

## AMY and the Fear Monster

Amy came to see me the week before her 7th birthday. Six months earlier a relieving teacher had taken her by her ear lobe and pushed her to sit in her seat. When Amy came home from school that day she told her mum she didn't want to go back to school. Her mum told her not to be silly, but the next morning she still didn't want to go to school.

Over the next 6 months the anxiety about going to school only got worse, and she began wetting the bed, vomiting in the morning, and was taken to school crying and screaming without being able to eat any breakfast. Her parents had tried everything - keeping her away from school for weeks at a time, bribing her, etc.

I asked her if she knew anything about 'fear monsters', because it seemed like one had got hold of her. I said it was good that she had come to see me, because I knew a little about how people could tame 'fear monsters'; but unfortunately you have to be a big kid to do this, and maybe she should come back when she starts to get her second teeth, as that would mean that she was big enough to deal with it. She was very quick to point out to me that she already had a number of adult teeth, so I asked if this meant she was ready to deal to the fear monster. The answer was a clear 'yes'.

Well, first we would need to get it out into the light of day, (did you know that fear monsters grow bigger in the dark?), so did she have some crayons? Then we got dad to build a little wooden cage, with a good lock, that was to be hung from the clothes line.

Every morning she was to take the fear monster and lock him in his cage. (If she was feeling a bit angry towards it she was allowed to whirl the cage around, as that might make the fear monster feel a bit ill, and that would teach it a lesson for



making her feel sick). And when she came home from school she was to let him out of the cage (it is not generally well known, but if you let fear monsters out of their cage in the late afternoon it makes them sillier and less powerful).

I said I wasn't sure where, but within a couple of days, she would notice that one of the problems - such as wetting the bed, vomiting in the morning, not eating breakfast, crying etc., would be not so intense. This was a sign that the monster was getting weaker, and was being tamed. She was to tell mum or dad, if they hadn't already noticed, and phone me immediately to let me know. And sure enough a few days later I received an excited phone call to let me know that monster was getting weaker.

I asked Amy if I could have the monster once she had tamed it - for safe keeping. But I didn't want it before it was tamed, as it might get loose, and get hold of some little kids who weren't big enough to deal with it. Once it was tamed Amy was given her certificate authenticating her membership to the 'Fear Monsters Taming and Ghost Busting Collective'.

The monster now occupies a space on my office wall, asking for it's story to be told.

**Comment:** The 'fearful' story had become dominant, and everyone was vigilant for problems. I merely invited people to search for signs of the problem weakening, and create space for that story to gain ground.

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