

## ***Avery Sleeps More Readily (ASMR): A whispered Good Night Fairy book***

# **Foreword**

**by Dr. Craig Richard, Ph.D.**

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### **Challenge of Sleep**

I was one of those kids who didn't fall asleep easily. My mother would inform me that it was bedtime and I was not always the willing participant. My brain would just feel too awake to see the logic of lying quietly in a bed until I fell asleep.

I'm sure my mother tried many things until she found the one thing that always worked. She would slowly and lightly run her fingertips up and down the inside of my forearms. It made my brain immediately fuzzy and relaxed, and sleep soon followed.

There were other special moments in my childhood when I remember my brain getting tingly and relaxed. One of them was watching the TV show, "The Joy of Painting" hosted by Bob Ross. His soft voice, gentle demeanor, and the hypnotic tap, tap, tap of his paint brushes on the canvas lulled my brain. Also, sitting still at the barber was easy for me. I found the slight touches to my hair coupled to the crisp snipping sounds of scissors to put me in a relaxed trance.

### **Discovery of ASMR**

As an adult I learned there is a term for this type of relaxation, it is called Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR). Most people who experience ASMR describe it as a deeply relaxing and enjoyable feeling usually accompanied by tingles in the head. When the sensation hits me, my brain and muscles become immediately relaxed, my eyelids feel heavier, and my body almost feels like it is floating in the calmness of that moment.

### **Triggers of ASMR**

There are a wide variety of stimuli, or triggers, which induce ASMR. The most popular ASMR trigger, according to published research, is whispering. Other common triggers include gentle tapping of fingers on various objects, crinkling sounds like magazine or book pages being turned, or the sounds of brushing. Even words with S's, T's, Q's and P's are popular ASMR triggers when gently repeated. For example, "sensations", "tingling", "sleep", "whisper", "tranquil", "esprit", and "response".

In addition to simple sounds and words, moments involving personal attention are some people's strongest triggers for ASMR. Examples include getting your nails done at a spa, having your hair washed at a hair salon, or being asked by an optician, "1 or 2?" as they click and scroll through different test lenses.

### **Popularity of ASMR**

Fans of ASMR have a special place they go on the internet, YouTube. Thousands of content creators on YouTube, often called ASMR artists, create videos just for the purpose of eliciting ASMR in viewers. Most of the content of these videos simulate real world moments associated with ASMR. Some of the most popular videos are role-play videos that simulate a visit to a clinician, hairdresser, spa, or any situation associated with personal attention by someone who cares about your wellness or comfort.

The artists and content of these ASMR videos share similar characteristics. Vocals are usually soft, gentle, caring, and/or whispered. Any touches or movements are light, soothing, and non-threatening. Their gazes elicit comfort and trust. The ASMR artists convey the dispositions and behaviors of someone who truly cares for you and cares about you.

## **Origins of ASMR**

It is likely that the relaxation one feels during ASMR as an adult is very similar to the relaxation one feels while being soothed as a child. ASMR triggers and behaviors that soothe infants have a lot of overlap: soft or whispering voices, light touches to the skin, gentle hair caresses, comforting gazes, personal attention, and distracting but non-threatening hand movements.

The wide world of ASMR triggers seem to be specific stimuli that tell our brains we are not in danger. Our brains associate these stimuli with being in a safe place and with safe people. And when our brains feel safe, we feel relaxed. And when our brains feel relaxed, we are much more likely to fall asleep.

## **Bedtime and ASMR**

As you might expect, many people report ASMR as helpful to falling asleep. I am one of those. I listen to ASMR videos and ASMR podcasts on a nightly basis to help me to fall asleep. The caring voices, soft whispers, and gentle sounds help my brain to settle down so I can sleep.

Although these ASMR recordings are very helpful, I suspect there is an even stronger way to stimulate ASMR and help someone fall asleep. Hearing a live voice and feeling the direct touch of someone who cares about your wellness and safety is, perhaps, the strongest trigger of ASMR.

So as you read to a child at night, continue doing all those ASMR-related things you may have already been doing. For example, giving the child personal attention as you sit or lay beside them, using a soft voice as you read, and turning the pages gently.

## **Avery Sleeps More Readily: A whispered Good Night Fairy book**

*Avery Sleeps More Readily* is going to entice and remind you to try additional behaviors which may also help a child to relax at bedtime. Try whispering parts of the story, or the whole story. Try tapping on some pages in a gentle way. Rather than simply turning the pages, linger, crinkle them lightly and repeatedly as you progress through each part of the story.

If possible, run a finger along the child's arm or play with their hair in a subtle way. You can also use your finger to trace the illustrations on each page. Repeat relaxing words like, "sensations", "tinglings", "sleep", "whisper", "tranquil", "esprit", and "response". Experiment and try new things. You will learn what works best to lull your family members to sleep.

Ultimately, the relaxation a child feels with you at bedtime is mostly influenced by the bonding moments that occurred between you at other times. Cuddling with someone you care for and with someone who cares for you, is the most relaxing feeling in the world. Our brains are whispering, "you are loved, you are safe, it is OK to fall asleep."