



An A–Z Collection of
Behaviour Tales
From Angry Ant to Zestless Zebra

Susan Perrow
Illustrated by Allmut ffrench



Hawthorn Press

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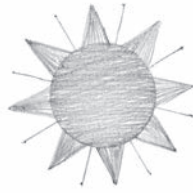
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Dedication

For all children ... everywhere ... and the child in every adult ...



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Foreword

Susan is a trailblazer for the movement for healing stories.

We all know how challenging it is to bring up children today, but with inspiration like this it can be the most worthwhile and joyful task there is. Her long experience in this field is helping people all over the world to give the fun and insight of story its proper place in education and in the family.

I remember so well, as a child, the wonderful safe feeling of listening to a story. My mum was my main storyteller and she fed us a daily story diet with large portions of fairytales from all over the world, spiced with fables and wisdom tales. In this way she never needed to lecture us or 'teach' us anything, it was all there in that glorious parallel world.

As an adult, the power of story became my work, and on the other side of the world Susan was doing the same thing. Perhaps we both sensed the deep need for this art in our time. I would like to share an experience which helps me to appreciate her great work. I started *The Storytelling Nursery* where I told stories every day. However there was one child in the nursery who really annoyed me. Despite all my efforts to make a perfect environment, she charged around every day, interfering with the other children's activities and destroying the calm. Despite my better self, I found myself loathing the little child and thus hating myself. Suddenly one day I had an insight. She wasn't actually trying to destroy their games and projects, she was trying to help. How could I find the right story for her? I hit upon an old classic, 'Mother Holly'. Two girls are asked for help by an apple tree, a bread oven and a hideous old lady. The preparation of the story became a nourishing meditation and I told 'Mother Holly' every day that week in nursery. In an extraordinary way that I cannot explain, the little girl seemed utterly transformed and my hate melted into love. How

did it happen? Was it the story or was it simply the fact that I had finally been able to see her? She has grown up into the full power of her wish to help – she is now a nurse.

This was my first experience of the direct transformative power a story can have.

However, as Susan clearly says, we cannot demand or expect a result, what could be a more creative way towards solving a problem than the gift of a story? And even if it doesn't work for the child, it will perhaps ease my understanding of the dilemma.

The format of this book is fun in itself, the pictures are beautiful, with lots of rhymes and songs to play with. Susan encourages interest in nature and uses many of the indigenous animals and birds of Australia as the heroes of her tales.

But can we really use stories to help children or is it just a nice idea? Sometimes it can be so simple. Years ago I was working as a teacher in a Kindergarten in Reading. I was feeling so frustrated about English children's gender stereotypes. All the little girls were dressed in pretty dresses and never played with the boys. This was such a contrast to the Kindergartens I knew in Norway. So in desperation I made up a simple little tale which I can't even remember, which ended with boys and girls playing together. To my utter astonishment as soon as the story was finished, they simply rushed out into the most wonderful fantasy game together. As if the story had finally given them licence to do what they had always wished for!

The playfulness of this book makes it clear to the reader that you can adapt Susan's tales for your own situation or even create your own.

I hope you enjoy this delicious story medicine!

Georgiana Keable

Storytelling teacher, founder of *Fortellerhuset* (the Storytelling House) and The Norwegian Storytelling festival, and author of *The Natural Storyteller*

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Introduction

Story medicine

This A-Z collection of behaviour tales offers story medicine as a creative strategy for parenting, teaching and counselling children. As medicine is used to help restore wholeness or balance to out-of-balance physical conditions, 'story medicine' can be an imaginative and effective strategy to help shift out-of-balance behaviour and problematic situations back towards wholeness or balance.

All 42 stories in the book begin with an undesirable or out-of-balance situation and, through the use of metaphor and an imaginative story journey, lead to a more desirable resolution. In doing so, the stories also have the potential to nurture positive values. The stories cover many kinds of universal behaviour. Following the alphabet from A to Z, the behaviour is identified in the story title: angry ... anxious ... bullying ... bossy ... demanding ... fussy ... greedy ... jealous ... lazy ... obnoxious ... uncooperative ... and more. The stories can be worked with directly, adapted, turned into your own home-made picture books and puppet shows, or used as springboards for the creation of your own tales. A chapter that expands on ways to use story medicine can be found at the end of the collection.

Some of the stories are light-hearted, some have a more serious theme, some are short and some are long. Some are tweaked and adjusted from previous collections; many are newly written for this book.

The potential reach of this collection is vast and varied. The stories can be used by teachers to bring about positive change in the school environment, both pre-school and primary. They can also be used when introducing the different letters of the alphabet. If children are old enough, they may choose to read their own way through the alphabetical list.

Child therapists and school counsellors will find this a valuable resource, and librarians may choose to read or tell the stories in their library story sessions. Perhaps most importantly, this is a family-friendly collection, offering story medicine that can be used by parents, grandparents and carers in their everyday home environment. Some stories may even have an influence on all ages within the family!

Age range

The selected stories are suitable for ages three to nine years. Some are obviously written for use with younger children (e.g. *Hurting Biting Hippo*, a story poem for biting, and *Clanging Crashing Clock*, a story for screaming and shouting) and others, with more complex storylines, are intended for older children (e.g. *Destructive Dana*, *Greedy Garden Spade*, *Jealous Jewel*, *Perfectionist Pat*). A suggested age is given next to each story title.

However, stories don't always like to be fixed into an age-appropriate box. Sometimes a story written for a young child may have a transformative effect on a 10-year-old, a teenager or even you, the adult reader. Has your behaviour been intolerant of others (*Intolerant Irises*)? Are you feeling unmotivated or apathetic (*Yellow Mellow Yacht*)? Have you had a 'cranky' day (*Cranky Cockatoo*)? Are you someone who tends to procrastinate (*Procrastinating Pudden*)?

A CEO of a production company in Chennai, India, attended one of my seminars. On hearing the story about *Obnoxious Octopus* he announced that he would tell it to his 100 workers at their next meeting to help with a behaviour situation that he felt was growing out of control. He was convinced the story would help his existing staff become more inclusive of new workers, and also discourage new workers from doing silly things to attract attention.

The potential reach of story medicine has no limitations!

Illustrations

This is my first collection of therapeutic tales that has been complemented with illustrations. Every story has a black and white sketch portraying either the main character or a certain scene in the story journey. The sketches have been deliberately kept simple to allow the imagination of the reader and listener (s) the freedom to expand and wander.

A therapeutic story approach

All the stories in this collection have been created with a therapeutic story approach that I wrote about at length in my first two print books: *Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour* and *Therapeutic Storytelling: 101 Healing Stories for Children*.

In summary, therapeutic storytelling is a gentle, easy, yet often very effective means of addressing traumatic situations and challenging behaviours with children. The story form is a healing medium that allows children to embark on an imaginative journey, rather than being lectured or directly addressed about the issue. By identifying with the main character or characters, the child is empowered as obstacles are overcome and a resolution achieved. Working with an imaginative journey and a specific selection of metaphors, a therapeutic story approach has the potential to shift an out-of-balance behaviour or situation back towards wholeness or balance. The story may heal, help a lot, help a little, motivate, strengthen resolve and/or sow invaluable seeds for future change.

Putting theory aside, I encourage all readers (both new and not so new) to simply dive into the stories and bathe in the story realm. Let the stories speak to you ... let the stories wash over you ... let the stories find a way to do some work ... or simply let the stories entertain you!

In many traditional cultures, throughout human history, wise elders have naturally used stories in their role as mentors and guides for the children in their families and communities. Using wisdom tales to guide and manage behaviour, they have tapped into children's imaginative reality and reached children in positive and proactive ways.

An A-Z Collection of Behaviour Tales encourages a revival of the use of story to guide and transform behaviour. Although stories are not magic pills that have powers to fix or heal all difficulties and challenges, story medicine can be a wonderful, and more pleasant, alternative to nagging and lecturing.

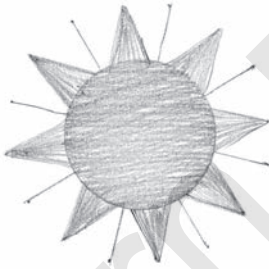
And sometimes magic does happen and a story does make a difference! I hope you and your children have as much fun exploring these alphabet tales as I have had in creating and collating them.

Susan Perrow

April 2017

Lennox Head, Australia

The Stories



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A

Angry Ant



Once again the safari ants were on the move! The short rains had started, and their ant home was no longer warm and dry – in fact it was fast filling up with water. The safari ants were now in search of higher and drier ground.

Little Siafu was at the end of all the ants, struggling to keep up. Ahead of her, the others were stretched out, marching one by one. The line seemed to go on for ever and ever!

‘Come on,’ called her friends, ‘or you will be left behind.’

To help her keep step, they started to sing:

The ants go marching one by one, hurrah! hurrah!

The ants go marching one by one, hurrah! hurrah!

*The ants go marching one by one, the little one stopped to play on her drum,
And they all went marching, up and around, to get out of the rain,*

Boom, boom, boom.

Little Siafu was trying to keep step with the song, but it seemed such a boring thing to do! Finally she decided she didn’t want to stay in line any longer. ‘I don’t want to stay in line one more minute,’ she said angrily to herself. ‘I just want to stop, and sit, and play on a drum – just like the little ant in the song!’

Little Siafu sat down and started to beat time on one of the shining stones at the edge of the track. It felt so good to bang out her anger! As she played she sang a different song from the one her friends were singing:

I’m tired of having to walk in line. I’m sick of having to keep in time.

I just want to sit in the sun, sit in the sun and play on my drum!

And as she sang and played, the ants kept marching on ahead of her, one by one, until they disappeared over the hills and out of sight.

Now Little Siafu was all alone. But not for long!

A brown cricket flew into a bush nearby. 'Play and dance with me,' called out Little Siafu, and the cricket started to make music through the leaves in the bush. But it was far too LOUD!

Little Siafu cried out angrily:

Go away and leave me be!

You are far too LOUD to play music with me.

Once again Little Siafu was all alone. But not for long!

A tortoise came plodding through the grass by the track. 'Play and dance with me,' called out Little Siafu, and the tortoise lifted his head and started to slowly sway from side to side. But it was far too SLOW!

Little Siafu cried out angrily:

Go away and leave me be!

You are far too SLOW to play music with me.

Once again Little Siafu was all alone. But not for long!

A golden weaverbird landed on a tree nearby. 'Play and dance with me,' called out Little Siafu, and the weaver bird started to flit and dance from branch to branch. But it was far too FAST!

Little Siafu cried out angrily:

Go away and leave me be!

You are far too FAST to play music with me.

Once again Little Siafu was all alone. But not for long!

An elephant came tramping down the track. 'Play and dance with me,' called out Little Siafu, and the elephant started to tramp and dance and make music. But the elephant was far too BIG!

In fact Little Siafu was very lucky she didn't get trampled on. She cried out angrily:

*Go away and leave me be!
You are far too BIG to play music with me.*

Once again Little Siafu was all alone, sitting by the track and playing on her drum. The more she played, the more she realized how much she missed her ant friends.

Soon she found herself singing a different tune:

*I wish I could walk with my friends in line.
I wish my friends and I could keep in time.
I don't want to sit in the sun.
I want to walk with my friends and play on my drum!*

Suddenly she stood up and picked up her shiny stone drum and started to walk along the path, playing as she went. Faster and faster she walked, along the path, and over the hill ...

And over another hill ...
And over another hill ...
And over another hill ...

UNTIL
THERE WERE HER FRIENDS, WALKING IN LINE,
THERE WERE HER FRIENDS KEEPING IN TIME!



Little Siafu was so happy! She caught up with her friends and proudly walked at the end of the long ant line, playing her shiny stone drum. It no longer seemed boring as she went along.



And as she played her drum she taught her friends a new ant song:

The ants go marching one by one, hurrah! hurrah!

The ants go marching one by one, hurrah! hurrah!

The ants go marching one by one, the little one playing her shiny stone drum,

And they all went marching, up and around, to get out of the rain,

Boom, boom, boom.