



Chloe's Story: Inner Strength through Imagery

By Charlotte Reznick, Ph.D.

What better way to help a child find Strength than to start within. Chloe's in-depth story gets to the heart of what Imagery (both guided and interactive) can accomplish – aim for resiliency throughout life. And with the help of Imagination tools, she also connects to other aspects of inner Strength such as self-appreciation and self-love.

Six-year-old Chloe described how she ran from the playground and hid in the bushes. She hated herself for having no friends. Other girls had easily formed a close group in soccer practice, while Chloe's forte was swimming. Chloe felt excluded and rejected. She felt weak and didn't know what to do.

Although Chloe's parents tried to reassure her that her classmates would be lucky to be her friend, she didn't believe them. "You have to say that," she said. "You're my parents." At six, she had a history of losses. Her nursery school chum turned away from her in kindergarten. She found another friend around the block, but within six months that girl moved. Each felt like a betrayal that shook Chloe's tender heart. So whenever a new friend appeared, it was natural for her to worry that her new friend, too, might leave. By the time her parents brought her to me, Chloe's fragile sense of self was in tatters. She had no inner Strength to do anything but be sad. This seemed a critical time to help Chloe develop Strength through the positive aspects of Imagery and meditation.

Chloe needed a sanctuary. Fortunately, this little artistic girl had a lush inner world and, when I asked her, easily Imagined a peaceful refuge. She was at a beach, over which rose a magnificent orange sun with a pink heart at its center. The sky was layered in yellows, pinks, and blues; birds chirped in the distance; soft teal waves lapped at the shore. Chloe relaxed there for the rest of our first session.

It was apparent that Chloe couldn't rely on her friends to change; she needed something to shift

in her. The next time we met, I suggested she close her eyes and focus on meditative breathing I call the "balloon breath." Once comfortable with her slow deep breathing, she returned to her "special beach place." I asked if she noticed any animals that could help. A pink and black Crab and a spotted purple Starfish rested on the sand. Did they have anything they wanted to show, tell, or give her that could make her feel better? Chloe Imagined a "gift" of a peach music box with a dancing figure on top. Anytime she had upsetting or angry thoughts about herself, they would disappear into the box.

As Chloe explored her special beach place over several visits, she discovered "if you dip your hands in the water, your troubles go away." This cool beach soon became her favorite daydream. There were always new animal friends to meet. Once a kind Deer delivered an important message from her parents, "We love you," something she had trouble taking in directly.

One week Chloe was feeling particularly blue because her classmates had ignored her at lunch. I asked her to check with her "heart." She drew it, misshapen and outlined in black, with charcoal scribbles covering most of the pink areas. A smaller heart, broken, black and chipped, was inside the larger one, with a sad little kitty crying inside. This heart was shut tight.

Chloe was desperate for love from her peers, but she needed to develop the inner Strength to learn to love herself first. What to do? I had her ask her "heart" for advice. First question: What color is Love? "Pink!" – her favorite color. I suggested she breathe pink Love into her heart,

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filling it up as much as possible, and notice what happened. In a few minutes, Chloe reported that it was now smiling and open, surrounded by gold. One half held the little kitty, brought to vibrant life with popping ears and tail. The other side held two more hearts, one with an open door to let Love in.

With her “heart” in much better shape, I asked Chloe about its message for her. She returned to her special beach place and pictured a palm tree. I proposed this could be a Tree of Trust and suggested she might find a shovel nearby to help her dig up a treasure box that held an answer. With the assistance of a friendly Panther, she started digging and found a black jewel-covered box with a key attached. Inside were great riches and a letter from her Heart. The note said she had a good life with friends and family. There were just a few false friends she didn't need. It's final message – “Love Yourself.”



Over the next few weeks, Chloe had many more adventures. She met a wise Owl who helped transform her disappointments into the confidence she needed to reach out to girls at school. Then she bumped into Sparkle, a young Wizard arriving with three crystal gifts: A heart-shaped crystal helped Chloe love herself even after her friends snubbed her; it also kept her Heart Strong and kind around the girls who rejected her. A star-shaped crystal made her feel like a star, no matter what. Here, Chloe was learning to validate herself without depending on unreliable peers. Finally, as if she were preparing for future challenges, Chloe received a diamond-shaped crystal that “could help with everything else.”

At one point Chloe wondered if she had Imagined that her friends were excluding her. When she returned to school the following Monday, they seemed perfectly happy to have her join

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them. Chloe had tapped into a profound life lesson: What we tell ourselves — good or bad — affects how we see the world, and, in turn, how the world sees us. Or, as this bright young girl wisely put it, “Your heart can be open or closed. If it's closed, it's probably sad and not in a good mood. And if it's open, you're happy to get love.”

Before kids leave my care, I'll often have them create a simple chart of what they've learned to take with them on their journey. She came up with “Chloe's Clues: How to Be Strong and Keep My Heart Open,” which might help many a sad kid.

1. Go to my special beach place when I feel lonely.
2. Wash away sad thoughts.
3. Remember Mommy and Daddy love me.
4. Listen to my animal friends; they know a lot.
5. Think Pink! It makes my Heart sing.
6. Expect people to be nice.
7. Don't worry about mean kids.
8. Say, “I love you Chloe” every day.

Chloe's story shows us Imagery offers one path to help kids connect with their inner Strength, step into their personal power, and take responsibility to bring happiness into their lives.

Charlotte Reznick is a child educational psychologist, author, media consultant, and international workshop leader on the healing power of children's Imagination. She is our recent Imagery International Person of the Year. Find out more at www.ImageryForKids.com.