

Harry the Hypno-potamus

More Metaphorical Tales for Children

Volume 2



Linda Thomson PhD MSN CPNP

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Preface

Imagination is a gift you give yourself in the present that allows you to go into the future feeling better and stronger, more calm and comfortable.

I wrote the first Harry Hypno-potamus book for pediatric health and mental health professionals who were trained in hypnotherapy and experienced in child development. However, I soon discovered that clinicians who work with adults were also utilizing the stories with patients/clients. Parents, school teachers, and other professionals not trained in hypnosis were using the metaphors with children. Meanwhile, the children themselves were picking up the book to read about a shy turtle, an anxious elephant, a meerkat who wet the bed, a chimp who sucked his thumb, and other entertaining and educational tales.

Therefore, the second book of Harry Tales is for readers of all ages who want to learn what they never knew they knew and control what they never knew they could. It is for anyone who wants to learn relaxation skills and self-regulatory strategies in order to cope with pain, anxiety, habit disorders, and other physical and emotional problems. The Harry Tales are for clinicians who want to put the “care” back in health care, and are passionate about helping patients/clients live happier, more comfortable lives.

Sometimes it is difficult to believe that I actually get paid to work hypnotically with children because it is such a joy. They bring to me far more than I could ever give to them. Their spontaneous creativity is a treasure. The most amazing and effective metaphors are the ones the children create themselves. The story of Sam, the orangutan, contains a metaphor about a shy pumper fire truck that was created by a

remarkable four-year-old boy. Truly, the solution to his problem was within, and he was able to access that ability through metaphor. I am grateful to him for sharing the story of Squirt with me, and for allowing me to share it with you.

It has been a pleasure to write these tales for children and adults. What gives me the greatest joy is learning that one of my stories has made a difference in the life of a child. As you utilize these stories in your work, I would be grateful if you would share with me any special experiences that you have had in using the tales. If, in your work, a child has created an amazing metaphor and would like to share with others in a third volume of Harry Tales, please send it to me, with their permission, at Linda.Thomson@Hitchcock.org

Enjoy!

A Guide to Using the Tales or Tips on Tails

Some of these Harry Tales are entertaining stories with a message that you can read and share with a child. Others, besides being educational and amusing, contain hypnotic scripts and techniques that can be adapted to many different pediatric emotional and physical conditions or problems. Pacing, leading, cadence, rhythm, and vocal inflections are all important in hypnosis. In the scripted portion of the stories, the words to emphasize in a hypnotic intervention are in bold face type.

The story of Harry, Haley, and Conor is a wonderful way to introduce children to hypnosis. Harry is a hippopotamus who has learned hypnotic skills from Dr. Dan, the Ashland Zoo veterinarian. Harry is so good at using his imagination, he is called a hypno-potamus. The hippo helps Haley and Conor learn that when they are feeling sad or angry, they can use their imaginations to think of their favorite things. The tale includes a colorful induction and deepening technique.

Anxiety, Fears, and Phobias

The tales of the hoatzin, octopus, and echidna deal with worries, fears, and anxiety, which are common pediatric problems. The beluga, raccoon, wallaby, and orangutan have more specific fears and phobias. The stork has a difficult time swallowing pills, and the dolphin's anxiety results in selective mutism. Having an invasive medical procedure is the subject of the story of the sea turtle. The story of the loon, and the tale of the hippopotamus and the tortoise, are based on real events that created anxiety in the animals involved.

Fear of Beards (Page 29) *(Gabor the Beluga Whale)*

This tale introduces the Ashland Zoo veterinarian, Dr. Dan, who is skilled in the use of hypnosis. Throughout the tales, Dr. Dan helps the animals with their problems by teaching them hypnotic skills.

Fear of costumes, clowns, or masks is not unusual for a young child. Gabor is afraid of masks and beards. Dr. Dan teaches Gabor, a beluga whale, how to tap into his own inner strength to overcome his fear. The tale describes the technique of allowing a child to view what is feared on the television screen of his imagination while he is firmly in control of the remote so he can speed it up, slow it down, or stop the scene entirely. By increments, Gabor gains strength as he moves forward at the speed that is appropriate for him to face his fear. He receives ego-strengthening suggestions as he learns that he is the boss of his fear.

Fear of Trying Something New (Page 35) *(Moshe the Happy Hoatzin)*

Moshe, a hoatzin bird from South America, is afraid of leaving the nest and learning to fly. His fears weigh him down. His father places him in the basket of a hot air balloon. The hoatzin's fears and anxieties weigh so heavily on him that the balloon cannot lift upward. Moshe begins to throw some of his fears out of the basket, allowing the balloon to rise to greater heights. Without the fears, Moshe can soar.

Worries and Fears (Page 37)
(Accaria Octopus)

Accaria Octopus has a lot of worries and fears. This tale contains an induction technique that pairs diaphragmatic breathing with images of waves coming in and going out. Deepening is accomplished by diving down through water. A trunk that Accaria finds at the bottom of the sea is so weighted down with fears that he cannot bring it to the surface. The octopus releases the fears, and the chest becomes lighter, allowing him to bring it to the surface and fill it with courage and confidence instead. Accaria learns that the chest full of strength will always be inside him, available whenever and wherever he needs it.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (Page 41)
(Owen and Mzee)

The tale of Owen and Mzee is based on the true story of an incredible relationship that developed between an ancient tortoise and a traumatized hippo. Owen, the young hippo, has survived a disaster that claimed the lives of his entire family. Mzee, the tortoise, helps Owen to begin having fun again through making art and playing games. The techniques of anchoring and dissociation help the hippo to overcome his PTSD. A soothing, tapping technique helps Owen remember as much of the traumatic event as he wants or needs to. The story also addresses survivor's guilt.

Fear of Bugs (Page 47)
(Bloom Raccoon)

Bloom Raccoon is afraid of bugs. Dr. Dan helps Bloom by using age regression techniques to bring the raccoon back to before the problem began. Using future progression, Bloom imagines a future that does not include his fear. He learns to be a master gardener in the garden of his imagination.

Invasive Medical Procedure (Page 51)
(Elvira the Green Sea Turtle)

Having a Voiding Cysto-Urethral Gram (VCUG) can be a frightening and uncomfortable procedure for a child. The tale of Elvira explains having a VCUG. Sea turtles enter a trance state when depositing their eggs, so Elvira learns how to use what she is already good at (dissociation and distraction) and apply it to the new situation.

Selective Mutism (Page 53)
(Meg Dolphin)

Meg is a bottle-nosed dolphin whose anxiety has caused her to become selectively mute. The dolphin learns diaphragmatic breathing to decrease anxiety. In this metaphor, Meg imagines herself back in a time before the problem began, then she also looks into the future when she is speaking easily. This metaphor also illustrates the forced choice technique: You may ... You may ... You may ... Whatever happens you will ... The tale also contains a metaphor about a frog who is trapped in a pit. When his fellow frogs shout to him to give up, the little frog, who is deaf, thinks they are cheering him on, and escapes.



Owen and Mzee

This tale is based on the true story of a friendship between a young baby hippo and a giant ancient tortoise. It happened in Kenya, Africa at the time of the great tidal wave in December 2004.

A baby hippopotamus, not yet one year old, lived with his hippo family in Kenya. The hippos enjoyed wading out into the muddy Sabaki River.

One day, heavy rains came. The river flooded, washing the hippos out to sea. Then, an earthquake at the bottom of the Indian Ocean caused a giant wave, called a tsunami, to rise up out of the sea. This huge wall of water spread out in all directions, flooding the land and sweeping away buildings, humans, and animals. The hippo family drowned in the giant wave. Only the baby survived.

The baby hippo was washed up onto a shelf of land near the shore. He was exhausted, confused, and terrified. The villagers who had survived the tsunami saw the little hippo on the sand bar and set out to rescue him. They captured the hippo and loaded him onto a truck.

The hippo had never seen humans before. The truck was noisy, and the ride was bumpy. The hippo baby was scared, and he felt all alone. The men named the hippo "Owen," after the man who had gone out to the sand bar to save him. They took Owen to a nature reserve near Mombasa. When they got the hippo off the truck, he ran and hid behind a rock where he began to cry. Big hippo tears ran down his cheeks. Owen had been washed away from his home, and all of his friends and family were gone. The baby hippo was alone in a strange place without any friends.

Suddenly, the rock moved and began to talk.

"Don't cry, little hippo," the rock said. "I'll be your friend."

The rock was actually a giant tortoise named Mzee who was more than 130 years old. He became Owen's very first friend. A hippo usually stays with its mother for four years, so Owen pretended that Mzee was his mother. When it was time to sleep, Owen lay down next to Mzee, rested his head on the tortoise's shoulder, and cried.





One of the workers at the nature reserve told Mzee the story of how Owen came to live there.

“After a terrible storm,” he said, “all of Owen’s family got washed out to sea. Then a tsunami came and drowned all of Owen’s family. The baby hippo was the only one who survived. Some strangers caught Owen and put him in a truck. They brought Owen here, to this place where he has never been, and where he doesn’t know anybody.

“No wonder he is so sad, and cries so much,” the tortoise said.

Tortoises are very good at looking like a rock. They don’t move very much or very fast. That suited Owen just fine; he didn’t feel like moving, or playing, or having any fun.

Mzee was very old and very wise. He knew that it was important for the young hippo to begin to play again, and to smile, and have fun. They began to walk around the nature reserve together. Mzee found a ball and they began to kick it back and forth. Mzee got some crayons for Owen so he could color and draw, or write about his feelings.

Mzee knew that hippos are supposed to love the water. In fact, the word “hippopotamus” means “water

horse.” However, any time that Owen got near the water, or if it began to rain, the hippo would start to panic. His heart would beat really fast. He felt like he might throw up, and it became hard for him to breathe. His body would start to shake.

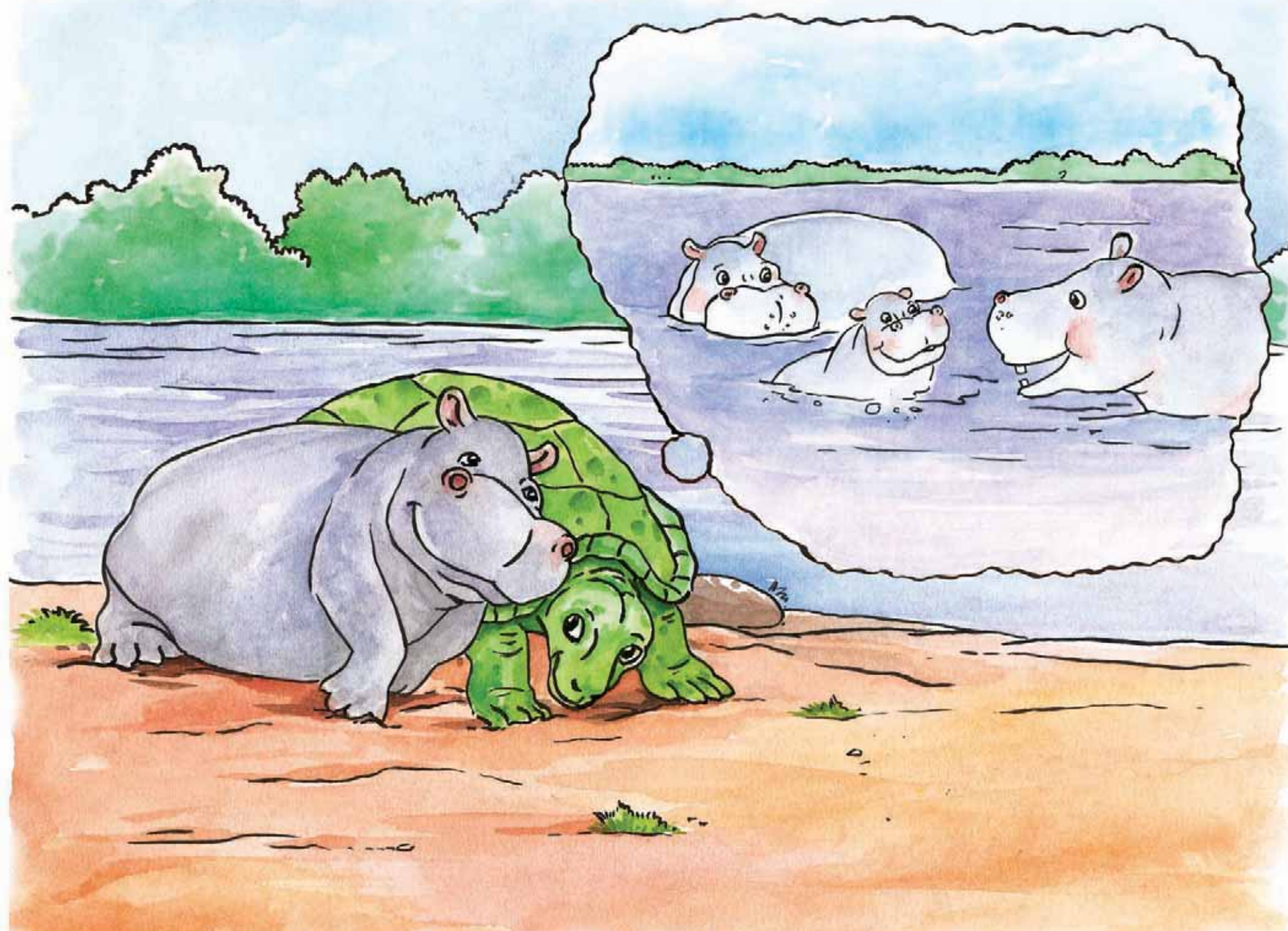
Owen didn’t know why he felt like this. He didn’t remember what had happened to him. His inside brain remembered that it was something bad, and it had to do with water.

Mzee remembered the story of what happened to Owen, and how he came to live at the nature reserve. He knew why, every time they walked close to the water in the pond, Owen stopped, and got panicky and scared.

Mzee stopped and lay down in the grass. Owen lay down next to him, resting his head on Mzee’s front leg. Owen felt safe and secure next to Mzee. He watched the fluffy white clouds floating across the blue African sky. All of Owen’s muscles felt relaxed and comfortable.

Mzee suggested, “Remember the taste of your favorite food ... Mmmmmmm ... Breathe in the smell of the grass ... Perhaps you would like to feel yourself gently rocking in a hammock ... **safe** and **comfortable** ...







Ran Rhinoceros

Ran was a white rhinoceros. He came to the Ashland Zoo from South Africa. The only land mammals at the zoo who were bigger than Ran were Yapko and Elkins. They were elephants. Ran weighed two and a half tons. He had two horns on his head and a heavily armored body. His hide wasn't really white. When the first English settlers came to South Africa, they heard the Dutch settlers call the rhino "weit". That sounds like "white," but it actually means "wide." The word was used to describe the rhino's mouth which is very wide, and works like a lawn mower to gobble up grass.

Ran had a friend, a bird named "Mesmer." Mesmer was a yellow-billed oxpecker, an African bird with shiny black feathers and a long bill. Mesmer spent a lot of time on Ran's back eating fleas, ticks, and flies from the rhino's hide. Ran thought that he was very lucky to have such a good friend, but whenever Mesmer sensed danger, he flew away to safety, leaving Ran all by himself.

The bird began to tease Ran. He would say, "You're so fat and lazy and slow, anybody could beat you in a race."

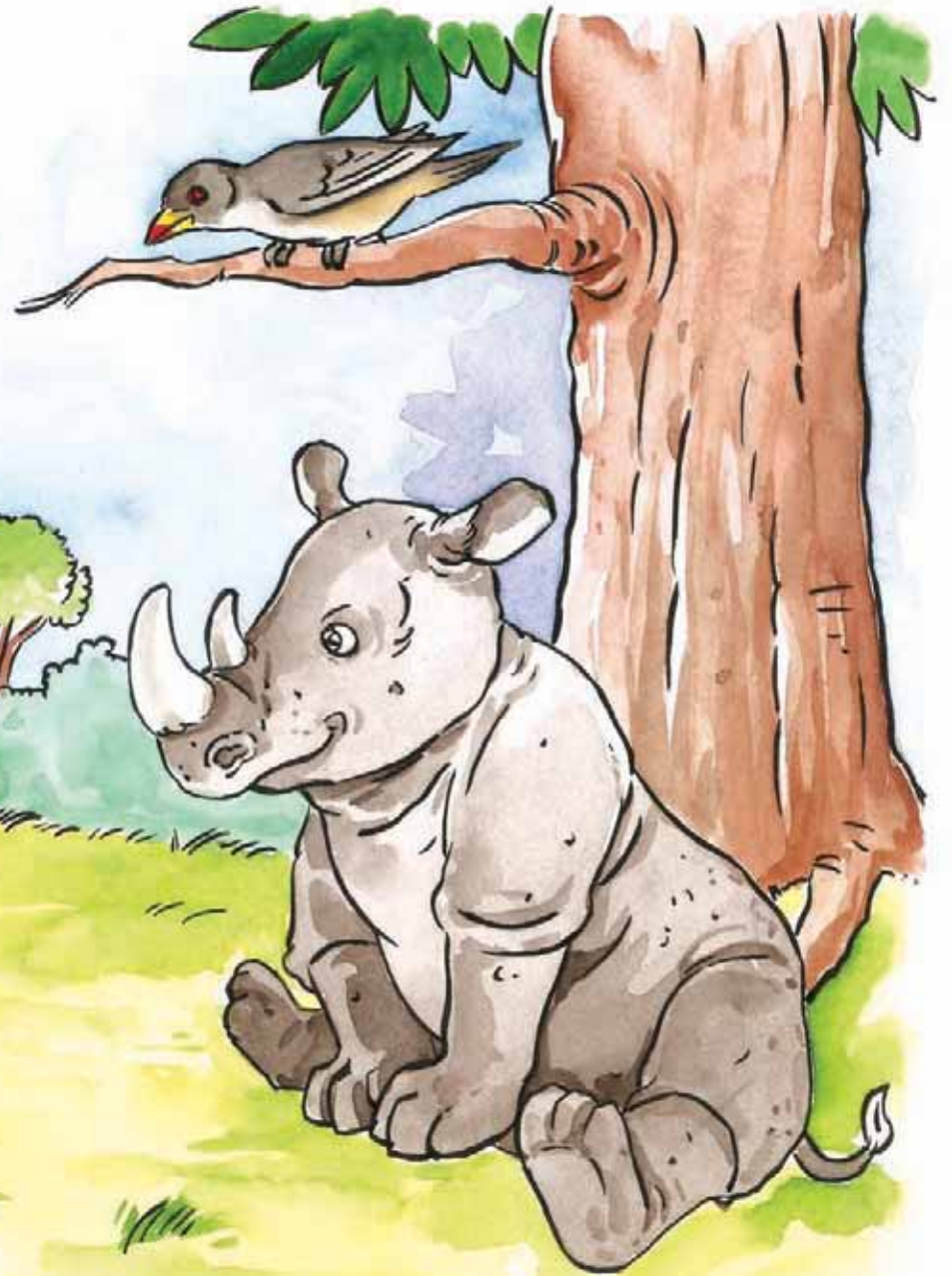
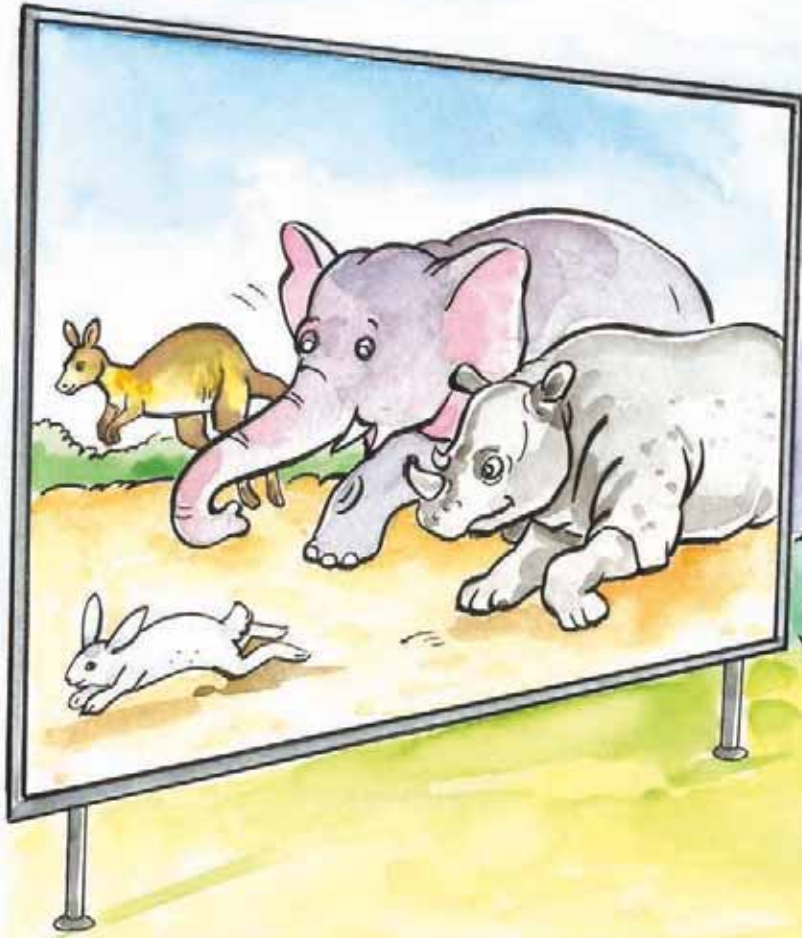
At first, Ran's feelings were hurt. Then he said to himself, "I'm going to show everybody that I can run fast. I'm going to run in the Ashland Zoo Road Race."

When Ran told Mesmer what he had decided, the oxpecker said, "You will need to begin to train so you will be in shape to run fast. I will be your coach."

With Mesmer riding on his back, Ran waddled to the road and began to run. At first the rhino moved slowly. He needed a lot of space, and he made a lot of noise, but once he got going, Ran discovered that he was a good runner.

As the race day approached, however, Ran started to feel nervous, especially since Mesmer kept telling him, "You gotta run fast, Ran; you gotta do well; you gotta win that race!"







One morning, several days before the race, while Ran was training, he felt like he couldn't catch his breath. The rhinoceros felt scared.

Spiegel Eagle was watching Ran train. Spiegel had asthma, and sometimes he had trouble breathing. He said to Ran, "Why don't you see Dr. Dan, the Ashland Zoo veterinarian, and get help for your breathing."

"That's a good idea," said Ran. And that is what he did.

Dr. Dan examined Ran very carefully and did some tests. After the tests came back, the vet explained to Ran, "You don't have asthma. The muscles in your vocal cords tighten up and make you feel like you can't breathe. Your problem is called 'vocal cord dysfunction.' I can help you learn how to relax your breathing passage—your airway—so that you can calm your breathing yourself."

"That sounds great," said Ran.

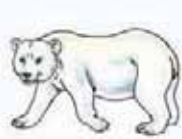
Dr. Dan said, "Like Harry the Hypno-potamus, I know that you like taking mud baths, so imagine stepping into a mud puddle with just your feet. Notice how **soothing** and **good** it feels ... That's right ... Now, go in a bit further as that **comfort** goes higher up your legs, and you go more into **comfort** ... Very good. When you are ready, go further into your mud bath

as the **relaxation** in your muscles goes up your body. Notice how loose ... limp ... and at **ease** all your muscles feel ... Hmmmmmm ... **Comfortable** and **relaxed** as you go further. Then, feel that relaxation as it reaches your throat ... your throat open, **relaxed** and comfortable ... Notice how **easily** and **gently** the air flows in and out. Each breath **relaxes** you even more ... **More** comfortable ... more **relaxed** with every breath."

"Notice how **calm**, **comfortable**, **confident**, and **in control** you feel. Perhaps you would like to go someplace wonderful in your imagination, a happy place."

Ran knew just the place, and he imagined every detail. He could see it, smell it, and hear all the sounds in his happy place. Imagining that he was there made him feel even more comfortable.

"While you are enjoying that special place in your imagination, notice a movie screen showing a movie of the Ashland Zoo Road Race. See yourself as you would like to look, and feel, and be. Notice your breathing—easy and relaxed. Remembering that you cannot control who wins or loses, you can control doing your best, performing with excellence."



Harry the Hypno-potamus, Volume 2 contains 35 fresh new stories that address common physical and emotional problems of childhood.

Harry, a hippopotamus with an excellent imagination that he uses to overcome his own problems, and Dr. Dan, who is the Ashland Zoo's wise veterinarian, join forces to teach the zoo animals all about hypnosis and the power of imagination. Each story is both delightful and helpful, using techniques and hypnotic language that will aid clinicians who work with children to resolve or manage pain, anxiety, fears, or habit disorders.

While children are busy enjoying these amusing tales, the cleverly embedded therapeutic messages slip into the unconscious. Children will relate to the various animals featured as they share how they experience their problems – and some of the ways they learn to deal with them. New possibilities for self-empowerment are revealed with each turn of the page. Along the way, interesting information is provided about the particular species highlighted. The book also offers guidance to clinicians about the use of metaphor and how the stories can become an essential part of their work with children.

"The author has taken a wealth of hypnotherapy, NLP and many other techniques well known to most therapists and magically woven them into [teaching] stories about the animals at the Ashland Zoo."

Pat Doohan FNCP, Fellow of the National Council of Psychotherapists

"Wow! Linda Thomson has done it again by providing the clinician with additional hypnotherapeutic techniques that can be used with children."

**William C. Wester, II, EdD, ABPH, ABPP,
Past President, American Society of Clinical Hypnosis**

"... a tremendous resource for professional and lay person alike. These simple yet effective stories have an unmistakable power within them which entertains yet at the same time boosts positivity and is empowering to the child."

David Slater, Clinical Hypnotherapist and Counsellor

"This is a valuable handbook for every child, sick or healthy, for parents and pediatric experts, nurses, and social workers."

Dr Consuelo Casula, Psychotherapist

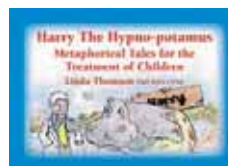
"Parents, teachers, health care workers, and young listeners will learn new ways to deal with fear, anxiety, phobia, PTSD, invasive medical procedures, and other buggy, spooky things."

David M. Wark, PhD, ABPH, President of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis

"Linda Thomson's special gift for meaningful storytelling will make it possible for children with a variety of presenting problems to benefit from her wisdom and compassion. Her hypnotic style encourages developing solutions to problems, and more than that, empowers young people to actively participate in a creative way in the process of growth."

**Michael D. Yapko, PhD, Clinical Psychologist,
author of *Trancework: An Introduction to the Practice of Clinical Hypnosis***

Linda Thomson PhD MSN CPNP a pediatric nurse practitioner for over thirty years, works in both family and pediatric practice. As an Approved Consultant in Clinical Hypnosis by the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, she incorporates hypnosis into her practice to help children help themselves with many different physical and emotional problems. Dr. Thomson has published on a wide variety of topics and is an engaging and popular teacher and speaker at national and international workshops and conferences.



Also available

Harry the Hypno-potamus Volume 1

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"The 'Harry Potter' of the hypnosis world."

Julie Linden, PhD, Past President, ASCH



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