Hood and the “What If” Bee

A story about worry... and the words “even if”

For ages 5 to 9



Child Protection Office

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At morning assembly, the teacher said: **“Hood, you will give the morning speech at assembly this Thursday!”**

Hood was delighted, and his friend Sami clapped for him.



On the way home, Hood heard a tiny voice near his ear: ***“Bzzz... what if you forget the words?”***

It was a little bee... and its name was ***“What If.”***



At home, the bee buzzed even more: ***“What if your voice shakes? What if everyone laughs at you?”***

And the more Hood listened... the bigger the bee grew.



That night, Hood couldn’t sleep. His tummy hurt and his heart was racing, and the big bee buzzed over his bed: ***“Bzzz… it’s going to be a disaster!”***



In the morning, Hood said in a small voice:

“Mama... I don’t want to go to school. I’ll ask the teacher to choose someone else.”



Mama Jumana sat beside him and said: **“I can see something is worrying you, Hood. Fear is a natural feeling, and we all feel it sometimes.”**

Then she smiled: **“Do you remember the game of three letters? What thought is buzzing in your head?”**



Hood said: “The bee tells me three things:”

I must never make a mistake! **If I make a mistake, it will be a disaster!**

If I make a mistake, I’m a failure!



Mama said: **“There are two bees, Hood. A small, kind bee that says: Get ready well.**

And a big, bossy bee that says: It will be a disaster… run away!

The small one helps you… the big one only scares you.”



Hood took out his detective hat and said:

“I’m going to investigate the big bee!”

Question one: **“Is there anyone in the world who never makes mistakes?”**



That evening, Ayoub called and said, laughing: **“At my first presentation at my new school, I forgot a whole word!”**

Hood asked: “Then what happened?” Ayoub said: **“I remembered it after a moment... and kept going!”**

Hood said: **“So... even heroes make mistakes!”**



Question two: **If I stumble on a word... is that a disaster?**

They drew a feelings ruler together. Hood said: “A real disaster is something really big. But stumbling on a word... that’s only a two!

A little annoying... but I can stand it.”



Question three: **If I make a mistake... does that make me a failure?**

Mama brought a tray of cookies with one burnt cookie: **“Shall we throw away the whole tray?”** Hood laughed: “No! One cookie doesn’t spoil the tray.”

Mama said: **“It’s the same with you. One mistake doesn’t make you a failure... you’re still Hood, still loved, even if you make a mistake.”**



Hood said: **“I’ve got it! Instead of ‘What if?’... I’ll say ‘Even if!’**

Even if I stumble... I’ll breathe and keep going. I hope I do well... but I don’t have to be perfect.”

And the big bee shrank until it was the size of a bean.



Hood began to practice: in front of Mama,
then his toys, then Sami at break time.

And Mama taught him **“balloon breathing”**: a slow breath
in that fills the tummy… and a long, calm breath out.



On Wednesday night, Mama wrote a
little card, and Hood put it in his pocket:

“Even if I make a mistake… I’ll keep going, and I’m still Hood.”

This time, Hood slept… and the bee was small and quiet.



On Thursday, Hood stood in front of the whole school.
The bee came close and whispered: ***“What if...?”***

Hood touched the card in his pocket, did his balloon breathing, and began: **“Good morning, my school...”**



In the middle of the speech… Hood stumbled and forgot a word!

He paused… breathed… and said to himself: **“Even if!”**

Then he remembered the word and carried on to the end.

Everyone clapped… and Sami clapped loudest of all!



At home, Hood opened the window and said to the little bee:

“You can visit me sometimes to remind me
to get ready… but I’m the one in charge.”

The bee flew away, and Mama hugged him,
saying: **“I’m proud of you… because you tried.”**

A Guide for Parents & Educators

This story follows “Hood and the Grey Cloud” and applies Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) to anxiety. The goal is not to make fear disappear, but to turn disabling anxiety into healthy concern that helps the child prepare and face the situation.

1. Two bees: concern and anxiety

REBT distinguishes a healthy negative emotion (concern and caution) from an unhealthy one (disabling anxiety). The small bee pushes the child to prepare; the big one pushes the child to escape. p. 8

2. The big bee’s thoughts

- **Absolute demand:** “I must never make a mistake.”
- **Awfulizing:** “It will be a disaster.”
- **Global self-rating:** “If I make a mistake, I’m a failure.” p. 7

3. Disputing (the detective hat)

- **Empirical:** is there anyone who never makes mistakes? Ayoub’s story is living proof. pp. 9–10
- **Catastrophe scale:** stumbling is a “two,” not a “ten.” p. 11
- **Unconditional self-acceptance:** one burnt cookie doesn’t spoil the tray; a mistake is a behavior, not an identity. p. 12

4. From “what if” to “even if”

The heart of the story: replacing catastrophic predictions with a realistic coping statement, and demands with preferences: “I hope I do well… but I don’t have to be perfect.” p. 13

5. Gradual exposure

Practicing in front of Mom, then toys, then a friend. Avoidance feeds anxiety; facing it step by step weakens it. The “even if” card helps the child remember the new thought, and balloon breathing calms the body. pp. 14–15

6. Why does Hood stumble?

We chose not to give a perfect outcome. The child learns that he can tolerate a mistake and keep going, so his calm isn’t tied to perfect success. p. 17

Questions to talk about after reading

- What did the bee tell Hood? When did it grow?
- What’s the difference between the small bee and the big one?
- What worries you? What does your bee say?
- Let’s write your own “even if” card together.

A tip

Praise effort, not results: “I’m proud of you because you tried.” Don’t let anxiety make decisions for your child by excusing them from every frightening situation. If anxiety lasts for weeks, or shows up as repeated physical aches or refusing school, consult a mental health professional.