

# Lions & Tigers & Bears, Oh My!

## FEARS:

*All children have them,  
both real and imaginary.*

**I**t's normal for fears to arise, as little ones struggle with growing up. Fears are often a sign that your child is entering a new stage of learning. Sometimes it's hard to know how to help a frightened child in her struggle. If you understand the reasons behind common childhood fears, it is easier to help. Here are some typical fears young children have, and the reasons behind them.

• **Fear of Strangers.** This is often the first fear we see in babies and it re-surfaces throughout early childhood. As children grow, they become more aware of the world. At different stages, they see some things and people as part of their world, and some as separate. When faced with unfamiliar people or situations, your child may become frightened. Each child needs his own amount of time to get used to new experiences.

• **Fear of Monsters and the Dark.** Monsters usually arrive at night, when children are alone with their thoughts. Often these monsters surface when there's something scary happening in a child's life. The problem could be the arrival of a new baby, the beginning of a new child care program, or something disturbing she saw while playing outside. Preschoolers have very active imaginations. It's common for threes and fours to have scary pictures in their minds that they believe could come true.

• **Fear of Things that Fly or Crawl.** This fear is often the result of something that really happened. For example, a child gets stung by a bee. After that, he's afraid of all

things that buzz, fly, or remind him of insects. He is overgeneralizing - which is a normal phase in the development of a preschooler's thinking.

• **Fear of Failure.** Children need and want to try new things, like climbing higher on the jungle gym, riding a bike, or going to a new friend's house. As eager as a child is to master these new skills, she also realizes that she could fail. Each child needs to learn that mistakes are okay and that she's loved for who she is, not what she can do.

• **Fear of Being Alone.** Children depend on the adults in their lives. Probably a child's worst nightmare is the thought of being left all alone in the world. It's very important to teach your child trust. Children need to know that they will never be abandoned and that someone will always care for them.

• **Fear of Storms, and Loud Noises.** Anything that seems big and unknown may be scary. Children fear losing what little control they have in the world. Things they don't understand sometimes make children feel how small and dependent they really are.