

The Turtle Steps

Once upon a time there was a turtle who had just started school but didn't want to go. His name was Ralph. He didn't want to learn things at school, but wanted to stay at home and play. Learning was too hard. He got into fights and didn't even know how they got started. It was hard to be good in school. It seemed like he was unhappy most of the time and was always getting into trouble.

Every day on his way to school he would say that he would try his best. But everyday he would get mad at somebody and fight, or he would get angry because he made a mistake and then he would rip up his papers. He began to feel like a "bad" turtle. He went around for a long time feeling very bad.

There was another turtle in his class named Lesley and she didn't like school either. In fact, she didn't like much at all. She felt sad or worried most of the time. She would worry that her mother might get sick or that her father might lose his job. When she wasn't worried, sometimes she felt sad. Lesley didn't do very well in school either. She was so worried and sad that she never really got interested in doing her schoolwork, or even in playing. She was always thinking about other things.

One day Ralph and Lesley were walking home from school together when they met the biggest, oldest turtle in their town. They had both heard stories of how the wise old turtle helped others feel better about themselves. They decided to ask for help. Ralph told the turtle that he was feeling bad and Lesley told him about feeling sad and worried all of the time.

The old turtle smiled at them in a kindly way and seemed eager to help them. Then he said, "There's something you don't realize - you are carrying the answer to your problem around with you." Ralph and Lesley didn't know what the old turtle was talking about. Then the old turtle said, "Your shell! Your shell! That's why you have a shell. You can go inside your shell when you feel sad or you seem to be heading for trouble. When you are in your shell, you can rest and figure out what to do about it."

"Here's what you can do when you feel like you are troubled. Stop what you are doing and, Ralph, say to yourself: "I feel angry," and Lesley, say to yourself: "I



feel worried (or sad)". Then say to yourself: "Shell to relax". In your shell, you are safe. You can relax all the muscles of your body. You can let them get limp, like cooked spaghetti. Take a deep breath and then slowly blow your troubles out of your mouth, right out of your shell. Just rest for a moment. Then say: "I can think of a helpful thing to do." Think of something you can do that is good for you, something that will help you feel better and will help you avoid trouble. Then come out of your shell and do it. Do the best thing that you can to help yourself. Just remember the four "turtle steps":

1. Stop! Then say how you are feeling.
2. Go into your shell and relax.
3. Think of something helpful to do.
4. Come out of your shell and do it.

After they left the old turtle, Lesley started to worry. Then she remembered the turtle steps. She stopped what she was doing and said "I feel worried and I don't like it," and went into her shell to relax. After she took a deep breath and rested, she thought worrying wouldn't do her any good and decided to sing a song. Then she came out of her shell and started to sing. She felt proud of herself.

That evening Ralph also thought about the turtle steps. He practiced saying its four parts: "Stop and say how you are feeling, go into your shell and relax, think of something helpful to do, and come out of your shell and do it." The next day came and he again made a mistake on his nice clean paper. He started to feel that angry feeling again, and was about to lose his temper, when he remembered what the old turtle had said.


Ralph stopped what he was doing. "I feel mad, but I don't need trouble," Ralph said to himself. Instead of ripping up his paper, he went in his shell, took a deep breath and rested until he knew what to do. The mistake didn't bother him there. He decided the best thing to do was to do his work as best he could. So Ralph came out of his shell and asked his teacher for help. He was excited that he kept himself from getting angry.

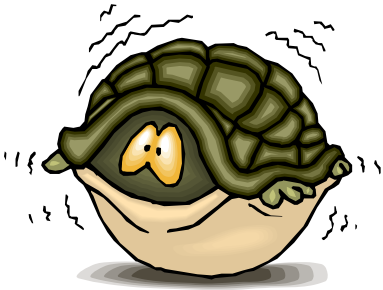
Both Ralph and Lesley continued using the turtle steps for the rest of the year. They felt happier and they both were proud of themselves. Everybody admired them and wondered what helped them handle things so well.



You Can Be A Turtle Too!

Whenever you think that your feelings are causing problems, use the Turtle Steps!

1.  and say how you are feeling.



2. Go into your shell and relax.

3. Think of something helpful to do.



4. Come out of your shell and do it.

