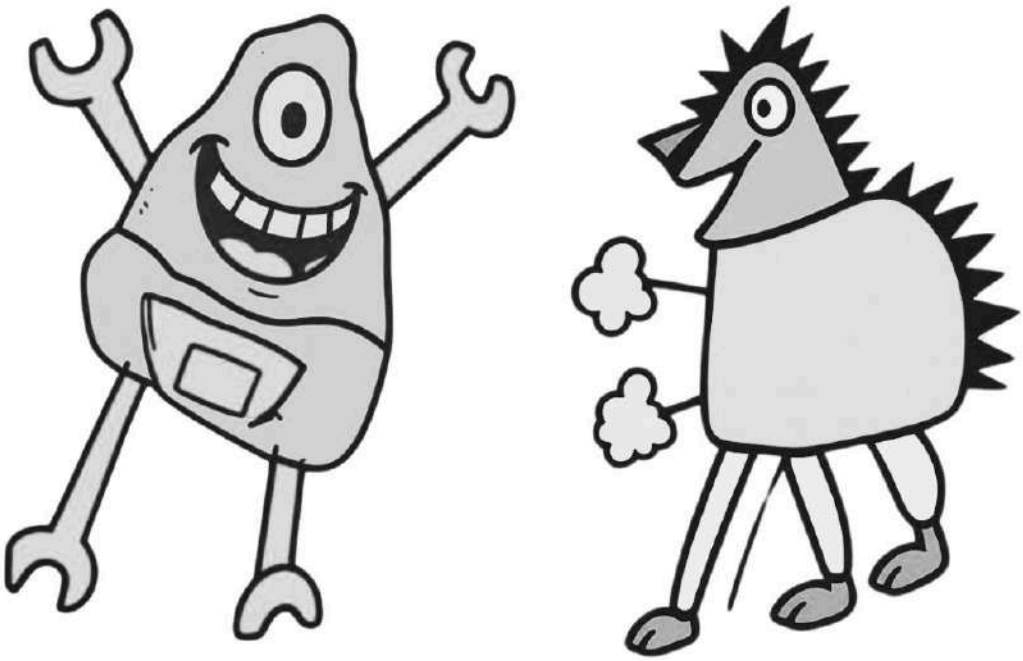
Everyone is a Little Scared Sometimes

Discover the science of fear,
stress, and your inner alarm.



Monsters drawn by my (Christy Bel) son
when he was 8-10 years old

DAAN IS AFRAID OF MONSTERS

WRITTEN BY
CHRISTY BEL

Daan and the Monster in His Head

Daan is afraid of monsters. Every night he hears strange noises and finds it hard to fall asleep. But with Mum's help, Daan discovers something important: it's okay to be scared, you don't have to be ashamed of your fears, and you can always ask for help. And when the fear inside your head feels very big, there is Someone who is stronger than any monster.A warm and comforting story about **fear, courage, trust, and the strength of Jesus**.

Afraid of monsters

The living room clock chimes. It is seven o'clock. Just a moment ago, Daan was playing on the couch, but now Mom only sees a pile of toy cars left behind for Dad to clean up later. Mom takes a peek behind the curtain. "Daan, where are you, my little monster?"

Daan is as quiet as a mouse and doesn't make a sound. *She definitely won't see me under the dinner table,* he thinks. But Daan wiggles so restlessly back and forth on his knees that he bumps against the chair leg. The suspense becomes too much for him, and he starts to giggle softly.

"Shh, sillyhead," Floor whispers, giving him a poke in the ribs. "Mom will hear us!"

Daan pokes Floor right back. "Ouch!" she cries out loud.

Then, Daan and Floor suddenly feel two arms wrap around them, and they burst out laughing. Mom has found the two children under the table! And even though they would love to play another round of hide-and-seek, Mom says it really is bedtime now. "Come on, kids, upstairs. Brush your teeth and off to bed."

Mom tickles Daan and Floor all the way up the stairs. Floor runs straight to her room and plops onto her bed, which is full of stuffed animals. She has at least ten of them, and they are all allowed to sleep in bed with her. *Who should I put where?* she wonders. One by one, her stuffed animals get a nice place to sleep. Mom has already gathered the pajamas. "Daan, where are you now?" she asks.

But Daan has stopped on the stairs. It is dark up there, and he doesn't dare to walk any further. "I think I really heard a little monster sound coming from my room," he says softly to Mom.

This has been happening every single night for the past few weeks. Mom walks

over to Daan and takes his hand. "Come, let's look in your room together," she says sweetly. Mom tells him every night that he doesn't need to be afraid, but he still is. He would much rather be a tough boy who defeats all the monsters for his little sister.

But Floor isn't afraid at all. She doesn't believe in monsters. She actually has to take care of her stuffed animals, because according to her, *they* are the ones who are scared. Not Floor, though—she is one tough girl. Daan sighs. If only he were as brave as Floor! After all, he is already eight years old, two years older than his sister.

Daan finishes walking up the stairs with Mom. His pajamas are already waiting on his bed. He puts on his favorite pair: a blue and green one covered in dinosaurs. The fabric feels wonderfully soft. He is actually very tired too, and looks forward to sleeping.

"Mom, did you already look under my bed?" Daan asks.

Floor is brushing her teeth in the bathroom. "Scaredy-cat!" she calls out. "Mom tells you every night that monsters don't exist and that you don't have to be afraid!"

"But I am *allowed* to be afraid!" Daan yells back angrily. "I can't help it, can I?"

Dex, their little dog, has come checking out the fun noise. He walks into the bathroom and then wanders into Daan’s room. Before anyone can catch him, he jumps onto the bed and plops right down on Daan's pillow. Dex adores Daan and loves nothing more than sleeping with him every night. He curls up his little body and is soon snoring softly.

Because Daan has been getting out of bed so often lately out of fear, Mom thinks it's a good idea for Dex to sleep with him. It makes him feel a bit safer. Dex may be a small dog and a total friend to everyone who prefers not to fight, but Daan loves having his furry friend lying on his duvet.

Mom sees Dex lying there. "Are you two finished going to the bathroom and brushing your teeth? Dex is already sawing logs!"

Floor dives into her princess bed first. Mom made a beautiful pink curtain that hangs from the ceiling all around her bed, making it feel just like a little tent. The sheets have just been washed and smell wonderfully clean. That is the best feeling ever: sleeping in a fresh, nice-smelling bed. Floor is tired. Mom sings a song with her and then walks over to Daan.

Daan and Floor go to bed at the same time, but because Daan is older, he gets to read a comic book for a little bit. He has a whole stack of Donald Ducks next to his bed. He has already read most of them many times, but he doesn't mind. He can read them over and over.

Mom comes to sit on the edge of Daan's bed. Dex wakes up and crawls cozily into her lap. Daan leans against Mom, too. No matter how tired he is, how can you fall asleep peacefully when you feel butterflies of fear in your tummy?

"Mom, I'm still afraid of monsters," he whispers. "Every night I look behind the curtain and under my bed. I never see anything, but what should I do if they come into my room anyway?"

Mom patiently explains that monsters really do not exist. She also promises that she will come in to check on him often while he sleeps.

"And Dex is a great guard dog," Mom says. "I know for sure that if anyone so much as steps into your room, Dex will wake up right away to protect you. You are his best buddy. Dogs sleep very lightly. Dex will definitely bark and growl if anything strange happens."

Daan thinks deeply. Mom is right, he knows that. Mom tries so hard, and she is the sweetest. Actually, deep down inside, Daan knows that monsters aren't real. They only exist in cartoons, and those usually make him laugh. In cartoons, they are funny and not scary at all. Just silly, drawn characters. A gnome, an elf, a troll, or a unicorn: those are all fantasy creatures that don't exist in real life. Just like the monster characters on TV.

Floor has a coloring book full of those kinds of fantasy creatures. She colors the unicorns pink and loves elves. Daan isn't afraid of those creatures either.

"Mom, that is actually my absolute biggest problem," Daan says, snuggling up close to her. "If real monsters came into my room, I know for sure Dex would growl and bark. Outside, he wants to play with every dog he sees and is a total sweetheart, but he would protect me, I know it. But... Dex can't see my monsters. So he can't bark at them either."

"Are the monsters invisible then?" Mom asks.

"No, you don't get what I mean," Daan says. "The monsters are fantasy. They are in my head, but I am still afraid of them. And Dex can't look inside my head. He won't bark when I think about monsters or when I dream about them, because he can't see them. Those monsters only exist in my mind. I actually know that."

Dex wakes up from Daan's loud voice. He looks up for a moment, stretches his paws, and lets out a big yawn. Dex truly doesn't think about monsters. He closes his eyes and goes right back to sleep. That's how fast it goes with dogs.

"I am all alone in my head, and that's where my monster-fear lives," Daan says sadly.

Daan explained it well. Mom nods and gives him a very tight hug. "Grown-ups are sometimes afraid of things in their thoughts too, you know. Not of monsters, but of things that might never actually happen. That is basically the same thing: being afraid of something that isn't there. And all those scared feelings do indeed live inside your own head."

"I wish I were Dex," Daan sighs. "Or I wish you, Dad, and Dex could crawl into my head to fight those monster thoughts out of my mind."

"I can only talk to you from the outside," Mom says gently. "But do you know

who *can* fight inside your heart and your mind? The Lord Jesus can help you. We can pray that Jesus makes you a little bit stronger on the inside, so you can learn to trust that you are safe. Just like Dex wants to protect you on the outside, the Lord Jesus wants to protect your thoughts on the inside against the fear."
Mom explains how that works. "In the Bible, it says that Jesus was first like a lamb. He was so gentle, loving, and patient, just like a little lamb. He even let Himself be captured. But because Jesus rose from the dead after three days, He won forever against all evil and all fear. Now He is no longer that vulnerable little lamb, but as super strong as a roaring lion! And that strong Lion, Jesus, lives in your heart. He roars all those scared monster thoughts right out of your head."
Whenever you are having a hard time and feel scared, you can always ask for Jesus' help. He is as strong as a lion. "But," Mom concludes with a smile, "of course, you are also just allowed to feel scared sometimes. Those feelings are just a part of life, too."

Foreword

It is incredibly important for both children and adults to understand how their brain works. When you know what is happening on the inside, you can gain control over it much faster. Sometimes people in church or other believers say that you should just 'pray your fear away' or that you simply 'need to have more faith in God.' However, that is far too short-sighted.
Our brain was designed by God with a beautiful, complex network of many connections and pathways. Being afraid or anxious is absolutely not a sin, nor is it a failure. It is actually a healthy alarm system built in by the Creator to protect us from real dangers. Unfortunately, as human beings, we can also become very afraid when it is not actually necessary. The alarm system is simply set too sensitively. It is precisely at those moments that we do not have to feel ashamed. We can rest in the knowledge that God understands the misunderstandings within our brain. With God by our side, we can practice in small steps to grow stronger and learn how to manage our fears. The brains He gave us are created so wonderfully that they can always create new, peaceful pathways.
You do not have to do this alone; God faithfully walks alongside us.
Greetings Christy Bel (Monsters drawn by my son when he was 8-10 years old)

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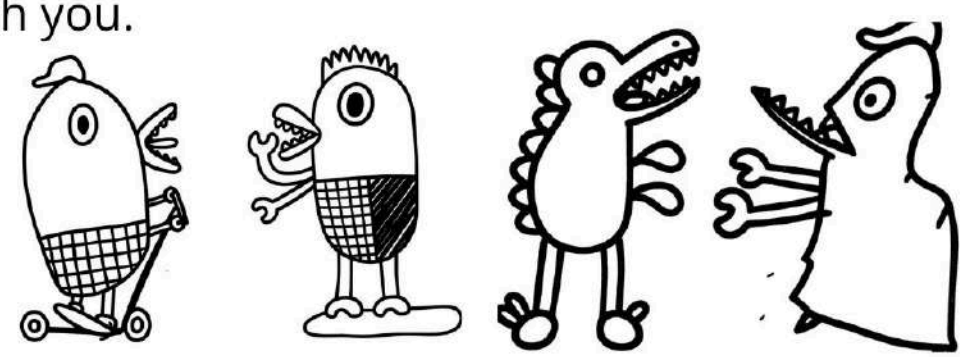
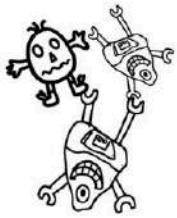


The 3 Brains

Inside your head live three brains. The **Reptilian** Brain takes care of survival (fight, flight, or freeze). The **Mammalian Brain** feels all emotions, like fear. The **Human Brain** is the smart thinker. When you are very scared, the reptilian brain takes over and the human brain shuts down. You cannot think logically for a moment. That is normal!

Draw a big head on your paper and divide it into three rooms.
In room 1, draw a small dinosaur (the reptilian brain that wants to survive).
In room 2, draw an animal with big eyes (the mammalian brain that feels fear).
In room 3, draw a professor (the human brain that thinks logically).

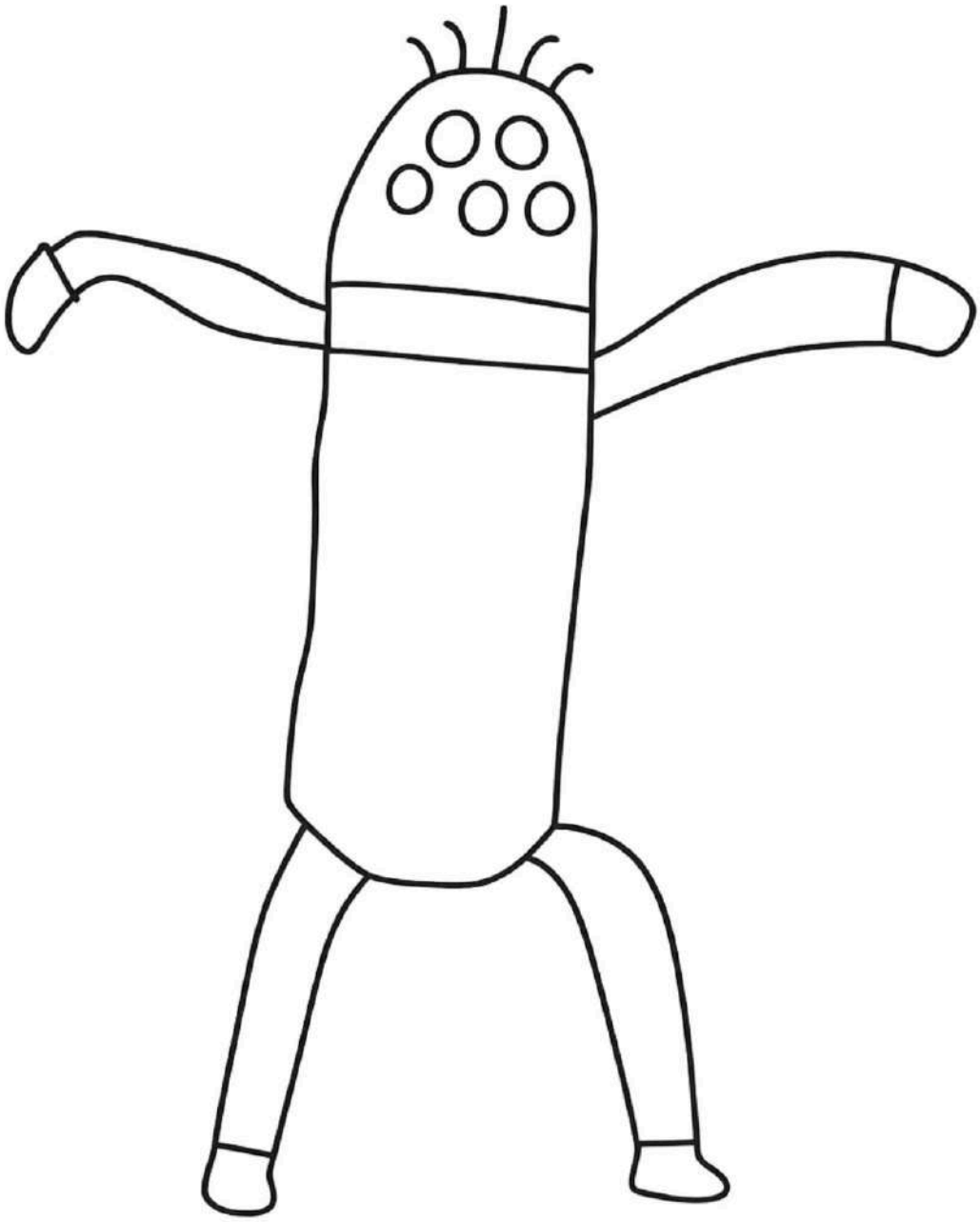
Draw a thick line through the professor to show what happens when you are scared: the professor is asleep, the dino is the boss!



1 The Watchdog in Your Brain (The Amygdala)

Deep inside your brain, there is a tiny little room. Inside that room lives a small watchdog. The fancy name for this dog is the Amygdala (say: Uh-mig-duh-luh).

His only job is to protect you from danger. A long time ago, if a wild bear came running towards you, the Amygdala would start barking loudly: "Watch out, DANGER!"



2 The Alarm Button and the Stress Juice (Cortisol)

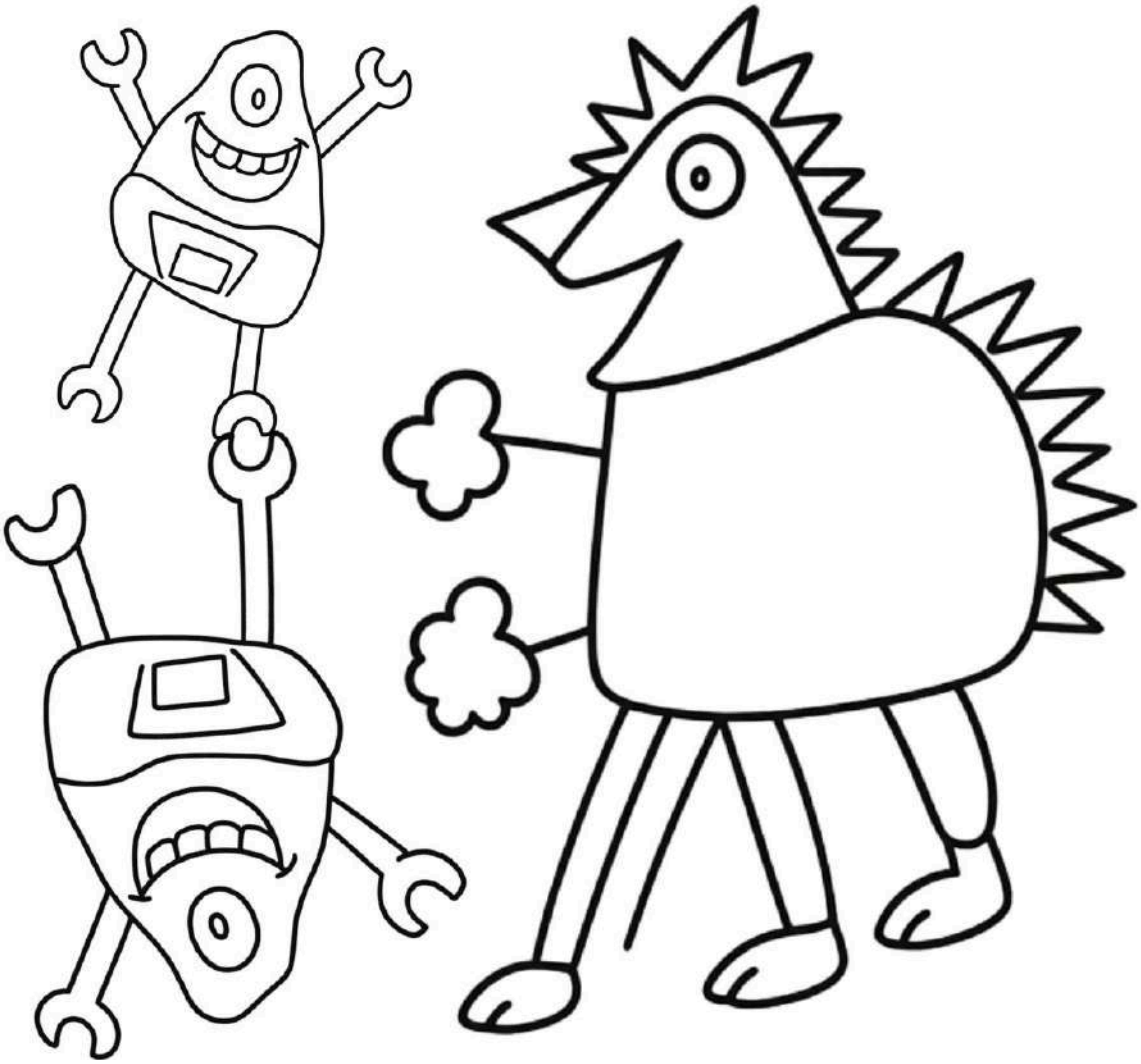
When your watchdog (the Amygdala) gets startled, he immediately hits a big, red alarm button. The moment he does this, your body instantly sends a special chemical through your blood. This chemical is called Cortisol (say: Kor-tuh-zool).

You can think of Cortisol as a kind of super-fast fuel or a 'stress juice'. This juice makes sure your body is ready for action in a split second:

Your heart starts beating really fast (to pump blood to your muscles).

Your breathing speeds up (for extra oxygen).

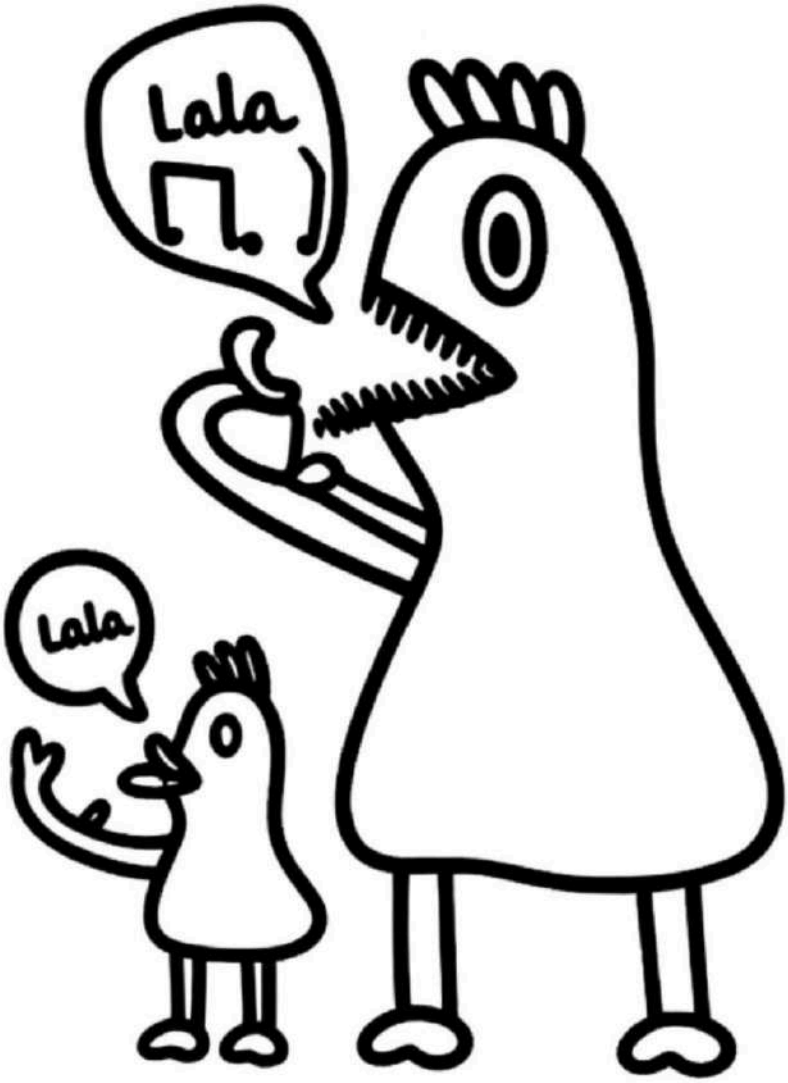
Your muscles become very tight (so you can run away fast or fight).



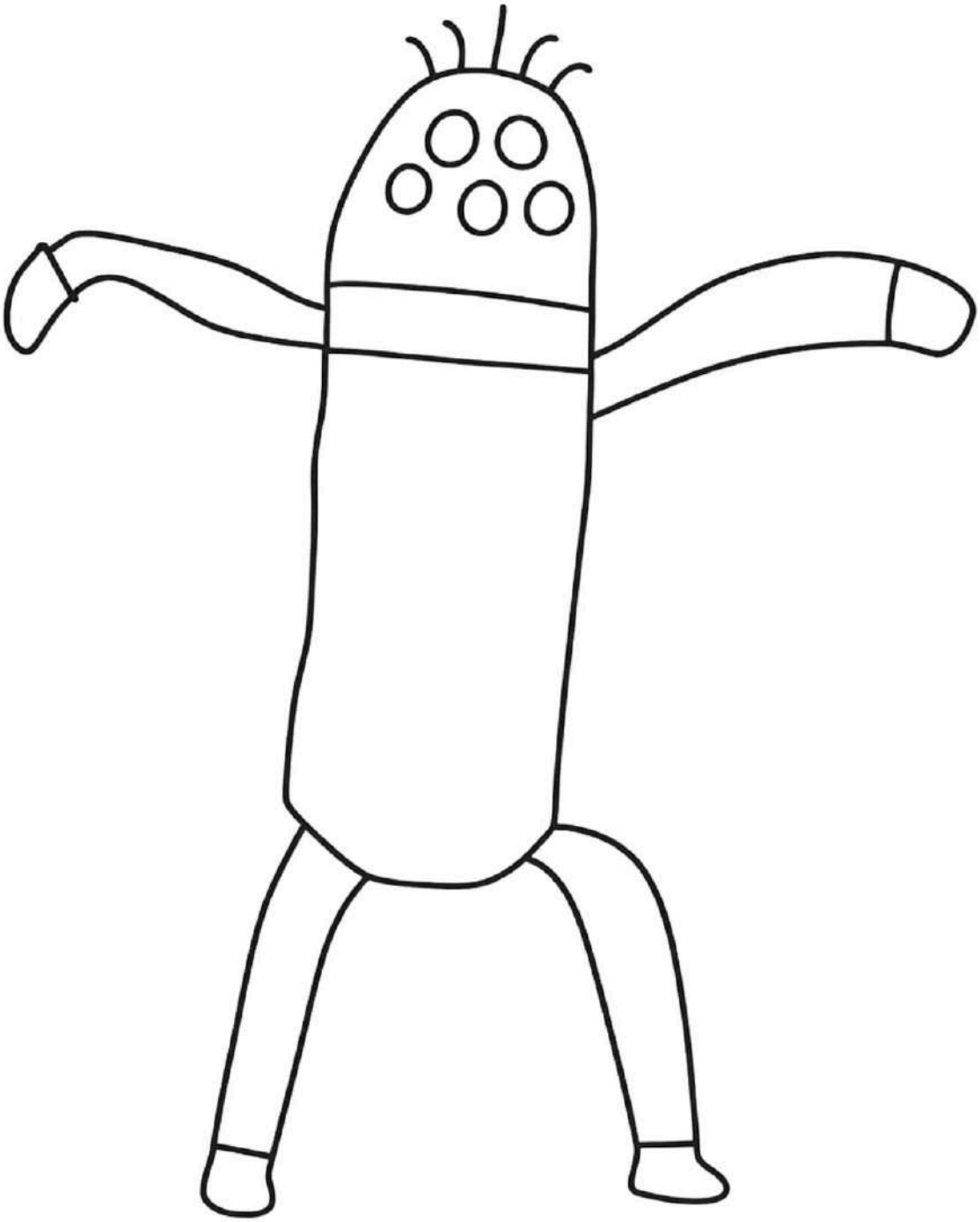
3 What Are Fear and Panic?

Fear is the feeling you get when the watchdog starts growling softly. There might not actually be a bear, but you are thinking about something scary (like a monster under your bed, or a difficult test). You can already feel the stress juice (cortisol) floating a little bit in your tummy.

Panic is when the watchdog starts barking incredibly loud and completely loses his cool. He presses the alarm button so hard that your body is flooded with the stress juice. You feel like you are in big danger, even though you are actually completely safe in your bed or in the classroom. The alarm is going off, but there is no fire!



Waar in je lijf voel jij het als je bang bent?
(Bijvoorbeeld: kriebels in je buik, snelle hartslag).
Geef die plek op de kleurplaat een speciale kleur.



The false fire alarm (Explanation about panic disorder)

You already know that the watchdog in your brain (the Amygdala) has an alarm button. Sometimes, that alarm button can break a little bit or become too sensitive. It then goes off very quickly, just like a super sensitive fire alarm that starts blaring when there is only a slice of bread in the toaster.

When that happens, grown-ups call it a panic disorder.

What do you feel during a panic attack?

When that sensitive alarm button is pressed out of nowhere, your body suddenly gets a huge splash of stress juice (cortisol). This happens very fast and at times when nothing is actually wrong. For example, you might just be watching TV or sitting in class, and suddenly you feel:

Your heart beating super hard, as if you just ran a massive sprint.

You get very hot or very cold.

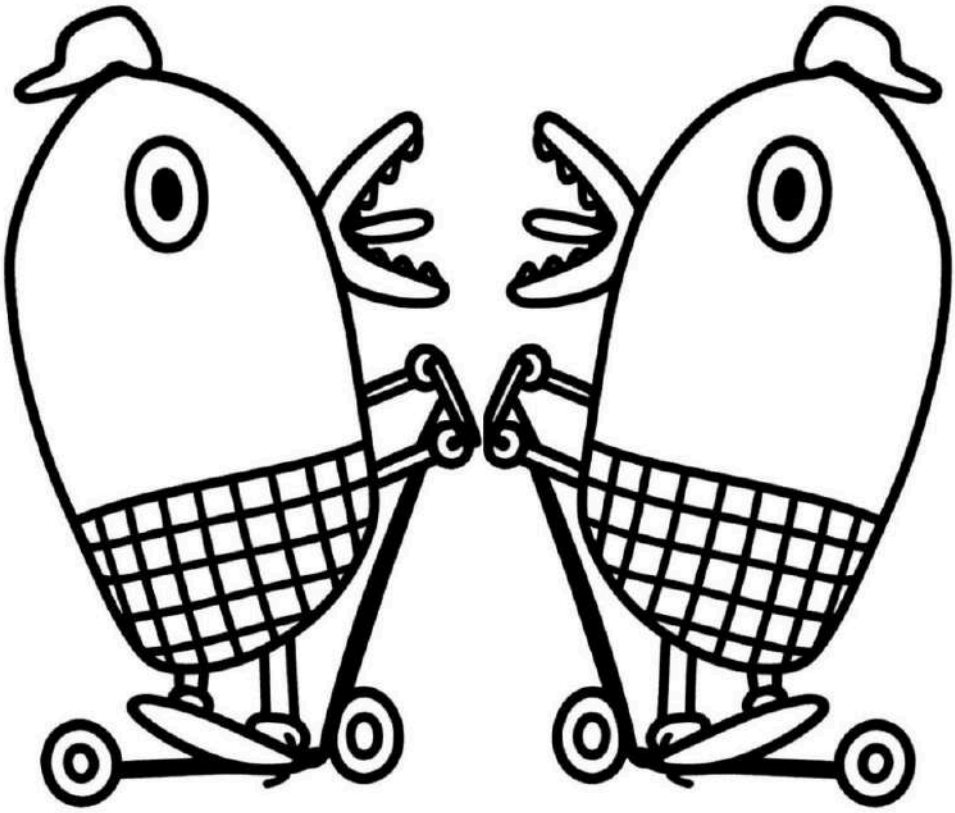
You feel dizzy or your breathing feels strange.

You get very scary thoughts, like: "Something terrible is happening!" or "I have to get out of here right now!"

This feeling is what we call a panic attack. It feels very real and very scary, but there is an important secret: it is a false alarm. You are completely safe at that moment, even though your body is screaming that you are not.

Fear of fear

Because a false alarm like that feels so awful, children (and adults) who have this often start thinking about it a lot. You start paying attention all the time: "Oh no, I hope my heart doesn't start beating so fast again." Sometimes you become so afraid of the false alarm that you prefer to skip certain places. For example, not wanting to go to a busy store anymore, or not wanting to go to school. We call this the 'fear of fear'.

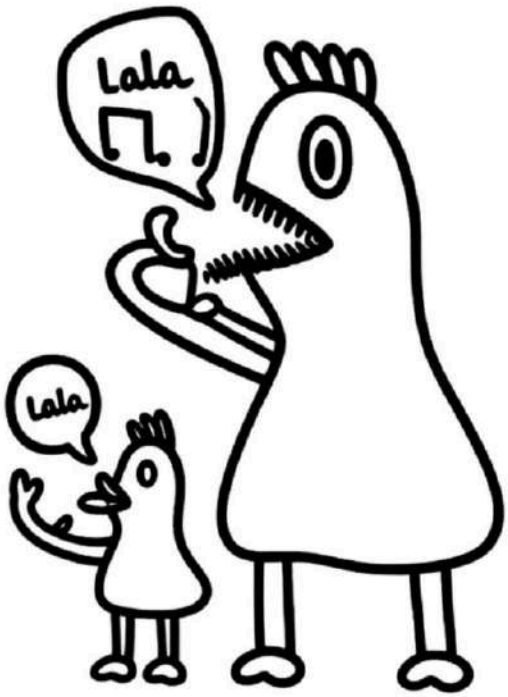


How do we fix this?

Fortunately, you can repair the alarm button in your brain! You do this together with a doctor or a talking doctor (a psychologist). They will help you with two important things:

Training the watchdog: You learn to keep breathing calmly when the alarm goes off. By doing this, you show the watchdog: "Look, I am breathing calmly, there is no real bear. You don't need to bark."

Doing things anyway: By actually going to school or the store, the watchdog learns that nothing bad happens. The more you practice this, the quieter the watchdog becomes and the sooner the alarm button will work normally again.



The sky and the clouds

Look up at the sky. Sometimes the sky is blue, sometimes there are white puffy clouds, and sometimes there is a dark, heavy storm cloud. Your feelings are just like those clouds. Fear is like that dark storm cloud. It can blow and rain very hard inside your head and tummy. But do you know the secret of clouds? They always drift by. Feelings come and go, they never stay forever. You are not the storm cloud. You are the big, strong sky. The clouds change and move away, but the sky always remains. The sun behind the clouds always shines, even if you cannot see it for a moment.

For great is your love,
reaching to the heavens;
your faithfulness
reaches to the skies.
Psalm 57:10

Anonymous worrying poem

We often suffer most
from fears that scare us most,
of things that never appear.
Thus, burdened by our fear,
we carry more than God intends.
Real sorrow that life sends
is lighter than the dread of grief.
But should disaster strike,
God always brings relief
and gives the strength you need.

Write your own worrying poem

Draw
your cloud sky

Draw your feelings of this moment
as clouds

The Step-by-Step Plan: The Anxiety Ladder (Example: The Store)

Step 1: Practicing at home in your mind
You don't go to the store yet. You sit safely on the couch at home. You close your eyes and just think about the store. You imagine what it looks like and how busy it is. You let the watchdog growl just a little bit, while you keep breathing calmly.

Step 2: Watching from a safe distance
You go to the store, but you stay outside in the parking lot or across the street. You only look at the sliding doors and the people walking in and out. You know you can leave immediately if you want to, so there is no need to run. You stay here for 5 minutes.

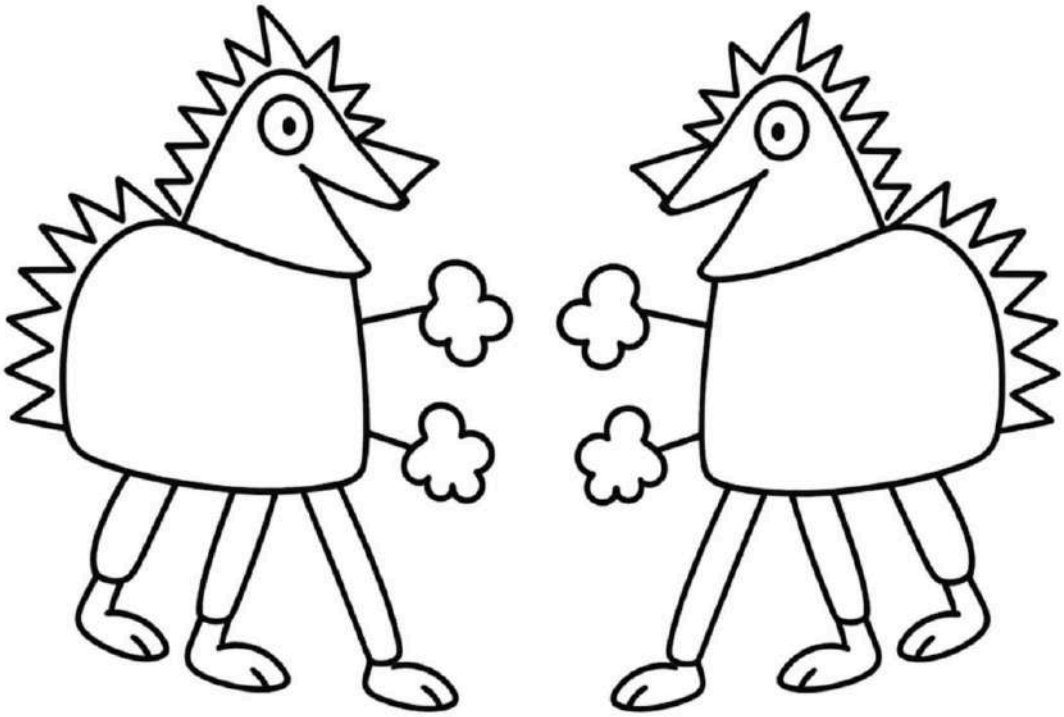
Step 3: Just taking a quick look inside
You walk up to the automatic doors. You step just across the threshold, so you are inside. You don't grab a shopping cart and you don't go shopping. You stay for 2 minutes right next to the exit, look around, and then walk back out calmly.

Step 4: A very small round together with someone

You go into the store together with someone you trust completely (like a parent or a therapist). You agree beforehand: "We will only walk to the first aisle, grab one item, and go straight to the register." Your helper is there to support you.

Step 5: The same small round, but by yourself

You do the exact same thing as in step 4, but now you walk inside alone. Your helper waits for you outside by the sliding doors. Your watchdog will bark louder now, but because the route is very short, you can manage to stay until the alarm drops again.



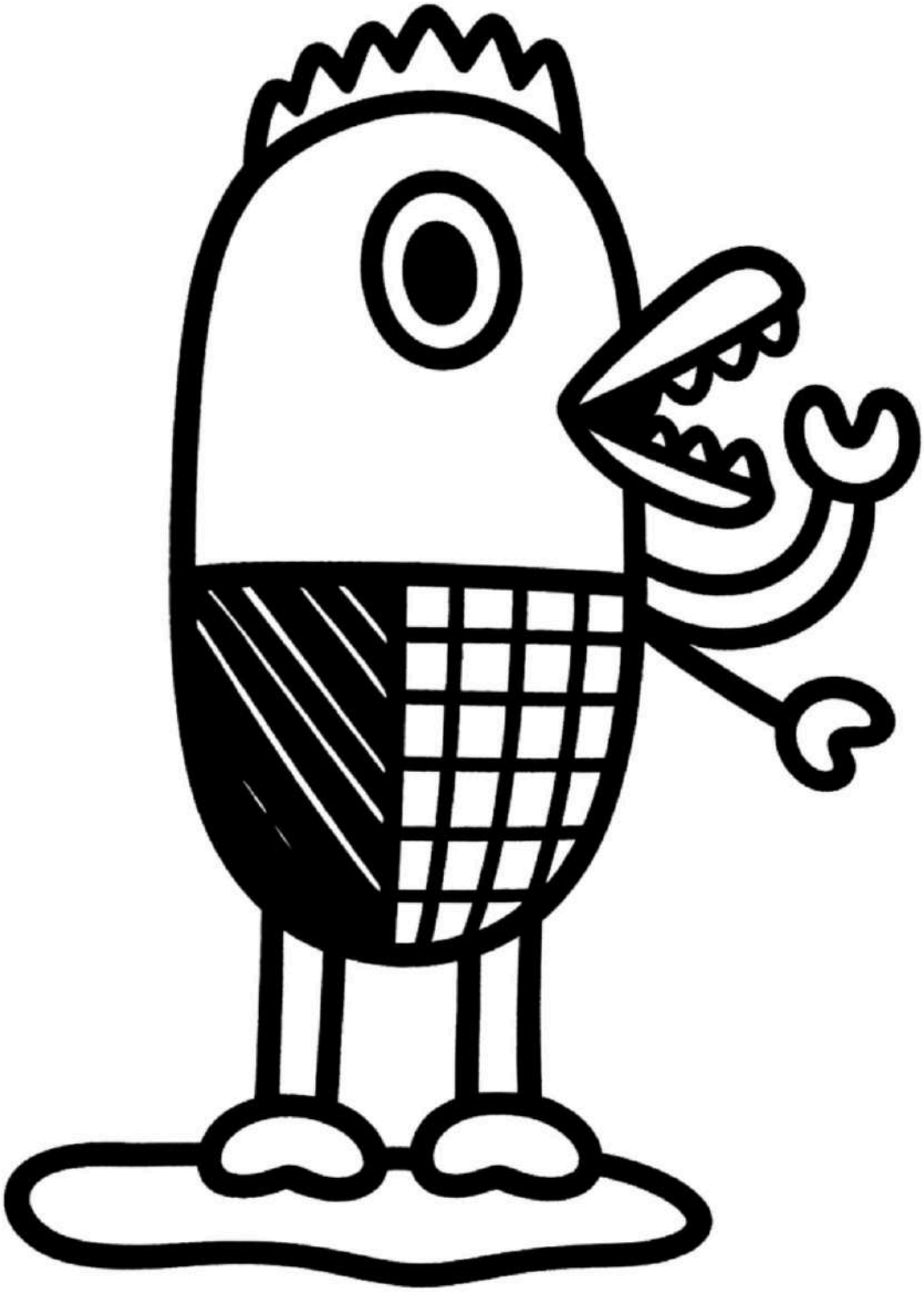
My Fear Meter

When you are only a little scared, the meter is low.
When you are very scared, the meter is high.
Draw your own fear meter! Or use this monster as a meter. Draw a meter from 0 to 10.

Green 0 = not scared at all
Orange 5 = quite scared
Red 10 = very scared

It is good to talk or write about your fears.

When is your fear meter low?
When does your fear meter go up?

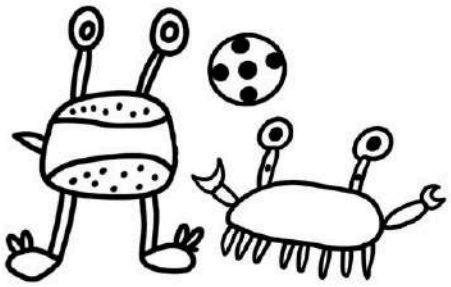


The watchdog only learns when the alarm goes off

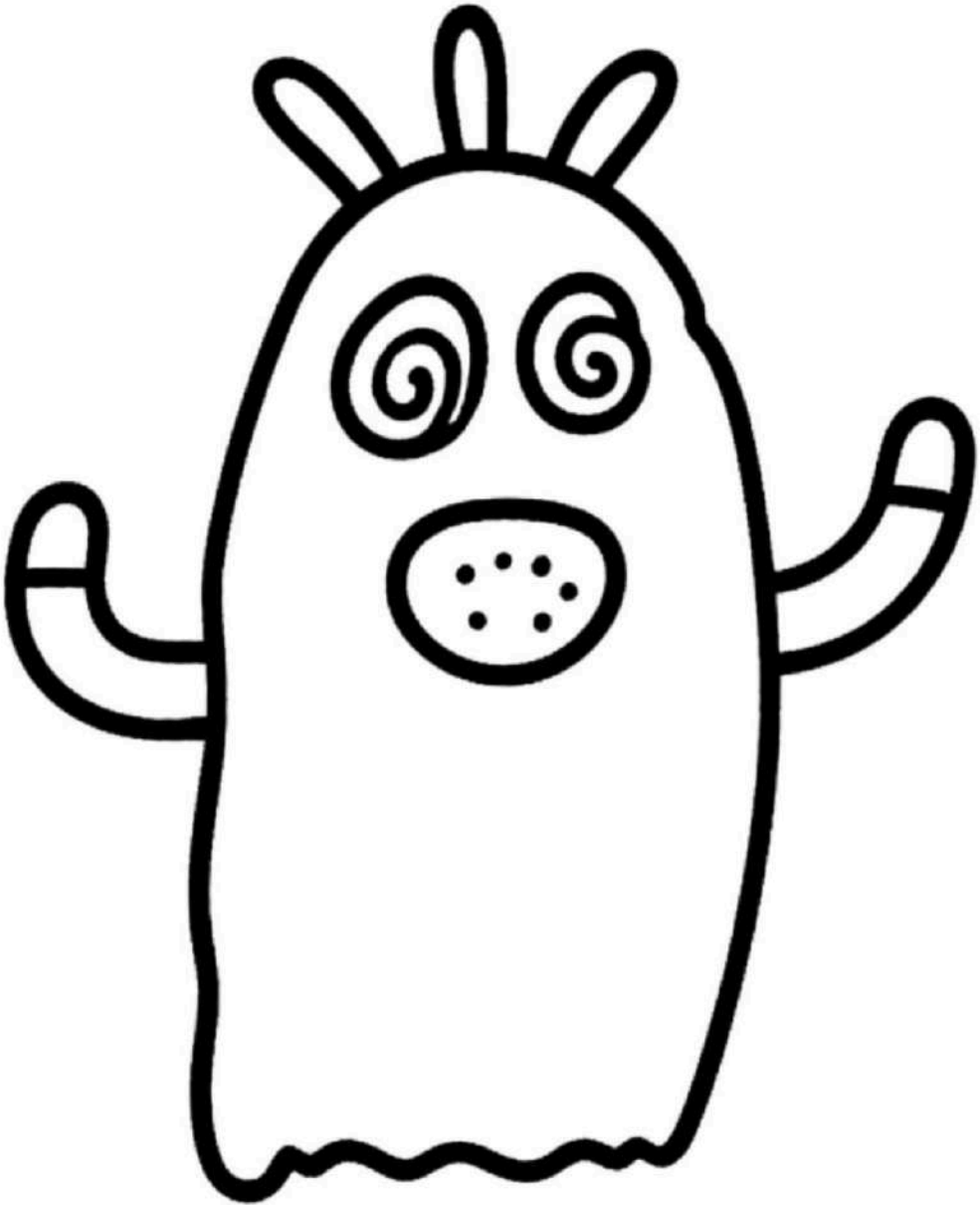
Imagine you want to teach a real dog not to bark at the mail carrier. The mail carrier actually has to come by for the dog to learn! If the mail carrier never shows up, the dog learns nothing.

That is exactly how the alarm in your brain works. When you practice (for example, by going to a place that scares you), the alarm will purposely go off a little bit. At that moment, the watchdog thinks: "Oh no, something terrible is about to happen!"

But if you stay in that place, nothing bad actually happens in the end. You don't faint, nothing terrible happens, and no real bear appears. After a few minutes, the stress juice (cortisol) in your body simply runs out. The alarm stops on its own and you become calm again. The watchdog then looks around in surprise and thinks: "Huh... the alarm went off, but we are still completely safe. Maybe it really was a false alarm."



Draw something funny next to him that makes him not scary at all anymore. For example, give him a silly party hat, a fake nose, boxers with hearts, or a roll of candy in his hand.



The Stress Window

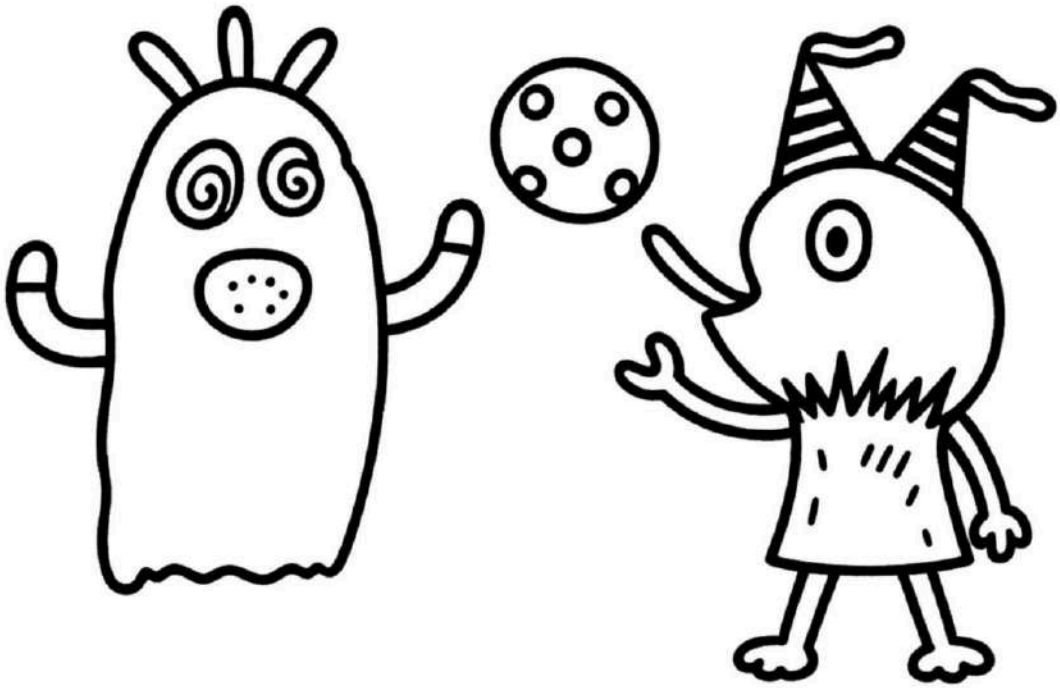
Everyone has an invisible window in their head. Are you inside the window? Then you feel good, calm, and you can think clearly. Sometimes you shoot above the window (you become very hyper, angry, or super scared) or you drop below the window (you feel too tired, sad, or shut down). The goal is to step back nicely inside your window.

1 First draw a large window with three panes on top of each other.
2 Next color the top pane red (too hyper/scared), the middle pane green (calm/good), and the bottom pane blue (tired/empty).
3 Finally draw yourself as a stick figure in the green pane: this is your safe base.

Why practicing sometimes feels like it goes wrong

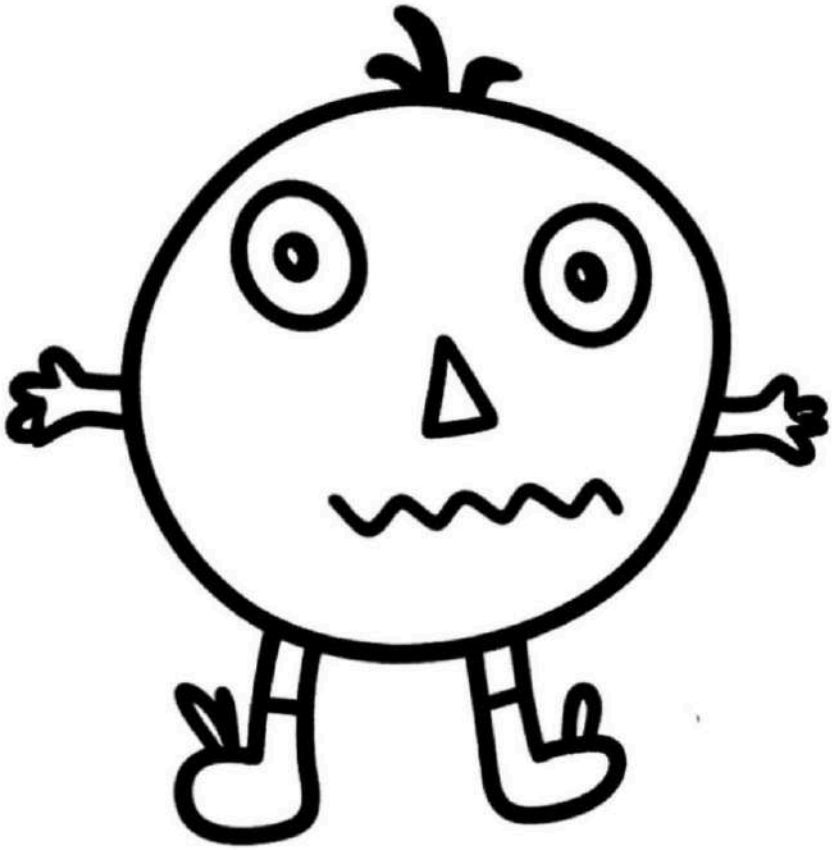
When you start practicing things that scare you, the watchdog in your brain might suddenly start barking very loudly. You feel the panic coming up and you might think: "See, it's going all wrong! I can't do this and the watchdog is right!"

But do you want to know a secret? It isn't going wrong at all. The panic you feel is actually exactly what needs to happen to train your watchdog.



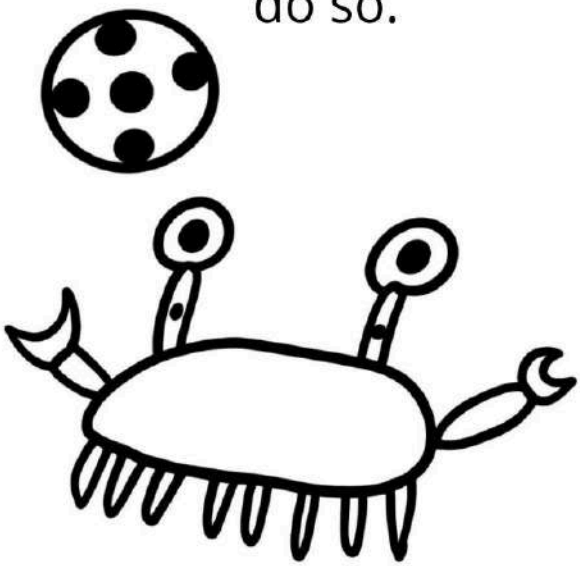
Running away makes the watchdog stronger

If you get very scared during practice and run away immediately, the watchdog thinks: "See! We ran away fast, and THAT is why we are still safe. Next time I will bark even louder!"
So, practicing doesn't mean you shouldn't feel any fear at all. Practicing means you let the watchdog bark, but you wait calmly until he realizes there is nothing wrong and goes quiet on his own.



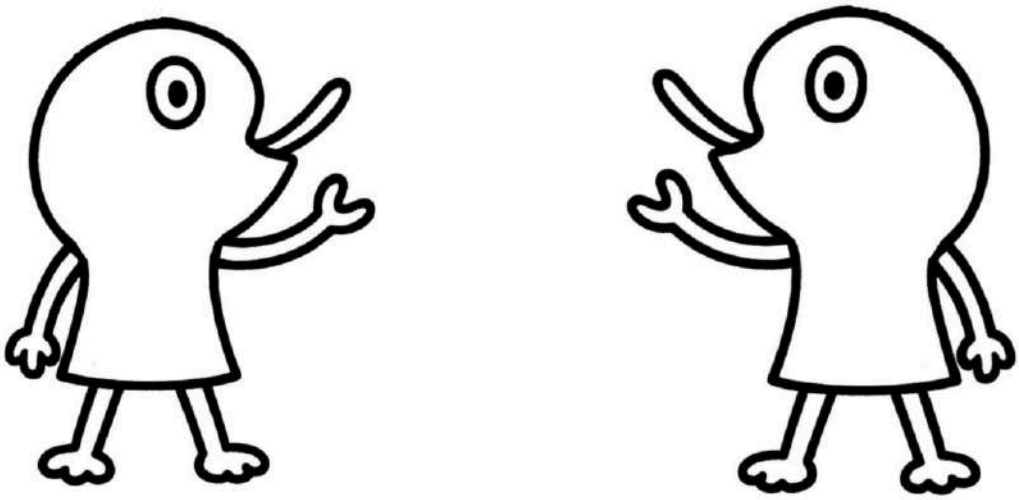
The hijacking of your brain (Amygdala Hijack)

When your panic level gets so high that you lose control, it happens because the watchdog (your amygdala) completely takes over. Psychologists call this an 'amygdala hijack'. The part of your brain that you use to think logically and make decisions (the prefrontal cortex) is temporarily 'switched off' at that moment. Your brain believes you literally have to fight for your life. You start running and screaming because your body is reacting purely on automatic survival instinct, not because you are making a conscious choice to do so.



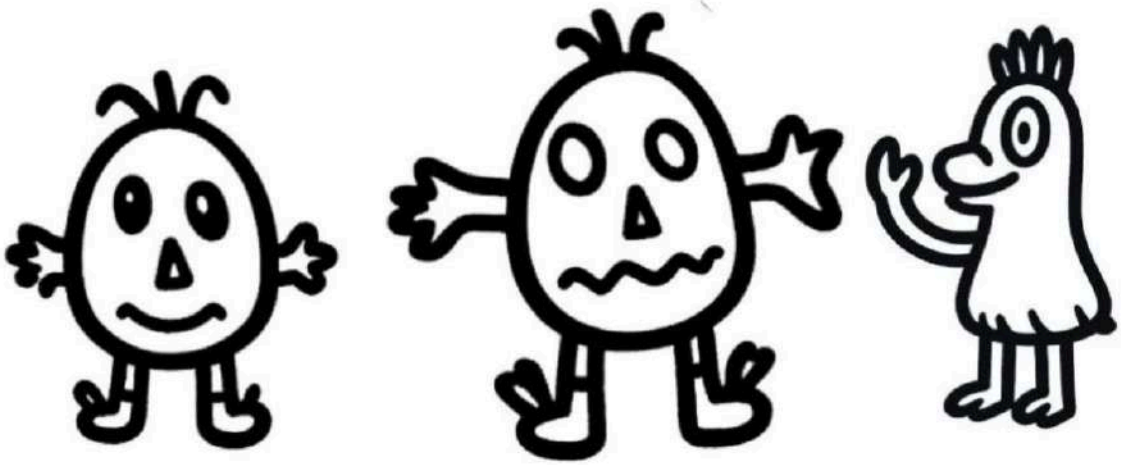
Why running and screaming?

The running: This is the pure flight reaction. Your body is so flooded with adrenaline and cortisol that your muscles simply must move to escape the imagined threat.
The screaming: This is an evolutionary alarm signal. It is meant to scare off the 'enemy' and at the same time warn the rest of the 'tribe' (other people) that there is immediate danger.
It is an extreme form of false alarm
It is incredibly frightening to feel like you are losing control over your own actions. But it is important to know: you are not going crazy, and you are not permanently losing your mind. Your body is simply executing an ancient survival program that pressed the wrong button. As soon as the wave of adrenaline drops after a few minutes, your logical brain takes back control.



What if the step was too big?

If the alarm goes off so loudly that you really have to cry or want to run away as fast as you can, you didn't do anything bad and the practice did not fail. It just means the step was a little too big for today.
When you learn to ride a bike, you don't start on a busy highway right away. You start on a quiet path with training wheels, and then someone holds onto your seat. We do the exact same thing when training your watchdog: we make the steps so small that you can just about manage to stay until the watchdog goes quiet again.



The Faith Train

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). That Word contains the unshakeable facts. Your life is like a train: the locomotive is the Fact (God's Truth), the coal car is your Faith (your mind that chooses to trust), and the back wagon is your Feeling. A train is pulled by the locomotive, never by the back wagon. Anxiety arises when you let your feeling drive the train. Your mind must tell your feeling the truth, and not the other way around.

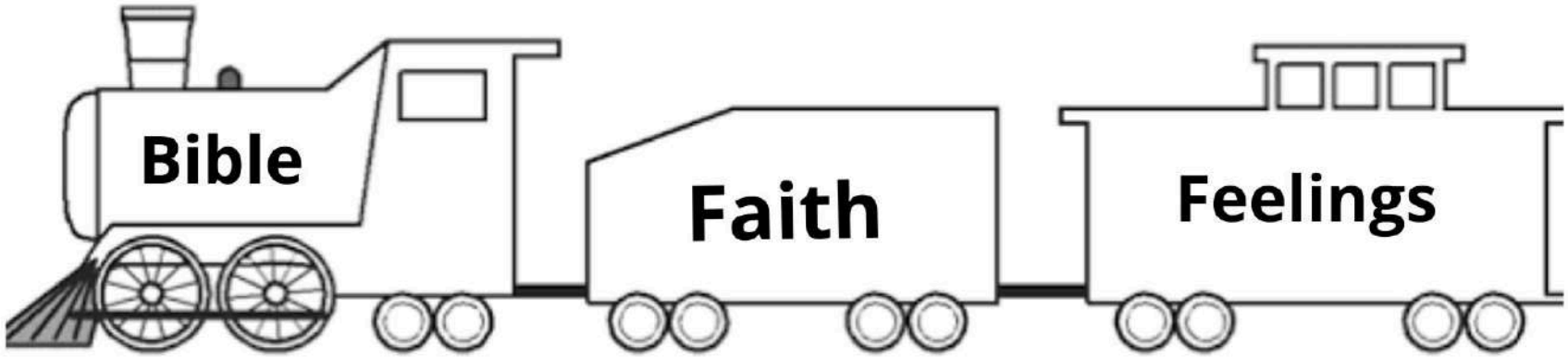
Take a notebook and write down the correct order in three parts:

Part 1: What do I feel? (The back wagon):
Part 2: What is the Fact? (The Locomotive): Look for a specific promise or truth from the Word of God.
Part 3: The Proclamation (The Faith): Let your mind take the lead.

Draw a simple black and white locomotive with a coal car and a back wagon, based on the classic concept by Bill Bright, and write your feeling, faith, fact in it as an exercise.

Which car do you hook up behind the locomotive?
Locomotive (Fact): "God loves me just the way I am."
Coal car (Faith): Your choice to believe this.
You hook this car up directly behind the locomotive!
Back wagon (Feeling): "I am not good enough."
This scared feeling only rolls along at the back.
The locomotive pulls the train!

FACT
FAITH
FEELING


Bible
Faith
Feelings

The 5-C Train inside your head

Did you know there is a tiny supercomputer inside your head? The moment something happens, it starts a chain reaction. We call this the 5-C Train. Every train car pushes the next one into motion. Let's see what happens when you meet a big dog on the street:

Car 1: The Context / Event (What happens)
You are walking on the street, and a big dog comes walking towards you. This is just what is happening. It isn't good or bad yet.

Car 2: The Cognitive Thought (What you think)
Your brain instantly starts talking. The scary thought says: "Help! That dog is huge and it is definitely going to bite me!"

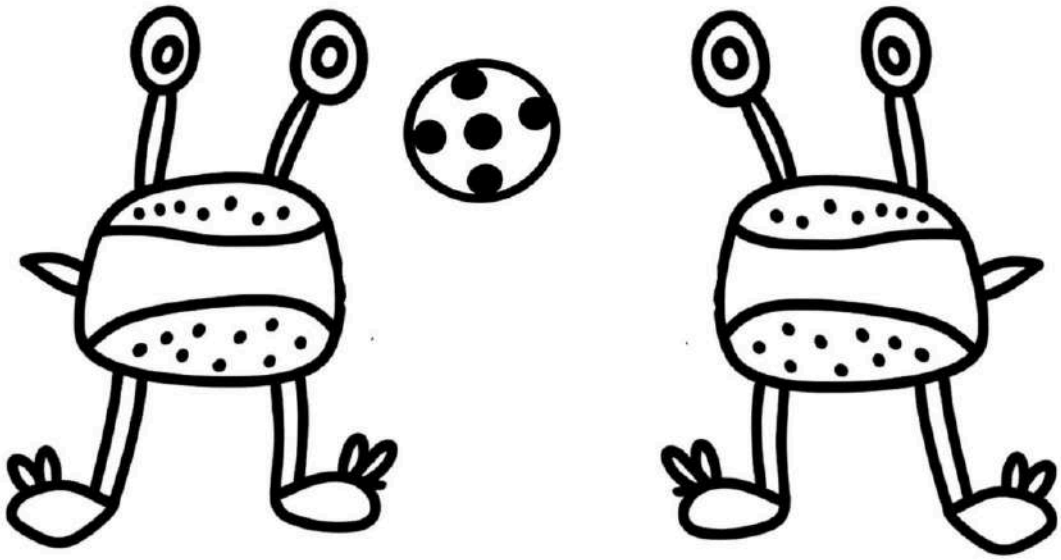
Car 3: The Core Feeling (What you feel)
Because you believe that thought, your body gets startled. You feel a big wave of fear. Your heart races, and you might get butterflies or a knot in your tummy.

Car 4: The Conduct / Behavior (What you do)
Your feeling tells your legs what to do. You scream out loud and start running away as fast as you can.

Car 5: The Consequence (What happens next)
The dog thinks running is a super fun game and starts chasing you! Now you are even more scared. Next time, you won't even want to walk down that street.

Your Superpower: Flipping the Switch!
You usually can't change the first car (the dog). But did you know you can change Car 2 (your thought)? If you think: "The dog is walking nicely on its leash, I will just walk around it calmly", the whole train changes! Your feeling becomes calmer, you just keep walking, and the consequence is that nothing bad happens.

You are the captain of this train!



Two Types of Fear

Wait a minute... is fear always just a mistake inside your head? No, absolutely not!

Fear is actually your personal bodyguard. It is a superpower that has existed for millions of years to keep humans safe. There are two types of fear:

Real Fear (Danger!): Imagine a big dog running towards you, growling loudly and showing its teeth. In this case, the thought "This is dangerous!" is 100% true. Your fear-train will immediately kick into action: you jump behind a fence or call for help. This fear helps you stay safe.

Alarm-Fear (No danger, just scary): Imagine that same big dog walking calmly on a leash next to its owner, wagging its tail. It isn't doing anything wrong. If your brain still thinks: "It is going to bite me!", that is a false alarm. There is no real danger, but your body still feels the stress.

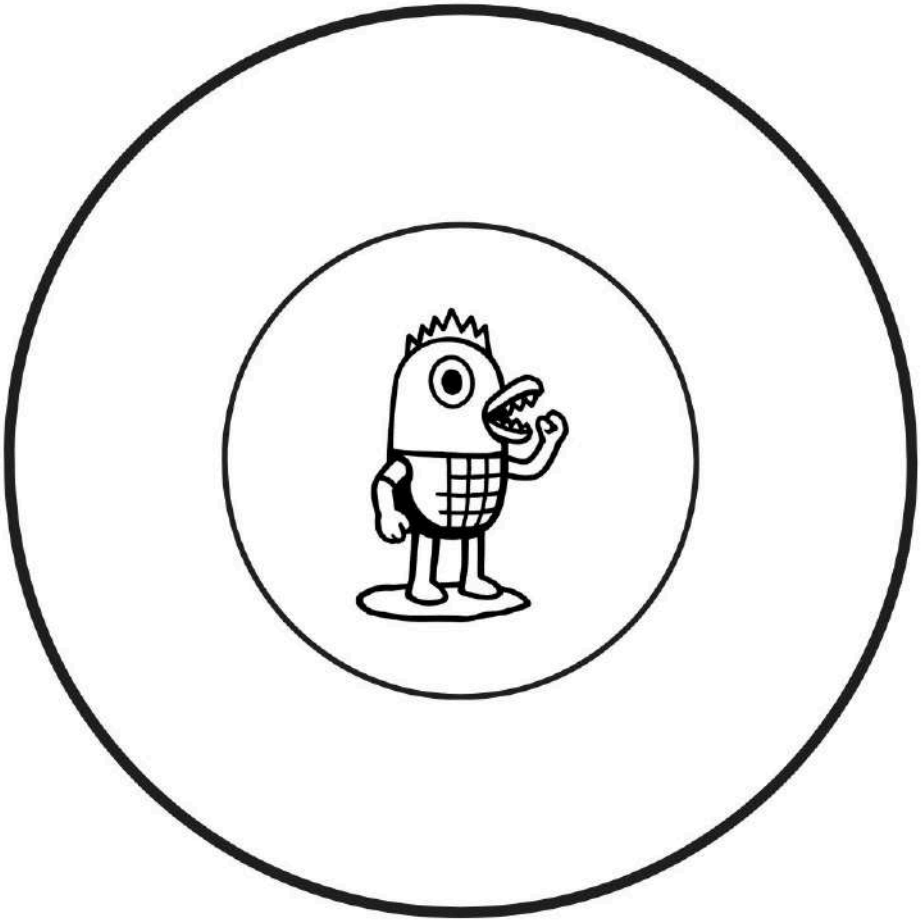
How do you know the difference?

Whenever you have a scary thought, always ask yourself: "Am I in immediate danger RIGHT NOW?" If a dog is showing its teeth: Yes! Listen to your fear and get to safety.

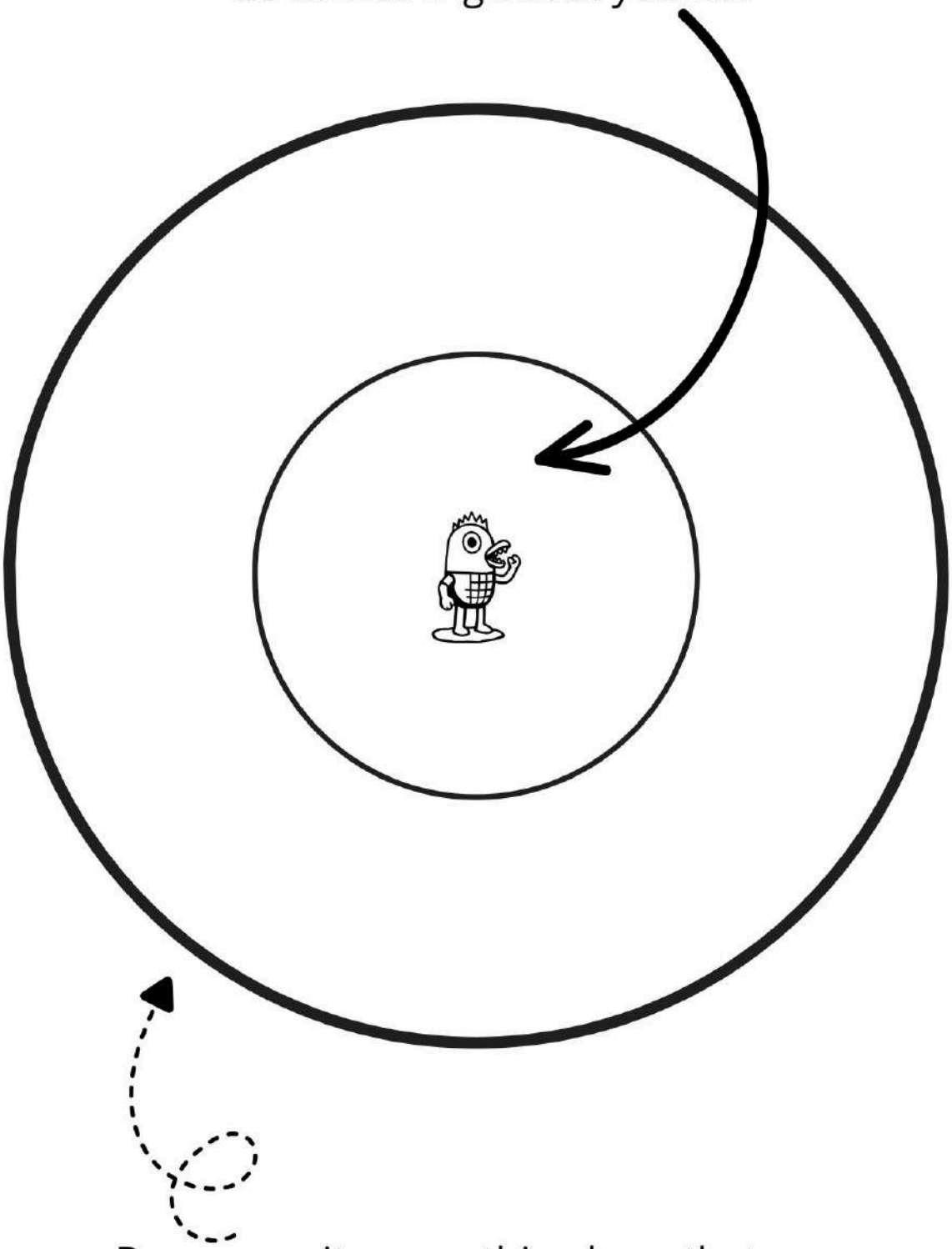
If a dog is just walking past: No. This is an alarm-thought. Time to put on your helpful glasses**!**

My Circle of Influence

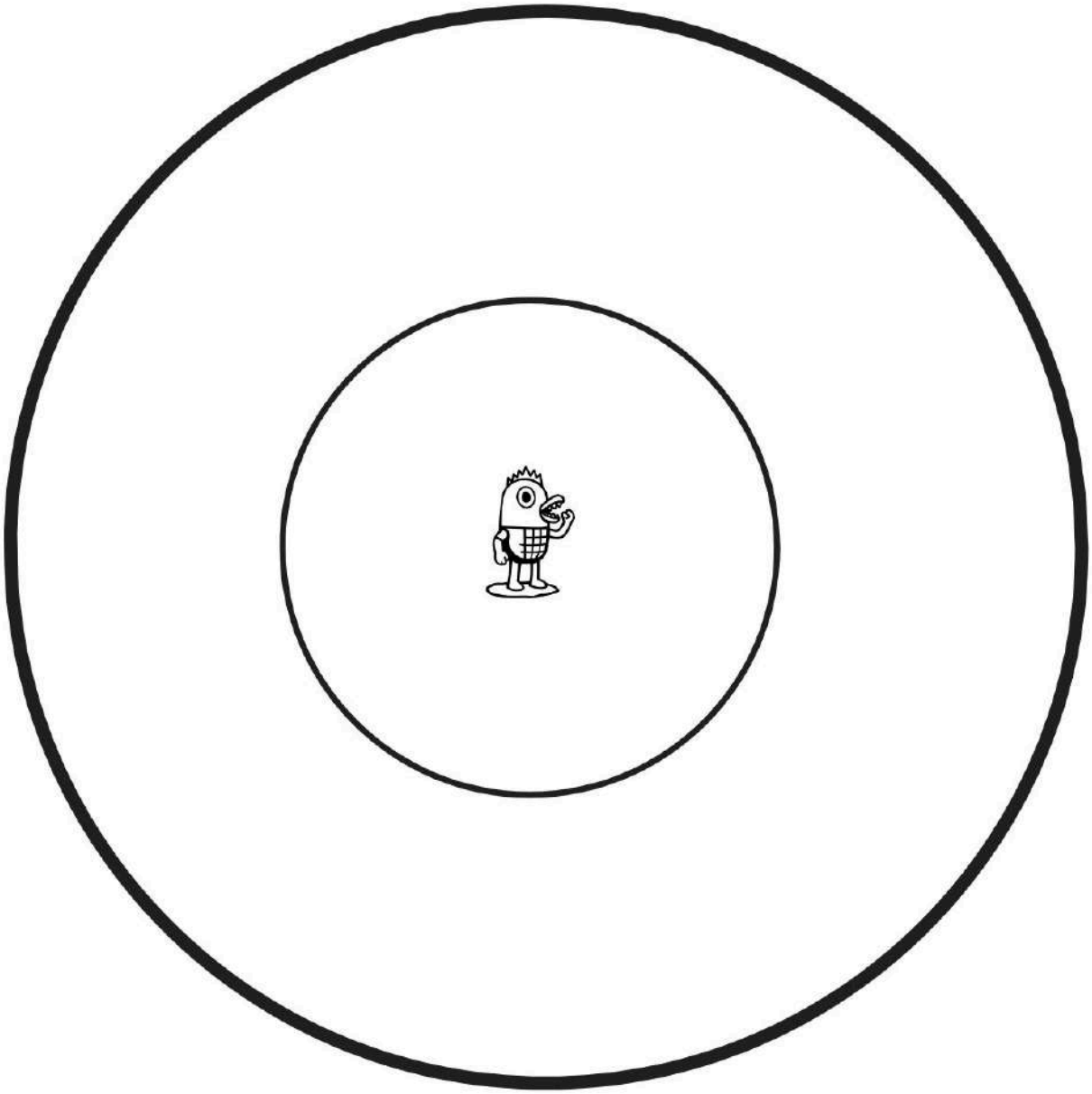
Some things you can change yourself
Other things you cannot change
Draw two circles
Draw a small circle inside a bigger circle
In the inner circle, draw or write things you can do something about.You can write things like how you respond, what you say, asking someone for help, taking a deep breath or trying something new.In the outer circle, draw or write things you cannot control.You can write things like the weather, what other people think, what someone else says or things that have already happened

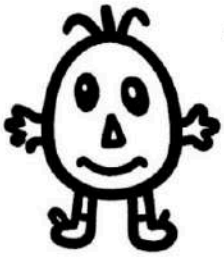


Draw or write something here that **you can do** something about yourself



Draw or write something here that you **cannot** change yourself





The Warm Light Inside You

Lie down comfortably and close your eyes if that feels good. Imagine a tiny, warm, and soft light floating just above your head. It has your absolute favorite color and feels super safe and cozy.

Your head: The light gently lands on the top of your head. Your forehead becomes smooth, your jaw relaxes, and your face becomes completely soft. The scary thoughts in your head don't have any room anymore, because the light fills your mind with peace.

Your shoulders and arms: The light splits into two and slowly slides down to your shoulders. Let your shoulders sink heavily into the mattress. The light flows down your arms, into your hands, all the way to the tips of your fingers. Your arms feel warm and heavy.

Your tummy: Now the light comes back together in your chest and gently moves down to your tummy. Feel your belly move up and down with your breath. The light makes your tummy nice and warm, melting away any tension or 'butterflies'. You are completely safe here.

Your legs and feet: Finally, the light travels down into your legs. All the way down, past your knees, into your feet and your toes. Your whole body is now filled with your warm, favorite color.

You are completely relaxed, from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. You are brave, you are safe, and you can rest now.

The Breathing Box

1 First draw a large, thick square box on your paper.

2 Next write the word **IN** on the left side, **HOLD** on the top side, **OUT** on the right side, and **WAIT** on the bottom side.

3 Finally trace the edges of the box with your finger to breathe calmly:

breathe in, hold, breathe out, wait.

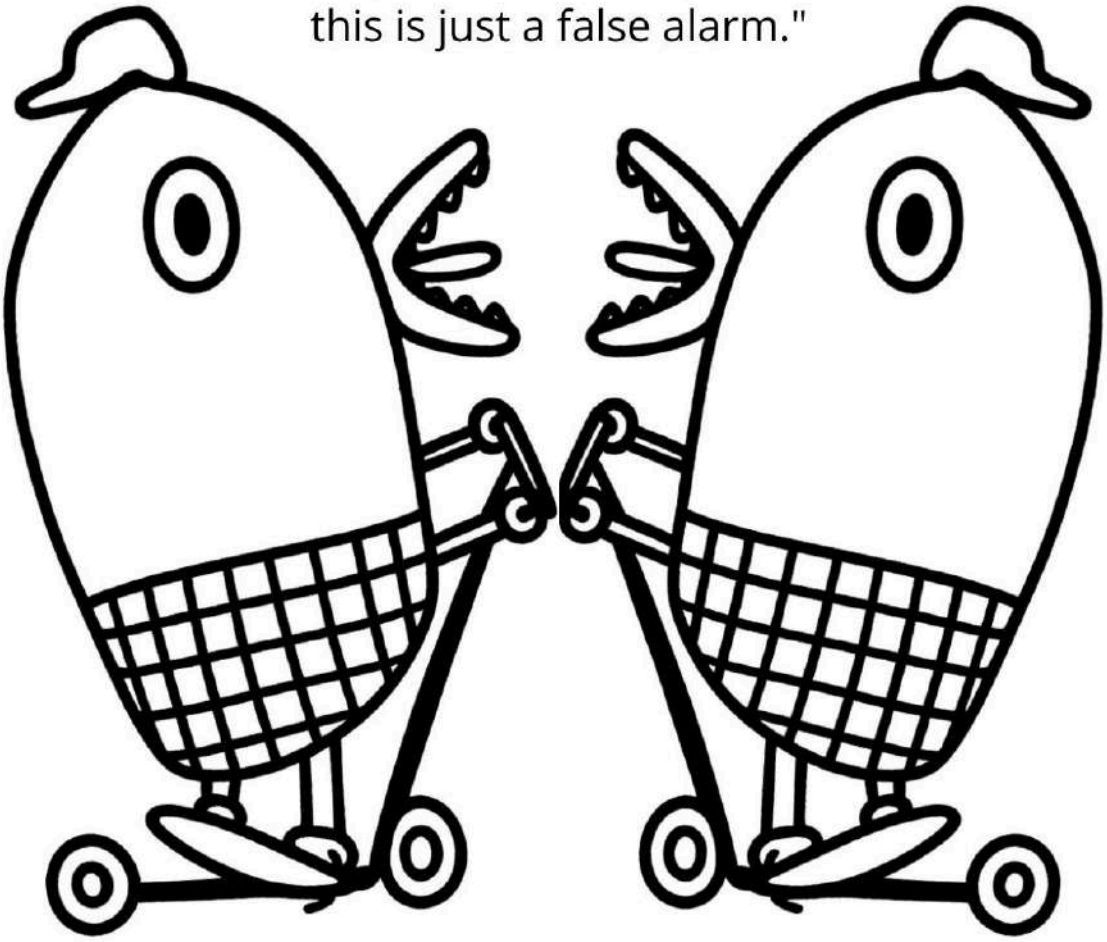
4 How Do You Make the Watchdog Calm Again?

Once the watchdog starts barking, you cannot just yell at him to stop. What does help, is showing him that you are safe:

Take deep breaths: By breathing very slowly into your belly, you send a signal back up to your brain: "Look, watchdog, I am breathing calmly, so there is no real bear."

Move your body: Run around for a bit or shake out your arms and legs. This helps you 'burn off' the stress juice (the cortisol) that is trapped in your muscles.

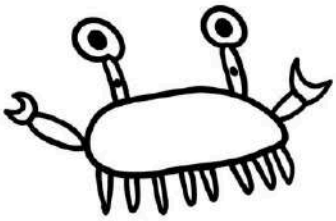
Talk to yourself: Say out loud or in your head: "I am safe, this is just a false alarm."

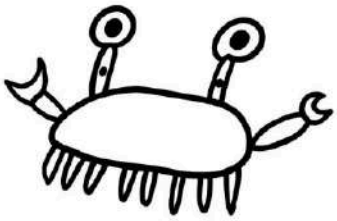


Breathing Exercise

God breathed the breath of life into man (Genesis 2:7). The Holy Spirit is called Ruach in Hebrew, which also means 'breath' or 'wind'. Anxiety constricts our breathing; breathing consciously is literally making room for God's Spirit.

Sit quietly and place a hand on your stomach.
Inhale deeply through your nose for 4 seconds.
Think to yourself: "I receive Your peace." (Philippians 4:7).
Hold your breath for 4 seconds. Rest in His presence.
Blow out quietly through your mouth for 6 seconds. Think to yourself: "I let go of my worries." (1 Peter 5:7).
Repeat this 5 times until the physical tension in your body drops.





Grounding exercises;

When you feel scared or stressed, you stop breathing properly. You easily lose touch with your body and get completely stuck in your worries.
This exercise helps you keep your feet firmly on the ground and stay in the here and now. It helps you shift your attention away from your thoughts and back to your body.

***Prayer** helps too. But trying to pray away your fear can sometimes make you feel like God isn't helping you if those feelings don't go away. This can actually make your anxiety feel even bigger.
God created our brain and our body. Learning how to calm ourselves down is a beautiful skill He allows us to practice.
God is right there with you, even while you are doing this exercise.

Name **five** things you **see,**
four you **feel**.
three you **hear**.
two you **smell**.
and **one** you **taste**.

it also helps to make physical stimuli stronger than the stimuli in your head.
For example;

smelling a nice essential oil for a moment.
squeezing a (sensory) ball with your hand.
stomping your feet on the ground.
clapping your hands.
singing and humming.

Christy Bel

The 5-4-3-2-1 method is a classic mindfulness exercise for grounding when a child or adult suffers from anxiety or panic. It brings the attention back to the here and now.

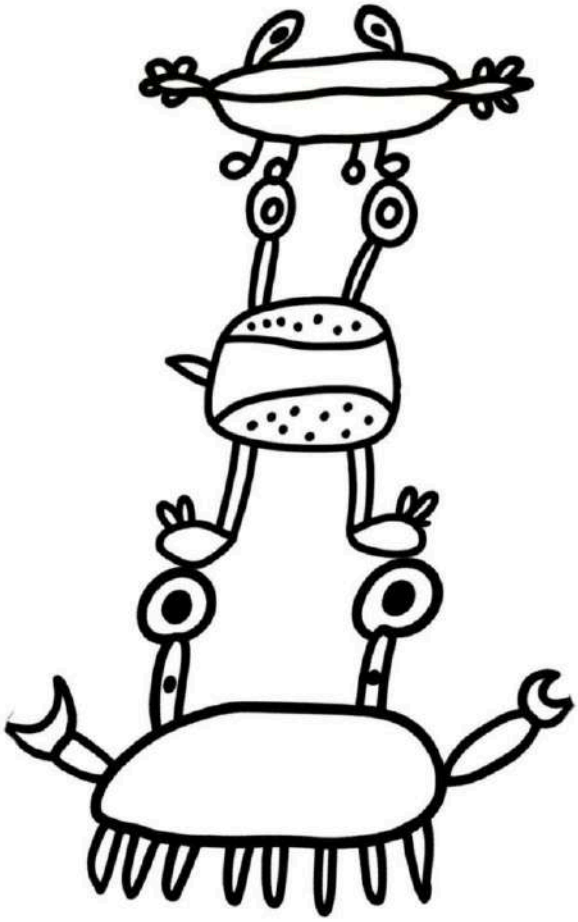
5 things you can see

4 things you can feel

3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste



Stay in this moment

Anxiety drags us into an imaginary, fearful future. But God is the God of the now. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us for a reason to look at the birds and the lilies (Matthew 6:26-28). Looking at creation re-engages our senses and reminds us of God's care.

Look around you and consciously name:

5 things you see: Thank God for making this physical world.

4 things you feel: Realize that God gives firmness to the ground beneath your feet.

3 things you hear: Listen to the symphony of life continuing around you.

2 things you can smell.

1 thing you can taste.

Close with the thought: God is here, in this exact moment.

Journal Exercise

The Psalms are filled with raw, honest fear. David frequently cried out that he was terrified, but almost always ended his prayers with a reminder of God's faithfulness. Fear is allowed to be there, but it does not have the final word.

Take a notebook and write in three parts:

Part 1 (**The Complaint**): Write down unfiltered what you are afraid of. Be honest with God, just like in Psalm 13 or 22.

Part 2 (**The Truth**): Write down a Bible promise that stands directly opposite to this (for example: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power..." - 2 Timothy 1:7).

Part 3 (**The Proclamation**): Close with one powerful sentence: "My feelings say [fill in your fear], but God's Word promises [fill in the promise]. Today, I choose to trust in that."

Visualization and Prayer Exercise

The Bible frequently calls us to lay our burdens before God. We often unconsciously carry scenarios that were never meant for our shoulders.

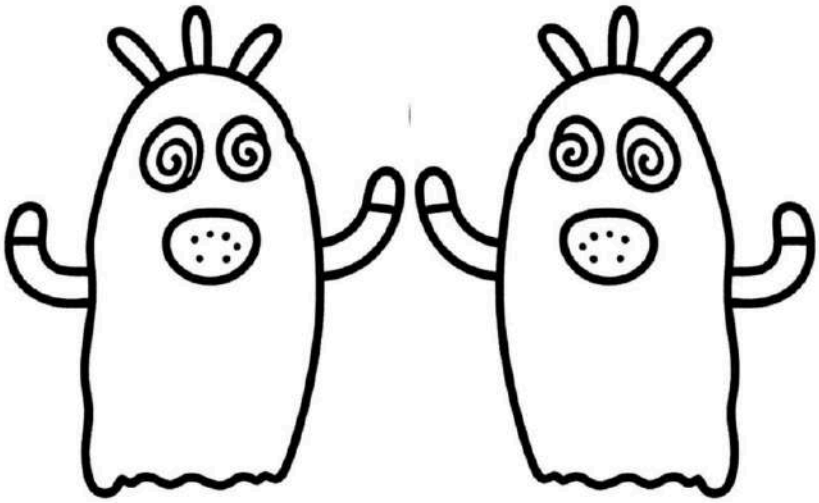
Sit down and clench your fists as tightly as you can. This symbolizes tightly holding onto control and your fears.

Name mentally or out loud the specific anxiety you are struggling with right now.

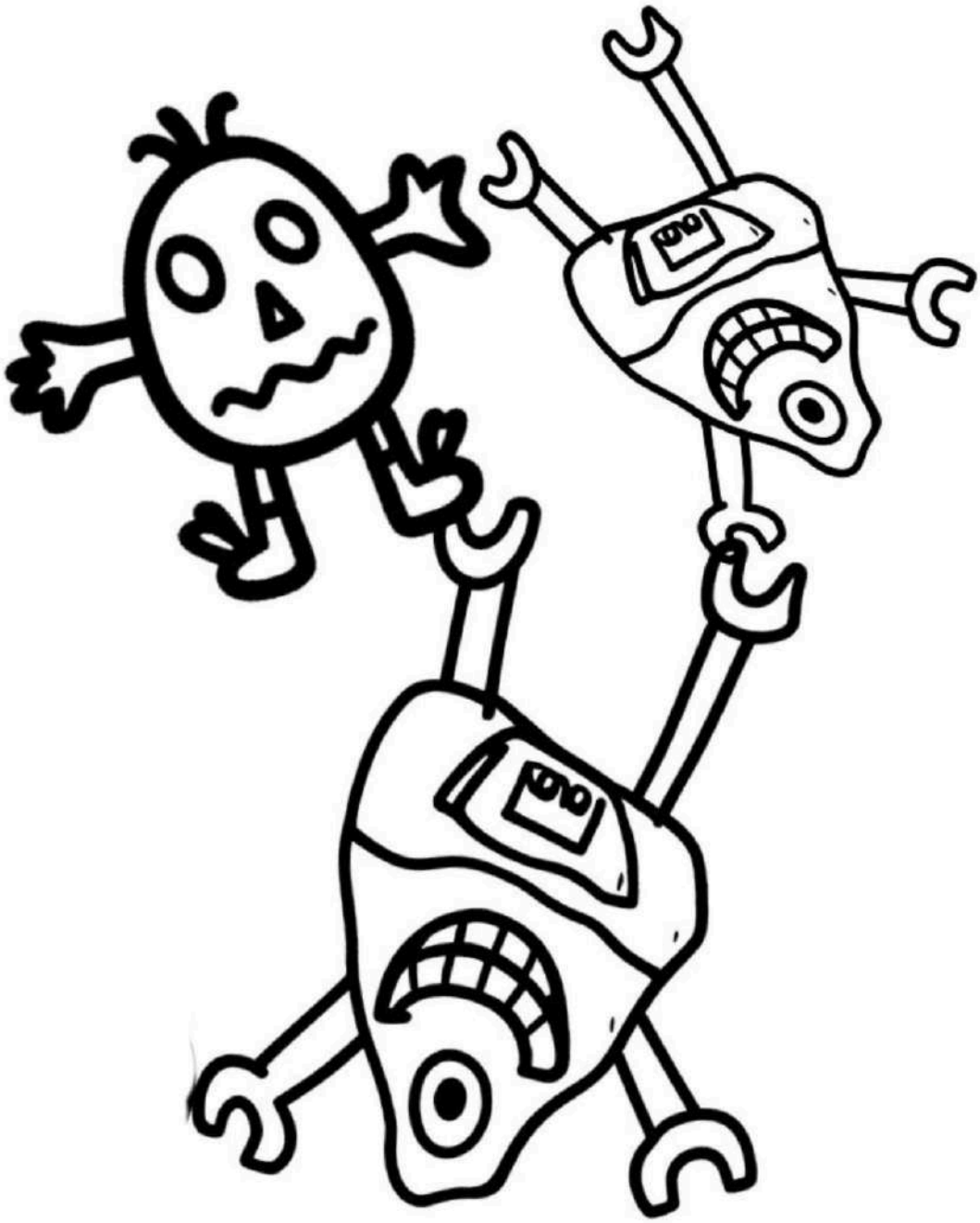
Now slowly turn your palms open toward heaven and relax your fingers.

Speak out loud:

"Lord, I cannot carry this, and I don't have to either. Here are my open hands. I surrender my anxiety to You. Direct my steps."

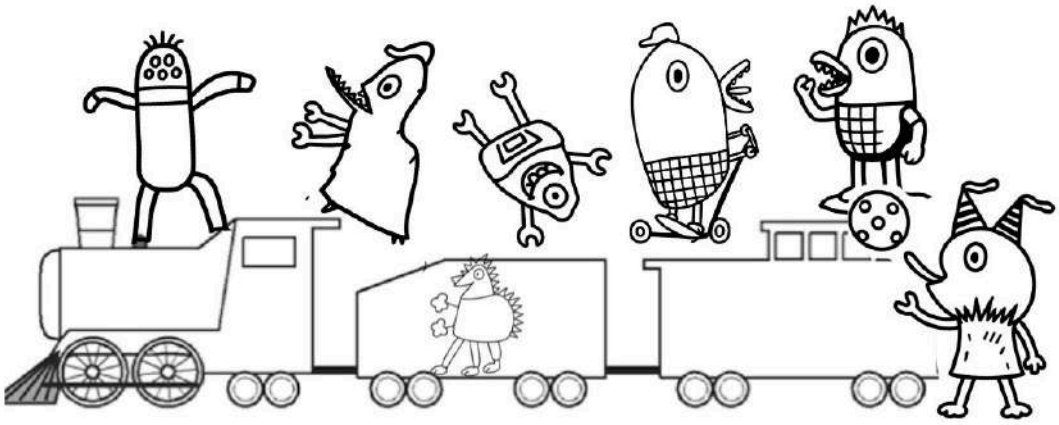


Lord
grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.



The Train Keeps Going

The fear train keeps going
In your life, you will come to many different stations
Sometimes it is a happy station and sometimes you come to a station where you find things difficult
Your feelings are always changing
You keep learning to understand yourself better and you keep learning how to deal with your feelings
You are never completely finished learning how to steer your feelings. And that is okay
When things are difficult, you can think back to what you have learned in this book.
You can take the exercises out again and practise them again.Maybe something does not go so well today.That is okay.
Tomorrow you can simply try again
The train keeps going
And along the way, you keep learning more about yourself.



Afterword

Dear reader,

Sometimes fear is like that ball underwater: no matter how hard you push, it pops right back up. And that is okay. You do not have to fight this battle alone. Remember the beautiful, well-known prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

You do not have to get it perfectly right away. You are allowed to keep practicing your whole life long. Every time you feel overwhelmed or scared, you can keep asking God for help. He always listens. Above all, be very kind to your own mistakes and weaknesses. Because you know what? That is exactly what Jesus would do. He looks at you with nothing but love and patience. You are good just the way you are.

Christy Bel