



## The Boy and the Bees

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Tommy, about to turn six, came to my office with his father. It was early May; the weather was beautiful. But as his mother had explained over the phone, Tommy would not play outside – he was afraid there might be bees. The summer before one had gotten into his pants and stung him. Neither Tommy nor his parents wanted him to be confined to the house for the rest of his life, but – Tommy was afraid.

I began by having Tommy close his eyes and pretend it was a few days from now and remembering when he “used to be afraid of bees.”

I let him do that for twenty seconds or so, then I had him open his eyes. “Do you like to draw?” I asked him. Tommy nodded.

I brought out a drawing pad and some markers, and we got down on the floor. “Can you draw me a picture of you, *before* the bee was there?” I asked.

Tommy smiled and got right to work, drawing a picture of himself with his mother standing next to him.

“That’s great – good picture,” I told him. “Now I’d like you to draw another picture. This time draw a picture of you *after* the bee is gone and you are ok.”

He enthusiastically drew the second picture – I had found his sweet spot. I intended then to have him pretend he was watching a cartoon, starting with his first picture and ending with the second [colleagues will recognize the “Fast Phobia Cure” here, also known as “V/K Dissociation.” The idea is to have the person experience the traumatic event from outside of him- or herself: dissociated.] But Tommy must have been onto me: without being prompted: he drew a third picture, of himself with the bee stinging him. The bee was as big as the boy; Tommy took a long time drawing it.

I had him imagine the cartoon, and then be in the cartoon and play it quickly backwards, but the main work had already been done. I asked Tommy, how would it be now if there was a bee in the room. “I forget to be afraid,” he said.

### My Mistake

The session was over. “He appears to be fine” I told the father, “but if not, bring him back and we’ll do a follow-up.” Tommy, though, was standing right there, listening. As we were soon to find out, the message he got was, “This might not have worked,” and indeed, the next day the fear was still there.

### Second Session

When Tommy came back, this time with his mother, I was ready. I had asked him to bring his favorite animal toy with him; he brought his stuffed tiger.

We started with Eye Movement Integration. I asked Tommy to think about being stung and follow with his eyes as I moved my finger back and forth and up and down a few times.

Then we did tapping (EFT – Emotional Freedom Technique). I had him say out loud, “I used to be afraid of bees but I really like myself and I forget to be afraid,” as he tapped the meat of one hand (“Karate chop point”) with the fingers of the other – then we did it on the tiger. We tapped a sequence of points on Tommy’s (and the tiger’s) head and torso (see <http://www.eft-alive.com/how-to-do-EFT.html> for a diagram). After a couple of rounds I asked him, “If there were a bee in this room, how would you feel?” “I wouldn’t be afraid,” he said. I gave his mother a chart with the tapping points and the procedure.

I asked Tommy how the tiger could help him. “He could kick the bee away and eat him,” he said. “What if the bee stings the tiger?” I asked. “It wouldn’t hurt him,” he said. “Or it wouldn’t hurt him much,” I put in. Tommy knows bee stings hurt; I wanted him to be aware that even if the tiger (or he) does get stung, it’s not so bad and he will be ok. “And if you do get stung?” I asked. “How can the tiger help you then?” “He can scratch it and make me feel better,” he said.

I could have stopped there, but I wanted to make sure, this time, that we had it cleaned up completely. I explained to Tommy that although he is not afraid anymore, we have to make sure his younger self, “the little boy who got stung last year,” is also not afraid.

I asked him to pretend he had a time machine. Tommy didn’t know what that was, so I explained it – he quickly got the idea. I had him describe it: ‘big and red and with stickers, able to hold a thousand people’ (ok – good enough – all we needed was space for him, the tiger, me, and his mother). I asked him to go forward in time and watch his 6th birthday party (coming up in a few weeks) – he could see who was there and what they were doing (a moon bounce). Then we went back in time, to just before his younger self had gotten stung. I asked Tommy, what could he say to “the little boy” that would help him go through being stung without being afraid. Tommy told his younger self, “It will be ok; it will only hurt a little and you don’t need to be afraid.” I suggested that he tell him that the tiger will help. I had him hug the little boy, then we returned to “now” (He had his eyes closed; he counted down from 10 on his fingers until he

reached 0, which was “now.”).

### Testing

It was time to test. We all went outside – Tommy, his mother, the tiger, and I. Behind my office building was a garden; we looked for bees. We found some, one of them pretty close, and there was no negative reaction. All done!

**Note:** When working with a phobia, it’s important to test afterward, if you possibly can. I have seen clients who seemed fine in my office talk themselves back into the phobia, or have a family member talk them back into it (“I don’t believe it could be that easy.”).

But if you test, especially in the presence of a family member or a friend, they know that what they have experienced is real – that the phobia is gone.