Big feelings come and go
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The Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. (Canadian Centre) is a registered charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. The Canadian Centre offers a number of programs, services and resources for Canadians to help them protect children and reduce their risk of victimization. For more information visit the Canadian Centre website at www.protectchildren.ca.

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For more information about children and trauma and how grown-ups can help, please visit www.makingsenseoftrauma.ca. There is a free webinar Making Sense of Trauma: Practical Tools for Responding to Children and Youth and additional resources available.

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For everyone reading this book

Thanks so much for taking the time to read this story and learning about freeze, flight, and fight, our bodies’ way of protecting us when our feelings get big.

Everyone gets big feelings, grown-ups and kids. Please take all the time you need to read this story. Read it all at once or a bit at a time. Pay attention to what works best for you.
Today we are going to learn about what our bodies do when we feel worried or scared and our feelings get big.
We have a part in our brain that is like an alarm called the **amygdala**.
It goes off by itself when we feel worried or scared.

It helps protect us.
We go into freeze, flight, or fight when the alarm in our brain goes off.

Sometimes we feel like we can’t move or think.

That’s called freeze.
Sometimes we feel like we want to get away.

That’s called flight.

And sometimes we feel like we want to hit and yell.

That’s called fight.
We are going to learn and practice what to do when the amygdala sounds the alarm.
Grown-ups and kids all go into freeze, flight, or fight when they feel worried or scared.

This is how our bodies help us.
Let’s imagine a dragon looking in the window! Our brain sounds the alarm and we go into freeze...

Freeze is when our feelings get big and we can’t run or fight.

Our heart beats faster and our breathing speeds up.

Everybody goes into freeze a little differently.

Imagine...what does freeze feel like for you?
I would feel like...

...my head is floating

...I am stuck

...my heart is beating faster
and then so quiet
I can’t hear it
...I am frozen

...I am invisible

...I can't get my words out

...making myself very little
We settle our bodies after feeling worried or scared.

Here is what we can do.

Look around and count **three blue things** in the room.

Take a **breath in**... and a long slow **breath out**.

Take another **breath in**... and a long slow **breath out**.
Notice if you are **sitting** on something **hard or soft**. Wiggle **your toes**.

Take one more **breath in**... and a long slow **breath out**.
Notice how your body feels as it settles.

Your heart and your breath slow down as the alarm gets quieter.

Big feelings come and go, like clouds floating by.
Now, this time when we imagine a dragon looking in the window, our brain sounds the alarm and we go into **flight**...

Flight is when our feelings get big and we want to move and even run away!

Our heart beats faster, our breathing speeds up and our legs might feel jumpy.

Everybody goes into flight a little differently.

Imagine...what does flight feel like for you?
I would feel like...

...I want to get far, far away

...I want to run like a racehorse

...my heart is pounding like a drum
...jumping out of my skin

...I am dizzy

...I can’t catch my breath

...talking as fast as a runaway train

...I want to escape as fast as I can
We settle our bodies after feeling worried or scared.

Here is what we can do.

First, **curl your toes**. Notice how the muscles in your legs tighten.

Let your toes **relax**.

Take a **breath in**... and a long slow **breath out**.
Now take another \textbf{breath in}... and a long slow \textbf{breath out}.

Notice if you are \textbf{sitting} on something \textbf{hard or soft}. Wiggle \textbf{your toes}.

\textbf{Take one more breath in}... and a long slow \textbf{breath out}.
Notice how your body feels as it settles.

Your heart and your breath slow down as the alarm gets quieter.

Big feelings come and go, like clouds floating by.
Again, this time when we imagine that dragon looking in the window, our brain sounds the alarm and we go into **fight**...

Fight is when our feelings get big and we want to make a fist or stomp our feet!

Our heart beats faster and our breathing speeds up.

Everybody goes into fight a little differently.

Imagine...what does fight feel like for you?
I would feel like...

...breathing fire

...I want to hammer something

...I'm as big as a giant
I want to kick and stomp

I'm hot like a volcano

...fighting like a knight

...roaring like a lion

...wrestling like a gorilla
Now take a breath in…

…and a long slow breath out.

We settle our bodies after feeling worried or scared.

Here is what we can do.

Push your hands together like you are squishing a ball...

breathe in... and then let go.
Notice if you are sitting on something hard or soft. Wiggle your toes.

Now take another breath in... and a long slow breath out.

Take one more breath in... and a long slow breath out.
Your heart and your breath slow down as the alarm gets quieter.

Notice how your body feels as it settles.

Big feelings come and go, like clouds floating by.
Look, there really is a dragon at the window!
I feel like...

...getting far, far away

...being invisible

...I can’t get my words out

...fighting like a knight
...running like a racehorse

...my head is floating

...I'm hot like a volcano

...I want to escape as fast as I can
It’s okay. It’s a lost dragon. The Dragon Keeper will call its parents.
That was scary seeing the dragon outside the window.

Our bodies did what they needed to do.
Let’s practice settling our bodies after feeling worried or scared.

Take a breath in... and a long slow breath out.

Take another breath in... and a long slow breath out.
Notice if we are sitting on something hard or soft. Wiggle our toes.

Take one more breath in... and a long slow breath out.
What does your body want to do now when you feel **settled and safe**?
I notice that I...

...want to play

...laugh like a monkey

...can take a big breath

...am in charge of my feelings

...am curious like a detective
...am silly
with my friends
...want to learn
...can speak so people hear
and understand my words
Aren’t you proud you know how to settle your bodies and turn down the alarm?

We know we can manage our feelings when they get big.
Now let’s go out and play!