The Day Hood Said: "Mama!"

A story about shame... and laughing together

For ages 5 to 9



Child Protection Office

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In math class, the teacher asked: **“What is five plus five?”**

Hood raised his hand eagerly and shouted: **“Mama! Mama! I know! Ten!”**



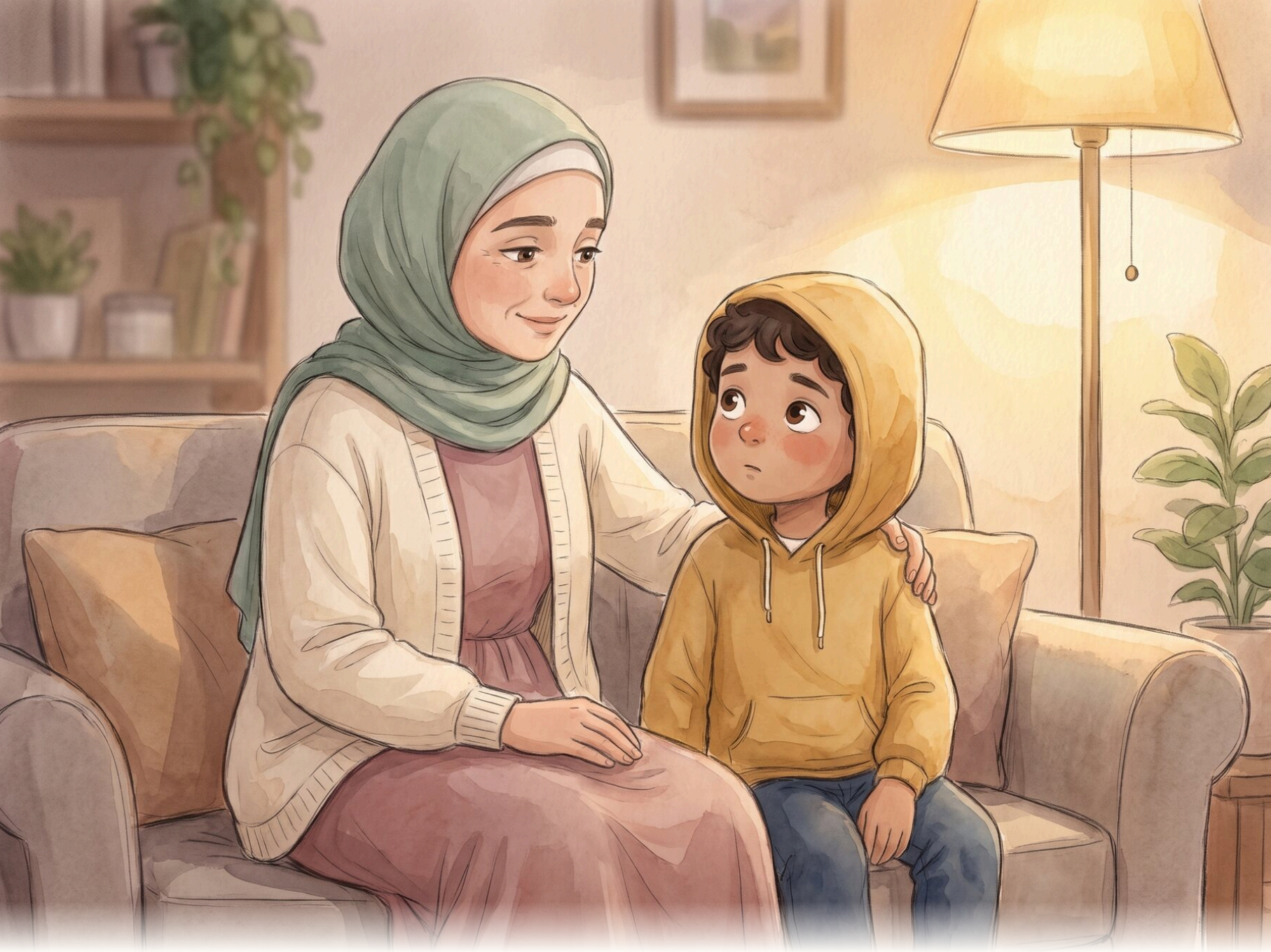
The class went quiet for a moment... then everyone burst out laughing.

Hood’s face turned as red and hot as an oven. He pulled his hood down over his face and wished the ground would swallow him up.



At home, Hood stayed hidden inside his hood and told his mother:

“I’m never going back to school! They’ll laugh at me forever!”



Mama Jumana sat beside him and said calmly: **“It sounds like you’re feeling shame, Hood… that feeling that makes us want to hide. It’s a hard feeling, and I’m right here with you.”**

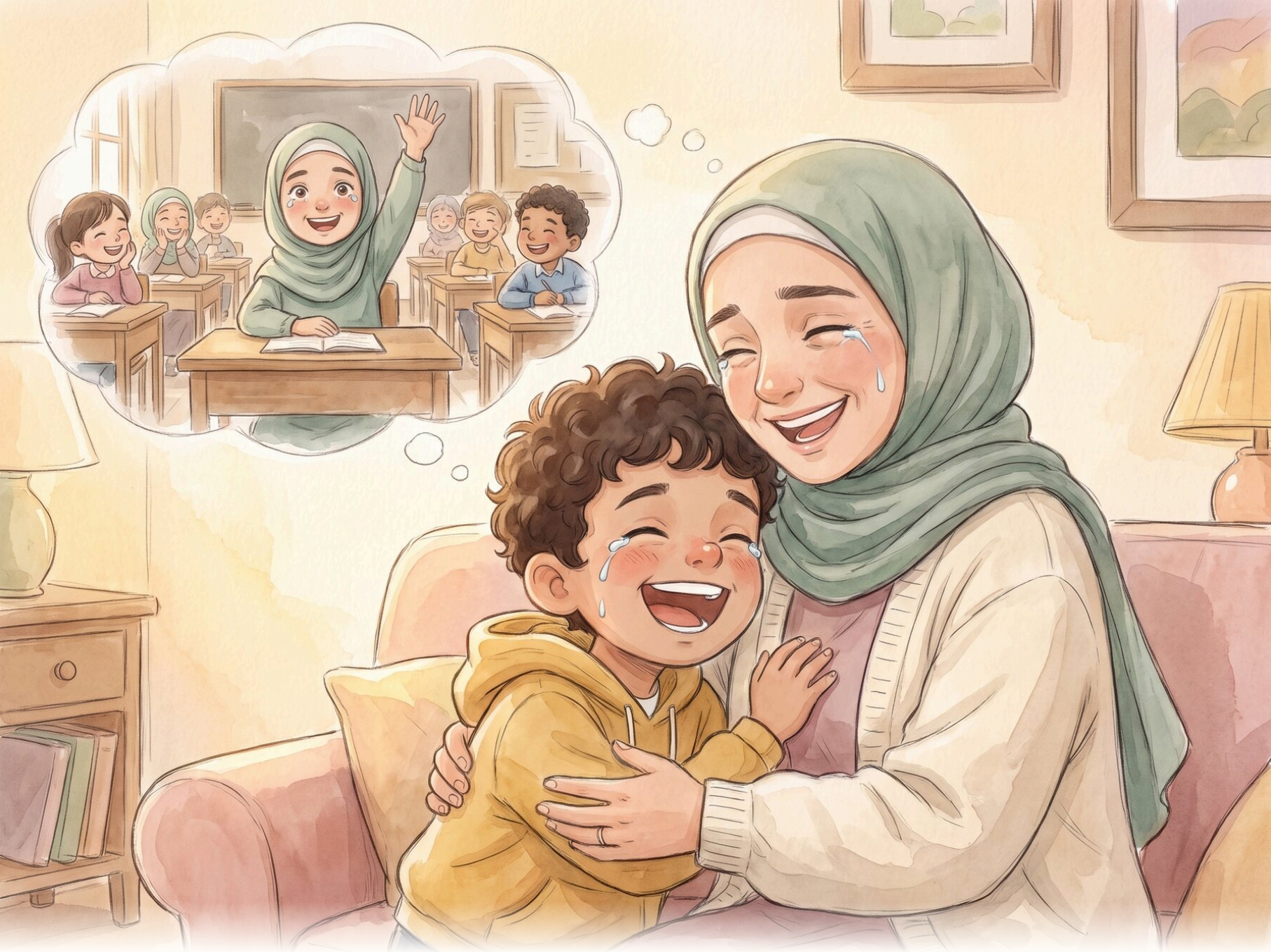
Then she asked: **“Remember the game of three letters? What are you telling yourself?”**



Hood whispered from inside his hood:

Everyone thinks I’m a little baby! **They’ll laugh at me forever!**

I must never look silly in front of anyone!



Mama smiled: **“I’ll tell you a secret… when I was your age, I raised my hand and called my teacher ‘Daddy!’”**

Hood peeked out of his hood: “Daddy?! Really?”
And they laughed together until their eyes watered.

Mama asked: **“Did I become silly forever?”** Hood laughed: **“No! You became the best mama!”**



Hood pushed his hood back a little and put on his detective hat.

Question one: **“Were they laughing at you… or at the funny word?”** Hood said: **“At the word… it really was funny!”**

Question two: **“And how long did the laughing last?”**

“Ten seconds… then we carried on with the lesson.”



Mama said: **“When you sneeze in class, everyone looks at you for a moment. Do you become a sneeze?”** Hood laughed: “No! I’m Hood who sneezed.”

She said: **“It’s the same today: you’re not a silly boy… you’re Hood who said a funny word.”**

Hood said: **“I felt a little embarrassed… and that’s normal. But I’m still Hood.”**



At dinner, Mama suggested a game: **“Funny Things Dinner!”**

Hood put socks on his hands, Mama balanced
a spoon on her nose, and they ate, laughing.

Mama asked: **“Did anything scary happen because we looked silly?”** Hood said: **“No... only something fun!”**



The next morning, when Hood walked into class,
a classmate called out: **“Good morning... Mama!”**

Hood took a breath, then laughed and said: **“Yes! That was really funny, wasn’t it?”**

Sami laughed with him, and the classmate had
nothing more to say... so the teasing stopped.



The teacher smiled and told the class: **“I’ll tell you a secret… in my first year of teaching, I called the principal ‘Grandma!’”**

Everyone laughed… and Hood laughed most of all.



Hood pushed his hood back and raised his hand high for the next question. He had learned something important:

“A funny mistake makes us laugh for a moment… but it doesn’t change who we are.”

A Guide for Parents & Educators

The third story in the series applies Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) to shame. The goal is to help the child move from “I am silly” to “I did something funny”: from judging the whole self to describing a passing moment.

1. Embarrassment vs. shame

REBT distinguishes a healthy negative emotion (embarrassment, or regret about an action) from an unhealthy one (shame, which condemns the whole self and pushes the child to hide). The hood in the pictures is a visual cue: up when shame takes over, down when Hood accepts himself. pp. 2–4

2. Shame thoughts

- **Needing everyone’s approval:** “I must never look silly in front of anyone.”
- **Awfulizing and overgeneralizing:** “They’ll laugh at me forever.”
- **Global self-rating:** “Everyone thinks I’m a little baby.” p. 5

3. Disputing

- **Laughing at the situation, not the person.** p. 7
- **How long it lasted:** ten seconds, not “forever.” p. 7
- **Unconditional self-acceptance:** “You’re Hood who sneezed, not a sneeze,” separating behavior from self. p. 8

4. Modeling

When Mom and the teacher share their own embarrassing moments, the child discovers that adults he loves and respects went through the same thing and are still loved. pp. 6, 11

5. Shame-attacking exercise

One of Albert Ellis’s best-known techniques: deliberately doing something harmlessly “silly” to discover that the world doesn’t fall apart. We adapted it for children as “Funny Things Dinner,” and then as answering teasing with laughter instead of hiding. pp. 9–10

6. Humor

Ellis used humor as part of therapy. Laughing with others at the situation takes away its power, and turns the child from the “target” of the laughter into a “partner” in it.

Questions to talk about after reading

- Why did Hood pull his hood over his face?
- Did the class laugh at Hood, or at the word?
- Tell your child about an embarrassing moment from your own childhood.
- What funny thing shall we do at our dinner?

Important note

Passing teasing is different from bullying. If a child is mocked repeatedly, or the mocking comes with exclusion or harm, it can’t be handled with laughter alone; parents and the school need to step in. Don’t share your child’s embarrassing moment with others without their permission. If shame or withdrawal lasts for weeks, consult a mental health professional.