



Moishy and the Tangled Shoelace

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities



Moishy and the Tangled Shoelace

On Friday morning, Moishy sits on the bottom stair with one shoe on and one shoe off. The bus comes in eight minutes. His backpack is packed. His kippah is straight. All he has to do is tie his left shoe.

He pulls the laces tight. He makes a loop. He makes another loop. Then the whole thing turns into a knot the size of a grape.

"Come on," Moishy mutters. He pulls harder. The knot gets smaller and tighter.

His face grows hot. His hands feel shaky, and his shoulders creep up toward his ears. Inside his chest, something starts to bubble like soup that's about to spill over.

"This shoelace is impossible!" he shouts, and he throws the shoe across the hall. It bounces off the wall and lands under the coat rack.

Mommy looks up from the kitchen. She wears her blue tichel and holds a spoon in her hand. She doesn't yell. She walks to the stairs and sits down next to him.

"That looks like a very stuck shoelace," she says.

"It's NOT my fault!" says Moishy. "It's the worst shoelace in the whole world."

"Mmm," says Mommy. "I can see your hands are working very hard. Your face looks like a tomato, too."

Moishy looks down. His fists are squeezed so tight that his knuckles are white. He almost laughs. Almost.

"Do you remember what Totty says when a knot gets this tight?" Mommy asks.

Moishy sighs. "If you keep pulling, it only gets tighter."

"Right. So what could we try instead of pulling?"

Moishy doesn't know. His head feels too full. Then he remembers something from the class on Wednesday. His teacher, Morah Gittel, has drawn a big stop sign on the board. She has said, "When your body gets hot and tight, stop first. Then breathe. Then pick one small piece."

Moishy puts both hands on his stomach. He breathes in through his nose and counts to four. He lets the air out slowly, like he is blowing on hot cocoa. He does it again. On the third breath, his shoulders come down a little.

"Okay," he says quietly. "Now what?"

"Now we do one small piece," says Mommy. "Not the whole knot. Just one small piece."

Moishy picks up the shoe from under the coat rack. He looks at the knot. It isn't one giant knot, after all. It is a few little tangles stuck together.

He finds the loosest spot. With one finger, he pokes a little space into the knot. Then he pokes another. The first loop slips out.

"That's one," he whispers.

He works on the second tangle. It takes four tries, but it comes loose too. Then the third. Slowly, the knot opens into a long, plain lace again.

Moishy ties the shoe. He makes one loop, then another, then crosses them and pulls. It is a little bit crooked, but it holds.

Mommy checks the clock. "Three minutes to spare."

Moishy hugs his backpack and grins. "I almost missed the bus because of a shoelace."

"You almost missed the bus because you got stuck," says Mommy. "But then you got unstuck, all by yourself. That's the part I noticed."

Out the window, the yellow bus turns the corner. Moishy grabs his lunch and runs for the door. Then he stops, runs back, and picks up the spoon Mommy has left on the stair.

"You dropped this," he says.

Mommy laughs. "Thank you, Moishy. Have a wonderful day."

All the way to school he keeps looking at his shoe. The bow is lopsided, one loop twice as big as the other. He decides he likes it that way.

At his desk, the math sheet has thirty problems on it. Moishy puts his hand on his stomach and breathes in for four. Then he does the first one.



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. What is tangled on Friday morning?

2. What does Moishy do with his shoe when he gets upset?

3. What does Moishy do to help his body calm down?

4. How does Moishy fix the knot?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. Moishy throws his shoe across the hall. Fact / Guess
2. The bus comes in eight minutes. Fact / Guess
3. Moishy is probably scared of the bus driver. Fact / Guess
4. Moishy uses the same idea later on his math sheet. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. What does your body feel like when you get frustrated?

2. Think of something that felt too big. What is one small piece you could do first?

3. Why do you think Mommy sat down next to Moishy instead of fixing the shoe?



Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: SHOELACE, BREATHE, KNOT, BUS, TANGLE, MOMMY

E	G	J	J	T	T	M	O	M	M	Y
H	P	R	M	T	A	B	P	H	M	N
T	W	F	L	S	N	Y	W	L	C	O
A	W	R	D	F	G	R	E	M	L	P
E	A	P	B	J	L	Y	C	U	T	T
R	K	M	V	F	E	F	A	R	H	A
B	G	N	S	S	H	M	L	R	L	T
L	O	I	O	W	S	U	E	A	M	R
E	R	S	G	T	N	B	O	S	P	L
T	S	G	R	N	P	L	H	U	N	L
A	S	S	U	U	K	O	S	B	U	A



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. EOHS = _____

2. RBEHETA = _____

3. KONT = _____

4. ISRTSA = _____

5. USB = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"I'm stuck. I can stop and breathe."

"I will try one small piece."

"Can you help me look at this with fresh eyes?"



Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Stuck Chart

Day / moment	What felt stuck	What my body felt	One small piece I tried
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw Moishy's knot turning into a smooth lace, one little piece at a time.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to draw the transformation of the knot.



Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. His shoelace
2. He throws it across the hall
3. He breathes in for four and out slowly
4. He works on one small tangle at a time

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Fact; 3 Guess; 4 Fact

Scrambled words: SHOE, BREATHE, KNOT, STAIRS, BUS

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.