

Kid Konnects

By Ellen Chernoff Simon, M.Ed., M.S., L.P.C., B.C.I.A.C.

In January 2003 ten-year-old Cara was brought to my office as a last resort after practically living in the physician's office due to a mysterious illness.

At the first meeting, Cara presented as a precious, bright-eyed, engaging girl. She was responsive and unusually insightful and sensitive for a child her age. She was well-nourished, although a bit thin, with a rosy complexion and an easy smile.

Her mother's account was as follows: Since the age of 18-24 months, Cara would periodically develop a fever accompanied by lethargy, nausea, and general malaise. In the past couple of years the illness had worsened and Cara was missing school approximately two weeks out of each month. She would typically develop a headache with nausea, fever and the appearance of fever blisters, and lethargy. Cara would have the inclination to lie down all day, either sleeping or lacking the energy to get up to play.

Her mother had exhausted all available diagnostics and treatment through conventional medicine. Cara had just been through an exhaustive series of tests from allergists, endocrinologists, and other specialists. She had blood drawn regularly and spent lots of time in the doctor's office. She had tried allergy medications and anti-depressants and finally received the diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome at the time of our first meeting.

During the first session, I developed rapport with Cara by asking her about her life, her interests, and her history. Cara expressed interest in school and her friends and particularly in racing bikes. She quickly mentioned that she was very close to her mother. At the time of this session, she lived at home with her mother, older sister, two younger half-brothers, and a stepfather who owned a bike shop. When I asked her what she thought was causing her illness, she had no idea. Cara stated that she had been sad since she was four years old and her grandmother died. She elaborated that she was close to her grandmother and had a relationship with her that her own mother never had. She said that every other day she felt sad and cried easily.

She expressed an interest in getting well and was willing to learn how to use imagery to meet her inner advisor (what we called the inner guide) and to learn more about herself.

In the next session Cara imagined her peaceful inner place. She chose a beautiful, grassy meadow near a mountain. There were white, blue, yellow, and purple flowers blooming in the meadow and there was a stream running nearby. She chose to sit on a hollow log near the stream. There were a couple of frogs hopping around playfully. It was 80 degrees outside, a beautiful sunny day. She was wearing Capri pants with blue and yellow stripes and a white tank top.

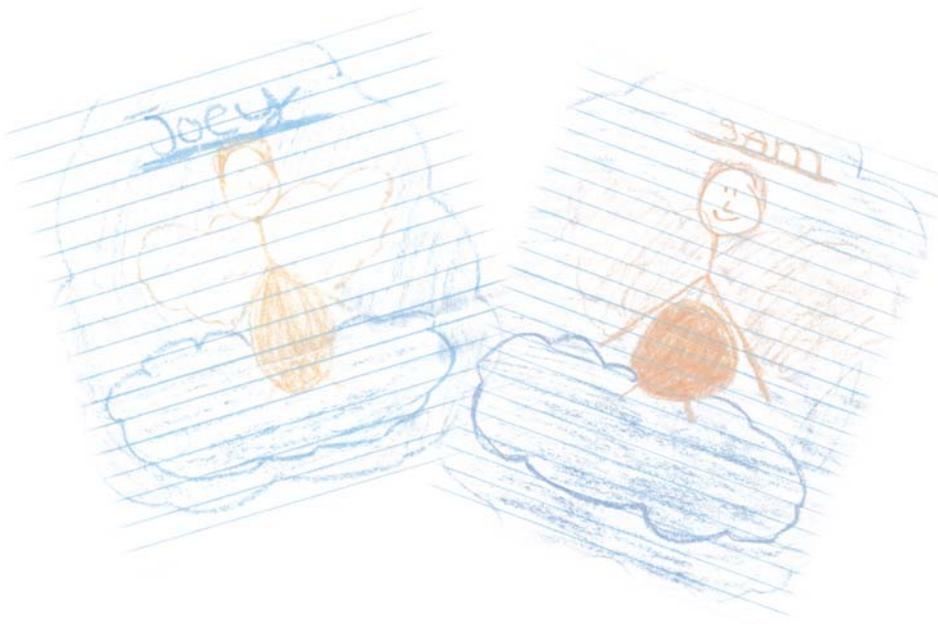


When she invited her inner guide to join her, right away an angel named Sam showed up. He was about 40 years old with "dirty" blonde hair, blue eyes, and tan skin. Sam had shiny white clothes and wings. He immediately held Cara in his arms and began to rock her back and forth on the log. She was aware of his loving and wise presence and she felt safe and happy with him.

She began her dialogue with him and asked him questions that had given her concern. First she asked if her grandmother was happy, Sam said that her grandmother was very happy and that she was watching her from heaven. Cara then asked if people were happy...and Sam replied that some people are happy and some people are not happy.

She then asked (on the out breath) if her mother was having a hard life. On the in breath she received the answer from Sam that yes, she has a hard life, but she is doing fine and she'll make it. Cara asked if her mother was having a hard time taking her to all the doctors. Sam said that yes, it was hard on her, but she would be fine. Cara asked if there was something she could do to make her Mom's life easier, and Sam said that he would help watch over her mother to keep her safe so Cara could relax and just play. At the end of this session, Sam gave Cara an image of a white heart. She agreed to meet with Sam at least once a day and whenever she needed him.

In the next session (week three) Cara reported that she had not been sick at all. This was later confirmed by her mother. She reported that every day before school, she would talk with Sam and he would promise to watch over her mother and keep her safe. She stated that Sam was with her all the time. Every night before going to sleep, she would listen to the imagery CD that I developed, "Sweet Dreams," to support feelings of peace and



comfort. In this session we also focused on learning breathing techniques using biofeedback and neurofeedback. She responded very well to this intervention.

Cara also explored more questions with her inner guide and shared that her relationship with him had developed even more deeply. She expressed her concern about her father and Sam agreed to watch over him as well. He told Cara that he can watch over many people at the same time. Cara was concerned about Sam being alone so she visited another peaceful inner place and met Joey, Sam's friend. Joey appeared out of the sky with long arms and wings. He had hazel eyes, brown hair, and was loving and caring. He thanked Cara for being a good friend to Sam. Joey agreed to help Sam watch over her family and to play with Sam when Cara was busy. Her mother had given Cara a gift that week—an angel sitting on a log with a frog nearby. Cara said that her mother had no idea about her peaceful inner place or that Sam was an angel. She was delighted about the "coincidence."

In week four, Cara continued to be well. She had not experienced any of the symptoms that had been causing her distress for the past eight years. She shared more about her inner guide. She reported that he hangs out in the sky, always watching over her at school, ready to help her. She had begun to ask Sam for answers to her questions during tests, and she stated that he always knows ahead of time what she is going to ask!! Cara said that Sam feels like the best friend in the world because he always loves her no matter what and that some of her friends may treat her differently from day to day but Sam's love for her is constant. Cara expressed with a big grin that she doesn't have to worry about her mother anymore because Sam has taken over that job.

In week five, Cara reported that Sam now communicated with Cara by humming lovely tunes. Whenever she felt sad

or worried, he would begin to hum new tunes that reminded her that everything was just fine. Her inner guide is there whenever she needs advice and so far, Cara has remained well.

Cara continued doing imagery work on her own and we had a follow-up visit a few weeks later. By April, Cara had won a bike race, had not been ill, and had as a constant loving companion her beloved inner guide, Sam, and his friend Joey.

I just heard from Cara's mom. In January it will be two years since Cara met her inner guide. Since her imagery treatment she has remained healthy and has not experienced the fever of unknown origin or missed school because of feeling unwell.

About the Author

Ellen is a Texas state board licensed professional counselor. She is an associate fellow of the Biofeedback Certification Institute of America, has been trained and certified with the Academy for Guided Imagery, the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, and the American Psychotherapy and Medical Hypnosis Association. She is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Pain Management and is certified as a Health Promotions Director with the Cooper Institute of Dallas, Texas.

Ellen is the President and originator of Imadulation® (www.imadulation.com), a company that produces self-help guided imagery audio recordings designed to assist individuals in the achievement of their personal goals and self-actualization. She is currently involved in ongoing research and pilot programs in hospitals and clinical settings using her pre-recorded guided imagery CDs. Ellen can be contacted at Ellen@imadulation.com.