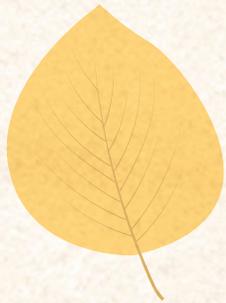
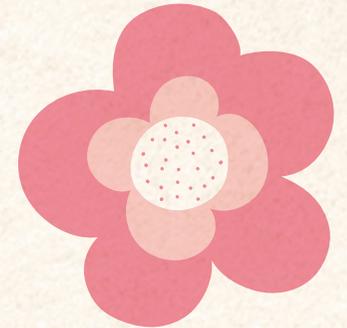


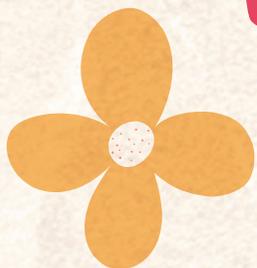


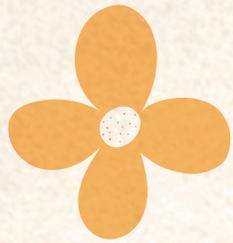
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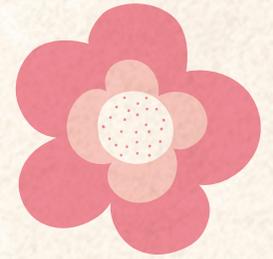
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PARENT





INTRODUCTION



This collection of stories has been developed as a companion to the suite of BUGK parenting program resources for use by trained BUGK facilitators in their parenting groups or in one-to-one work with parents.

Facilitators might choose to use these stories in place of the children's picture storybooks recommended in the BUGK manual, or they might choose to read them in addition to the children's books- or to use a mixture of both.

The stories support the BUGK program focus on narrative, and in particular, on providing support to parents as they make sense of their own parenting story. It is intended that the stories will provide yet another opportunity in the program, for parents to reflect upon their own parenting challenges.

Some of the stories have animal characters - a technique often employed by writers of children's stories. Animal characters create some distance between the personal experience of the audience, and that of the characters in the story - allowing the reader/listener to step back from their own experience and to reflect upon it dispassionately, without feeling judged or threatened.

How you use these stories will largely depend on your intention. For example: if you intend to use a story to make point, or to be instructive in some way, then you might read a particular story as part of your presentation of the main content of a session, and then invite open discussion about the meaning or content of the story. On the other hand, if your focus is on enjoyment and/or role modelling for parents, then you might choose to read a story at the end of a session, offering it as a 'parting gift' for parents. As with all other program content, we encourage trained BUGK facilitators to use all activities and resources in whichever way they feel most comfortable using them, and which best meet the needs of the parents attending their sessions.

The intention with these stories is that facilitators will read them aloud to parents during the course of BUGK group sessions. Some facilitators like to set aside a special 'storytime' in each of their group sessions. Many facilitators and parents look forward to 'storytime' as an enjoyable way to come together and bring each session to a close. Ultimately, as with all other aspects of the program, facilitators are free to use the stories if and when the time seems right for their group.



INTRODUCTION

Although some of the stories are clearly aligned with particular themes of the chapters of the program, facilitators may choose to read any of the stories at any time during the course of the program as they see fit.

General themes explored in each of the stories, are as follows:

- **Brainbow the Chameleon** - early brain development
- **Will** - messages from the past
- **Waddley Wombat** - mindful listening
- **Frizzle and Dipper** - the iceberg/anthill model of understanding behaviour
- **Storm** - helping children to manage big feelings (co-regulation)
- **Ubuntu** - self-care for parents



At the beginning of each of the stories, there is a text box with an outline of the content and/or key messages contained within the story.

Facilitators will note that there are some blank pages at the back of the booklet. Facilitators are encouraged to use that space to write their own stories which relate to parenting experiences shared in their BUGK groups. If facilitators are able to provide parents with their own individual copies of the story booklet, they might wish to use the blank pages to record any stories they write themselves. Some facilitators might be interested in supporting parents to write their own parenting story as a group project. In that case, the group story could be written on, or printed and attached to, the blank pages provided.

In the case of parents having their own individual copies of the booklet, they may choose to read some of the stories to their children where appropriate.

We hope you enjoy sharing these stories with the parents you work with.

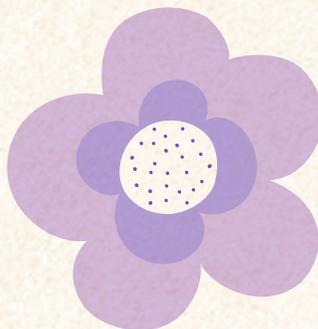
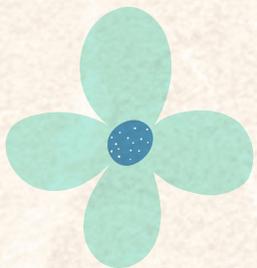
Have fun!



BRAINBOW

The Chameleon

This story illustrates the effects on children's behavior, of their changing capacities and challenges as dictated by the process of early life brain development. There are also some examples of parent-child co-regulation of emotion.



BRAINBOW the Chameleon

From the time he was born, Brainbow had been labelled 'the different one' in his family. If he'd been born into another family, he might have been called the 'black sheep' of the family. But Brainbow wasn't a sheep - he was a chameleon.

All the others in Brainbow's family could change the colour of their skin to blend in with their surroundings, but Brainbow was different.

It took Brainbow's mother some time to work out what was going on for her little son. At first she thought there might be something wrong with her beautiful baby boy. When he was born she was surprised to see that his skin was yellow all over. She was even more surprised to find that he didn't seem to be able to change his colour to blend in with his surroundings. This worried Brainbow's mother because it meant that her baby really stood out when he was in the leafy green forest or basking in the sun on warm grey rocks. It made him easy prey for the sharp-eyed eagles circling overhead.

To keep him safe, the little chameleon's mother had to make sure he stayed close to her at all times. She soon discovered though, that the very best protection for her baby was for her to change her own colour to match that of her son. So whenever he was upset, she would take him to a sandy dune and rock him and pat him and sing him a colour-changing song, until they were a sandy-coloured matching pair that no eagle-eyed predator could find.

A whole year passed by and Brainbow grew and grew... but his skin stayed as yellow as it was on the day he was born. His mother wondered if he would remain yellow forever.



BRAINBOW the Chameleon



He was a strong and busy little chameleon who loved to be on the move. Every day he tried hard to keep up with his big brothers and sisters. He practised running faster and faster. He practised rolling over and over... and he practised climbing higher and higher.

Then one day, not long after Brainbow's first birthday, as his mother watched nervously from below, he mastered the art of balancing on a precarious thin branch high above the ground. As Brainbow proudly wobbled and swayed in the breeze, his mother noticed something extraordinary.... Brainbow's colour was changing!

Beginning at the tip of his nose, and slowly spreading all the way to the tip of his tail, Brainbow's skin began to take on a greenish tinge. His new colour became brighter and stronger until finally he was a vivid, lustrous green all over.

'Ah!' thought his mother. 'Now he'll be safe in the leafy green forest!' Quickly changing her own colour to match her son, she laughed. "I'm coming to get you!" and chased after her son as he ran off into the forest.

Every day after that, Brainbow's mother expected to see her son change colour again. But every morning when he woke up, he was still green, and every night when he went to bed, he was still green.

BRAINBOW the Chameleon



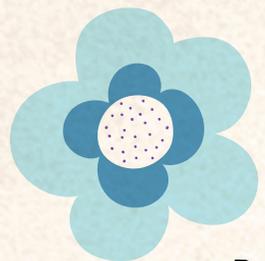
On the day before Brainbow's second birthday, while his mother was preparing his birthday party, the little chameleon was in the forest chasing ants with his big brother. He had his eye on one particularly large and luscious ant when 'slap!' 'slurp!', with one quick flick of his tongue, Brainbow's brother snapped up the ant for himself. Brainbow was crestfallen and very angry with his brother. He'd run so fast to chase that ant and he'd felt so proud that he could hunt his own food- only to have it taken away from him. And there was nothing he could do to get it back.

Brainbow stomped his feet and poked out his tongue at his brother. He tried to scratch and bite him too, but his brother only laughed at him and ran away. That made

Brainbow even more angry, and he stomped and spat and spun around in circles and as he raged, his skin began to change colour again!...this time to a deep purple.

By the time his mother arrived to see what all the commotion was about, Brainbow was in a fierce purple rage. Deep inside, the mother chameleon felt annoyed that her children couldn't play peacefully together while she was busy, but she took a deep breath and, noticing her son's livid purple skin, she changed her own colour to match his. Then she looked her little boy in the eye, made a scowling face to match his own, and stamped her purple feet as she yelled, 'Not fair! Not fair!' 'Cross! Cross! Cross!'

Brainbow instantly stopped his stomping and stared at his mother in surprise. As she soothed him with her calm voice, he relaxed and sobbed out his story about the ant. Gradually he calmed down.

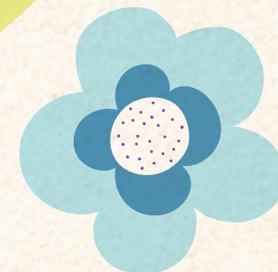
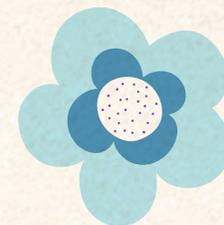
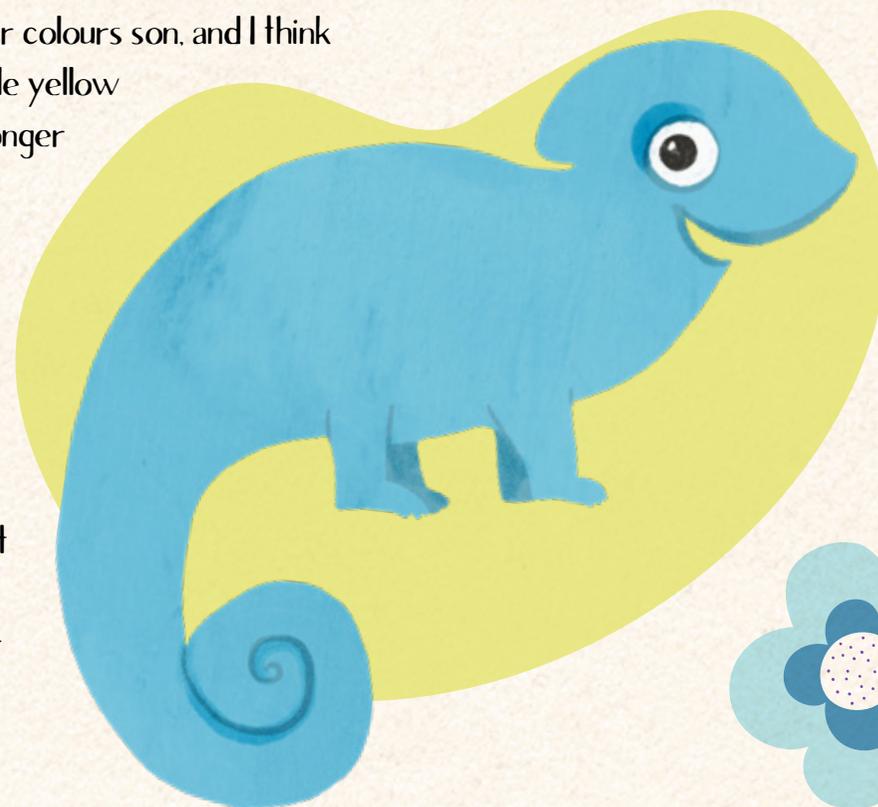


BRAINBOW the Chameleon

By the time Brainbow was around three or four years old, his purple colour gradually toned down to a cool blue tone. Sometimes, when the little chameleon became particularly angry or felt very frightened or sad or wildly excited about something, his skin would return to its livid purple shade, but mostly he remained a cool blue chameleon.

At around the same time, Brainbow began to talk. He talked and talked and talked. At first his mother thought it was cute, but then he started asking questions. No matter how carefully his mother answered his questions, he always seemed to have another. 'Why Mummy?... But why?'

One lazy afternoon, when mother and son were sharing a cool blue moment in the shade, Brainbow's mum said, "I've been thinking a lot about you and your colours son, and I think I now understand what's been happening. When you were a little yellow baby, you only had a Beginning Brain. As you got bigger and stronger and practised running and climbing, your Busy Brain helped you turn green. When you were older still, and your Big Feelings Brain grew more, you turned purple. Now that you're such a big boy, you're Thinking Brain is helping you to talk and to think for yourself... and you're mostly blue. The rest of us change colour to match our surroundings, but I think you change colour when different parts of your brain are growing and working hard! I wish your brothers and sisters could do that too - it would make it easier for me to tell how they're feeling and what they need from me. Maybe I'll just have to look harder to see their true colours underneath their skins!"





WILL



This story explores the process by which messages from the past can impact on relationships between parents and their children.





WILL

Three generations of the Murray family are having a summer holiday in a bush cabin by the sea: Jen and Rob, their 4 year old son Will, and Jen's parents Lynne and Brian. The family holiday has been planned as a celebration of Lynne's 60th birthday.

Lynne and Brian are keen bushwalkers and on the first morning of the holiday, before the young family is even out of bed, Will's grandparents climb to the top of the mountain to see the sunrise. On their return, when Will hears where they've been, he pleads with his parents and grandparents to let him climb the mountain too.

"I want to climb the mountain. Pleeeeease can I go too?"

But his mother says, "No Will. It's too far. It's too steep. It's too dangerous."

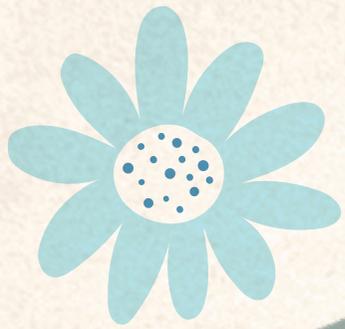
Will moans, "It's not far! It's not fair! I can do it!"

After breakfast, Jen and Rob head into town to do some food shopping, leaving Will with his grandparents. As soon as they are out of sight, Will says, "Let's go up the mountain Pa! Please take me there. Come on! Let's go!"

"I'd love to take you buddy, but your Mum and Dad wouldn't like it if I did. Sorry Will." But Lynne says, "How about I just take you to the beginning of the steep bit?" Glancing sideways at her husband, she adds, "It can't hurt. No harm done...and he's so keen to give it a try."

Brian shrugs and gives a sigh, but he fills a water bottle for Will's backpack as his grandson excitedly runs off to find his hat and walking shoes.





WILL



Will and his Nan start out towards the mountain path - Will bounding ahead, then running back to check with his grandmother. "Nan! Nan! This is the best holiday ever!" As they begin to climb, and the track becomes steeper, Lynne checks in with Will. "It's getting steep now Will. Are your legs getting tired? We can turn back now if you like."

"No Nan. I'm ok. I'll tell you when I've had enough", and he climbs on ahead of her, calling, "Come on, poor old Nan!"

Back at the cabin, Jen and Rob return from town. Only Brian is there to meet them.

"Where's Will?" asks Jen. Sheepishly, Brian tells her that Lynne has taken him to the beginning of the mountain climb. Jen says nothing as she enters the cabin, but her dark looks do not bode well.

When Lynne and Will return, Jen is preparing a picnic lunch for the family. She barely looks up when the mountaineers arrive. Lynne offers to help, and as the two women slice and chop and pack, Lynne says, "I'm sorry darling. I should have discussed it with you first."

And Jen replied, "Yes Mum, you should have! It seems to me sometimes that what I say, and what I want, just isn't that important to you. When I was a kid, and when I didn't want to go on a bushwalk with you...especially after that fright with the tiger snake--I still had to go! What you wanted about the bush was the only thing that was important to you, not what I wanted. And now, with Will, it's the same thing. I don't want him to go. You want him to go, so you take him... even though I said not to! Yeah, Mum, that does bother me. Like, when will it end? When will what I say about the bush really matter to you? You seemed to listen to what I wanted about other things. But just not the bush!"



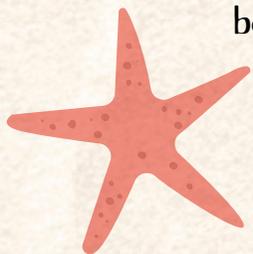


WILL

Lynne is thoughtful for some time, then says, "You, know, darling, you're right! I really didn't listen to what you wanted, and I guess I just did it again. I'm sorry. I'm not sure why the bush is that important to me. It's like I just had to make sure you and I would have our bushwalks, and that you would have fun and really enjoy doing it with me. And when you didn't, I didn't want to hear that. And now there was a chance to have a nice little bush walk with Will, I just couldn't say 'no' to him, and I didn't think of what you'd said so clearly about him not going. I am sorry."

"You know, the more we talk about it, the more I remember that my grandfather and father were very keen bushwalkers and I really wanted to go with them. To be close to them. My grandfather would often take me, and we had such special times. But my father always had a reason not to take me. And that was so disappointing to me. I guess I wanted to be sure that you and me... and maybe now, Will and I, would share the bush the same way, and I needed to make it happen. Even if you didn't want to do it. It stood for family closeness to me and I seemed to need it to stand for that for you too."

Once the picnic food is prepared, the whole family help to carry baskets and chairs and rugs down to the beach. Once the family is set up on rugs in the shade, Rob picks up his board and heads into the surf, encouraging Will to join him. Will follows him reluctantly, and when Rob hoists him up onto his surf board and gives him a ride in the shallows, Will begins to cry, and comes running up the beach, back to his mother.





WILL



When Rob comes out of the surf, he drops his board in the sand with a frustrated sigh. "I don't get it," he says. "We take him on holiday to a beautiful beach and he won't even go in the water! I would have done anything to have a beach holiday when I was a kid, but my Dad had fair skin and hated being in the sun, so we never went to the beach. And now Will doesn't enjoy it! First my dad hates the beach and now Will seems to hate it too! I guess I have to let it go. Maybe I have to find our own special place that we both enjoy. I don't need the beach, to have with Will, what I wanted with my dad."



Jen spreads out the picnic food and soon the family are tucking in to a delicious birthday lunch. The adults are still eating when Will says he wants to make a sandcastle with a moat.

"But you haven't finished all the food on your plate Will," says Brian. "Clean up your plate before you go and play."

"He's had enough to eat Dad. Don't force him to eat any more. I used to hate it when we were kids and you'd force us to stay at the table and eat every last scrap of food on our plate."

Brian is quiet for a while then replies, "When I was a boy, my family was poor and Mum had five kids to feed. We left our plates so clean, you didn't need to wash them!"

"But we're not poor now Dad, there's plenty of food, and childhood obesity is a real problem today."

"You're right love. It's just hard to let go of old habits."



WILL



"Come on Will. I'll show you how to make the best sandcastle with a moat and a secret tunnel!" Grandfather and grandson share their special handshake and head off to do some serious castle building together.

Later, Rob fills everyone's glass and Brian raises his glass saying, "Here's to our family!"

Jen lifts a birthday cake from a container. "I used your recipe Mum, but it doesn't look as good as yours always does. What's your secret?"

After they've sung 'Happy Birthday' and blown out the candles, Lynne says to Will, "How about you help me cut the cake. On my birthday when I was a little girl, my grandmother always cut a special circle slice in the middle of the cake, just for me. Hold the knife with me Will, and I'll show you how to do it... and let's both make a wish. I wonder what you'll wish for..."

WABBLEY

The Wombat

This story is about communication: specifically, about deep listening and the effect that can have on our relationships with others. When we listen mindfully, with more than just our ears, people around us can feel truly heard and understood.



WADDLEY the Wombat

Waddley the wombat was having a bad day. He'd woken early to the sound of thunder. There was a crashing storm outside. Lightning flashed. The rain came down in sheets... and it went on and on and on. The river rose and water began to seep into his riverbank burrow. Waddley would have to go out in the storm and dig a new burrow. But just as he reached the burrow entrance, a big River Red Gum came crashing to the ground and blocked his way. Waddley had just begun digging when... Splosh!... the burrow roof caved in and muddy water began flooding his home.

When Waddley finally emerged from his digging, he was covered in thick, wet mud. He felt sad to see his cosy home all sodden and squashed and he was cold and muddy from all that digging. Hoping that he could rest for a while in the warm dry burrow of his friend Walter, he set off to find him. He looked in all the burrows near his home, and checked all their usual hiding places, but Walt was nowhere to be found.

As he wandered into the bush, wondering what to do and worrying about his lost friend, Waddley came upon Squawk the Rainbow Lorikeet.

Squawk: You look really glum chum! What's up?

Waddley: Oh, I'm having a terrible day Squawk. First the thunder woke me up, then the river flooded my burrow and a tree fell over the entrance so I couldn't get out... and now I can't find Walt!



WADDLEY the Wombat

Squawk: I've had a bad morning too! I was just telling my friends here that I'm terrified of thunder. And the storms knocked all the best nectar flowers to the ground. Now I'll have to fly up to the mountains to collect food and I really don't have time today. The plums are ripe in the orchard over the river and I need to get there before the possums find them. When I couldn't find my friend Screech, I called a meeting and told everyone and sent them all out in a search party. That's what you should do too.

Squawk was still chattering as he flew off into the distance. Waddley's head was spinning.

He still felt worried about Walt. He still felt sad about his home. And he still felt cold.

Waddley had just rounded a bend in the track when he almost ran into Flash the Butterfly as she flitted from flower to flower.

Waddley: Oh hello Flash. Maybe you can help me. My home's been flooded and I can't find Walt. I'm having a terrible day.

Flash: Poor old you Waddley! Tell me all about it. I just need to get some nectar from that flower over there while the sun's shining...

Waddley had just started to tell Flash about his troubles, when the butterfly took off in another direction. Waddley trundled after her, and had just caught up when Flash took off again.

Flash: Sorry Waddley. I am listening to you. Sounds like you... whoops just one more daisy over there!

Back again! Now what were you saying? Oh look at the sun shining on those buttercups! Sorry. Gotta fly!





WADDLEY the Wombat



And so it continued, with Waddley telling snippets of his sad story... Flash taking off while he was in mid-sentence and Waddley ambling after her, until the wombat felt quite dizzy and had to sit down to rest.

He still felt worried about Walt. He still felt sad about his home. And he still felt cold.

Waddley was almost asleep when Jolly the Joey nudged him on the nose.

Waddley: Hello Jolly. Nice to see you. I'm certainly not feeling jolly myself today.
My home's been flooded and I can't find Walt. I'm having a terrible day.

By this time, Waddley was feeling so worn out and miserable, that as he began to tell Jolly his story, his eyes welled up with tears.

Jolly: Oh it's not that bad Waddley! Please don't cry. I can't stand it when you cry. Let's play leap frog! That'll make you feel better. Show me a big smile now!

Jolly bounded off to play, but Waddley didn't follow him.

He still felt worried about Walt. He still felt sad about his home. And he still felt cold.



WADDLEY the Wombat

Totally exhausted and bedraggled by now, Waddley plodded over to the billabong where he sat down to rest by the water's edge. He had just settled comfortably in the cool grass, when Plonk the Pobblebonk frog jumped out of the water and sat beside his wombat friend.

With a sigh, Waddley began once again to tell his story of woe. As he talked, Plonk just sat and listened. When Waddley got to the saddest part of his story, a big fat tear rolled down his face and plopped into the billabong with a splash. As he listened to his friend's sad story, Plonk's eyes were shiny with tears too. When Waddley got to a part of the story that was really hard to talk about, he stopped talking for a while. And Plonk just sat with him in silence.

When he got to the end of his story, and Plonk was still sitting beside him and still listening, Waddley said, No-one's ever listened to me like that before Plonk. You're the best listener ever... and you haven't even got ears!



FRIZZLE



and DIPPER



This story illustrates the value of looking beneath the surface of behaviour to discover how someone is really feeling and what they are needing.





FRIZZLE and DIPPER

Dipper the seal and Frizzle the polar bear cub lived in a cold, cold land in the frozen north.

Together they played, in a bay of floating ice: ducking and diving in the frozen water, romping and jumping between the ice floes.

When they had races, Frizzle was always faster on the solid ice, while Dipper was faster in the smooth water.

And when they were tired from playing and racing, they just dozed together on a floating ice raft.

One day Frizzle went hunting for food with his mother. They had just stepped onto a large chunk of floating ice, when suddenly...C.R.A.C.K!...the end of the ice floe broke off!...while Frizzle was still standing on it!!

Frizzle started to drift away from his mother. He froze on the spot, not knowing what to do, but his mother called out, 'Jump into the water! You can swim back to me!'

Frizzle wasn't a confident swimmer, but he wanted to get back to his Mum. So he jumped into the freezing water.



FRIZZLE and DIPPER



Just then, Dipper appeared and he swam alongside his friend all the way back to his mother.

"Oh Frizzle! You were so brave and strong! You'll be a great hunter before too long!" said his mother, as he clambered onto the ice floe beside her.

But Frizzle didn't feel brave and he didn't feel strong. As soon as they were back on solid ground again, he wandered off by himself. The little cub sat by Dipper's breathing hole in the ice. It didn't take long for his friend to appear.

"Oh Frizz, that must have been so scary for you! I know you don't like swimming much and from where I was under the water, I could hear your heart pounding and see your paws paddling so fast!...and now you're trembling all over!"

Dipper heaved himself up onto the ice beside his friend and flopped one of his salty wet flippers over him in a big sealy hug.

Frizzle gave a big deep sigh and said, "That's why you're my very best friend Dipper. You can always look beneath the surface to see how I'm really feeling, and you know just what I need, to make me feel better."

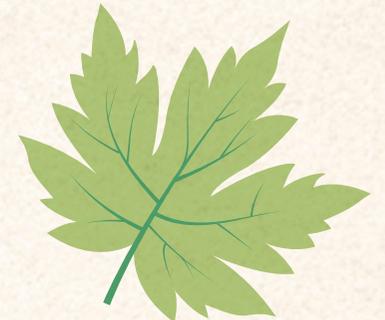




STORM



This story is about helping children to manage strong feelings. It illustrates how to co-regulate a child so that he can feel safe and understood. The story also shows how this practice can strengthen parent-child relationships.



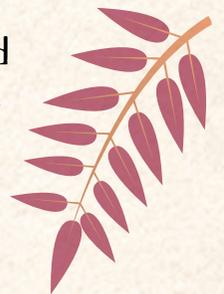
STORM

Way, way out in the middle of the Tranquil Ocean, there was a tiny dot of a place called Thunder Island, where nobody wanted to go. Passenger ships took a wide detour to avoid going anywhere near Thunder Island. Even though there were schools of tasty fish in its waters, fishermen would return to shore with a smaller catch, rather than fish on the reefs off Thunder Island. No-one had stepped ashore on the island for a very long time, but stories of its horrors were legendary. Islanders who lived nearby warned their children of the fearsome ogre who lived on the island and they were told never to go near that place.

In the stories, the ogre had come to be called Storm. He was said to be massive in size, with a thunderous voice, huge, wild eyes that flashed like lightning and enormous feet that stomped in rage. Storm was a terrifying monster, feared not only by children, but by their parents as well.

One day it happened that a lone sailor from a far distant land, spied the island and decided to come ashore. He was an explorer who was sailing the seven seas in search of adventure. Being a stranger to those parts, he had never heard the stories about the fearsome ogre Storm.. he was just curious to explore the little island. He also needed fresh supplies of water.

As the sailor anchored his boat and came ashore, he marvelled at the beauty of the little island. The water was crystal clear and the sand so soft and white. The Tranquil Ocean waves lapped gently onto the shore, making a soft shushing sound. The breeze was warm. There was not a footprint on the beach. It seemed the island must be deserted, so the sailor brought ashore some food and blankets and tied his hammock between two trees on the beach.



STORM



at the edge of the pool. He was just a small boy - a grubby barefoot boy: thin and dark with a mop of tangled curly hair and scratches on his knees.

The surprised sailor smiled at the boy, held out his hand and said, "Hello", but the boy just stared at him with big, wide eyes and said not a word. So the sailor picked up the next container and went to fill it from the spring. But as he reached out to catch the water, the ground beneath his feet began to tremble and shake. The rumbling loosened the rocks he was standing on and the sailor lost his balance and almost fell into the pond. As he tripped while dodging another falling rock, he spun around and saw the boy still standing in the same spot. But he looked like a different boy now. A low rumbling sound was coming from his mouth, and an angry red colour spread up through his body until his face glowed hot and steamy. His fists clenched. His eyes flashed. His knees and legs and feet shivered and stamped and stomped. His teeth gnashed and he tried to bite the sailor's arm. The rumbling sound grew to a deafening roar. His arms flayed about wildly and he scratched and tore at the sailor's legs. The boy screamed, and his screams sounded like thunder! "You're stealing my water! You want to hurt me! I'm going to hurt you first!"

STORM

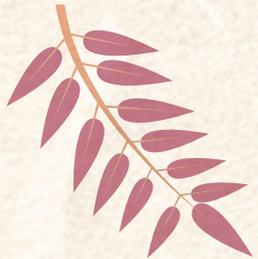


"I've been sailing for many weeks and I've run out of water," the sailor cried. "I want to be your friend. I've got food on the beach and I'll share it with you."

"I don't believe you!" shouted the boy in his thunderous voice.

The worldly sailor had lived in wild places, and was used to wild creatures, and he acted quickly. He scooped up the boy and held him close. "Quick!" he said, "a huge storm's coming! We've got to get out of here! Back to the shore! Black clouds are coming! There's going to be thunder, and lightning and rain!"

And he ran with the boy back through the forest, fast and furious. Together they bounced over boulders, rolled over ridges, jumped through the jungle - all the way down to the beach. As they clambered across the sand, the sailor shouted, "Here's a blanket to keep you dry!" He wrapped the boy tightly and heaved him into the hammock he'd slung between the trees. Swinging the hammock strongly back and forth, he called, "We made it! We're safe now!" Then gradually, bit by bit, as he rocked and swayed the hammock more gently, he said, "The wind's dying down now. The waves are getting smaller."



STORM

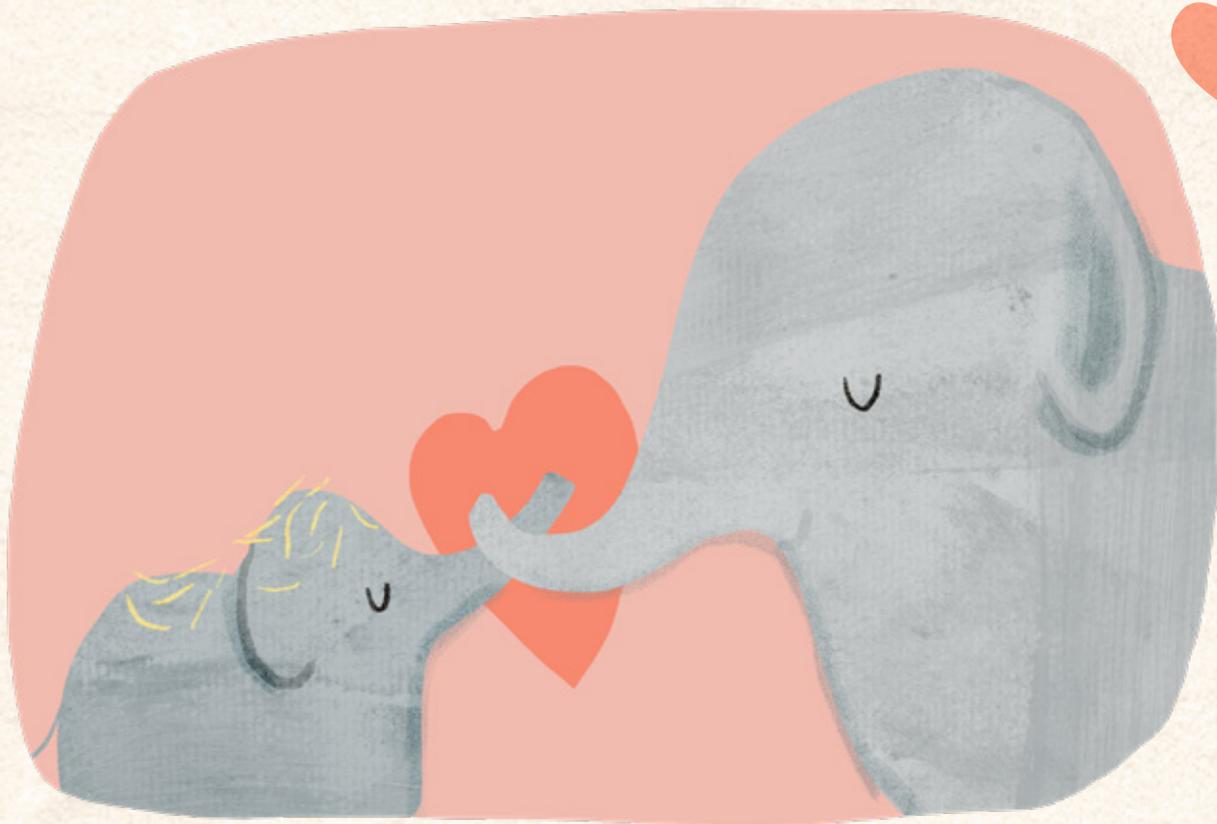
When the storm had calmed and there was just the shushing of gentle waves lapping the shore, the sailor said, "You know, sometimes when we get really angry, we do things without thinking." From under the blanket, a muffled voice whispered, "I'm sorry I hurt you."

The sailor replied, "Those big storms can be pretty wild but they never last long. It seems to have cleared up now."... He smiled as the two of them shared a high five. Then he looked at the boy and said, "Let's eat! Would you like some of this pie that I made?...and I've got cake as well."

The sailor thought, as he watched the boy munch ravenously through his provisions, then said, "We could go on some adventures together, you and I." And the boy looked up at him with big, smiling eyes and whispered, "I'd like that."



URBUNTU



This story is about the importance of parents asking for help and taking good care of themselves in the difficult, and sometimes painful, challenge of parenting. It also illustrates that 'it takes a village to raise a child.'



UBUNTU



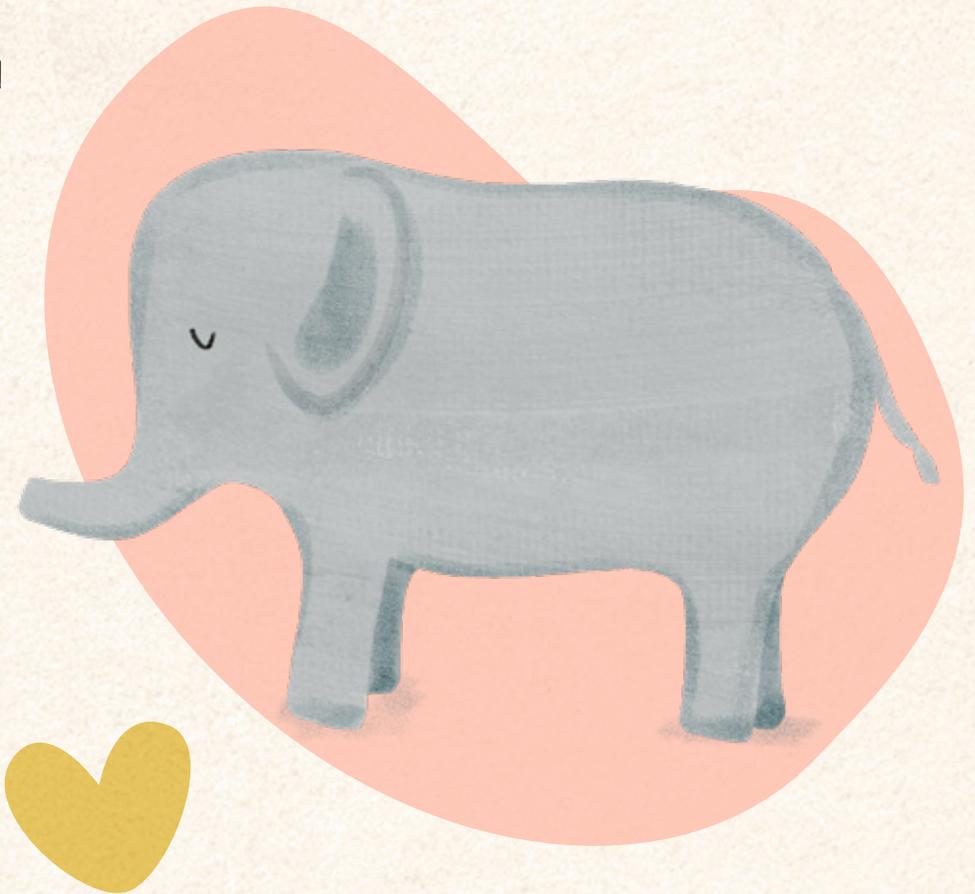
There was great excitement at the zoo, because Elli the elephant was going to have a baby!

This would be Elli's first baby, and the first time a baby elephant had been born at the zoo.

As it got closer to the time when her baby would be born, the zookeepers moved Elli to a quiet enclosure away from all the crowds. Every day, Zoe the elephant keeper, checked to see if the baby had been born. Every night, before she went home, Zoe would check on Elli one last time.

On Tuesday night there was a storm that rattled windows and blew trees to the ground. The noise woke Zoe and she sat up in bed worrying about Elli. Although it was still dark, Zoe was wide awake. She decided to get up and go to the zoo to make sure that Elli was alright.

All was quiet as she approached the elephant enclosure and she thought that Elli must be sleeping, but when she peeped through the door, she could see Elli standing in a corner of her enclosure rocking from side to side. She opened the door and called softly to the elephant as she walked towards her. In the dim light, it took her a while to notice a large bundle on the floor of the enclosure. At first she thought it must be a pile of straw... but then the bundle moved! Elli's baby had been born!



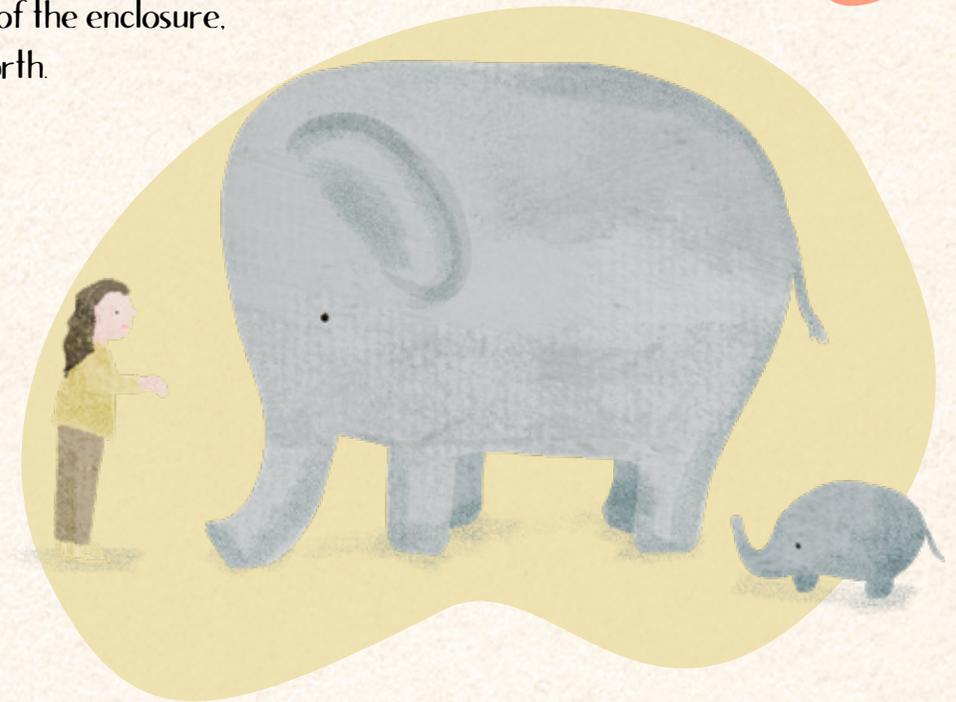


UBUNTU

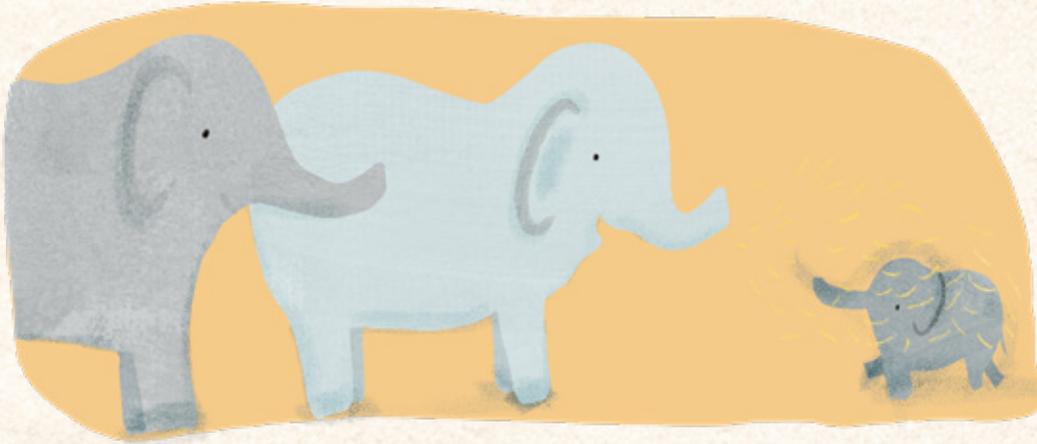
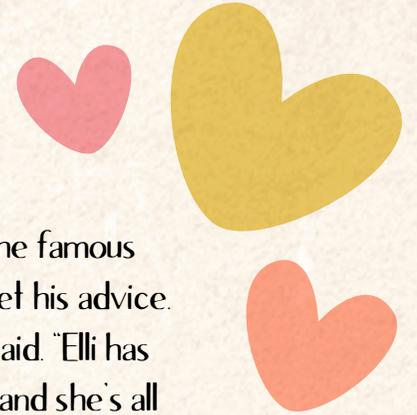
Zoe watched in wonder as the baby tried to stand up, first on one wobbly leg, then another. But that's as far as she got, because no sooner was the baby up on her front feet, than Elli suddenly rushed towards her baby, stopping just before she trampled on the little one. The mother elephant made huffing sounds as she swished her trunk and stamped her big heavy feet on the ground.

Zoe jumped back in fright. Elli was usually such a calm elephant, but tonight she seemed restless and confused and frightened. Zoe tried to calm her, talking to her softly and putting out her hand to reassure the new mother. But Elli rolled her eyes and raised her trunk with a loud trumpeting roar whenever Zoe tried to come closer. Finally the new mother walked slowly away from her baby-back to the corner of the enclosure, where once again she began rocking back and forth, back and forth.

Zoe stayed with Elli until the sun came up, all the time talking to her softly and trying to calm her, but anytime the baby elephant tried to stand up, Elli would rush towards it, and Zoe began to worry that Elli would hurt her new baby. She called the other keepers and they talked for a long time about the best thing to do. Elli wouldn't eat any of the food that Zoe brought for her, and though Zoe spoke to her softly, Elli's eyes remained wild and frightened. Her ears drooped and she just seemed very tired. The baby elephant needed to be safe, and needed to be fed. But Elli didn't seem to know how to look after her baby.



UBUNTU



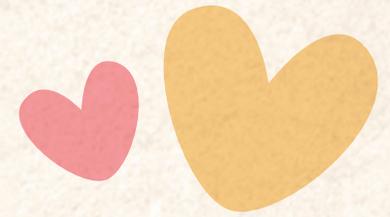
Finally they called Dr Ubuntu the famous elephant expert in Africa, to get his advice. "Ah the solution is simple", he said. "Elli has lived her whole life in the zoo and she's all alone with her baby. Here in Africa, when a mother elephant has a baby, all the aunty elephants help the new mother. What Elli needs is an Aunty!"

So Zoe rang another zoo nearby, and arranged to have one of their old lady elephants brought over to be with Elli. When Mali arrived in a big truck, all the keepers crossed their fingers and wondered how this old elephant could possibly help. She looked so wrinkly and saggy and she had ragged ears from her time on the plains in Africa when she was young.

When the old aunty elephant lumbered into the enclosure, she sniffed Elli's baby sleeping in the straw pile. Then she looked at Elli who was still swaying back and forth, back and forth in the corner. The keepers watched in awe as she walked slowly to the mother elephant's side and began swaying with her. Together, they slowly rocked- back and forth, back and forth. Gradually Elli's swaying became slower and slower until finally she stopped altogether. Then, with one enormous sigh, Elli lay down to rest.

While Elli rested, Mali used her trunk to bring Elli food. She gathered straw to make her a soft bed. She sprayed her with cool water when the day was too hot. She made rumbling humming sounds as she watched over her, flapping her ears and wrapping her trunk over Elli's back. And she played with the baby elephant, throwing straw in the air and covering her with it until she looked like a lumpy haystack.

UBUNTU

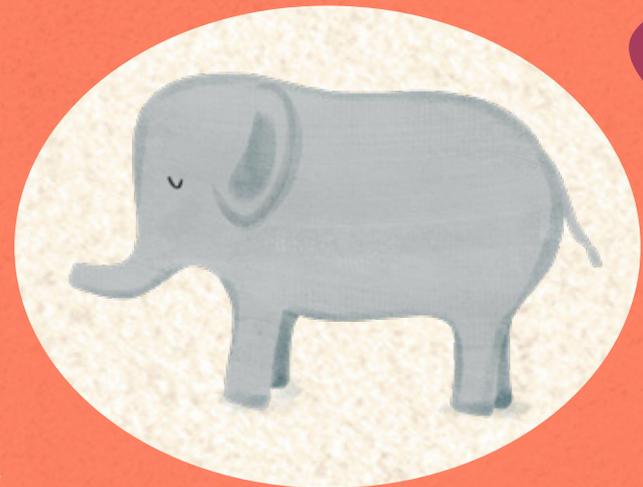
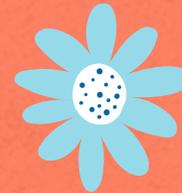
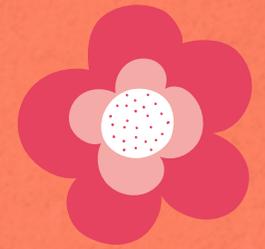
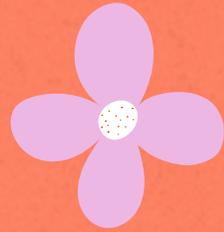


While Zoe watched the baby elephant play, she saw that it was a girl. She decided to call her Ubuntu.

After only a few days, Elli began to eat every bit of the food that Zoe brought for her. The next day Zoe noticed that her eyes looked bright again....and the day after that, she started to flap her ears once more. On Saturday, she stayed awake all day and she let her baby drink her warm milk for the very first time.

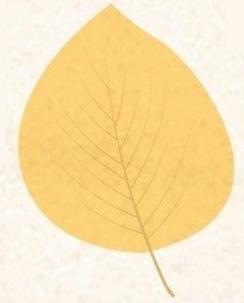
From then on, she just seemed to know how to look after her baby: She brought her food, she gathered straw to make her a soft bed, she sprayed cool water over her when the day was too hot, and she played with her baby, throwing straw in the air and covering her with it until she looked like a lumpy haystack.





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