

The Word She Cannot Find



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

Ages 12-15



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Chapter 1: An ordinary afternoon

There is nothing terrible to report about the afternoon.

Chaya finishes her homework. She reads a chapter about a family whose hat appears in three photographs on three different people. Then she helps Mama put the clean cups away.

Mama asks how the book is going.

"The hat keeps changing owners."

She tells that part. Mama laughs.

Then Chaya goes to her room. She doesn't want to open her reading book. She doesn't want to begin another notebook either.

Something about the evening feels difficult. She can't find a word that fits.

Chapter 2: The list of names

Chaya writes a few words on scrap paper.

Sad. Angry. Worried. Tired.

She crosses out angry. Nobody did anything she wants to argue about.

She circles tired, then puts a question mark beside it. She might be tired. That doesn't seem like the whole answer.

Sad stays uncircled. She isn't sure.

Mama knocks and asks whether she wants company.



"Not yet."

Chaya turns the paper over. She doesn't want Mama to see four ordinary words defeated by one ordinary afternoon.

If she could say, "I'm disappointed about this," they could talk about this. If she could say, "I'm worried about that," they could talk about that.

Without the name, she thinks she has brought no proper question.

Chapter 3: No finished sentence

At supper, Chaya speaks very little. Mama, whose burgundy tichel covers her hair fully, asks whether she is uncomfortable or feeling unwell.

"I don't think I'm ill. I just don't know what it is."

"You can tell me that."

"But I haven't worked it out."

Mama puts down her fork.

"Do you need something right now?"

Chaya looks at the plates. She wants Mama to sit with her after supper. That answer is easier than the four words on the paper.

"Could you keep me company for a little while?"

"Yes. We'll clear the table first, and then we can sit."

Chaya doesn't have to call it sadness to ask for a chair beside hers.



Chapter 4: Plain things she knows

They sit in the front room. Chaya brings the scrap paper because she wants to show it, not because Mama asks for evidence.

"I kept trying these. None seemed exactly right."

Mama reads the words.

"A word can help. It doesn't have to be an entry ticket to talking."

Chaya describes what she does know. She enjoyed part of the book. The rest of the afternoon felt difficult. She hasn't felt like starting anything. Company sounds better than questions about tomorrow.

Mama listens without naming the feeling for her.

"Maybe something unpleasant happened at school," Chaya says. "Maybe I just haven't remembered the bad part."

"Was there a part you want help with?"

Chaya thinks. No hidden insult or argument comes to mind.

"Not one I know about."

They don't invent one to make the conversation look complete.

Chapter 5: Not a search that must win

Mama asks whether Chaya wants to keep talking, sit quietly or read a short piece together.



Chaya chooses quiet company first.

After a while, she wants to tell another story from the book. The borrowed hat wasn't the only repeated thing. One little chair appears in a kitchen picture and later in a garden picture.

They talk about the chair. Chaya laughs once.

She nearly takes that laugh as proof she had exaggerated the difficult evening.

Then she remembers she has described an evening, not claimed she will be miserable every minute of it.

"It's a little easier now," she says. "I still can't name it properly."

"You don't have to finish the search tonight."

Mama doesn't promise that company will answer every difficult feeling. If Chaya keeps feeling unsettled, feels unwell or needs more help, they will talk again and get suitable support.

Chapter 6: A word later

The next afternoon, Chaya looks at the scrap again.

Tired seems closer today. She still isn't sure that it describes everything. Yesterday she had treated one word as though it had to carry the whole afternoon.

She tells Mama what seems clearer and what still does not.



They don't announce that the mystery is solved forever. Chaya can rest, read and help with an ordinary small job when she has room. If something else becomes clear, she can say it then.

She puts the paper with her other scraps. It isn't a diagnosis or a report card.

Chapter 7: A shorter beginning

A few days later, Mama asks how school was.

Chaya has a clear answer about the geography lesson and an unclear one about the break afterward.

"I enjoyed the lesson. I don't know what I felt after break, but I'd like to tell you what happened."

Mama brings her cup to the table.

Chaya begins with the part she knows. This time, she doesn't wait outside her own conversation for the perfect word to let her in.



The conversation begins

Number the cards 1-5.

Chaya tests four feeling words and finds none exact.

Mama listens to plain things Chaya knows.

Chaya enjoys a book detail but later feels unsettled.

Chaya later finds tired closer, without claiming a final answer.

Chaya asks for company before finding the perfect word.



Known, uncertain, requested

Sort the cards. Leave uncertainty as uncertainty rather than filling it in.

KNOWN**UNCERTAIN****REQUEST****INVENTED CERTAINTY**

Chaya finished homework.

She enjoyed the hat detail.

One exact feeling word fits everything.

The cause of the unsettled afternoon

Could you sit with me?

There must have been an insult she forgot.



A beginning without a label

Choose useful path nodes. This is not a diagnosis exercise.

☐ **1.** Say I do not know yet.

☐ **2.** Keep refusing help until a perfect label appears.

☐ **3.** Describe ordinary observations you choose to share.

☐ **4.** Ask for a small present need.

☐ **5.** Invent a hidden bad event to explain everything.

☐ **6.** Tell a trusted adult if difficulty persists or safety/wellbeing changes.

A useful beginning for Chaya



Enough information to ask

Fill the rows for the fictional character only if you prefer. No need to manufacture sensations or private memories.

Observation	What can be said plainly	What cannot be concluded from this alone
Chaya does not feel like opening her book.		
Company sounds better than more questions.		
She laughs during the conversation.		



A shorter start

Write a fictional request using uncertain words honestly. An adult may help. Leave personal examples optional.

Something the character does know

Something still uncertain

A small present request

A trusted adult to ask if more support is needed



No entry ticket

Pick a reminder. Explain one limit on it. Final stickers are 2 1/4-inch squares.

**I can begin
uncertain**

**Plain words are
enough**

**Ask for
company**

**Do not invent
the cause**

A label can wait

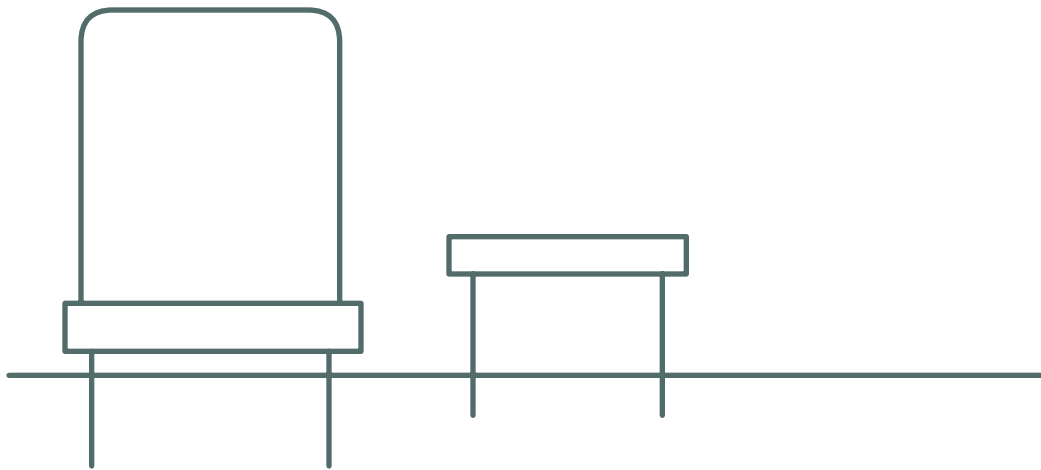
**Tell a trusted
adult**

One limit on my reminder:



Room beside the chair

Draw an object-only scene: two chairs with a small table, a book and a folded paper. Caption a fictional beginning of a conversation without a perfect feeling name.



A conversation can begin with...



Conversation words

Find WORD, ASK, COMPANY, LISTEN, HELP, KNOW, LATER, NEED. All read left to right.

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

WORD**ASK****COMPANY****LISTEN****HELP****KNOW****LATER****NEED**



Parent notes and answers

Discussion questions:

What does Chaya know before finding a feeling name?

What can she ask for already?

Why not invent a hidden bad event?

What would call for further adult support?

Parent tool: Accept plain uncertainty without demanding a label or cause. Listen to observations and present needs. Do not diagnose from a story or turn uncertain words into a test. Persistent difficulty, feeling unwell or safety concerns need caregiver attention and suitable support; no exercise should delay urgent help.

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

2. Known: homework finished, book partly enjoyed. Uncertain: exact feeling, cause. Request: company. Invented certainty: hidden insult must exist.

3. Useful: 1, 3, 4, 6. Do not invent causes, demand a name or prescribe private emotional exposure.

4. Does not want to begin something: observation, not proof of illness. Company preferred: request. Laugh later: real moment, not proof earlier distress false. Persistent difficulties belong with caregiver/support, not self-diagnosis.

5. Open. Possible: I cannot name this yet. I have felt unsettled this afternoon. Could you sit with me? Adult may need to ask safety/health questions and arrange appropriate help.

6. Open. Labels may be useful, but no label is a diagnosis or required ticket to help. Do not use uncertainty to delay urgent safety or medical care.

7. Open. No required confession.

8. WORD: row 1, column 1, right; ASK: row 2, column 2, right; COMPANY: row 3, column 1, right; LISTEN: row 4, column 2, right; HELP: row 5, column 1, right; KNOW: row 6, column 2, right; LATER: row 7, column 1, right; NEED: row 8, column 2, right