

The Girl Named Trees Project



Patient Education Aspects of the Book, *The Girl Named Trees*, by Therese Gramercy

Storybooks can be powerful educational tools. Let's see how Trees used her wily ways and subtle methods of behavior modification to help infuse knowledge / lessons about surgery:

- The book itself is beautiful – it doesn't look like serious patient education material.
- The tone of the book is upbeat – it uses the format of a humorous rhymed-poem.
- The components of the book are unique – upscale artwork, preparing adults to read the story, the multiple subjects presented, the activity pages, identifying pages for kids vs. adults.
- We ease the reader into the topic of surgery – using a classic “red herring” strategy – we talk about Alaska and gardens and parties and really cute names for the surgeon.
- The girl in our book is portrayed as brave and self-sufficient even before her hospital incident.
- We are sensitive to what is scary – you see no IV's or medical equipment attached to Therese and even the bed is just a bed. We are never told what her illness was or that it was life threatening, or what Georgi's important “forms” were. We take the concept of ‘surgeon’ from the scary side of the spectrum - serious-sounding “that worries me” to the far side – laughing, silliness, poking fun, “it will be OK”.
- The medical test results in the book show school grades – Therese gets an F in ER and gradually gets better grades, D, C-, B+, and she doesn't need an A to leave the hospital.
- Surgery is presented as a normal thing that could happen to anyone; and doctors, nurses and hospital staff are there to help you through it so you feel better again.
- We give easy definitions for surgeon, surgery and O.R. We let them know that you go to sleep and when you wake up it is all done. And that their main task is really just sleeping and resting.

- We learn that laughter is how you chase your fears away.
- We learn to laugh at ourselves as patients and how we can't remember things because of the medication, and that even a nurse might not be able to remember everything either.
- We learn to find humor in ordinary things, and we laugh and tell jokes before surgery.
- We let them know that checking back in to meet with their surgeon is a normal part of going home and getting better. And that their surgery may be one of those "red letter" dates on a calendar that they may never forget – Therese is very grateful to her surgeon and has a party each year just to say thanks again.
- We see our surgical patient having a regular life before surgery, we walk through her hospital experience using humor, and we see her she her go on to a regular life after her surgery.
- We learn an important life lesson about the benefits of having a positive attitude during a difficult situation: to be thankful/grateful for the help of the others so that they can get better instead of focusing on their medical problem as a horrible ordeal.
- We provide a "bed rest" activity: we have questions and answers at the end of the book so they can dig back through it to answer all sorts of questions (and again, please notice how we "sandwich" in the serious questions):
Where is Alaska? What kind of doctor does the surgery? What color car did Laura drive?
- We provide alternate learning experiences that do not focus on their health situation: they learn a lot of fun details about Alaska, about geography and about muffoletta!

Thank you very much for your interest in our book **The Girl Named Trees**, written by Therese Gramercy, Anchorage, Alaska, with artwork hand-painted on silk by Gina Murrow, Chugiak, Alaska, silkcreek.com, and for your support of **The Girl Named Trees Project** charitable foundation, Tax ID 27-3403056, girlnamedtrees.com

Many kindnesses,

Therese Gramercy, theresegramercy.com



All proceeds from this publication legally belong to The Girl Named Trees Project, a charitable foundation **under IRS section (501)(c)(3), Tax ID 27-3403056**. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.