

Book Review

Book Title

Not Again Little Owl, ISBN 978-1-9996259-0-0

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Dr Vivien Norris, the author, is Clinical Director of the Family Place and her experience as a clinical psychologist, Theraplay and DDP practitioner is evident throughout the book.

The book is the story of Little Owl whose Mummy isn't able to look after him properly. It is decided by Rabbit that he should live with his Granny but she can't keep up with his bounciness. So Little Owl is moved again by Rabbit, first to Fox and then on to Hedgehog and then eventually to Badger. Badger is able to help him and can accept him with all his speed and bounciness, and help him with his 'muddles'. Little Owl begins to relax with Badger, they fit together and he starts to feel safe. When Rabbit arrives once more to move him again Little Owl is so upset and frightened. He doesn't know Squirrel and doesn't want to move again. Badger and Rabbit accept his feelings and stay right alongside him during the move. Badger is able to tell Squirrel about all that Little Owl has been through and how hard it has been, and the special ways he needs to be looked after to make him feel safe.

The joy and positivity for me about this book is how the child and adults reading it can experience all the different emotions evoked in the story and experience how hard it is for Little Owl to make sense of what is happening.

This book is part of a series written by Norris named *By your Side* which is a model designed to aid transitions from one family to another. Two other books have been written in the series, one as a guide for foster carers and adopters and one for social work practitioners. Norris is very clear why she has developed

this model. She explains that the resources she found when moving a four year old child who had already moved six times were not helpful as they had an adult agenda and focussed only on the positives. In *Not Again Little Owl* Norris has created a story which allows the child's distress to be acknowledged and creates an opportunity for the adults to stay with the sadness and enable the child to start to feel safe enough to show their emotions. Norris makes it clear that all those involved in moving children between families will need support.

I first came across the work of Norris five years ago when I discovered the poster and practice notes she had written along with Sally Twigger on *Using Theraplay to support transitions from fostering to adoption*. The outlook used was a breath of fresh air for me, as working in the world of adoption support there seemed to be a lack of coherence in the way children moved between families. Sometimes it seems the child's needs at the time of transition are lost and processes and procedures take over. How we move children between families and the messages we as adults give to children seems central to childrens' understanding of who they are and what has happened to them. *Not Again Little Owl* for me is a great book to start working with children to heal from the hurt they may have experienced through multiple moves. I would recommend this book to adoptive parents, foster carers and kinship carers, and to all the professionals working with children and families.

About the author

Fiona is an adoptive parent of two young adults. Recently retired she previously worked in development roles for Scottish Attachment in Action and Adoption UK in Scotland. She is one of three Directors of Cairnsmoir Connections a social enterprise based in Scotland, providing books and resources for those living and working with the impact of trauma and adversity.