

## Party Hats on Monsters



*Party Hats on Monsters* is a technique that assists children with their fears in an enjoyable and non-threatening way. It can also be used to assist children who experience distressing nightmares. A lot of children often don't feel comfortable expressing their feelings verbally so this strategy uses drawing to help children to still be able manage their feelings and work through things that might be troubling them.

- Step 1. Ask your child to draw a picture of something that makes them feel happy and safe.
- Step 2. Talk with your child about the picture they drew in a relaxed manner.
- Step 3. Encourage your child to draw a picture of the nightmare/feared object that has been troubling them.
- Step 4. Now encourage your child to change the picture in funny ways to make it seem less scary. For example, they can draw it wearing a party hat, they could draw a super hero or magic fairy to change the scary characters from mean to nice. The more changes, and the sillier the picture is, the better.
- Step 5. While the child is changing their picture you can tell them that changing the picture makes the nightmare or feared object less scary. Let them know that they can also change the picture they have in their head to help them feel less frightened.

Practice this task with your child when they have nightmares until they get the hang of it and are able to change the pictures in their head.

**Source:** Hall, T.M., Kaduson, H.G., & Schaefer, C.E. (2001), Fifteen Effective Play Therapy Techniques. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 33(6), 515-522

