

How Little Turtle Found His Shell

This is a story about a young turtle who sometimes found it hard to pay attention and get along with people. His name was Little Turtle.

Little Turtle liked to have fun, and he also liked to mess around. He didn't like it when his mum or another grownup turtle asked him to do something. He thought it was too hard to try to read or write or sit quietly.

Sometimes Little Turtle even found it too hard to be nice to his friends. He liked to tease the other kids and grab their toys or books. He didn't like to share, and he didn't like to follow rules. He wasn't a bad turtle, but sometimes he just found it too hard to remember not to fight or make a noise. Especially when he was feeling angry or upset.

Every day, Little Turtle would tell himself that he would try to stay out of trouble. But every day he would get mad or frustrated. Then he would do something that he was not supposed to do, and would get into trouble. He felt like he had no control over what he was doing. He felt more and more miserable.

One day when he was feeling his worst, Little Turtle met the biggest and oldest turtle in his town. Wise Old Turtle was 200 years old and he was very, very wise. Wise Old Turtle asked, 'Little Turtle, why do you look so very sad?'

Little Turtle spoke in a small voice, because he was afraid of Wise Old Turtle. 'I have big problems,' said Little Turtle. 'Whenever I feel angry or frustrated, I can't control myself. I always get into trouble and I think nobody likes me.'

Wise Old Turtle was very kind and wanted to help Little Turtle. 'Hey,' he said, 'I will tell you a secret. You already have the answer to your problems with you. You have it with you wherever you go.'

Little Turtle didn't understand. 'It's your shell, your shell! That is why you have a shell. Whenever you feel upset, when you are angry or frustrated, you can go into your shell.'

Wise Old Turtle explained further. 'After you go inside your shell, you can follow three easy steps.

First, tell yourself to 'stop'.

Second, take one long deep breath.



Third, say the problem and how you feel. Then you can rest until your feelings are not so strong, or until you feel calmer.'

Wise Old Turtle showed Little Turtle how to go inside his shell to calm down,.

'You do it like this. Cross your arms over your chest, then tell yourself to stop, then take one long, deep breath, and then say the problem and how you feel.'

Then Wise Old Turtle said, 'Now, the next time you feel upset, you can go inside your shell and calm down.' Little Turtle liked the idea and wanted to try it himself.

The next day, Little Turtle's was playing with his friend, Lucy. When they were playing Lucy wanted to use some of Little Turtle's crayons. But these were new crayons, and Little Turtle started to feel angry and wanted to grab them away from Lucy. He was just about to start yelling at Lucy and push her away when he remembered what Wise Old Turtle had said.

Little Turtle knew he was angry, and he wanted to control himself, so he pulled his arms, head, and legs into his shell.

Then he said 'Stop' to himself, took one long, deep breath, and said 'I don't want Lucy to use my new crayons and I'm feeling angry.'

Little Turtle was happy to find that he was nice and comfortable in his shell where no one could bother him. Soon he felt calm and in control again. When he came out, he was surprised to see that his mum was smiling from the doorway. She said that she was very proud of him.

Lucy said, 'Okay, I can use the coloured pencils'. Little Turtle couldn't believe that he'd stopped himself from pushing Lucy and had kept control of his temper.

Little Turtle practised this again and again. When he felt upset, he would go into his shell and calm down. When someone hit him or teased him, or when something was too hard, he went into his shell and rested. Little Turtle felt very proud.

After a few weeks, Little Turtle discovered that his friends liked to play with him and that it was easier to sit quietly and read. He felt much happier. Little Turtle did not feel like a bad turtle anymore.

Adapted from Kusche C.A. & Greenberg M.T., 1994, *The PATHS ® Curriculum: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies*, Channing Bete Co. Inc., USA.