

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

by Amy Nielsen

www.bigabilities.com

Once upon a time, there was a family of three bears, Poppa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear. One morning Mama Bear made porridge for breakfast. It was too hot to eat, so while it cooled, the bear family decided to take a walk in the woods.

While they were gone, a little girl named Goldilocks, who had wandered away from her parents, was walking in the woods and spotted the bear family's house. She didn't understand that it's not okay to walk into someone's home without knocking. So, she walked up to the door, opened it, and went inside, leaving the door open behind her.

Goldilocks saw the three bowls of porridge on the table. She often didn't remember to eat. But, seeing the food reminded her that her tummy felt hungry. First, she tried the largest bowl. It was too hot, so she spat it out. Next, she tried the middle-sized bowl. It was too cold, so she spat it out. Things that are too hot or too cold make Goldilocks uncomfortable. Finally, she tried the smallest bowl. It was just right, so she ate it all!

Next, Goldilocks saw three chairs. Seeing the chairs reminded her that her feet were sore from walking in the woods, and she wanted to sit down. She had left her house without shoes on, and walking on rocks and sticks had hurt her feet. First, she sat in the biggest chair, but it was too hard. Next, she sat in the middle-size chair, but it was too soft. Things that are too hard or too soft make Goldilocks uncomfortable. Finally, she sat in the smallest chair, and it felt just right. She was so content that she began to rock back in forth in the chair. At home, she has a rocking chair for this, but this chair wasn't a rocking chair, and eventually, she and the chair toppled over. The chair broke into several pieces. Since the chair was broken, she decided to explore more of the house.

Goldilocks walked into the bear family's bedroom and saw three beds. All the new experiences of the day were starting to overwhelm her. She wanted to climb into one of the beds and hide under a heavy blanket. First, she climbed into the largest bed, but its blanket was too itchy. Next, she climbed into a medium-sized bed, but its blanket smelled like flowers. Things that are itchy and have strong smells make Goldilocks uncomfortable. Finally, she climbed into the smallest bed and under a soft, heavy quilt. This made Goldilocks feel relaxed. So relaxed that she began to repeat the words from her favorite book, eventually falling asleep.

Meanwhile, as the bear family was returning from their walk, they heard voices in the woods, calling, "Goldilocks, Goldilocks."

“That’s strange,” said Papa Bear.

Mama Bear pointed to the door, “Look, the door is open.”

Baby Bear said, “Maybe the voices from the woods are people looking for someone named Goldilocks, and maybe she’s inside our house?”

The bear family cautiously walked inside and noticed things were not as they had left them.

Papa Bear said, “Someone has been eating my porridge.”

Mama Bear said, “Someone has also been eating my porridge.”

Baby Bear said, “Someone ate all of my porridge. They must have been very hungry.”

The bear family walked into the living room. Papa Bear said, “Someone has been sitting in my chair.”

Mama Bear said, “Someone has also been sitting in my chair.”

Baby Bear said, “Someone sat in my chair, and it broke. I hope they didn’t get hurt.”

The bear family then walked into their bedroom.

Papa Bear, seeing his blanket ruffled, said, “Someone has been sleeping in my bed.”

Mama Bear, also seeing her blanket ruffled, said, “Someone has also been sleeping in my bed.”

Baby Bear whispered, “Someone is sleeping in my bed. It is a little girl with golden hair. I bet her name is Goldilocks.”

Papa Bear whispered, “I will go find the people in the woods looking for her and bring them here.”

Mama Bear whispered to Baby Bear, “Let’s go wait in the living room, so we don’t wake her up and frighten her.”

In a short while, Papa Bear returned with Goldilocks’ parents. Her mother had been crying. Her father had a look of relief on his face. “Thank you so much,” said her mother, and she flung her arms around Mama Bear’s neck and gave her a big hug, and Goldilocks’ father shook Papa Bear’s hand.

Baby Bear said, “I am glad you found her. But why was she alone in the woods?”

Mama Bear said, “Baby Bear, that’s an impolite question.”

Goldilocks’ mother said, “No, it’s okay.” She bent down and looked Baby Bear in the eyes.

“Goldilocks has Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD. ASD means she sees the world a little differently. Things must be a certain way, or she becomes uncomfortable. She doesn’t

understand how dangerous things like wandering away from her parents can be. Or that some things you shouldn't do, like walking into someone's home without knocking. We must be careful to keep her safe and today taught us that even more."

"Look!" Baby Bear said, pointing toward the bedroom door. Goldilocks was peeking around the corner, and when she saw her parents, she said, "Mommy, Daddy!" and came out and gave them each a big hug.

Her mother started crying again, and Goldilocks looked at her and said, "Mommy, you happy."

"I am now, Goldilocks," said her mother, and she hugged her again.

Then Goldilocks noticed Baby Bear. She excitedly started flapping her arms and said, "bear, bear!"

"That's right!" said Baby Bear. "I am a bear."

Goldilocks repeated back, "I am a bear."

Baby Bear responded, "No, I am a bear. You are a girl."

Goldilocks began to get agitated, and she screamed, "No, I am a bear! B, E, A, R spells bear!"

Her mother bent down, looked Goldilocks in the eyes, and calmly asked, "How do you spell bear?"

Goldilocks responded, "B, E, A, R spells bear."

"Wow!" said Baby Bear, "Goldilocks is very smart."

"Thank you," said her father, "She loves the alphabet and has started spelling words and reading all on her own!"

Goldilocks then told Baby Bear, "Goldilocks go home."

Her mother said, "That's right, Goldilocks. We are going home."

"H, O, M, E spells home," said Goldilocks.

Everyone smiled and said, "Good job, Goldilocks!"

The families said goodbye, and Goldilocks' parents grabbed her hands. As they walked toward the door, Baby Bear said, "Wait, can you bring Goldilocks over some time so we can play?"

Goldilocks' parents looked at each and smiled, and her father said, "Of course. Thank you so much!"

After Goldilocks and her parents left, Baby Bear said, "I am happy I met Goldilocks. I want to learn more about ASD so I can help other children like her be safe if they wander away from their parents. If I had ASD, I would hope other people would do the same for me."

Mama Bear and Papa Bear hugged Baby Bear and told him they were proud of him!

Mama Bear said, "I'll go make us some more porridge."

Poppa Bear said, "I'll get the tools to fix the broken chair."

Baby Bear said, "Now that Goldilocks safely back with her family, I can say, 'And they all lived happily ever after.'"

The End