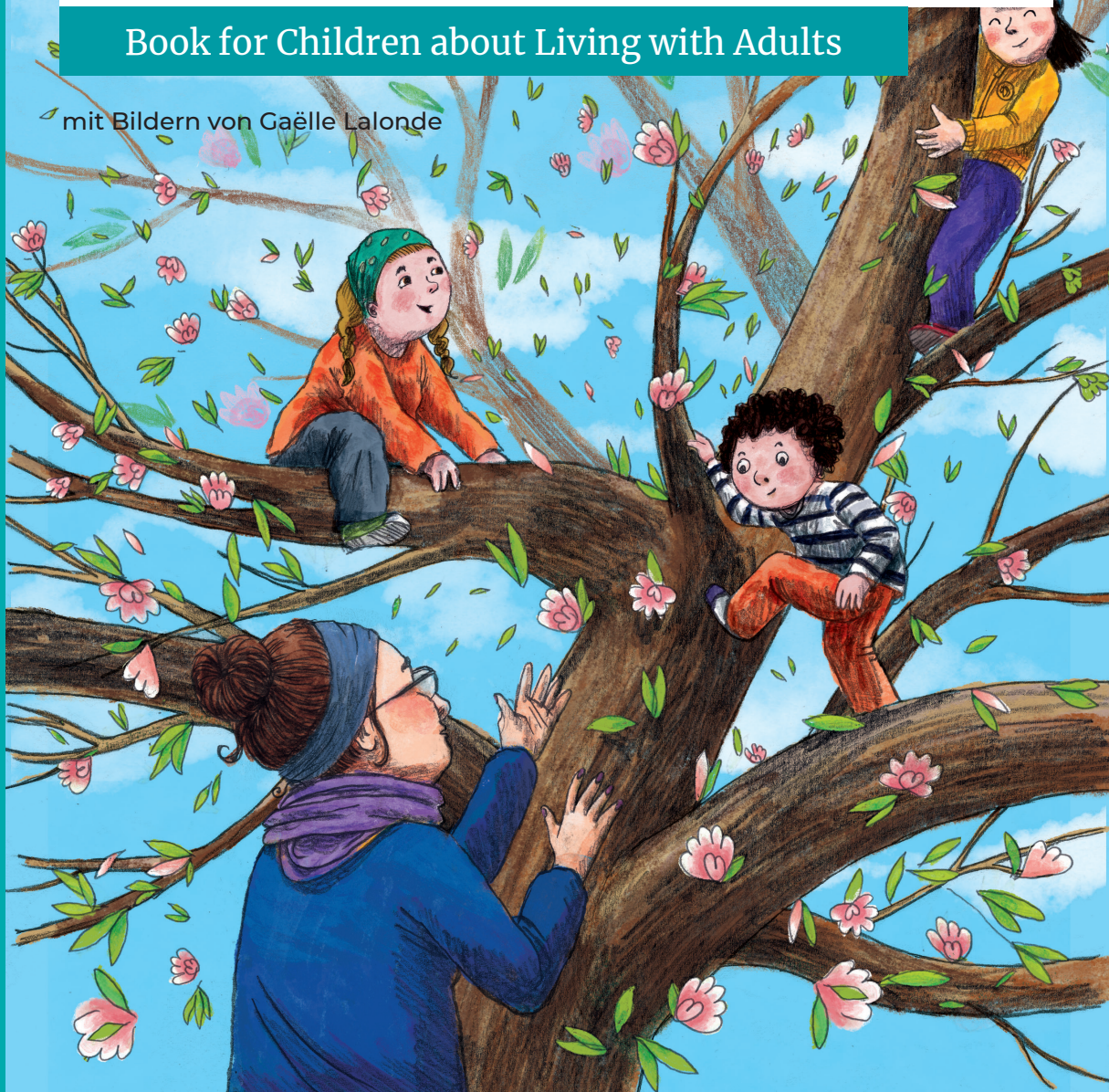


Anne Sophie Winkelmann

# POWER STORIES

Book for Children about Living with Adults

mit Bildern von Gaëlle Lalonde



9 783981 888355

15,00 Euro



Deutsches  
Rotes  
Kreuz



edition  
claus

Der Verlag mit dem Drachen.



# Introduction to Power Stories

Dear children,

Your parents and the other adults around you are very different from each other. They have different ideas about how best to care for and teach children. When they were children themselves, they had different experiences with their own parents and learned different ideas about what „normal“ means.

Most adults are not always kind and caring with children. Acting that way all of the time is not even possible for them. I don't think it's really possible for anybody. When grownups are overwhelmed or angry or disappointed or sad, sometimes they speak or act in ways that hurt children. For example, they curse, they suddenly start yelling, they don't really listen, and they talk and explain nonstop. Some adults grab children by the arm so hard that it hurts, or hit them. Others stop talking to them for a while. Or they punish children by keeping something very important to them away from them.

When adults use violence like that, children get hurt. Then the kids might feel sad, confused, angry, or helpless, for example, and they might get scared.

Some people think it's okay for children to get hurt: for

This is a translation of part of the book „Machtgeschichten“, which was published in 2019 in Germany. The english version was made possible thanks to the International Virtual Academic Collaboration Project - „Children's Rights Studies Online“, coordinated from the University of Applied Sciences Potsdam, Germany. It was funded by the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst).







example, when children have done something that these people think they shouldn't. That is how children learn to behave, these people say.

I and many other people think it's never okay when children get hurt by adults.

That's why we think it's important for adults to think about how they can help children grow up without using violence. Most adults really want to do that. But sometimes, they don't manage it. Maybe because they are overwhelmed, or insecure, or simply don't know how they could do things differently. Sometimes I feel the same way.

That's why there's the other side of this book. It is just for adults. There, they can find ideas and explanations to help them learn.

The children in the stories in this book experience situations with adults that you may also know from your own lives. The stories are about things like getting dressed, getting dirty or climbing. There are arguments and punishments and solutions and hugs. There are many feelings and lots of different ways that the adults try to deal with the situations. Some ways are more enjoyable and other ways are more uncomfortable for the children.



The stories might make you brave, and then you might want to talk with adults about how you feel when they treat you a certain way. The adults could be curious to hear you tell them about how you feel and what you need. When they listen, they might be open to learning and trying new things.

Each of the stories is always written with a beginning and then two different endings. You can read one ending first, share in how the children are feeling, answer the questions for that ending if you like, and then read the second ending. Of course, you can also think up your own ideas about how the stories could end differently. You can write down your idea for a completely different ending, or have someone write it for you. If you like, you can send me your ideas and I will put them online on the website [www.machtgeschichten.de](http://www.machtgeschichten.de) (with your permission). Then other people will have the chance to read your work. If you want to, you can draw a picture. This can also be put on the website.

But just for now, I want to wish you a lot of fun reading, listening and talking about the Power Stories!

*Anne Sophie Winkelmann*



## Fish and Cleaning Up

„I‘m going to the couch with Vera!“ calls Saleh, running out of the bathroom into the group room. Jumi and Mio spit toothpaste into the sink in big arcs and watch for a while as the funny foam-slime ghost with the carrot-fleck eyes slowly flows down the drain.

Then they cuddle up on the sofa with the other children and listen as Vera, the teacher, reads aloud.

When the story is over, Jumi whips an eye patch out of her pocket and yells, „Pirate attack! Pirate attack!“ Then she grabs the book they‘ve just read as stolen treasure and runs to the big pirate ship. Saleh and Mio race after her like lightning.

„Well, that sure scared them!“ Jumi laughs in an extra pirate-y voice.





In their homemade pirate ship between chairs and pillows, it's very dim under the taut fleece blanket, and the voices of the other children sound far away. „Where do we sail to next?“ Saleh wonders aloud, scanning the pirate map they drew the day before.

Eyes are peeking into the ship's cabin from both sides. „Can we play too?“ a couple of kids ask eagerly. The only trouble is, there's really not enough room for any more people aboard the ship.

Then Maika suggests excitedly, „Why don't we be the animals that live in the sea and we can meet and visit each other!“ „Yeah, or we could be a band of friendly pirates!“ shouts Marla.

Soon, almost all the children are playing one big game together. They build a second ship in the next room for another group of pirates. A lonesome treasure island emerges from the snuggle corner, protected by numerous dolphins. Under tables, behind shelves and along the sofa, they create caves and hiding places with blankets, scarves and pillows. Treasure beads get hidden, treasure maps drawn. The whole kindergarten is teeming with gurgles of laughter and happy burbles. Even a huge shimmering fish is playing along, swimming with the children on their



journeys between the caves, ships and islands in the sea.

Sometimes there are fights – for example, when Mio wants to use exactly the same scarf as Marla, or when Jumi always wants to steer the ship and never gives others a turn at the wheel. But they always find a good solution and can carry on with the game.

Just as they discover a sunken ship, the teacher Vera calls out, „We'll have fruit in a minute and then we'll go outside. You can play a bit longer, but in a moment we'll ask you to start cleaning up.“

„Clean up!? Noooo!“ several children shout at once. Jumi is indignant. „But we want to keep playing!“ Mio's eyebrows furrow: „I don't want to clean up. Always cleaning up. It's so stupid!“

Vera has overheard: „Yes, I can understand that you don't want to stop right now, and that you don't want to clean up either,“ she says with empathy. „You still have some time, after all. I just want you to know that we're going out later.“ Then she goes back to cutting apples and nectarines at the table, and it looks like she's really not going to say anything more about cleaning up right now.

So Mio and Jumi jump back into the big ocean and bring the treasure from the sunken ship to their hiding place. Vera



and cleaning up are soon forgotten. Until suddenly, next to the pirate ship, Vera's voice sounds: „Okay everyone, now I want you to start cleaning up!“

The clean-up song is already playing in the next room: „Clean-up time, it's clean-up time!“ Saleh and a few other children are already carrying some scarves and blankets to the shelf.

Mio and Jumi sit silently with their treasure under the deck. They are sad that the beautiful game is ending now. They are also angry. How can the teacher just decide that they all have to go out now?

After a while Vera comes over to them and smiles: „Well, you two! You still don't feel like cleaning up, do you?“ „No,“ they both shout angrily.

„Yes, I can understand that,“ Vera nods. Then she thinks for a moment and says, „You know, it's important to me that all the children who played in the big game help clean up. Even if they don't really feel like it. If we all do it together, the room will be clean again very fast and you can use all the materials for a new game tomorrow. We're a strong team, right? Please join in!“



Jumi crawls out of hiding and looks at the big flurry of tidying up the room. The kids cleaning up together make a cheerful hubbub. Saleh is packing all the toy ships onto a blanket and is about to drag them to the closet, when Maika comes along and jumps onto the blanket. She calls, „Take me with you! I want to bust up ships too!“ Jumi laughs. She grabs the treasure chest, jumps onto the blanket with Maika and „rides“ with her into the other room. „Clack, clack, clack,“ many children are sorting the different materials into various boxes.

Mio sits still under the deck and says nothing. He peeks out a small window at the bustling activity. „No,“ he says again softly. „I don't want to!“

Do you sometimes feel the same way Mio does?  
What do you think the teacher will say now?  
How would you like the story to end? What  
would be a good solution?

**Version 1**

Vera says: „No, Mio, that won't work! That's enough!“ She pulls Mio out of hiding and sets him down roughly in front of the pile of scarves, chairs and shiny stones. „So, now your job is to clean all this up. Let's go!“

How does Mio feel now?  
Do you think he'll clean up?

Mio feels small. And he's a little scared. Vera spoke very loudly and grabbed his arm pretty hard. That hurts. He looks sideways at Vera, uncertain: What would she do if he didn't clean up now?

He quickly grabs the scarves, folds them in a rush and stuffs them into the cupboard. Then he throws the stones into the small wooden box. Now he feels the anger within himself too. Cleaning up like this is no fun.

Have you ever felt that a grown-up person was hurting you? Or were you ever afraid of a grownup?

Do you sometimes feel angry too, when you have to do something and don't really want to?

How could the story be completely different?

What other solutions could there be, when children don't want to clean up?

What if Mio doesn't clean up at all today?

**Version 2**

Vera stays patiently seated next to the ship. After a while, she asks, „Do you know what you don't like about cleaning up right now?“ Mio thinks for a bit and then says aloud, „I want to decide for myself if I want to keep playing or go outside.“

Vera thinks this over for a moment. Then she says, „Yes, Mio, I can understand that very well. I didn't ask you at all. I just decided what was practical for me. I can really understand how that makes you angry. I think that's not a good way to do things either. Really! You know what, I'll talk to the other teachers and we'll figure out a way that



you can decide more for yourselves whether you want to go outside or keep playing.“

Mio is surprised. And very relieved. He climbs out of the ship and looks at Vera. She seems to really mean it. „Good,“ Mio says happily, and then calmly begins to take the ship apart.

When everyone has finished cleaning up and Mio is sitting next to Jumi and Saleh in the coatroom, he whispers to them, „Want to keep playing on the climbing gym right outside? I’ll tell you a secret!“

What does Mio want to tell Jumi and Saleh?

Can you decide for yourselves whether you want to go outside or not?

Is there anything you would like to decide for yourselves more often?



## Reflexión

The story touches on several complex issues, commonplace in family and educational practice, that are connected to children's personal experiences and ideas. For this reason, the story contains numerous suggested questions in a particular order that can facilitate a dialogue process with children. For example, it can make sense to address the topics of violence and cleaning up directly after the first version, since the second version focuses children on the topic of participation. In the end, of course, topics will emerge mainly from direct conversation with the children.

### Physical violence

Vera, the teacher, pulls Mio out of hiding to make him clean up.

Has it ever happened, in my personal experience, that I used physical violence to get something done?

How did I feel afterwards? How did I deal with it?

Have the children listening ever experienced being picked up against their will, carried away, pulled somewhere or grabbed by the arm?

The story offers the opportunity to open up a space where children can tell their stories and be heard. When doing so, the behavior of specific adults who have used violence in the children's daily lives should not be justified.

Rather, the attention is on the child's feelings. Compassionate

questions can help a child feel heard and understood. „And that hurt you, didn't it? Were you scared?“

During the conversation, I feel it is important that the adults reading aloud take a clear stand and say that they do not think it is okay for children to experience violence and that there are laws that forbid adults from hurting children. We can also say that it still happens to us and others sometimes, and that we want to learn to find other ways.

### Team discussion:

#### Physical violence

The story can also encourage the teaching team to talk about moments when we ourselves have used violence against children.

Has anyone ever changed a diaper without the child's consent? Maybe some of us have held onto a child's arm while giving a scolding. Sometimes, adults may have carried children out of a room that they were disturbing. Even if nobody was hurt, it was still a physical act that occurred against the younger person's will.

When people are invited to talk about this in a team meeting, it is crucial to have an atmosphere of trust where all colleagues can speak honestly, without fear of being judged.

Together, we can then reflect on how we adults benefit from such actions. What do we get out of it? And what impact does it have on the children? What impact does it have on the relationship?



Exchanges like this can initially bring up discomfort and shame, but also relief. This can give people courage to make change. An entire team might collectively resolve to practice attitudes toward children in which the young people's self-determination and joint decision-making become more natural, step by step.

## Cleaning up

The topic of tidying up can be very challenging. This can be true for everyone involved – at home, in the daycare center, and at school.

The story can invite you to think about different ways of cleaning up together.

From time to time, it might be alright for a child to not clean up at all. Perhaps there could be a tidying competition with teachers or parents who also have very messy spaces. Maybe the kids can organize themselves and play music while cleaning up ... Sometimes, a workable practice is already in place and it could be fun to simply brainstorm together with the children about other possible solutions. Sometimes the children's ideas enable us to reconsider what actually matters to us when cleaning up, and how we want to deal with children's limits.

## Participation

In the story, Vera does not ask the children whether they want to play inside or outside after the fruit snack. She simply announces that everyone will go outside afterwards and doesn't let the children's resistance irritate her. In many everyday situations like this one,



children don't get to decide what they would like to do next.

As adults, we usually have good reasons for our decisions. We may think that fresh air would do the children good and that they should take part in cleaning up in order to learn something.

This leads to many intriguing questions:

As an adult, am I allowed to make decisions about children?

Do I expect them to accept my decisions?

What message do children receive when they are neither asked nor involved in decisionmaking?

How can children have more of a say?

When can we pause and listen to their opinions, and what would it mean to take them seriously?

How can we work with children to develop solutions that suit everyone?

After the story, we can ask ourselves: Have I experienced similar situations? How did I react? How could I act differently in a situation like this?

*(You can find detailed information on the topic of participation in the training book starting on p. 53).*

## Team discussion:

### Participation

Where can I listen more to children? Which everyday decisions do I want to make more often together with the children?  
Where do I want to start?

Can we think of some alternatives for dealing with the issue of cleaning up and going outside?

This question can facilitate an initial group reflection on participation in your own setting. The first version of the story could be read in a team meeting. Then, working individually or in pairs, different (realistic or imaginary) alternatives can be created, written out, and read aloud. A first open dialogue develops and the team might begin to question formerly self-evident facts.

This could be followed by an initial observation of everyday practice.

The topic of participation is closely linked to a fundamental discussion about the power of adults over children; it depends on each adult's personal willingness as a parent, primary caregiver or educational companion to relinquish power. It can be helpful to approach change in our personal practice in small steps and to reflect on the process in detail and with care.