

The Easy One



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

Ages 12-15



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Chapter 1: Mirel never minds

At the Sunday family lunch, Aunt Sheindy is deciding who can watch her twins on Thursday afternoon.

"Mirel can," she says, before anyone else speaks. "Mirel never minds."

Cousins nod. Bubby nods. Aunt Sheindy's navy tichel catches the light as she turns to Mirel with a warm smile.

"Right, Mirel?"

Mirel is thirteen, and she has an answer ready, because she always does.

"Sure."

The word is out before the thought behind it arrives. The thought says: Friday is the fractions test, and Thursday afternoon is when I planned to finish the practice pages.

Chapter 2: The label

Later, Mirel helps clear plates and listens to how people talk about her.

"Mirel is the easy one," Aunt Sheindy tells Bubby. "Never a complaint."

"Such a help," Bubby agrees.

Mirel carries the salad bowl into the kitchen and sets it down more slowly than she needs to.



She is not sure she is easy. She is sure she is quiet in front of grown-ups. Sometimes quiet looks like easy from the outside.

She also knows that being called easy is nice. It has a small warm place in it. If she says no now, will the warm place disappear?

Chapter 3: The practice pages

That evening, Mirel opens her math notebook on the bed.

Thirty fraction problems wait for her. She has done nineteen. The last eleven are the hard ones, with mixed numbers.

She counts Thursday afternoon in her head: pick up the twins from gan, give them snack, play, wait until Aunt Sheindy returns at five-thirty.

There is no place in that afternoon for eleven mixed numbers.

She could study late. She could study Friday morning. She could hope the test is easy.

Mirel puts her pencil down.

On Sunday, nobody asked what she needed. Nobody made her say yes. She said it herself.

Chapter 4: What she can say

Mama sits on the edge of the bed with a basket of folded towels.

"You look like someone doing math without enjoying it," she says.



"I told Aunt Sheindy I'd watch the twins on Thursday. I have the fractions test Friday."

"Do you want to watch them?"

Mirel looks at the towels. "I don't know. I think I do want to help her. I just don't want to do it Thursday."

"That is a real answer."

"But everybody says I never mind."

Mama hands her a towel. "Do they say it because it is true, or because you always say sure?"

Mirel has no answer for that.

"You can mind this time," Mama says. "It does not turn you into somebody else."

Chapter 5: The sentence

On Monday after school, Mirel walks to Aunt Sheindy's door.

She practices the sentence in her head on the way. She does not want to blame the twins. She does not want to make a speech about everyone always asking her. She does not want to prove anything.

She only wants to say what is true.

Aunt Sheindy opens the door with a twin on each side and a dish towel over her shoulder.



"Aunt Sheindy, I said yes on Sunday, and I should have thought first. I have a math test Friday, and I need Thursday afternoon to study. I can't watch the twins that day."

There is a pause. One twin tugs the towel.

"Oh," Aunt Sheindy says. "I did not realize."

"I'm sorry for the change."

"I wish you had said at lunch."

"Me too," Mirel says. "I should have."

Chapter 6: The warm place

For a moment, Mirel waits for the warm place to vanish.

Aunt Sheindy sighs. "I will ask Mrs. Frankel. Thank you for telling me now, while I have time to arrange something."

"Could I come on Sunday afternoon instead? For an hour?"

"That would be lovely, if you have room. Only if you want to."

"I want to," Mirel says, and she notices that this time, the word is her own.

On the walk home, she feels less pleased than she did on Sunday. She also feels lighter.

She goes back to the notebook and finishes three mixed numbers before supper.



Chapter 7: Easy is not a promise

On Tuesday, a cousin mentions the Thursday change at school.

"I heard you said no," she says. "Is Aunt Sheindy upset?"

"She had to ask someone else," Mirel says. "I told her as soon as I could."

The cousin shrugs. "I just thought you never said no."

Mirel thinks about the word easy. It is a label, not a promise. People hang it on a person because it fits on some days.

She does not need to prove it wrong. She does not need to prove it right.

She can still help. She can also say when she cannot.

On Thursday afternoon, she sits at her desk with mixed numbers spread across the page, and feels like herself.



Sunday to Thursday

Number the cards in story order.

Mirel talks with Aunt Sheindy at her door and says the plain fact.

Aunt Sheindy says Mirel never minds and Mirel says sure.

Mirel counts Thursday afternoon and the math pages.

Mirel offers an hour on Sunday.

Mama says she can mind this time.



Label or choice?

Sort the lines. A label is what people say. A choice is what Mirel decides.

LABEL**CHOICE**

Mirel is the easy one.

Mirel says sure.

Mirel never minds.

Mirel talks with Aunt Sheindy.

Mirel offers an hour on Sunday.



The warm place

Read the thoughts. Mark which one the story shows. Rewrite one in your own words.

Thought	Shown?
☐ Being called easy has a small warm place in it.	
☐ Aunt Sheindy yells at Mirel.	
☐ Mirel feels lighter after the talk.	

One thought in your own words



A true sentence

Draw a path through the parts of a useful talk at the door.

Start

Say the plain fact.

Give a long speech about being asked too often.

Say what you can do instead.

Blame the twins.

Say sorry for the change.

A useful conversation



Mind this time

Use fictional people. Fill the fields. No private disclosure is needed.

A fictional label people use for a character

What the character might say before thinking

A plain true sentence the character could use

Something the character can offer



Easy is not a promise

Read the reminders with an adult. Choose one that fits. Final stickers are 2 1/4-inch squares.

**A label is not a
promise**

Say it early

Mind this time

**Offer what you
can**

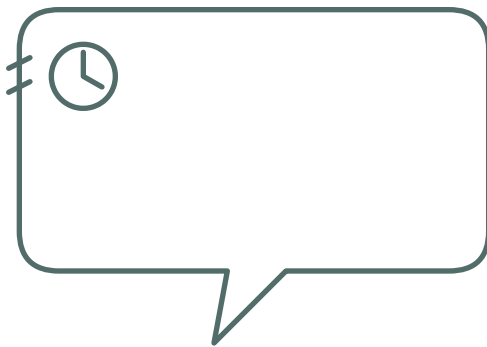
**Helping is still
allowed**

**Say the plain
fact**



Two ways to say sure

Draw two speech bubbles for the same word, one said quickly and one said after thinking. Add one thing the character checks.



One thing the character checks



Find the honest words

Find MIND, SURE, LABEL, TRUE, ASK, CHOOSE, TEST, HELP. All go left to right. Tell one word's part in the story.

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

MIND**SURE****LABEL****TRUE****ASK****CHOOSE****TEST****HELP**

One word's part in the story



Parent notes and answers

Discussion questions:

What did Mirel say before she thought?

Why did the word easy feel warm and hard to lose?

What did Mama say about minding this time?

What true sentence did Mirel use with Aunt Sheindy?

What did she offer instead?

Parent tool: Praise for being easy can make a no feel risky. Help the teen separate a label others use from her own present need, say the plain fact early and offer what she can do without proving the label wrong. Do not turn it into a rule that she must refuse favors; helping and declining are both ordinary. No compulsory personal disclosure.

1. Listed order 4, 1, 2, 5, 3.

2. LABEL: easy one, never minds, such a help. CHOICE: say sure, talk with Aunt Sheindy, offer Sunday.

3. Shown: being called easy is nice; she waits for the warm place to vanish; she feels lighter afterward. Not shown: Aunt Sheindy gets angry; Mirel proves the label wrong.

4. Useful nodes: Say the plain fact; Say what you can do instead; Say sorry for the change. Not useful nodes: Give a long speech about being asked too often; Blame the twins.

5. Open. Example label: always helps. Example sentence: I said yes quickly and I need to change it.

6. Open. Helping and declining can both be honest.

7. Open. No people required; two bubbles and a small notebook with a calendar page are enough.

8. MIND: row 1, column 1, right; SURE: row 2, column 2, right; LABEL: row 3, column 2, right; TRUE: row 4, column 2, right; ASK: row 5, column 1, right; CHOOSE: row 6, column 2, right; TEST: row 7, column 2, right; HELP: row 8, column 2, right