



By Karen Stephens

Children's Books to Help Preschoolers Cope With Fears

When your child experiences fear, whether it's in the dark of night or the light of day, nothing means more than your loving support and guidance. It's quite a gift to be someone's sense of security and safety. But oh, what a daunting responsibility, too! When kids struggle with fear, it makes you feel like you need a psychology degree just to get through each day!

Rest assured, you can meet this challenge, being able to sensitively take into account children's points of view helps immensely. This column offers one method of helping kids sort out and cope with fears: read to them!

Read books that feature characters your child can relate to — characters who face a similar fear, who cope with it, and ultimately conquer their fears. Books allow children to stand back from their fears and to ponder them more objectively. They provide kids *anonymity* so they can talk about the character's feelings without talking directly about their own. Any way you look at it, the snuggle time during reading can only help what's ailing.

As your child tries to gain some control over fear, you can also read books that provide factual information about experiences. Kids may be dreading getting a shot, having a cavity filled, or moving away. There are books that explain the basic processes and vocabulary associated with those experiences to help children have a clearer idea about what to expect. Such preparation makes a world of difference. Books may answer questions your child is afraid to ask. They can clear up misconceptions your child secretly holds as well.

When reading a book together, young children may just want to curl up and listen. A little later they may begin to reflect and then comment on the character's feelings and decisions. To create situations during which either can happen, consider the following picture books, written for children up to age 8. I hope they will help when your child's life gets a little bumpy.

Books

may answer
questions
your child
is afraid
to ask.

FEAR OF FAILURE

- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's Books, 1972.
- *Sam* by Ann Herbert Scott. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1996.
- *My Mom Hates Me in January* by Judy Delton. Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman, 1987.
- *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Kraus. New York, NY: Harper Collins Children's Books, 1989.
- *Leo the Late Bloomer* by Robert Kraus. New York, NY: Harper Collins Children's Books, 1971.
- *No, David!* by David Shannon. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1998.

MOVING TO A NEW HOME

- *Alexander, Who's Not (Do you hear me? I mean it!) Going to Move* by Judith Viorst. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's Books, 1995.
- *Goodbye House* by Frank Asch. Glenview, IL: Scott Foreman, 1989.
- *I'm Not Moving, Mama!* by Nancy White Carlstrom. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1990.
- *Boomer's Big Day* by Constance W. McGeorge. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1994.
- *Boxes, Boxes Everywhere* by Crystal Bowman. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001.
- *The Berenstain Bears' Moving Day* by Stan and Jan Berenstain. New York, NY: Random House, 1981.

- *A Home* by Nola Malone. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's Books, 1988.
- *Moving House* by Anne Civardi. Tulsa, OK: Usborne Books, 2001.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 1993.
- *Going to Day Care* by Fred Rogers. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, 1985.
- *Jesse's Daycare* by Amy Valens. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991.
- *Day Care Days* by Mary Brigid Barrett. Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1999.
- *When Mama Comes Home Tonight* by Eileen Spinelli. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998.
- *Will You Come Back for Me?* by Robin Kramer. Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman, 1992.
- *The Ticky-Tacky Doll* by Cynthia Rylant. Boston, MA: Harcourt, Inc. 2002.
- *Starting School* by Anne Civardi. London, England: Usborne House, 1995.
- *Timothy Goes to School* by Rosemary Wells. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, 2000.
- *Night Shift Daddy* by Eileen Spinelli. New York, NY: Hyperion 2000.
- *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes. New York, NY: Greenwillow, 2000.
- *You Go Away* by Dorothy Corey. Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman, 1999.
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, 1999.
- *My Mom Travels A Lot* by Caroline Bauer. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, 1985.
- *Ira Sleeps Over* by Bernard Waber. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.
- *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's, 1988.
- *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1996.
- *I'm Lost* by Elizabeth Crary. Seattle, WA: Parenting Press, 1996.
- *Lost in the Museum!* by Miriam Cohen. New York, NY: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1979.

LOSS OF LOVE

- *Mama Do You Love Me?* by Barbara M. Joesse. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1991.
- *Even If I Did Something Awful?* by Barbara Shook Hazen. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1981.
- *Daddy's New Baby* by Judith Vigna. Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman, 1982.
- *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1967.

BULLIES & TEASING

- *Move Over, Twerp* by Martha Alexander. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam for Young Readers, 1989.
- *The Lazy Bear* by Brian Wildsmith. London, England: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni. New York, NY: Pantheon, 1963.
- *The Two Bullies* by Junko Morimoto. New York, NY: Random House Book for Young Readers, 1999.
- *The Rat and the Tiger* by K. Kasza. New York, NY: Putnam Publishing Group, 1993.
- *William's Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow. New York, NY: Harper & Row 1972.
- *Let's Be Enemies* by Janice Udry. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1961.

BEDTIME NOISES, MONSTERS, NAPS

- *Clyde Monster* by Robert Crowe. New York, NY: Dutton, 1976.
- *Go Away, Big Green Monster* by Ed Emberley. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co. 1992.
- *There's Something in My Attic* by Mercer Mayer. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1988.
- *There's a Nightmare in My Closet* by Mercer Mayer. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1968.
- *There's An Alligator Under My Bed* by Mercer Mayer. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1987.
- *What's Under My Bed?* By James Stevenson. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books, 1983.
- *My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Creatures, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins or Things* by Judith Viorst. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1973.
- *May We Sleep Here Tonight?* by Tan Koide. New York, NY: Margaret McElderry Books, 2001.
- *Brave Martha* by Margot Apple. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin 1999.
- *The Very Noisy Night* by Diana Hendry. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1999.
- *Bedtime for Frances* by Russel Hoban. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1960.
- *Kate's Giants* by Valiska Gregory. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1995.
- *Night in the Country* by Cynthia Rylant. New York, NY: Bradbury Press, 1986.
- *I Hear a Noise* by Diane Goode. New York, NY: Dutton, 1988.
- *I Hate To Go To Bed!* by Katie Davis. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1999.
- *No Jumping on the Bed!* by Ted Arnold. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1987.
- *No Nap!* by Eve Bunting. New York: Clarion Books, 1989.
- *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1984.

STARTING SCHOOL

- *Will I have a friend?* by Miriam Cohen. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1967.
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Book for Young Readers, 1999.
- *Jazzbo Goes to School* by Matt Novak. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1999.
- *Going To School* by Anne Civardi and Stephen Cartwright. Tulsa, OK: Usborne, 2002.
- *A Pocketful of Cricket* by Rebecca Caudill. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964.

OVERCOMING FEAR WITH COURAGE

- *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni. New York, NY: Pantheon, 1963.
- *Fritz and the Beautiful Horses* by Jan Brett. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.
- *Brave Irene* by William Steig. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1986.

STORM FEARS

- *The Bravest Babysitter* by Barbara Greenberg. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1977.
- *Something's Going to Happen* by Charlotte Zolotow. New York, NY: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1988.
- *The Storm Book* by Charlotte Zolotow. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988.
- *Storm* by W. Nikola-Lisa. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's Books, 1993.
- *Hurricane* by David Wiesner. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990.

WAR FEARS

- *The Butter Battle Book* by Dr. Suess. New York, NY: Random House, 1984.
- *Nobody Wants a Nuclear War* by Judith Vigna. Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman, 1987.

CRIME, FIRE, AND BOMBING FEARS

- *Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1994.
- *One April Morning: Children Remember the Oklahoma City Bombing* by Nancy Lamb and Children of Oklahoma City. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1996.
- *Why did it happen?: Helping children cope in a violent world* by Janice Cohn. New York, NY: Morrow Junior Books, 1994.

DOCTOR AND HOSPITAL FEARS

- *Going to the Doctor* by T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 1996.
- *The Doctor's Office* by Gail Saunder-Smith. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 1998.
- *Next! Please* by Christopher Inns. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 2001.
- *The Berenstain Bears Go To The Doctor* by Stan and Jan Berenstain. New York, NY: Random House, 1981.
- *Eric Needs Stitches* by Barbara Marino. New York, NY: Harper Collins Children's Books, 1989.
- *Sick Day* by Patricia MacLachlan. New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, 2001.
- *A Hospital Story* by Sara Bonnet Stein. New York, NY: Walker & Co., 1983.
- *Going to the Doctor* by Anne Civardi. Tulsa, OK: Usborne Publishing, 2000.
- *Going to the Hospital* by Anne Civardi. Tulsa, OK: Usborne Publishing, 2002.
- *The Emergency Room* by Anne & Harlow Rockwell. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's Books, 1985.

DENTIST FEARS

- *Those Icky Sticky Smelly Cavity-Causing but ... Invisible Germs* by Judith Rice. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 1997.
- *My Dentist, My Friend* by P. K. Hallinan. New York, NY: Ideals Publications, 2001.
- *Going to the Dentist* by Helen Frost. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 1999.
- *Going to the Dentist* by Anne Civardi and Stephen Cartwright. Tulsa, OK: Usborne Books, 2001.
- *Albert's Toothache* by Barbara Williams. New York, NY: Penguin Books for Young Readers, 1991.
- *My Dentist* by Harlow Rockwell. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books, 1975.

About the Author — Karen Stephens is director of Illinois State University Child Care Center and instructor in child development for the ISU Family and Consumer Sciences Department. For nine years she wrote a weekly parenting column in her local newspaper. Karen has authored early care and education books and is a frequent contributor to *Exchange*.