

Fears can be either helpful or hurtful. Realistic fears protect us from harmful situations by telling us to avoid them. They keep us from getting hurt.

But lots of people, and especially children, have irrational or unwanted fears that can be just as overwhelming as real fears. Most common for young kids are fears related to the dark, monsters, nightmares, etc. These are the kinds of fears to help kids overcome.

Since with silly or unwanted fears there's really nothing to be afraid of, what we are really afraid of is what we are telling ourselves inside our heads. We're afraid of what our thoughts are saying.

The songs *Go Away Bad Thoughts* and *Shake It Out and Dance* are custom-tailored to help in concert with the following procedures:

1. Play either or both songs a number of times so that your child can learn the concepts.
2. Have them sing or chant along with each chorus.
2. The next set of steps helps them learn how powerful their minds are in making them feel either good or bad. First, have them imagine that they are tasting a variety of different foods. Let them describe the quality and flavor of the foods, whether sweet, sour, etc. Then have them imagine tasting something sour or bitter. Help them to see how their thoughts have such a strong influence over their feelings. You might say, "You really have a powerful brain in your head, don't you?"
3. Now have your child name one of their specific fears. See if they can come up with a silly name for it. If not, they can merely call it a "bad thought." Have them color a picture of the thought, even if it's just a rough sketch. Ask them if it is a thought that will help them to feel good and have a good day, or a bad day, etc.
4. The next step is to empower them with the idea that they can be the "boss" of their thoughts and fears. You are teaching them that they have thoughts but can also choose not to have them because they are a "big boy/girl." Ask them "Who's in charge of those silly thoughts?" They'll most likely rise to the challenge and say "I am." If they are familiar with the story about the "Three Little Pigs," ask them if the little pigs want to let the wolf in when he knocks at the door. Help them to see how their bad thoughts are like the wolf, and that they don't have to let them in.
5. Now that the fearful or bad thoughts are something that seems more concrete and separate from them, they can do something to get rid of them rather than listen and be afraid.
6. Lots of kids like to take their bad thoughts and fight with them a bit. Take the picture that they've drawn and place it on a large pillow, playfully attacking

them with it as they assert who the “real boss” is. Have them say, “I don’t like you, bad thought. I’m the boss of you. You get out of my head right now. Go away. Go away.”

7. Kids can initially be resistant or embarrassed by the pillow hitting and may need some modeling and coaching. The gales of laughter that are generated serves as a release and helps desensitize the fear. The physiological basis for the effectiveness of this method is that fears elevate levels of adrenaline in the blood system, while constructive emotional expression serves to reduce it.
8. After a number of trials with the pillow hitting, typically an hour before bedtime, the process becomes internalized. Kids learn to tell their thoughts to go away inside their heads. Encourage them to play this pillow game every other night or so until they tire of it and have acquired new skills.

9. Praise your child for being strong and becoming the boss of their thoughts, but when negative thinking occurs, don’t take an opposing position. It’s their choice. Simply remind them that they can choose to use the new tool if they want to have a good day.

Happy Kids Songs and companion activities help children boost character, social and emotional skills.

These songs have won:

- *Teacher’s Choice Award
- *Parent’s and Teacher’s Choice Award
- *Mom’s Choice Award^[SEP]
- *First Prize, Children’s Category, USA Songwriting Competition^[SEP]
- *Honorable Mention, Children’s Category, International Songwriting Competition^[SEP]
- *National Parenting Center’s Seal of Approval^[SEP]
- *Seal of Excellence Award, Creative Child Magazine

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Overcoming Fears and Negative Thinking

with

“Go Away Bad Thoughts”

and

“Shake It Out and Dance”



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