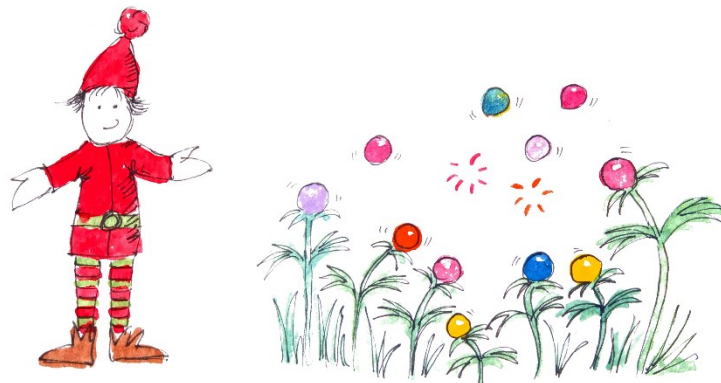


The Little Elf and the Flowers of Hope and Bravery

A therapeutic story to help primary children to explore feelings relating to a return to school during the coronavirus pandemic.



Guidance for Adults about this Story (you will find the story on p1)

Therapeutic stories are designed to help children to explore and understand feelings. Based on narrative psychology, this taps into storytelling as a therapeutic tool. This story is not about problem solving or finding answers, it is about understanding the emotional connection we have with the story and the characters. We have written this story to help children to explore the feelings they may be having and witnessing during the return to school transition during the coronavirus pandemic. It's important to let your child lead the discussion about the story and let them make any links themselves to their own thoughts, feelings or situations. Children might also make links to many different situations outside of coronavirus, and that is ok.

The main psychological messages in this story are:

Resilience and Hope - Some people might be feeling isolated, helpless and scared at the moment. We can't change the situation, but we might be able to change how we feel, think and act about the situation.

Sense of Belonging – This situation is happening to everyone, in different ways, all around the world and there are ways we can still feel connected.

Feelings - It's ok to talk about the feelings you are having, and these are normal feelings in an abnormal situation. Different people are having different feelings, at different intensities and at different times, and that is ok.

Read the story first yourself before you share with your child and notice your own reaction to the story. Your child will probably need to hear/read the story several times to help them to process the content. It is important to read the story with your child if you want to discuss it and ask questions. However, your child might like to read it themselves beforehand, and that is ok.

After reading the story, you might want to talk with your child about the story. Asking questions, and discussing the story, will help your child to understand and process feelings. If you are asking questions, try to ask open-ended questions and let your child lead. Try not to ask leading questions e.g. 'Does this make you feel sad?' Instead try to stay in the metaphor of the story and allow your child to make the links between the characters and situations/feelings in their own lives e.g. 'How do you think the Little Elf was feeling?'

If your child shows an interest in this story (and they might not, that is ok), here are some questions that you might want to ask/discuss:

- Is there any character, or part of the story, you would like to draw a picture of together? (Sometimes children want to draw/talk about the character/part of the story that they identify most with)
- Is there any character or part of the story you would like to talk about?
- How do you think the Little Elf was feeling before he visited the flowers?
- How do you think the Little Elf was feeling at the end of the story?
- How do you think the Little Pixie was feeling at the end of the story?
- What ideas do you have about what might happen next in the story?
- Are there any other ideas the Little Elf could get from the Flowers of Hope and Bravery?

Further Reading

Brett, D (1992) More Annie Stories: Therapeutic Storytelling Techniques. New York: Imagination Press.

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The Little Elf and the Flowers of Hope and Bravery



One morning, as Little Elf sat at the bottom of the tree he lived in, looking up at the big, dark mouldy-green cloud that had been hovering over his lovely home for weeks, lines of light began flowing through the darkness. This cloud had appeared one day and had frightened everyone because it was huge and mouldy. Since then, all the elves had been told to stay inside their trees to keep safe. The grown-up elves had been watching the big, dark mouldy-green cloud every day. The Little Elf had been feeling sad about all the things he had missed when staying inside, including his birthday party. However, he had been waving to his friends from the top of his tree every day, which had made him smile and feel cheerful.

Over the last few days, the Little Elf had noticed that the cloud had become a little smaller, a little less mouldy and a little less dark. Today, these lines of warm, yellow sunshine were shining through cracks in the cloud, lighting up his tree. The Little Elf felt warm inside too, thinking about how the big, green cloud might be starting to shrink. He had also noticed the grown-up elves changing in the last few days. Their faces looked a little less frowny, a little less worried and a little more relaxed. Their eyes were a little brighter and they were smiling a little more.

Tomorrow was the day that the Little Elf could go back to school. As he sat under his tree, he wondered how he felt about this. He was not sure. He felt a tangled knot turning and twisting in his tummy. He felt excited, like he always felt the night before his birthday. But he also felt a bit sad because he would have to leave his tree tomorrow; his tree that kept him safe and warm, and protected him from the big, dark mouldy-green cloud. This sad feeling reminded him of the time his very best friend moved to another forest and he couldn't see her anymore. His eyes began to fill with tears as he thought of missing the gentle sway of his tree, rocking him smoothly in the wind; and of the days when he had explored his tree, more than ever before, and found nooks and mini creatures he had not known were there.

He felt worried too because, when he looked up into the sky, the big, dark mouldy-green cloud was still there. When would it go away and why couldn't the grown-up Elves make it go away? He also thought that school might be a bit different tomorrow because so much time had passed, and life was very different now that the cloud had

come to the forest. He remembered his friend the Woodpecker, who had reminded him how to be brave, and he thought he would probably need to be brave tomorrow to leave his tree and go to school.



As the cloud was becoming a little smaller, a little less mouldy and a little less scary, the elves had started to go outside for a while every day. So, the Little Elf stood up and walked across the forest to see his new best friend, the Little Pixie. When the Little Elf got close to the Little Pixie's tree, he noticed the Little Pixie standing outside. Little Pixie was frozen on the spot, his wings were spread wide (they looked huge today!), and they were quivering and shimmering in the sunlight. The Little Elf felt worried about his friend. The Little Pixie was often frightened of things outside of his tree and he found school a bit tricky. He felt different to all the elves - he looked different and did things differently. When Little Pixie was feeling particularly frightened, his wings

became really big and he wanted to fly away.

'Hello friend' said the Little Elf. 'Are you excited about school tomorrow? I am, I have missed it so much!'

'Not really' said the Little Pixie in a small wobbly voice looking down at the ground. 'I like being inside my tree'. As he thought about school, his wings became bigger, in fact so big that they drooped a bit on the ends and quivered even more.

The Little Elf wondered what to do. As he thought hard, he heard a knock, knock, knock on Little Pixie's tree, and he looked up to see his friend the wise Woodpecker.

'Hello little friends' said the wise Woodpecker. 'Sounds like you are both having lots of different feelings about going to school tomorrow. That's okay. Do you know about the Flowers of Hope and Bravery that grow on the other side of the forest?'

'No' said the Little Elf, and the Little Pixie shook his head. 'What are they?' asked the Little Elf.

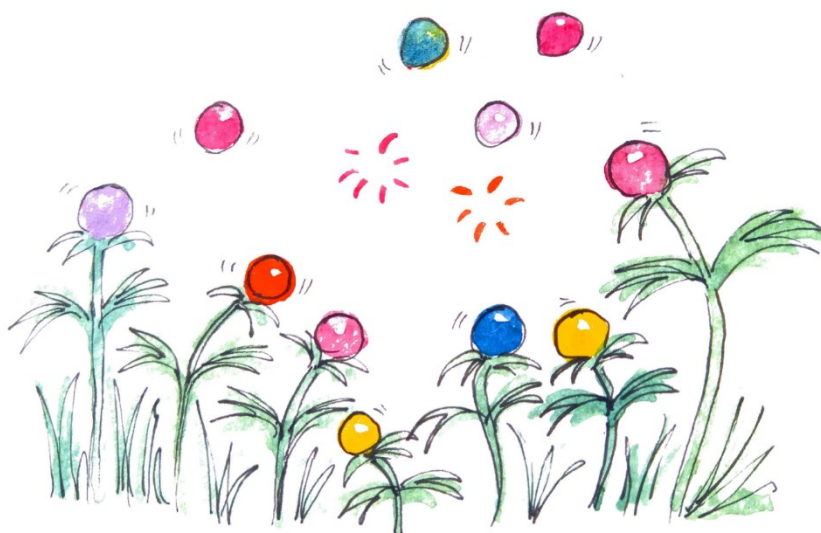
The Woodpecker smiled. 'The Flowers of Hope and Bravery are special flowers that release magic bubbles to help us in times of trouble. They aren't always there; they only grow when we need them most. They have been growing again since the big,



dark mouldy-green cloud arrived, and now that the lines of warm, yellow sunshine are squeezing through, the flowers are growing bigger and stronger! Would you like to see them? Yes? Then come with me!’

The Woodpecker glided slowly down from the tree and across the forest. The Little Elf and the Little Pixie followed him, feeling curious. They came to a clearing where there were many, colourful, sparkling flowers. ‘Wait a minute, why are the flowers sparkling?’ thought the Little Elf. He looked closer and saw that the flowers were all bubbles, growing bigger and bigger and floating up off the stems.

There were lots of elves in the clearing looking at the flowers. Bubbles rose off the stems, floated over to the elves and popped on top of their heads. Some elves were choosing the bubbles they wanted by pointing, and others were waiting for bubbles to come to them.



‘Would you like to try?’ asked the Woodpecker. ‘You can come here, any time you need some hope or bravery. You can come here too if you are just feeling bad and you don’t know what you need. The bubbles will remind you what you can do to feel better’.

The Little Elf looked at the Little Pixie and the Little Pixie looked back. Little Pixie’s wings got a bit bigger and quivered a bit more. They both took a deep breath and walked closer to the bubbles. Two big, shiny bubbles floated over to them.

A yellow, sparkling bubbly hovered over to the Little Elf and popped on his head. Suddenly, he had an idea. He could take one of the leaves from his tree with him when he went to school tomorrow. He could keep it in his pocket and, if he felt sad or missed his tree too much, he could hold the leaf in his hand and remember that the tree would be there at the end of the day when he came home. The tangled knot in his tummy loosened and stopped twisting and turning.

A purple, shining bubble drifted over to the Little Pixie and popped on his head. Suddenly, he felt less shaky and quivery. He felt a magical, tingly feeling moving into

his arms and his wings. He felt like his wings were a bit too big. He felt like he wanted to stay and find out what these special bubbles were about, and he didn't want to fly away. He concentrated hard and he made his wings shrink. He felt a little braver. 'Wow' he whispered in a small voice. 'Look at my wings!'

'Little friend', said the wise Woodpecker, 'it looks like you have discovered how to use your wings to show people when you are feeling scared and when you are feeling braver'. The Little Pixie smiled and whispered to himself, 'Look at my wings'. He thought about school tomorrow and about his kind teacher, who he liked very much. He thought about how, if he made his wings a bit bigger and said 'Look at my wings', his teacher would know when he was frightened and needed some help.

The Little Pixie and the Little Elf smiled and thanked the wise Woodpecker for showing them the Flowers of Hope and Bravery. Then, they headed home.

The next morning, they met outside the Little Elf's tree to walk to school together. The Little Elf had one of his tree's leaves tucked safely inside his pocket. As he walked away, his big, strong tree waved its branches at him. The Little Pixie's wings were big and quivering again. As they walked closer to school, both friends remembered their bubbles. The Little Elf held his leaf tight, and the Little Pixie shrunk his wings so that they folded down as he walked through the entrance archway into school.



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