

A book series for teens

How to understand your emotions: FEAR

The Farthest Journey




Edyta Zarębska
Magdalena Pytel

Story + exercises

DKMS 
POKONAJMY NOWOTWORY KRWI



DZIECIAKI
CHOJRAKI




Author: Edyta Zarębska

The Farthest Journey

The forest was shrouded in a thick fog – the constant companion of autumnal nights and mornings.

But even in the deepest darkness and fog, there was always a flicker of light in the Glade of Dreams, where night and day met for a brief moment at dawn.

The light was a mystery to the casual wanderer, magic to the adventurer and home to forest creatures and animals.



It was here that stories were told, and owl meetings were held. It was here that visitors thirsty after a long trek were given potions of power consisting of thousands of drops of night dew and a pinch of moon dust.

It was the only place on earth that Flicker – the tiniest of all the lightning bugs in the forest – knew and loved. This is where he had been born, and this is where he and his sister – Sparkle – and friends roamed the nearby forest, peering into abandoned hollows and illuminating their mysterious interiors. It was thanks to them, the young lightning bugs, that the Glade of Dreams and the forest around it had a unique aura of mystery, interrupted by carefree giggling and silly pranks such as illuminating dandelions and pretending to be ghosts – only to scare the youngest generation of lightning bugs.

One night the siblings, no longer wanting to listen to the hooting of owls in the clearing, once again went to explore the forest and something unexpected happened. Flicker's light began to fade. At first everyone thought it was just a spider web accidentally snagged during flight that



dimmed his light. After returning to the Glade of Dreams, Sparkle carefully examined her brother to see what had really happened. But there were no traces of spider web, dewdrops or dust that might have dulled the light. Meanwhile, Flicker's light remained weaker.

“Sage, I don't know what it could be,” concerned Sparkle whispered to the most important owl in the clearing.

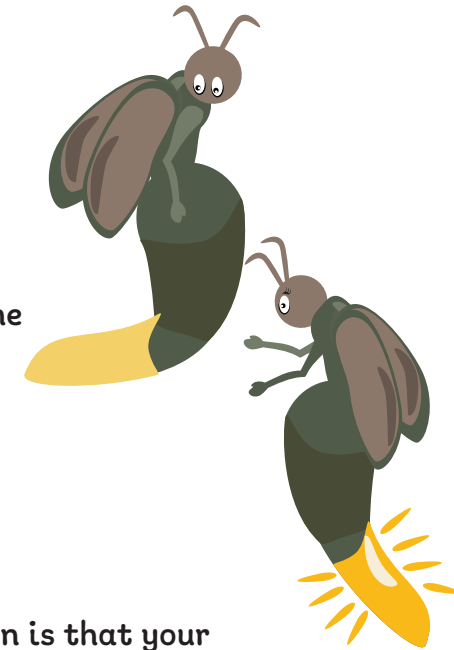
“Well, my dear,” the owl sighed. “Since nothing obscures the light and it is still weak, the only explanation is that your brother's pigments are receiving too little oxygen.”

Sparkle pondered. She was well aware that each lightning bug had pigments that, when exposed to oxygen, made them glow.

“I don't understand,” she sighed. “If there is not enough oxygen here, then why do we all produce strong light, everyone except Flicker?”

“Because he has always been fragile, it's possible that his pigments are weaker than yours, but that can't be changed, only more oxygen can help here,” the owl said.

“Where are we supposed to get more of it? I mean, the forest is full of oxygen, isn't it?” Sparkle said nervously.





“There is a place not far from here where two-hundred-year-old trees grow. It’s a very old forest and water there is in full bloom. That place is full of oxygen,”

Sage explained.

“Will it help? How to get there? How long does it take to fly?” Sparkle had a lot of questions.

“It takes all night to get there.”

“I’ll fly with him if that’s the only way,” she whispered.

“You can’t!” the owl exclaimed. “It’s too dangerous, and there’s a reason why you’ve been told to stay close to the young forest. I will take care of it.”

“Are you sure it will help him?” Sparkle asked quietly.

“I don’t know, but it’s worth a try,” the owl said firmly.

Upon hearing the news of the trip, Flicker withdrew into himself. He could not sleep all day; he would roll from side to side and felt overwhelming anxiety. He was waiting for the night on which he was to set out into the unknown. He was scared of new places, the old forest and the blooming water. He had never heard of it before and couldn’t even imagine it.

What terrified him most, however, was the thought that he would have to fly away from there and leave Sparkle and his friends. He wasn’t even sure



if he would return, and if he did, whether his light would be strong again. Or would he become the only lightning bug in the clearing that was barely visible? How would he light the way, enjoy the night or prank others? What if his light went out completely? And he would have to rely on the light of others or holding hands in the dark when flying. Would he still be one of them? The thought that he would just sit and watch others having fun made him feel very lonely. And his little lightning bug heart was beating like crazy, as hard as if it was about to jump out at any moment, and at times it seemed to him that these heartbeats were lifting him up.

Waiting for the moment when he would leave home was anguish, and the beautiful memories seemed to hurt the most. When night came and it was time to snuggle into the owl’s feathers, he looked sadly at the receding Glade of Dreams, at Sparkle, who lit up to bid him farewell and thousands of his other lightning bug friends.

It wasn’t until they were deep in the forest and the lights of the clearing were no longer visible that he was filled with hope that things would work out after all. It was





a feeling that gave him extraordinary strength. It made the beats of the owl's wings sound like applause, because there he was, a small lightning bug, flying for help despite his fear, anxiety and uncertainty. And the fact that he was not flying alone meant that there was someone with him who believed the attempt was worth it.

However, when they left the young forest, and everything around them became different and alien, Flicker felt fear again. It was fear of the unknown, combined with a longing for what was close and familiar, but had been left behind. And with each moment, with each passing tree, with each beat of Sage's wings, the little lightning bug felt an increasingly greater distance separating him from his home.

Finally, the old forest appeared in front of their eyes. The trees were huge, and their branches, twisted in the wind, looked ghostly against the moon.

Flicker grabbed the owl's feathers with all his strength and buried his head in them. Then he felt that they were flying lower and lower, it even seemed to him that they had started to fall, but he was so scared that he was afraid to lift his head to see what was happening.

Only after a while did he hear Sage's voice:

"We have landed, we are here."



When he opened his eyes, Flicker saw a clearing much different from the Glade of Dreams. It was almost dawn and among the mighty trees one could see water covered with a green carpet.

"This is the blooming water," the owl said. "The carpet you see is plankton. Together with the trees it produces an exceptional amount of oxygen."

"Will it hurt?" asked Flicker, but he was already so tired and sleepy that he wasn't sure if the owl had answered. All he heard was: "I'll be here with you," and he fell asleep.

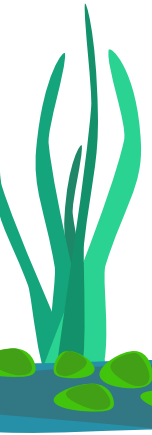
He woke up feeling a gentle stinging near the pigments. It was night again, which meant he had slept all day. He looked at his abdomen, it glowed, but not as strong as before. However, a bit stronger than yesterday.

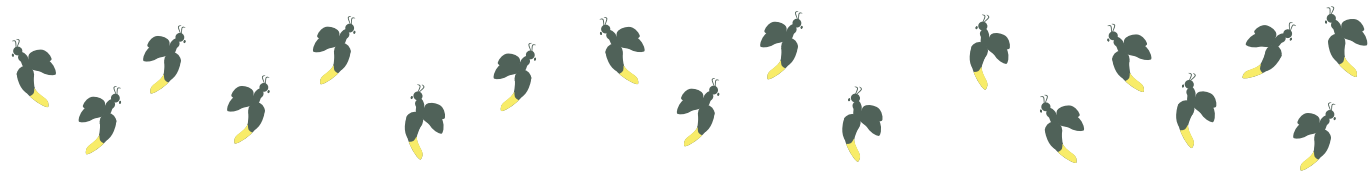
"I guess it didn't work," he groaned.

"It's better than it was," the owl replied. "If necessary, we will come back here, but now it's time to fly home."

Right after that the owl took flight. Meanwhile, Flicker was so excited that he had got some of his light back that he was constantly looking at it. He no longer felt fear of the branches of the old trees, he was much more scared that his light would go out.

As they were flying back, a vigil was taking place at the Glade of Dreams, with thousands of lightning bugs awaiting their return. And when they saw





a pale light approaching and realized that Flicker had not fully recovered his light's strength, each of them reduced theirs.

"I don't want pity," Flicker whispered at the sight of his friends' pale lights.

"It's not pity, hoo-hoo," the owl said. „It's an attempt to understand how you feel. Having a strong light, they could only imagine what you were feeling.”

"But they can glow stronger at any time, and I can't. So they will never feel what I feel," he sighed. „But you know, Sage, that's good, because I wouldn't want them to feel that way.”

"We have many more trips ahead of us," the owl said. "Each one is a new hope that at some point you will glow as strong as before.”

"And if not?" Flicker whispered. "And I will become almost invisible.”

"Those to whom you are important will see you, even if you don't glow.”

"Never give up Flicker.”

"It's not that simple, I'm still different from them," he groaned.

"True, it is difficult. But remember that what makes you different makes you YOU," the owl said.

The Glade of Dreams was already within reach of the owl's wings. Suddenly, in the dim light, Flicker spotted Sparkle. She was smiling and waving at him.

It was the nicest feeling of the night. The realization that there would be someone waiting for him all the time, no matter how far and difficult a journey he would still have to make and with how strong a light he would return.



GAMES RELATED TO **THE FARTHEST JOURNEY** STORY

NAME OF EMOTION: **FEAR**

1

● **“Map of fear”** (to be done with another person or by yourself)

Goal: to educate about fear, identify emotions

Essential materials:

- art supplies,
- sheets of paper.

Description of the game: together with your child you create a map for Flicker, leading through the scary forest, straight to the Blooming River. On the map we mark what Flicker was scared of. Then the child creates his/her own map of fear. Current fear, past fear or fear of the future may be indicated. Next, discuss the map created by the child and ask them about the road taken and their fears.

Instructions: You probably remember that Flicker was scared of his road into the unknown. We will prepare a map for him to guide him through the dark, scary forest. The fears in our head, the imaginary ones, always seem bigger, but when we can see and get to know them, they become smaller. Our map will make it easier for Flicker to get there.

Now that the map for Flicker is ready, you can create your own map. Think about what is in front of you, your road and the fears that are on it (when the map is ready). Tell me, please, about your road and your fears, I want to be next to you when you are scared, like Sage was with Flicker. Together we'll manage.

Possible modifications: (for board game fans) together with the child we can create our own game board to depict Flicker's journey. We can mark on it places that he was particularly scared of, such as: the entrance to the old forest; huge, spooky trees; and other topographic elements that we invent together. Once we create the board, we can then develop the rules of the game.



2. “Lightning bug” (to be done with another person)

Goal: education about emotions

Essential materials:

- a flashlight,
- fabric (a scarf or other fabric).

Description of the game: the game consists of puzzles about fear with true/false answers. The person who guesses holds a flashlight (lightning bug), and when the answer is yes – true, the person turns it on. We cover the flashlight with fabric and thus our lightning bug is created.

Instructions: We’ll play riddles about fear – ones in which the answer can be yes – true or no – false. When the answer is yes, turn on our lightning bug.

Sample sentences/puzzles (can be mixed and modified):

- Everyone is scared of something (true).
- When we are scared, our heart beats faster and it is harder to catch our breath (true).
- We need fear (true).
- When I am scared of something, I can ask for help (true).
- I can be scared and still do what I am scared of. There is nothing wrong with being scared (true).
- We must not be scared (false).
- Parents are never scared of anything (false).
- You can’t tell others what you are scared of (false).
- Boys should not be scared of anything (false).
- When I am scared, I am inferior to others (false).
- Once I start being scared, I will never stop (false).

Tip: we can take a pause and “smuggle in” important educational content about fear during play.

3. “Personal stories” – puppet theatre (to be done with another person)

Goal: expressing fear, expressing emotions through play

Essential materials:

- art supplies,
- straws or sticks (to which we will attach the puppets made from paper).

Description of the game: together with the child we create puppets of the main characters of the story, namely Flicker, Sage and Sparkle. Then we create a play about what happened with Flicker later – on his second trip. We ask the child to play the main role, that is, the Lightning Bug. We encourage the expression of emotions.

Instructions: I wonder how Flicker’s second trip to the scary forest would go. Would he be as scared or a little less scared? Would someone accompany him... How about we create a play about it! First we will make puppets of the main characters and think about what happened next. Are you ready to have some fun?

Tip: it’s a good idea to encourage the child’s expression of emotions and to reinforce any expressions of emotion.

Possible modifications: we can introduce characters invented by the child.



TIPS ON HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT FEAR:

EDUCATION

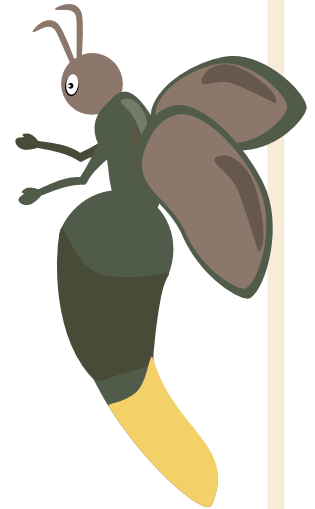
Wanting to develop the child's knowledge of fear, we can support ourselves with the content of the story *The Farthest Journey*, taking a pause, for example, at how Flicker felt fear, how we know that we are scared. Then we can take a pause at what he was scared of. We are usually scared of what is new and unknown to us. It is also worth noting what was helpful for Flicker: the presence of Sage; the behaviour of friends who wanted to understand how he was feeling; facing fear.

WHAT CAN I DO?

When we notice that the child is scared, it is worth paying attention to this: "I see that you are scared" and normalize the situation: "It's normal, everyone is scared of something, you have a right to be scared...", also assure the child of your presence: "I will be next to you when...".

It's also worth taking care of your own fear by talking to loved ones, taking moments of respite (breathing techniques) or getting help from professionals. Staying calm as the caregiver will be extremely necessary for the child, especially if they are experiencing severe fear.

The onset of a disease triggers a variety of strong emotions, including anxiety. It is worthwhile to take care of the thoughts that accompany us, check for distortions among them, such as catastrophizing (focusing only on negative scenarios), which intensifies anxiety. It is worth cultivating thoughts that give encouragement and hope.



The project was financed by Dotacja Fundacji DKMS

Publisher: Dzieciaki Chojraki

Stowarzyszenie Wspierania Transplantacji Szpiku i Onkologii Dziecięcej

Authors: Edyta Zarębska, Magdalena Pytel

Managing Editor: Katarzyna Grunt-Segień

Publishing Coordinator: Marlena Fiedorow

Translation and proofreading: Wojciech Grabek, Carolyn Trotman-Grabek

Graphic design, typesetting and layout: IlustraDorka D&D Domagała

Poznań 2024

Edition I

Printing: Drukarnia Akcygraf

