**The Princess and the Itch**

**This book belongs to**

 Test

Once upon a time there was a very nice and clever girl called Test. Test liked to play and dress up, and she very much wanted to be a princess. In fact, you could say that she was *itching* to be a princess… it made her itch all the time. In fact, she may even be scratching that itch right now!

This itchiness made her scratch, and this scratching made her more itchy, which made her scratchier, which made her itchier. This just made the scratching and itching more and more and more, so that Test ended up just feeling *itchy,* and not having time to be a princess at all!

One day, a kind witch saw how Test scratching all the time was making her feel more itchy and less like a princess. Test was lucky because this was a very nice and kind witch. She lived in a little house tucked behind a big green hill, and she had been there so long no one hardly ever noticed her any more, and no one even knew her real name. But she was an old and kind and lovely person, and could cast spells to help people she thought would use them wisely.

This nice kind witch decided to help Test out. She decided to cast some good spells that could help Test not to scratch, which would make some of the itch go away, which would give Test more time to be like a princess. The witch hoped that Test would one day hear those spells and start to use them.

The first spell the witch cast, if used, meant that if Test was busy doing other things that she liked (including princess-related activities) the itch would go quiet and slink off – phew! The spell went like this,

“Play with toys, mess about, make that naughty itch get out!

Swim the sea, drink some tea, think of anything you see,

Just have fun, go out and play, every night and every day,

If you do, you’ll quickly see, that naughty little itch will flee!”

This was a good spell but it had a problem – Test liked to play, but she couldn’t play *all* the time… what about when she needed to go to bed!? She couldn’t start jumping about and running around when she needed to go to sleep. That wouldn’t do at all.

But the witch was clever as well as kind, and she realised that this was a problem with her first spell. So, she cast some other spells that Test could use as well.

The second spell was about stroking instead of scratching. This was a good spell, because stroking can help an itch go away, but it does not make it come back worse again afterwards like scratching can. The spell went like this:

“Scratch feels good, scratch feels nice,

But makes the itch come more than twice,

So stroke instead when you go to bed,

Smooth and calm to soothe your head,

And when you wake then the itch is less,

To make you feel more like a princess.”

The witch was very pleased with this spell, as she knew stroking could get rid of that prickly tickly feeling you get with a nasty itch. She also knew that if Test wore an elastic band on her wrist and flicked it instead of scratching when she got the urge.

But the clever witch also knew that itches could be hot and red, so she cast a third spell to deal with that too. It went like this:

“Ice-cold water from the crystal lake,

Cools your skin of itchy ache,

Hot red itch that makes you mad,

Clear crisp water makes it not so bad.”

The kind witch was very happy with this spell, if she did say so herself. But she really *really* wanted to help Test scratch less so she could spend more time feeling like a princess instead. So the witch summoned all her magical forces, to come up with a strange and unusual fourth spell. It was quick and a bit odd (like the witch herself) and went like this:

“Oats in bath,

Strange but true,

Pulls that itch away like glue!”

All these four spells had one thing in common: they were designed to help Test scratch less, so that she had more time to think and be like a princess. So the witch wanted to give Test one fifth and final spell that would make Test feel like she was the boss and not her itch.

The fifth spell was so that Test could feel like she was in control of when she wanted to have a scratch (like any good princess), and she wasn’t made to do it by that pesky pestering itch. It was a spell that could help Test feel like she was in control, not just for itches but for lots and lots of things, like when she felt angry or scared about something that was going to happen. The fifth spell was designed to be cast slowly and calmly, and went like this:

1, 2, 3,

Take a slow breath in with me,

4, 5, 6,

Hold inside like a dolly,

7, 8, 9,

Breathe out slowly and you’re fine!

 This spell took about 9 seconds to cast, and Test could repeat it to herself as many times as she liked – with the breathing – to stop herself from itching, or to control feelings of anger, or to help herself keep calm if something scary was going to happen.

So the witch cast these five spells, put them in her hands and blew them at a thousand miles an hour up into the air, and sent them from her little house tucked behind the big green hill, on the wind and on the clouds, to the windows of the house where Test lived.

Test heard these spells drifting in on the breeze and she started to use them. Little by little, day by day, slowly but surely, using her spells, she managed to start scratching less. By scratching less she then started itching less. And by itching less she started scratching less, which made her itch less… and the never-ending cycle of itching and scratching began to unwind itself. By doing this Test didn’t have to itch to be a princess anymore, and because she wasn’t itching, she had more time to be free to feel like one…

The End

Produced by Dr Rohan Naidoo in collaboration with the Children’s Dermatology Department, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trusts and the Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology, University of Nottingham

**Copyright© Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust and University of Nottingham, 2014.**

Permission is granted to reproduce for personal or educational use only. Copying, hiring, lending or redistribution for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited and subject to the express consent of the copyright owner. In all circumstances, this notice must remain intact.

Did you find this resource useful? Please let us know: cebd@nottingham.ac.uk