**A note for parents, teachers and carers – how to get more out of reading *The Scared Book.***

I’m sure you’ve realised that as well as being a lot of interactive fun, and, I hope, a good giggle, *The Scared Book* has sneaky opportunities for kids to learn about fear and how to face it, and provides an opportunity for children to feel a sense of mastery by successfully helping the book.

As I’m sure you know, being scared is a healthy reaction to a threatening situation, and we are hard-wired to experience fear, to keep us safe. But sometimes these feelings are mis-placed and prevent us from doing things that are helpful, necessary, or even fun. In these cases, we need strategies to help us ‘calm down’ and work past what our bodies feel.

After reading the book, you can review what happened to the book when it felt scared – it got tingles, goose-bumps and butterflies. In school visits, I draw a stick figure of a person, and ask the children what happens in their body when they are scared, then I mark the spots on the stick figure. At home, kids could do this for themselves. Everyone has their unique signs, but these are some common responses.

Fast heartbeat

Sweaty palms

Prickly scalp

Dry mouth

Needing to go to the toilet

Weak/shaky in the knees

Sweating

Tense muscles

Fuzzy head

Etc.

You can then talk about what things helped the book. Don’t overlook the first thing the book did – it asked for help! Always a good place to start. The two main things I focus on in school visits are blowing away the butterflies and tracing a spiral.

One of the simplest ways to disable the physical fear response is by deep breaths. I get kids to place their hands on their tummies to focus on breathing into their tummies. Then hold for a second or two, and breathe out fully, like they are blowing away the butterflies.

Tracing the spiral is a mindful exercise, and I feel the energy in the room calm every time we get to this page of the book. It’s like magic! I’ve been told by parents that it’s their child’s favourite page. It’s something children can do for themselves anywhere – tracing a spiral on their arm or leg with their figure also gives a physical sensation to focus on.

Having something achievable to do, something that helps a person feel a sense of control in a situation that feels out of control, can help diminish fear. Kid’s also love to feel that they have mastery over their environment, and in helping the book, they achieve that - so congratulate them, and they have something to be proud of!

Hope these notes help you to get even more out of your reading of *The Scared Book.*

Happy reading!

Debra Tidball.