**Mother Rabbit and the Bush Fire**

*A Story to Help Sooth Anxious Behaviour*

**Susan Perrow © 2019**

**Taken from my first collection of therapeutic stories, entitled ‘Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour’, Hawthorn Press, UK, 2008.**

There was once a mother rabbit who lived in a hole in the ground in the middle of a green grassy field. This mother had many babies and every day the baby rabbits would enjoy playing, running and jumping in and out the long grass around the edge of their home.

One day Mother Rabbit had to go away on a short journey. She left her babies sleeping, safe and snug in their rabbit hole, and set out across the field and along the dusty track. While she was away, a bushfire started up in a nearby gully, was given an extra push by the hot summer wind, and swept across the green grassy fields.

Later that day when Mother Rabbit was travelling back home, she saw to her horror that a fire had traveled before her. The green grassy field was now blackened stubble, and the ground was too hot for Mother Rabbit to walk on. ‘Were her babies still safely asleep in their home’, she wondered?

Mother Rabbit had to wait till the cool of the evening before the ground was ready to step across. In the light of the twinkling stars, she made her way carefully to the edge of her rabbit hole, and peered down. What a relief to find that her babies were still sound asleep, safe and snug in their home. Mother Rabbit was so happy. She joined her babies down in the rabbit hole and they all slept till the next morning.

Every day the little rabbits watched their green grassy playground slowly grow back. It started first with little green shoots peeping out of the blackened ground. Taller and taller the little shoots grew, until the field was full of tall green grass once again. And once again, as before, the baby rabbits would enjoy playing, running and jumping in and out the long grass around the edge of their home.

**Back story:**

*This story was written many years ago for a four-year-old boy. One day at pre-school, a normally very settled little boy, arrived like a whirlwind. Matthew proceeded to knock things over and tip things upside-down, and playtime was extremely challenging for all concerned.*

*His mother, while putting her son’s bag into his locker, explained that the previous evening a fire in the home had burnt half their house down. Matthew and his family had escaped to the garden and watched all the bedrooms burn to the ground. His mother had tried to explain to her son that the house was covered by insurance and they would be able to re-build soon, but of course Matthew had been deeply affected by the whole experience. That morning at school Matthews behaviour was like the flames of a fire!*

*Finally it was lunchtime followed by our daily rest, and Matthew fell fast asleep, totally exhausted. While the children were resting an idea for a story came to me, a story that I thought might help Matthew understand, in a more imaginative way, the traumatic event of the previous evening.*

*Rabbits were Matthew’s favourite animals so I chose a rabbit family for the main characters in the story. My message, through the use of metaphor, was twofold - the rabbit children were safe, and slowly their environment was returned to normal. This story proved to be an example of the powerful effect of using an imaginative versus a rational explanation for a young child.*

*I waited until Matthew had woken up, and then gathered the whole group of children for a story time on the veranda, just before the arrival of the parents. Even though there was no time to ‘polish’ the story, it was loved by the whole group and for the next two weeks they asked to hear it again - Matthew was especially keen to hear it over and over again.*

*The story had a remarkable effect on Matthew. When his mother arrived to pick him up on this first day of the story, he ran to meet her at the gate and patted her on the arm and said, ‘Don’t worry Mummy, everything’s going to be alright!’ She looked at me and said, ‘What have you done, Susan?’ I suggested that she call me later that night when her children were asleep and I would tell her a story. Which I did!*