



# Week 3 Toolkit · Family Version

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## Stories & Metaphors – Reconstructing Experience Through Creation

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### 1. Toolkit Basic Information

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Item	Details
Age Range	4-12 years (see age-specific guidance below)
Duration per Session	15-20 minutes
Recommended Frequency	2-3 times per week, or when your child has emotions that are hard to put into words
Best Time	After emotions have settled, weekend afternoons, bedtime story time
Materials Needed	White paper (folded into 4 sections), colored markers/oil pastels, optional: stickers or small stamps

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### 2. Core Principles (Must Read for Parents)

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The core of this activity is: **Let your child be the author of the story. You be the listener.**

Remember three things:

1. **No judging** – Don't say "that doesn't make sense" or "the ending should be different"

2. **No interrogating** – Don't ask "is this hero you?" or "did this happen at school?"
3. **Just listen** – When your child speaks, just nod and say "mm-hmm" or "and then?"

#### **Why?**

Because when a child hides their difficulties inside "someone else's story," they feel safe. The moment you ask "is this about you," that safe space shatters. Trust the power of the story itself – your child is already healing.

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## **3. Age-Specific Guidance**

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### **Ages 4-5 (Kindergarten)**

**Characteristics:** Simple, jumpy stories – often just "monster came – beat it"

**How to guide:**

Parent tells a very short story first as a model (e.g., "The little ant looks for a cookie")

Only require 1-2 panels, not all four

When the child tells the story, help connect with simple words: "And then? What happened next?"

**Expected outcome:** Willing to draw one character and say one or two sentences

### **Ages 6-8 (Early Elementary)**

**Characteristics:** Can understand story structure, but may get stuck on the "problem" part (because the real problem isn't solved yet)

**How to guide:**

Emphasize "this is a story – you can use magic, anything is possible"

If the child gets stuck on the problem, ask: "Who can help? Or what idea does the character come up with?"

Accept any fantastical solution ("Superman flies in" is fine)

**Expected outcome:** Can complete a four-panel story and tell it

### **Ages 9-12 (Upper Elementary)**

**Characteristics:** May have more complex emotions, but may find this "childish"

**How to guide:**

Reframe: "Let's write a short script" or "draw a four-panel comic"

Allow using words instead of pictures (writing alone is fine)

Respect privacy: "If you don't want to tell me the story, you can write it down and fold it up"

**Expected outcome:** Willing to complete a story independently

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## **4. Detailed Step-by-Step Instructions**

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### **Step 1: Prepare the Atmosphere (2 minutes)**

**Material preparation:**

Fold an A4 sheet of paper into four sections (like a four-panel comic)

Optional: mark small numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 in the corners

Place markers nearby

**Opening scripts (choose one):**

"Let's be authors! Draw a hero story of your very own."

"Look – this is a four-panel comic. The first panel is the beginning, the last panel is the ending. What happens in between? You decide."

"I heard a story about a little rabbit recently. Do you want to make up a story too?"

**If the child says "I don't know how":**

Parent tells a very short story as a model (e.g., "A little bird couldn't find its mom. Another bird helped. Finally, it found its mom.")

Then say: "You can make up a different story – anything you want."

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## Step 2: Guide the Story Structure (3-5 minutes)

Use questions to help build the framework. Don't say "you should" – ask "what do you want..."

**Panel 1: Beginning**

"Who is the main character? A little hero? An animal? A robot? Where does it live?"

**Panel 2: Problem**

"One day, it ran into a problem. What was the problem? Was it lost? Bullied? Or did something scare it?"

**Panel 3: Help**

"Who helped? Or did it come up with an idea on its own? Was there magic? A friend?"

**Panel 4: Ending**

"In the end, was the problem solved? What did the character become? Braver? Did it go back home?"

**Important:**

When the child says "I don't know," don't say "think harder"

Say: "Let's skip that panel and draw the next one" or "Then draw a question mark"

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## Step 3: Free Creation (8-10 minutes)

While the child draws, the parent's role:

✔ Do this	✘ Don't do this
Sit quietly nearby	Say "you should make this look more like..."
When the child pauses, ask "want to add more?"	Draw for the child
Encourage with eye contact or a nod	Look at your phone or leave
Listen carefully when the child speaks	Interrupt, correct, or ask "why"

**If the child draws very quickly:**

Say: "Do you want to give this story a title?"

Or: "Which character do you like the most?"

**If the child draws very slowly and carefully:**

Don't rush. Wait patiently. The child is processing deeply.

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## Step 4: Telling and Listening (3-5 minutes)

After drawing, invite the child to tell the story:

"You're done! Can you tell me the story? Start from the first panel."

**The Golden Rules of Listening:**

Don't interrupt – let the child finish in one go

Don't translate – don't say "does this monster represent your anger?" – don't interpret for the child

Don't ask "is this real" – a story is a story

Respond with only three phrases: "Mm-hmm", "And then?", "I see"

**After the story, say only one sentence:**

"Thank you for telling me your story. What part do you like the most?"

**Don't ask:**

"Is the hero you?" (The child will shut down immediately)

"Who is the bad guy?" (Unless the child brings it up)

"Will you be like that when you face problems?" (This is lecturing)

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## Step 5: Closing (1-2 minutes)

Ask the child:

"How do you want to keep this story? You can stick it on the wall, put it in a notebook, or fold it up and put it away."

**If the child wants to tell the story again:**

- Listen patiently again. Repetition is how children integrate experiences.

**If the child says "this story isn't finished":**

- "That's great! Next time we can draw panel 5, panel 6."
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## 5. Common Questions and Responses

What the child does	What parents can do
"I can't draw"	"Let's collaborate – you tell me, I'll draw, but the story is yours." Or "Then draw a circle to represent it."

What the child does	What parents can do
Story is full of violence/fighting	Don't criticize. The child is releasing aggression. Say: "This hero is so powerful – they beat so many bad guys." Later you can ask: "Besides fighting, were there other ways?"
The main character keeps crying, problem not solved	Don't force a "happy ending." Say: "This story is a little sad. What does it need? Does anyone go to help?" If the child doesn't answer, accept the ending.
Child cries while telling the story	Stop. Give a hug (if the child accepts). Say: "This story made you a little sad – that's okay. Let's stop here." Don't ask why.
Refuses to tell the story, only draws	"That's okay – let's just look at the drawing. Let me guess the story – do you think I'm right?" Turn "telling" into "guessing."
Tells the same story over and over	This is normal. The child is reorganizing each time. Listen patiently. Respond the same way each time: "Thank you."

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## 6. Extension Activities (Optional)

### Activity 1: Puppet Show

Draw the characters from the story on cardboard and cut them out  
 Attach to chopsticks or straws to make puppets  
 Perform the story (child as director, parent as actor)

### Activity 2: Sequel Creation

Next week, ask: "What new story happened to that little hero?"  
 Draw panel 5, panel 6

### Activity 3: Story Exchange

Parent also draws a four-panel story (about a difficulty from their own childhood)  
 Tell it to the child, then say: "You see – adults also had difficulties when they were little."  
 Don't request a response – just share

### Activity 4: Emotion and Story Connection (Use cautiously)

Only for parent-child relationships with good established safety  
 You can ask: "Does any of the feelings in this story feel familiar to you?"  
 If the child says "no," stop immediately and don't ask again

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## 7. Weekly Checklist

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Date	Done (✓)	How many panels did child draw?	Was child willing to tell the story?	Notes
Monday			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Wednesday			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Friday			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Weekend			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

**Success Criteria (keep expectations low):**

- ✓ The child was willing to pick up a marker and draw something
- ✓ The child completed one panel (not required to complete all four)
- ✓ The child said one sentence (even "I'm done")
- ✓ The child did not tear the paper 或 throw a tantrum

**What NOT to expect:**

- ✗ A perfectly logical story
- ✗ A "positive" ending
- ✗ The child clearly stating "this story is about me"

## 8. A Final Word for Parents

**You are not a language arts teacher. You don't need to teach your child "how to write a good story." You only need to do one thing: be a safe listener.**

When your child discovers that no matter what story they tell – happy, sad, or messy – you are listening carefully... they will know: **My voice is heard.**

This week, start with one story.

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