

Parents' resource

Zoe's Choice

***Zoe's Choice* is a story about fears and relationships. Zoe is pushed by her friend and becomes too scared to sleep, afraid that a monster named Scarolena is going to hurt her. With the help of her family, Zoe discovers her own strengths and learns to overcome her fears.**

Zoe's Choice can be used as a way of starting a conversation.

There are no fixed rules or set instructions, however, a few tips are provided below.

- The most important thing is that you and your child enjoy the shared experience of reading together.
- The book can facilitate a discussion about feelings and experiences. Using the book to ask your child questions to help them link feelings and experiences, and support them to find the words to describe the narrative of their own life.
- Use the book to discuss ways Zoe was helped by her family. Use the *Skills the family used to help Zoe overcome her fears* section at the back of the book to assist you.
- This book creates the space to think together.
- Use the book to acknowledge the creative activities and solutions that children have to offer.
- Each child will take something different from the story. Try not to be too prescriptive. Ask open-ended questions. Let your child lead and you can follow, so that your child feels free to express her or his feelings completely.

There is usually more than one story in a book.

This resource suggests some different conversations you might have about the different stories in *Zoe's Choice*. These are ideas only. You don't have to ask every question or go through them in order. Select a couple and let the conversation go wherever your child takes it. Allow the conversation to go on only as long as your child shows interest.

The "what happened" story

This concept helps check a child's understanding of the story, how much they were engaged by it, what they took from it and gives them the opportunity to share the experience of the story.

Questions

- Is this a good book?
- What was your favourite bit?
- What happened to Zoe and Lena at the beginning of the story?
- Why was Zoe frightened?
- What did Zoe's family do to help her?
- Do you think Zoe's family were helpful?
- Did Zoe change at the end?
- What was Scarolena doing?
- Why did Zoe and Scarolena dance together at the end?



Therapeutic storytelling is an easy means of addressing difficult topics with children. Proven and effective sound psychological theory is quietly woven into the storyline. The hard work of trying to determine how to address a specific topic has been done for you. Caring adults, in essence, then have a professional helping them quietly work through difficult topics with children. It provides a springboard for discussion and guidance, allowing for positive change that affects self-esteem, trust development, value clarification and decision-making. The power of the story, with its ability to allow fantasy, creativity, feelings, thought and change continues as a natural focal experience in a child's development. Coupled with quiet psychological theory it offers a healing medium that allows children the ability to learn, feel and know through the assistance of their imagination.

– Caryn Sabes Hacker
The Healing Power of Storybook Solutions (2009)

Zoe's Choice can facilitate a discussion about feelings and experiences.

Good Ships is an initiative of Relationships Australia Victoria to produce books and resources for children to help address the difficulties they commonly face in the context of important relationships. For more information visit www.rav.org.au/goodships



Good ships

The "feelings" story

Themes that can be explored include identifying, understanding and managing feelings, empathy, coping and sharing experience.

Questions

- After reading *Zoe's Choice*, do you feel happy, sad, scared or something else? Why do you feel that way?
- When Lena pushed Zoe, how do you think Zoe felt?
- Has anyone ever pushed you? How did that make you feel? What did you do? What did you tell yourself? Who helped? How did they help?
- Have you ever pushed anyone? How do you think they felt?
- How do you manage feeling bad or angry?
- We all have worries. Do you have worries right now?

The "identity" story

Themes or therapeutic goals that can be explored include being pushed, being scared, seeking help, ways of coping, finding creative solutions, making friends, being assertive and saying no to violence.

Questions

- Do you think Zoe was weak or strong? Why?
- Were Lena and Scarolena weak or strong?
- Were the family members helpful to Zoe?
- What are good ways of helping a scared child?
- How do you manage conflict with friends?
- Tell me about a time when you were frightened and got help to solve the problem.

- Tell me about a time when you did something different and others learned from you.
- Tell me about a time you learned something from a friend or family member.
- When have you felt like Zoe or one of the other family members?
- If you saw someone being pushed, what would you do?

Ways of responding

- Listen and reflect on the thoughts and feelings of the child.
- Celebrate the child's contributions.
- Validate and support any solutions a child suggests.
- Reflect and acknowledge the child's feelings.

The "strengths" story

Zoe's strengths, found at the back of the book, can be used to celebrate strengths, and ways of coping with fear and relationships.

Questions

- Which images show your strengths?
- Choose an image of a strength you'd like to develop and tell a story about it.
- Choose an image that is about something you have never experienced.
- Choose an image that celebrates something about your friend, sibling or parent.

Activity

- Draw a picture about a strength you have.

Ways of responding

- Listen and reflect on the thoughts and feelings of the child.
- Celebrate the child's contributions.
- Don't judge or teach, just celebrate the children's contributions.

The aim of Relationships Australia Victoria's Good Ships project is to produce a series of engaging, beautifully illustrated story-books, with accompanying resources for parents, teachers and counsellors. The books can be read simply for pleasure, but each is focused on a challenge or difficulty children commonly face. The idea behind the series is a simple one: Stories help us connect, grow, learn, and heal.

