
Princess Light and the Silver Dolphin

Source: Susan Perrow (www.healingthroughstories.com)

Theme: Self Esteem

Recommended Age: Six to Twelve

Modality: Individual, Group

Goals

- Increase self-confidence and self-worth
- Initiate discussion on how every child is different and unique

Materials

- The story “Princess Light” (Included)
- Dolphin template (Included)
- Paper
- Markers or crayons (assorted colors, including gray or silver)
- Scissors
- Stapler

Advance Preparation

Copy the story of “Princess Light”.

Make six copies of the dolphin template. Photocopy the dolphin template onto silver cardboard or photocopy onto white cardboard and color the dolphins with a gray or silver crayon.

Description

Read or tell the story “Princess Light” (Perrow, 2008) to the child.

After reading the story, ask the child to draw their favorite part. Encourage a conversation about it. Then ask the child to draw their least favorite part of the story on another page. Encourage a conversation about it.

Give one of the silver dolphins to the child and ask them to draw a background picture for the cut-out to be pasted into.

In the next session, read or tell the story again. Encourage more pictures to be drawn from the story or of any topic of the child’s choice. Have more dolphins ready to be pasted in, if needed. Encourage a conversation about the new drawings.

Compile the story and the child’s drawings into a booklet. Allow the booklet to be taken home at the end of two or three sessions.

Discussion

The story of “Princess Light” uses therapeutic metaphor for guiding and transforming self-esteem amongst children. The dolphin has been chosen for its confidence, joy and wisdom.

Writing Therapeutic Stories: Therapeutic stories that use the definition for healing—to bring into balance, become sound or whole—challenge behaviors and help the process of bringing an out-of-balance behavior back into wholeness or balance.

In writing a healing story it helps to carefully select therapeutic metaphors and to construct a journey or quest to meet the need of the situation and the age of the children. The story is not intended to moralize. The objective is to simply reflect what is happening and, through the story’s metaphors and journey, provide an acceptable means of dealing with the issue and/or a realistic resolution. A healing tale should—as much as possible—leave the listener free to come to her/his own conclusion. This way the “power of story” is left to do its work. As Ben Okri suggests,

It is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are. They do their work in silence, invisibly. They work with all the internal materials of the mind and self. They become part of you while changing you (Okri, 1996, p.34).

Metaphors, Journey and Story Props: The use of metaphor is a vital ingredient in therapeutic story work. In the story of Princess Light, metaphors are used to help build the imaginative connection for the listener. An integral part of the story journey is that they play both the negative roles (pulling the behavior or situation out of balance—e.g. Princess Clever and the deep dark hole) and the positive roles (leading the behavior/situation back to wholeness or balance—e.g. the silver dolphin). The journey is the formative part of the therapeutic story construction. An eventful journey is a way to build the tension as the story evolves, and can lead the plot into and through the behavior imbalance and out again to a wholesome, pro-active resolution.

Metaphors can be strengthened by the use of story props—e.g. the silver dolphin and the drawing book.

The therapist can use the observations of the child’s drawings and the discussion following the drawings to intervene therapeutically to address issues raised by the child.

Note: The same story could be used for a boy and changed to be about “Prince Light” and “Prince Clever”.

Reference

Okri, B. (1996). *Birds of heaven*. London: Phoenix Press.

Perrow, S. (2008). *Healing stories for challenging behaviour*. London: Hawthorn Press.

About The Author

Susan Perrow, M.Ed., has 30 years of experience in teaching, counseling, and storytelling. After completing her master's degree on a cross-cultural study of storytelling in teacher training, she set up a 150-hour module on storytelling at Southern Cross University in Australia. Since 1995, she has worked in Teacher Training and Parent Education in Australia, Africa, Europe, and Asia, specializing in storytelling, therapeutic story writing, and creative discipline. She currently resides in Lennox Head, Australia. She can be contacted at www.healingthroughstories.com

Princess Light and the Silver Dolphin

story

There was once a princess who lived in a grand castle in the forest with a beautiful garden all around. There were flowers and birds in her garden of every rainbow color, and she had kittens and ponies and many friends to play with.

This princess was known far and wide for her beautiful smile. She had a family who loved her very much, and who knew that her smile was so beautiful because it was coming from her inner shining light. They used to call her “Princess Light” and when she played and danced in the garden, even the flowers turned their heads toward her, thinking it was the sun itself that was smiling so brightly.

As Princess Light grew older, she began to travel to visit other parts of her land. Her favorite friend was a princess who lived in a castle by the sea, and Princess Light loved to spend time there in the summer months, playing and dancing on the beach and swimming with the dolphins in the clear blue water.

For many years the two princesses had a happy friendship. But as time passed Princess Light began to notice that her friend, Princess Clever, seemed to do so many things better than she could. When they were running together, her friend could run faster; when they were drawing together, her friend could draw more beautiful pictures; and when they were swimming in the sea, her friend could swim much better and faster than she could.

The more Princess Light thought about this, the sadder she became. Sometimes it even made her cross, and when she was sad and cross, it was not so easy for her inner light to help her smile. And when Princess Light couldn't smile, she wasn't good for anything. She couldn't run or swim or draw or do anything if she wasn't able to smile and feel happy about herself.

One day, when Princess Light was visiting Princess Clever, it was very hot, so they decided to go for a swim in the cool blue sea. They drifted far out, over the reef and into the deep ocean where the dolphins danced and played. The two princesses had a wonderful time all morning playing with their dolphin friends. But when it was time to go back to shore, Princess Clever called out, “Let's race!” She then swam so fast ahead that she left Princess Light all by herself in the deep water.

Princess Light felt sad and cross that her friend seemed to be so much cleverer and faster than she was. And the sadder she became and the crosser she became, the slower she swam, until her legs and arms just stopped working altogether. Then something terrible happened, for as she stopped moving in the water, she started to sink down.

Down, down, down she went, away from the sunny clear waters of the ocean top and down to the dark murky waters of the ocean bottom. Down, down, down, she went, until she could feel hard cold rocks under her and all around her, and she found herself trapped in a deep dark hole. She couldn't see to the right of her, she couldn't see to the left of her, and she couldn't see above her.

Then she heard a noise, and saw a silver flash of a tail. It was one of her dolphin friends who must have been following her all this time. "Hold on to my tail" whispered the dolphin, "and I will try to take you back to the top. But you must kick your legs and help me or we will not reach there together!"

So Princess Light took hold of the dolphin's silver tail and started to slowly move her legs, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, until she could feel herself rising out of the dark rocky hole. Faster and faster she kicked, and up, up, up she traveled toward the clear waters of the ocean's surface. And as she burst up through the water and out into the sunshine, she took the biggest breath and then gave her dolphin friend the most beautiful smile that she had ever smiled.

"Climb on my back," said the silver dolphin, who was so happy to see the princess smiling once again. "Climb on and hold tight and we will ride the waves back over the reef." And so Princess Light climbed onto the dolphin's back and had the ride of her life all the way back to shore. Princess Clever was waiting on the beach. She couldn't believe it when she saw her friend riding on the dolphin's back across the lagoon!

When the silver dolphin delivered Princess Light safely to shore, he whispered to her a special message:

"When you are sad or cross, don't despair and don't hide,
You have a shining light deep inside.
This light inside will help you smile,
And your beautiful smile will shine the way,
Through darkest night and cloudy day."

For the rest of the holiday by the sea, Princess Light played happily with her friend. She never saw the silver dolphin again, but whenever she felt that Princess Clever was running or drawing or swimming better than her, she remembered the special message. This helped her to keep smiling a beautiful smile and to just try her best!

When summer came to an end, Princess Light returned to her family in the castle in the forest. She kept her special message from the silver dolphin all to herself, and it always helped her through difficult times. As she grew older, she continued to play and dance in the castle garden, and the flowers still turned their heads toward her, thinking it was the sun itself that was smiling so brightly.

Dolphin

template

