant . . . and definitely green. She would crush some different leaves between her fingers as she walked, letting the aroma waft toward her nose. She liked the earthy smell of the soil as she lay so close to it in her tent at night.

"Have you ever discovered the tastes of the forest?" said Ms. McKay. "Nature lets you know what to avoid. Anything that is red or grows on thorny plants is likely to be poisonous. Just taste the things I show you." *Yeah, your insurance is probably not up to having a poisoned kid on you hands*, said Shelley's head. Ms. McKay pointed out leaves they could chew on (but not swallow) to experience the flavor, and wild fruits that were edible.

"Let us also be aware of our sense of touch," said Ms. McKay on the last camp night. "Our skin is our biggest sense organ. If you could peel it off and spread it out, it would cover two square yards." *Gross*, thought Shelley. "Let yourselves discover what tactile sensations you experience in the woods. Not just what you touch but what touches your skin, like the coolness of the breeze or warmth of the sun."

Shelley felt the ground as she slept on it at night, the smoothness and coarseness of tree barks as she passed, the texture of leaves as she crushed them in her fingers, and the difference between soft soils and rocky outcrops as she hiked over them. She came across another shiny beetle, caressed its silky back, and felt its delicate legs walking across her hand. She picked up a feather in the trail, drawing its softness between her fingertips.

Having always thought of herself as a city girl, Shelley surprised herself when she got back home. She *wanted* to go walking. She hadn't seen before how many lovely gardens there were down her street or what a delightful little place was the park at the end of the road. As she walked she saw the colors in the gardens, smelled the fragrance of flowers in the air, felt the warm of the sun and the cool of the shade, and heard bird calls she'd not heard before . . . and it all felt great.

STORY 43
HAVING FUN

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Lack of fun and enjoyment
- Feeling depressed
- Being too serious
- Not knowing how to have fun

Resources Developed

- Accepting that life is not all fun
- Enjoying the moment

- Identifying the experience of fun
- Learning to be playful
- Building positive social skills
- Learning to *do* fun things

Outcomes Offered

- Happiness
- Joyfulness
- Fun-directed activities

What you just said reminded me of something Angela said, and you might be curious to know what it was. Angela was someone about the same age as you, and when I asked her what she would like to be doing more of, her words may not have been the same as yours but I think the meaning was. She answered, "Having fun."

I never did learn why Angela wasn't having as much fun as she wanted. In fact, it might have been that she was having some fun and wanted to have more. Maybe we didn't even need to talk about the reasons behind why Angela had come to see me, because I guess she already knew them at some level. Just talking about them a lot more—particularly to someone she didn't know really well—wasn't necessarily going to make a lot of difference. And it seemed to me that when Angela asked to find more ways of having fun, a part of her already knew what she wanted and needed to do.

So I asked Angela what she did for fun in her life at that moment. She stopped and thought for a little while, then said, "I have fun playing with my baby sister, but sometimes she starts to cry and Mom blames me for upsetting her. So it isn't always fun."

She thought a little longer and said, "Sometimes it's fun playing with my friends. We can laugh and giggle a lot, but other times, when they pick on me, it's not such fun."

"In those times—even if they are brief times," I asked, "what does that fun feel like?"

"I don't know," she answered.

"That's okay," I said. "Sometimes we don't have to have the words for a feeling to know what that feeling feels like. If you think about it now, is it possible to feel it?"

She closed her eyes for a moment, a smile started to creep into the corners of her mouth, and she nodded her head.

"What do you notice about what is happening in your body?" I asked.

"My stomach feels sort of warm," she said. "I can feel the smile on my face, it's nice."

I replied, "I wonder, if there are times when you want to feel that fun feeling but can't play with your baby sister or have a giggle with your friends, how you can do what you just did now. How can you close your eyes and feel the warmth in your tummy or smile on your face?"

"I guess I can just do it," she said, and opened her eyes, still smiling.

"Of your friends," I asked, "who do you think has the most fun, happiness, or joy?"

"Libby," answered Angela without hesitation. "She always seems to be fooling around. She is sort of the class clown."

"What is it that Libby does that helps contribute to her feelings of fun?"

"She is playful," answered Angela. "She is always telling jokes or playing practical jokes on other

kids. Once she put a rubber spider in another girl's desk then waited for her to open the lid and scream."

"I wouldn't necessarily want you to do all the things that Libby does," I said. "Nor do I want you to get into trouble for putting rubber spiders in other kids' desks to see if they scream in the middle of class—but I am wondering if there are any things that Libby does that you might be able to do to create more fun."

"I guess by being a little more playful," answered Angela.

"How could you be more playful?" I inquired.

"I guess I could just be a little more relaxed, tell some more jokes, or fool around a little bit more with the other kids at times," Angela responded.

"Is there anyone else that you think is a good example of how to have fun?" I continued.

"Well," said Angela, "Karen seems to have a lot of fun because she has a lot of friends. They always go around together laughing and having a good time."

"And what is it that Karen does to have both friends and fun?"

"She invites them around to her place after school," answered Angela. "She has a lot of sleepovers. She visits the other kids' homes."

"Are there things that Karen does for fun that you can do for yourself?"

"Maybe I can talk to Mom," said Angela, "about inviting some friends around after school or having them sleep over one weekend."

"And is there anyone else you think of as a fun-filled person—or do you think that you've got enough things to work on already?" I asked.

"Joanne always seems to be doing a lot of things that are fun. She competes in squash after school on Fridays, is learning the guitar, and plays basketball on weekends. She is always talking about all the things that she's done and about how much fun they are for her."

"Doing things that we enjoy can be fun," I agreed. "Are there things that you'd like to be doing more of in your life to have fun?"

"I've thought I'd like to go to ballet classes," said Angela. "That would be fun."

As Angela began to plan the things she wanted to do, a smile of joy started to creep back on her face again. I guess I didn't need to tell her what joy felt like or what the things were that she could begin to do to have fun. She was already starting to discover them for herself, and it probably all started with that thing I remember her saying: *I want to have more fun*.

STORY 44
CULTIVATING CONTENTMENT

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Lack of contentment
- Loneliness
- Trying to be perfect

Resources Developed

- Appreciating the simple things
- Feeling okay about yourself
- Enjoying your own company
- Enjoying the company of others
- Accepting that you are not perfect
- Learning to relax
- Creating peaceful thoughts
- Accepting that contentment may be different for different people
- Appreciating your environment
- Using what you learn from others

Outcomes Offered

- Contentment

Contentment was a word that Fred Mouse may have heard, but he hadn't really thought about it before. It sounded like a big adult word. However, when he did hear it, Fred wondered what it meant.

He first began to think about it while eating his toasted cheese sandwich for breakfast in his hole in the wall in the corner of the house. *Maybe contentment*, he thought, *is that feeling in the morning when your tummy is rumbling for food and you give it a hot toasted sandwich with runny cheese in the middle. That would be contentment for me if I were a tummy*, thought Fred. But did it mean more? He was curious to explore what else it might be, so after breakfast he set out on a journey to find what more he could learn about contentment.

The first friend he met was Philip Bear. *Is Philip contented?* Fred wondered. *He seems happy to sit wherever he happens to be and watch the world go by with a relaxed, teddy-bear smile on his face. He is also happy if someone wants to pick him up, play with him, or give him a teddy-bear hug. Maybe*, thought Fred Mouse, *contentment is just feeling okay whether you're by yourself or enjoying time with others*.

Philip had been loved, hugged, and cuddled so much that spots of his hair had begun to wear off, but, interestingly, it didn't seem to make a lot of difference that he wasn't quite perfect. *Maybe*, thought Fred Mouse, *contentment is about feeling okay whether you're perfect or not*. But were there more ways of being contented?

Instead of turning around and thinking he had all the answers, Fred continued on his journey like an explorer wanting to discover the mysteries of the jungle. Soon he heard a soft purring from the next room. As you might imagine, Fred Mouse was pretty careful when he heard the sound of purring, so he peered around the corner warily. Curled up on the rug by a warm winter's fire was Tabby, the cat. She hardly moved except for the slow, rhythmic rise and fall of her stomach and chest with each relaxed breath that she took. Her muscles looked limp. Her mouth held a gentle smile. *Maybe that's contentment*, thought Fred, *to take time to curl up, let your breathing grow slow and easy, feel the comfort of you muscles and enjoy your own peaceful thoughts*.

He began to wonder whether Tabby was thinking contented thoughts. Was she dreaming about chasing a mouse? Was she dreaming about chasing him? *It might be a contenting thought for Tabby*, Fred said quietly to himself, *but it might not be very contenting for me to be chased by a cat*. With that he had another thought: *Maybe what contentment is for one person isn't the same as what it is for another.*

Fred tiptoed quietly passed Tabby to continue his exploration outside. Barely had he stepped outside the doorway when he heard a beautiful warbling. Millie, the magpie, was perched in the branch of her tree. The sun shone gently on her back, the soft breeze swayed the branch, the sky above was clear blue, and the fragrance of flowers filled the air. *If I were Millie the magpie*, thought Fred, *I'd be singing happily, too. Maybe contentment is appreciating what you have around you, and singing joyfully about it.*

I don't know if Fred Mouse discovered all there was to know about contentment or whether, if he'd continued his journey, he might have found out a whole lot more. Perhaps what he learned was enough for him just at that point. I can guess, though, that when Fred snuggled into the comfort of his own bed that night, and closed his eyes to drift off to sleep, he could feel a little of that contentment that he'd seen Philip, Tabby, and Millie experiencing. And I wonder if, like Fred Mouse, you are feeling a little more contented, too.

STORY 45
NAILING DOWN ANGER

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feelings of anger
- Temper outbursts
- Uncontrolled behaviors
- Feelings of powerlessness to change

Resources Developed

- Accepting the consequences of behavior
- Learning about the impact of actions
- Taking responsibility
- Exploring new possibilities
- Creating positive alternatives

Outcomes Offered

- Anger management
- Skills in seeking solutions
- Ability to use energy creatively

Matt was a nice enough guy. He enjoyed his friends and family and, mostly, they enjoyed him. I say "mostly" because sometimes Matt could get really angry. If things didn't go quite his way, he could shout and scream at people. He would slam doors, push other kids around, or throw things that happened to be near him. His mom and dad had long said things like, "You'd better learn to control that temper, young man, or one day you will get into real trouble." Now Matt was noticing that some of his friends at school tended to be avoiding him more and more. The more he got angry, the less they wanted to spend time with him.

This worried Matt. He liked his friends. He didn't want to lose them but he didn't know what to do about it. He had always been like this. Try as he might, at times things would build up like a volcano until he erupted. Matt felt it was outside his control. What could he do?

One Saturday morning his dad came home from the hardware store and said, "Matt, I've got a present for you." Out of the shopping bag he pulled a brand-new hammer and bag of big, shiny nails. He got an old baked-bean can and tipped the nails into the empty container. Handing Matt the brand-new hammer and can of nails, he said, "Every time you get angry, go outside and hammer a nail into the wooden fence that runs down the side of the house."

At first, Matt thought his old man must be going crazy or something. Perhaps he'd been under too much pressure at work, but Matt gave a shrug. He had tried everything else, why not do what his father had said?

Each time he got angry at home he went and hammered a nail in the side fence. If he got angry at school he'd remember how many times he'd lost his temper and as soon as he got home he'd go and hammer the appropriate number of nails into the fence.

Soon Matt found the task of hammering the nails in got boring. He didn't like having to keep track of all the times he got angry and then go out into the shed, gather the nails and hammer, walk over to the fence, and pound in a few more nails, particularly if it was cold and raining. Surprisingly, Matt found that he was getting less and less angry. It was easier, in fact, to control his temper than to remember the times he hadn't, then go and hammer another nail in the fence. After a week of not having to face up to the fence, even on one single occasion, he proudly went and told his dad.

"Good," said his dad. "I'm pleased to hear it. Now, every day you have *without* losing your temper, I want you to go and remove one of those nails you hammered in the fence."

The days went by, and the nails came out one at a time, but somewhere in the task of removing them, Matt noticed that they were leaving holes. The wood sprung back around some of the holes, closing them up a little, while others stayed the full size of the nail. Matt became concerned about the gaps that remained even after he'd removed the nails.

When he told his dad, his dad said, "That's a bit like what happens when we get angry. Anger can hurt and sometimes it leaves a wound or a scar that people remember long after the anger has passed."

Matt thought about his dad's words over the next few days. He didn't like the fact that he'd left holes in the fence. Every time he walked by he could see the wounds that remained from his actions. The next weekend he asked his dad for some putty and filled up all the holes in the fence, but he could still see where they'd been. Matt wanted to fix what he'd done, so he asked his dad if he could paint the fence next weekend.

"What color would you like to use?" asked his dad. Matt had several ideas. He could paint the fence all one color, paint each picket a different color, or do a mural over the whole fence. Perhaps he could have a fence-painting party, inviting his friends around to do some graffiti art. As he considered it, he discovered there were many things he could do that might change what he had done to the fence. This, thought Matt, is a lot more fun than hammering in nails.

STORY 46
HELPING WITH HUMOR

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feeling sad
- Seeing someone you love feeling sad

Resources Developed

- Communicating about humorous experiences
- Relating with stories
- Looking at the funny side
- Helping others when they are sad

Outcomes Offered

- Positive communication skills
- The benefits of humor
- The joy of helping another

Jodie's mom was feeling sad when I first met her. I guess we all get sad at times. Moms and dads can get sad. Boys and girls can get sad. We are also happy at times, excited at times, or playful at times. Sometimes it helps, if we are feeling down, to know what we can do to feel better.

Jodie's mom told me a story about how that had happened for her. I suppose Jodie knew her mom was feeling down. I'm not sure she knew how much one simple question she asked, while they were eating supper, could help her mother feel better. I think Jodie was just curious. Maybe the kids at school had been talking about it. What Jodie asked her mom was this: "Tell me a story about me before I was born."

Jodie's mom thought for a while as she remembered back over her pregnancy, the time when Jodie was still in her tummy. "There was one day," she said in a short while, "in fact, the day you were due to be born. You weren't in any hurry, a bit like now when it's time for you to go to school. Your dad was at work and we lived on a little hobby farm where we grew our own vegetables and had our own chickens and ducks. Well, somehow the ducks got out, and I couldn't just leave them. What if the foxes got them while I was in the hospital? I had to round them up.

"I had a big fat tummy and was waddling around like an old duck myself. I tried to corner them against a fence, but I could hardly bend over to pick them up and they'd scatter in all directions, quacking as though they were laughing at me. Each time I got close they'd flap their wings or just waddle off. As I was chasing them around the five acres, I felt some pains. You decided it was time to be born. I couldn't leave the ducks out so I went and got an old sack, cornered them one at a time and threw the sack over them." Jodie was laughing out loud at the thought at her big fat mom waddling around, chasing the ducks.

When her mom told her the next bit, Jodie's laughter became louder. "As I was carrying one of the ducks back," she said, "it did a poo all down the side of my dress." Jodie could hardly contain her laughter and Jodie's mom was laughing at the memory, too.

"One by one," she said, "I rounded them up and got them back into their pen. When I finally got inside, I phoned your dad and asked him to come and take me to the hospital. I was too worn out to even change my smelly dress. He was rushing in to the hospital when a police car pulled him over for speeding, but seeing me, all muddy, covered in duck poo and pregnant, they gave us an escort into the hospital with sirens blaring. I guess you made a pretty dramatic entry into the world."

Jodie had never heard the story before and she laughed until tears were running down her cheeks. Jodie's mom hadn't taken the time to tell the story before or even to reflect on how funny it had all been. By asking a simple question, Jodie had helped her mother in a way that she hadn't even thought might be helpful. I guess they both learned that finding something to laugh about can help if you are feeling down.

STORY 47
FLYING OFF THE HANDLE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Anger
- Greed
- Frustration
- Blaming others
- Expressing hostility toward others

Resources Developed

- Searching for what you want
- Seeking other possibilities
- Looking for solutions
- Being persistent

Outcomes Offered

- Knowing that persistence may be rewarded
- Knowing how not to react impulsively
- Managing anger effectively

Once there was a fly who had the misfortune to be born in a very tidy town. As you know, flies love trash, garbage, and all that sort of dirty, smelly, yucky stuff, but the people of this town believed that cleanliness was next to godliness and—unfortunately for the fly—put their beliefs into practice. Search as he might, there was never any garbage to be found in the streets and all the trashcans were sealed so tightly that not even a half-starved fly could work its way in to get a decent meal. The fly flew up and down the streets, searching everyone's backyards, hoping that a careless owner or kid might have dropped something tempting. Minute by minute he got hungrier and hungrier until he reached the point that it felt like he really was going to starve.

He cursed his luck. This had to be the tidiest, cleanest town that ever existed and it was his fate

to be born here. Oh, how he would have been willing to sell his soul for a nice meal of doggie poo, but the dog owners scooped the doggie droppings into plastic bags almost before they reached the ground. He could barely catch the smell of it and, for a fly, dog poo is probably as tempting as the smell of popcorn is for you at the movies.

When the fly couldn't get what he wanted, he started to get angry. He would get them back, he thought to himself. So he started buzzing people. Making loud noises—especially around their faces—had them swatting at him, but he dodged their swinging hands quite easily and kept up his pattern of annoyance. If he was really angry, fluttering around their food just as they put it on the table to serve up a meal really got to them; unfortunately, it just left him feeling hungrier than ever. The best trick he found was to buzz the face of one of their young babies. That was a guaranteed way to upset them.

Having explored every nook and cranny of the town, our fly winged his way into the countryside hoping that there it might at least find something. A nice pat of cow or horse manure would make a delicious meal, but the farmers were as tidy as the people in the town. They raked up after their horses and cows, leaving not a single, pooey morsel for the poor fly to find.

Just then the fly's nose began to draw him like a magnet to the rotting aromas of a potentially delicious meal. Soon he had the town garbage dump in sight. *Ah-ha*, said the fly to himself, *Why haven't I thought of it before? Even the tidiest of towns have to dump their garbage somewhere.*

To the fly it was like a huge smorgasbord laid out for a meeting of kings and queens. He plunged into the garbage dump, rolled in the smelly muck as if taking a bath, and began to gorge himself on the trash. This was great! There were putrid fish bones, rotting vegetables, and—what any decent fly would die for—his favorites: stinking, sloppy dog poo beside a puddle of vomit. He ate and ate, then ate some more till he could eat not another mouthful. However, when he found some days-old, rotten, moldy, green custard in the bottom of a grubby plastic container, he couldn't resist the desire for desert.

Finally satisfied, the fly flapped his wings to take off, but he was so heavy with his meal of garbage that he couldn't lift into the air. At first he didn't know what to do but just sit in the dump. There he might be swamped by the next truckload of trash or stomped on by a worker's boot. He had to find a solution for his problem.

Looking around, the fly saw a long-handled shovel leaning against the wall of the garbage workers' shed. He slowly dragged his big fat body across the ground to the shovel, up the shovel handle, and right to the very, very top. From there he launched himself into the air, hovered briefly, and plummeted to the ground with a big splat.

And the moral to the story? It's this: Don't fly off the handle if you are full of trash.

STORY 48
LEARNING TO LAUGH

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Unhappiness
- Lack of enjoyment
- Difficulty in laughing or having fun

Resources Developed

- Learning to smile
- Learning to laugh
- Building positive feelings

Outcomes Offered

- Smiles
- Laughter
- Fun

Clary sat in front of a mirror, one of those with light bulbs all the way around its sides. He painted a big red smile on his face, and then drew a black line around the edge to highlight it. He painted on some wide-open, bright eyes that seemed to twinkle with mirth. On top of his head he placed a ginger-colored, unruly wig of hair, then a crooked top hat with a big yellow flower on the front. He ran a plastic tube from the flower down the back of his head, over his shoulder and along his arm. He pulled on a big floppy jacket with brightly colored checks and pushed the tube into a big bulb of water in his pocket. Finally, he slipped into a pair of overgrown shoes and carefully stepped out of his caravan, walking through the canvas flap of the big tent and entering the arena. Almost as soon as the crowd of people saw him they burst out laughing. You see, Clary was the circus clown.

He tripped over his long floppy shoes and people laughed out loud. He walked up to a person in the front row and squeezed the bulb in his pocket. As the flower squirted water over that man, the people laughed even louder. There was no doubt about it, thought the ringmaster, Clary was definitely the funniest clown ever.

After the show Herman, the trapeze artist, visited Clary in his caravan. Clary was wiping the smile off his face, and underneath the makeup his real mouth didn't lift up at the corners at all. As he wiped away the sparkling painted eyes, his own eyes looked dull and sad.

"What's up?" asked Herman.

"Well," answered Clary, "it's easy to make other people laugh, but I can't laugh myself. Even back at school I found it easier to make others laugh. I felt different from the other kids. I wasn't good at sports like most of them and I didn't really excel in my studies. In fact, I was often at the bottom of the class—but one thing I could do was to get others to laugh. I would trip over like I do when I enter the circus ring and the kids would laugh. If I went to eat a sandwich at lunch and it pushed up my nose instead of going into my mouth, they would think it was funny. I guess I did what I did well, and went on being the class clown, but I never felt really happy."

"Okay," said Herman, feeling sorry for his friend. "If a laugh is difficult for you, perhaps a smile might be easier." They both stood and looked in the mirror as Clary attempted a smile.

"Not good enough," announced Herman.

"What do you mean?" asked Clary.

"All you did," replied Herman, "was lift the sides of your lips a little. That's not good enough. I remember reading a while ago that a brain doctor named Dr. Duchenne, who lived more than a hundred years ago, would stick needles into people's faces and give them electric shocks through the needles to try and stimulate the facial muscles. One of the things that Dr. Duchenne found was that there's a difference between a pretend smile and a genuine smile. When we pretend to smile we just

lift the corners of our mouth like you did, but when we genuinely smile, we raise the muscles in our cheeks and around our eyes. I know I'm sounding a bit like a football coach, but come on, let's get all those facial muscles working."

Clary tried again.

"Better," announced Herman. "Here is your homework: Before you leave your caravan each morning, sit in front of your mirror and practice a genuine Dr. Duchenne smile."

Though they saw each other around the circus, neither mentioned the smiling exercise until a week later, when Herman entered Clary's caravan after a performance.

"Let's see that smile," he said. "How does that feel?"

"Good," said Clary, with a genuine Dr. Duchenne smile.

"Just as it should do," announced Herman, confidently. "You see, for a long time scientists thought that we laugh when we're happy and cry when we're sad. But now their research is showing that if you put a smile on your face, you feel happier and if you start to frown, you feel sad. Now, for the next step, let's try a laugh."

They both looked in the mirror again. Clary was showing a genuine smile. "Okay," said Herman, "open your mouth and put one hand on your stomach, the other on your chest and start to laugh. Notice what it looks like in the mirror. Feel what is happening in your stomach and chest."

Clary laughed. Hey, it was possible. He could do it.

"This is infectious," said Herman, laughing with him. When they realized they were laughing so heartily at nothing, they laughed even louder and more heartily.

Now when Clary paints a smile on his face for the circus, it follows the lines of the Dr. Duchenne smile that is already there, and his own eyes twinkle with laughter under the painted ones. You see, Clary is a clown who can help other people laugh . . . and can laugh himself.

STORY 49
CHANGE YOUR POSTURE, CHANGE YOUR FEELINGS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problem Addressed

- Lack of emotional control

Resources Developed

- Discovering the mind-body relationship
- Learning to alter feelings
- Building emotional control
- Creating emotional choices
- Facilitating emotional empowerment

Outcomes Offered

- Emotional control
- Strategies for change
- Personal empowerment

Patty was studying drama at school. She told me about something their drama teacher, Ms. Roberts, asked them to do at school.

"Look down at the ground, just in front of the toes of your shoes," she said. "Don't look at anyone else or talk to them."

They let their shoulders slump forward, hung their arms loosely at their sides, then walked around for a little while without looking at anyone and without talking. After a few minutes Ms. Roberts asked, "How are you feeling?" Patty told me that nearly everyone said they felt sad.

Ms. Roberts then asked them to stand in pairs, staring each other strongly in the eyes. "Put your hands on your hips," she added. "Stand with your feet a couple of feet apart and stare." After just a few minutes everyone said they were feeling angry toward the other person.

"Keep staring at your partner," Ms. Roberts instructed them, "but this time clench your jaws tightly together and make tight fists with your hands." Again they felt angry; some even felt angrier than before, and some said they felt really mad at the other person.

"Now," said Ms. Roberts, "relax the muscles in your jaws and your hands, stand tall, and look the other person in the eyes, blink a couple of times and begin to smile." It didn't take long for one person to do this before the other person smiled back, and everyone was soon saying how much happier they felt.

"Close your eyes," Ms. Roberts continued. "Give the muscles of your shoulders and arms a bit of a wriggle, let your body stand there limply." Soon everyone was saying how relaxed they felt.

"People think that acting is pretending to be something," said Ms. Roberts, "but all good actors know a secret that a lot of other people don't seem to be aware of. If you change your posture and the expression on your face, you begin to change the way you feel. You don't have to try to pretend to be happy or sad. By taking the posture of a person who is experiencing those emotions you actually start to feel it. It is real."

Patty hadn't thought about that before. She hadn't thought that she could begin to change the way she felt by the way she stood, the way she held her body, and the expressions she put on her face. I think Ms. Roberts was teaching her kids about more than drama. Patty was learning some important things about managing her own feelings. She said to me, "I had never thought I could change the way I felt by changing what I did."

STORY 50
EXPRESSING EMOTIONS CONGRUENTLY

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Difficult family relationships
- Being affected by others' behavior
- Lack of skills to manage difficult situations
- Failure of current strategies

Resources Developed

- Learning to step aside from the emotional response
- Looking at things more rationally
- Experimenting to find what works
- Learning to do something different
- Being grateful

Outcomes Offered

- Enhanced relationship skills
- Better affect management
- Rational thinking
- Enjoyment of your successes

Raelene always seemed to be in trouble with her stepmother and, if she was in trouble with her stepmother, it also meant she would be in trouble with her dad. As soon as her dad got home, her stepmother would tell him all the things Raelene had done and hadn't done. To Raelene it seemed like her stepmother was screaming all the time—and screaming specifically at Raelene. She never did it to her own kids or when Raelene's dad was around.

Raelene couldn't bear it. She tried to keep to herself and out of her stepmother's way. At times she shut herself in her room but her stepmother would follow her in, still shouting at her to do things. She hated being shouted at and, trying to avoid it, she always ended up in trouble.

You see, there was something that Raelene didn't know. I guess she was young and sometimes you don't always know these things when you are young. All she knew was that when her stepmother screamed at her she would end up in trouble.

One day, when her stepmother had been screaming, Raelene went outside to get away from it all. Her pet dog, Crystal, came running up to her, tail wagging and tongue lolling out of her mouth, but Raelene had had enough and screamed at Crystal. Crystal dropped her tail between her legs and turned around to run off, looking for a place to hide—sort of like Raelene did when her stepmother screamed at her. Now, Raelene was a smart kid and she noticed what went on around her, even if she didn't always understand. She saw how Crystal had run away when she screamed. She thought how it was like what she did when her stepmother screamed at her.

At school, Raelene was studying science and had learned about experiments, so she decided to carry out an experiment with Crystal. She sat down on the ground, closer to Crystal's height where she could see Crystal's nose and eyes peeping around the corner of the house from where she'd retreated. Raelene began to talk to Crystal in a soft, gentle voice. This was the experiment. *What* she said and *how* she said it was different. Her words said Crystal was a naughty dog for running away and hiding. However, she said it in a gentle, loving, and caring voice. Soon Crystal popped out from around the corner and came back with her tail wagging, tongue lolling, and her whole body swaying with excitement.

Raelene continued her experiment. She now told Crystal what a good dog she was and how she was the only person who seemed to understand Raelene—but *how* she did it was in a loud, shouting voice. Crystal again dropped her tail between her legs and ran around the corner.

This is interesting, thought Raelene. She now used the same loving words in a gentle, loving voice. Again Crystal emerged, tail wagging, tongue lolling, and rested her head on Raelene's lap.

Now, Raelene was a good scientist. She continued to experiment with different things, making her speech fast as though she sounded excited or slow like she was sad, loud like she was angry or soft as if it was soothing. Crystal responded to the sound of her voice, or *how* she said something, rather than the actual words, or *what* she said. As I said, Raelene was smart. She began to wonder if this was how she was responding to her stepmother. Was she recoiling from the screaming, like Crystal, and not hearing the actual words her stepmother was saying? If so, no wonder she was always getting into trouble.

After that Raelene began to experiment when her stepmother was screaming. It wasn't always easy and she had to frequently remind herself: Listen to the words rather than the screaming; hear *what* she is saying rather than *how* she is saying it. In that way she could hear what was asked of her and do what was necessary to avoid getting into trouble so much. She wasn't so sure if she was imagining it, but she even thought her stepmother was screaming a little bit less.

Raelene was surprised to find herself thinking she could be a little thankful to her stepmother, as well as to Crystal, for teaching her about how important it was to match *what* we say with *how* we say it. I personally think a lot of the credit was due to Raelene, because she was the one who noticed Crystal's response and set up the experiment to test it out. She had learned that if she spoke loving words in a loving voice Crystal would always be there with her head on Raelene's lap, her tail wagging and a guarantee of loyal friendship.

EXERCISE 8.1

Learning to manage emotions effectively is a core ingredient in one's quality of life. Jot down in your notebook any metaphor ideas that you observe in your casework or day-to-day life. They may be about effective means of managing anxiety, depression, or anger. They may be about building positive emotions, or learning how to appreciate humor. Build your stories around the three core therapeutic characteristics listed at the beginning of each story in this part.

- What is the problem your idea addresses? How does it parallel the problem or problems of your child client?
- What resources, skills, abilities, or means does the child need to reach a resolution?
- How can your story conclude with appropriate, healthy, and mature management of emotions?

CHAPTER 9

Creating Helpful Thoughts

The notion that how we think, to a large degree, determines the ways that we feel and behave is an idea that was proposed back as far as the Greek philosophers and has influenced a major school of therapy in the early cognitive work of Beck (1967, 1973, 1976) and Ellis (1987). This has led us to see that it is not so much the *event* that occurs in the child's life as much as the way the child *experiences* that event—and this tends to be determined by the child's attitude, ideas, and thoughts. Much has been written about cognitive-behavioral and other evidence-based approaches to working with children, and an examination of how this material can be communicated through stories is expanded in Chapter 15, along with a list of references.

The current chapter focuses on the development of helpful cognitive processes, including stories about useful thoughts to help manage the process of grief, and about how a child can misinterpret events or form false beliefs. There are tales about how thoughts determine our emotions, and how it is possible to reframe those ideas in a positive direction by learning to find exceptions to the rules, use the abilities a child has, discriminate, and awaken concepts that enhance confidence.

STORY 51
MANAGING GRIEF: *A YOUNG KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Death
- Loss
- Grief

Resources Developed

- Acknowledging loss
- Learning that grief is okay
- Experiencing stages of grief
- Learning to move on
- Focusing on positive memories

Outcomes Offered

- Appropriate grieving
- Acceptance of the stages of adjustment
- Strategies for moving forward

I'm sure you have heard the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, but have you heard of the story about Grandpa and the Four Bears? The story starts off sad but ends up with something glad. Perhaps we could call it "How Little Bear Moved from Sad to Glad."

Little Bear had lived all her life with Big Brother Bear, Mama Bear, Papa Bear, and Grandpa Bear in the woods. The sad part of the story happens right at the start. One day Mama Bear told Little Bear, "Grandpa Bear has gone to live with God in bear heaven."

Big Brother Bear wasn't so gentle. He just said to Little Bear, "Grandpa's dead."

Little Bear ran into her bedroom crying. Her mother came in and put her arm around her. Mama Bear's eyes were wet and red. Little Bear knew she had been crying, too.

"I don't want him to be dead," said Little Bear.

"I know," Mama Bear said comfortingly. "None of us want him to be dead but, when bears grow old, they die. It's not sometime we can do anything about. As you know," she continued, "Grandpa Bear had been sick and hurting for a while. Now he won't be hurting anymore."

When Mama Bear left, Big Brother Bear walked by and said, "Only sissies cry."

Little Bear saw Big Brother Bear's eyes looked wet and red, too, so she couldn't feel too angry with him. In fact, she didn't quite know how she felt—sort of weak and upset and sad and shocked, all together. Since Mama Bear had said it was okay to cry, Little Bear lay on her bed, buried her head in the pillow, and had a good cry.

It was strange at the funeral. There were Uncle Bears and Auntie Bears and Cousin Bears and Friend Bears, many with tears in their eyes. Seeing them helped Little Bear know she didn't always have to be strong and brave like Big Brother Bear said.

"Lots of bears loved Grandpa," Mama Bear explained as Little Bear looked around at the big crowd.

She didn't want to think of Grandpa Bear in a wooden box, even though all the Bear family had walked by, seen him, touched him, and said goodbye. She didn't want to think, as the box rolled away through some little doors, that she would never see him again.

Over the next few days, or it might have even been a few weeks, Little Bear continued to feel sad. She didn't want to do much, didn't feel hungry, and wasn't interested in playing with her bear friends as usual.

One night Mama Bear sat on her bedside and asked, "When you think of Grandpa Bear, what do you think about?"

Little Bear answered, "About him being dead and how sad I am without him."

"Then just close your eyes for a moment," said Mama Bear, "and think about the fun times you had together while he was alive. When were you happiest?"

With her eyes closed, Little Bear answered, "Most of all I liked sitting on his lap while he told me funny stories. I liked it when he helped me make cards for you on birthdays and Mother's Day. He always liked what I did and told me how he loved me."

"Then," said Mama Bear, "when you think about him in the future, it might be helpful to just close your eyes and remember those special moments you shared with him."

She did. And that is how Little Bear helped move from being sad to enjoying glad memories of Grandpa Bear.

STORY 52
MANAGING GRIEF: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Death
- Loss
- Grief

Resources Developed

- Acknowledging loss
- Learning that grief is okay
- Experiencing the stages of grief
- Learning to move on
- Finding ways to adjust after grief

Outcomes Offered

- Appropriate grieving
- Acceptance of the stages of adjustment
- Strategies for moving forward

It is always sad when someone or something close to us dies. The first time Bill experienced that was when Spot, his dog, died. Spot was more than a dog to Bill. He had been his best friend for as long as he could remember. He had been there longer than Bill's sister, Janet, and he was always at Bill's side even when his closest human friend, Troy, wasn't.

Spot would play with Bill whenever he wanted. He would lay his head quietly on Bill's lap when Bill wanted to talk about some of those things that he never talked to anyone else about. Spot would stand, growling, between Bill and his father if Bill's father got angry with Bill. There was no doubt that Spot was his best buddy and always had been.

However, Spot was getting older. His fur was going grayer, and he waddled slowly to the door

to greet Bill when he got home from school instead of leaping up, paws on Bill's chest, trying to lick his face. Dad had taken him to the vet's several times over the last few months, and this time, Dad came home by himself. He explained that the vet had said it was kinder to put Spot to sleep.

Bill knew that meant Spot was dead but he didn't want to believe it. He knew Spot was old. He wasn't like he used to be but Bill had sort of expected—and wanted—that Spot would always be there. He tried to hold back his tears but couldn't. His mother gave him a hug and said, "That's okay. You loved Spot and he loved you. It's okay to be sad."

Bill sobbed himself to sleep that night. In fact, he cried so much he wasn't sure if he had slept at all. The next day at school he was in a daze and, probably, didn't hear a word that his teacher said. He didn't want to play with his schoolmates at lunchtime or after school. All he could do was think about Spot.

He found himself wondering if there had been a mistake. Could Dad have got the news wrong? What if Spot had got better before the vet put him to sleep? Should they go back to the vet's to check? He knew this hope was unrealistic but didn't want to accept that Spot would never be coming home.

Now, if you knew Bill, I'm sure you'd like him. He's a nice kid, far from being an angry guy, but there were times, at the moment, when he'd snap at his sister or yell at his parents when they asked him to do something—and then sink into feelings of despair and sadness. At times it seemed unfair. Why should Spot die when he had been such a good buddy and never hurt anyone?

Gradually—so gradually that I am not sure Bill really noticed it—he began to listen to some of the things his teacher was saying and to kick the soccer ball with his friends at lunchtime again.

When his dad first said, "We can get another puppy," it was the last thing Bill wanted. There could never be another Spot. But, as time passed, he thought maybe it would be nice to have another dog. It wouldn't be the same, yet a puppy may be like Spot used to be. It might help fill that gap that Bill had felt since Spot died.

At one stage his mom gave him a hug and said, "All those feelings you've been going through are what we all feel when we lose someone or something close to us. I know it doesn't feel good and I wish I could make them disappear for you. The hurt, the sadness, and the anger are part of the ways we adjust to losing someone we love. We pass through them, and move on to look forward. We feel sad, then need to find what helps us feel glad again."

Of course, Bill never forgot Spot, and I doubt he ever will. He has a picture of him above his desk. Nonetheless, Bill learned there were still lots of things he could enjoy without a dog. For a while he didn't want a substitute for Spot; then, when he asked, his parents bought him a new puppy. Since the new puppy's coat is all the same color, Bill calls him Spotless. Now, a photograph of Spotless is pinned beside Spot above his desk.

STORY 53
AN ACT OF KINDNESS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problem Addressed

- Seeing someone or something in need

Resources Developed

- Offering a helping hand
- Engaging in acts of kindness
- Controlling our wants for the sake of another person

Outcome Offered

- Feeling good for helping

In the north of the state where I live there is a gorge called Yardie Creek Gorge. It is the only gorge along that part of the coast with permanent water, and so it's home to a variety of birds and animals, including the black-foot wallaby. The wallaby is like a small kangaroo that lives on the steep, red cliff faces where it bounds from ledge to ledge on vertical walls that many rock climbers would find challenging.

My grandson and I had joined the boat trip through Yardie Creek Gorge hoping to see this unique wallaby—and were in for a pleasant surprise. Macca was the captain of the boat. He dressed the part in white shorts, white socks, white sneakers, and white shirt, with dark patches on his shoulder bearing the three stripes of a captain. Macca obviously loved his job and was interested to discover all there was to learn about this unique area and its wildlife. He knew it intimately and his knowledge had us curious to learn what he knew.

What had set out to be an ordinary tourist trip, however, turned out to be something different. One of the other passengers pointed to the cliffs and said, "There's a rock wallaby in that cleft."

"Where?" asked Macca, spinning his head around quickly to look.

The passenger was pointing to a spot where Macca wasn't used to seeing wallabies. He put the boat in reverse, and there, wedged in a tiny cleft, was a baby wallaby (called a "joey").

"This," he said, "is the baby of a female who lives in a cave farther down the gorge. It looks like he has slipped on the rock face and fallen into the water, clambered up, and got wedged in this cleft—unable to climb up the steep cliff and unable to swim in the water if he falls back."

Macca nosed the boat into the cliff wall, grabbed a towel, and gently lifted the joey out, drying its wet fur as he did. His wife, who was also on the trip, took over the care of the joey. She let us look at this gray-and-black bundle of fur with its cute face, wide eyes, and alert ears. It tried to bury itself in the towel like an ostrich sticking its head in the sand. We were allowed to look but not touch, she told us. "If you handled it too much it will get your smell on it and then the mother could reject it."

All the kids on the boat, including my grandson, were wide eyed and fascinated at this lovely young creature. They and their parents would love to have given this cute, fluffy critter a pat.

Farther up the creek Macca edged his boat onto a pebbly little beach, climbing near to the cave inhabited by the mother wallaby and her babe. As he released the pressure on the towel the young wallaby leapt into the cave and disappeared.

There was relief that the joey was safe but a little disappointment, too. Everyone on board, even the toughest-looking men, would love to have held and cuddled the joey, to have felt the softness of its fur, and to have looked into its wide and uncertain eyes. They would have wanted to give it comfort and reassurance and probably wished that they'd been in Macca's position of letting it go back into the wild. We all hoped that its mother wasn't far away and that soon both mom and babe would be reunited.

It was a special moment of tenderness. I think we all felt touched about doing something nice for something else, by being part of an act of kindness. In the end, it wasn't just the joey that benefited. We felt happy for being part of the rescue.

STORY 54
THINGS MAY NOT BE WHAT THEY SEEM

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Misinterpretation of situations
- Formation of false beliefs
- Jumping to conclusions

Resources Developed

- Learning to test reality
- Learning to assess your assumptions
- Examining how we can misinterpret cues
- Looking at how false beliefs are formed

Outcomes Offered

- Being careful about jumping to conclusions
- Assessing the beliefs you are forming
- Humor

Sally put up her hand. "Please, ma'am, can I be excused?" She needed to go the toilet.

She had just entered the cubicle and sat down when she heard the voice from the next cubicle say, "Hi, how are you?"

This is weird, thought Sally; *kids don't usually talk to each other in the toilet*. She didn't recognize the voice but Sally had been brought up to be polite, to speak when you are spoken to, and all those sorts of things, so she replied, "Eh, fine. How are you?"

"I'm okay," came the voice from the next cubicle. "What are you doing?"

That seemed a bit of a rude, personal question to ask someone when they were both sitting in the toilet, thought Sally. Yet she was polite, and answered, "Eh, the same as you, I suppose."

"How did you do on the exams? What did you think of the math test?" the voice inquired.

"Okay, I think." said Sally. Maybe the girl with the voice is just trying to be friendly, she thought. "Math doesn't worry me. Actually I like it and was happy with the test."

"Do you think you passed?" the voice asked.

"I think so, but I'm still glad they're finished. What about you? How did you do?" asked Sally.

"I might have scraped through," continued the voice. "Say, what are you doing at the weekend? Would you like to celebrate with a sleepover at my house?"

Sally was taken by surprise. How do you answer such a question by someone you don't even know, except as a voice in the cubicle beside you? It was kind of the girl, thought Sally. She seemed

friendly enough, but do you just go to a stranger's house for the night? What would her mother say when she tried to explain this one?

"Thank you," answered Sally. "That is a kind invitation but I think I will need to check with my parents first."

"Listen," came an irate-sounding reply, "I got excused from class so I could talk to you. Now there is this idiot in the next cubicle who keeps answering all my questions. I'm going to have to hang up and call you back later."

STORY 55
POSITIVE REFRAMING

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Wanting what you cannot have
- Facing failure

Resources Developed

- Striving to get what you want
- Looking for all the options
- Accepting failure
- Reframing ideas into the positive
- Changing feelings by changing thoughts

Outcomes Offered

- Acceptance of failure
- Knowing that change is possible
- Positive thinking
- Happy feelings

A boy was walking home from school when he saw the branches of an apple tree hanging out over a tall fence. From one of the branches dangled a large, tempting apple. The boy wasn't much of a fruit-eater, preferring a bar of chocolate if given the choice, but, as they say, the forbidden fruit can be tempting. Seeing the apple, the boy wanted it. The more he looked at it, the hungrier he felt and the more he wanted *that* apple.

He stood on tiptoe, stretching as high as he could, but even at his tallest height he was unable to reach it. He began to jump. He jumped up and down, springing as high as he could, at the top of each jump stretching his arms to grab the apple. Still it remained out of reach.

He thought a little more about how he might solve his problem. He thought perhaps he could climb the fence, but as he faced its tall, smooth surface he could find nothing to grip—no footholds, no handholds, nothing. Damn.

Not giving up, he thought, if only he had something to stand on. His school bag wouldn't give enough height and he didn't want to break the things inside, like his lunch box, pencil case, and

Gameboy. Looking around, he hoped he might find an old box, a rock, or, with luck, even a ladder, but it was a tidy neighborhood and there was nothing he could use.

He had tried everything he could think to do. Not seeing any other options, he gave up and started to walk away. At first he felt angry and disappointed thinking about how hungry he had become from his efforts, how he really wanted that apple, and how crisp and juicy it would have been for him to sink his teeth into its flesh. The more he thought like this—the more he thought about what he had missed out on having—the more miserable and unhappy he became.

However, the boy of our story was a pretty smart guy, even if he couldn't always get what he wanted. He started to say to himself, *This isn't helpful. I don't have the apple and I'm feeling miserable as well. There's nothing more I can do to get the apple—that is unchangeable—but we're supposed to be able to change our feelings. If that's the case, what I can I do to feel better?*

Perhaps if I think differently about the apple, I might feel differently, he continued, trying several ideas. *The apple didn't really belong to me, so perhaps it was bad to take it. Maybe the apple wasn't ripe and, if I had eaten it, I might have a rotten bellyache by now.*

As he began to think those thoughts he started to feel happier. He said out loud to himself, "I'm glad I wasn't able to reach it." The more he thought that, the happier he felt, and the happier he felt, the more he chose to go on thinking the thoughts that helped him feel happier.

STORY 56
THOUGHTS DETERMINE FEELINGS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Loss of something special
- Thoughts causing negative feelings
- Lack of ownership of thoughts and feelings

Resources Developed

- Awareness of how thoughts influence feelings—negative and positive
- Awareness that it isn't the object but the way we think about it that makes the difference
- Creation of positive thoughts for positive emotions
- Taking responsibility for your thoughts and feelings

Outcomes Offered

- Ownership of thoughts
- Ownership of feelings
- The knowledge that positive thinking can result in positive feelings

Katie was jumping rope on the lawn in front of her home. It was a nice day, the sun was shining warmly, and she had all the time in the world to enjoy her jumping. She felt happy. Her thoughts were focused on her jumping: how to match the spinning of the rope in her hands and the jumping

of her feet so they didn't get tangled, causing her to fall. When her mind and muscles were working together, when everything flowed smoothly, it felt pretty good.

As she jumped, she remembered that her grandmother had given her the rope for Christmas. She knew that her grandmother didn't have a lot of money and had to save up to buy the jump rope. Before Christmas, her grandmother had taken her to some toy shops to look at different things, hoping to subtly find out what Katie wanted. When Katie got not just *a* jump rope but *the* very jump rope she really wanted, she felt especially loved by her grandmother.

As she skipped, a boy rushed across the road. He ripped her special jump rope from her hands, shouting, "Give me that" and raced back across the road toward the park.

What a horrible boy, thought Katie. At first she was shocked and upset; but when she thought, *He has stolen the jump rope my grandma gave me for Christmas,* she became very angry. Then, thinking she had lost her jump rope forever, she felt sad and found tears welling up in her eyes.

Racing across the park in the direction the boy had gone, she saw that a younger child had fallen into a pond. The boy had thrown an end of her jump rope out for the child to grab. Thinking to herself, *That little kid could drown*, she began to feel worried for the child. As the boy pulled the child to safety, her thoughts changed again. "He's going to make it," she called out loud, and began to feel relieved.

When the child was safely on the bank and appeared to be okay, the boy walked up to Katie and handed back the jump rope, saying, "I'm sorry if I frightened you before, but I had to act quickly. Thank you for the loan of the rope." Thinking that it was nice of him to apologize and return the rope, Katie felt grateful.

Back home, she told her mom the story of how the jump rope had helped save the child. She told her father when he got home from work and even rang up her grandmother to tell her. As Katie thought of the part her jump rope had played, she felt proud—and then she had another thought: *It wasn't the rope that made me feel all those ways, it was the way I thought about the rope*. And with that thought, she felt even better.

STORY 57
FINDING EXCEPTIONS TO PROBLEMS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Global thinking
- Negative thinking
- Focusing solely on the problem
- Not seeing the exceptions

Resources Developed

- Thinking specifically
- Looking at the positives
- Seeking solutions
- Finding the exceptions

Outcome Offered

- Skills in solution-focused thinking

Christine, or Chrissie as her friends called her, was a good student. She might not have been top of her class but she was a long way from the bottom, and had always really enjoyed going to school. Therefore, it came as a surprise to her parents when she started to say that she didn't want to go to school any more. She was too young to leave school, and her parents had high hopes that she might go on to get a college degree. Certainly, she was smart enough. But Chrissie began to sleep in longer, she dawdled while getting ready to go to school, and her parents felt they had to be on her back more and more. Of course, the more they were, the less she wanted to go.

"What's going on?" her mother eventually asked.

Chrissie confessed, "Some of the kids are constantly picking on me. They're either on my case all the time, or they just ignore me completely. They keep teasing me about the braces I got on my teeth last vacation. They're saying that I suck up to the teachers. I've had enough," she said angrily.

"Perhaps I should go and see the principal," said her mother, "to see if we can put a stop to it."

Chrissie objected. She was horrified. "That would just make it worse. Then the kids would really have something to tease me about." She knew it wouldn't stop them doing what they did behind the teachers' backs, anyway.

Chrissie's mom had to acknowledge that Chrissie was probably right. It wouldn't stop it and they might even give Chrissie a harder time. Wondering what else she could do, she went and got a sheet of paper and a pen and brought it back to Chrissie, saying, "Write down the list of the names of all of the pupils in your class."

"You aren't going to make me write down all the bullies and then take it to the principal, are you?" asked Chrissie suspiciously.

"No," said her mother, "I promise you I won't. Just write out the list of everyone's names and then I'll explain what we do next."

Chrissie was both curious and cautious, but she wrote out the list as her mother requested. Her mother then handed her a yellow highlighter and said, "Now, I want you to go through the list and highlight the names of every student that does *not* bully you."

Soon Chrissie had every name highlighted with the exception of three or four.

"Good," said her mom, "now here is a red pen. I want you to go back and circle the names of all those students who are usually good or kind to you."

From where her mother was sitting it looked as though Chrissie had circled about ten or twelve. Chrissie's mother didn't need to interpret what Chrissie had done and Chrissie didn't need a lecture about what it meant. The next morning she was up on time, chatted jovially over breakfast, and was waiting at the bus stop with plenty of time for the bus to arrive.

STORY 58
LEARNING TO USE WHAT YOU HAVE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Seemingly insoluble problems
- Limited thinking

Resources Developed

- Learning to use your own resources
- Being open to new possibilities
- Building skills
- Learning that you only need to do something once to know it is possible

Outcomes Offered

- Possibility thinking
- Reliance on your abilities
- Enjoyment of your success

Sometimes things can be scary. Sometimes we face situations that we doubt we can handle, or wonder how we might do so. Phillipa was a frog, a little frog, who was in just such a position. She lived in a pond with all of her family and a lot of friends, but that wasn't the problem. She could sit on a lily pad and flick out her long, quick tongue to catch a juicy, passing insect whenever she wanted. That wasn't the problem, either.

The problem was that there was a big mean snake that lived near the banks of Phillipa's pond. Mean Mrs. Snake had gobbled up some of Phillipa's friends who hadn't been on the lookout while playing leapfrog on the banks. If a frog happened to be too busy concentrating on a tasty-looking insect, mean Mrs. Snake could have her eyes on that frog as meal for herself.

At times, she would slither into the pond, silently swimming from lily pad to lily pad, looking for big, plump frogs to add to her menu.

Phillipa didn't know what she could do to save herself or the other frogs from mean Mrs. Snake. At first she called on the god of frogs, who said, "I have created you with all that you need to help yourself. As much as I would like to help, sometimes there are things that you have to do yourself."

That wasn't very helpful, she thought, and wondered what else she could do. A frog could leap, but mean Mrs. Snake could dart faster. A frog could swim, but so could a snake. *What else, what else?* she wondered. Deep in thought, she hadn't noticed how close she had drifted to the shore. Suddenly there was a swish of sound and without even looking Phillipa knew it was mean Mrs. Snake.

Phillipa remembered once hearing a friend say, "If only we could climb the trees." Everyone else replied, "Don't be silly, we're only frogs. Frogs leap and swim. They don't climb trees."

Within the flash of an instant, Phillipa saw a branch above her and leapt with the biggest leap of her life. Her webbed feet spread wide, her hind legs pressed down into the water, propelling her out of the pond and into the air. She reached out with her front legs as she did, grasping the branch and

pulled herself up into the tree. The other frogs farther out in the pond watched in amazement as Phillipa climbed her way higher into the branches.

"Frogs are not supposed to do that," she heard one of her doubting friends mutter below.

"Not supposed to? They *can't!*" exclaimed another, not wanting to believe what he had seen.

"They can," called back Phillipa, excitedly. "I just did. If I can, it's possible for you to do it, too."

The others tried. They leapt from the water but they didn't spread their webbed feet wide enough or press hard enough with their legs and thus fell short of the branch, toppling back into the water with a *plop*.

"Try harder," encouraged Phillipa.

"We are trying as hard as we can," the others shouted. "It's impossible."

Just then mean Mrs. Snake saw this group of splashing frogs, growing more and more exhausted, and thought here was a chance for a ten- or twelve-course dinner. She dived into the water and instantly the branches of the tree around Phillip looked like a Christmas tree decorated with frog ornaments.

"See," Phillipa said triumphantly, "it *is* possible."

The frogs hung on for dear life, wrapping their legs tightly around the branches, frightened to move, frightened they might fall back into the water, frightened of mean Mrs. Snake lurking below.

When mean Mrs. Snake eventually gave up and left, the frogs felt more confident and climbed their way higher and higher into the tree, where they now felt safe and secure. Not only was it safe, it was fun. It was fun at times to dive back into the deep center of the pond, for once they knew they were capable of leaping from the pond—which they hadn't thought possible before—of course, they were able to do it again.

There are a number of stories that tell how tree frogs first got from their ponds into the trees, but I like this one about Phillipa and mean Mrs. Snake. I also like what Phillipa said to her fellow frogs. She said, "It is possible to believe you can do more than you thought. It is possible to try and try until you succeed . . . and then maybe it is possible to do even more."

STORY 59
LEARNING TO DISCRIMINATE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Not knowing when behavior is appropriate or okay
- Not knowing when it *isn't* appropriate or okay
- Not knowing what to do, where
- Confusion about the double standards you observe

Resources Developed

- Learning to discriminate
- Making choices about appropriate behaviors
- Asking what is safe and caring

- Considering the needs of yourself and others
- Learning from experience

Outcomes Offered

- Discriminatory skills
- Ownership of behavior
- Consideration of others and safety
- Enjoyment

Sometimes when you are growing up it's hard to know what is expected of you. Mom says, "Do the dishes," and Dad says, "Do you homework." Dad says, "Come here," and Mom says, "Go there." I'm sure you know what I mean. What do you do? What is okay and what is not? And how do you know?

That was the dilemma Harry was in. His mom and dad had some friends visiting from out of town. These friends had two boys: Dave, who was a little older than Harry, and Mitch, who was a little younger. While the two sets of parents sat talking over coffee after lunch, the boys disappeared into Harry's bedroom and were soon rough-housing and having pillow fights with each other. The parents had a laugh about it, commenting on how "Boys will be boys."

Later, visiting the neighborhood park, the parents walked and talked while the boys hung back, still rough-housing. When Mitch, the youngest, got dumped to the ground and came up crying, Harry got a lecture from his dad —probably because he happened to look guiltier than Dave did.

"Hang on," said Mitch's mom, trying to calm the situation a bit. "They were just doing what they were doing back home with the pillows before."

"Yes," said Harry's dad, "but they have to learn to tell the difference between when it's okay to fool around and when it's not. They need to learn when it's safe and when it's dangerous. Mitch could have hit his head on one of the rocks by the path."

Harry felt bad. He hadn't meant to hurt Mitch. They had just been fooling around like at home, as Mitch's mom had said. So how can you tell when one time is okay and when another is not?

Harry's dad's anger was an example. Harry was always being told not to be angry, but he saw his dad come home angry from work at times and he sure saw his dad get angry at the umpire when they went to the baseball game on Saturdays. In fact, sometimes his dad would stand up and scream so much that Mitch almost felt embarrassed to be with him. But he never saw his dad get angry with Mom, and rarely angry with him. So Harry wondered, *When is it okay and when is it not okay?*

"You should always tell us the truth," insisted both his mom and dad. But he had learned that if he told the truth he could get into trouble. Besides, he had heard his mom tell a friend that she had other plans when the friend invited her out . . . and Harry knew she didn't have any other plans, at all. He'd also heard Dad phone his boss one morning and say he had a really bad headache and wouldn't be coming to work that day, when Harry knew he didn't have a headache but wanted to go somewhere with Mom.

At the end of the walk, Harry's parents and their friends stopped at the tavern in the park for a drink. The tavern had a little sanctuary with some young male kangaroos that were fighting. They balanced on their strong tails, punched each other with their paws, and slashed out with their long hind legs. A crowd had gathered to watch in fascination. People were taking photos.

It's okay for us boys to rough-house in my room, thought Harry, *but not do the same in the park. It's okay for the kangaroos to fight and box in the park, but I bet Mom would go nuts if they did it in my room.*

No wonder it's confusing. How could Harry expect to know what was okay and what wasn't when he got messages like that? He certainly hadn't wanted to hurt Mitch and, fortunately, he didn't; but I guess he was a little smarter from the experience because he began to wonder: If he hadn't got it right this time, how might he do it better next time?

In his head, Harry began to ask himself some questions. *Is it safe for me to do what I'm doing? Is it likely to hurt me or someone else? If we're playing, how can we have fun and do it safely? One thing may be okay for one set of circumstances or with one group of friends but not for another. How do I judge that?* wondered Harry. Of course, things do happen that we may not want to happen at times, and there may not be any firm answers to those questions, but by asking them Harry put himself in a better position to know in the future what was okay and what wasn't.

STORY 60
AWAKENING CONFIDENCE
(contributed by Susan Boyett)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Scaredness
- Sadness
- Being bullied
- Physical symptoms of anxiety (hair loss)

Resources Developed

- Building confidence
- Learning the language of confidence
- Doing things to create change
- Building stickability
- Learning the language of stickability

Outcomes Offered

- Confidence
- Perseverance
- Empowerment

This is the story of Madeline and how she pushed Scaredness and Sadness away to make room for Confidence in her life. She decided that she would like her story to be told so that it could be used to help other children with the same kind of problem.

Madeline was having a hard time getting along with another girl in her class. They had once been friends, but something had gone wrong and this girl started to say mean things that upset Madeline,

often leaving Madeline in tears. She hated crying because the other kids would call her a baby when she did. Scaredness seemed to like this and got Madeline so worried that some of her hair started to fall out.

The worst place to be was on the school bus. That was where she got teased the most. Scaredness had Madeline so worried about catching the bus that her mom had to start picking her up from school.

Madeline wanted to do something about how Scaredness was messing up her life and stopping her from having fun. She started watching how Scaredness worked in her life and found things started to get better. One thing she worked out was that Scaredness was most strong in the mornings. This was because Confidence was a bit lazy and liked to sleep in!

With the help of Mom, Madeline learned to remember not to walk out of the house without waking Confidence up first. This was a really smart move, and pretty soon things started to get better. It was not that people stopped being mean, although that did get better, too; it was that Scaredness and Sadness couldn't use other kids' meanness to upset Madeline so much with Confidence there to protect her.

What Madeline started to notice was that when a girl who had been nasty before called Madeline over on the playground, Scaredness's trick was to whisper in her ear, "Uh oh, she's going to bully you," and Madeline would feel frightened. But as Confidence started to be more awake it would talk in her other ear and say: "It's okay. You can be strong. You can handle this."

With Confidence around, Madeline began to discover that often there wasn't a problem there at all. The girl actually wanted to be nice, and Scaredness was tricking her. This was not always how it was. Some girls could still say mean things sometimes, but, by listening to Confidence ("You are okay. Remind yourself of the nice things about you.") Madeline was able to stand up for herself.

Pretty soon Madeline felt ready to catch the bus again, but, because this took a lot of courage, she thought it was important to make some big friends so that she would feel safer. These big girls, in more senior years, all promised to say hello to Madeline when they saw her on the bus. It was great to have a whole lot of "big sisters" looking out for her. Madeline felt so confident that one day she even got mad at a girl who was mean to one of her friends.

Madeline figured out that Scaredness was also making her feel worried about schoolwork. Scaredness was whispering in her ear that she'd got everything wrong and that she would get into trouble. It made her feel bad when she took longer to get her work finished than the other kids. In fact, Scaredness was really pushing and shoving her around in the classroom. This was especially true in math, but also sometimes when she was doing harder work in English. Scaredness would get her so worried that she would feel sick, or need to go to the toilet, or need to get a drink so she could get out of the classroom for a while.

When this happened, Madeline realized she needed to wake up Confidence here in the classroom, too. She understood how anyone could doze off in some lessons. Confidence helped her to feel better about showing her work to the teacher—"Showing her will help you to learn," said Confidence, "and I bet you made less mistakes than what Scaredness says." She learned that most of the time Scaredness was tricking her.

Mom had the idea that they could help to wake up Confidence by taking Madeline to a math tutor after school. Madeline thought that doing extra math was a bad idea at first, but she soon found that the extra practice helped her to feel more confident in math at school. ("See how well you are

doing?" encouraged Confidence.) It was the same with cursive writing. She had been so slow at it, until she started practicing at other times. One day she found she got through her work so quickly she was already doing extra work for the teacher before the other kids had finished!

Madeline realized that Confidence had introduced her to another friend called Stickability. Stickability ("Keep trying—the more you do it, the better you become") was what helped her to practice until she got things right. She remembered that Stickability had helped her in the past but she didn't know its name then. She had once thought that she would never be able to ride a two-wheeler bike without training wheels, but she had stuck at practicing until one day she could do it! With Stickability as a friend she should be able to get confident at lots of things.

One day Mom thought it was time to check Madeline's hair—and guess what? No new hair had fallen out! In fact, on another day when Mom checked her hair she found that there was new growth. Madeline felt really proud that she had worked out a way to solve her own problems.

EXERCISE 9.1

Use your notebook to jot down ideas about the cognitive skills children need for living a healthy and functional life, whether these ideas are triggered by the stories you have just read, the cognitive behavior therapy literature, or what you see one child do that might be helpful for another. It may help to start to structure these stories of creating helpful thought processes into the following therapeutic characteristics:

- The cognitive problems or challenges faced by the main character
- The processes of thinking that would help resolve that problem
- An outcome that opens up new possibilities or better equips the child for managing such situations in the future

CHAPTER 10

Developing Life Skills

As childhood is a time of rapid development, Holmbeck, Greenley, and Franks (2003) consider our therapeutic subjects to be developmental "moving targets." Not only do the developmental stages change rapidly, but there is a wide variation within each of those stages. Take any two children of the same age and you are likely to see marked differences in their developmental levels, cognitively, educationally, behaviorally, emotionally, physically, and socially. There are so many life skills children need to acquire that they are likely to develop some well and some not so well. Although one child might be performing well at school, he might be withdrawn and isolated in a social sense. Another may have an extensive range of quality friendships but be behind in academic achievement.

In just ten stories I cannot cover the multitude of developmental skills a child needs to acquire for a healthy, functional maturity, but, hopefully, these tales will provide a basis on which to build your own stories to help the children with whom you are working. They address—at times with humor—questions like, What do you do when faced with a moral dilemma? How do you learn to live with rules you may not like, manage when terrible things happen, make decisions, or take responsibility for your actions?

STORY 61
FACING A MORAL DILEMMA: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- A moral dilemma
- Being in trouble (when perhaps it's not entirely your fault)
- Telling lies
- Lack of responsibility

Resources Developed

- Exploring personal moral standards
- Learning to face consequences
- Learning to be responsible
- Learning to make considered judgments

Outcomes Offered

- Moral responsibility
- Acknowledgment of cause and effect
- Personal value systems

"Did you tell your parents?" Brad's friends asked him when he got to school on Monday morning. "What did they say? Did you get in trouble again?"

Brad had been in trouble on Friday. Jess, one of the girls in his class, was constantly teasing him. On Friday, she had recruited several other girls and they were all skipping along behind Brad, teasing, laughing, and giggling. Brad was at the end of his tether. He turned around and gave Jess a push. She fell backward and hit her head against a corner of the wall. It began to bleed. It was only a small cut but cuts to the head can bleed a lot.

It so happened that Ms. Brown, one of the schoolteachers, saw Brad push Jess. She grabbed him by the wrist and held him tightly while asking Jess's friends to accompany her to the nurse's office. Brad was taken to the principal's office, lectured about bullying, and told to write out twenty-five lines, *I must not be a bully,* and another twenty-five lines, *I must not hurt girls*. The principal then wrote a letter for him to take to his parents, put it in an envelope, and sealed it. Brad was to give this letter to his parents and have them sign the total of fifty lines that he was to do over the weekend.

During classes that afternoon, Brad was too terrified to concentrate . . . and even more terrified about going home. When his mother asked him how school had been he just shrugged his shoulders and headed for his bedroom. What was he to do? Should he tell her the truth? If he did he would probably get into trouble from her and Dad as well as Ms. Brown and the principal.

Could he just not tell his parents? But then, he had to give them the letter and get them to sign his lines. Maybe he could fake one of their signatures. Maybe the principal wouldn't know. He knew other kids who had done it but he wasn't sure if he could.

Maybe he could tell a lie and make it sound as though it really hadn't been his fault. After all, he had told some little lies in the past and gotten away with it—but this time it felt like something big. He had heard other kids lie with excuses about their homework. He knew that some did, but then others said that you should never lie.

Previously, his parents had given him talks about lying. "You should always tell the truth," they'd said, but he found there were times when he told the truth and ended up getting into more trouble. Then there were other times when he'd told some lies and managed to escape without punishment.

Brad wrote out the lines secretly and hid them in his room. Come Sunday night, he was about to burst with the worry of it all. He hadn't been able to find a way out and knew he had to tell his parents. Over dinner he said, "I got into a bit of trouble at school on Friday and the principal gave me a letter to give to you."

"I wondered what was going on," his mother replied. "You've been pretty quiet all weekend. What happened?"

Brad said, "Jess and her friends were teasing me and started to push me around. Then one of her friends got down behind me and Jess gave me a push so that I fell over. When I got up I pushed her back and she hit her head against the wall. Ms. Brown only saw the last bit, blamed me for it, and took me to the principal's office." With that he handed over the letter and the fifty lines that he'd written.

"You shouldn't push girls around," his father said at first, but as his parents discussed it, they agreed the girls had been responsible, in part, so Brad's mom said that she would go to school in the morning and talk to Ms. Brown.

Oh, no! Brad was really in trouble now. Ms. Brown was the teacher who'd seen what happened and his mom was going to support his lie about the girls pushing him over first! How bad could it get?

I bet you would like to know how the story ended. But, to be honest, I don't know, so I can't tell you. However, if you were in Brad's shoes, what would you have done? Would you have confessed to Mom and Dad? Would you let Mom visit Ms. Brown in the morning and wait to see what happened? How would you have faced up to the consequences of what you had done? Or taken responsibility for what you had done? How would you make your own judgment about what was best to do?

STORY 62
FACING A MORAL DILEMMA: *A TEEN STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- A moral dilemma
- Conflicting standards
- Choices between desire and responsibility
- Lack of responsibility

Resources Developed

- Exploring personal moral standards
- Learning to face consequences
- Learning to be responsible
- Learning to make considered judgments
- Learning to consider the others' well-being
- Learning to make mutually agreed-upon decisions

Outcomes Offered

- Moral responsibility
- Consideration of the other
- Mutual decision making
- Personal value systems

"Did you score?" Brad's buddies asked when he got to school on Monday morning. They knew he'd had a date with Jess over the weekend and wanted to know the news . . . in detail.

It has just been a first date and things had got a little hot. They'd cuddled and caressed but Jess had drawn an absolute line as to what was okay and what was not. Brad could have gone further, but his head was telling him something different.

He was at that age where some of his friends had scored and some hadn't—or at least that was what they'd said. Monday mornings at school were bragging time about what they had got up to over the weekend. Brad had no doubt that some had had sex but others hadn't—and then, there were some who didn't talk about what they did at all, so he had no idea.

What a dilemma he found himself in. His body wanted one thing and his mind another. His friends were telling him to go for it and his parents were telling him something different. Around the age of puberty he was given a book to read and got the usual sex talk as though his parents were teaching him something new. As if he hadn't heard about it at school, been to sex education classes, seen the graffiti, or heard the sniggering comments from his friends in the locker room.

"If you are going to, tell us about it," his parents had said. "Let us talk it over before you do anything or get a girl into trouble."

Yeah, that *would be likely*, thought Brad. He was a big enough man to make his own choices, wasn't he? This was up to him and Jess, not anyone else.

Thinking that, he began to weigh up his own values. There was a time when he thought it would be good to save himself until he got married, but nobody seemed to do that anymore. It was stuff that his parents used to do, not what his generation did. At least he wanted to be serious, he wanted it to be special, or that's the way he thought when he wasn't kissing Jess . . . and finding himself getting hot in those parts that get hot when you are held in a passionate kiss. Of course, his friends couldn't tell him what to do, nor could his parents.

I bet you would like to know how the story ended. But, to be honest, I don't know, so I can't tell you. However, if you were in Brad's shoes, what would you do on the next date? How would you make your own judgment about what was best to do? How would you take responsibility for your choices? On what principles would you make your choices? Would they include your sense of your partner's happiness and well-being? How would you balance your wants and Jess's stated boundaries?

STORY 63
LEARNING ABOUT RULES

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Resenting rules
- Antisocial behaviors
- Rebelliousness

Resources Developed

- Learning the need for rules
- Exploring the values of rules
- Observing the benefits of rules
- Seeing how we set rules in our own lives
- Learning to set equitable rules

Outcomes Offered

- Appreciation of the reasons for rules
- Appreciation of the benefits of rules

I bet if I asked most kids your age what they thought about rules they would screw up their noses and say that they hated them. Like when parents say, "If you want to go to the movies this afternoon you need to tidy up your room, that is the rule"—most kids answer, "I hate rules."

I have a friend, a teacher, who tends to teach in some unusual ways. She asks kids what they think about rules and gets the usual response. So then she plays a game with them. She has a big plastic sheet of Chutes and Ladders that she spreads out on the floor. She splits the class into three or four teams and asks them to play against her to see who can win. When it comes to her turn she rolls the dice two or three times in a row.

"Hey, you can't do that," some of the kids will object.

When she lands on a chute, she might move on to the next ladder and climb up rather than slide down to the end of the chute.

"Hey, you can't do that," object the kids even more strongly.

"Why not?" she asks.

"Because it's against the rules," assert the kids.

"What does it matter?" my teacher friend asks.

"It isn't fair," they respond. "You're cheating. We're not equal and everyone should have the same chance."

She then begins to ask her class why they think there are rules in school, in the playground, on the football field, on the roads when we are riding a bike, or at home. Her students often come up with lots of reasons for rules. Things work better when we have rules, they say. Or, if we didn't have rules at an intersection how would we be able to ride our bikes safely, or walk across the road with all the cars, trucks, and buses around? Everyone could be in a lot of trouble. Rules help people to get

along better together. If we follow the rules not to steal other people's things or to hurt others, we get along better together. Rules exist for our safety and our well-being.

Then she might give them some egg cartons, sheets of cardboard, felt pens, plastic discs, and dice, asking them to get into small groups and make up their own games but without any rules. It is not long before the kids are calling to her, "Teacher, we can't do it. How can we have a game without rules? It's impossible even to play without rules."

STORY 64
SOMETIMES TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- When terrible things happen
- Loss
- Grief
- Parental conflict
- Parental separation
- Lack of skills to manage troubled times

Resources Developed

- Accepting it is okay to grieve
- Accepting some things cannot be changed
- Learning to change the things that can be changed
- Learning to look to the future
- Making choices to influence the future
- Discovering it is okay to feel good again
- Accepting personal responsibility for change

Outcomes Offered

- Optimism
- Future-orientation
- Self-determination
- Control (in part) of your future

Steve loved watching cartoons, especially those about adventures in outer space. While watching them he wasn't thinking about other things, like his pet dog, King, who had been run over by an automobile just in front of their house. King had been his best friend. Steve could talk to him about anything. He would sit there with his head on Steve's lap, looking understandingly into Steve's eyes when his parents were having yet another fight. Not long after King died, his best human friend, Danny, moved out of state when Danny's father got a new job.

Steve often thought life wasn't fair. He lay in bed at night, tears in his eyes, thinking how hor-

rible his life was, and wondering if it would ever get better. Then, the worst thing of all happened. *In some ways it might be good*, he thought. *At least the fighting will stop*. But then he wouldn't have a family anymore. When his parents separated, he thought it was the worst thing that could happen to a kid . . . and he felt *really* rotten.

One night after re-watching some cartoons he'd videotaped, Steve fell asleep and dreamed about a spaceship landing beside his bed. It was big, round, and bright with lights. Slowly, the spaceship's gangway lowered and, against the lights, Steve saw an emerging figure in a space suit with a glass-topped helmet. His suit bore the name "Captain Empowerment."

Captain Empowerment took off his helmet and, before Steve could stop himself, he asked the captain, "Take me away on your spaceship. I can't stand all these horrible things anymore."

In a calm, deep voice, Captain Empowerment answered, "Sometimes rotten things happen to the best people, even to kids. I can't change what is happening or take you away from it, but there might be something I can do to help. Come aboard."

Steve followed Captain Empowerment through the weird insides of the craft until they reached a cylindrical compartment. Captain Empowerment said, "This is a time capsule. Hop inside, turn the time dial to two weeks ahead and see what happens."

Steve entered and Captain Empowerment closed the door behind him. In front Steve saw a dial that commenced with today's date and went ahead for the rest of his life. As Captain Empowerment had suggested, he turned the dial on two weeks and a mechanical voice said, "Welcome. I am RALFI, the computer of your future. Do you want to see two weeks ahead as it *could* be or as you would *prefer* it to be?"

Steve was a little surprised by the question. He hadn't expected to have a choice. As if reading his mind, RALFI said, "To some degree, we have a choice about the future and how it will be."

"Let me see how it could be first," asked Steve. Immediately he found himself sitting on a chair in his bedroom, his elbows on his thighs, his hands clasped in front of him, his head leaning forward, tears rolling down his cheeks, thinking about all the terrible things that had been happening to him. A few seconds was enough. "Help get me out of here," he begged RALFI. "Take me into the future of how I would rather it be."

Instantly, Steve was playing football with friends in the neighborhood park. They were laughing, joking, and having fun. After the game when he got home and sat in his room he started to feel sad again, thinking about King, Danny, and his parents. Then he heard RALFI's computer-like voice in the distant background say, "It is okay to feel sad. Some sad things have happened to you—and it is okay to feel good at times, too. I can show you what could happen," said RALFI, "but I can't make it happen for you. For you to be where you want to be in two weeks' time, can you tell me what you need to do to make the change?"

Steve thought. Some things he'd like to change but knew he couldn't. He couldn't bring back King, get Danny's parents to move back, or make his parents be happy. Almost thinking out aloud, he found himself answering RALFI, "There are some things I can't change but maybe I can start to get out with my friends again, play, laugh, and have some good times. Maybe I can remember more of the fun I used to have with King rather than think about how sad it is without him. Maybe I can write or e-mail Danny and perhaps look for a new best friend among the other kids at school. I can't do anything about what Mom and Dad have decided so it may be best to enjoy the time I spend with each of them, separately. Hopefully, they might be happier now." As he voiced his thoughts, Steve thought he noticed a little smile on RALFI's computer dial.

RALFI, however, kept to the business at hand. "Do you want to see the way it could be or the way you want it to be in twelve months?" he asked.

"Let's miss the could be and go to how I want it to be in twelve months," Steve instructed RALFI.

He was taller and wearing long pants to school instead of shorts. He was getting a certificate at school but couldn't quite read what it was for—schoolwork, sports, community service, maybe. Mom and Dad were *both* there to see it. They were happier in their separate lives and proud of their son. He still looked at the photograph of King in his bedroom from time to time, and remembered the fun they'd had together. And what was this? A new puppy called Scruffy was licking his hand. He and Danny were sending fewer e-mails but he had several other really good friends at school.

As the scene faded, Steve thought RALFI's dial was smiling again. He didn't need to explore any more and stepped out of the capsule to find Captain Empowerment waiting for him. Captain Empowerment handed him a space suit and a glass bubble helmet that Steve put on. He then looked in a mirror and saw the name on the suit: Steve the Supreme. "Steve the Supreme?" he asked Captain Empowerment.

"Yes," said the captain, "I decided to name you Steve the Supreme Creator of His Own Future Destiny, but that was too long to fit on your suit. Even though sometimes some terrible things may still happen to you in life, you know there are things you can do to make the future the way you want it to be, so henceforth you will be known as Steve the Supreme."

STORY 65
ACCEPTING WHAT YOU HAVE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Wanting bigger and better
- Wanting what you cannot have
- Setting unattainable goals
- Failure to accept what you have

Resources Developed

- Learning to accept what you have
- Taking the opportunity while it's there
- Learning to set realistic goals

Outcomes Offered

- Acceptance
- Realistic appraisal of goals
- Attainable goals

Feeling hungry, a fox set out in search of a meal. He hadn't gone very far before he found a mouse sleeping under a tree—an easy and certain catch. *What good luck*, thought the fox, *a nice, tasty little meal just lying and waiting for me, already. That will make a nice breakfast*.

The fox was just about to pounce on the mouse and gobble it up when a rabbit came hopping

by. Seeing the rabbit, the fox forgot about his easy breakfast and greedily thought, *What luck, a rabbit is bigger and tastier than a mouse. If I catch it, I will have enough food to last all day.*

He raced after the rabbit and was just closing in to make his catch when a deer that had been grazing nearby was startled and took flight. The fox greedily set his eyes on the deer. Despite feeling a little tired from chasing the rabbit, he thought he still had a fair chance to catch the deer. *What luck*, he said to himself, *a deer is bigger and better than a rabbit. Catch that and I can eat for a week without any more running around.*

He had used so much energy chasing the rabbit that he started to lag behind the speedy deer, but it didn't seem to bother him because just then he saw a horse. He was tired. The horse was big and fast but it didn't deter the fox. *What luck, with a horse I could eat for months without doing any work.*

The horse didn't even bother to run. With a couple of well-placed kicks, it would have smashed the fox's skull if the fox had not dodged in time. Deciding he was trying to bite off more than he could chew, the fox thought, *Oh, well, at least I can turn back and look for the deer*, but it had disappeared into the forest long ago.

Maybe it has to be rabbit, today, he thought, but by the time he got back the rabbit had long gone as well.

Mouse for breakfast, then, he muttered with disappointment and returned to the tree, expecting to easily catch a sleeping mouse—but the noise of chasing the rabbit, deer, and horse had awakened the mouse. It was gone!

The fox thought to himself, *What a pity I didn't take the opportunity that was available rather than trying to chase something beyond my reach*. Sad, he lay down under the tree and felt his empty tummy rolling with hunger.

STORY 66
TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Carelessness
- Lack of responsibility
- Lack of forethought

Resources Developed

- Facing the consequences of your actions
- Taking responsibility
- Building a sense of humor
- Having forethought in your actions
- Balancing responsibility and enjoyment

Outcomes Offered

- Consideration of others
- Carefulness
- Responsibility
- Enjoyment

Saturday mornings were a time to which Janey looked forward. She often seemed to be in trouble for one thing or another: She hadn't done her homework, she hadn't been paying attention in class, and she was watching TV when the dishwasher needed to be loaded. On Saturday mornings she was free—free to play with friends and not have to worry about getting into trouble. At least, that was until they were playing ball. Janey threw the ball a little too hard and her friend missed the catch. It landed in Mr. Grumblebum's yard!

"Mr. Grumblebum" wasn't his real name, of course, but he had earned it among the neighborhood kids for good reasons. He always had something to grumble about and kids were his favorite targets. He was angry, period.

As Janey looked over the fence, she saw Grumblebum picking up the ball. It hadn't broken a window or knocked down any of his flowers but already she could see that he was angry. By the time he stormed, red-faced, into their driveway, Janey and her friend were looking for somewhere to hide.

Full of rage, Mr. Grumblebum wasn't watching where he was going and stepped on Janey's skateboard. Whoosh, the skateboard took off down the driveway. Waving his arms about insanely to keep balance, Mr. Grumblebum lost hold of the ball and sped down the driveway across the path, doing an ollie as he leapt the curb.

Hey, thought Janey, *I didn't know old Grumblebum knew how to skate. That was a cool ollie.*

He raced across the road—luckily there were no cars coming down the street. The board hit the opposite curb with a sudden thump and came to a dead stop. Mr. Grumblebum flew into the air, doing an aerial somersault in the tuck position. "Wow, what a great stunt," Janey shouted to her friend. "I *have* to learn how to do that."

Now, every Saturday morning old Granny Gordon made her way up to the supermarket on High Street and came back down with a cart full of groceries. Everyone knows that you shouldn't take supermarket carts away from the supermarket, but frail old Granny Gordon had been doing it for years and nobody seemed to bother that she did.

Mr. Grumblebum hadn't perfected his skateboard trick. He would have really impressed Janey if he had landed back on the skateboard, but instead he landed on top of old Granny Gordon's shopping cart. She screamed in fright, let go of the handlebar, and Mr. Grumblebum took off down the hill. To Janey, Grumblebum's screams sounded just like those of excited kids on a roller coaster. "I didn't know old Grumblebum could have so much fun," she called, taking off after him.

Down the hill, Ms. Greenfingers had a lovely row of rosebushes that bordered the path. Every now and again she would go to the zoo and collect a bag of "zoo poo," an exotic mix of elephant, hippopotamus, monkey, and other animal poos that was supposed to be good for roses. She would mix it in a bucket with some water to make a thick, sloppy stew to feed her roses.

As Mr. Grumblebum shot past on the shopping cart on top of old Granny Gordon's groceries, he just clipped Ms. Greenfingers as she was bending over to feed her roses. With a fright she screamed and threw the bucket in the air. Janey would later recall it as if it had been filmed in slow motion. The bucket shot into the air, slowly tipped over, and the zoo poo stew rained down like water from a fire hydrant, drenching Grumblebum from head to toe. Then the upended bucket landed on top of his head. He looked like a helmeted knight of old charging into a joust on his shopping-cart horse.

The trolley careered down the hill and across a park, thumping into the wall that edged a large lake. *Now he's showing off*, thought Janey as Mr. Grumblebum executed another aerial somersault.

Water skiers looked forward to weekends on the lake as much as Janey did to her Saturday morn-

ing freedom, but one of them was in for a big surprise. Miraculously, Mr. Grumblebum landed between the skier's arms, his feet perfectly on the skis and his hands on the rope. The skier let go, falling off in fright, but the driver of the boat, obviously, hadn't noticed for they were heading for the giant ramp of a ski jump. Mr. Grumblebum hadn't noticed either because he was still wearing the zoo poo stew bucket like a knight's helmet—except it had no visor for him to see out. He shot into the air like a rocket off a launch pad, the bucket flying off his head, his eyes wide with terror. Somehow, in midair, he managed to turn his fall into a monstrous belly flop. *Ooops*, Janey thought, *that wasn't such a great stunt*, and decided it was time to go and collect her skateboard.

Of course, it wasn't the last she heard about it. As soon as Mr. Grumblebum had stumbled home and had a shower with lots of sweet-smelling shampoo to wash off the zoo poo stew, he was knocking on Janey's front door, carefully watching out this time for any skateboards on the driveway. Janey's mother invited him in for coffee, but he was already launching into an angry outburst about Janey's carelessness and irresponsibility.

"Yes," her mom agreed, "Janey may have been partly responsible for the ball going over the fence into your place. Certainly, she was responsible for leaving her skateboard in our drive. However, you were responsible for not looking, and stepping on it when you were so focused on your anger. We are all responsible for the things that we do."

Mom promised Mr. Grumblebum that she would talk with Janey but, in fact, she really didn't need to. There were some important things that Janey had already learned.

STORY 67
MAKING DECISIONS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Indecision
- Poor problem-solving skills

Resources Developed

- Learning to ask questions
- Learning to explore the options
- Weighing up the pros and cons
- Discovering how to problem solve
- Learning to go with considered decisions

Outcomes Offered

- Consideration of the choices
- Problem-solving skills
- Decision-making skills

Kelly was on a school excursion to the zoo. Everyone knew that Kelly—especially Kelly himself—had a fantastic imagination. During math class he could be commander of a spaceship traveling to the starry cluster of Omega Centauri, a thousand light years away. In science he might be riding his magic time-machine motorbike into the future. In English he could be captaining a Kelly-designed, pressure-resistant submarine to the Mariana Trench, the deepest spot on earth, 30,000 feet down.

At the zoo, the class was on an overhead walkway looking down into the African wildlife park . . . but Kelly was down among all the animals. I don't know if he knew he was really there or if it was his imagination. Whatever, if he let his imagination run, he could see himself as a great explorer: a white pith helmet on his head, tall brown leather boots on his feet, khaki pants, and a jacket with lots of pockets.

Suddenly there was a loud—and terribly close—roar. Kelly was face to face with a huge, hungry-looking lion. Its long, shaggy, brown mane surrounded a face dominated by a big open mouth and large sharp teeth. As Kelly looked around for a way to escape he saw he had been encircled by the whole pride of lions. His only escape route was blocked by a raging river.

"What can I do?" wondered Kelly. He had to think quickly. What were his choices? He could run, but lions could run faster than he could. He could climb that nearby tree, but he remembered that, in some parts of Africa, lions actually climbed trees. Was it here? He looked at the raging river. If he jumped in he might drown. What was he to do?

Just then he saw a semi-submerged log floating down the river. With one almighty jump he landed on the log, relieved to escape the lions. . . . Then he felt the log wriggle. He felt it again. The log was swimming! It wasn't a log all. He was riding on the back of a crocodile. What was he to do now?

Then he heard another roar, a different roar, the roar of a waterfall dropping over a steep cliff into nothingness. Again Kelly faced making a decision: Stay on the back of the crocodile and get swept over the waterfall, swim to shore and perhaps get eaten by the croc, or reach one of those overhanging branches. Choosing the branch, he leapt, his fingers just wrapping around the bough where he dangled above the snapping jaws of the croc. Hauling himself into the tree, he was face to face with a snake!

Not all snakes are poisonous, remembered Kelly, *but some of those that aren't can unhinge their jaws and swallow large animals the size of a young boy*. What was he to do now? What were his options?

He could climb higher but, as the branches got thinner, would they support his weight? The snake was lighter than Kelly and could climb higher still. He could jump but, if he broke a leg, the lions would have no trouble making a meal of him. Then he saw a vine hanging from the tree. Perhaps, like Tarzan, he could swing into the next tree, then climb his way down to safety.

He swung into the next tree and climbed down the trunk. His feet had barely touched the ground when he felt something grab him from behind. What could it be? Was it an elephant about to pick him up in its trunk and dash him to his death? Was it a gorilla reaching out to crush him in a huge hug? He turned to find himself face to face with a zookeeper.

"Sonny," said the zookeeper, "We'd best get you out of here before something decides you might make an interesting change of diet." Kelly faced another choice. How dare this man stop a great African explorer! Would Kelly break free and run back to the adventures of the jungle, or go with the keeper to rejoin his school group? I wonder what decision he made this time.

STORY 68
TAKING A DIFFERENT VIEW

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Relationship conflicts
- Sibling rivalry
- Seemingly insoluble problems
- Selfishness and greed
- Lack of compromise and negotiation
- Fixed-mindedness

Resources Developed

- Broadening perspectives
- Listening to others
- Learning from challenges
- Seeing other possibilities
- Valuing relationships

Outcomes Offered

- Learning from others
- Knowing that problems can have solutions if we broaden our thinking
- Working cooperatively in relationships
- Valuing relationships

One day a cowboy was riding along on his horse when he met three brothers who were arguing. "Why are you fighting?" he asked.

The eldest brother said, "Our father was a rancher. When he died, he left his horses to us three sons. His will was clear. I am to get half of the horses. My second brother here is to get one-third, and my youngest brother gets one-ninth. The problem is, our father left us seventeen horses."

If you know a little about math, you will see the brothers' task was impossible. Seventeen cannot be divided into a half, a third, and a ninth.

"We have tried every mathematical approach we can think of," the eldest explained to the cowboy. "We have even thought of killing one or more of the horses and cutting it up to make sure we get our rightful proportions. However, our father's will was clear on that, too: The horses were not to be killed." The other brothers nodded. A dead horse's leg or tail wasn't much use to them. This was why they argued.

Half of seventeen was eight and a half, so the eldest suggested he take nine. The younger two objected because it would mean they got less. He should take eight, they suggested, but he didn't want to take less, either. The argument raged, tempers flared, and the brothers got *really* angry at each other. No one was willing to comprise.

"I see your problem," said the stranger. "Your father has set you a difficult challenge, however I think I see a solution."

He led his own horse across to the corral that contained the seventeen left by the young men's father. He pushed the gate open, let his own enter, then closed the gate again. Eighteen horses stood in the enclosure.

"Now," he said to the elder, "you take your portion of one-half." How many did he get? Yes, the brother counted out nine horses that he delightedly claimed for himself. Thanks to the stranger, he got his rightful share.

Turning to the second brother the cowboy said, "Now you take your portion of one-third." How many was this? That's right, the brother happily led out six horses. To the third brother the stranger said, "Now it is your turn. Take your one-ninth." Which was how many? Yes, the last brother took his two horses, leaving behind the saddled horse of the stranger.

"Your father has left you more than horses," said the cowboy. "In setting you this challenge, what else do you think that he has given you?"

"I think," said the first brother. "That he was trying to teach us that every problem has its solution. No matter how difficult it seems, to find an answer we might have to look at it differently."

The second brother added, "I think it is more than that. Since we were little kids we have always been fighting and arguing. Perhaps he wanted us to see that working together gave us an opportunity for happiness. While greed and selfishness separated us, no one was happy."

"I believe," said the third, "he was possibly teaching us even more. He was saying that no matter how much each of us thinks we are right, we may not have the answer. That sometimes we need to look outside of ourselves. Sometimes somebody else can offer us a helpful idea for solving a problem."

The cowboy just smiled as he mounted his horse, cocked his hat, and prepared to ride on.

STORY 69
OVERCOMING FEAR

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problem Addressed

- Fear

Resources Developed

- Learning to reality test
- Appreciating the values of fear
- Discriminating between real and imagined fears
- Accepting the temporary nature of emotions
- Learning to change emotions positively

Outcome Offered

- Skills in fear management

Fred was a mouse who lived in a hole in the wall in the corner of the house. Each morning when he awoke he found himself looking forward to his toasted cheese sandwiches for breakfast—in fact,

some mornings more than others, because sometimes the nights before had been scarier than others. You see, Fred Mouse was afraid of the dark.

He knew he wasn't alone in being afraid. Other mice were scared of dogs and cats. He had heard that sometimes people were scared of spiders and snakes, or even funny things like standing on cracks in the pavement. For Fred it was the dark. When he went to bed at night and Mommy Mouse turned off the light, he began to get frightened. She would leave on the hallway light to help reassure him, but somehow that seemed to make things worse. It cast shadows across the door and walls. They seemed to change, as though something or someone was lurking in the dark.

When he was younger he used to hop into bed with Mom and Dad if he was scared, feeling the reassurance of just being close to somebody. Now, they told him, he was a big mouse and had to sleep in his own room by himself, like all good mice did when they started to grow up.

It was nice when Mom sat on his bedside and read him a story. Sometimes he would drift to sleep while she was reading, sometimes he would be able to think about the story and forget about the dark. But sometimes the thoughts of the dark would creep back into his mind and again he would start to feel scared.

One morning after eating his toasted cheese sandwiches for breakfast, Fred went looking for his friend, Philip Bear. "Are there times when you get frightened?" he asked Philip.

Philip thought for a while and said, "I certainly get frightened at times that the honey pot might be empty."

Fred didn't think it was quite the same thing, but he asked Philip, "When you are frightened, what do you do?"

"Well," answered Philip, "I go to check that there is honey in the pot. If there is, then I know I don't need to be frightened anymore."

Not sure he had got the answer he was looking for, Fred went searching for Tabby, the cat. "What do you do when you are frightened?" he asked Tabby.

"Well," replied Tabby, "like all cats, sometimes I get frightened of dogs. Some dogs can be friendly and don't really bother about wanting to hurt cats, but some dogs are not so friendly and, at those times, it is good to be scared. The fear gives me the energy to run away and protect myself. I think it's a matter of learning to tell the difference between what you need to be frightened of and what you don't.

"You see," continued Tabby, "you can come and talk to me, so already you know how to overcome the fear that mice usually have of all cats. You have learned that I am a friendly cat and there is no need to be afraid if the situation is safe. But it might be a good thing to be afraid of other cats who see mice as a meal rather than as friends."

Fred hadn't thought about it that way, but he felt more confident when Tabby told him that there are some fears he had already been able to overcome.

Next he sought out his friend, Tom, who was sitting at the table eating breakfast—as little boys are prone to do at breakfast time. He asked Tom, "What do you do when you are frightened?"

"Sometimes I get frightened if Mom shouts at me," said Tom. "Not that she shouts very often, which is probably why I get frightened when she does. I guess I know she won't be angry forever and because she's not, I won't be frightened forever. So I tell myself that the feeling will go. Then I try to do something that feels nice, like give her a hug if she is feeling upset, or go outside and play for a while. Usually I come back feeling better."

When Fred went to bed that night it was with lots of thoughts in his mind about the conversations he'd had during the day. What could he learn from the things his friends did? Could he ask his mom to read him a story, to absorb his thoughts in some interesting tale? That had worked sometimes in the past. Could he check his room—like Philip did with his honey pot—to reassure himself there was no need to be afraid? Like Tabby, could he weigh up whether it was appropriate for him to be afraid? Was there any real risk? If there was, what could he do about it? If there wasn't, how could he relax and drift into a comfortable sleep? Could he do what Tom did, and remind himself that feelings like fear will pass and won't stay around forever?

What do you think he did? Whose advice did he follow? Did he do some of these things or all of these things? Or did he perhaps think of other things that he might be able to do himself? Whatever he did, I do know that it was possible for Fred to snuggle up at night in the hole in the wall in the corner of the house and sleep a comfortable, rested sleep.

STORY 70
THE SECRETS OF SUCCESS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Dealing with rivalry
- Facing a challenge
- Setting goals
- Finding the means to succeed

Resources Developed

- Acknowledging strengths
- Acknowledging weaknesses
- Using strengths
- Making choices about weaknesses
- Training and preparation

Outcomes Offered

- Focusing on your strengths
- Applying yourself toward your goal
- Developing your personal best

"Grandpa," asked Thomas on the phone, "can we walk the Bibbulmum Track next weekend and stay at Hewitt's Hill Hut?"

"That could be possible," said Grandpa, thinking of the previously enjoyable hikes they had on the local backwoods trails and how Thomas had a particular preference for Hewitt's Hill Hut.

"Could I bring some friends? Daniel, Bon, Luke, and Willo?"

Grandpa noted Daniel's name at the top of the list. Daniel and Thomas were best friends as well as friendly rivals. They were always challenging each other to see who was the better.

If the competition had been confined to schoolwork, Thomas might have been the victor. He learned his new spelling words faster, he was quick to pick up on addition and subtraction, and he could read aloud quite effortlessly—but these are not the things that are really valued among little boys, and education is a lot more than reading, spelling, and math.

Daniel had the physical prowess. He could run faster, climb higher up a tree, and throw a stone farther. When it came to designing and building a paper airplane, Thomas was quick and creative, but Daniel always seemed to fly his farther.

Some days they would take the long walk home from school through the woods. There they would climb to the top of a granite outcrop and engage in the ultimate little-boy challenge: to see who could pee the farthest. Daniel always won. That in itself was infuriating, but it wouldn't have been so bad if he didn't laugh at Thomas. Thomas felt hurt.

He was also worried, for the annual school football tryouts were coming up, and Thomas desperately wanted to be selected. He had no doubt that Daniel would be. Daniel always was. He ran fast, he handled the ball well, and he didn't get frightened when other kids tried to tackle.

One weekend, Thomas arrived at his Grandpa's looking forlorn. Daniel had beaten him again when they stopped at the granite outcrop. Again he had laughed at Thomas, and boasted about how he'd be on the football team.

"What's wrong?" asked Grandpa kindly.

"It's Daniel," said Thomas. "He is always better than me. No matter what he does, he always seems to win. He'll get selected for the football team and I won't. He beats me at everything I do. We have the grand championship coming up in a few weeks and I know that he'll win . . . and laugh at me again."

Thomas's grandpa gently stroked his grandson's shoulder and said, "You and Daniel have been friends for a long time and in that time there is something I have learned about Daniel. Over my life I have met a lot of other people like him. You see, I used to be a champion swimmer." Thomas had seen the dusty old trophies in his grandpa's den and the ribbons that hung from the bookshelf. He had seen the couple of framed photographs of his grandpa as a younger man, proudly holding a trophy. He knew this about his grandpa but they had never spoken about it before.

"In my experience, the best athletes have a few secrets that you never hear them talk about," his grandpa confided, as though he were a master magician finally agreeing to tell his student some safely guarded magical tricks of the trade.

Thomas was eager to learn the secrets. He wanted to know what he could do to beat Daniel.

"First," began Grandpa, "it is helpful if the ability comes to you easily. You see, there are some things you do very well and some things Daniel does very well. We all have our different skills and abilities. The secret is to concentrate on your strengths. Know what they are and how to use them. Be aware of what you are not so good at, too, and make the choices as to whether you want to focus on those things less, or try to develop them. Thinking too much about what you can't do may stop you from doing what you can.

"In my time as an athlete I have seen many people who have the ability, but they tend to be lazy. They could make it to the top but don't put in the effort.

"The second secret of top athletes," continued his grandpa, "is that they train. Have you ever

seen Daniel training? No, he never puts in the effort. Set your goal, work hard toward it if that is what you really want, and you will certainly make it.

"Finally," said Grandpa, "you know I play golf now. My aim is not to beat others, but improve my own score. Top athletes talk about competing against themselves rather than others, or about improving their own personal best. In training, aim for your best. That's what matters most for your own satisfaction."

Grandpa's words inspired Thomas. He wanted to do his best, so he began to train, getting up early every morning and practicing. He watched top athletes being interviewed on TV, and, after Grandpa's talk, realized how much effort they put into becoming the best. He noticed that they often carried water bottles with them. That, he thought, was a good idea, and he always kept one in his school bag. He drank plenty.

Well, Thomas got selected for the football team, but that wasn't the grand championship for which he had been training. It was a couple of weeks after he asked his grandpa's advice that he asked Grandpa to take him and his friends for a walk along the Bibbulmum Track to stay at Hewitt's Hill Hut. This was to be the site of the grand championship.

They cooked on a campfire, toasted marshmallows on sticks they had whittled, and played spotlight in the dark. They watched the moon rise, then snuggled into their sleeping bags full of anticipation. The grand championship was to be held in the morning. Thomas had prepared himself, he'd drunk constantly from his water bottle all that day, and even sipped on it when he awoke during the night. He had certainly been training.

First thing in the morning, before Grandpa awoke, Thomas led his friends out into the woods because here, near Hewitt's Hill Hut, was the tallest granite outcrop that he knew. It was the day of the grand championship: to see who could pee the farthest. Thomas had been practicing holding back as long as possible. Now he was ready. He let fly. He won. He was the Grand Champion. He peed the farthest he had ever done.

That night when they had walked out of the woods and returned to Grandpa's house, Thomas gave his grandpa a big hug. "Thanks for teaching me the secrets of success," he said with a smile his grandpa could only begin to wonder about.

EXERCISE 10.1

What are the life skills that your child or adolescent clients want or need to develop? These may vary if you are working in a pediatric medical clinic, educational setting, private therapy practice, childhood disability agency, adolescent drug clinic, family court counseling service, or juvenile judicial system.

- Make a list of the life skills specific to your clients.
- Jot down story ideas for the development of each skill.
- Ensure your stories include realistic, practical, and replicable means for the acquisition of those life skills.

CHAPTER 11

Building Problem-Solving Skills

To live a successful life as an adult, a child needs to become a successful problem solver. Children need to acquire the skills to help them deal with adult life's unexpected challenges: how to cope with an unwanted pregnancy, a retrenchment when you have a family to feed and a mortgage to pay, the diagnosis of a life-threatening illness, or the numerous other problems we inevitably encounter. Whether we're dealing with such major issues or life's day-to-day hassles, effective problem-solving skills are one of the essential requirements to living a more contented childhood and adulthood. People who are effective problem solvers report greater feelings of happiness and well-being, while poor problem solvers have fewer choices, feel less in control, and are more likely to become anxious and depressed. Teaching appropriate problem-solving skills prevents many mood disorders and maladaptive behaviors, and enhances the quality of life.

These are the reasons the stories of this chapter focus on problem solving. They explore how to cope with adversity and build the cognitive processes that provide resilience. They talk about thinking through issues rather than relying upon unrealistic, magical solutions. They teach about acceptance, negotiating outcomes, working collaboratively toward a resolution, and other useful means to turn a problem into a solution.

STORY 71
OVERCOMING ADVERSITY: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Loss
- Sadness
- Global thinking
- Negative thinking
- Pessimism
- Introspection
- Hopelessness

Resources Developed

- Thinking specifically
- Thinking positively
- Being optimistic
- Looking outward
- Maintaining hopefulness
- Becoming action-oriented

Outcomes Offered

- Knowing it isn't the event but the way we handle the event
- Acknowledging that thoughts can determine feelings
- Discovering that attitude can determine outcome
- Possessing grief management skills
- Possessing trauma management skills

Dolly and Debbie were dinosaurs. In fact, they were two very curious young dinosaurs who liked to invent new games and explore new places. They lived with a family of dinosaurs in a lush valley where there were fresh streams and plenty of food. Life was good.

One day Dolly and Debbie were exploring a cave in the hills that surrounded their valley. They crashed deeper and deeper into the cave, each encouraging the other, curious to see how far they could explore—when suddenly from outside there was a big *bang*. Dolly and Debbie ran toward the entrance of the cave to find that their lush valley and family of dinosaurs had disappeared. Of course, they didn't know what had happened, and it was going to be millions of years before scientists would discover that a meteorite had hit their valley and wiped out everything except for Dolly and Debbie, who had been hidden deep inside the cave.

At first, they sat in the entrance to the cave and looked out over the valley, totally stunned. They found it hard to believe. Then sadness settled on them as they became aware of their loss.

Looking across the blackened valley, Dolly was the first to speak. "This is terrible!" she said. "It

is the worst thing that could ever happen to anyone. How will we ever get over it?" And with that she felt even sadder.

Debbie said, "Yes, it is terrible what has happened, but isn't it good that we were exploring the cave? We are lucky to have survived. We are so fortunate." And with that thought she felt a little less sad—certainly not a lot, but maybe just a little less sad.

"Yes, but we have lost everything," said Dolly. "All our family, all our friends, all our food, all our water. . . . Our home is completely destroyed."

"Things could be worse," replied Debbie. "At least we have each other. Already the dust is beginning to settle; we can see the sky again and there might be another valley over the hills that is untouched. Maybe we can see if others have survived beyond this valley."

"I don't care about others," said Dolly. "I just feel too much pain in myself. Why is this happening to me? My life is ruined."

"Things may change and improve," said Debbie. "Nothing ever stays the same. When we entered the cave it was bright and sunny. Everyone seemed happy and was going about their business. While we were inside it suddenly changed. It is likely that it will change again and start to get better."

"It never will be," said Dolly. Her words felt heavy on her heart and her feelings grew sadder with every sentence she spoke.

"No, it won't be the same as it was," agreed Debbie. "But let's not lose hope for the future. Perhaps we can start to do things to make it better than it is." And as she thought ahead the sadness faded even a little more.

"Things couldn't be worse," said Dolly. "I have lost everyone and everything. What are we going to do? Nothing is working out right anymore." She kept saying the same things over and over in her head and the more she did, the worse she felt, and the less she felt like doing anything except for just sitting at the entrance to the cave looking over the blackened valley and feeling terrible.

"Come on," said Debbie, nudging Dolly to her feet. "We need to *do* something. We need to move on to find a new home and friends." It wasn't easy to get Dolly moving, but as soon as Debbie was up and walking *she* certainly started to feel better. While the same sad thing had happened to both Debbie and Dolly, I wonder which one you think was going to cope with it better. How was Debbie thinking and what was she doing that made it easier for her to cope? How could Dolly change her thoughts and the things she was doing to help herself feel better?

STORY 72
OVERCOMING ADVERSITY: *A TEEN STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Facing tough times
- Threats to life and well-being
- Seeming hopelessness

Resources Developed

- Thinking beyond yourself (of loved ones)
- Thinking positively
- Being optimistic
- Looking forward
- Being hopeful
- Becoming action-oriented
- Maintaining humor

Outcomes Offered

- Knowing that it isn't the event but the way we handle the event
- Accepting that thoughts can determine feelings
- Discovering that attitude can determine outcome
- Maintaining a sense of humor
- Possessing skills to manage trauma

I have a great love of mountains and high-mountain trekking. Whenever I can, I visit places like the Himalayas. Because I love mountains so much I have also read a lot about them and am fascinated by stories of climbers who pushed themselves beyond what you might think humans are capable of experiencing. Of the many stories of climbers who have battled against seemingly intolerable odds, there is one that touches me very deeply and reminds me very clearly of some of those things that help people get through the really tough times in life.

Dr. Beck Weathers was a specialist, a pathologist, who fulfilled a lifelong dream of climbing to the summit of Mt. Everest on May 10, 1996. Unfortunately, it was a tragic day in the history of Everest. A blizzard swept down on the mountain and within a few days fifteen people had died. Beck was thought to be one of them—in fact, about four times he was thought to be one of them.

Trying to get down, Beck, with a few other climbers, got lost; their oxygen—which is necessary to survive at those altitudes—had run out, they couldn't see in the storm and the darkness, they had no tents or sleeping bags, and they didn't know which way to go. When he took off a glove to warm his hand inside his jacket, the glove blew away, his hand snap-froze, he couldn't do up his jacket, and his whole body started to freeze in the howling wind. He passed out. Other climbers who came to the rescue of those in trouble couldn't find him and doubted there was any way that he could have survived the night on the mountain without a sleeping bag and tent. This was the first time he was written off as dead.

The next morning rescuers found Beck, partly buried in the snow. A doctor, among the rescuers, scraped ice off Beck's face to recognize him, checked his vital signs for life, and pronounced that he was so near death that he was beyond help. For a second time he was written off.

That afternoon, miraculously, Beck regained consciousness, later saying that he had a mental vision of his family, of the people he loved, and that it inspired him to get going. With one arm frozen and only able to see a short distance in front of him, he staggered across the mountain face, again miraculously, into Camp IV. He was given oxygen and hot water bottles, and wrapped in two sleeping bags in a tent. For a third time, nobody expected him to survive through the night. Even if he did, he wouldn't have the strength to face all the hazards of getting down the mountain.

In the tent by himself, Beck's hands were too frozen to allow him to open a water bottle and have a drink. The blizzard blew the tent flaps open and tore the sleeping bags from his body. His arms were swollen and his wristwatch was cutting off the blood flow to his hand. Being a doctor, he knew that meant he could lose his hand—so he tried to chew through the watchband. He screamed, helplessly, for the exhausted rescuers couldn't hear him over the howling blizzard.

In the morning when Beck stood and even began to walk his rescuers could hardly believe it, but still no one thought he would survive. They were 26,000 feet up the highest mountain in the world. There was a long, tortuous descent ahead—tough for even the fittest.

On the rescue was a famous mountaineer and mountain photographer, David Breashears, who personally helped Beck. Beck's arms were frozen as stiff as poles, he had limited sight and strength, and his face was so frostbitten that he would later have to have his nose amputated, along with his hands. Being a doctor he must have known this, but he remained hopeful, saying at one point, "I'm gonna lose my hands, but I might just see my wife and kids again."

David Breashears later wrote a book entitled *High Exposure*, in which he said he kept expecting Beck to complain—but he never did. In fact, even after having been written off for dead so many times, knowing that he could lose his arms and never be able to work as a doctor again, Beck Weathers was cracking jokes.

Climbing Mt. Everest is a costly exercise—probably about the same as buying a small apartment or a couple of cars. As David virtually carried Beck down the mountain on his own back, Beck laughed that before leaving home he'd said to his wife, "This is costing me an arm and a leg," and then, knowing that he would lose his arms, added, "but I guess I bargained them down."

What interests me is just how people facing such tough times and difficult situations survive and are able to get on with their lives. I find Dr. Beck Weathers an inspiration and I guess this is part of the reason that I love reading about mountains and the adventures of mountaineers, particularly what they do when faced with such difficult times.

STORY 73
COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

Therapeutic Characteristics

This story has different characteristics from most of the others and is best considered as a matching metaphor. It is designed to match the child listener in age, gender, and experiences as well as the problem (in this case, insomnia). An outcome is not specifically offered, although it is implied: to sleep restfully again in the child's own room. The resources, or means for getting to the outcome, are not specified, though it is implied the child has knowledge based on his own experiences. I present this story as a way of eliciting the resources and outcome from the child through collaborative storytelling: The therapist sets up the problem and seeks to engage the child in a process that will lead to a successful outcome. This process is discussed further in Chapter 16.

You know, as you were telling me the troubles you have been experiencing with sleeping I was quite amazed because I have been seeing another guy about your age who has very similar problems.

Now, my guess is that there are probably a lot of things you have tried already. Some may have

helped a little and some haven't been very helpful at all. Much as you might not want to, I guess you have built up a reasonable understanding of just how a person feels when they have difficulty getting off to sleep at night, or what happens when they wake up and can't get back to sleep. So I'm wondering whether we can talk about what you have done to see whether those things might help this other boy that I know. You see, the reasons he developed his sleeping problems in the first place may not be exactly the same as for you but, as I tell you about them, you may agree that there are some similarities.

His parents separated a while ago. It wasn't a happy time and hadn't been for a long while. There was the usual arguing and fighting that adults often get into at such times. That was when his sleep problems first started.

He told me how he would lie in bed at night and hear his mom and dad yelling at each other, wondering what he could do to stop it but feeling as useless as a Gameboy without batteries. When they did separate it was sort of a relief in some ways, but he'd lie in bed at night thinking about whether they'd separated because of him and things that he'd done or hadn't done.

He wanted to stay with his dad. His bedroom was at one end of the house and his dad's was at the other. He got pretty scared when his dad turned off the light at night and he was there, in the dark, all by himself. Lots of scary thoughts raced around in his head like an out-of-control merry-go-round. Much as he tried to stay in bed, he couldn't help himself. He *had* to go down to his dad's bedroom and climb in beside his father.

Now and again, his dad wouldn't have objected, but every night was a different thing. "You are too big now," his dad told him. "You need to sleep by yourself."

Well, he tried, but the scary feelings didn't stop, so he would wait until his dad was asleep, then sneak into his room and sleep on the floor beside his bed. There he drifted off to sleep much easier.

I would like to tell this boy a story that may offer him some hope and show him some things that are useful to do, or not do, so that he can feel comfortable about sleeping in his room by himself. What do you think would be helpful for him to know? What would be a useful story for us to create for this boy on the basis of the things that you know and have learned? What new things might be helpful for him to explore? And what difference do you think it will make for him when he can sleep restfully again in his own room?

STORY 74
THINKING THROUGH A PROBLEM

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Failure
- Feelings of helplessness
- Lack of acceptance
- Facing a monstrous problem

Resources Developed

- Learning what you are good at . . . and not good at
- Looking for practical solutions
- Creating back-up plans
- Doing what you are good at
- Doing what is practical

Outcomes Offered

- Success
- Acceptance
- Problem-solving skills

Among his classmates, Wally was known as Wally the Wacky Wizard. Ever since he had been going to magic school, he had failed Basic Wizardry. He found it tough, and the only reason he seemed to get promoted to the next grade each year was that he was such a likeable young wizard.

If anything could go wrong in Basic Wizardry, it would certainly go wrong for Wally. Everyone reminded him how hopeless he was but, no matter how many times they told him, he didn't improve. He never felt anyone really gave him the encouragement he wanted, or helped him to put things right.

It had all started when he got his first magic wand. The class was doing simple exercises but Wally messed it up and turned his wand into an overripe banana. In fact, in some ways you might well think it was a good spell because it was certainly a permanent spell. Neither his teacher, nor his dad, nor any of the other wizards, seemed to be able to get his overripe banana back to a normal magic wand. I guess one good thing was that the banana didn't keep ripening.

Nonetheless, it felt limp and squishy in his hand and would never point in the right direction when he was trying to make a spell. Worse than that, it never ever seemed to get a spell right. There was the time he turned his baby sister into a purple pumpkin. He thought she looked funny as a pumpkin, lying in her cot wrapped with a diaper on her bottom and her little beanie on top of her pumpkin head. Mom wasn't so amused. In fact, she screamed and screamed until Dad got the High Wizard of the village to turn his sister back to normal.

If Wally thought his problems were bad then, things got decidedly worse when a Magic-Proof Monster started to attack the village. Like a winged dinosaur, this terrifying creature smashed through buildings and picked out a villager or two to eat for dinner every night. The villagers lived in fear, and the High Wizard's spells to kill the monster were powerless. The Council of Wizards met and combined their magic power, but still they couldn't stop the Magic-Proof Monster.

Maybe because Wally had thought of his own problems as such a monster, he began to see the monster as his own problem. He dreamed about conquering it, about becoming the village hero, about being accepted in a way that nobody had accepted him before.

He spent hours and hours down in his father's backyard shed, practicing with all the magic tools, trying to create the perfect spell to slay the Magic-Proof Monster. One night he snuck out of the house, overripe banana-wand in his hand, right about dark when the monster usually turned up. The rest of the villagers were all hiding in their houses, but when they heard the monster's footsteps, they

peeked out of their curtains wondering whose home it might target tonight—and saw Wally holding his overripe banana. They held their breath in fear.

Wally pointed his limp banana toward the monster and called out some magic words. A flash of lightening leapt from his banana-wand straight into the air, hitting a wandering witch's owl and knocking off its tail feathers. It plummeted to the ground with a sad, loud thump . . . and the monster stomped closer to Wally.

Wally called out the formula again and another bolt of lightening erupted from his overripe banana, striking the tower on top of the village hall, sending it crashing to the ground. "Oh, no," screamed people from behind their windows, "Wally is doing more damage than the monster."

But Wally had a plan up his sleeve. He knew that he wasn't good at magic, he knew that even the best wizards had tried and failed, he knew that to conquer this monster of a problem he couldn't just hope the monster would go away. He had to do something. He had to do what he was good at rather than relying on magic that didn't work.

Wally peeled his magic wand. He took the ripe fruit from inside the banana skin and threw it in the air. The monster's jaws snapped forward to catch the banana, and it liked what it tasted. It charged at Wally, hoping for more—and that was just what Wally was waiting for. When it was close enough for Wally to feel the heat of its breath he threw the banana skin under its monstrous feet. In its haste, the monster stepped on the skin, slipped and fell heavily, hit its head on the hard ground, and knocked itself out cold.

The villagers ran from their houses, shouting triumphantly, quickly tying down the unconscious monster and saving the village.

If you were ever to visit that village of wizards, you would probably hear the story of Wally the Wacky Wizard. You see, he became a hero and there is a statue of him in the middle of the village square, and parents tell their children the story of Wally the Wacky Wizard before they go to sleep at night.

STORY 75
SOLVING A PROBLEM

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Facing a challenging problem
- Wanting the seemingly unattainable
- Not having others to help
- Not having immediate answers

Resources Developed

- Learning to explore options
- Weighing up the pros and cons of a situation
- Searching for new possibilities
- Learning to use thought over impulse

- Learning from observation and experience
- Using lateral thinking

Outcomes Offered

- Self-reliance
- Power of observation
- Creative problem-solving

I once heard a story of a bird. I don't remember what sort of bird it was, but I suppose we could make it any sort of bird that you want. What sort of bird would you like it to be?

This bird lived in a land where there had been a very long, dry summer. It hadn't rained for a long time. The ground was so dry that even the overnight dew was soaked up as quickly as if it had fallen on a sponge. As a result the poor bird had not had a drink for a long time. It was *really* thirsty—so thirsty that it was feeling weaker and weaker with each passing day.

Frightened that it couldn't live much longer without water, it flew high into the air, hoping to see a patch of water somewhere in the parched land. It flew and glided, flew and glided, trying to save its energy as much as possible. Across the hot dry earth it searched for life-giving water.

Can you imagine how relieved it was when it noticed the sun glinting off something on the ground? The poor little bird glided down to investigate. There, in a spot where people sometimes picnicked, somebody had left behind a glass jar. At first the bird was excited. In the last rains, a long time ago, some water had fallen into the jar. Just enough remained in the bottom for the bird to have a refreshing drink. But then its heart sank.

The jar was tall, the water level low, and the bird couldn't get its beak deep enough down to get a drink. Realizing this, it felt even drier and thirstier. The water could save it, but the water was out of reach. What could the poor bird do?

As it looked desperately at the jar, the bird began to think of many possible options. It could push the jar over, but then the water was likely to spill and soak into the dry ground before the bird had a chance to drink. Maybe by holding the rim of the jar in its beak the bird could tilt it over just far enough for the water level to rise closer to the top without spilling any. But how could it hold the jar at just the right angle and drink at the same time? The bird looked around. There was nobody else to ask for help. It was a problem it needed to solve by itself.

I wish I had a straw, thought the bird, and that gave it a good idea. It looked around for a hollow stick or perhaps a long leaf that it might be able to roll into the shape of a straw but, unfortunately, it found nothing except pebbles scattered over the dry ground. The bird was frustrated. In front of it was what it wanted and needed but couldn't reach. There was nothing or no one around to help. What could it do?

In the end it gave up, weakly launched itself into the air, and flew on in search of water it could reach. It wasn't long before it came across a small pond. The water was muddy. It might taste yucky but at least it was water. As the bird approached, a huge pair of jaws suddenly launched themselves from the pond and the bird just had enough energy to spring into the air before getting eaten.

Great, it thought, *I find the only water around and a crocodile lives in it!* Hovering over the pond, it noticed the watermark left by the crocodile on the banks . . . and that gave the little bird an idea. You see, it might have been a bird, but it wasn't a birdbrain. When the crocodile had leapt out, the water

level must have dropped. When it flopped back in, the level rose. "Thank you, crocodile," called out the little bird as it turned back toward the jar.

Arriving at the jar, the bird picked up a pebble and dropped it in. The water level rose a little, just like when the crocodile had fallen back in the pond. The bird found another pebble and dropped that in, too. Gradually it kept adding pebble by pebble into the glass jar, and gradually the water level rose. As each pebble was patiently added the water got closer and closer to the bird's beak; it wasn't long before its patient efforts were rewarded. The water had risen high enough for the bird to drink its fill . . . and fly on, happily.

STORY 76
ACCEPTANCE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Lack of self-acceptance
- Unhappiness
- Wanting to change what cannot be changed
- Inappropriate role models
- Unattainable goals

Resources Developed

- Learning from experience
- Seeking what might be helpful
- Learning to dispense with what does not work
- Setting achievable goals
- Learning what can be changed and what cannot
- Changing what can be changed
- Accepting your strengths

Outcomes Offered

- Self-acceptance
- Ability to modify attitudes
- Enjoyment of your attributes
- Happiness

Once there was a very short man—so short, in fact, that he had often been an actor, playing one of the dwarfs in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The problem wasn't that he was small but that he was unhappy about being small. Sometimes, some people don't like to feel different from others.

He began to think about what he might do to become tall. Maybe he needed to do what someone tall did, so he went to the zoo to ask Mrs. Ostrich, the tallest bird in the world, "What do you do to be tall?"

"Well," said Mrs. Ostrich, "I've never really thought about it, but I think it must be that I stretch my neck down to the ground a lot to eat seeds or bury my head in the sand."

The man decided to try it. He started to peck seeds from the ground but found it difficult to bend down like the ostrich, and the seeds made him feel sick. He put a snorkel in his mouth so he could breathe and went to bury his head in the sand but, fortunately, he realized it was too dangerous and didn't do it . . . and didn't grow an inch taller, either.

"There has to be a better way," he thought, so he asked the tallest animal. "Tell me, Mr. Giraffe, what do you do to be so tall?"

"Maybe it is because I reach up to eat the tender young leaves off the top of prickly trees," answered Mr. Giraffe. The small man, trying to copy the giraffe, stood on the tips of his toes and stretched up. As there was no way he could stretch to the top of the prickly tree, he decided to climb up to the tender leaves at the top. The sharp prickles scratched him, he started to bleed, and when he finally got to the top, it was only to find the leaves tasted worse than seeds. He hadn't grown an inch, and he felt *really* sick.

If Mrs. Ostrich and Mr. Giraffe can't help me, thought the unhappy small man, *maybe I need to find a really tall person and see what they do.*

After a bit of searching, he found Mr. Basketball. Standing barely as tall as Mr. Basketball's knee, he looked up and asked, "What do you do to be so tall?"

"I work out at the gym a lot, run around the basketball court, and bounce balls," answered Mr. Basketball. So the short man devoted several months to working out at the gym, running around the basketball court, and bouncing balls. He wanted to give this a really good go but, once again, he didn't grow a fraction of an inch.

As tall creatures had not helped, he decided he needed someone wise, so he visited old Mrs. Owl.

"Can you tell me how to be tall?" he asked.

"Tell me," asked Mrs. Owl, "why do you want to be taller than you are?"

"Well," replied the small man, "I suppose I could win a fight if I got into one."

"How often do you get into fights?" asked the owl.

"Oh, not very often," said the small man. "In fact I can't remember ever being in one. But maybe if I was bigger, people might respect me more."

"Do people disrespect you now?" asked Mrs. Owl.

"No, not really," said the small man.

"Is there anything that you could do as a tall person that you can't do now as a short person?" continued the owl.

"Not really," answered the small man, thoughtfully. "I sure know I don't want to peck seeds from the ground, bury my head in the sand, eat leaves from the tops of prickly trees, or bounce balls endlessly. I have tried them all and they are not for me."

"So what can you do now," asked Mrs. Owl, "that you wouldn't be able to do if you were tall?"

"Well," said small man, "I can play one of the dwarfs in the Snow White plays and bring a lot of laughter and happiness to young children. I can meet young children at their own level and, consequently, enjoy much better times with them than most adults do."

He saw a smile lift in the corners of Mrs. Owl's beak, and felt a smile on his own happy, short face as he spoke.

STORY 77
LEARNING TO SHARE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Relationship conflicts
- Desire for what the other has
- Envy and greed
- Lack of communication

Resources Developed

- Assessing your own behavior
- Building better communication skills
- Learning to negotiate
- Seeking resolutions
- Discovering the benefits of sharing resources and skills

Outcomes Offered

- Conflict resolution
- Willingness to communicate
- Mutual sharing of resources
- Working with others cooperatively

Once upon a time there were two countries that shared the same border. One country, ruled by a queen, was covered with rocks and stones. The other, ruled by a king, didn't have any.

That would have been okay, except that the queen looked over the border and wanted what the king had. "With clear land," she said, "we could grow crops and feed my people."

Now, the king was also looking across the border and wanted what the queen had. "With rocks," he said, "we could build houses, schools, and hospitals."

The queen said to her people, "We need to clear our land if we are going to eat. Throw all the stones over the border."

The people of the stoneless country went to their king and complained. "The people in the queen's country are throwing stones at us," they said.

"Don't we want stones to build houses, schools, and hospitals?" asked the king. "Let's declare war. The queen's people are poor and have no other weapons apart from their stones. If they keep throwing stones, we will have all the material we need to construct our buildings." So the war continued until the stoneless land was full of stones and the stony land was stoneless.

Both the king's and the queen's subjects were happy for a while. The queen's people grew crops on the clear land. The king's people built homes, schools, and hospitals . . . for a while.

Soon the queen became aware they had plenty of food but no stones to build new homes, schools, and hospitals. They had no stones to repair their old buildings.

On the other side of the border, the king's people now had lots of buildings but food was short and they were getting hungry.

"We need a war to get our stones back," said the queen, so another war was declared. Once more the stones were hurled across the border. The king's and queen's people kept fighting, wanting what the others had, but no one was happy.

Now, one year, a wandering court jester happened to stop and sit on a hill near the border. Seeing what was happening, he burst out laughing. "This is ridiculous," he said to himself and asked to meet with the king and queen, together.

When they sat down face to face, they weren't very friendly at first. "This is all your fault," said the king. "You started this by throwing stones at us."

"No, it is your fault," answered the queen. "You declared war on us to get our stones."

"Hang on, hang on," said the jester. "It isn't going to fix your problem if you're angry or blaming each other. One of you has stones. One of you has crops. And you each want what the other has until you get it . . . and then you don't. How can we work it out so you don't go on fighting?"

The jester saw both the king and queen were thinking about his question. The king spoke first. "The stones are yours," he said to the queen. "The pastures are ours. Yet the jester is right. We both want what the other has. Maybe we could share. How would it be if we grew food for you and swapped it for the stones that we need. Maybe my people could teach some of your people how to farm and your people could teach us what they know about building. That way we could work together and not fight any more."

The queen agreed and the jester laughed happily. After the two countries began sharing what they had and were living together peacefully, the jester would often sit on his hill, watching the people come and go across the border, sharing food and stones.

STORY 78
TENDING TO THE NEGLECTED

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feeling unloved
- Feeling neglected/uncared for
- Need of tender loving care
- Limited choices
- Boredom

Resources Developed

- Caring
- Learning to change what you can
- Doing constructive/useful things
- Creating beauty
- Giving others pleasure

Outcomes Offered

- Love and care
- Tending to the neglected
- Knowing how one person can make a difference
- Knowing that kids can work together for good
- Beauty

There is a busy street corner beside a bus station where kids change buses going to and from school. It's not what you would call a pretty spot. There's a lot of noisy traffic and the nearby buildings are gray and unloved. In fact, it has a very uncared-for feeling about it. However, it has a patch of beauty—a small garden plot called Pete's Patch, because Pete created it in nine and a half minutes.

Pete is one of the kids who, for nine and a half minutes each day, waited here to change buses. It wasn't a fun or pleasant place to hang out. The station was noisy and smelled of gas fumes. There was nowhere nice to walk and the patch of land next to the station was littered with trash. Maybe it had once been a garden, but now it was an eyesore. Kids and adults had thrown their empty drink cans there, along with burger wrappings and fried-chicken boxes. Someone had sprayed swearwords and what Pete thought was pretty rude graffiti up the walls. No, it wasn't a nice spot to spend nine and a half minutes of every school day when all you wanted to do was get home. But Pete was here. He didn't have a choice. If he wanted to get home, this was the only way.

He felt like he was wasting his life away. There was nothing to look at, nothing to occupy his mind or hands, and hanging around like that each day drove him crazy. He knew he couldn't do anything to change the bus company's timetable, but, he began to think, he might be able to make his nine and a half minutes more enjoyable for him and others.

He asked Mom for some plastic trash bags and a pair of gardening gloves. That week, he put on the gloves and filled his nine and a half minutes each day by piling the trash into the bags.

"Hey, man, are you crazy or something?" his schoolmates teased. "What difference will it make? Why waste your time?" They didn't know that for Pete it was a bigger waste of time to sit doing nothing.

On the weekend he asked his dad to drive down, collect the bags, and take them to the dump. On Monday morning, the patch looked so much cleaner and nicer.

Then next week, Pete began to pull the weeds from around the old plants that had been hidden behind the rubbish and weeds. One of his friends, as bored as Pete was with filling in nine and a half minutes doing nothing each day, came to help. Mom and Dad came down on the weekend to collect the new pile of bags, prune back the old rose bushes that no one had seen for years, and offer some suggestions to Pete. Soon the patch was looking good, but the swearwords and rude graffiti on the walls behind were really bugging him. They seemed to detract from what he had done.

"What can I do?" he asked his dad.

"What would you like to do?" his dad replied, bouncing the problem back to Pete.

Pete had an idea. He started to save his pocket money. He asked his dad to talk to the owner of the building and, as soon as he got permission, he went straight to the hardware store where he spent every cent he had saved on cans of spray paint. On the wall, he sketched a mural in chalk to cover all the dirty graffiti and, when he started to put his cans of spray to work, more of his school friends wanted to join in for those nine and a half minutes each day.

Now a whole bunch of kids are pretty proud of that patch, and they sure aren't going to let any other kids—or adults—mess it up. They water the roses regularly, they've planted fresh flowers, and one of the other kids' dads gave them an old swing that they painted and set up on the patch. They walk through the patch while waiting for their next bus, gather any rubbish, pull out a weed or two, and have a swing. In fact, sometimes when you pass you may even see an adult swinging among the roses.

One Monday, however, as he rode the bus to school, Pete was in for a surprise. He looked, as usual, toward the patch. Something had changed. There was a sign on it. His friends had painted it. It read: Pete's Patch.

STORY 79
TAKING CONTROL

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Habit patterns
- Unwanted behaviors
- Lack of control
- Lack of empowerment

Resources Developed

- Taking control
- Learning thought-/behavior-stopping techniques
- Learning to create desired alternatives
- Learning to extend skills
- Building personal empowerment

Outcomes Offered

- Habit control
- Broader behavioral repertoire
- Empowerment

Natalie had a habit. It doesn't matter what sort of habit it was because I guess we all get into habits of different types. Some bite their finger nails, eat too much junk food, don't eat enough, pick their noses in public, burp at the dinner table, or do other things that other people may not like. So you can imagine any sort of habit you might want for Natalie. Is wasn't so much what the habit was but rather what happened that was more important.

I asked Natalie what she wanted to be when she was an adult. She didn't need any time to think. Her reply came quickly: "A policewoman. I want to ride on one of those big white horses like policewomen do."

"And what will you do as a policewoman riding on a big white horse?" I asked.

"I'll go to football matches and other places where there are big crowds. I'll ride around making sure everyone does everything right."

"Yes," I said, "this is really what a policewoman's job is about, isn't it—helping to keep control. Have you started to practice the things you need to do to be a policewoman?"

"Mom has promised to give me horse-riding lessons as a Christmas present," answered Natalie.

"But there are other things you might need to do as well," I suggested. "Let's imagine that you wanted to help an elderly person across a busy road. What would you do?"

Natalie stood up proudly, extended an arm, the palm of her hand raised to face the imaginary traffic; she called out in a firm voice, "Stop." She stood there waiting for the imagined elderly person to cross the street and then waved the traffic on.

"Good," I said. "I think you will make a good policewoman. A lot of good police work is learning how to stop things, isn't it? You need to stop the traffic. You might need to stop a robber burgling a house or robbing a bank. You might need to stop someone painting graffiti on a wall, or stop people fighting.

"I wonder how you can practice your police voice, 'Stop.' Maybe that old habit of yours that we've been working on is a starting point. When you do it, perhaps you can stand up, put your hand up like you did for the imaginary traffic, and call out 'Stop' in a firm, police-like voice."

I continued, "Perhaps we ought to explain to Mom that you're practicing how to be a policewoman. Sometimes parents get a little worried when kids start doing things differently. She might not understand what's going on and think, *I should never have taken Natalie to see that psychologist—she really is going crazy now.* Would you like me to explain or would you rather explain to her yourself?"

When I saw Natalie the next week she told me she had been practicing her policewoman's skills of making her habit stop, and that it was going pretty well.

I asked her to imagine she was helping that elderly person across the street just as she had done the week before. She stood up proudly, extended her arm to the full, her palm facing the imaginary traffic, and called out, "Stop!" Her voice was firmer and stronger. She waited until the imaginary person had crossed the imaginary road and then waved the imaginary traffic on.

"Ah-ha. What did you just do?" I asked.

"I waved the traffic on," she said, looking a little puzzled.

"So, what else do policewomen do to exercise control as well as stopping some things that happen?"

She smiled. "They start things happening too. I started the traffic flowing again."

"Exactly," I said. "A good police officer wants to stop a bad thing from happening so that more good things can start. Some police officers focus primarily on starting the good things. They run police youth clubs, do community programs, and set up neighborhood watch schemes. At times they can help to stop what they *don't* want to happen by starting what they *do* want to happen."

The next week, Natalie proudly announced, "I've kept practicing being a policewoman. I can tell my habit to stop and I can do something different when it feels like it's going to happen."

"What have you done?" I asked.

"Those times when I thought the habit was about to happen I'd say 'Stop,' then go and talk to Mom, take Toby—my dog—for a walk, phone a friend for a chat, or go and play a game on the computer."

"I think you're going to make a wonderful policewoman," I said. "If you keep your training going like this, the only other thing you need to do is learn how to make a horse stop and go in the direction you want it to."

STORY 80
CREATING A WISH

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Parental conflicts
- Feeling sad
- Being absorbed in negative thoughts
- Feeling unloved and unwanted
- Wishing for something you cannot have

Resources Developed

- Learning to ask for what you *can* attain
- Showing kind-heartedness
- Making goals positive
- Making goals specific
- Taking responsibility for attaining goals
- Learning to work for what you want
- Learning to ask solution-focused questions

Outcomes Offered

- Personal responsibility for attaining goals
- Personal empowerment
- Solution-focused strategies
- Happiness

Once there was a girl. Shall we give her a name? What would you like to call her?

One day she was taking a walk along a beach. Do you live near a beach or go for summer vacation to a beach? Would you like to set this story on that beach?

This girl was walking along that beach one day, sadly, not feeling very happy. She'd left home to go for a walk because her mom and dad were fighting—again—and she felt she needed to get out. She walked along, her head down, thinking about her troubles, not hearing the call of the seagulls, or swish of the waves lapping the sand. She didn't feel the pleasant warmth of the sun on her skin, or the damp sand under her feet.

As she kicked her way along the beach, her toes suddenly hit something solid. She stopped, bent down, and started to dig the sand away with her hands. What she found was an old lamp, just like those you read about in storybooks—the ones where, if you rub them, a genie pops out and grants

you three wishes. This one was old and battered, and had barnacles growing off it like it had been at sea for a long time.

The girl picked off the barnacles and got a handful of wet sand to clean it. *Poof!* As she rubbed it, out popped a genie.

Now this was not the handsome, muscular genie you see in movies or storybooks, though he did have a turban on his head. Instead, he was old and skinny and looked like he needed to sleep for a week. Nonetheless, the girl's excitement was overwhelming. "Wow! Does this mean I get three wishes?" she asked excitedly.

"Give me a break," said the genie. "I have been shut up in this thing for longer than I can remember. My last master got his three wishes, then tossed me overboard. I had to plug up the hole to stop from drowning, I've suffered with seasickness, and I haven't had a meal in years. I got dumped on this shore and buried in sand, and you want three wishes."

"Oh," said the girl, disappointed. She'd found a genie that not only didn't look like a genie, but was grumpy as well.

"Well, can I at least ask for one wish?" she inquired, remembering the thoughts that had occupied her mind as she walked along the beach.

"Well, you rubbed the lamp, so you are the master," said the genie, "but just one for now."

"I wish," said the girl, "that Mom and Dad would stop fighting."

"Well, that's one wasted wish," said the grumpy genie.

"What do you mean?" asked the girl, feeling shattered.

"You are my master and I can do things to help you change, but I can't go changing other people just to suit you. What they chose is what they do."

The poor girl looked devastated and, seeing her so sad, the genie softened, a little. "Look, here are some tips about making a wish. First, it needs to be something that you can realistically change for yourself, and second, you need to make it something that *you* want to *do* rather than something you want someone else to *stop* doing. I'm not good at stopping wars, famines, or fights. I'm better at helping people create peace, grow more food, and get on better together.

"Anyway, what do I get out of this?" he asked suddenly. "As my master, are you going to look after me? I could do with some food and a warm place to spend the night." Then, with a *poof*, he disappeared back into the lamp.

Great! Just my luck, thought the girl, who had been feeling pretty unloved and unwanted at home. When, at last, she thought she might have the chance to change things, she gets a grouch of a genie.

Nonetheless, she was a kind-hearted girl who gently carried the lamp home. When her parents were busy arguing over dinner, she scraped some of her meal onto a separate plate that she later took to her bedroom to feed the genie. He devoured it in a hurry but it didn't do anything for his mood. He just demanded more, sending the girl on several missions to the fridge, then demanding that she not disturb him while he had a good night's sleep.

In the morning he was no better. He spat out the cornflakes she gave him and demanded something cooked. That was hard to do without raising her parents' suspicions, but it helped to settle the genie's mood a little. Eventually, he said, "Have you thought about your second wish?"

"Yes," she said, "I want to be happy."

"No good," answered the genie.

The girl looked startled by his brusque response. "What do you mean, now?" she asked.

"Well, I'm only telling you this because you've been kind to me," he said. "How do I know what happiness means to you? If you're making a wish you need to be specific. When you're feeling happier, what do you want to be thinking? What do you want to be feeling? What do you want to be doing that is different from what you're doing now?"

"Well, I don't want to think about Mom and Dad fighting all the time."

"Wrong," said the genie. "Remember yesterday, I told you it is better to make wishes about what you *want*, than what you *don't want*. What do you want to be thinking?"

"I want to look forward to coming home after school, to enjoy time with my friends, to think fun thoughts."

"Good, that's getting better," said the genie. "Then how are you going to do them?"

"Wait a minute," said the girl. "Aren't you the genie? Aren't you supposed to make them happen for me?"

"You wait a minute," said the genie in reply. "I've been shut up in that damn lamp for longer than I can remember. I haven't eaten, I've hardly slept, I've been seasick, I've had no friends, and I haven't had a chance to practice my magic. Granting wishes is like anything else. You stop training for a sport and you lose your fitness. You stop studying and you forget what you learned. If you want these things, you have to do a bit of the work yourself.

"Look," he continued, "remember the way you were walking along the beach last night, head down, kicking your toes into the sand, occupied with all your worries? How about next time you walk the beach you lift your head up, look at the colors in the water and sky, see what delights the tide has washed up, listen to the sounds of the waves, feel the sand underneath your feet, paddle your feet in the cool water, and let yourself enjoy the experience of what's happening?

"I hate to admit this, but even genies know there are some things we can't change . . . and some that we can. Our own thoughts, feelings, and actions are among the things that we can change. To do so, you need to practice and practice and practice—just like I need to practice my magic, or soon forget how."

The girl nodded. He might be a grouch, but he was a sensible grouch.

"One more thing," he said. "If you want this wish to happen, then you have to decide when you're going to do the things to make it happen. It isn't any good just sitting around waiting for magic to happen. So, when are you going to do something about it?"

"I'll go for another beach walk this afternoon," she said, "and do what you suggest."

And she did, carrying the genie in his lamp inside her schoolbag as she walked.

That night she fed the genie again and went to sleep thinking, carefully, about what her third wish would be.

The big bowl of porridge she prepared for the genie in the morning was neither good enough nor big enough, so she cooked bacon and eggs, hash browns, and pancakes until his mood seemed a bit better. She waited her time to ask her third wish, thinking she had learned a lot about wishes and should get it right this time.

"I wish that you would stay with me forever and keep granting my wishes."

"Good try," said the genie, and she saw him laugh for the first time. "You can't wish for something you can't have. I can only grant you three wishes, and that is the deal. But if you do what you've done already, it will be as good as having me around for the rest of your life. You don't have to be limited to just three wishes. Remember, it's okay to wish. It's okay to look ahead and want things to

be better. But what you wish for and what you want needs to be realistic. It needs to be something that you can actually attain. It helps to make it specific, to spell out exactly what you want in the ways that you think, feel, and do things. Then, don't forget to decide when you're going to put them into practice.

"Let me share a trade secret with you: the three magic questions that every genie has to ask himself before he can make a wish come true. He needs to ask:

What do I want to do?
How can I make it happen?
When am I going to do it?"

The girl reached out and gave the grouchy old genie a hug. A softness lightened his eyes, the warmth of a smile flickered in the corners of his mouth, and *poof*, he disappeared back into his lamp.

EXERCISE 11.1

What are the skills a child needs to be a good problem solver? What will help equip children when they find themselves suddenly facing unexpected situations of adversity or trauma? What will help them find a solution to a problem, or accept a situation that cannot be changed? How can you put this information into stories that will demonstrate or teach such appropriate skills? Use your notebook to write out your own problem-solving stories.

CHAPTER 12

Managing Life's Challenging Times

If it is true that bad things can happen to good people, then really rotten things can happen to undeserving children at times. When they do happen, they may be unexpected and the child may be ill equipped to cope, not having faced that experience before nor having developed the necessary skills to manage. Put a child in a situation for which he or she does not have the skills and there is a high probability that the child will experience inappropriate patterns of thinking, emoting, and behaving that could be maintained into adult life. How, then, do you help prepare a child for these events? In the words of the old adage, prevention is better than cure. Providing children with metaphoric stories about coping—before a particular life challenge occurs—offers the skills to help when that situation does arise. At the time of crisis, it may take several stories over several weeks to help a child work through the various stages of grief, or process the diagnosis of a major illness, the stages of treatment, and the management of the prognosis.

The stories in this chapter examine how to manage challenges such as pain, illness, and major setbacks. They look at dealing with unrealistic parental expectations, changes in life's circumstances, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse. They are certainly not inclusive of the challenges a child may experience, but illustrate how metaphors serve both a preventative and a management function.

STORY 81
BLOWING AWAY PAIN: *A KID STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Pain
- Hurting without support figures present
- Medical treatment
- Lack of pain management skills

Resources Developed

- Learning a new skill
- Learning to shift focus of attention
- Focusing on pleasure rather than pain
- Discriminating and developing fine behavioral skills
- Enjoying success

Outcomes Offered

- Pain management strategies
- Self-initiated management skills
- Ability to shift attention

Have you ever learned to blow bubbles? I was teaching my granddaughter recently. We got a piece of wire and twisted it into a circle, put some dishwashing liquid into a plastic cup, and dipped the wire circle in until it was coated with the liquid. She held the ring of wire up to her mouth and blew. At first she blew too hard, and the liquid just ran down the wire onto her fingers. As she learned to blow gently, several big bubbles formed and floated off into the air. She was excited. They sparkled in the light. She tried to catch, watched them pop, and giggled. It was a good thing that she had learned something new, something fun, because I didn't know what was about to happen a little while later.

She fell over and hurt her knee rather badly. Of course, a cut knee may not be as bad as the pain someone has if they are really sick, have broken a bone, or need to go into a hospital. But when you're young, and your mother isn't there, and your knee is hurting, and blood is running down your leg, it can be pretty scary.

I needed to bathe her knee, apply some antiseptic, and put on a bandage, but it hurt and she didn't want me to touch it. Tears rolled down her little cheeks. She was frightened it might hurt even more.

I remembered how she'd laughed and giggled when she'd blown the bubbles, so, before I started to patch up the wound, I went and got our little wire ring and detergent. As she dipped in the ring, held it front of her mouth, and breathed out slowly, a big, big bubble started to form. It glistened in the light. She watched it float into the air, her eyes drying and a smile creeping on to her face. She learned that if she blew faster she could blow a whole stream of bubbles that floated away until they

popped. It was as if she were blowing her scary feelings away. Perhaps, if she'd wanted, she might have imagined the scary, hurt feelings sealed inside the bubbles, drifting across the room, away from her.

She giggled when they popped, especially when one landed on her brother's hair and sat there for a little while before bursting. Learning to control her breathing, slow or quick, short or long, she could make different bubbles: small bubbles, big bubbles, single bubbles, a stream of bubbles, and, at times, even double bubbles.

I washed away the dirt as she blew away bubbles. I bathed it in antiseptic while she blew and giggled, not realizing that she was learning how to change her feelings a little, or how to feel more comfortable than she had been. As I dried off the wound and put on the bandage she was still blowing bubbles and giggling.

Let me show you what we did. If I take this paperclip off my desk, straighten it out, then wrap it around a fat pen like this one and twist it to make a little handle, we have a bubble ring, especially for you. Shall we ask your mom to give you some dishwashing liquid in a cup, and you can show her how you can blow bubbles, too? And will you bring it back next time you come to see me? I would like to see how well you have learned to blow bubbles, too.

STORY 82
MANAGING PAIN: *A TEEN STORY*

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Pain
- Hurting without support figures present
- Medical treatment
- Lack of pain management skills

Resources Developed

- Learning a new skill
- Learning to shift focus of attention
- Focusing on pleasure rather than pain
- Using distraction techniques
- Enjoying success

Outcomes Offered

- Pain management strategies
- Self-initiated management skills
- Ability to shift attention

Do you follow basketball (here you could choose any sport or pursuit in which your client is interested)? Which is your favorite team? Who is your favorite player?

Larry was a keen basketball fan. His bedroom was lined with posters of his team and favorite

player. He went to every game he could and, when he couldn't, he'd watch them on TV. He got excited when they were winning, angry at times when they were losing, and sad when they did lose. Something Larry didn't realize was how helpful it was going to be for him that he was such a strong supporter of his team.

Unfortunately, there was a time when Larry got quite sick and had to go to the hospital. Things can be pretty scary when your body isn't working quite right and you don't know what to do about it. Things can be pretty scary when you don't have control over what is going on and your mom and dad can't always be by your bedside. Some of the treatment the doctors and nurses give can be painful and uncomfortable. I guess that's why being such a good fan of his team helped Larry.

Larry was a pretty smart kid. He imagined his illness was like a game of basketball. He had an opponent he needed to beat. He imagined himself being his favorite player—fit and strong, ready to play out the whole game until he won. He thought how he needed to go the distance, even though he might feel pushed to the limit of his abilities. The best of players, he thought, don't give in, they persevere and play through the whole game. He thought how even the best of players get hurt and feel pain at times. They manage pain and injury better than most people, his dad told him, by keeping their mind focused on what they needed to do.

He'd read a lot about what makes a sportsperson good because he wanted to be one himself. He'd read how top athletes were in touch with what they called the "winning feeling." They thought about success more than failure. They learned from their mistakes but didn't worry about them. They focused more on what they did well . . . and on doing it better.

Larry had also read about something called "tunnel vision." It's something a player has when he is so focused he can switch off things that aren't important—the weather, the booing or cheering of the crowd . . . and pain. If you want to shoot a three-pointer you have to be relaxed and focused. There is no room for distraction. You have to apply all your strength, effortlessly. Larry had tried practicing it when he played basketball. Now he practiced it in the hospital. He focused on being well. He imagined what it would feel like to slam dunk the last, winning basket of the game, to know you had won, to know you had overcome your opponent.

Larry kept a poster of his favorite player by his bed. It was a reminder of some of the things that it takes to win. Do you have a poster of your favorite player? How could you get one to serve as a reminder for you?

STORY 83
BEATING A BULLY

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Being a bully
- Fear
- Intimidation
- Lack of strength

Resources Developed

- Learning about your abilities
- Thinking through a problem
- Using your own strengths
- Doing more of what works

Outcomes Offered

- Knowing how to stop and think
- Realizing that might is not always right
- Valuing your own abilities
- Building on your strengths

In the woods live many animals and every animal is so different in many ways, perhaps just like the kids at school and the characters in the story I am about to tell you. One animal that everyone in the woods knew was Big Brown Bear. Now, Big Brown Bear wasn't very popular because Big Brown Bear was a bully. He'd throw his weight around just because he could, scare the other animals when they were playing, and chase them to hurt or eat them. There didn't seem to be anyone in the woods big enough or strong enough to stop Big Brown Bear.

One day Little Coyote was wandering through the woods, going about his own business, when he heard the heavy thump of paws on the ground, and the crunching of dry sticks under heavy feet. It wasn't hard to guess whose they were. Big Brown Bear was coming in his direction. Instantly, Little Coyote felt afraid. Should he run as he always did? He was sick of always running, always living in fear around Big Brown Bear. But he was too small, too weak to stand up and fight. Just as he was thinking what to do, he noticed some bones on the ground nearby. Now, Little Coyote might have been small and frightened, but he was smart and much cleverer than Big Brown Bear. Moving over to the bones, he sat down and began to chew on them, his back bravely toward Big Brown Bear. He waited patiently, listening to the sound of Big Brown Bear's footfalls on the ground until the bear was just about in striking distance. Then Little Coyote said in a loud voice, "Yummy, that was one delicious brown bear that I've just eaten. I'm still feeling hungry. I wish I could find another to eat."

Big Brown Bear was used to having his own way. He would knock other creatures out of the way if he felt like it. He would trample on them, not worrying how much he hurt them. He wasn't used to being scared or frightened because there was nobody else in the woods bigger or more bullying than him. However, the thought of being eaten stopped him in his tracks. For the first time he felt frightened. Could a coyote really capture and eat a bear? He wasn't prepared to take the risk and quietly backed off into the woods, finally turning and disappearing into the trees with a sigh of relief. "That was close," he said to himself. "I'm glad I escaped from that mean coyote."

High in a tree, unbeknownst to Big Brown Bear and Little Coyote, Squirrel had been watching what happened. Perhaps if he told Big Brown Bear how Little Coyote had tricked him, Big Brown Bear would look on Squirrel as a friend and protect both him and his family. So Squirrel hurried off . . . but not quite fast enough, for Little Coyote glanced back and saw him scurrying down the tree trunk and running after Big Brown Bear.

When Squirrel caught up with Big Brown Bear he told him what he'd seen, asking if they could be friends. Big Brown Bear may not have been particularly bright, but he certainly knew when some-

one had made a fool of him. He was as mad as a bear with a sore paw. "Climb up on my shoulder, Squirrel," he said gruffly. "It's time for you to see what I'm going to do to that conniving coyote."

Just when Little Coyote hoped that he was safe, he again heard the sounds of heavy thumping of paws and the breaking of sticks underfoot. Big Brown Bear was coming back after him, and he had Squirrel on his shoulder. Little Coyote again faced a problem. He had briefly won an advantage—but what was he to do now? Should he flee as he always had done? Would he have to be running scared all his life? Should he allow Big Brown Bear to regain his role of bully of the woods?

No, thought Little Coyote, *Big Brown Bear isn't that smart. I'm a lot brighter. He might be stronger in his body but I have a strength of mind*. With that, Little Coyote began to wonder what he could do. Again he sat with his back bravely toward Big Brown Bear and Squirrel, pretending he hadn't seen them. He waited till the footsteps got close enough for Big Brown Bear to hear him and, at just the right moment, Coyote said out loud, "Where has Squirrel gone? It must be half an hour since I sent him off to bring me another brown bear."

STORY 84
I AM ONLY NINE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Parental separation
- Parental conflict
- Being caught in the middle
- Feelings of powerlessness
- Not knowing what to do

Resources Developed

- Learning you're not alone in your situation
- Accepting that some things can't be changed
- Doing what you believe is right
- Learning to be self-assertive

Outcomes Offered

- Reassurance
- Acceptance
- Self-assertion

Can I tell you a true story about a boy I will call Jason? When I met Jason his parents had separated and Jason was living with his mom but spending most weekends with his dad.

Before his parents had separated there was a lot of unhappiness at home. His mom and dad would often yell at each other. Jason hated it, and was scared by it. He would lie in bed at night, listening to them fight and feeling frightened about what might happen. It was lonely in the dark of his room all

by himself and, though he wouldn't have said anything about it to his friends at school, at times he cried himself to sleep.

He didn't want his parents to separate, but when they did I think he hoped things would be happier. And in some ways they were—but in some ways, they weren't. Whenever his mom and dad got together or needed to talk on the phone they were yelling and screaming again. It felt bad that this mostly seemed to be about Jason or his younger brother, Clayton. You see, Jason loved his mom, and he loved his dad, and he hated the times when they put him in the position of having to choose whether he spent the weekend or vacation with mom or dad.

Then a test came. Sometime after his parents had separated, his dad had decided he needed a two-week vacation and planned it at the end of term so as not to miss his school vacation time with the boys. At the same time as Jason's dad made his plans, Jason's mom decided to take the boys on a trip for two weeks of the school vacation. That meant a month before they saw their dad and he saw them. Dad was upset. He said he couldn't change his plane tickets. Mom was upset; she had already bought tickets, too, she said, and the boys were looking forward to getting away.

His dad asked Jason if he would like to stay with him instead of going away with his mother. They would do something special, he promised.

Jason felt terrible. If he said yes, his mom would be unhappy and probably even angry. If he said no, his dad would be unhappy and maybe even angry. What could he do? No matter what he did it was going to be wrong . . . and that meant Jason was unhappy.

It was Jason's dad, not Jason, who told me what Jason did. In fact, Jason's answer made his dad stop and think. He said it made him realize that he shouldn't be making his son responsible, that he and his wife needed to sort out the way they solved their problems rather than drag in the boys.

Now, some parents realize this . . . and some don't. Sometimes there are things that kids can say that might be helpful . . . and sometimes there aren't. I have heard it said that there are times when no matter what you do it's likely to be wrong, so you might as well be wrong doing what you believe is right.

Sometimes it helps to let other people know what you think . . . and sometimes it's helpful just to know it yourself. What Jason said was this: "Dad, I am only nine years old."

STORY 85
COPING WITH ILLNESS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Illness
- Fear
- Loneliness
- Unfamiliar medical procedures

Resource Developed

- Valuing relationships with loved ones
- Learning to seek information
- Discovering how to use imagination helpfully
- Learning how to create positive thoughts
- Developing appropriate coping strategies
- Learning to laugh

Outcomes Offered

- Validation of feelings
- Utilization of imagery
- Utilization of humor
- Positive thinking
- Knowing difficulties can be overcome

Let me tell you about a girl called Jill. Jill was scared. Her doctor said she had cancer. She was even more scared when she heard her mom crying and her dad trying to comfort her. She remembered hearing Mom and Dad talking about an uncle who died of cancer . . . and that was scary, to think that *sometimes* people who got cancer could die.

She didn't much like the hospital where the doctor had sent her for the tests. It had big, cold corridors, strange smells, and lots of sick-looking kids. She didn't like the doctors asking questions, sticking needles in her arms, or making her lie still on the table, all alone with a machine that made whirring noises. As well as scared, she felt lonely. She didn't know what was going on.

The person who seemed to understand most was her grandmother. One day she said, "Come and sit beside me, my little princess." Jill liked it when she called her that. She felt special, and snuggled up to Nana like she had done for as long as she could remember. When she was younger Nana had told her stories; now they often just sat together and talked about the events of her day.

"You must be feeling pretty scared," Nana said. "I think I would be if I was in your shoes." This was the first time Jill had heard an adult say they might be scared. "What frightens you the most?" Nana asked, caringly.

Jill replied, "Am I going to die?"

Nana looked her in the eyes, held both her hands, and said, "I can't give you a definite answer on that, but the doctor says that you have a very good chance of overcoming the cancer and getting well again. Sometimes people do die of cancer, as you know. The doctors have found some very effective treatments these days and most people get over it successfully. You have some positive things on your side. You are young and otherwise healthy, and we will do everything we can to make sure you get the best treatment to get well again.

"Apart from that," she continued, "what else frightens you?"

"I guess I'm scared that I don't know what's going on," said Jill. "Sometimes the doctors don't talk to me about what they're doing. Sometimes Mom and Dad don't talk to me, either."

"What would make it easier for you to ask when you need to know things?" asked Nana. "Would it help to tell them it's important for you to know?"

When Jill began to ask her doctor, he explained a lot more about how the cancer was making bad cells instead of good cells and that she would need to go to a hospital to have treatment with something called "chemotherapy," which was the use of very strong medicines to help kill off the bad cells. He told her that sometimes the medicine might make children feel sick and sleepy, that it was so strong she might even lose her hair. He rubbed his own bald head and said, with a laugh, "You might look as handsome as me for a while." Jill laughed, too.

When Nana came to visit her in the hospital, they would laugh and joke. "It helps to keep positive," Nana said. "When things get scary here, think about the good times you can have when you get back home, when you're playing with your friends again, or when you're on your next vacation."

As Jill lay in a machine having radiation therapy, she tried to do what Nana suggested. It wasn't always easy, but if she tried hard she could imagine herself being in a spaceship, off on a great adventure. She used the time, off in space, to plan what she was going to do when she got back home from the adventure.

Going back to school was hard at first. Some of the other kids stared at her and asked her why she had shaved her hair off. She felt weak and tired, not like her old self, but—before long—her hair started to grow back and she was able to play with her friends just as she had done before.

She still has to see her doctor from time to time. On one visit he said, "You'll have to teach me your secret."

"What secret?" she asked, feeling puzzled.

Rubbing his bald head again, he answered, "The secret of how you got your hair to grow back!"

STORY 86
FINDING SOLUTIONS

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Family conflicts
- Father-son conflicts
- Adolescent issues
- "Undesirable" friendships
- Underachievement
- Substance abuse

Resources Developed

- Owning responsibility for change
- Looking for practical solutions
- Setting goals
- Focusing on the outcome
- Sticking with decisions
- Learning to "just do it"

Outcomes Offered

- Personal empowerment
- Improved interpersonal relationships
- Control over problems like drugs
- Goal achievement

I once met a guy called Leonard, though all his buddies called him Leo and he even preferred Leo, himself. He didn't particularly want to see me. His mother had dragged him into my office, almost by the scruff of his neck. He sat looking down at the floor, his baseball cap pulled low over his eyes, and she did all the talking.

What she had to say was all pretty negative. Leo was constantly in trouble at school and had been expelled several times. He had left school early and had fallen into some bad company. He had lost several jobs by fighting with the boss and he was now stacking goods in a warehouse—a position that bored him to tears. He was in constant conflict with his father. His parents bought him a car that he crashed and ruined in the first couple of months. He was now doing dope and speed.

I felt pretty bad hearing all the negative things she told me about Leo and wondered how he felt, even though I'm sure that he'd heard them many times over.

When I saw Leo alone I said, "I have heard all the things Mom has said about you and what she wants to be happening. I'm wondering what you want."

"Some peace at home," he replied, adding, "Dad's always on my case. My friends aren't good enough. I should have a better job. I totaled his car. I can't do anything right by him."

When his dad got on his back, Leo would tell him where to put it and it often ended in a physical fight.

I asked what he thought he could do to help create more peace at home, and Leo was clear. "Cut down on the speed," he said. "That gets dad's back up and I overreact when I'm using."

I asked what else he wanted. "Another car," he answered. He knew exactly what make and model and how much he needed, so I then inquired what he needed to do to get a new car. "Save some money," he answered simply. How he could do that? "Stop using speed. At the moment I'm spending almost all my wages on it."

When I asked what would help him cut down on the use of speed and save money, I was surprised by how readily he came up with a number of ideas, and he said, "Instead of taking my wallet when I go out, I can just take a few dollars in my pocket for drinks and other things. Also, I could spend more time with friends who don't use and less with those who do."

When I saw him just a week later he had not used any speed for the whole week. It was the first time that he'd been free for that long in the whole time he'd been using.

I was curious about what had helped. Leo just shrugged and said he had stuck with his decisions not to take his wallet with him when he went out on the weekend and to spend more time with friends who didn't use. He had also decided to give his mother a fixed amount from his wages each week so that she could put it in a savings account toward his car. If he had any money left over at the end of the week he would give her that as well.

Leo surprised me how quickly he'd taken those steps and how successful he'd been in overcoming his old habit. What was delightful, too, is that he maintained it. Not everyone does it as quickly and as successfully as Leo. Sometimes it can be a struggle, but I guess Leo showed that it is possible,

and he's left me looking forward to something. He has promised to drive up to my office and show me his new car when he gets it.

STORY 87
FACING CHANGES

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Facing changes
- Adjustment issues
- New challenges
- Forgetting your capabilities

Resources Developed

- Remembering your capabilities
- Choosing to change what you can
- Looking for the positives
- Learning how thoughts can determine feelings
- Knowing you need to do something only once to do it again

Outcomes Offered

- Mindfulness of capabilities
- Utilization of past abilities
- Choices
- Confidence in capabilities

Do you remember your first day at school? Some kids can't wait to get to school for the first time. Some find it scary and don't want to go at all. Some kids don't want to leave their moms at the school gate. Seeing all those strange, big kids in the playground can be frightening, and the teachers may talk in loud, stern voices—but for most of us, going to school is something that we have to do whether we like it or not. How we feel about it, though, is something about which we do have a choice.

If Alicia remembered her first day at elementary school she would probably recall a lot of those scary feelings. At the time of our story, however, she has grown to be one of the big kids. She knows everyone in her class and many of the kids in other classes, and has lots of friends. She knows the teachers, plays sports, and doesn't think about what that first day felt like.

Now that is ending. Alicia is about to start high school. Again, her mother will drop her at the gate of a new school and say goodbye while Alicia steps into an unfamiliar schoolyard with a lot of kids she doesn't know and teachers she has yet to meet. Again she will be one of the little kids. How will she cope?

In elementary school she felt accepted, even important. She had gone from the bottom to the top of the school. Anyone who could see what was happening to Alicia now might want to say, "Hey,

stop and remember when you first went to school. It felt scary and unfamiliar then, but look at how you handle it now. If you made those changes once through elementary school, then surely you can do the same at high school."

Of course, Alicia didn't know what lay ahead. She had no choice about the fact that she had to go to high school, yet, again, she had a choice about how she felt. There might be scary things about high school but there might be exciting, fun things, too. None of us can see the future, so Alicia couldn't be expected to know how interesting it might be to tackle new and different subjects, how pleasant her teachers might be, or what new friends she might make. She had yet to experience all the things she could do, like music, drama, and sports.

Alicia may have forgotten how she was already capable of making the changes to new and unfamiliar experiences. If she had done it at elementary school, surely she could do it now that she was bigger and older and knew more than she did before. Someone had once said to her, "We only need to do something once to know that we can. Once you have learned to ride a bike, play a new computer game, or work out a math formula, you know you can do it again. The more you do it the better you become."

STORY 88
GETTING BACK ON YOUR FEET

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Trauma
- Pain and hurt
- Sudden, unexpected changes
- Loss of a skill

Resources Developed

- Acknowledging you past capabilities
- Building on your strengths and abilities
- Learning to stand on your own feet
- Learning to take things one step at a time
- Learning to move forward
- Having confidence

Outcomes Offered

- Adjustment to change
- Utilization of past abilities
- Skill acquisition
- Confidence

Can you imagine what it might be like to begin learning to walk at the age of twelve? Most of us learn to walk when we are so young that we forget how we did it. And Andrew was just like most of us.

He had been in the back seat of his mother's automobile one wet, winter afternoon when another car crashed into them. Andrew screamed with fear at the noise and violence of the collision. His mom's automobile was pushed off the road and onto the sidewalk.

I should point out that Andrew was no wimp. He raced motorbikes competitively and was used to falling and getting injured—but now he *really* hurt. His mom was hurt, too. It was the most frightening thing that had ever happened to him. He tried to get up to help his mom but he couldn't. He felt helpless and scared. His head hurt and he had pains down his right side.

Fortunately, the hospital tests didn't show any broken bones or anything serious, and the doctor said he could go home. However the pains didn't stop. Andrew found it was getting harder to move. He couldn't hold a cup without its falling from his hand. He didn't have the strength to pull the ring top on a drink can, or hold his pen at school. His legs felt so weak that he kept falling over. Walking became harder and harder, until he could barely walk at all. And he was terrified about getting back in an automobile.

This was not like Andrew. He was a boy's boy. He did martial arts training, rode his BMX bike with friends, and raced his motorbike. The bookcase in his bedroom was covered with trophies he had won. Now he couldn't do any of those things. He sat watching TV, playing X-Box, and feeling unhappy.

When we talked about motorbike riding, his eyes lit up. He rode a dirt bike. Muddy tracks and jumps were his favorites. We talked about what he did when he fell off his bike in a race. How did he get back on his feet? What helped to get back on the bike and finish?

Andrew had to learn to walk again. Maybe you don't remember what it was like when you first learned to walk, but perhaps you can imagine what it feels like for a little kid to get on his feet for the first time. Just standing up for the first time must be hard. Those little leg muscles are weak and not trained for standing yet. Just like that young child, you probably took many falls at first, but you weren't put off. Each time you fell, you got up and stood on your feet again, maybe a little wobbly at first, maybe needing to hang on to a supporting hand or table leg. Each time you got a little stronger until you were able to stand on your own two feet.

Then you began to put one foot in front of the other, stepping out for your first time. Again you probably had some falls, but again, each time, you got up and tried once more—getting stronger and stronger each time. Soon you were running and jumping and skipping and not thinking about how you have to move the muscles in your legs to walk over to a friend's home, kick a football, or ride a bike.

That's how it was for Andrew at the age of twelve. He had to learn to do it all over again. Knowing that he had done it once helped him feel the confidence to do it again. It wasn't easy. In fact, it was hard work at times. Fortunately, Andrew was no quitter. He knew how to get back on his bike and finish the race. He learned to walk again without falling, to ride a bike, and to kick a ball. Who would think that at the age of twelve years you might have to learn what you had already learned when you were around twelve months old?

STORY 89
FACING THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Parental disharmony
- Feelings of rejection
- Not having a place
- Being unloved
- Suicidal thoughts

Resources Developed

- Acknowledging life is tough at times
- Seeing that things could be worse
- Seeing that things can be better
- Choosing to live
- Taking responsibility for your happiness

Outcomes Offered

- Personal responsibility
- Empowerment
- Hope

I am sure you have heard it said that "shit happens." Sometimes it seems to happen to some people a lot more than others. When Natasha started to tell the story of her teenage years, I had this image of a giant mammoth in the sky with diarrhea. The mammoth seemed to be following her around and dumping on her no matter where she went.

Natasha was a young adult when she told me her story. I'm not sure she ever told anyone when she was a teenager because sometimes it's hard to talk about things that seem so important to you—particularly when you think they won't be understood. And Natasha thought there wasn't anyone who really understood or cared about her.

Her story is complicated, but let me try to explain. When Natasha was thirteen, her parents swapped partners with her best friend's parents. Her best friend's dad came to live with her mom, and her dad moved out to live with her best friend's mom. Neither parent had talked with Natasha or her sister about it before. They just did it, and Natasha felt they didn't give a damn about her or her sister.

At first she lived with her mom and new stepdad. She had never really liked him, but now that he'd taken her dad's place she positively hated him. One day they started arguing over something. When he got angry, she shouted at him, "You're not my dad. You can't order me around."

"I am the head of the house now. You have to live by my rules," he shouted back and lifted a hand threateningly.

"Go on. Hit me. Show me what a man you are," she goaded him.

Well, he did hit her and pushed her into her room, slamming the door after her. Natasha packed a bag and went straight to live with her dad. Her mom didn't even try to encourage her to stay.

As the months and years went by, things turned from bad to worse. Natasha fell out with her dad. She hated the way he constantly put down her mother. He blamed her mother for the break-up of the family—even though he was now living with her best friend's mother! Tensions became so great that her father told her he couldn't put up with her anymore and that she would have to go.

Fortunately, her grandparents welcomed her. At first she enjoyed living with them, but Natasha, herself, admitted she wasn't an easy teenager to get along with. She felt bitter and angry about the way her parents—and life—were treating her. She felt she needed to dump her shit on someone, and her grandparents were the closest.

Now, her grandfather had heart troubles. His physician had told him to avoid stress or he could have a heart attack and die. Natasha was told she was the stress. She had to settle down or they would put her in a home for difficult teenagers. Nobody in the family wanted her. She must have felt as rejected as anyone could feel.

Before she was due to leave for the home she found a razor blade in the bathroom and cut her wrists. Strangely, she thought, the pain as she cut through her own skin was nothing compared to the pain in her heart.

At first her grandparents were concerned and caring. Her parents even came to visit her—together. But nothing changed. They weren't going to leave their new partners or take her back. Her grandparents didn't want her and she was still scheduled to go into the home.

Natasha found some tablets in the medicine cabinet, punched them out of their plastic sheets, and took a handful before she went to bed, but woke up the next morning, late and with a rotten hangover. No one seemed to take much notice.

When she was old enough, her father bought her a car—just trying to appease his guilty conscience, she thought. It was an old heap but she accepted it. One weekend in the hills, she lined up a steep cliff at the edge of the road and was ready to push her foot to the floor. She didn't.

At that point, I interrupted her story. I was curious. "What had made the difference that you didn't drive over the cliff?" I asked.

"Two things," she replied without hesitation, as though she had given it a lot of thought. "First, despite the shit of a time my parents have given me, I still love them—Mom in particular. I couldn't bear the thought of doing that to her. The second was a thought that the way my luck was going even killing myself wouldn't work out. What if I ended up a paraplegic or something? They might feel sorry for me. They might have to look after me, but I would be in a worse state—and for the rest of my life.

"Now, life is good," continued Natasha. "I think I realized that if I wanted to be happy, it was up to me. I went to college. I've got a good job, a lovely boyfriend, and we're planning on getting married. Yet it's more than those things. What my parents and grandparents did, what my thoughts of self-harming have taught me is that I have to look after myself. If I'm doing that, it doesn't matter so much what others think. At the time it was hard to see any hope, but as I look back I'm glad I'm here to tell you my story. I'm glad I didn't take a permanent course of action based on a temporary feeling."

STORY 90
LEARNING TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Substance abuse
- Being stuck
- Caught in undesired, unhelpful friendships
- Feeling powerless
- Lack of self-direction

Resources Developed

- Acknowledging the need for change
- Continuing to search when all else fails
- Finding direction and purpose
- Acknowledging the need for self-caring
- Developing self-caring strategies

Outcomes Offered

- Learning to care for yourself
- Looking at what matters most
- Discovering self-empowering strategies
- Finding that circumstances can change for the better

Let me tell you about a couple of people I know. Well, one isn't quite a person. He's Philip, my teddy bear, and he's right here. Let me introduce you. The other is Peta, whose parents brought her along to see me, too. Peta and Philip met here in my office and had a conversation that would change Peta's life.

Peta had a big problem: She was hooked on drugs. She knew it was a problem but felt trapped. Most of her friends were into drugs. If she stopped, would she lose her friends and be alone? Her boyfriend, who was a few years older than Peta, had done time for drugs. He supplied her and pushed her around a bit at times. If she stopped, would she lose him and feel even more lonely? Could she cope on her own? A part of her wanted to break free but another part felt powerless to do so.

Trying to quit, and withdraw, was not without problems either. In fact, her family was the big problem here. They were well known in the community and she didn't want to do anything that would hurt them. She didn't want to go to any public clinic for fear of giving them a bad name. So she struggled on, stuck where she didn't want to be, but not seeing a way out.

Peta could be strong at times. She stood up for herself by letting me know that she didn't much like my office. I think she felt confined and uneasy behind a shut door so I asked, "Where would you prefer to talk? What's going to be the most comfortable way for you to work through this?"

She suggested we talk as we walked through a nearby park—so we did. Peta seemed more re-

laxed and confident outside. It was interesting for me—but more important for her—to see the things that contributed to her feeling happier.

Now, Peta was a pretty smart young woman. She saw the problems of her situation, and knew she needed to change directions, but wasn't sure how. At first, I noticed, she seemed to rely on me to choose which path we took and which direction we went as we walked through the park, so, when we came to an intersection in the path, I would slow down, hesitate a little and allow her to choose her own path. Soon she was deciding which directions she went. Nonetheless, she still felt stuck on the drug issue.

Let me confess, she wasn't the only one. During our walks I had tried every card up my sleeve. Subtly, I had sought to encourage her to make her own choices about what she did. Openly, we discussed the problems of drugs and the drug culture. I gave her homework exercises for taking control over her drug-related behaviors. We explored how she could start to build non-drug friendships and attend a specialty drug-rehabilitation clinic. Nothing seemed to work. Both of us felt frustrated and I didn't know what more I could do. That was when Philip came to the rescue.

Returning to my office after one of our walks, I looked across at my desk. Philip was sitting there, dressed in his tartan vest, a red bow around his neck and a checked cap on his head. He had been handmade for me by a previous client, a thank-you gift at the end of her therapy. As a result, Philip was very precious. He was *my* teddy bear and had never previously been out of my possession, so I surprised myself when I took him off the desk and handed him to Peta.

"This is Philip," I said, introducing them to each other. "He would like to spend the week with you. I don't know whether there is something that he has to teach you, whether you may teach him something, or whether there is something that you can learn from each other. I look forward to hearing what you discover."

When Peta returned the next week Philip was wearing his checked cap, red ribbon and tartan vest, but he also wore a pair of red pants. As she cuddled him on her lap, I asked what they had learned from each other.

Peta said, "I realized Philip was very special to you. At first I put him in the lounge room, but then my drug friends came around and I felt uncomfortable for him. They were smoking and I didn't want him polluted with the smell of their dope. I felt embarrassed about them. I didn't want him seeing the sort of people I mixed with, so I moved him to the dressing table in my bedroom. He sat there looking kindly at me each night as I went to sleep and was looking over me when I awakened in the morning. I thought he looked immodest without any pants so I made him this little pair of trousers to wear."

"So, what's the most important thing that you have learned in your time together?" I asked.

Peta burst into tears, and the answer that she gave changed the direction of her life. She agreed to go to a specialty substance-abuse clinic and from there to the agency's rehabilitation farm. She loved being outside, working on the farm. The isolation allowed her several months to separate herself from both drugs and druggie friends. She found that once she was out of sight they didn't care much. They didn't write or visit and had no interest in how she was progressing.

After the farm she got a job in radio and the last I heard from her was a phone call from another state, where she had moved to set up a new life for herself.

So what had made the difference for Peta? What helped her to change when she and I had felt

so stuck and powerless? What had taken place in that conversation between Peta and Philip, my teddy bear? When I asked her, tears flowed down her cheeks. She said, "I realized that I cared for him more than I cared for myself."

EXERCISE 12.1

Life presents us all with challenges at times, and children, unfortunately, are not exempt. In this context, the old adage that prevention is better than cure is indeed relevant. Look at building your own story ideas as to how a child may handle a challenging time, not only in the present, but also in preparation for the possibility of such challenges in the future. Follow the therapeutic characteristics:

- Describe a problem with which the child might identify.
- Explore the resources needed to cope with current or future challenging times.
- Reach a resolution that is realistic and pragmatic.

CHAPTER 13

Kids' Own Healing Stories

As mentioned in Chapter 3 and discussed further in Chapter 15, it may be helpful to (a) listen to the metaphors children use, (b) involve them in the storytelling process, and (c) set homework exercises for them to create an outcome-focused story. This has the advantage of actively engaging the child in the therapeutic process as well as having the child searching for the means to reach the desired outcome. In addition, the stories told by one child may be adaptable for use with another child seeking a similar outcome.

This chapter illustrates these points by using children's own stories. The first, Story 91, was the handwritten tale of a friend's son that I found on a bedside table when staying at their home. Story 92 comes from a collection of stories by students at the John Curtin College of the Arts, Western Australia (Covich, 2003). The other stories come from a project that I undertook with the very generous assistance of a nonclinical group of Year Seven students (around 12 years of age) at Helena College in Western Australia. As a homework exercise (along the lines that I would assign in therapy) the students each wrote a problem-solving/healing story. Some of these stories, with the permission of the children, their parents, and the college, are reproduced below. Further discussion of this project and its clinical applications can be found in the section "Metaphors Built on a Child's Own Story" in Chapter 15.

STORY 91
THE GHOST WHO LEARNED TO SCARE
(contributed by Sam Green)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feelings of inadequacy
- Not being good enough
- Failing to live up to expectations

Resources Developed

- Finding a role model
- Obtaining information
- Reading helpful books
- Associating with helpful people
- Practicing your skills

Outcomes Offered

- Being accepted
- Using your skills
- Enjoying the achievement

Once upon a time there lived a ghost who couldn't scare a fly. He couldn't scare anyone but himself. So one day he had an idea. He was going to scare school. He had a witch as a teacher.

At the end of the day he went home to his father and asked, "How do you scare someone?" His father said, "It's easy, watch me." And the father scared a girl who was walking by so much that she dropped her book. "See, it's easy" said his father.

The ghost picked up the book that the girl had dropped and read it. It was about how to scare someone.

"I'll show them," said the ghost.

"Rawww!!!!"

Everyone in his grade had run away except for one person—Sam Green.

"Rawwww!!!" This was the biggest he could do but Sam Green wasn't scared.

"Who are you?" said the ghost.

"I'm the greatest, scariest person in the school." So Sam taught the ghost all his moves.

"You are as scary as me. You and I should have lunch." So they went and the sixth graders started laughing at the ghost, but he scared them right away.

Then they went to have lunch. After they had finished Sam told the ghost to come with him to his club. He went on and saw three monsters sitting at the table: Angus, Nick, and Leigh. "Hi" they all said. "Guys meet our new President I've been telling you about. All Hail!"

"Now you can join the competition," Nick said.

"All right, what do I do to get into practice?" asked the ghost.

The day came and they all went to the contest. There were heaps more. After everyone had done their scare, the ghost did his.

"And now the moment you've all been waiting for. The winner is Ghost!"

STORY 92
GIRL
(contributed by Pia Hill)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Isolation
- Separation from family
- Being in an unfamiliar situation
- Racial/cultural differences

Resources Developed

- Knowing when you are happy
- Valuing what is important
- Appreciating friends, family, and community
- Being yourself
- Having fun

Outcomes Offered

- Self-awareness
- Self-acceptance
- Genuine friendship
- Family, community bonds
- Personal satisfaction

I am a girl with no friends, nobody down here knows me, nobody really knows my name, where I am from, and most of all who I am. I am a girl from Beagle Bay, now in Perth at boarding school.

I am a girl in a new world—a world of thousands of Gardias (white people) who are all so private and unfriendly. I am Aboriginal, born in Beagle Bay, lived in Beagle Bay . . . until now.

The first thirteen years of my life were the best thirteen years of my life. I knew everyone in the community and everyone knew me. Everyone was friendly, I could go into anyone's house because I knew them or they were family.

My parents sent me down here because they wanted me to have a better education. I can understand that but I am so unhappy here. Nobody to talk to . . . nobody wants to talk to me. When I look around me I seem to be the only black girl in this whole school. They all look like white, rich snobs to me. Gardias with lots of money.

Nobody was like that where I was from. Everybody lived on what they had—which they were

happy with. They didn't show off about how much money they had, they didn't show off at all. Nobody had enemies because everyone was so kind and close. The whole community was like one big family.

Beagle Bay is my home. Not a rich bitch school filled with snobs—little goodie goodies they act like, and inside they are like . . . completely up themselves.

Being who you are is being how you act all the time, not hiding the real you and faking so you are better, so you think. . . .

You shouldn't have to be *popular* because you have the most money, or the most pretty face and perfect body.

You should be *popular* by the most friends you have and how nice you are.

But for me I don't care if I am popular or not. As long as I have friends, nice friends and they treat me well.

Being who I am is being a girl with a family and friends all around me—being in Beagle Bay with the people I belong to, fishing and swimming on my days off, not getting all dressed up and going out.

But most of all, spending my time and having fun with the people I love . . . my Beagle Bay family.

STORY 93
DAYS TO COME
(contributed by Erin Kelley)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Disability
- Grief
- Despair
- Loneliness

Resources Developed

- Accepting what cannot be changed
- Looking to change what can change
- Being hopeful
- Working toward your goals

Outcomes Offered

- Success
- Goal attainment
- Happiness

As the days go by I wonder. I wonder how. I wonder why. I wonder where I'll be in ten years. . . . Hi I'm Steph, and I have been seated in this chair for the last three years. I hate it. Every mo-

ment I think of my mum! Thoughts, memories, disasters. It all floats up above in my head. I feel as if I'm locked in a cage and can't break through! How will I ever fulfil my life while being seated in this chair?

My brain is all I have. It's the only one I can trust but now I'm even turning on him. If you can't trust your brain you can't trust any one. I feel like all I have now is memories. Memories of when Mum died. Memories of when Dad died. Memories of when I was the only one to survive.

I always wondered if I would be taken away from all this, up above where no one can bully you, tease you, and even hurt you. I could live with my mum and dad up there. We could be happy, peaceful, and everyone would love me, and I would love everyone. I guess that's why they call it heaven because it's so peaceful. But what if Mum was split up from Dad? What if he went to heaven and she went to hell? What would happen to me? No, that would never happen. My mum's too good for hell. Any way that's a dream. I would never be taken, not while I'm with my Aunty Sue.

In case you haven't guessed the chair I have been talking of is a wheel chair and I've been in it for three years but the disaster happened maybe a year ago. It started when Mum and Dad were having a fight while driving the car. Mum wouldn't stop bickering about how dad drove and dad wouldn't keep his eyes on the road and that's when it happened. The car went out of control, spun and, wham, it hit!

I woke up with my aunt sitting over me. I was in the hospital. She explained that I was to come home with her. I was confused. Where were Mum and Dad? Where had they gone?

I refused to go home with her. I wouldn't go until I was told the truth. I had already guessed what had happened but I kept telling myself that it wasn't true, that they were OK and that they were at home resting and waiting for me to come home.

No, the year has past and my mum and dad have never returned. I'm alone with Aunt Sue. Aunt Sue is nice and all. I mean she brought me welfare, food, and a roof over me. She even brought home a puppy I named Pal. But that's not the point. I want, I need, I desire Mum and Dad to come home to me.

It'll never happen but I really wish it would. They always told me one day I would be able to walk again but now all that has faded away. The doctors are nowhere near finding an antidote to bring my legs back to life and I have left all hope behind in the smashed car that my mother and father died in.

Two Years Later

My legs are getting stronger by the day and I have become aware of the possibility that I could walk again! Yeah, at last I will be able to play soccer and netball and anything I desire because I will have the eagerness to run, walk, and cycle. I will defeat all sports and conquer any challenge because I will be alive again!

Well I'm still dreaming but the physio guy said if I put in a lot of hard work and do all the exercises and routines every morning and night I should be able to conquer the sleeping of my legs! If I stand and take a few steps every so often that will also help and then gradually I should be able to walk again. Aunt Sue isn't so sure. She said he could be getting all your hopes up for nothing but she said either way she would help.

As the months pass I get stronger and gradually I walk. At first I took a step and fell over but now I am stronger and can take seven steps. But once my legs get wobbly, bang I'm back on the floor. The floor seems to be my favourite place right now but soon the sky will be. Soon I will be running on

the track and shooting on the court. There I go again, getting my hopes up. Aunt Sue keeps telling me to try a bit harder than I know I can do, because that way I will always get better.

Three Months Later

I'm doing it! I'm really running! Look at me go. This is the best day of my life. If only my mother and father were here then maybe it would be the most spectacularly best day. Oh how I wish they were here to see me run, to see me skip, to see me happy. Aunt Sue said they were always watching and were always here, so in a way I am with them and I am happy!

STORY 94
MARY-JANE'S STORY
(contributed by Anthea Challis)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Disability
- Being bullied
- Going it alone

Resources Developed

- Learning to change
- Trying new strategies
- Extending kindness to others
- Using kindness as an agent of change

Outcomes Offered

- Social acceptance
- Kindness
- Happiness

Dear Diary,

My name is Mary-Jane. I'm 12 years old. I have arthritis in my legs and that's why I have to use this wheelchair. I got it when I was 7 years old.

I have dark hair and hazel eyes and I wear ugly, square glasses. I have a mum, a dad, and a little brother that always teases me about my glasses. I don't have any friends at school and all the girls tease me. They are blonde and beautiful but I'm the opposite, dark haired and ugly. I hate my life.

Monday

Today when I went to school Tasha and Ashleigh came up to me and started teasing me, as usual. "Square eyes, square eyes. Hey, look Tash, little Mary-Jane has had her sandwiches cut into little squares with peanut butter in. What a BABY! Ha, ha, ha, ha."

They took my lunch bag off me and threw it up on the roof where I couldn't get it. I went off

to my secret hiding spot near the creek and cried. This happens every day. I'm always picked on. I wish I could lock myself away from the world then I wouldn't have to worry about being teased.

When I got home my mum saw my tears and immediate knew that I had been bullied. "Oh, Mary-Jane. What did they do to you this time?"

I told her what happened.

"I think it's about time someone talked to those girls. I'm going to call the principal," she said.

"Mum, no," I started. "They'll just tease me even more. Please don't call."

"Well . . . okay . . . but, if I don't call, will you promise me that you will stand up to them?" I nodded but I'm not sure if I meant it.

Tuesday

Today Mum gave me money to buy my lunch so that they couldn't throw it on the roof as easily. As I rode through the gates, Ashleigh, Tasha, and Samantha started to walk toward me. I stopped.

"Well, hello Mary-Jane, what have you got for us to throw on the roof today?" said Ashleigh. Tasha and Samantha giggled.

"Leave me alone," I said, shaking.

"Samantha, check her bag," Ashleigh said to Samantha who unzipped my school bag and peaked inside. I tried to grab it off her but she was too quick. I snatched at it. The wheelchair toppled over and I fell to the ground with a crash. Samantha, Ashleigh, and Tasha ran off, holding the wallet with my lunch money in it. I started to cry.

"Mary-Jane. What's happened?" It was Mrs. Little my teacher.

"Oh, I just fell out of my wheelchair. I'm okay," I say.

"You're bleeding, we'd better clean you up."

I didn't want to tell Mrs. Little what had really happened because she might go and tell Samantha off and then I would just get pushed around twice as much.

Wednesday

Ashleigh came in late today. Everyone turned around and stared. I was copying a sentence from the board when Tim nudged me and told me to turn around. So I put down my pencil and turned my body slowly. I thought my eyes had just popped out of their sockets because what I saw was Ashleigh sitting in a wheelchair just like me but she had her leg in a cast.

"I broke my leg when I was riding my horse yesterday." Ashleigh had been talking about her new horse for weeks.

"Ummm . . . okay . . . can every body please be careful of Ashleigh's leg," Mrs. Little said to the rest of the class who where still staring at Ashleigh.

At lunchtime I saw Ashleigh at the bottom of the stairs, trying to get up them in her wheel chair. I rode over to her.

"Hi. Are you trying to get up the stairs?" I asked.

"Yeah, I have to get to my next class," Ashleigh replied.

"Listen, I know another way up that I use. It's got a ramp. Do you want me to show you?" I asked.

"That would be great," she said quietly.

So I took her around to another door where there was a nice big ramp that led up to the second floor. She rode up it.

"Thanks."

After school, when I was collecting my pencil case and books, I overheard Ashleigh talking to some other kids. "I was going to be late for my next class. I couldn't find a way up the stairs because of this stupid wheelchair when Mary-Jane showed me a ramp to the second floor."

And as soon as I got home the phone rang. You would never believe it. It was Ashleigh and she wanted me to come to a sleepover at her house.

"Wow . . . Me? . . . I'd love to come." I couldn't believe it—Ashleigh was being nice to me. I had solved my problem. Ashleigh never bullied me again. I was happy. And that's how the story ends.

STORY 95
SALLY'S PROBLEM
(contributed by Emma Barley)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Domestic violence
- Physical abuse
- Protection of parents
- Fear
- Powerlessness

Resources Developed

- Acknowledging your limitations
- Knowing when you are powerless
- Knowing when to accept help
- Discovering the values of helpful communication
- Learning to use your support network

Outcomes Offered

- Power to choose
- Use of support networks
- Openness of appropriate communication
- Changing your circumstances

"Sally, what happened to your eye? Were you in a fight?" Sally's best friend Tanya asked, sounding concerned.

"What? Oh, nothing, nothing at all. I . . . I just fell over."

But it wasn't nothing. It had never been nothing. Ever since Sally's mother, Violet Evestone, had died tragically in a car accident 10 years ago, her father, John Evestone, would come home late every night, smelling horribly of alcohol. He would stumble round the house and if Sally talked to him he would shout and hit her. Her life was very hard.

John hadn't cooked her a meal for 3 years and she had to look after herself. She cooked her own food, washed her clothes, and did everything she needed to do. Every day she would tidy her room, which was easy since she had not had a birthday or Christmas present for ages. She could not buy anything because she didn't get any pocket money but she didn't want to tell anyone about her problems. She didn't want to be in even more trouble with her dad.

At school some of the teachers noticed her problem. "Sally, are you okay? Your eye looks really bad, and yesterday you had bruises all up your arm. What is happening?" Mr. Smith, her teacher, asked curiously.

"Oh . . . um . . . well." She was stuck. Should she tell him about her father? No, this was her problem, she could sort it out she thought, but she made the wrong decision by not telling him. "No, I'm fine. I'm just having a bad week, that's all," she replied, trying to sound convincing.

"Oh, good then," said Mr. Smith and they got on with class.

That night Sally's dad was in a really bad mood. When she asked if she could have some money to buy clothes, her dad violently threw a chair at her.

The next morning she limped the 5 km walk to school. She was too scared to ask her dad to drive her. In PE that afternoon she collapsed to the ground. The pain in her ankle was unbelievable. Everyone ran to see if she was okay but she was not.

"Look, that ankle of yours is broken," Ms. Applecross, the PE teacher, said. "What did you do to break it that badly?"

"Um . . . I fell off my bike yesterday," Sally lied. It was really the chair her dad had thrown at her.

"Look, you're going to have to go to hospital," said Ms. Applecross and she picked Sally up and helped her to the school nurse, Madam Fluer's, car. Madam Fluer drove Sally down to the hospital. Later on when Sally's ankle was bandaged up the nurse rang her father.

"Hello, is this Mr. Evestone?" asked the nurse into the receiver. "Your daughter has broken her ankle. Could you come down to pick her up?"

"No, she is your responsibility," came the reply.

"I'm sorry, sir, but you must come and pick her up. . . . It's not her fault. . . . No, she can't stay overnight. . . . (sigh) . . . Okay I'll drive her home. . . . 'Bye." The nurse finished and put down the phone.

"Okay Sally, your father wasn't too keen to pick you up, but I'll drive you home," said Madam Fluer. Sally didn't really want to go home and face her father.

That night she tried to stand up to her father by telling him that it was his fault, that he had to pay the hospital bill for her broken ankle. He went crazy. Then without any warning he unbuckled his belt, held it above her head, and whipped her. Blood gushed down Sally's face from the deep scar he had left on her forehead. She couldn't hold it in. She burst into tears. John stormed out of the house yelling, "Next time you'll think before you accuse me of anything." He got into the car and drove off—probably to some stupid pub.

Sally decided this had gone too far. She phoned her Gran and told her everything that had happened. Gran was appalled. She drove straight to Sally's house. When she saw the cut on Sally's forehead she screamed and started swearing badly.

She has taken Sally to her house and she looks after her very well. Sally is very happy now and she hasn't seen her dad for ages, not that she wants to.

Remember, if you have a problem tell someone about it. They may be able to help solve it.

STORY 96
MY LIFE
(contributed by Nathaniel Watts)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Death of a parent
- Grief
- Sadness
- Anger
- Uncertain, conflicting emotions
- Feeling responsible

Resources Developed

- Managing grief
- Saying good-bye
- Celebrating positive memories
- Accepting reality (not responsible)
- Learning not to blame yourself

Outcomes Offered

This story provides a good description of the problem (the death of a parent) and some of the processes of grief. It also presents resources for coping with grief but does not have a clear, positive outcome. It is years later before the character is assured that it was not his fault. The therapist may want to help the child build a clearer outcome with questions like the following: What else might have helped to ease the boy's pain of losing his father? How could that have happened earlier? What helps the character maintain his well-being now? Helping the child explore appropriate outcomes is discussed in Chapter 15, p. 248.

When I was three years old we went to live in a mining town because Dad worked there. I started school at pre-primary and it was so good because everything was so close.

Dad took us to the mess occasionally, which is a food diner. I also had lots of friends there, such as Blake, Caden, Willow, and E.C.T. There was a pool near our house. We knew the owner so he gave us discounts.

When I was five years old I rode my bike with my friends and we did a derby and I crashed into my friend and lost my toenail. He thought it was his fault so he tried to avoid us. Later that year we went to the Royal Show by plane and I had the best time.

When I was seven I was playing on the trampoline and the police came and told my mum heart-breaking news. My sister was listening through the door. When she heard she ran straight to her friend's place.

Mum called us inside. She was crying. We said, "What's wrong Mum?"

She said, "Dad's dead." We straight away knew that it was our dad, not hers. We burst into tears.

My uncle walked into the room. "What's wrong? Mum tell you off?" he asked with a giggle.

"No, Dad's dead," we said in pain. All of a sudden he lost his strength and sat down.

A couple of days later we went to see Dad's body. I wanted to see him but somehow I didn't want to. I was scared of someone I had loved for eight years. Why? I thought to myself. Was I scared he was going to come alive or was I angry? I wanted to see him. It was hard to bring myself to do it. But I ended up seeing him. He seemed stressed. I was happy to see him but I was also angry to see him.

A couple of days later we went to dad's funeral. I was crying the whole time. Mum did a speech but it seemed too hard (it would be for me, if you asked me). We went in a limousine to Dad's funeral and to Dad's grave. It was so depressing seeing Dad get buried. I never thought that Dad would die. Proves what I know.

When we were walking out of the church, Mrs. Parker, one of my old teachers gave us each a little bear. I was so depressed. Because of all my family had done together, we were like best friends. After the funeral we invited lots of people to celebrate what a great person Dad was.

I couldn't get to sleep for three weeks. I took two terms off school. For years I wondered if it was my fault until one day Mum told me that it wasn't my fault.

STORY 97
MY LIFE STORY
(contributed by Oliver Potts)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Parental violence
- Hatred of a parent
- Feeling hurt

Resources Developed

- Learning to enjoy the positives
- Taking responsibility for your emotional well-being
- Being self-protective
- Being self-assertive
- Making decisions . . . for now

Outcomes Offered

- Self-protection
- Self-assertion
- Skills in decision making

It all started when I was two and my father started hurting my mum. I remember this one time I was having a nap and I was woken by a loud bang down stairs. I got out of my bed and went down

stairs. I went into the kitchen and saw my father pushing my mum around the kitchen. He pushed her once too many times and pushed into the dining room table really hard. She crashed into the table and stumbled to the ground. I started crying when I saw her hurt. My father saw me and rushed past me, out of the room. That day he broke Mum's thumb and I will always hate him for that.

When I was three and a half we stopped living with my father and started living on our own. My mum was working at her friend's hotel. That's where my mum met my new dad. He was complaining that he couldn't get his suitcase into the elevator with everyone else. He complained to Mum and she just said, "With those strong arms I think you could manage to carry your suitcase up two flights of stairs."

When I was five we went to live in Indonesia with my new dad. My mum and new dad got married there. After my new dad finished work in Indonesia he came to Australia, while we went back to England for Christmas.

In January 1996 Mum and I came to Australia, Dad picked us up from the airport and took us to our apartment. It was a 3 bedroom, 1 bathroom unit. It was really nice.

My problems started again when my father started sending me letters. He spelt my name with 2 "Ls," instead of one. I told him that my name was correctly spelt with 1 "L." He insisted it was spelt with two and that caused another argument.

There has been many times over the years where my father has lied to me and hurt me emotionally, so sometime last year I told my father that I did not wish to speak to him anymore. That is my resolution for now. It might not seem much but I find it fine and at least I'm not getting hurt.

STORY 98
ROCK YOUR WAY OUT OF IT
(contributed by Jonathon Matthews)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Feeling unloved/unwanted
- Being a victim of bullying
- Loneliness
- Depression
- Loss of self-esteem
- Suicidal thoughts

Resources Developed

- Looking after yourself
- Thinking about the future
- Looking for what you enjoy
- Thinking about what is wonderful
- Deciding to live

Outcomes Offered

- A future-orientation
- Optimism
- Hope

Nobody cares. No one, not even Mum. My dad left us when I was young. I've always wondered what it would be like to have a friend. Every kid in school teases me but I ain't got a clue why. I always go sit on me own and cry.

I feel real glum. I feel deflated like a pricked balloon. I feel a sharp pain in my throat when I try not to cry. So many people bullied me today. So much I ran home at lunchtime, crying. I felt so much pain. What did I do wrong?

It was 5:15 in the morning when I woke up and Mum still wasn't home. I wondered drearily were she was. I never saw her again and that was it. I still imagine her now that she was probably stoned at some pub or out being a prostitute.

As you know I've had a very tough life. I had decided to go and listen to Van Halen because they always help me when I'm feeling down. They make me feel like I am the king of the world and I can take on anyone (which I can't).

I'm old enough to look after myself now. I decided that I should start thinking about the future, especially a job. I tried lots of things but I never fit in—not anywhere. Why do I have no luck, whatsoever, with anything I try? I am starting to lose self-esteem.

So I decided this was it. I was fed up with life. So the next day I rode my bike up to the local quarry. I threw all of my belongings over the tall cliff first. Then I decided this was it. Just as I started to step off I heard the music of me dreams. It was VAN HALEN. Then I knew there was no point in it. I have a wonder full life ahead of me.

STORY 99
WHEN THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO
(contributed by Stephanie Wood)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Parental conflict
- Abuse of a child
- Loss of a friend
- Loneliness
- Sadness
- Powerlessness

Resources Developed and Outcomes Offered

This is an eloquently written account of a problem over which the child characters have no control. The reality is that they may not be able to stop parents from fighting or their best friend being sent off to boarding school. If this

is so, the question then becomes how the therapist can join the child's metaphor to build resources and offer outcomes that will help him or her cope with what cannot be changed. The therapist may ask questions like, "What do you think Willow discovered from these experiences?" "If Willow's and Paige's parents are fighting all the time, what can they do as kids to feel okay about themselves?" "If Willow's best friend is sent away to boarding school, how could she cope with that?" "What could she do to find another friend?" This is discussed further in Chapter 15.

You know, I have always wondered what the point was of your parents living together if they hated each other, why they even choose to be together in the first place. My parents fight 24–7. That means I have no means of support because I am an only child. I have one friend in the entire world. Everyone teases me because I'm always sad, except for when my friend is around. Her name is Paige and my name is Willow. Paige's parents fight all the time too so we have a lot in common. We get along really well.

Today was as boring as yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that, and so on and so forth. My parents were fighting again and so were Paige's parents. We live right next door to each other and our houses are so squished in that it is hard not to hear what is going on next door. Paige and I were sitting out the front on a log trying hard not to hear our parents screaming at each other.

"Willow," Paige muttered to me. She turned towards me. She had shadows under her eyes and tears running down her cheeks. "I've got something to tell you."

"Go on," I said. I could see how upset she was and sat closer to her and put my arm around her shoulder to calm her down a bit.

"Well," she muttered. "I'm leaving here, for good. Ummmm, I'm going to a boarding school."

I jumped up in surprise. "What?" I screamed at her. I was so confused; Paige was my only friend in the entire world and she was going to abandon me all of a sudden?

"I'm really sorry. I'm leaving this afternoon but I don't want to go. Dad says if I don't go, he'll make me go to boarding school forever. It's just not fair," she tried to tell me under her tears.

I looked up at the sky and screamed and screamed as hard as I could, like that boy on the breakfast cereal commercial, except my world was spinning out of control.

I rolled onto my back and stared at the ceiling. I was in my room. I don't know how I got there. Everything went so fast. I rolled onto my other side and faced my window. I could see into Paige's room. She was crying and packing her bags, then her mum came into her room and started to pack things quicker as if she wanted to get her out of there really quickly. Then her dad came in and started saying something like, "You're an embarrassment to the world." Then her mum and dad started arguing and Paige just looked at them in sadness. Her dad hit her on the head a few times and then carried on with the fighting downstairs with her mum.

Paige sat there crying until she was called downstairs. She grabbed her bags, took them out of the house and piled them into the car. Her mum and dad came out of the house and pushed her into the car and drove off. I felt even worse when Paige peered out of the car window and waved goodbye to me, trying to smile but, not being able to hold back her tears, cried.

I watched as the car got smaller and smaller and smaller until it was gone. Suddenly I got this urge to go chasing after her but I knew it was no use.

Once the child has told his or her story of the problem – in this case the fighting of parents and loss of a best

friend – it may be helpful to assist the child to explore possible ways for coping through presuppositional questions such as those mentioned under the Therapeutic Characteristics at the beginning of this story and as further discussed in Chapter 15.

STORY 100
LUCY MAC'S STORY
(contributed by Corin Eicke)

Therapeutic Characteristics

Problems Addressed

- Death
- Loss of parents
- Grief
- Loneliness

Resources Developed

- Showing kindness
- Going out of your way to help another
- Enjoying another's happiness
- Cultivating friendships

Outcomes Offered

- Kindness
- Friendship
- Happiness

Lucy Mac was in my year for mentally gifted kids. I was one of her best friends at the time and still am. We shared a room at the boarding school. My favourite subject was math. Hers was, well, she didn't really have one. She loved them all.

I was chosen to come 2 years before the event. Lucy was chosen 5 years before.

It was summer holidays. Lucy and I were both planning to go home for the summer. Lucy got a phone call one day before she was due to go home. She ran to her bed and cried and cried. I went up to her and asked her what was wrong. She snivelled, "My mum and dad are dead!" I stepped back shocked. I asked, "How?" She yelled, "Their house burnt down!"

She didn't go home for the summer and neither did I. I stayed to help Lucy get over it and to comfort her. I got her breakfast, lunch, and dinner from the cafeteria. She didn't eat any of it though. When school started again, I persuaded her to come back to some classes with me. She came but sat at the back of the classroom and wasn't happy at all. All night I heard her mumbling. I thought that she was sleep talking. She wasn't. She told me in the morning that she was the only one left in her family. She also said that her brother died when she was four.

That's when the idea hit me. After all of my classes for the week I ran to the four-story library. I looked all weekend. Just before I was about to give up I found what I was looking for. Family files. I found the Mac file and looked in it. It was there! I raced back to Lucy who was talking to herself that she was the only one left in her family. I showed her the paper I got out. Her face lit up. I found a sheet of paper and on it had a photo and some writing. The writing said Nicholas Mac, archaeologist, based in Arizona, and a phone number.

I had another great idea. I jumped on the phone and rang the number on the paper. I chatted for an hour or so. When I got off I had a grin on my face. I told Lucy that I had arranged for her to stay with her cousin, Nicholas, in Arizona for three weeks. She hugged all the air out of me. Two days later she left for Arizona.

When she returned she was smiling. I hadn't seen her smile since her parents died 4 months ago.

EXERCISE 13.1

In the next therapy session in which you consider metaphor is appropriate:

- Experiment with involving the child in the healing story.
- Listen to the metaphors they use to describe the problem and start to build your outcome story around their metaphors.
- Ask them to join in the storytelling, helping the character to find a solution.
- Set homework exercises for them to write out a healing story and bring it back to the next session.

She told me that she had soooooo much fun and she owed it all to me. Whenever she was on holidays she would be going to stay with Nicholas.

She never thought that she was the only one in her family ever again. In fact, she knew more family members now than before her parents died. She keeps a photo of her, Nicholas, and all of her relatives on our dressing table. I don't mind as it means a lot to her and it is important to her—just as much as I am.

PART THREE

Creating Your Own Healing Stories for Kids

CHAPTER 14

How Can I Use Metaphors Effectively?

It is my hope that the stories in Part Two illustrate a variety of styles of storytelling, and origins of material for therapeutic metaphors. In this section, I want to closely examine the processes for creating metaphors, using examples from the preceding stories to walk with you through the ways I have developed and presented these therapeutic tales. My intent is to be as clear as possible and thus make the processes replicable for you in your own clinical work. To this end, this chapter will describe some of the pathways that may be helpful to follow in metaphor therapy with children and adolescents and some of the potential pitfalls to avoid. Subsequent chapters will explore the sources from which you can build metaphors (where to get your ideas), the steps for planning and presenting your stories (how to build and tell them), and the ways to include parents in the therapeutic process (how to maximize healing benefits). What I offer is not inscribed in stone as the "Ten Commandments of Metaphor Therapy," but consists simply of things I find helpful to bear in mind when constructing healing stories for my young listeners.

POTENTIAL PATHWAYS FOR EFFECTIVE METAPHOR THERAPY

Build on the Child's Resources and Positive Experiences

Perhaps the most important information you can gain for working with a child is to learn about his or her resources, interests, skills, and positive experiences. Undoubtedly, if you have spoken with the child's parents you will have heard about all the problems they see in their child. The child has no doubt heard this, too—many times over. It is likely to have been discussed at length within the family, to the point that the child is fed up with hearing it again and again. To continually remind a child

of what is wrong with him or her does not necessarily give the child the skills to change and, certainly, does not enhance his or her sense of self-worth. For the therapist, joining in a discussion of the problems with the child runs the risk of triggering resistance on the part of the young client who, understandably, does not want to hear it all again from someone new. Once in this position, the therapist has lost potential therapeutic potency and will need to take a different orientation to be able to offer the hope of change.

Material that is likely to engage children, build on their resources, and give them confidence to move forward may be gained from a variety of questions that seek to explore their capabilities, strengths, and potential for making therapeutic gains. Such resource-oriented questions might include the following:

- What do you do for fun?
- When do you feel happy?
- What hobbies do you enjoy?
- What sports do you play?
- What books do you like reading?
- What do you like to watch on TV?
- What is special about your favorite characters?
- What are you favorite subjects at school?
- Who are your closest playmates?
- Do you have a pet?

Let me give an example. I recently saw a 12-year-old boy (referred by his pediatric rheumatologist) who had been diagnosed with a diffuse pain syndrome that involved debilitating symptoms following an automobile accident. He found it difficult to walk, stand, hold a pen, play, or participate in sports. He had stopped attending school, did not see his friends, and spent most of his time playing video games. His specialist had suggested a psychogenic element to his problems and was encouraging him, along with his psychiatrist, physiotherapist, and parents, to start doing things again. From a therapeutic perspective this was very appropriate, but Andrew (as I have called him in a metaphor based on his case, Story 88, "Getting Back on Your Feet") did not believe he could, and so was passively resisting all efforts.

Not wanting to risk our sessions' slipping into the same pattern, we talked about his past interests and hobbies, and how he might resume these when better. We explored ways, often in metaphor, of seeking to broaden, subtly and simply, the types of activities in which he *could* engage and to build this into a more extensive repertoire. I was deeply touched when, on leaving my office after one session, he looked me in the eye and said, "You know, you're a good friend." On that we had a basis to work.

Join the Client's Language

Listen to the language of your young clients. Learn the names and nature of the games they play, discover their favorite TV characters, listen to the ways they communicate with their parents, and hear the language they use in relating conversations with other kids, because joining them in their world—even just a little—can go a long way.

One of my passions is travel, and when I travel into a new country I attempt to learn some of the

basics of the language, exchange simple greetings, and pick up courtesies, like "thank you." Though I may be a long way from being fluent, even the process of seeking to join people in their own language and learn a little from them can help break down barriers, establish rapport, and enhance communication. Similarly, with children and adolescents, a small effort to join with the content and style of their communication can make a big impact on their feelings of being valued and being taken seriously. Incorporating that into your metaphors will enhance acceptance of the story, and its therapeutic message.

School psychologist Tracey Weatherilt (2003, in personal correspondence), sums up the need to join the individual child with what she calls a "note of warning." She says,

> Depending on the child's age, cognitive development and maturity, metaphor maybe lost on the child if made too complex or subtle. Although appearing to make an obvious point, metaphors and stories need to be fairly explicit and draw a clear line to the targeted subject or behavior you want to work on with the child. It is also necessary to use material familiar to children. This may mean that therapists need to keep abreast of the trends and popular culture in children's lives, particularly when working with older children (e.g., popular television shows, computer games, and SMS text messaging language at the various age levels). Using current popular culture concepts and language also increases the likelihood of the therapist building a good connection to the child client.

Use Metaphor to Help Extend the Child

For me, using metaphors is a bit like raising the bar for an Olympic pole-vaulter. By inching the standard higher you help the athlete reach his or her potential, whereas setting it at their current or previous level of achievement does not encourage personal extension. For this reason I prefer to introduce new ideas, information, and language on the principle that slightly higher is better than lower. I would rather pitch my story a little beyond the child's level than run the risk of talking down to the child.

Some stories in Part Two contain information that is not essential to the therapeutic message of the story but may help extend a child's knowledge. "An Act of Kindness" (Story 53) talks about gorges and black-footed wallabies. "Finding Tenderness" (Story 37) has as its main characters a pair of Australian native animals called echidnas, and explains some of their unique defensive habits, while Story 30, "I'm Not Afraid Any More," provides the listener with information about the world's biggest shark.

At times I may choose to use words a little beyond the child's level because I consider that stories are about teaching *and* healing. They are about expanding knowledge and information. If children can leave my room with a new word, new knowledge, or new skills, whether educational or therapeutic, they are stepping forward. If they go home and tell a parent what they learned about an echidna's methods of self-protection, they have engaged in a learning process that can be adapted and used to facilitate the movement toward their therapeutic goal.

Metaphors can thus be employed to *extend* the child and his or her knowledge, helping to

- capture a child's attention,
- stimulate the desire to learn,
- set an expectation of learning,

- build anticipation for what may follow,
- avoid an up-front confrontation with the potentially stressing issue,
- intrigue the imagination,
- challenge with new words or knowledge, and
- expand the child's basis of information.

Make the Metaphor Memorable

If you can make the story, or aspects of the story, memorable for your young listener you are more likely to make the message of the story memorable as well. First, simple techniques such as rhyme (e.g., the "zoo poo stew" of Story 66) or alliteration (e.g., in names such as Pollyanna Priscilla Ponsenbury of Story 31, or Wally the Wacky Wizard of Story 74) can facilitate retention.

Second, humor (such as in Story 66, "Taking Responsibility," Story 74, "Thinking through a Problem," and Story 80, "Creating a Wish") can help engage the child in the storytelling process, facilitate rapport between the storyteller and the listener, and deliver an outcome that is both enjoyable and memorable. In addition, Berg and Steiner make the important point that "When you have fun with children, they will learn that they are fun to be around, which will contribute to their sense of well-being as unique individuals" (2003, pp. 13–14).

Third, it is possible to help aid identification with a character by matching the character's characteristics to the child's. Engaging the child in the process of selecting the character's name and traits can facilitate identification with the character, the problem, the steps to rectify it, and the outcome. Hence you may hear me ask at times, "What would you like to call this character?" (as in Story 13, "Recognizing Your Abilities").

Fourth, the child may associate more easily with the story if it is grounded in a context relevant to the listener. It may be set in a home, school, or neighborhood that a child can imagine as his or her own. It may be in a place where the child has vacationed (e.g., as in Story 41), some other familiar environment or the environment in which the problem occurs and needs to be resolved.

Fifth, the story is likely to engage the listener and remain memorable if it has elements of interest, intrigue, surprise, or anticipation. It may introduce the unexpected, or come up with a novel twist at the end, such as in Story 23, "See for Yourself," and Story 25, "Build on What You Are Good At."

Sixth, use of the five senses helps adds reality and identification. Stories 41 and 42, "Heightening Pleasure," are specific examples. If you set your story on the beach, hear the sound of the waves lapping on the shore, or the screech of seagulls overhead. Paint the sky blue, the sea green, and the sand yellow. Smell the ocean, taste the salt in the air, feel the coolness of the sea breeze, and describe those sensations in your story.

Seventh, the involvement of emotion adds to the reality of the story, identification with the tale, and a memory of the outcome. Include feelings of anger or love, fear or joy, jealousy or hope, sadness or laughter, for greater memory.

Make the Metaphor Appropriate to the Client

The more a story matches the listener and the listener's experiences, the easier it is for that person to identify with the story and, consequently, with the outcome. As cognitive processing in childhood

tends to be more concrete than in adolescence or adulthood, it helps to make the stories more concrete and more identifiable for the listener, particularly during those younger years. The story therefore, needs to match the listener on several levels.

Age Matching

Making stories age appropriate is one potential pathway for enhancing the effectiveness of metaphor. In preschool years, children may identify more readily with stories of fictional characters like Santa Claus or fairytale characters. During early elementary school years, animal stories may be more likely to engage attention and identification, whereas in the latter elementary school years kids may better identify with cartoon characters, computer-game heroes, or the star of a children's TV show. Moving into secondary school, sports idols or movie heroes of the likes of Harry Potter or Frodo Baggins (from *Lord of the Rings*) may be a more relevant choice.

The first two stories of Chapters 4 through 12 give examples of age-matched metaphors for kids and teens based on the same therapeutic characteristics or outcome. In these stories the theme, the resources to reach the outcome, and the outcome itself may be similar, but the character, age of the character, and context of the story have been changed to make the story age appropriate for the client.

Gender Matching

Just as matching the story to the age of the client helps with the identification, so does gender matching. Young listeners and adolescents may not identify with the story so readily if it is about the other gender. Generally it is easy enough—as with age—to maintain the theme or message of the story while simply altering the gender of the main character or characters to suit that of your listener. The princess of Story 10, "Seeking Happiness," could just as well be a prince, or the "silly boy" of Story 24, "Learning to Think for Yourself," could also be a "silly girl."

These are guidelines and with any matching the therapist needs to know the child well enough to ensure the match is helpful and appropriate to both identification and outcome. The therapist needs to be aware of the exceptions, such as whether a child or adolescent has a known gender conflict or has negative feelings toward the same gender resulting from a history of abuse by that gender.

Client Matching

The closer you can match the story to the interests and characteristics of your individual client, the more you are likely to facilitate identification and, consequently, learning. Get to know your young clients before you start to weave your story, find the things they are interested in, and weave them into your tale. Is there a sport they love? Do they have any particular hobbies? Who are their favorite friends? What TV characters do they like? What subjects do they enjoy most at school? What are their dreams and fantasies?

Culture Matching

Therapists need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the cultural backgrounds and religious values of their clients as well as the cultural values that may be communicated in the therapists' own stories. Researchers such as Malgady and Costantino (2003) have explored the value of matching client and care-provider of the same ethnicity as well as tailoring services to match cultural values, beliefs, and mores. With 5- to 8-year-old Puerto Rican children they told *cuentos* (Puerto Rican folktales), and

with 12- to 14-year-old Puerto Rican adolescents they used stories of heroic male and female Puerto Ricans to offer cultural models, foster ethnic pride, model achievement-oriented behaviors, and provide coping strategies for common stresses of poverty, minority status, and racial prejudice. Being sensitive to culture, cross-cultural stories and cultural values can have a big influence on both therapist-child rapport and the impact of metaphors.

Context Matching

I mentioned earlier about the use of Australian fauna, such as a kookaburra (Story 6, "Come Up Laughing"), a magpie (Story 29, "Changing Patterns of Behavior"), and echidnas (Story 37, "Finding Tenderness"), in my stories. These are contextually relevant for the children with whom I work. A commercial television station has for years had a cartoon clip of a young echidna rolling down its burrow to bed before saying good night to the channel's young viewers—something with which many Australian kids are familiar. Magpies and kookaburras are found around the suburbs, they are fed by many families, and are part of many young clients' environment. This is not to suggest you tell stories of kookaburras if you are working in Europe or North America, where your children are not likely to associate with them. With some slight changes, there is no reason the kookaburra could not be a laughing hyena, the magpie any trainable animal (such as a pet dog), or the echidnas hedgehogs or porcupines. This is the beauty of stories: they can be adjusted to suit the age, gender, characteristics, and context of your client, and thus enhance the potential therapeutic gains.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS IN EFFECTIVE METAPHOR THERAPY

Avoid Magic-Outcome Stories

By "magic-outcome stories" I refer to tales that have a problem and an outcome but do not provide the means, processes, skills, or resources to help the child get from one to the other. A number of classic stories, such as Cinderella, have feel-good outcomes but do not show the listener how to reach the outcome.

Cinderella faces problems that may well match many of the problems experienced by our young clients. She encounters sibling rivalry, abuse, a hostile stepmother, and a low level of self-worth. The story provides an outcome fit to match the wildest fantasy of any female child: She is the most beautiful woman at the ball, meets her prince charming, and is rescued from a situation of abuse and poverty. This shift—from where she was to where she wants to be—comes about not because of anything that Cinderella does, but rather through the magic of a fairy godmother. The transformation is the product of the magical appearance, and magical powers, of a fanciful figure. Cinderella, herself, does little to determine her own destiny. It is not something she has the power to replicate or maintain. The story provides no means for the character—or the listener—to lift herself out of her undesired situation and improve her lot in life.

Many Zen tales have a similar magical-outcome formula. One I have long liked and that I developed into a metaphoric tale in *101 Healing Stories* (Burns, 2001, pp. 75–76) is the delightful re-

framing story of the Zen master who came home to find his house burned down. He looked at the charred ruins and declared that at last he had an unobstructed view of the moon at night. As in the tale of Cinderella, there is no description of how the character moved through the processes from one set of circumstances to another. The tale does not tell us how, unless you have the wisdom or spiritual mastery of a high-order Zen practitioner, to move from the process of grief and loss to the reframed attitude of positivism.

Some clinician-authors seem to take a different view about the use of magic in metaphor. Linden, for example, says,

> Magic is a very important metaphor. It is full of surprise and it implies that change can happen (Lankton, 1988). When a child's sense of him or herself, or of the future, has been destroyed because of some kind of traumatic experience, magic is a very powerful antidote. Children understand magic as a way to make things happen that ordinarily cannot happen. It can give children a sense of outcome and mastery in situations which seem hopeless, and does so with delight and joy. . . . The possibility of magic restores hope. (Linden, 2003a, p. 247)

The building of hope is certainly an important function of therapy. Seligman's work (1995, 2002) highlights the value of hope for children and adults in combating depression and creating happiness. The case of the child with elective mutism that I presented in Chapter 1 shows that magical stories do work, *sometimes*—in this case, because the child already had the resources to speak, and to speak with certain people in certain circumstances. Generally, however, offering hope without the means is a bit like a parent saying to a child, "You can wish for your desired birthday present but I don't have the money to buy it." Hope without the resources to attain it is likely to heighten disappointment and possibly exacerbate the trauma experiences, so I would want to say, "Offer hope, offer outcome, and if magic stories help achieve that, use them—but with them, also offer the means, steps, skills, or processes that the child needs to make them realistic and attainable." While hope without means may be a false hope, hope with means gives the child replicable resources to facilitate transition and provide empowerment to overcome the problem.

Let me also distinguish between magic-outcome stories and the magic-wand question that is commonly found in brief solution-focused therapy (Berg & Dolan, 2001; Berg & Steiner, 2003). Magic-wand questions (e.g., "If you had a magic wand and could wish for what you wanted most in your life, what would you want?") may be useful to include in therapeutic conversation and therapeutic metaphors as a way to define a child's goal. It is then essential to explore those questions that are going to help the child move toward his or her goal: questions such as "What do you think you can do to have that wish become a reality?" and "When are the times you feel closest to where you want to be?"

It is, of course, possible to create metaphoric tales that incorporate these processes. This I have attempted to do in "Creating a Wish" (Story 80). This tale uses a magic character (a genie in a lamp), has magic in its content, and asks a magic-wand question. At the same time, it seeks to empower listeners in the means to achieve their desired outcomes. In fact, the concept of empowerment is the key issue here. The bottom line with metaphor therapy, as indeed with any form of therapy, is to empower the child or adolescent to find his or her own best solutions. This doesn't happen as much by magic as by appropriate actions.

Avoid Negative-Outcome Stories

While it might seem obvious to say that we need to create positive-outcome stories rather than negative-outcome stories, there are traditional tales—along with many others—in our culture that end in the negative. They are, if you like, paradoxical in that they are designed to teach the listener to do something by telling him or her what *not* to do. If that description sounds a little confusing, imagine yourself in the place of a child being told a story that tells you what not to do but doesn't give you the means to do it, a story that tells you what to avoid but does not teach you how to obtain its reciprocal.

A classic example is the story of the Little Red Hen, who found a grain of wheat and, at each stage of planting, reaping, threshing, milling, and baking, asks the other barnyard animals for help. All the way along, she seems to have an unrealistic expectation that they should help her exactly when and how she wants. The story is full of negativity, with the other creatures answering, "No, not I" whenever the little red hen requests assistance. In the end, when they smell the bread baking, she ends up being equally selfish by denying them a meal. The moral to the story is that if you do not help, you do not get to reap the benefits.

Nowhere throughout the tale is the listener guided in what behaviors are appropriate. It is just assumed that somehow the young listener will know and adopt these. As with magic-outcome stories, the tale of the Little Red Hen fails to teach the listeners what they could do to reach a positive outcome. This might be implied, but it is not explicit.

Other stories, such as "The Four Faithful Friends" (Story 34), are based on a similar theme—the value of working together cooperatively—but provide the steps and processes that will result in the characters' reaping a positive result in the end.

Because negative-outcome stories can foster guilt rather than action, your metaphors are more likely to be helpful if they move toward the desired rather than the undesired outcome, and provide the steps by which a young listener can attain the appropriate end. With these, as with magic-outcome stories, the tale needs to provide processes that are accessible to the listener.

As an astute reader, you may find yourself thinking, *But you have included negative-outcome stories yourself, George*—and, of course, you are right. It is something I have done deliberately to illustrate just this point. Story 47 has the message "Don't fly off the handle if you are full of trash," but does not teach the skills for managing anger. In "Seeking Happiness" (Story 10), the core message is that materialism does not necessarily provide happiness. I have built into this story other indirectly, almost paradoxically, offered suggestions that may enhance happiness. These were not in the tale as I have previously told it (Burns & Street, 2003). Story 16, "The Importance of Accepting Compliments," winds up with a challenging, confronting, and humorous question: "What, don't you know how to accept a compliment?" It points out the potentially dramatic consequences of not accepting compliments while not showing listeners how they can.

Stories telling a child what *not* to do can at times be useful if you wish to (a) bring home a strong point, (b) include some shock or surprise elements to the story, or (c) communicate a therapeutic message with humor. Once that therapeutic message about what not to do has been expressed, then additional metaphors that provide constructive strategies for attaining the outcome can be presented. For example, if you tell a story such as "Flying off the Handle" (Story 47), you may want to follow it with a story like "Nailing Down Anger" (Story 45), or others that provide means to manage anger.

Avoid Using the Stories Exactly as You Have Read Them

If I may offer a suggestion, it is this: Use the stories I have offered as ideas rather than as tales to recite verbatim. In saying this, I am mindful that some colleagues I respect as competent therapists have told me that they read stories from my previous metaphor book, *101 Healing Stories* (Burns, 2001), with therapeutic success for a given client or in a group. While this may work at times, generally it is more personally relevant for the child if the metaphors are individually directed, and are part of the conversation taking place in the therapeutic relationship at that point in time. The stories I have told were designed for a particular client with a particular therapeutic outcome in mind, at a particular point in time. What might be relevant or helpful for one child at one time may not be so relevant or helpful for the next child, even if he or she seeks the same outcome. It was not without difficulty that I found myself putting these stories in writing, because most of my healing stories are told verbally. They are adapted to the subtle verbal and nonverbal communication and feedback that I observe from a client. They may be developed collaboratively through questions I ask or comments that a young listener makes. They are, in the tradition of storytelling, fluid and flexible—a quality they tend to lose when printed in black and white.

Preceding each story in Part Two are the therapeutic characteristics I see in the tale. Of course, there may be others you observe and I would ask you do not be limited by my perceptions. These therapeutic characteristics include the problems each tale addresses, the resources it seeks to develop, and the outcomes it offers. I refer to this as the PRO (problem, resources, and outcome) approach. As a practicing clinician, I find it more useful and pragmatic to keep this three-point skeleton of the story in mind than attempting to memorize a whole tale and repeat it verbatim. With the skeleton, and a little practice, it soon becomes possible to flesh out the details in a personally relevant manner for the individual child. Indeed, a core quality of metaphor therapy is its ability to adapt to the uniqueness of each client, whether child, adolescent, or adult.

Question the Use of Storytelling for Every Problem

The greater the range of therapeutic tools therapists have available, the better they can serve the needs of any particular client. Metaphor therapy is just *one* of those tools in the therapist's tool kit, and it is appropriate to ask on what occasions it may be beneficial and on what occasions it is not.

I once organized a conference in which one of the presenters stated that he had learned only one form of therapy and that it was all he had ever needed. I feel concerned when I hear such statements, which imply we need to put the client into our model of the world, rather than that the therapist must adapt to the client's model. This is particularly concerning for child therapy.

While metaphors are one—and not the only—way of working, they have a universal appeal that can be incorporated into many therapeutic approaches. It is possible to tell a healing story in a psychodynamic model, a cognitive-behavioral framework, a solution-focused strategy, or any other in the extensive range of therapeutic approaches with which we may work. However, we need to stop and ask whether a story is appropriate, or even necessary, for this particular child. There is, simply, no point in making therapy more difficult or complex than it needs to be. If it is possible to use direct suggestions with a child, do it. If you have, say, a lonely and withdrawn child who will respond to a directive like, "Before our next appointment, I want you to join a sporting club or deliberately make

more contact with others kids at school," there is no need to weave complex or intricate metaphors to achieve the same end.

Perhaps the clearest example for me of a failure in using metaphors was with my own daughter. She had engaged in a behavior that I considered inappropriate, and I felt it my responsibility as a parent to let her know. Having thought about it, I considered communicating the message in a story rather than saying it directly. I contemplated the story over a number of days and told it to her one day when she and I were alone in the car driving home. I thought I had wrapped the story up nicely as we pulled into our driveway but she leapt from the car, slammed the door behind her, and wouldn't speak to me for the rest of the evening. Obviously the story had an impact, based on the reaction it elicited, but not the impact I had intended. The lesson was important for, in retrospect, it seemed that the story had been too direct, and represented my desired outcome rather than an understanding of her situation. It was useful for me, if not for her, in that it led me to question whether that particular metaphor—or indeed a metaphor at all—was appropriate in the circumstance.

Because stories have a relatively universal appeal, it is often not a question of whether metaphor therapy is an appropriate intervention so much as *what* story is an appropriate intervention. If storytelling is not proving to be helpful in therapy, it may not be the storytelling itself but the content and relevance of the tale to the listener. At such times we need to ask ourselves, "Is the character one with whom the child can identify?" "Does the problem addressed sufficiently match that of the child?" "Are the resources being offered relevant for, and doable by, the child?" "Can the child relate, in a useful way, to the outcome?"

Avoid Using Metaphors Like a Medical Prescription

One option I explored in structuring this book was to list the sections in Part Two under diagnostic categories relevant to children such as depression, anxiety, fear, conduct disorders, relationship issues, and so on. I chose not to do that, first, because I consider it more helpful for the therapist to be mindful of the outcome than of the problem and, second, to avoid the temptation to use healing stories prescriptively. I wanted to avoid the formula that says "diagnose depression, prescribe Prozac," "think abuse, analyze repressed memories," or "see conduct disorders, do cognitive-behavior therapy." Such prescriptive thinking may work, at times, but it runs the risk of being inappropriate and even dangerous if it does not allow the therapist to acknowledge or adapt to the client's individual needs and resources.

For these reasons I have sought to avoid such prescriptive use of stories, though again there have been some exceptions to this. Story 89, "Facing Thoughts of Suicide," presents a message that suicide may not be a wise option and that in the future things may look different. Such stories may work for some adolescents at some times—and this is the very issue about using stories too prescriptively. They work best when most applicable and relevant for the listening child or adolescent. One story about not enacting suicidal thoughts does *not* fit all clients. Our stories are likely to be most beneficial if they are directed toward enhancing the things in that individual adolescent's life that will serve as preventatives to suicide. Is the client feeling suicidal because of the lack of friends? Are these feelings related to conflicts in their relationship with parents? Do they lack self-confidence and self-fulfillment? Do they have negative, helpless, hopeless, depressive cognitions? Metaphor therapy may be better directed to building those preventative skills rather than just saying, "Don't do it." Like any

therapeutic intervention, it will be most effective when specifically geared to the needs and objectives of that individual client rather than offered prescriptively on the basis of the defined problem.

Do Not Expect That a Single Story Will Be the Sole Answer

While it may be that a single, well-crafted story will help a child change a significant problem, reach a long-desired conclusion, or find a more appropriate direction in which to be heading, therapy generally is a process. The case of Jessica, our elective mute in Chapter 1, reminded me of the power a single story may hold . . . yet it was not the complete answer. Jessica began to speak with me (one person) in my consulting room (one place), but for therapy to be effective it was important this skill be generalized to her real-life circumstances. She needed to communicate with her teacher, to speak up in class, and to talk with peers if she was going to build the educational and relationship skills necessary for her appropriate maturation. Her therapy involved further metaphors and behavioral strategies to help shape this process. Generalization of her progress involved cooperative efforts between her teacher and therapist as well as therapeutic exercises for Jessica to do in class.

In other words, the metaphor that seemed to provide significant change was an adjunctive part of a comprehensive therapeutic plan. The single story itself, apart from the permission that Jessica saw in it to change her behavior in the particular situation of my office, was not the total answer to her problem. It did, however, recognize the difficulties she was having and offer an element of hope, and it was a facilitative part of the total therapeutic program.

CHAPTER 15

Where Do I Get the Ideas for Healing Stories?

In this chapter my aim is to explain the processes I use to develop story ideas in therapy. Participants in metaphor workshops often ask, "Where do you get your imagination for therapeutic stories?" as though you have to be a highly imaginative or creative person to use healing stories. I tend to think in terms of developing or building a story rather than of creating one. Creating, for me, conjures the conception that a tale somehow appeared, magically, out of the blue, in my marvelously imaginative mind. Generally, that is not the case. I do not see myself as a particularly imaginative person, and I do not think a high level of imagination is necessary to be an effective metaphor therapist. I am, however, constantly on the lookout for stories. Like a collector of any object, I collect storybooks as I travel, look for ideas in client cases, read what children are reading, observe the learning experiences of the children in my own life, and ask myself as I do, "How might this be shaped into a healing story for one of the children I am working with at the moment?"

To illustrate how I have developed the stories in this book, I will revisit a number of the tales, seeking to explain where I found the source of the story, how I built the idea into a metaphor, and the processes by which I constructed the healing story. This chapter thus describes how to develop metaphors from a variety of sources such as the evidenced-based literature, the cases you encounter in your day-to-day work, the ideas you find in a storybook, the heroes in the lives of your young clients, the fertility of your own imagination, or everyday life experiences.

METAPHORS BUILT ON A BASIS OF EVIDENCE

If we set out to provide treatment we need to offer the best treatment available. I consider this particularly so for children, who may not have the same discriminatory skills as adults and may not be as

informed clients. We are fortunate that we are in an age of therapy where we have some solid evidence about what therapeutic techniques work well and what do not work so well. There is ample literature to guide therapists in efficacious interventions, such as Kazdin and Weisz's *Evidenced-Based Psychotherapies for Children and Adolescents* (2003), a compilation of studies by pioneering clinical researchers who provide evidence of effective therapies and strategies for applying them.

The art of skilled child therapists largely lies in their ability to develop a sound working alliance with the child and to translate the evidence-based data into an accessible, understandable, and applicable format for that given child client. How do you convert the language of scientific journals into the language and experience of an enuretic child or suicidal teenager? How do you communicate to a depressed child about cognitive distortions (Beck, Brown, Berchick, Stewart, & Steer 1990), learned patterns of helplessness (Seligman, 1990, 1995), and attributional styles (Yapko, 1992, 1997)? "Overcoming Adversity" (Stories 71 and 72) are built on the evidence-based, cognitive, attributional styles of people who cope well with adversity, and those who do not. The child version (Story 71) is an easy-listening tale that compares and contrasts the opposing cognitive styles of two young dinosaurs who respond differently to the same situation. One models optimism, specific thinking, an outward focus, concern for others, flexibility of thought, hopefulness, and a style that is based in action. The other is pessimistic, global in its thinking, and more self-focused. The second dinosaur's cognitive style is more fixed and rigid, oriented toward the past, and ruminative or worrisome. This fictional tale of the dinosaurs is based on the evidence about the differing cognitive and attributional styles between people who are depressed and those who are happy or more optimistic.

To say to a child, "You need to be more optimistic and less pessimistic in your thinking" may not have a lot of meaning—or a lot of impact—and may even have a negative impact. To quote research data that indicates, "You will handle life better if you think specifically rather than a globally, or if you are more action-oriented and less ruminative" is not likely to bring about the desired cognitive or behavioral changes. However, to wrap the evidence in a story such as the two young di-

EXERCISE 15.1 METAPHORS BUILT ON A BASIS OF EVIDENCE

- Note the specific symptoms or problems with which a child presents.
- Study the evidenced-based literature for that particular condition, examining in particular the therapeutic interventions that work.
- Examine which of those particular interventions are most likely to help the child reach his or her therapeutic goal.
- Structure a metaphor around the utilization of those effective interventions in a way that will make them understandable and relevant for the child.
- Bear in mind each of the following:
  - The character who will match the challenge and model the outcome
  - The particular aspects of the problem to be addressed
  - The resources necessary for the client to reach his or her outcome
  - The evidenced-based interventions that will lead to new learning and discovery
  - A valid and obtainable outcome

nosaurs or an Everest mountaineer (Story 72) demonstrates the skills and the benefits of those particular styles in a way that makes it easier for the child or adolescent to absorb and adopt.

Many of the 101 healing stories in this book are based in evidence which is something you may or may not have been aware of as you read them. While space does not permit me to revisit all of them, I trust the above illustrates how metaphors are an effective, subtle, and potent tool for communicating the data from our research laboratories. It is possible for two playful young dinosaurs to teach core cognitive-behavior therapy concepts.

METAPHORS BUILT ON HEROES

Many contemporary, fictional characters from books and film contain excellent material for use in therapy, as their stories often parallel the movement from problem through solution-seeking actions to outcome. When you find that a child has a particular interest in a character like Harry Potter, Frodo Baggins, or Ramona Beasley, you may use these characters in your stories to engage the child in the therapeutic experience. If a child has just watched the video of *Spider-Man* (or you have recommended it as a therapeutic exercise as described in Chap. 3), here is an opportunity to use the character to weave a story about overcoming a disability, developing your skills, and helping others. If a child has just seen *The Hulk*, here is a character who has problems of uncontrolled anger, finds ways to resolve them, and ends up using his energy gainfully. If your client has been reading the latest *Harry Potter* book or seen the film, you have the option to metaphorically explore how to face unexpected challenges, resolve difficult problems, and promote goodness. It may help to engage the kid in the story itself, with questions like, "If you were the Hulk and experiencing such uncontrollable rage, what do you think would help you feel calmer? Let's make up a story about it," or, "If you were Harry Potter and facing the only thing you ever feared, what do you think you could do and who might help you?"

I have chosen not to use any such contemporary, fictional characters in the stories of Part Two, first, because they are constantly changing with the release of the next new book or film, and second, because of the copyright issue. To publish stories based on copyrighted characters could be inviting trouble. To tell a therapeutic story woven around a heroic character for a child in the privacy of the consulting room is not so problematic. The magic/wizard theme popularized by Harry Potter can be incorporated into your stories without copyrighted characters. In Story 39, "Putting Yourself in Someone Else's Place," Michelle is given a witch's suit and spell book for her birthday, which she uses to put herself in the place of her older sisters. This story builds on a hero-popularized theme without using that particular hero character.

Other hero stories can be based on a child's favorite sports idol, movie actor, or pop star. Story 82, "Managing Pain," uses the listener's favorite sports hero. In addition, it is possible to create your own hero-type characters. To illustrate how this can be done, I have produced some characters of my own. There is Wally the Wacky Wizard in Story 74, Clary the clown in Story 48, Grandpa and the Four Bears in Stories 2 and 51, and the cross-generational favorite in my own family, Fred Mouse (Stories 1, 37, 40, 44, and 69).

Linden (2003) claims there are archetypal figures that represent the array of human emotions and that the use of such characters instantly accesses the associated emotions. For example, kings and queens are representative of leadership and power, witches and wizards of magic, spies and soldiers

of fighting, sports heroes of competition and success, and angels and devils of good and evil. An understanding of this can benefit the therapist's choice of a story hero, or appreciate the choice of hero selected by a child.

"We can identify these figures," says Linden, "by learning what the child's favorite storybook, TV, and movie characters are, or by watching to see what the child chooses for a dress up costume" (2003a, p. 246).

EXERCISE 15.2 METAPHORS BUILT ON HEROES

- Listen for or inquire about the heroes in the life of your child client.
- Study those hero figures.
- Make a mental or written note of the strengths, qualities, or characteristics of that hero.
- Ask yourself what the hero does that may be helpful for your client to be doing.
- Build the hero's characteristics and problem-solving skills into the story designed to match the desired outcome for the child.

METAPHORS BUILT ON IMAGINATION

I often find that when trainees first begin to work with metaphor therapy, one of the most common concerns is "I don't have the imagination." So here is some good news: You don't have to be an imaginative person to use metaphor therapy. A few artistic, creative people seem to be endowed with this skill, whereas for most of us it comes with patience, persistence and practice. If you have the simple principles for developing a healing story, then it becomes easier to build the characters and story line. While these simple principles will be discussed further in the next chapter, here I would like to illustrate how an "imaginative" healing story can be constructed.

Grandfathers who own a car are popular when a grandson wants to get to the skate park but a definite embarrassment to have hanging around. As a result, I found myself sitting in my car parked under a shady tree a goodly distance away while my grandson and his friends demonstrated their tricks, tried out new stunts, and did heaps of their own hanging around. Absent-mindedly, I began to wonder what would happen if someone unintentionally stepped on one of the skateboards left at the top of a ramp. What could be the consequences? What chain of events might follow that could illustrate how important it was to take responsibility for things such as leaving your skateboard at the top of a ramp? Who might step on a skateboard anyway? Perhaps someone so distracted, maybe by anger, that he did not notice the skateboard. As I thought about describing an irritable, angry person with little empathy for the mistake of a child, the name Grumblebum seemed to fit. It described the character, it was a bit irreverent, and it joined with schoolyard humor, as does Ms. Greenfingers' zoo poo stew (which ends up over Mr. Grumblebum's head).

While Grumblebum represents anger and its consequences, it seemed appropriate to have a character that guided the listener in a more responsible direction. Janey became this character: a girl who

made mistakes and who was capable of learning from experience, willing to offer a gesture of kindness to somebody else who had been upset, and willing to take responsibility for her own actions.

What might seem an imaginative tale to the first-time listener or reader, the story actually evolved out of a real-life experience of taking my grandson to the skate park. It happened while having the time to contemplate an idea and expand on that idea. It evolved around the thought of being able to communicate a therapeutically valid outcome to the listener with impact and humor. The tale is told in Story 66, "Taking Responsibility."

EXERCISE 15.3 METAPHORS BUILT ON IMAGINATION

- Select a current client for whom you think a healing story would be helpful or appropriate.
- Take time to think about creating the metaphor, perhaps even jotting your thoughts down on paper.
- What sort of character is likely to match your client? What are his or her characteristics, qualities, and resources that can parallel those of your child client?
- In developing the story line, take into account how you can do the following:
  - Describe the crisis or challenge
  - Develop the necessary resources
  - Facilitate the relevant processes of learning and discovery
  - Provide an appropriate resolution
  - Find out the key elements of the story that are going to satisfy the previous points
  - Tell it to the child, carefully observing the child during the telling.

METAPHORS BUILT ON THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES

One thing that therapists can be very thankful for is that our discipline is blessed with many strategic tools. For therapists who are willing to explore the literature, seek training in different modalities, and expand their knowledge, there will never be a lack of useful interventions. With some 400 different types of therapy and dozens of different interventions within each school of thought, the question for the informed therapist is, "Which of the tools in my kit will be most helpful for this particular child?" The next question is likely to be, "How do I most effectively communicate that intervention or strategy to this particular child?"

Two of the stories that I have developed to illustrate this communication of strategies through metaphor are Chapter 12's opening metaphors about managing pain, major illness, and the anxieties associated with medical treatment. The strategies behind Story 81, "Blowing Away Pain," are based on the use of Ericksonian hypnosis approaches with pediatric hematology oncology patients (Jacobs, Pelier, & Larkin, 1998). They begin by stating:

> When children are diagnosed with cancer they are thrust into a world filled with uncertainty. Pain and treatment separates them from the routine of daily living; the possibility of death looms.

> Children employ necessary defenses to psychologically negotiate the various stresses of illness, to help them feel more secure while integrating their experience of cancer and healing potentials. (1998, p. 139)

From a review of the literature, they claim the data are "well established and illustrate how children are highly susceptible and are naturally imaginative" (1998, p. 140). These factors of suggestibility and natural imagination contribute to the potency of metaphor therapy with kids.

Jacobs, Pelier, and Larkin (1998) explore the question of what we know developmentally about kids and how we can adapt strategies that will access those developmental competencies for managing situations such as life-threatening illness. Preschool children, for example, are growing in autonomy and tend to be highly imaginative. They believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, participate in imaginative play with dolls or rocket ships, and have the ability to drift easily between fantasy and reality. This richness of fantasy combined with a high level of self-focus has both an upside and a downside. On the downside, it could be easy for a child's fantasies of danger, vulnerability, and separation from parents to be validated by admission to a hospital, the diagnosis of cancer, and traumatic treatment procedures.

On the upside, it is possible for the therapist to join the child's imaginative world, playfully and informally, through the creation of healing stories. Jacobs, Pelier, and Larkin (1998) talk of helping to assist a child with procedures such as chemotherapy by absorbing them in play and imagination – an intervention remarkably similar to the storytelling offered to nine year old Jacob Grimm for the surgical removal of a tumor in 1794 (discussed at the end of Chapter 1). A case example they give of working with one preschool child was for a therapist to sit on the floor with him, blowing bubbles. This strategy utilizes the characteristics of this developmental age and is incorporated into Story 81, "Blowing Away Pain: *A Kid Story.*"

Story 82, "Managing Pain: *A Teen Story*," is a hero story based on an adolescent client's favorite sports hero. For the sake of the written story in this book I chose a basketball player, but it could include any game and any athlete. As with all metaphors, it is the therapeutic characteristics of the story rather than the content that matters most. Here, the story again follows the developmental characteristics described by Jacobs, Pelier, and Larkin (1998). The therapeutic strategies incorporated into the story tap into adolescent metaphoric thinking, while seeking to build skills of empowerment, mastery, and pain management.

EXERCISE 15.4 METAPHORS BUILT ON THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES

- Make a note of the goal or goals your client wishes to achieve.
- What therapeutic strategies or evidenced-based approaches do you know are helpful to reach that goal?
- What particular interventions in those areas are likely to help your client reach his or her therapeutic goal?
- Structure a story that describes those effective interventions in a way that your listening client will be able to identify with and absorb the message.

METAPHORS BUILT ON AN IDEA

Often an idea, a one-liner, a joke, a statement, or a brief analogy can form the basis for building a therapeutic story. On a regular radio talk show, I was discussing the subject of happiness. One caller rang in with a very brief story: Once upon a time there was a king who had everything but wasn't happy. Thinking that if he found the happiest man in his kingdom and wore his shirt he might know something of the experience of happiness, he sent out messengers to find the happiest man. When they finally returned, they told the king that the happiest man didn't even have a shirt.

This brief tale communicates an important message about happiness and well-being. We—and our children—are fed many media messages about happiness and how to attain it through the purchase of a particular product. For example, our TV-viewing children are learning that the only way to produce a happy family is to cook on a particular brand of stove, spread your bread with a certain brand of margarine, or wash the family clothes with a designated detergent. Perhaps the story of the happy person who did not have even a shirt to wear helps counterbalance some of these other views children are learning on the subject of happiness. It says that happiness is not to be found in what you own or possess so much as in your attitude of mind and approach to life.

As I pondered the idea, it seemed that shoes had more metaphoric associations than a shirt. We have common metaphors about standing in other people's shoes, walking in someone else's footsteps, or standing on our own two feet. In Story 10, "Seeking Happiness," this idea is adapted into a children's story. Here the main character has become a young princess who could equally as well have been a prince, the son of a tycoon, a rock star, or a movie actor. The story follows the same plot and it comes to a similar conclusion illustrating that happiness is not in owning the latest toys, wearing brand-name products, or even having shoes on your feet.

Story 10 also shows how adult stories can be adapted into tales for children. An adult version of this story is told in Burns and Street (2003, pp. 1–3) where the character is a troubled tycoon and the book, *Standing Without Shoes*, takes its title from the tycoon's valuable discovery. Here, in Story 10, the princess (and the listener) not only develops an awareness of the nature of happiness but also is offered pathways toward attaining greater levels of happiness. The royal nanny provides useful steps for facilitating and enhancing well-being, based on the positive-psychology literature (Burns & Street, 2003; Keyes & Haidt, 2003; Seligman, 2002). She talks of the value of social interactions, the ability to laugh and have fun, and the benefits of being action-oriented. She speaks of extending boundaries and engaging in new behaviors, as well as broadening and building a range of activities

EXERCISE 15.5 METAPHORS BUILT ON AN IDEA

- Be constantly mindful of possible metaphor ideas for children.
- Look for them in children's books, client comments, family conversations, schoolyard jokes, and everyday life experiences.
- Keep a record of those ideas so that you can build a store of metaphoric messages to draw on when the need arises.
- Practice crafting some of those ideas into meaningful healing stories.

and emotional responses. She introduces the listener to the values of increasing sensory awareness and heightened stimulation.

METAPHORS BUILT ON A CHILD'S OWN STORY

As mentioned in Chapter 3, using client-generated stories, working collaboratively with a child on the story, or having children create their own stories can provide useful material to work with therapeutically. When I ask a child to write a healing story as a homework exercise, I tend to phrase it like this: "Write me a story about a character—you can choose any character you like: an animal, an imaginary figure like a ghost or monster, a hero like a wizard or Superman, someone about your own age, or whoever you want—who has a problem or problems, who finds some helpful ways to fix those problems, and who enjoys the benefits of their success."

I might go on to offer an example such as: "One child once wrote me a story about a character that was a ghost. This ghost had the problem that he couldn't scare anyone—not even a fly. Trying to find ways to fix it, he started to watch what other, scarier ghosts did and how he could copy them. Some things he tried worked, and some didn't. In the end he felt so proud when he could scare off monsters that were terrifying good people." (See Story 91.)

These directives may be given verbally or in writing. I attempt not to be too specific and thus risk having kids produce what they think I want rather than using their own imagination and creativity.

Advantages for Using a Child's Own Story

- When the child has created the story, he or she is more likely to accept and use the message of the story than one that is seen as being imposed by an adult.
- If, in creating the story, the child finds a solution or solutions to the problem, then the therapeutic exercise has been successful.
- If the child is stuck with the problem and doesn't see the means for reaching a satisfactory outcome, then the therapist can help guide the child toward finding a solution to his or her own story.
- In working with groups of children or in classroom situations, it is possible to read aloud some of the resulting stories, stopping at the point in each story where the problem has been described and then asking the group to brainstorm solutions: "If you were the character of this story, how would you go about solving the problem? What could you try? What do you think the effects of that might be? What if there are things the character cannot change? What are the best ways to manage the situation then?"

With the generous assistance of school psychologist Susan Boyett and schoolteacher Claire Scanlon, we asked Year Seven students at Helena College in Western Australia to do the homework exercise of writing a problem-solving/healing story. The students were given a written guide along the lines I have presented above. Some of the stories the children created are reproduced in Chapter 13, with the kind permission of the students, their parents, and the college.

The exercise proved extremely interesting for a number of reasons. First, the problems on which these stories were centered were not dissimilar to the stories I hear in my clinic. There were tales of parental marital problems, abuse, separation, grief, drug use, bullying, disability, and suicidal thoughts. I want to hasten to say that it does not mean the children of this sample were facing these problems themselves, but that it was the way some of them chose to address the types of problems they saw as characteristic of their age group.

Second, most of them chose another child as the character of the story. One chose a doll, another a puppy—but none took up the invitation to create a fictional figure or use a "hero." This is worth bearing in mind when building metaphors for children in this age group of around twelve years.

Third, some of the children came up with useful problem-solving strategies or means for fixing the problem. Although it was not part of this project, it may be interesting to know the long-term predictability of healthy adult functioning in kids who, at the age of twelve, are good problem solvers. Having good problem-solving skills is one of the characteristics of adults who cope well and are less likely to become depressed (Yapko, 1997). Helping to equip children with these skills may thus serve as a useful preventative tool.

In a tale about grief and disability (Story 93), even the title, "Days to Come," has the sound of hope. Erin Kelley tells of a girl in a wheelchair who wants to walk again and is "aware of the possibility." She works toward her goal, is strong in the face of difficulties, and is not deterred by the lack of others' hope, finally reaching the "best day" of her life.

Fourth, some students seemed to be very good at describing the problem, but then provided magical outcomes, offered solutions outside their control, or struggled to find effective resolutions. Stephanie Wood provided a beautifully written tale of Willow and her only friend, Paige, whose parents were constantly fighting (Story 99, "When There is Nothing I Can Do"). When Paige is sent to boarding school, Willow is alone, sad, and frightened. Willow can do nothing to stop her parents' fighting or to stop Paige's being sent to boarding school. When a child cannot find the means to reach a satisfactory outcome—and at times there may not be one—the challenge for the metaphor therapist is to help the child find ways of accepting what is happening, reframing their ideas about it, or building better coping mechanisms. Here the therapist may ask questions like, "If Willow's and Paige's parents are fighting all the time, what can they do as kids to feel okay about themselves?" "If Willow's best friend is sent away to boarding school, how could she cope with that?" "What could she do to find another friend?"

Finally, some children produced a partial resolution. In "My Life" (Story 96), Nathaniel Watts tells of a child facing the death of a father. The story is sad and poignant and describes things changing years later when the character finds comfort in the assurance that the death was not his fault. The therapist may want to help a child who tells a tale of this nature explore what it was about the reassurance that helped alter the experience. What else might have been done to ease the pain of grief? How could that have happened earlier? What helps the character maintain his well-being now?

Similarly, in Story 98, "Rock Your Way Out of It," Jonathon Matthews tells how a single, positive experience can distract you from negative thoughts—including suicidal ideation. For his character, it was a Van Halen song. But what does the character do after that momentary distraction? How can he hang on to, or create, more positive experiences? What does he need to do to make life more meaningful and happy? What is necessary to help ensure he goes on to enjoy the "wonder full life"

as it was described in the story? These are the sorts of questions the therapist, teacher, parent, or caregiver might want to help the child explore in the context of his or her own metaphor.

Having children create such personal healing stories can be a powerful tool in educating and building preventative skills, generally as well as in therapy. It can be a win-win task, being successful if children find solutions in their own stories, and being a metaphor in which the therapist can join the child to help shape an outcome if a solution is not immediately found by the child.

EXERCISE 15.6 METAPHORS BUILT ON A CHILD'S OWN STORY

- Ask kids to tell you stories, whether in your consulting room, a classroom, or at home.
- Jot down those that are useful, particularly those that are outcome oriented.
- Retell the story to another child who is experiencing a similar problem.
- Ask that child to also create his or her own healing, problem-solving story, either orally or in writing.

METAPHORS BUILT ON HUMOR

"In teaching, in therapy, you are careful to bring in humor, because patients bring in enough grief," said Milton Erickson in the context of adult therapy (Zeig, 1980, p. 71). I consider the same applies equally for child and adolescent therapy. Some children go through some pretty rotten experiences that they do not deserve. Humor can help lighten the load and reframe the experience. It is engaging in that it readily captures a listener's attention. It is intriguing in that it has the ability to hold attention. It is impactful in that it can deliver a potent message enjoyably. Add to this the fact that humor aids the retention of learning and you have a powerful therapeutic medium. To check this out, ask yourself: Of the 100 stories you have read so far, which are the ones that have stayed in the fore of your mind? Where do the humorous ones rate on that list?

The previously quoted statement by Berg and Steiner is worth repeating here. They say, "When you have fun with children, they will learn that they are fun to be around, which will contribute to their sense of well-being as unique individuals" (2003, pp. 13–14).

Having discussed humor as metaphor in Chapter 3 and looked at its impact on making metaphors memorable in the previous chapter, here I will focus on some of the types of humor that can be used in metaphor. First, a humorous tale can be a comedy of errors: If something can go wrong, it will. Story 16, "The Importance of Accepting Compliments," is an example in which the snake, failing to accept a compliment, sets off a series of disasters that ends up in court. It delivers a powerful and perhaps unexpected message that usually evokes a laugh from the listener. The comedy of errors that makes up Story 66, "Taking Responsibility," offers humor throughout the story rather than in just the punch line.

Second are tales I think of as "yucky" stories, based on the schoolyard subjects at which kids screw up their noses—and laugh about anyway. They are often anally oriented subjects like Ms. Greenfingers' bucket of zoo poo stew that ends up over Mr. Grumblebum's head in Story 66, or a

yucky topic like Jack's decision to cultivate his smelly socks in Story 25, "Build on What You Are Good At."

Naughty or mischievous stories are the third. These are the things children do that they think they should not do, or perceive would not be approved of by adults. Story 17, "What You Give Is What You Get," is that tale of two brothers who have been naughty by sampling Mom's brandy; but things go from bad to worse when they decide to cover up their guilt by urinating in the bottle—an even naughtier action. To heighten the impact, one brother plays the responsible role while the other takes the naughty role. In the end their actions turn back on them, unexpectedly. Story 70, "The Secrets of Success," has the young-boy, parents-are-not-meant-to-know theme of seeing who can pee the farthest from the top of a rock.

Fourth, the introduction of unexpected characters, events, themes, or outcomes can add humor and impact. Who would expect that if you were lucky enough to find a magic lantern your genie would be a grouch (Story 80)? That an object of immense terror might be just a stone falling in a pond (Story 23)? Or that the moral taught by a greedy fly might be about controlling anger (Story 47)?

Fifth, I would encourage that you listen to the jokes and humor used by children, the ones they bring home at the end of the day, or the ones you overhear them sharing with friends. Story 54, "Things May Not Be What They Seem," expands on a joke about a girl who became engaged in a conversation in the school toilets only to find she had misinterpreted the events, unaware the other girl was talking on a cell phone. In *101 Healing Stories* I devoted a whole story chapter to illustrating the use of jokes and humorous stories as metaphors (Burns, 2001, pp. 200–213).

EXERCISE 15.7 METAPHORS BUILT ON HUMOR

- Collect funny kid stories. These can be found in books, schoolyard jokes, one-liners sent around on e-mail, or funny things you observe kids doing.
- Care needs to be taken so that the humor is constructive and appropriate. Avoid humor that does not provide a means to the end, is culturally sensitive, or may be down-putting.
- Of the funny stories you have collected, which one or ones match the challenge faced by your young client?
- What steps does the character in your humorous story take that might be helpful for your young listener to replicate?
- Does the story offer a helpful and replicable solution?

METAPHORS BUILT ON CROSS-CULTURAL TALES

Story 4, "Feed What You Want To Grow," has its origins in a Native North American tale. Story 16, "The Importance of Accepting Compliments," is based on a story I collected in East Africa. Story 68, "Taking a Different View," I originally heard as a Sufi tale about camels that I have adapted into a

more Western context. "The Four Faithful Friends," Story 34, is the much-loved national tale of Bhutan that is found painted on the walls of homes, hotels, and government offices.

All cultures have told stories, and all cultures have told stories specifically for children. While some do not cross cultural boundaries very readily, others are adaptable as therapeutic tales, as I have hoped to illustrate in the above examples. I would encourage that you look out for, and collect, the stories in your own cultural background, and those from other cultures, that may be relevant for the children with whom you are working.

How children see meaning in cross-cultural stories was brought home to me when I returned from Bhutan and told my grandson the story of the Four Faithful Friends (See Story 34). He contemplated it for a while then said, "But the monkey could climb up the tree and pick the fruit on his own." He continued, "The pheasant could fly up into the branches to get the fruit." With a little more thought he added, "The elephant could reach up and pluck the fruit with its trunk." And, yes, the rabbit could probably wait till the fruit ripened and fell.

He was right, of course. Each animal *could* survive by itself. Even the tree may well have grown of its own accord, as trees in the wild have a good track record of doing. As I thought about it, my grandson's comments seemed to hold their own wisdom. This new knowledge made the message of the story even stronger for me. The bottom line was that the animals did not *have* to cooperate to be able to reach the fruit but *chose* to cooperate. They wanted to be friends. They wanted to help each other. By working together, by sharing in the activity of cultivating the seed and harvesting the fruit, it was a lot more enjoyable and productive than doing it alone.

EXERCISE 15.8 METAPHORS BUILT ON CROSS-CULTURAL TALES

This book would not have happened were I not a collector of tales from a variety of sources. I have already mentioned that when I travel a part of my goal is to collect local stories.

- Build your own collection of stories that may be helpful for your clients.
- All cultures have told stories to educate their young, teach values, describe ways of relating with others, and build the skills necessary for understanding and living life.
- Buy or borrow storybooks from different cultures, or sit with storytellers, to find the tales that are useful for your therapeutic work and the ones that are not. This may take sorting through a lot of stories, but it can be a very useful exercise.

METAPHORS BUILT ON CLIENT CASES

The experiences of one child, the things that child did to resolve an issue, and the outcome he or she gained may be helpful for another child. As I discussed back in Chapter 1, stories are a way of communicating about experiences the listener may not yet have had. They help equip or prepare a child for a present or future situation by hearing what another child or adult did to manage a similar set of

circumstances. In the project with Helena College, children wrote a number of stories from which those in Chapter 13 were selected. The school psychologist asked one child who told a true-to-life tale if that child thought it would be okay for the story to be considered for publication. The response was, "If my story can help others, it is really important." That, to me, seems the very essence of why we share stories.

Story 43, "Having Fun," tells the story of a girl, Angela, who said she wanted to have fun, and the processes she went through to reach her objective. In Story 79, "Taking Control," Natalie learns about ways that will help her manage a habit pattern. Andrew's story of "Getting Back on Your Feet" (Story 88) describes how a child may experience a sudden, unexpected trauma and what might help a youth get back on his feet. The stories of an adolescent boy who came to grips with problems related to drugs and disruptive behaviors (Story 86, "Finding Solutions"); of a young adult looking back, with relief, on her adolescent decision not to commit suicide (Story 89, "Facing Thoughts of Suicide"); and of a mother's relating how a daughter helped her alter a depressive mood (Story 46, "Helping with Humor") are all based on real clinical cases and may be of benefit to other children and adolescents as they struggle to find means for dealing with similar issues.

EXERCISE 15.9 METAPHORS BUILT ON CLIENT CASES

- It may help to keep written or mental notes of successful cases.
- What one child did to help resolve a problem may help another child do the same. It certainly can offer hope as well as means.
- Have your story do each of the following:
  - Describe the challenges encountered by the other child
  - Include what did not work and what did
  - Describe the outcome of the other child's efforts and the way he or she felt about having achieved that success

METAPHORS BUILT ON EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES

Life itself is often the best source of healing stories. Our lives are made up of stories, and the stories we tell reflect, and shape, our experience. Even if we shift the characters and context beyond the human, as in stories of imagination, fantasy, and science fiction, the authors of those stories are still human and bound by human experience. Consequently, our stories—no matter how fanciful—speak of life and the many experiences that make up life. In everyday experience there can be a tale to tell—perhaps even a therapeutic tale.

There may be stories from our own childhoods, as in "Let Joe Do It" (Story 14), that are relevant to the children we see professionally. Observing the children in our lives may provide many important metaphoric outcomes about learning new skills ("Learning New Tricks," Story 26), overcoming fear ("I'm Not Afraid Anymore," Story 30), negotiating resolutions ("Negotiating a Solution," Story 35), discovering it is okay to be good without having to be perfect ("Good, Not Per-

fect," Story18), and learning how to be successful ("The Secrets of Success," Story 70). There may be stories in events as simple as a bird flying into your window ("Come Up Laughing," Story 6), a story told by a friend (on which "What You Give Is What You Get," Story 17, is based), or something that happens as you commute to work ("A Gesture That Changed a Whole Suburb," Story 27). One of my peer reviewers commented in a discussion on the manuscript for this book, "It reminded me that a story does not have to hold some profoundly wise message. It can be profound in its simplicity."

The previous categories from which metaphors can be built are not intended to be mutually exclusive, nor are they the only ways to build metaphors. They just happen to be a framework that is convenient for me to think in when structuring therapeutic tales. I offer them for you to use if they seem helpful or as a suggested means for you to build your own sources of metaphor ideas.

EXERCISE 15.10 METAPHORS BUILT ON EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES

If telling stories from your experiences or observations of children:

- Be mindful of the child's desired goal. This is the direction in which your story should clearly be heading.
- Seek an experience that describes the attainment of that outcome. It may help to ask yourself, "When did I obtain a similar goal?" or "When did I see someone else achieving that goal?"
- Have your story develop the resources, learning, and discovery necessary for the goal attainment. Ask yourself, "What abilities or means did I, or the person I observed, need to reach that goal?"
- Define the metaphoric problem, asking, "What experience did I, or that other person, encounter that paralleled the problems of my child client?"
- Tell the story in your own words, describing the problem, the resources, and the outcome.

GUIDELINES FOR USING PERSONAL LIFE STORIES

A question that is occasionally asked in training workshops on metaphor therapy is, "Is self-disclosure in storytelling a good thing?" In thinking about and answering this question, it seems to me that the *therapeutic relationship* has two elements. First, the *relationship* (the noun that defines what happens or exists between therapist and client) is, perhaps, one of the primary factors contributing to successful therapeutic outcome (Miller, Duncan, & Hubble, 1997), and communicating about shared personal experiences is one way we have of relating meaningfully. This is evidenced in Chelf, Deschler, Hillman, and Durazo-Arvizu's study (2000) of cancer patients, which showed that 85% of subjects who attended a therapeutic storytelling workshop reported gaining hope from hearing the personal life experiences of others who had faced, and coped with, the same illness.

Second, that relationship is *therapeutic* (the adjective that describes it), existing for the benefit of

the client. *Self-disclosure* was a concept that originated from psychodynamic theory with the intent of keeping the therapist's issues from interfering with the client's progress—but the therapist's stories of progress and outcome, equally, can be a beneficial element in the therapeutic process. In other words, I do not see it so much as a question of *whether* you use personal life experiences but rather *how* you do so. If it is to discuss your unresolved issues in the therapy session (e.g., by telling a matching story of how you can identify with the client's problem, but not having a resolution), it may not be helpful. If, on the other hand, the intent and function of telling an outcome-oriented tale is to facilitate the client's goal attainment, it may well make the relationship therapeutic. Such use of personal life-experience stories should not be an act of disclosure so much as a process of sharing something relevant to the client's outcome process. These outcome-relevant therapist experiences can be woven into a metaphor in much the same way as a client case, a cultural story, or evidence-based data about a certain condition.

There may be times when you have an appropriate outcome-oriented story from your own experience but choose not to tell it as *your* story, as it may distract from the story's message or it may not be relevant to speak of your foibles, grief, pain, or whatever. It is easy to shift such personal stories from the first person into the third, as I have done in Story 14, "Let Joe Do It." This is a story from my own childhood that I could tell as my story, if appropriate, or shift into the third person ("Joe" was a pet name my father had for me when I was a child) to distance myself from the story while still communicating the metaphoric outcome.

To ensure the effectiveness of using personal life experiences as therapeutic teaching tales, several steps may be helpful to bear in mind:

1. *Be mindful of the story's purpose*. Its function is *not* to disclose something about the therapist but rather to create a beneficial learning experience for the client.
2. *Remember for whom the story is intended*. It is not *your* story that matters so much as how children will hear it, adopt it, and employ it for themselves.
3. *Keep the goal of the story in mind*. A story from your own experience, or indeed from any source, works best if it closely matches the child's issues and desired outcome.
4. *Ensure the story is relevant to the context*. Stories of personal experience are more likely to be accepted when they are part of the context of a conversation.
5. *Follow the PRO-Approach (see Chap. 16)*. This will help keep the story on track, addressing the Problems relevant to the child, accessing the Resources appropriate for their resolution, and providing an appropriate Outcome.
6. *Observe the child's responses, carefully*. They will tell you if the child is disinterested, distracted, bored, angry, or finding the story irrelevant.
7. *Discontinue using personal metaphors (or any others) if not helpful*. If your stories do not hold the child's attention, change your stories, or your whole therapeutic approach. Good therapy is about finding what works, and what works best.

CHAPTER 16

How Do I Plan and Present Healing Stories?

THE PRO-APPROACH

Having explored the various sources that form the bases on which to build therapeutic stories in the last chapter, the next question becomes, "How do you structure those ideas into a metaphor and present it to the child?" Fortunately, the process is not difficult: just three simple steps with which, by now, I hope you are already familiar. Each story in Part Two is preceded by a heading, "Therapeutic Characteristics," detailing the Problems the story addresses, the Resources it seeks to develop, and the Outcomes it offers. I refer to this as the PRO-Approach (the acronym for *P*roblems, *R*esources, and *O*utcomes) and find it a pragmatic basis for building metaphors as well as for maintaining focus on the therapeutic outcome.

It is very easy at times to get caught up in the problem-focused story of the child or child's parent. Their story, as yet, has no resolution—as evidenced by the fact that they are sitting in our office discussing it. Let us take the example of a mother who brings a teenage daughter to therapy. The mother tells how the daughter is anorexic, taking drugs, mixing with undesirable peers, fighting with family members, and failing to study. She has slashed her wrists, overdosed on her mother's antidepressants, announced she is sleeping with her boyfriend (who has not won parental approval), and said she doesn't care if she gets pregnant. Her parents have tried everything, nothing has worked . . . and this teenager sits with her arms folded staring you in the eyes with a you-ain't-gonna-make-a-difference-either look.

Where do you begin? And what is the problem—the conduct issues as described by the parent, or the curtailment of independence as seen by the teenager? Even if it is possible to have a clear, empathic understanding of the problem—though perhaps that is an important starting place—is this

necessarily going to provide the mechanisms to effect change? For this reason it is therapeutically beneficial to have a clear understanding of the *outcome*. Where does the *client* want to go? How might the client want life to be happier? What does this teenager want for herself and her relationship with her parents?

Having defined the outcome, it is easier to ask the question about what resources, abilities, or means your child or adolescent—and, consequently, the character of the metaphor—needs to reach the desired outcome. Focusing on the outcome puts you in a better position to structure a healing metaphor than if you were caught up in the client's story of seemingly endless problems. In the rest of this chapter I explore how to undertake an outcome-oriented assessment, plan your metaphor, present it to the child or adolescent, adapt it to the client's responses, and generalize the outcome into real life.

1. MAKE AN OUTCOME-ORIENTED ASSESSMENT

The assessment and treatment of children has unique problems that are not as common in adult therapy. Berg and Steiner (2003) describe children as "involuntary clients" who represent a unique population with unique ethical and consent issues. Most of the children we see are younger than the age of legal consent and, in many cases, are too young to understand the processes of informed consent we may use with an adult client. The debate in the literature about this issue (Baldwin, 2001; Baldwin & Barker, 1995) falls into two main schools of thought: the liberationists who claim that children should have the same rights as adults, and the protectionists who say that children need special considerations because they are developmentally different from adults. How you seek consent will also depend upon whether you operate from an individual, family, or social model of therapy. It is not my intent to get into a debate on the legal, ethical, or philosophical issues about this matter, but rather to point out the concerns and what they mean in the pragmatics of therapy.

Who Sets the Goals?

Answering this question is likely to determine the success or failure of whatever intervention you employ. When a parent, teacher, grandparent, or caregiver leads a reluctant kid, by the hand, into our consulting room, sits him or her down, and proceeds to list off all their problems, what do we see as the goal? Is it what the parent wants the child to do or be, or what the child wants? What if the parent says that a child's behavior is causing unacceptable sibling conflict or threatening the parents' marriage, and the child says he or she does not care? What if a child says that, because kids at school are bullying him, he wants to take his father's gun and shoot them all? Do we listen to the express goal of the client or take a morally, socially responsible stance? And how do we match this with our ethical responsibilities? Exploring the child's goal in a specific, solution-focused approach with questions (like, "How would you prefer to be feeling about the other kids?" "What things can you do other than taking a gun to school?" "What do you think you can do to help form better relationships with them?") may differentiate between the actions of the bullying and the perpetrators of those actions, thus highlighting the point that the child's goal is to cope better with the bullying and relate better

with his classmates rather than to kill them. This then becomes a workable therapeutic goal, and balances the goal of the child with the well-being of others.

A story that has remained in my mind since schooldays is the tale about little Johnny who was caught kissing a girl in class. His teacher sent him to the principal, who sat behind his big, wooden desk, pulled out a large blackboard ruler, slapped it on the palm of his hand, threateningly, and said, "Listen son. I will teach you to kiss girls in class," to which little Johnny replied, "But, sir, I already know how." Johnny's teacher and principal had a problem with his behavior. Johnny did not.

In the case of Jessica, the six-year-old elective mute I discussed in Chapter 1, several people were involved in her coming to my office, and all wanted the best for her. Her grandmother, who initiated the appointment, wanted to see Jessica talking like other children. Jessica's teacher had the problem that Jessica could not be assessed—as the system specified—and wanted her to meet these requirements. Her mother did not see a problem as Jessica was garrulous at home, and would probably speak at school when she was ready. As for Jessica, it did not bother her apart from being teased by other children.

All this raises the question, "Who is the client?" Is the outcome to help the grandmother feel she has a normal granddaughter, make the teacher's job of assessment easier, accept the mother's position that nothing is wrong, relieve Jessica's discomfort about being teased, or a combination of these outcomes?

Berg and Steiner (2003, p. 14) point out that never in their combined careers (nor I in mine) have they had a child telephone and say, "Doctor, I have a problem. Can I make an appointment to sort it out?" Generally, children are brought to therapy by parents, teachers, caregivers, or custodians like social workers, police officers, or probation officers. Of course, there may be exceptions to this depending on the context in which you are working, the nature of your relationship with your clients, and the way your clients perceive your availability. One of my peer reviewers who works in a school environment said it is not uncommon for her to have students knock on her door and sit down for a chat about something that has been bothering them.

Frequently, however, the child does not know what to expect, may not have been told the purpose of the visit, or may even have been given a fabricated story. Recently a parent requested hypnosis for a child with a behavioral problem. She told the child I was a man who did magic. The son probably expected a birthday party entertainer who could pull rabbits from a hat or make things disappear. With this expectation, it was obvious I was going to be a disappointment to him from the beginning.

To follow up this question of who sets the therapeutic outcome, I would recommend the chapter entitled, "Assessing Your Clients, Agreeing on Goals" in *Children's Solution Work* (Berg & Steiner, 2003, pp. 32–47), as it provides a useful approach to negotiating goals with children and their caregivers. In addition, I have elsewhere (Burns, 2001, pp. 321–237) given a fuller description, and an adult case study, of the Outcome-Oriented Assessment that I have summarized below.

Take an Outcome-Oriented Approach

This means adopting an approach to therapy that is both future- and goal-oriented, looking in the direction that a child wants to move. Most approaches to metaphor therapy have followed a style that

parallels the problem rather than having primary focus on the outcome. One of the few exceptions, apart from this book and Burns (2001), is Lankton and Lankton's *Tales of Enchantment* (1989) that contains goal-oriented stories for both adults and children. An outcome-oriented approach allows children the experience of knowing someone has heard and understood their problem *and* has the vision to see where they want to go and how they want to feel. As such it has the advantages of providing hope, direction, and practical steps.

Make an Outcome-Oriented Assumption

I acknowledge having a bias in my assumptions about therapy. If parents bring in a child and say, "Johnny is displaying conduct problems," it is my assumption they are saying, "Show him ways of behaving more appropriately." If parents bring a teenager in and say, "Mary is anorexic," it is my assumption they are saying, "Teach her ways of eating better, or feeling better about herself." This is built on the understanding that the client wants to know more about attainment of the outcome than about having a more intimate knowledge of the problem. Holding such an assumption helps prevent the therapist from getting caught in the child's or parents' stories of an unfaltering problem and allows for an clearer perception of how to reach a solution.

Examine the Expressed Goal

If a parent says, "I want to know why he or she is behaving this way," examine that expressed goal. Does the person want an analytical interpretation of the problem (and sometimes an explanation, especially one that dispels parental guilt, may be reassuring) or some practical approaches to resolving the issue?

Shift from Negative to Positive

If a child says, "I *don't* want to be frightened any more," or "I am sick of being bullied all the time," shift your inquiries—and the child's focus—into the positive with questions like, "Then how *do* you want to feel?" or "What will be different when you are handling the bullying better?"

Anticipate the Outcome

When the therapist believes in the child's ability to reach the outcome, the child is more likely to do so, too. Your positive expectations will have a positive effect on the child's therapeutic success.

2. PLAN YOUR METAPHORS

What Is the Outcome?

Just as it is said that every story has a beginning, a middle, and end, so we can say that every metaphor has a Problem, Resources, and an Outcome. Similarly, as the writers of many stories begin by thinking of the end, so metaphors are more easily planned from the Outcome. Let me offer as an example

Story 3, "Kids Can Make a Difference: *A Teen Story*." This is a story worthy of retelling because of the outcome. Trevor, an ordinary teenager, made a difference to the lives of many destitute people. One night he was watching a television story about homeless people in his own city, as were thousands, maybe millions of others; but their stories are not told for the simple reason that although they had the same beginning as Trevor, they did not have the same ending. Trevor's story would not be a story, either, if he had continued to watch TV and not put his concerns into action. We have a helpful, repeatable, healing story because of the end or outcome.

Dr. Beck Weathers' story of survival on Mt. Everest (Story 72, "Overcoming Adversity: *A Teen Story*") would probably not have been told by several authors, including myself, if it were not for the outcome. If Dr. Weathers had been among the fifteen who died on the mountain that year it is unlikely that many of us would have heard of him. Amazingly, if he had reached the summit and descended safely we may have been less likely to know about him, as he would have been just one of the 1,200 people to do so in the last fifty years. His story is told because of the outcome. He survived against unbelievable odds after having been written off for dead several times. It is at the end that his story begins, and where it is easiest for us to start planning ours.

This then becomes the first question in planning a metaphor: What is the outcome? Where is the story going? What is it designed to achieve? What is the ending? If you have undertaken an Outcome-Oriented Assessment with the child or the parents, hopefully, you will already have a specific, positive, and achievable goal or goals toward which therapy will be directed. This is where your therapeutic interventions—metaphors or not—are headed.

The outcome is analogous to the destination on a road map where you want to journey. Once you know where you intend to go, then you can ask how do you get there.

What Are the Resources Necessary to Reach the Outcome?

Having defined the therapeutic destination, it is now a matter of planning the resources, skills, or means the child needs to reach the outcome. These are—in the analogy of the road map—the road, the vehicle, the fuel, the driving skills, and the knowledge of the road rules that are necessary to make the journey possible. Here are some steps that may be helpful for tapping into the child's resources.

Assess the Child's Existing Abilities

What skills does the child already possess that would help him or her move toward the therapeutic goal? What are the child's capabilities, and how might these be employed to reach his or her desired outcome? My reason for putting these questions first is that it seems useful, pragmatic, and efficient to use the skills and abilities a child already possesses than to start the arduous task of creating new ones from the beginning. This is a process that Milton Erickson described as *utilization*, and has been expounded upon by Duncan, Miller, and Coleman (2001); Revenstork (2001); and Yapko (2003)—but it is still well summarized in Erickson's own words as, "[e]xploring a patient's individuality to ascertain what life learnings, experiences, and mental skills are available to deal with the problem . . . [and] then utilizing these uniquely personal internal responses to achieve therapeutic goals" (Erickson & Rossi, 1979, p. 1).

Marty was a 10-year-old boy whose mother expressed concern he wasn't eating a sufficient variety of food—takeaways, bread, potatoes, and sweets were his whole diet. When I talked with Marty he said he was scared to try new foods. When I asked what things he liked doing and thought he was

good at, he said riding his bike. He had a BMX bike that he rode competitively and did tricks with, so he already possessed an ability to get on top of scary feelings. By metaphorically talking about how he'd overcome previous fear—such as when he first rode a tabletop or jumped a set of whoopee-do's, or when he tried a new trick like sliding his grinders down the bar at the skate park—he learned to generalize that ability to overcoming his fear of eating new or different foods.

Find the Exceptions

Look for the times when the child experiences, or partially experiences, the desired behavior. When is the problem absent, or lessened? When is the desired outcome present? What are the exceptions to the rule? Are there times when a young insomniac sleeps well, an elective mute speaks, a drug addict says no to a fix, a depressed child laughs, or a bully shows tenderness?

Story 57, "Finding Exceptions to Problems," describes how to build this area of resources through the example of Chrissie, who became school avoidant when other children were picking on her. Her mother helps her build the resources of thinking specifically, looking for the positives, seeking solutions, and finding exceptions to the global, negative concepts she had developed. Once the exceptions have been accessed then therapy needs to explore what circumstances facilitate the exceptions and how they can be replicated.

Build the Necessary Resources

As children are still learning, growing, and developing, each developmental stage adds to the skills necessary for appropriately managing an adult life. Coping with the death of someone close may not be an experience the child has previously encountered and, consequently, he or she may not have learned the appropriate skills of grieving and adjusting. If the necessary skills are not already within that child's repertoire then it may be appropriate to ask, what is missing? What does the child need that he or she hasn't yet acquired, and how can we help teach those skills in the therapeutic context?

"Learning New Tricks" (Story 26) talks of a boy who needs to build a skill he does not yet have—controlling his bladder. With the help of a friend's father, who owned a circus, Andy discovered it was possible to learn new skills, such as juggling. In doing so, he became aware of capabilities he had not realized he possessed, practiced improving these new abilities, and shifted his focus from his problems to his resources. It is a tale that walks the child step by step through building the necessary skills to resolve his problem and enhance his self-confidence.

Create New Possibilities

Therapy needs to be aimed at opening opportunities for new learning. By building resources, metaphor therapy creates new learning experiences at cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels. Such stories provide the opportunity to experience something that the listener has not yet experienced, and show ways that experience can be managed, or even enjoyed. This is illustrated in both the child and adolescent versions of "Heightening Pleasure" (Stories 41 and 42), which are aimed at creating new possibilities, opening awareness of sensory pleasure, and developing options for enjoyment and well-being. The story builds resources through a metaphor that aims to create new opportunities and new discoveries.

What is the Problem?

Once you have defined the outcome of the story and the means or resources needed to reach the outcome, then you can ask, "What is a problem with which the child might identify?" In our analogy of the outcome being the destination on a map and the resources the various means for getting there, the problem represents the challenges to your departure: getting time off work, affording the accommodations, deciding what to take, and so on. Once you have defined the outcome, and explored the resources necessary to reach that outcome, it is easier to ask what matching problem will engage the child, and move the story toward its therapeutic goal.

The types of questions that are helpful for the therapist to ask here are: What metaphoric problem will match the problem of the child? What is a crisis, or challenge, with which the young listener may identify? I find it helpful to keep in mind that the problem is simply the vehicle, or starting point, to the story. It serves as the basis to move on to the essence of the metaphor—developing the resources and reaching the outcome.

Story 73, "Collaborative Problem Solving," presents a matching metaphor that is designed to parallel the child listener in age, gender, and experiences as well as in the problem, which, in this case, is insomnia. Having engaged the child in the storytelling process, it then becomes possible to explore the resources necessary to reach the outcome. A similar example can be found among the children's stories in Chapter 13, Story 99, "When There Is Nothing I Can Do."

Who Is the Character?

The next thing you need to ask in planning your metaphor is, "What character or characters will best communicate these therapeutic messages to the child?" If the outcome is greater confidence or self-assertiveness, and the child needs to learn skills to achieve this, the problem then could be one of fear or lack of assertion, so you may choose a timid mouse, afraid of the dark, who through observing what others do learns to sleep comfortably (Story 69), or a boy, afraid of snorkeling, who discovers he can swim safely with the world's biggest shark (Story 30), or a ghost who cannot scare but learns how to do so (Story 91). In the character you need a figure that can represent the problem, has the ability to build on existing resources (or develop new ones), and can reach the desired outcome. Given these three basic requirements, you have considerable choice. You may choose from the following possibilities:

- An animal, as in Story 8, about a mule making the most of what it is given; Story 19, about a giraffe learning to accept itself; or Story 75, about a bird solving a problem;
- A child, like a boy reminding his father he is only nine years old in Story 84, a girl negotiating a solution in Story 35, or a teenager facing a moral dilemma in Story 62;
- An imaginative character, such as Captain Empowerment of Story 64, or others like Wally the Wacky Wizard or the grumpy genie that we have discussed previously;
- A sports or hero figure, as described in the section "Metaphors Built on Heroes" in Chapter 15; or
- An archetypal character, like the jester in the struggle between a king and queen that results in their learning to share (Story 77), the spaceship captain who teaches empowerment

(Story 64), or the imaginative African explorer learning to weigh up the possibilities and make a decision (Story 67).

In addition to the character's needing to be capable of communicating the three therapeutic characteristics of the story, it needs to be a figure with which the child can identify. Here it helps to have learned about some of the interests, hobbies, or sports of the child. Does he have a pet, or relate well with animals? Is she a social or gregarious young person who may enjoy a tale about other children? Does he read science fiction or fantasy, or play computer games from which you might build a character of imagination? Has she an interest in sports, pop music, or movies stars on which you could develop a story about a hero figure? Is he or she likely to relate to a character that is a match in age, gender, and personal characteristics, or to an archetypal figure such as mentioned previously?

While the character is not the essence of the healing story, it is an important vehicle for communicating the story in a way that involves the child in the process and outcome. Hence, the character can change to best suit and engage the listener. Though the therapeutic characteristics of Stories 31 and 32 ("Caught in the Middle") are almost identical, the character in the version for children is a doll and the one for adolescents is a teenage girl. The character could just as easily be a space toy, a precious teddy bear, a work of valuable art, or a teenage boy. The story idea on which I built "Seeking Happiness" (Story 10) had a king as its main character. He became a troubled tycoon—more modern and audience relevant—in the version that appears in *Standing without Shoes* (Burns & Street, 2003), while in the story told here in Chapter 4 the character is a princess.

3. PRESENT YOUR METAPHORS

If there is a basic, simple suggestion for working with metaphors, it is this: Plan from the Outcome, and present from the Problem. When I am structuring a metaphor in my mind during a therapy session, jotting it down on paper for the next therapy session, or thinking about it as I drive to work, I plan the Outcome first, the Resources second, and the Problem last. As I tell it to the child, however, I begin with the Problem, follow with the Resources that the character develops and utilizes, and conclude with the Outcome.

Present the Problem

The purpose of this stage of the metaphor is to engage the young listener in a search for identification and meaning, a process the literature describes as a search phenomenon in which the listener may ask, "How does this story relate to me?" and begin to seek the personal relevance of the tale. Stories are thus like a projective test. They offer a relatively ambiguous stimulus on which the perceiver is likely to place a meaning. The more the child is engaged with the character and problem of the story, the more he or she is likely to engage with the outcome. Therefore, if the presentation of the problem is serving its function, you may expect the child to be interested and involved, with a fixation of visual focus, a stillness of bodily movements, a slight nod of the head, or even a verbal expression like, "Yes, that's how I feel." At this point the story does not offer a solution but simply pre-

sents the problem, engages the listener, and creates some mystery about what the character might do to find a resolution.

Describe and Develop the Resources

In this part of the story the child is guided through ways to access the abilities he or she already has, reactivate past skills, build on the exceptions to the problem, or develop new means to overcome the challenge—the resources you have decided on in the planning stage. The character, like the listener, may try ways of managing an old problem and fail, discover exceptions to what he or she had come to think of as the rules, or try new approaches and strategies. It is a stage in which the character comes to acknowledge, be aware of, and utilize the tools that he or she has available. It is also a process of discovery, finding how to make use of the available resources, learning not just what the tools are but how to employ them in a practical and helpful way. Here the child is assisted to develop useful processes of adaptation, change, learning, and discovery that will guide them toward a satisfactory outcome.

Offer an Outcome

The final step in telling the tale is the attainment of the specific therapeutic goals that have been negotiated in the Outcome-Oriented Assessment. This may not be the complete goal or the total acquisition of everything the client desires, but may be one of those specific steps leading in the desired direction.

When it comes to how you end the story, there are several possibilities:

- It may end in a clear, direct, and even poignant outcome, as in the message about looking after yourself (Story 5) or not flying off the handle (Story 47).
- The outcome may be ambiguous, allowing the child to search for his or her own meaning—such as in Story 25, "Build on What You Are Good At," which might leave the child to ponder, "What am I good at, and how can I build on that?"
- The story may not reach a conclusion at all but invite the child to find his or her own, as in Story 73, "Collaborative Problem Solving."

At the end, the character discovers what it feels like to reach his or her objective. He may feel confident in just making one small step toward what had previously seemed an unobtainable objective. She may discover what differences it makes to the ways that she is thinking, feeling, and doing things. He might look forward to replicating those experiences again in the future so that the outcome is not just a one-time achievement. Or she may simply enjoy the process of learning and discovering.

We need to be mindful that our young listeners may not necessarily interpret the story in the way in which we had intended it to be heard. They may project a meaning into the story that we, the therapist, had not necessarily intended to communicate. If this is the case, it is important to work with the interpretation the child derives from the story, for that may have greater impact and meaning than the message we had planned. In our storytelling we need to be flexible enough to build on the child's meanings in a way that constructively helps that child move toward the desired therapeutic goal.

In sum, a simple guide is to *plan* the metaphor in the order Outcome, Resources, Problem, and Character, then *present* or tell the metaphor as a story that moves from the Problem, through the Resources, to the Outcome. In this process, it may be helpful to revisit the guidelines for effective storytelling that I discussed in Chapter 2, along with the use of the storyteller's voice. My encouragement is that you experiment with these guidelines to help enhance the effectiveness of the therapeutic message. Test them out, see the things that work for you and your clients. Use those things that help engage your listeners and involve them in the process of storytelling. Discard those that do not.

4. STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN

It is a useful skill for a therapist to be a little dissociative, by which I mean the ability for one part of you to be engaged fully in the storytelling process with the child, and another part to be standing back a little, observing the child's responses and adapting your tale to their needs. As you tell the tale, you may want to look for, and listen to, the individual reactions that communicate whether your tale is having an impact or missing the mark. Is the child sitting still, looking at you wide-eyed, appearing curious about what happens next? or restless, swinging his legs, fidgeting with her fingers, gazing around the room to find something more interesting? And, when you have made the observation, what do you do with it?

If signs of distraction are present, it is usually a good indication that a child is not engaged in the therapeutic process, or has not identified with the story and, as a result, your words may be falling on deaf ears. Part of the art of good storytelling is the flexibility to adapt and adjust to the needs of the listener and the situation with questions to yourself, like, do I incorporate the child's behavior into the story and have the character reflect the distraction that the child is experiencing? Do I change the story in an attempt to engage the child more? Do I stop and ask the child, if he were the character, what he might do at this point of the story? Do I change the character or problem to better match the interests, hobbies, or sporting activities of my listener? These are the type of questions that will help keep your story relevant and the outcome beneficial. So in saying "stop, look, and listen," I want to emphasize the value of taking a mental pause in your storytelling to observe what is happening for your listener, then adapt and adjust your tale, if necessary, for the effectiveness of the story and benefit of the listener.

5. GROUND THE STORY IN REALITY

In the northern part of Australia there is an Aboriginal value legend that is soundly grounded in the reality of the local environment. The story tells of a young man who attempted to have incest with his sister high on a cliff ledge. In struggling to get free, the girl fell over the cliff—but not before plucking a feather from her brother's headband. The feather landed on the cliff top and was petrified into the rocks. The elders chased after the young man and, as he fled, he ran through a fire that burned his skin, plunged into a waterhole, and turned into a crocodile, his skin hard, wrinkly, and darkened from the burns. Every time one of the tribe walk by the cliff and see the feather-shaped rock at the

top, or wander by the waterhole and see the wrinkly-backed crocodile still trying to hide in the waters, there is an instant reminder of the message of the story: Incest is taboo.

If you can build the story in the reality of your child's experience it helps to confirm the message and outcome of the story. If your story incorporates a character children may see on TV, is set in a suburb like their own, relates to a sport that they play, or tells of characters similar to their friends, then every time they engage in or interact with those variables there is a reminder of the story and its outcome.

EXERCISE 16.1 SUMMARY: STEPS FOR USING HEALING STORIES

- *Step 1. Make an Outcome-Oriented Assessment.* If you have an assumption of outcome and agree on a goal that is specific and positive, then it will be easier to ensure therapeutic success whether working with healing stories or any other therapeutic intervention.
- *Step 2. Plan your metaphors.* First, assess the Outcome. Look at where the story is going. Second, define the Resources and means necessary to reach the child's outcome. Having done this, you can then explore the presenting Problem and the character necessary to carry the story through to its conclusion.
- *Step 3. Present your metaphors.* In telling the tale, you will tell it in the reverse of what you have planned, beginning first with the Problem, describing and developing the necessary Resources, and, finally, offering appropriate Outcomes.
- *Step 4. Stop, look, and listen.* Observe your client. Assess the way the story is being received and what needs to be adapted and changed to make it meaningful and useful for the child.
- *Step 5. Ground the story in reality.* This helps make listening to the story more engaging for the child and also helps generalize the benefits into the child's day-to-day life.

CHAPTER 17

Teaching Parents to Use Healing Stories

The emphasis of this book so far has been on professional caregivers telling therapeutic tales either *to* or in collaboration *with* children. However, parents, grandparents, and significant others in the life of the child may have greater contact and intimacy with the child than a therapist who is only available for a once-a-week consultation. If we can teach parents (the term I will use to include all close persons involved in the child's day-to-day life) to relate healing stories as they share a family meal, sit on a bedside at night, or drive along in a car, the benefits of storytelling can be enhanced through more exposure to therapeutic tales and better parent-child communication. But first, let me address an issue that does not really fall within the parameters of this book, yet is something of which every therapist in the child and adolescent areas needs to be cognizant, and which it would be remiss of me to overlook—the role of parents in influencing the conduct or behavior of their children.

STORIES *FOR* PARENTS AND PARENTING

While most parents approach the role of parenting with good intentions and the best desires for their children, not all have learned, or had appropriate role models in, effective parenting skills. If we look at the specific area of children with conduct issues, Dadds, Maujean, and Fraser say, "Conduct problems of aggression, stealing, non-compliance, lying and rule violations are among the most frequent referrals to mental health clinics for children and adolescents" (2003, p. 238). While there is a range of risk factors for conduct disorders that cover the epidemiological, developmental, social, educational, and other types (Loeber & Farrington, 2000), Dadds, Maujean, and Fraser are quite specific

when they say, "A wealth of research has shown links between parenting style and child behaviour, and the development of conduct problems in young children" (2003, p. 238). In fact, they state that perhaps the most well-established risk variable is exposure to problematic parenting. Brinkmeyer and Eyberg concur when they say, "The combination of poor parent-child attachment and poor child behaviour management skills predicts more severe disruptive behaviour than either factor alone" (2003, p. 205). What this means in practice is that, if a child comes into our office with conduct problems, whether they are simple annoyances to the family or something as significant as an act of criminal behavior, by and large the causes are likely to be found in the parenting styles with which they have been raised and, if this is so, it is toward the parenting style that therapy is best directed. Scott Sells, in an article entitled "Getting Through to Resistant Parents," is also specific when he says, "Parents who lack good parenting skills tend to respond to their children's bad behavior by repeating the same, ineffective methods—threatening punishment, raising their voices, nagging, etc." (2003, p. 27). If we think about what this means in terms of treatment, it quickly falls back to one of the old adages in pediatric psychotherapy: You work with the parents and their parenting skills rather than the child. Sells draws the conclusion that one solution is to show the parents "how to stop an out-of-control kid with a step-by-step road map," with the therapist adopting the role of a "family coach" (p. 27). Helping parents change their behavior has a strong likelihood of helping children change theirs.

There are a number of approaches, with good empirical validation, for modifying parental styles in child management (e.g., Brinkmeyer & Eyberg, 2003; Sanders, 1999; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003). Some authors, such as Selekman (1997, 2002), see the family as the appropriate unit for change rather than the individual child or parents by themselves. While there is a sound rational and empirical basis for parental and family interventions, they do not fall within the scope of this text but are important to bear in mind by all child and adolescent therapists.

Let us say a parent brings a child to your office with a problem of nocturnal enuresis, but you soon discover the child is lying awake at night, too frightened to go to sleep or go to the toilet, because Mom and Dad are fighting. Where does the problem lie, with the bedwetting child, or the fighting parents? And who is your client? Here I can do no more than spotlight this problem as one that child and adolescent therapists need to be mindful of, and suggest that metaphors *for* the parents may be a helpful method for gift-wrapping the message of change and improved parenting skills in a way that engages their desire to overcome the problem. Depending on the circumstances and the players, it may be possible to introduce a metaphor along the lines of, "Recently I saw another boy about Johnny's age who was experiencing a similar problem of bedwetting. Of course, there are a number of good therapies to help with this type of problem now, and Johnny's parents were eager to see it fixed. I found it interesting when they raised the question of what they could do to help, so we began to discuss the possibilities. If I asked you, what would you guess are the things they discussed? . . . And the ways they suggested to help resolve them? . . ."

Planning and presenting stories for working *with* parents or families on problems in the parent-child relationship, or with parents who are a risk factor in the child's presenting problem follows the same principles that were discussed in the preceding chapter about preparing and presenting healing stories for children. If you would like to find out more about working with metaphor therapy for adults, you may find Lankton and Lankton (1986), Kopp (1995), and Burns (2001) useful books.

SOME VALUES OF TEACHING PARENTS TO USE METAPHORS

Yapko laments that "Storytelling seems to have become an art on the decline" (2003, p. 322). He adds that television has so saturated our society that we have become passive viewers of experience and that interactions with people have diminished as we spend more time "talking" to computers. Apart from this concern that the personal, interactive *art* of storytelling is being lost, I have an added concern that the *content* or *nature* of the stories children hear is also changing. Many computer games are based on stories of violence and aggression, while many television programs—even cartoons—tell tales of war, murder, violence, and disturbed relationships. They are based on a principle of entertainment rather than on the traditional principles of using stories to communicate values and essential life skills.

The nature of the media-based stories that we, and our children, hear *does* have an impact. It effects how we behave and how we respond, even if there may be many individual variations in the types of responses we make. If not, would companies spend so much on advertising the stories of their products and services? With the sort of stories that our children are hearing from so many different sources in their life, we need to ask whether one story, told once in a therapist's office, is going to counterbalance the stories children hear through television news items, computer games, disturbed family relationships, pop songs, or violent schoolyard behavior. It may, but it may not. However,within this age of technology we can continue to tell our children helpful, adaptive stories, to reclaim the art of storytelling and communicate the nature of stories that are judged appropriate by informed parents, teachers, or therapists. Hearing them, with reasonable frequency, from persons a child is close to, loves, or respects in the context of a caring relationship can enhance their potency. Thus, it seems logical and desirable to teach parents and other caregivers to do for their children what we as therapists or teachers might do.

Enhancing Parent-Child Relationships

At the beginning of this book we looked at the intimacy of the relationship formed when a grandparent sits a child on his or her lap and reads a story, or when a parent sits by a child's bedside at night to tell a tale that may precede a restful slumber. In such situations, there is a special bonding, closeness, and intimacy that exist between teller and listener. When my grandson was younger and I picked him up for our special times together, the words were spilling out of his mouth almost before he was in his seat and had the seat belt fastened: "Tell me a Fred Mouse story." Fred Mouse helped bond us in a unique relationship. He was a special character who existed only for the two of us, and through whom we could journey on adventures, reflect on experiences of our day, discover new learnings, and explore ways of resolving the problems of childhood. By inviting parents to story-tell, you are indirectly encouraging a process for enhancing the parent-child relationship.

Learning from the Main Teachers

Usually, parents are the main teachers in a young child's life. In general, they are the ones who are there from birth, the ones who spend the most time with the child, and the ones who provide the role model for how to behave, interact, and respond to life's various situations. They communicate

stories, in words and behaviors, that will teach the child about values, problem-solving, relationships, and other necessary life skills—whether helpful or not. I have long considered the most important role in life as that of being a parent, of educating our children, for this determines their future—and, indeed, the future of the world. If we are to help educate parents in effective ways of communicating the values they want to offer their children, the methods for coping with various life challenges, or the skills for enjoying a happy existence, we would do well to teach them the strategies for effective storytelling. In this way children can learn from the key teachers of their lives, the people who are primarily responsible for their upbringing and for equipping them with the skills necessary for life's journey.

Creating Quality Time

In the role of parenthood it is easy to get caught up in all of life's day-to-day responsibilities and demands: time and stresses of work, mortgage repayments, demands of looking after a household, and so on. While a child is quietly sitting watching TV or playing a computer game, it is easy to take the opportunity to get on with the chores that "have" to be done, like washing the dishes, sweeping the floor, mowing the lawn, or finishing off a brought-home work project on the laptop . . . and thus miss having quality time with your child.

Rachel Remen based the title of her delightful book, *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal* (1996), on the recollection that when she was a young child, her family would sit around the kitchen table, over the evening meal, telling their stories of the day. She, like Yapko, laments the loss of wisdom shared through those family stories, which she sees as important in the experience of learning and healthy maturation. This adds another dimension. It is not just the *art* of storytelling and the *content* of the stories, but the *process* in which the teller and listener are permitted uninterrupted quality time together to share an enjoyable, learning experience.

Communicating Effectively

Some years back I used to run parents' and children's groups in effective parenting skills. When I asked parents and children separately what changes they thought would help improve the parent-child relationship, the answer was almost universal. Children said things would be better if only their parents stopped nagging them—a matter that was nearly always at the top of their lists. Parents, on the other hand, said things would be better if they did not have to keep nagging at their children—a top item on *their* lists. This fascinated me. Both saw nagging as a common problem in their relationship, both found it undesirable, yet both continued to do the things that kept the pattern going. For parent and child alike, nagging had become a major, common, but undesired pattern in their communication.

Communicating with stories may avoid the problem of parents' lecturing, preaching, or nagging. Certainly, there are times when direct and clear communications are desirable, such as if your child is about to step into the road in front of a bus. This is *not* the time to relate a lengthy and indirect tale about the undesirability of stepping in front of a bus or the means for avoiding it. However, there are other times when the indirection of metaphoric stories is an appropriate, and effective, method of communication that may avoid the lecturing, preaching, or nagging. Jeffery Zeig, Director of The Milton H Erickson Foundation (2004, in personal correspondence), said that informa-

tion may help youngsters *do* different things but stories create experiences that enable them to *be* different.

Encouraging Desired Behaviors

Another value for communicating with therapeutically crafted stories is that, in the process, they teach children patterns of behavior and skills that are, hopefully, useful for their maturation. Storytelling is not authoritarian and thus enables a greater feeling of equality in the relationship. The child is not being told what to think, feel, or do but is encouraged to think independently. An opportunity is available to his or her own ideas and attitudes. Metaphoric stories, thus, help foster greater problem-solving and decision-making skills. What is the character going to do? How is she or he going to solve this problem? Will this approach or that approach work best? What are the likely outcomes?

Such questions have the child searching for answers, testing his or her own potential solutions against those of the character, finding what is helpful and what is not. In this process of creating possibilities, weighing up options, and looking for solutions, the child is learning the skills of decision-making. What does the character need to do to fix the problem? How may he or she find the solution? In journeying with a character through these questions, children learn to weigh the possibilities and probabilities and to make their own considered judgments, and thus prepare themselves for the independent decision-making skills they will need throughout life's journey.

Learning with Enjoyment

As I look back on my school days, two teachers stand out for having made the process of education positive and enjoyable for me. One was from elementary school and the other from high school. Both taught with stories, and some of those stories I remember to this day. While we are a species self-protectively equipped to learn quickly from situations of fear and trauma, most of our learning is enhanced through an environment that is positive, enjoyable, and supportive. Storytelling can contribute to those educational characteristics, creating a pleasant learning experience for both parent and child. It has the potential to be a joyful, humorous, fun process for relating and learning.

STEPS FOR TEACHING PARENTS STORYTELLING

The steps for teaching parents to tell stories that communicate values, information, healing, or other life lessons are much the same as I have provided for therapists in the preceding chapter. Here I present them more in the language and style that I might use for communicating them to a parent.

Step 1: *Find the Outcome for the Story*

You may want to choose a value, a message, or something that *you* think may be helpful for your child, or you can discuss the outcome of the story *with the child* through questions like, "If I told you a story about Fred Mouse (or whoever) tonight, what would you like to happen in the end? How would you like him to feel? What would you like him to do differently?"

(The theme or outcome of the story may be defined with the parents in the therapy sessions, and the parents can then be coached through the following steps.)

Step 2: *Plan the Story*

It is said that every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. For healing stories I refer to the beginning as the Problem, the middle as the Resources, and the end as the Outcome—something I call the PRO-Approach. When planning a story, I find it easiest to begin at the end, finding the Outcome first, as I suggested in Step 1. Next you need to ask, what is the middle? What skills, progression of steps, or Resources does the character need to reach its goal? Third, what is the beginning of the story? What Problem or challenge does the character need to overcome? Fourth, who is the character? What sort of character will help communicate the story's message? If you want a warm, fuzzy, cuddly ending to the story, you may choose a teddy bear or one of your child's pets. If the story is communicating a message of strength, a character like an elephant or a superhero might be a better choice.

(In working with a parent, it helps at this point to plan an actual story with her or him that can be taken home and told to the child between therapy sessions. In the follow-up session you may want to know how the child responded to the story, how the parent felt in telling it, what they noticed about the parent-child relationship, and how they might continue or build on this experience.)

Step 3: *Present the Story*

Tell it from the beginning (the challenge or Problem). Describe the steps the character needs to take or the skills it needs to develop to reach the story's goal (the Resources). Conclude with the ending (the Outcome).

(Generally, I want to keep this process as simple as possible to make it easy for the parents to follow, ensuring their successful storytelling, and building their feelings of confidence to continue. When they are confident, you can suggest Step 4 (next) and introduce them to the guidelines for storytelling and the storyteller's voice, as in Chapter 2.)

Step 4: *Stop, Look, and Listen*

Observe how your child is responding to the story. Is he or she interested or involved? Is he or she bored and fidgety, or aroused and excited? Is he or she dozing or sleeping? If this is the desired effect of the story, then keep doing what you are doing. If not, then change the direction of your tale or engage the child in how it might be improved.

(You can ask parents to record one or two of their storytelling sessions on tape and bring it with them to an appointment if feedback is required.)

AN EXAMPLE OF EFFECTIVE PARENTAL STORYTELLING

The effective use of parental storytelling was recently demonstrated to me in an e-mail I received from the mother of a boy who was part of the project from which I gathered the stories in Chapter

13, "Kids' Own Healing Stories." At the time of this story he was an eight-year-old who was terrified of birthday parties and never wanted to attend them (the Problem). His mother created a beautiful story-poem that follows the steps I've just described. First, she defined the Outcomes that her son wanted: He would prefer to go to birthday parties, be excited about the anticipation, and enjoy the experience of being there. She was then faced with the question of what steps the child in the story would need to go through to move from fear to enjoyment. She tapped into a skill or Resource that her son already possessed—juggling. Now, she had the basic ingredients—Outcome, Resources, and Problem—for crafting the delightful story that follows.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

I'm on my way to a birthday party
but I'm feeling a little sad
dressed in all my party clothes
with a present in my bag.

I'm not used to being without my mum
and I'm not at all that sure
that I want to be dropped off, at this party
and collected back at four.

We get there and I get out of the car
the walk to the house seems very far
my mother rings the bell on the door
a grown up comes out standing tall
they have a chat and say, "pick-up's at four"
I see balloons and streamers they line the hall

My mum gives me a kiss and a bit of a squeeze
I feel very sad and I've got trembling knees
I try to be brave 'cause now it's too late
my mother has just driven out of the gates

The birthday boy he is eight today
he and my friends come up and say,
"Come on out the back so we can play"
but I'm not convinced I want to stay

I turn to my friend and give him his present
he grabs it unwraps it and squeals with delight
"A set of monster glow-in-the-dark PJs
THANKS! I'll wear them tonight"

"Come and see my new racing car from my mum and dad
with these controls it goes back and forwards, it's really not bad"
but while I'm looking at his spaceship with the pop-up dome
I'm really wishing that I was back at home

In walks his mother and says, "Food is on the table"
and I think to myself, "Eat! Oh I'll never be able"
but you wouldn't believe it, what a great spread
it had all of my favorites on it, including fairy bread

I grabbed a party plate and piled it all up
then poured my own drink in a red plastic cup
we all finished eating, then an adult announced a surprise
"Kids go out the back, a magician's arrived"

Sitting all in a circle, we watch his great tricks
as he waved his wand,
we all laughed,
as the rabbit in the hat, escaped on the grass

"I need a volunteer, who could try juggling these balls"
I knew I could do it, as I've done it before
my uncle has a fruit and veggie shop, which I visit nearly everyday
where he's always juggling oranges and other things from his neat displays

And before I knew why
my hand was up and pointing to the sky
I was feeling full of confidence and no longer was I shy
I took hold of the balls and would do my uncle proud
as I did my juggling tricks, in front of a roaring crowd

Everyone was clapping and cheering
and they all thought I was great
then the magician said "I'm sorry kids
but it's getting very late"

He packed up all his bags of tricks
and said that he must go
he would like to thank all the kids, especially me
for helping with his show

We all played one more game of pass the parcel on the floor
then a grown up came into the room, and said "It's five to four"
I can't remember the last time that I had so much fun
I looked up at the doorway, and saw my smiling mum
arriving at the time she said, and not a minute late
before I knew, with a lolly bag, we were driving out the gate

I didn't want to go home, I wanted to stay longer
with all that delicious party food, you'd never die from hunger
but mum said there'll be other parties, that I'll get to go to
some kids might have them at their home, some maybe a trip to the zoo

where they'll blow out candles and sing the birthday song
and I will stand around amongst them and get to sing along

And now and again in the letterbox, hand delivered there will be
a letter that is addressed especially to me
I always open it up, in great anticipation
and am very excited when I read in big letters
INVITATION!!

HELPING PARENTS BUILD STORYTELLING SKILLS

Suggest Meeting with Storytellers

For parents who want to continue the processes of therapeutic storytelling initiated in your office, or those who want to communicate values, life experiences, and skills of management to their children through stories, there are several opportunities for them to develop the art, content, and processes of storytelling. First, there are storytellers' guilds throughout many countries that hold conferences and meetings in which the art of storytelling in both entertainment and therapy is discussed and practiced. Second, local libraries at times hold story-reading and storytelling sessions. Third, there are writers' groups that run workshops and conferences for people interested in creating and developing story ideas. These may help parents broaden and build their skills for communicating with children.

Recommend Books

There are two categories of books that may be beneficial. First, those that teach how to tell stories, and second, those that provide ideas or examples of metaphoric tales. In this book I have attempted to combine the art of storytelling with steps for creating outcome-oriented stories and a collection of illustrative story ideas. Though primarily directed toward therapists, it may contain helpful information for parents, grandparents, teachers, or caregivers who want to learn more about working with stories. As there are many storybooks for children, you as a therapist may like to check out your local bookshops or libraries to keep abreast of current publications to recommend to parents, or, alternatively, set parents the task of looking for books that meet their child's needs, whether they be overcoming anxiety, dealing with illness, managing anger, adjusting to the physical and emotional changes of puberty, dealing with peer pressure, building better social relationships, or whatever is personally relevant for the child. A guide to some of these is provided in the "Resources, References, and Other Sources of Metaphoric Stories" following Story 101, "Will You Be My Teacher?"

Create a Role Model

It may be useful to provide parents with a role model for communicating in metaphors. This can be done in several ways. First, you can coach parents in the PRO-Approach for storytelling, as I described in this chapter.

Second, it can be useful to have parents sit in on the metaphor therapy you are providing for their child, if this is appropriate. Sometimes it might not be appropriate if the child has confided things he or she does not wish to express in front of parents, or has a sense of autonomy about working through the situation without a parental figure looking over his or her shoulder. When a parent is included, I find it helps if you carefully describe to them, step by step, what led you to creating the metaphor, how you developed the story, and why you presented it in the way that you did. You cannot expect that by sitting in on just one session a parent will understand the processes you have developed over years of study, training, and practice.

Third, review and revise the stories a parent is using. Spend some time with the parents, asking them about the stories they have used. Listen to the tape they have recorded, or have them tell the story to you in the way they did to their child. Explore whether their tales still meet the outcome goals, or whether those goals—and the stories—need to be adjusted as the child progresses. Examine the resources being offered. Are they still relevant? Is there more that might be helpful? What do you know from your own clinical experience and the literature that might be useful to add to their stories?

Encourage Collaboration with the Child

For parents to work collaboratively and interactively with their child in the development of a healing story can enhance the parent-child relationship as well as the healing and teaching characteristics of the story. You may encourage parents and children to make a video of the story, paint it, tell it in play with a favorite toy or doll, enact it in drama, or make it into a storybook together.

EXERCISE 17.1 TEACHING PARENTS TO USE HEALING STORIES

- Practice coaching parents in the use of storytelling and metaphor.
- It may help to walk them through the section on "Steps for Teaching Parents Storytelling."
- Select the content of the story collaboratively with the parent or parents.
- Have them tell the story to the child or to you, or to audiotape it if told at home.
- Offer constructive feedback for them to continue using healing stories.

. . . AND THE STORY CONTINUES

Life is *rich* with stories: stories in theater, stories in books, stories in families, stories in our clients, stories in our experience . . . stories in life itself. If there remains just one more thing to say, it is something I hope has been underlying all that you have read so far. It is: Enjoy. Enjoy the process of searching for, reading, and collecting story ideas. Enjoy the preparation, planning, and presenting of your own healing stories. Enjoy observing the benefits of using stories in teaching and therapy. Enjoy the outcomes of your work and, above all, enjoy the children and adolescents with

whom you work. They *can* relate in fun ways and, for those who may have lost some of the skills to do so, you *can* model warm, loving, playful, fun interactions for them through your own enjoyment.

Thank you for joining me on this exploration of healing stories. I wish you well in your work and hope that your life stories are full of helpful, healthy journeys and destinations. How could I end but with the following story?

STORY 101

Will You Be My Teacher?

Once upon a time there was a storyteller, a very famous storyteller but also a very sad storyteller, for he had lost his story. No longer could he wander from village to village entertaining and informing people, and so he climbed a solitary hill, sat on a rock, and stared miserably at his feet.

Now, the hill that he picked was not as solitary as he had thought. It was the summer field for a herd of grazing goats that were tended by a young girl who recognized the sad storyteller sitting on a rock and staring miserably at his feet. She had sat at his feet in the village square, listening to his entrancing tales. Now she walked up and asked, kindly, "You look so sad, Mr. Storyteller. What's wrong?"

"I have lost my story," came the dejected reply.

"How could you lose a story?" asked the incredulous girl. She could see how it might be possible to lose a goat or a school bag, but then she remembered how there were jokes she heard at school from time to time and had forgotten by the time she got home.

"My master taught me all his stories," answered the storyteller, his eyes still absently studying the ground at his feet, "and I diligently learned them all, every one, word for word. The villagers have heard them all now and want something new, but I have nothing new to tell them. I don't have a story of my own."

"What are you looking at?" asked the girl as if ignoring what the storyteller had said.

"Nothing," was the sad reply.

"Before your eyes, I see a glistening blade of grass existing in the dry summer ground," she commented. "Have you wondered what story it may have to tell? How it began life as a seed cast on the ground, not knowing whether it would survive or thrive, powerless to control the rain and sunshine it needed to live. Its roots had to search to find pathways into the harsh soil, its blade reached up for the light of the sun, and it never gave up doing what it did best. Even if one of my goats ate it back,

it would not give up but grow to feed another goat on another day. In fact, as you watch it—though it may be too subtle to see—it continues to grow before your eyes. It, in turn, will cast a seed, perhaps like storytellers do, that will grow into another blade to continue not only its own life but the life it gives to my goats and the life they, in turn, give to my family."

The storyteller looked at the blade as if, though he had been staring at it before, he now saw it for the first time.

"What else do you see?" she asked.

The storyteller lifted his head to see in front of him a long-horned goat whose old yellow eyes looked curiously into his own. "Nothing but this scrawny old goat," he said.

"Even this scrawny old goat has a story to tell. She was the first one my poor parents worked hard, and saved carefully, to buy. She has produced most of this herd that you see now, yet her life has not been easy. She has fought bravely against foxes but still has seen some of her kids stolen and eaten. She has lived through droughts when others animals were dying. She has freely shared her milk with us to drink, sell, and use to make cheese, becoming as close a friend to our family as any human. With thanks to her, we—and she—can now live comfortably.

"And what are you feeling?" asked the young goatherd, again seeming to change the subject.

"Eh, nothing," responded the storyteller a little less confidently, at first sure he felt nothing except his sadness but then wondering if he could feel the firmness of the rock on which he sat. *Might the rock have a story to tell of strength, stability, and endurance?* he found himself asking. If he thought about it, perhaps he could feel the warmth of the summer sun. *Might the sun have its story of nurturing, of bringing light into darkness, or of giving life to the planet?* Yes, he could feel the caress of the breeze. *What a mischievous tale of fickle moods the wind could weave with its gentle power to assist boats across oceans and its howling hurricanes that destroy homes. What could it tell of balancing moods, being responsible for actions, or doing good instead of evil?*

The girl saw from the look in the storyteller's eyes that she needn't ask any more questions. Waving her arms in a big circle that seemed to encompass the whole of the universe, she said, "Everything, everyone, has their own story."

My story of today began in a valley of despair, thought the storyteller, looking down the hill. *I traversed new territory, climbing steep slopes and outcrops of rocks, seeking solitude, only to find a pupil who helped me to open my eyes and stand on a summit of hope.*

Looking toward the young goatherd, the storyteller asked, "Will you continue to be my teacher?"

Resources, References, and Other Sources of Metaphoric Stories

REFERENCES AND PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE ON METAPHORS

In the professional literature there are many books and journal articles about metaphors that provide research into metaphor processing, offer case histories, and give examples and sources of metaphors. Throughout the text of this book, I have minimized the amount of referencing and reiteration of other people's research so as to give maximum space to the stories and the techniques for using them. To help you further explore the science, theory, styles, and applications of healing stories, I have sought to provide a comprehensive bibliography, which includes a broad cross-section of the literature (some of which takes a different orientation than does my own). In this section are all the articles and books I have cited in the text. Some of them are repeated in following sections so as to make them readily accessible both alphabetically and thematically.

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Yapko, M. D. (1999). *Hand-me-down Blues: How to stop depression from spreading in families*. New York: Golden Books.
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STORYTELLING, METAPHORS, AND THERAPY FOR CHILDREN

Metaphors are easily, and appropriately, incorporated into therapy for children. While this list is far from comprehensive, it is a starting point to give you an idea of the sort of literature available and the places you can begin to look for further resource material. It covers the art of storytelling, metaphors specifically written for children, and various approaches to child/adolescent therapy.

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Amos, J. (1994b). *Confident*. Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn.
Amos, J. (1994c). *Happy*. Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn.
Amos, J. (1997). *Lonely: Stories about feelings and how to cope with them*. Bath, U.K.: Cherrytree Books.
Amos, J., & Spenceley, A. (1997a). *Owning up*. Bath, U.K.: Cherrytree Books.
Amos, J., & Spenceley, A. (1997b). *Why fight?* Slough, U.K.: Cherrytree Books.
Barton, B., & Booth, D. (1990). *Stories in the classroom: Storytelling, reading aloud, and roleplaying with children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
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Bloomquist, M. L., & Schnell, S. V. (2002). *Helping children with aggression and conduct problems: Best practices for intervention*. New York: Guilford Press.
Braithwaite, A. (1997). *Feeling angry*. London: A&C Black.

Briggs, D. (1993). *Toddler storytime programs*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

Brink, N. E. (2002). *Grendel and his mother: Healing the traumas of childhood through dreams, imagery, and hypnosis*. Amityville, NY: Baywood.

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Goforth, F., & Spillman, C. (1994). *Using folk literature in the classroom*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.

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Johnston, M. (1996). *Dealing with Insults*. New York: Powerkids Press.

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MacDonald, M. R. (1995a). *Bookplay: 101 creative themes to share with young children*. Northhaven, CT: Library Professional Publications.

MacDonald, M. R. (1995b). *A parent's guide to storytelling*. New York: HarperCollins.

Malgady, R. G., & Costantino, G. (2003). Narrative therapy for Hispanic children and adolescents. In A. E. Kazdin & J. R. Weisz (Eds.), *Evidence-based psychotherapies for children and adolescents* (pp. 21–41). New York: Guilford Press.

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Moses, B. (1997). *I'm worried*. East Essex, U.K.: Wayland.
Olness, K., & Kohen, D. P. (1996). *Hypnosis and hypnotherapy with children*. New York: Guilford Press.
Pellowski, A. (1990). *The world of storytelling: A practical guide to the origins, development, and applications of storytelling* (Rev. ed.). New York: Wilson.
Pellowski, A. (1995). *The storytelling handbook: A young people's collection of unusual tales and helpful hints on how to tell them*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Schaefer, C. E. (1999). *Innovative psychotherapy techniques for child and adolescent therapy.* New York: Wiley.
Schaefer, C. E. (1999). *How to talk to teens about really important things: Specific questions and answers and useful things to say*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
Schwartz, M., Trousdale. A. & Woestehoff, S. (Eds.). (1994). *Give a listen: Stories of storytelling in school*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
Selekman, M. D. (1997). *Solution-focused therapy for children: Harnessing family strengths for systemic change*. New York: Guilford Press.
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Selekman, M. (2004). The therapeutic roller coaster: Working with self-harming teens is dramatic and unpredictable. *Psychotherapy Networker* (January/February), 77–84.
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Sells, S. P. (2001). *Parenting your out-of-control teenager: 7 steps to reestablishing authority and reclaim love*. New York: Guilford Press.
Straus, M. (1999). *No-talk therapy for children and adolescents*. New York: Norton
Taffel, R. (2000). *Getting through to difficult kids and parents: Uncommon sense for child professionals*. New York: Guilford Press.
Tatar, M. (1992). *Off with the heads! Fairy tales and the culture of childhood*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Thomas, J. D. (1999). *Great stories for kids*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press.

CHILDREN'S STORIES

Children's stories often contain metaphoric content and may be good sources for stimulating creative ideas. In addition, they illustrate the nature of stories, the process for structuring stories, and the art of communicating them. Here are just a few examples. Check your library and bookshops for the many others available.

Clark, M., & Voake, C. (1990). *The best of Aesop's fables*. London: Walker Books.
de Saint-Exupery, A. (1993). *The little prince*. London: Mammoth.
Jackson, J. (1981). *Tawny scrawny lion*. Racine, WI: Golden Press.
Milne, A. A., & Shepherd, E. H. (1999). *Winnie-the-Pooh's little book of wisdom*. London: Methuen.

Nykokabi, S. (1974). *The chameleon who couldn't stop changing his mind*. Nairobi, Kenya: Transafrica Publishers.
O'Mara, L. (Ed.). (1991). *Classic animal stories*. London: Michael O'Mara Books.
Powell, M. (1994). *Wolf tales: North American children's stories*. Santa Fe, NM: Ancient City Press.
Shipton, J., & Foreman, M. (1991). *Busy! Busy! Busy!* London: PictureLions.
Shorto, R. (1990). *Cinderella and Cinderella's stepsister* (T. Lewis, illus.). New York: Carol Publishing Group.
Williams, M. (1991). *The velveteen rabbit*. London: Heineman.
Young, R. A., & Dockrey, J. (Eds.). (1993). *African-American folktales for young readers*. Little Rock, AR: August House.

MULTICULTURAL MYTHS, FOLKTALES, LEGENDS, AND FAIRY STORIES

Folktales contain the whole history and tradition of communicating through stories, whether to inform, teach, or entertain. In them are stories that are universal, transcending cultures, religions, and the generations. There is no more delightful method to appreciate the nature of stories than to read these tales—or even better, to sit with traditional storytellers—with an eye or ear open for possible therapeutic themes.

Akello, G. (1981). *Iteso thought patterns in tales*. Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania (formerly Tanyanyika): Dar Es Salaam University Press.
Barchers, S. I. (Ed.). (1990). *Wise women: Folk and fairy tales from around the world*. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
Bruchac, J. (1991). *Native American stories*. Colorado: Fulcrum, Golden.
Bruchac, J. (1993). *Flying with the Eagle, racing the Great Bear: Stories from Native North America*. Troll Medallion.
Caduto, M. J., & Bruchac, J. (1994). *Keepers of the night*. Colorado: Fulcrum, Golden.
Chophel, N. (1983). *Folk culture of Tibet*. Dharamsala, India: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
Degh, L. (1994). *American folklore and the mass media*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Ghose, H. N. (1993). *Tibetan folk tales and fairy stories*. New Delhi, India: Rupa & Co.
Hatherley, S. (1991). *Folk tales of Japan*. South Melbourne, Australia: Macmillan.
Hull, R. (1992). *Native North American stories*. East Essex, U.K.: Wayland.
Hull, R. (1994). *Indian stories*. East Essex, U.K.: Wayland.
Ingpen, R., & Hayes, B. (1992). *Folk tales and fables of the Middle East and Africa*. Surrey, U.K.: Dragon's World.
In-Sob, Z. (1979) *Folktales from Korea*. New York: Grove Press.
Kamera, W. D., & Mwakasaka, C. S. (1981). *The compliment: East Africa folktales*. Arusha, Tanzania (formerly Tanyanika): East Africa Publications.
Lall, K. (1991). *Nepalese book of proverbs*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Tiwari's Pilgrims Bookhouse.
Lurie, A. (Ed.). (1993). *The Oxford book of modern fairy tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Martin, R. (1990). *The hungry tigress: Buddhist legends and jataka tales*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
Morgan, W. (1988). *Navajo coyote tales*. Santa Fe, NM: Ancient City Press.

Njururi, N. (1975). *Tales from Mount Kenya*. Nairobi, Kenya: Transafrica Press.
Ramanujan, A. K. (Ed.). (1991). *Folktales from India*. New York: Pantheon.
Retan, W. (1989). *Favorite tales from many lands*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.
Roberts, A., & Mountford, C. P. (1980). *The first sunrise: Australian aboriginal myths in paintings*. Adelaide, Australia: Rigby.
Rockwell, A. (1994). *The robber baby: Stories from the Greek myths*. New York: Greenwillow.
Sakya, K., & Griffith, L. (1980). *Tales of Kathmandu: Folktales from the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal*. Brisbane, Australia: House of Kathmandu.
Scheffler, A. (1997). *Silent Beetle gets the seeds: Proverbs from far and wide*. London: Macmillan.
Schultz, G. F. (1968). *Vietnamese legends*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle.
Scott, M. (1988). *Irish fairytales*. Dublin, Ireland: Mercier Press.
Sherman, J. (1993). *Rachel the Clever and other Jewish folktales*. Little Rock, AR: August House.
Sierra, J., & Kaminski, R. (1991). *Multcultural Folktales: Stories to tell young children*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
Spears, R. (Ed.). (1991). *West African folk tales* (J. Berry, trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Te Kanawa, K. (1997). *Land of the long white cloud: Maori myths, tales, and legends*. Auckland, New Zealand: Viking.
Thomas, R. (2002). *Folk tales of Bhutan*. New Delhi, India: Learners Press.
Urton, G. (Ed.). (1985). *Animal myths and metaphors in South America*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Salt Lake City.
Zipes, J. (1979). *Breaking the magic spell: Radical theories of folk and fairytales*. Houston: University of Texas Press.
Zipes, J. (1994). *The outspoken princess and the gentle knight*. New York: Bantam.

RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL STORIES

Religions have long taught through parables. In the spiritual literature are many stories of strong moral values, positive reframing, constructive management of relationships, and healthy worldviews. Here is just a small sample.

Berg, L. (1999). *The God stories: A celebration of legends*. London: Frances Lincoln.
de Mello, A. (1988). *The song of the bird*. Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.
Feldman, C., & Kornfield, J. (1991). *Stories of the spirit, stories of the heart: Parables of the spiritual path from around the world*. San Francisco: Harper.
Friedlander, S. (1987). *When you hear hoofbeats think of a zebra: Talks on Sufism*. New York: Perennial Library.
Hoff, B. (1989). *The tao of Pooh*. London: Mandarin.
Hoff, B. (1993). *The te of Piglet*. London: Mandarin.
Jensen, L. (1999). *Uncovering the wisdom of the heartmind*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.
Martin, R., & Soares, M. (1995). *One hand clapping: Zen stories for all ages*. New York: Rizzoli.
Redhouse, R. W. (Trans.). (1977). *Legends of the Sufis*. London: Theosophical Publishing House.

Shah, I. (1970). *Tales of the dervishes*. New York: Dutton.
Shah, J. (1979). *The Sufis*. London: Allen.

VIDEOTAPES

There are a number of good videotapes available that show skilled practitioners of metaphor therapy working with this medium—though most I have encountered are with adult clients. Still, these are useful to watch as they demonstrate aspects of interactions with the client, styles of communication, and use of the voice that are not readily observable in the printed word and that can be translated into your work with children.

The Milton H. Erickson Foundation has a comprehensive selection of videotaped demonstrations recorded at their congresses over the last 25 years. The foundation's contact details are:

The Milton H. Erickson Foundation, Inc.
3606 N. 24th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85016
USA
E-mail: office@erickson-foundation.org

INTERNET WEB SITES

If you are looking for story ideas, there are many interesting Web sites that may offer inspiration. Be warned that sometimes you may need to wade through many tales before an idea leaps from the vast pool as one that will suit a particular child, presenting problem, or desired clinical outcome. Web sites are subject to change—at times rapidly—and, while those that follow were correct at the time of going to press, they may have changed since then. I hope they serve as the first wave to help you surf onto many more healing stories.

After Hours Inspirational Stories: inspirationalstories.com
Ah-Life Stories: www.ah-life.com
Animals, Myths, and Legends: members.ozemail.com.au/~oban/
Bear Time—Stories, Songs, and Fun for Children: www.beartime.com/children_stories.htm
Bedtime.com: www.bedtime.com
Bedtime-Story: the-office.com/bedtime-story/
Biblekids: www.biblekids.info/
Child and Youth Health—Once Upon a Time: www.cyh.com/cyh/parentopics/usr_index0.stm?topic_id=341
Children's Stories Online: www.wrendesign.com/Children'sStoriesHomePage.html
Children's Storybooks Online: www.magickeys.com/books/
Clean jokes: members.iinet.net.au/~hewittg/Jokes1.html
Ecokids—Say It with Words: www.childrenoftheearth.org/SIWWcontents.htm
Internet Public Library (kids): ipl.sils.umich.edu/div/kidspace/storyhour/

Internet Public Library (teens): ipl.sils.umich.edu/div/teenspace/storyhour/
Kidlink: www.kidlink.org/english/general/intro.html
Kids' authors: www.kidauthors.com/
Kids' Stories: home.netrover.com/~kingskid/108.html
Laugh-a-Lot!: www.graceweb.org/Laugh-A-Lot!/
The Macscouter: Indian stories: www.macscouter.com/stories/RC_Stories_Indian.html
Metaphors We Talk By: www.stanford.edu/~dib/metaphor.html
Parenting Toddlers.com—Child Short Stories: www.parentingtoddlers.com/childshortstories.html
Room108 Kids' Stories: www.netrover.com/~kingskid/108b.html
Stories in a Nutshell: www.storyarts.org/library/nutshell
Stories of Nasrudin: www.csclub.uwaterloo.ca/u/tamulder/nasrudin.html
Story Arts: www.storyarts.org
Story Palace—Children's Stories: storypalace.ourfamily.com/children/html
Story Palace—Inspirational Stories: storypalace.ourfamily.com/inspirational.html
Story Palace: Jokes & humor: storypalace.ourfamily.com/main2.html
Storytelling in the Classroom: www.storyarts.org/classroom/index.html
Wacky Web Tales: www.eduplace.com/tales/
Wonderworld of Fun—Small Stories for Little People: www.ssheen.clara.net/pleasure3.html
Zen Pursuer: sungag.buddhism.org/zen.html
Zen Stories to Tell Your Neighbours: www.rider.edu/users/suler/zenstory/nature.html
Zensufi Story Park: www.zensufi.com/story.htm

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