

Terry the Tortoise

This is a story about Terry, a little tortoise who was feeling unhappy. He was feeling upset about going to school. He didn't want to work or learn things. He just wanted to stay home and play all day. He wanted to watch TV or play with his friends. School felt too tricky, it was too hard to read books or do maths or copy things. Terry did like to play with his friends, but he also liked to fight with his friends! He liked to tease them and grab their pencils and books. Terry did not like to share, and he didn't listen when his teacher. Miss Honey said that wasn't right. Terry thought it was too hard to remember not to fight, or make a noise in class. It was too hard to follow Miss Honey's rules, and it was far too hard not to feel angry and hurt other children.

Every day he would say, "I'll try not to get into trouble today." But he usually did. He would feel cross or frustrated. Then he would lash out and get into trouble. He felt like he didn't have any control over what he did. After a while, although Terry liked his teacher, Terry did not like going to school. Worse of all, other children didn't seem to want to play with him anymore. Terry started to feel lonely. He walked about feeling VERY upset, but he didn't know who to tell.

Then one day when he was feeling just terrible, Terry met the biggest, oldest tortoise in his town. Everyone respected Wise Old Tortoise because she was very clever and did good things.

"Hello Terry. Why so sad?" she asked.

Terry spoke softly, because he felt a little bit afraid of her.

"I have BIG problems," he said. "When I feel angry, I can't control myself. I get into trouble and now I think nobody likes me."

The Wise Old Tortoise was kind and wanted to help. "Hey, let me tell you a secret, Terry. You already have the answer to your problems – it's with you all the time. You have it everywhere you go! **It's your shell!** Whenever you feel afraid, or upset, you can go inside it to feel safe."

"WOW!" Terry felt amazed. He stopped feeling wobbly in his tummy about speaking to her and asked, "What do you do?"

The Wise Old Tortoise explained: "After you go inside, first tell yourself to **STOP**. Second, take a deep breath in and let it out slowly – you can do this a couple of times. Tell yourself what the problem is and check how you **FEEL**. Then rest and **THINK**. That will help you work out what to **DO**. You can rest until your angry feelings aren't so strong, until you feel calmer.

Terry smiled. It sounded great! But what if he forgot what to do?

Just in case, Wise Old Tortoise showed him how to go inside his shell and calm down just as I'm showing you now:

You do it like this. Go in. Big breath in and slowly let it out. Cross your arms over your chest and tell yourself, STOP! Then one more deep breath in and slow breath out. Now

ask yourself, How do I feel? Then say to yourself, 'H'm, let's think about this. If you need more time, rest and think some more.'

Terry liked this idea. He practised hard. Next day at school, when someone teased him and he felt a really ANGRY feeling again, just when he was about to hit, he remembered, just in time.

Terry knew he was feeling upset and angry because he felt hot and clenched his fists ready to lash out. He wanted to control himself, so he pulled his arms, his head, his tail and his legs completely into his shell. It felt quiet and safe in there. STOP he said to himself. He did the breathing and checked out his feelings. Something is annoying me and I feel angry and upset! Sure enough, the breathing helped. He began to feel calmer and in control. He decided not to let the teasing bother him. When he came out of his shell, Miss Honey gave him a big smile.

Terry practised what to do over the next few weeks, again and again. When someone hit him, or used unkind words, or school work felt hard, he would go into his shell, practice his breathing until he felt calmer, and then think about what to do next. He began to feel pretty proud of how he was doing. He began to see that his friends were noticing he was doing well too, and they started playing with him again. Not only that, he got lots of smiles and 'thumbs ups' from Miss Honey for his school work. He still got into trouble now and again, because nobody's perfect all the time. But Terry discovered a really smart secret the day he spoke to the Wise Old Tortoise.