

There's a Monster in My Closet!

There are monsters in my closet and snakes under my bed! I'm afraid of going down the drain when I take a bath! I worry there are bad guys out there trying to steal me! Is that barking dog going to eat me? This world is a scary place!

Lots of grown-ups just tell us kids to stop being afraid. That doesn't help me very much. In fact, that makes me feel confused and like my feelings don't matter.

What I Want You to Know

When I am a toddler, I might be afraid of lots of things. The thought of you leaving me is very scary. I am also scared of noises, falling, bugs, or big



animals. I may even be afraid of the toilet or my dark bedroom.

As I get older, I notice more of the world around me. I've had a few painful and scary experiences and my imagination is growing more and more vivid. It is hard for me to figure out

what is real and what is imaginary. Monsters, ghosts, and getting lost seem especially scary to me. I also hate the idea of losing my mommy or daddy.

My fears might seem silly to a grown-up, but they are real to me. I need to learn to sort these things out and not be scared. It will take me a while, and I need your help as I learn to be brave.

Here's How You Can Help Me

Please *help me feel safe*. When I am frightened, hold me. *Listen to me* when I talk about my fears.

Help me see that *it is normal to be afraid* and worry about things. Tell me about things you were afraid of when you were my age and how you learned not to be afraid.

Help me think of ways to cope with my fears. If my imagination is running

wild, teach me how to use it to turn scary situations into funny ones. If I think there are monsters in my closet, help me think of them as friends instead.

Give me a chance to face my fears, but *don't try to force me* to do something I'm not ready for. Help me ease into facing my fears.

Comfort me and reassure me as I learn to face my fears. Gently remind me that I will learn how to overcome or control my fears. When I finally overcome a fear, point it out to me so that I can learn from my success. Tell me how “grown up” I acted.

If you help me learn to face my fears now, I will be able to face my fears on my own when I get older.

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

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