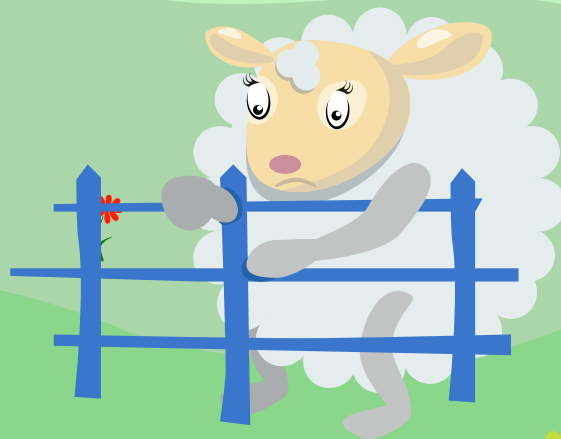


A book series for children  
How to understand your emotions: FEAR

# The Wishing Well

Story + exercises

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# The Wishing Well

“Leave it, it’s mine,” Mila the lamb was annoyed, pushing her brother away.  
“It’s mine, mine,” teased Rebel, nudging the head of cabbage that Mila got for breakfast with his little horns.

“Moooom,” she moaned. “He’s teasing.”

“Rebel, have you eaten yours yet?” Mom asked.

“Not yet,” Rebel replied and jumped up gleefully, rolling Mila’s cabbage into the corner of the pen.





“Rebel, give your sister her breakfast right now,” Mom said firmly.  
“But she is so funny when she gets angry,” he groaned.

It was like this every day; Rebel was constantly looking for opportunities to tease his sister. The only respite from his mischief were outings to the pasture. He would occupy himself with frolicking, watching frogs and chasing butterflies.

But later that day, on the way back from the pasture, the farmers separated the flock, and Mila and the other sheep were moved to a new barn on the other side of the meadow, while Rebel, Mom and Dad were escorted to the old one.

Mila didn't know what was going on, she looked through a crack in the door, wanting to see her family, but the barns were too far apart. She was very scared and sad, but worst of all was the uncertainty of what would happen next. Would she see them tomorrow? Would they be in the same pen again? Or was she here by mistake? There was a storm of thoughts in her head, and she started trembling. Her legs were twitching, and she felt alternately cold and hot.

“Don't worry,” spoke up one of the sheep, seeing her anxiety. “We'll probably only be here for a little while, and then you'll go back to your own.”

But Mila didn't know how long ,a little while' was. Was it a few hours, days, or maybe longer? In her mind ,a little while' had already passed, and she really wanted to cuddle with her mother.

The following days looked the same. Every morning, all the sheep went out to pasture where Mila would meet her family. These were the happiest moments of the day, she didn't even mind her brother's teasing, and in the evenings, when each flock returned to their barns, Mila began to miss his mischief. Every morning she woke up hoping that maybe today would be the end of that ,little while' the sheep had been talking about, but the days passed, and nothing changed. Until she learned that all the sheep in the barn would be sheared, and that meant she would no longer have her lush, thick wool. Again, she felt fear; she had never been sheared before and didn't know if it would hurt, and if so, how much.

On top of that, she could not imagine what she would look like afterwards. After all, she had such a unique snow-coloured fleece, which her mother loved so much. She felt that without it, she would no longer be herself.

“Hey, don't worry, the fleece will grow back,” the sheep, who again noticed the little lamb's fear, comforted her. “It's only for a little while,” she said consolingly. But for Mila, ,a little while' was already too much. She was to be in the other barn for ,a little while' and without her fleece for ,a little while,' but she felt that ,a little while' was an extremely stretchy word that meant uncertainty. Meanwhile, certainty was what Mila badly needed right about then.



When the farmers began taking the sheep to be sheared, she hid in a dark corner and waited there until evening before slipping out into the meadow, unnoticed.

“I will never go back there,” she cried quietly.

A moment later she heard noises, she instinctively huddled in the grass. The noises were coming from an old shed and were so strange that the lamb finally decided to find out what they were.

When she opened the door, she saw an old sheep.

“Why are you here?” Mila asked.

“I’m old, my joints hurt a lot and it’s difficult for me to move around.”

“And you’re sitting here all the time? I never saw you in the meadow.”

“They don’t let me out, I get my grass and water here.”

“That’s sad,” whispered Mila, and without thinking long, she loosened the lock of the pen.

A moment later they were both in the pasture, the old sheep was nibbling the grass with relish and looked happy.

“And you, what are you doing here alone?” she finally asked, looking at Mila.

Then the little lamb told her everything.

“You know, my dear, running away is not a good thing, because it condemns you to loneliness,” the old sheep said.

“Does it?” Mila asked surprised.

“If you don’t return to the barn, you won’t be sheared, but you will also have to hide. And that means you won’t see your family any time soon,” the sheep explained.

“I know that it is difficult to overcome fear. But when you come back tomorrow, you will meet your mother here, as always. It’s very important to have someone next to you who loves you. Then even fear gets a little smaller,” she added. “And besides, shearing doesn’t hurt,” she smiled.

“By the way, I’m Luna, and you?”

“Mila,” the little lamb replied, and at the same time she spotted a well in the moonlight.

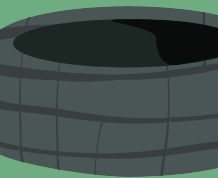
“Why do we never drink water from it?” she asked, moving towards the well.

“Because it’s almost empty, but there are a lot of pebbles at the bottom,” replied Luna, slowly following Mila. “It’s a wishing well. If you want something badly, you have to think about it, close your eyes and throw in a pebble, but you can only have one wish.”

“Wow, a wishing well?” Mila was thrilled. “Do they always come true?”

“I don’t know,” replied the sheep. “I’ve never checked.”

Mila was delighted with what she had just heard.





A feeling of happiness that was difficult to describe came over her, that maybe just in a moment all her worries would disappear.

Excited, she approached the well. But she had two wishes: the first was to be with her family again, and the second was to feel no fear.

“I don’t know which one to choose,” she groaned, looking at the sheep. “Maybe I should

ask for courage? Or for being back in the same pen with Mom, because then any fear would get smaller? Why is this so hard...,” she sighed.

The old sheep stopped nibbling grass and said: “You know, Mila...” “You don’t have to ask for courage.”

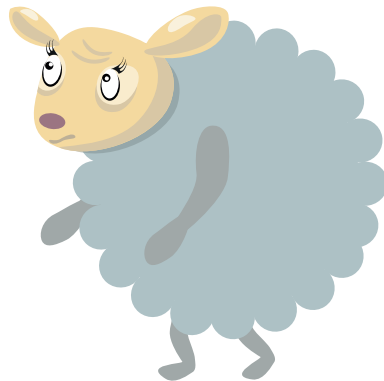
“What do you mean, I don’t have to? I’m scared all the time, and I still feel this strange fluttering in my heart whenever I think of the shearing.”

“True courage is not to be afraid to admit that you are scared of something,” the sheep said, seriously.

“So... am I brave?”

“In my opinion, very much so,” she responded.

Mila hesitated for a while longer, because she wasn’t quite sure if the sheep was right. In the end, she made a decision:



“Well, then I know what to wish for,” she whispered. However, this time she decided not to say it out loud. She concluded that thinking the wish would have more power.

She closed her eyes and thought that she wanted to be with her relatives again in one pen. But just as she was about to throw a pebble into the well, she thought of Luna. About how sad it was that she was alone all the time, and they didn’t even let her out in the meadow.

Then she made the new wish and threw in the pebble.

“May it come true,” she whispered, then looked at the sheep. “You know Luna, I think it’s time for me to go back to the barn. We’ll definitely meet again soon, only I don’t know if you’ll recognize me after the shearing,” she added with a smile.

“I told you that you are brave,” smiled the sheep.

The next day came, and just as Luna had said, the shearing didn’t hurt, and although Mila looked differently now, she was still the same Mila.

Later that day, she was reunited with her parents. She was happy again.

As soon as they were in the pasture, she went straight to the old sheep’s pen to share the happy news. But Luna was not there. Only after a while did the little lamb notice her grazing in the meadow along with other sheep.

“Wow, Luna, it’s me, Mila,” she whispered in case the sheep didn’t recognize her. “Have they let you out, or have you not returned to the pen since yesterday?” she asked puzzled.

“They let me out,” smiled Luna. “Today the vet decided that with my joint problems I should move more.”

“That’s wonderful, that was my wish at the well!” Mila was delighted. Hearing this, tears welled up in the old sheep’s big eyes.

“Why did you do it?” Luna asked.

“Because I realized that it is much more difficult for you than for me. You were constantly on your own, and yet you never asked the well to grant your wish...”

“Maybe you should finally throw a pebble into it,” whispered Mila.

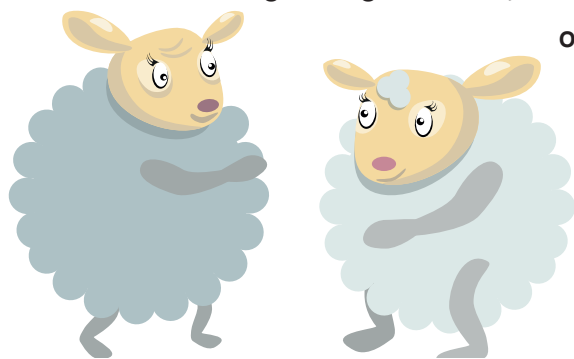
“I did it yesterday.”

“Really?” And what was your wish?” asked the little lamb.

“I asked for you to be with your family again.”

Mila looked at Luna in disbelief. She wondered if everything that had happened was really the work of the well, or was it the confidence that wishes do come true? One thing she was sure of though, is that something unusual had happened the night before – she had met Luna.

And maybe if it weren’t for the separation from her family and the fear of getting sheared, she would never have met her. And now, in the midst of a thousand sheep in the meadow, two best friends were standing right next to each other.



## GAMES RELATED TO THE WISHING WELL STORY

NAME OF EMOTION: **FEAR**

1.

**“Mila’s great fears”** (to be done with another person)

**Goal:** to educate about fear and how to regulate it.



**Materials needed:** figurines of Mila and Luna the sheep (you can use ready-made figurines of sheep or use plasticine, for example).

**Description of the game:** together with the child prepare figurines that will represent the main characters of The Wishing Well story, namely Mila and Luna. We let the child make the figurines according to their own ideas. We can then use the figurines to educate them about anxiety (how the body reacts to anxiety) and to educate them about regulation (conversation, support), by preparing a theatre play for the child.

**Instructions:** Mila and Luna have become friends, today we will meet them and see their story. We’ll learn about what Mila is scared of, and what Luna has to say about it. Ready for the show? Let’s go!

An example version using the figurines of Mila and Luna:

**Mila:** “I’m Mila, I’m scared that I won’t see my parents anymore. Look, I’m so scared, my legs are shaking and it’s hard for me to collect my thoughts. When I’m scared, I want to hide or run away.”

**Luna:** “I understand that you are scared. Running away and hiding is not a good idea, because you will be lonely. Tell me about your fears... Together, we’ll figure something out. I’m close by, you won’t be alone!”

**Possible modifications:**

- older children can also actively participate in the theatre and play roles,
- you can create a play about what happened next with Mila and Luna.

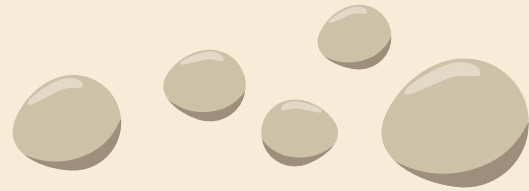
## 2.

**“Pebbles of fear”** (to be done with another person)

**Goal:** identify fear

**Essential materials:**

- pebbles of different sizes,
- paper,
- glue/tape,
- a pair of scissors,
- optional decorative elements.



**Description of the game:** together with the child create a wishing well by rolling paper into a tube and gluing it. If the child wants, they can decorate the wishing well. When the well is ready, prepare the pebbles. Each pebble represents one fear, with small pebbles corresponding to small fears and larger pebbles symbolizing great fears. The child names what they are scared of and then throws pebbles into the well. We can work together with the child to seek answers to the needs associated with particular fears.

**Instructions:** Today we will make your own wishing well. You can make it look any way you want. Once the well is ready, look at the pebbles and think about what you are scared of. Choose one pebble for each fear. If the fear is great, choose a larger pebble, and if small, find a smaller one. Now you can throw pebbles into your wishing well, you can say what you fear and what you need, what you would like to see happen. In our well you can have more wishes and more fears than Mila.

**Tip:** it is important that the child can express and name what they are scared of and what they need (if this is difficult for the child, we can help by pointing out possible answers).

**Possible modifications:**

The adults can also throw in pebbles while illustrating that they also experience fear (normalizing the feeling of fear).

## 3.

**“Show me what you are scared of”** (to be done with another person)

**Goal:** expressing fear, expressing emotions

**Description of the game:** in this game, both the child and the adult can show (or optionally draw) what could be the cause of fear, and the other person’s task is to guess what it is.

**Instructions:** How about a riddle? This won’t be an ordinary riddle. I’ll show you what I’m scared of, but I won’t say anything... Try to guess what it is. It could be a spider, or a snake, or an injection. Let’s try it!

**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 use drawings, as in classic charades.

### TIPS ON HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT FEAR:

#### EDUCATION

When telling your child about fear, it is also worth mentioning how it affects the body (your hands or feet may tremble when you are scared, your heart will beat faster). It is also worth mentioning that usually when we are scared, we want to run away or hide somewhere or sometimes fight, especially when we feel that something is threatening us.

We can also talk about the fact that we are often scared of things that do not pose any threat to us. “In our head, fears are bigger,” and when we share them, they become smaller - just like in the case of Mila, who was scared of shearing, and when she told Luna about it, the latter was then able to reassure her.

It is natural that adults also feel scared, often in the same situations as a child, especially in the face of illness. We can share with the child that we, too, are scared. When we are scared,

it is definitely easier when someone we love is close by. We can recall what Luna said in the story, that it is courageous to talk about being scared, and to name our fears.

### **WHAT CAN I DO?**

When a child feels scared, our presence and reassurance that we are there is important. It's also worth adding that we know the child is scared (so that they can feel seen and heard), that it's okay to be scared, and that they are very brave because they are willing to talk about it. We can also ask how great the fear is and what the child needs to help them conquer the fear.

In the face of illness, the child and the family are at risk of experiencing excessive chronic anxiety, in which case it is worth introducing techniques to regulate the level of anxiety, such as breathing techniques in which the focus will be on longer exhalations.





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