Little Caterpillar's BIG Surprise

Written by Dr Susan Ozer Illustrated by Esther Batt

Dedicated to all the children in my developmental clinics.



Little Caterpillar's Big Surprise

Improving self-esteem in children with learning and developmental difficulties

By **Dr Susan Ozer (nee Yarney)**

About Dr Susan Ozer

Dr Susan Ozer is a Consultant Neurodevelopmental Paediatrician based in the UK, and an award-winning author who has written several books for children with neurodevelopmental disorders.

One of Dr Ozer's books has been translated into many European languages.

She uses storytelling to make medical concepts easier to understand for the benefit of children and parents/carers.

www.drsusanozer.com

www.school-doctor.com

Acknowledgements

Illustrated by **Esther Batt**

Design and print - **Ian Curtis**,
First Sight Graphics Ltd **www.firstsightgraphics.com**

Approved by Plain English Campaign

© Ozer 2025 an award-winning author who has written several books for children with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Note to Teachers and Parents/Carers
(how to use this book)

Children develop differently, some faster than others, though most achieve basic developmental milestones by the age of 5. From the age of 6, as they begin their formal learning journey, some children struggle to grasp early learning concepts.

Little Caterpillar's big surprise is targeted at children aged 4-7, or older children with developmental or learning difficulties. The story illustrates the difficulties children face when they don't develop or learn as quickly as their peers. Slow progress with learning and development may cause low self-esteem, and children who struggle to understand why they can't be like their peers.

It's important that parents and teachers support and reassure children who find learning difficult, and make sure such children know there's still time to catch up. It's also very important to highlight early a child's strengths, as this can help improve self-esteem, especially if they're struggling to learn.

This story shows how important it is to help children with learning and developmental difficulties, and to understand that everyone is born with their own unique gift or talent. Some children have one talent whilst others have many.

Just like Little Caterpillar in the story, a child, with the right help, can discover something they may be very good at, such as running, building Lego, dancing, singing, or drawing. The story is also an opportunity to teach the importance of butterflies and how they develop.

Foreword

Dr Inyang Takon, Consultant Neurodevelopmental Paediatrician, United Kingdom.

“Little Caterpillar’s Big Surprise.” features an engaging narrative that resonates with children experiencing low self-esteem or feeling different, particularly those who struggle to fit in with peers.

Dr Ozer brings to life a story centred on the emotional journey of children who feel they cannot fit in with their peers, often leading to low self-esteem and perceived low abilities. It highlights the challenges and self-doubt some children face while trying to discover themselves. The book also emphasizes transformation and self-discovery.

The little Caterpillar’s transformation into a butterfly symbolizes that success and finding one’s “tribe” may come later, but it is eventually achieved, even if it takes longer than for others.

It illustrates the development of self-esteem through change and personal growth, showing how the Little Caterpillar attained much without initially realizing it until shown by others (the butterflies).

Dr Ozer also demonstrates how peer support helps children realize their growth and potential, as Little Caterpillar did not realize their transformation until the butterflies highlighted this. It also highlights the power of friendship in providing encouragement and support. Children will learn that true friends uplift those who are different from them.

Little Caterpillar offers a hopeful message for children struggling with self-esteem or feeling behind in their abilities:

- It encourages appreciation of children’s innate talents and uniqueness that will come through.
- It reinforces that transformation and success are achievable, regardless of pace, and that children will eventually achieve what they are meant to achieve.
- Children would enjoy reading this book and connect with its themes, learning to look out for peers who may be feeling sad because they don’t fit in. For children who identify with the difficulties of Little Caterpillar, it is a source of hope.



The Story

Little Caterpillar one day decided he was tired of being a caterpillar.

“Everyone in Garden World has something special except me. I’m just a slow Little Caterpillar with no special gift except to eat and eat,’’ he grumbled to himself. Little Caterpillar decided to travel to the fields beyond Garden World in search of his special gift.

Wriggle, wriggle, wriggle.

