

**An alternative way of writing about our client:
Kevin's story battling with monsters.**

Fabienne Kuenzli, Ph. D

Kevin, an adorable 4 ½ year old Afro-Mexican boy, came in for counseling with his foster mother and a large number of foster brothers and sisters. He had killed several animals (rats, a mouse, and a baby cat) and had hurt badly the family dog on several occasions. He hit, cursed, kicked, and threw extreme temper tantrums every time he heard the word "no". He really behaved like a monster. Kevin could not feel for others. He had no sense of guilt and empathy and basically took people and treated them as if they were objects. Kevin also had night terrors and night enuresis. His mother was a crack addict and prostitute and had abandoned 5 others children before Kevin. *I was a little scared of the monster in Kevin* but I knew his bad behavior needed to be stopped.

Our first session was very short. Kevin came into my office and began his tyrannical behavior. He soon learned I would not put up with it. He kicked and bruised my leg. I gave one warning and when he behaved badly again, I brought him back to the waiting room where he threw a tantrum and bit his foster mother. I expressed my surprise to the foster mother that she was letting Kevin bite and call her "bitch". I told her she did not deserve to be called a bitch or to be hit by a 4 ½ year old even if the child had been brutally abused. I explained that letting a child continue to act out the violence he endured damages the child further. Something in what I said clicked. I got the attention of the foster mother and she made a commitment to work with me setting limits on Kevin's behavior. My sessions with Kevin became longer and longer and soon raising my finger was just enough. He required no more warning and we could usually have a full session.

I used Violet Oaklander's method with Kevin in order to allow gently to create and find a sense of himself, I would make with him a list of what he loved or hated in order to let him learn to define without the harsh judgement who he was. I invited him frequently in learning to present part of himself that he did not know, that he refused he could not tame, we did that with marionettes, with little figurines, with drawing. I helped the foster mother for example to assist Kevin in expressing this powerful anger that he so powerfully had in a manner that was not dangerous to others. We build together a laboratory to express anger. In this place there were things to throw, to destroy, to rip off, a tunnel to scream in, whatever you can think about to release anger. At the beginning, I helped them this activity that as a game together, in a preventive manner. Soon, the intensity of the angry outburst changed. The foster mother felt also a different response toward Kevin's anger and said she was less "afraid" of it.

Then came a session to remember where Kevin created a harmonious family dollhouse scene. Then the boy misbehaved and Kevin suddenly changed his voice, altered his expression and said: "I will kill you all and destroy you. I will kill mommy and daddy and you will go and live in another family, a mean family, because you are mean". During the same game, though I observed noticeable signs of change, these were encouraging. Instead of the regular ending in total destruction game, there were sign of ability to repair. Kevin suddenly brought into the dollhouse, a nice mother who came to take care of the kids. Kevin also said these kids "weren't that bad". Toward the end of this session, Kevin was really concerned about putting all the family to bed in the dollhouse before he lives for the session. He organized to put some tissues operating as blankets, he said "to keep them warm for the week, until I come back to see you Dr. Fabienne". I held my tears. I knew this would be a turning point as I never saw such a powerful change during the session. I looked up to avoid showing my emotions. He was finding a way to be caring. Sure enough, the foster mother called to

say how calm the night had been, the cessation of the night terrors and a much improved behavior during the day and at school.

During another session Kevin made sand tray scene, using the most respectful Oaklander method , Kevin told me a story, his story, our story: "So, Dr. Fabienne, this is the story of a family of Dinosaurs (He loves Dinosaurs, I re-learned all their names, Brachiausaurus, Tyrannosaurus, Triceratops, archaeopteryx... Thank you Kevin). They fought all the time and were really mean and nasty... until the guard of the desert comes. It is a real nice guard. He teaches them to be kind and to love one another and you know what Dr. Fabienne? They are not scared anymore, especially the baby because he knows now they have a good family (Kevin's foster mother became her adoptive mother few months later). They like the desert and they like the guard". I said, "Wow! That is a great story Kevin, so they live in the desert. Kevin replied, looking at me like I was an idiot: "Yes". I asked, "And the guard, where does he come from? Where did the Dinosaurs family found him?" "Oh!" Kevin said: "the guard is from very far away, because *she* has an accent." "I see," I said, "so this is now a happy family and maybe in a while they won't need the guard anymore. Maybe they can learn to protect themselves. What do you say Kevin?" Kevin looks irritated, and replied, "No! They need the guard a little longer." I said, "Oh OK ...I think that the guard will stay a little longer, for as long as the dinosaurs' family needs *her*."

And then this day, *a very special day*, the foster mother told me that Kevin was *transformed*. He showed regard and care for others and sleeps well at night, all through the night. She repeated, as to convince herself that it really happened. The physician said he could stop his sleep medication. I saw Kevin interacting appropriately and sharing with his foster brothers and foster sisters in the waiting room. I even heard him telling an older kid: Look you need to be nice with him. Kevin stopped killing animals. I have a fake rat in my office (yak!) and he now shows love and care even for this disgusting plastic rat! My work with Kevin lasted 24 sessions. At the end Kevin stated: "I am Ok now, I think other kids needs more the doctor of the heart than me, I can let you go. I am a little sad to say good-bye".

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