

TEDDY'S STRANGE PROBLEM



Little Sammy rushed through his homework so that he could play with his toys. Teddy was his favourite – and his car, hat, toolbox, Rubik's cube, and spinning top.

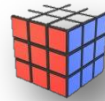


When Teddy wanted to go to work, we would take the toolbox, wear the hat, sit in the car with the top



and Rubik’s cube in the toy case on one seat of the car and ride until he got to the place he was going. He would carefully select the place he would sit at the whole day and work on the customer’s shoes. When there was no work, he would twist and turn the Rubik’s cube until all the multi-coloured squares were neatly ordered and all the squares on each face were of the same color. He was often thrilled to get it *all* right. “Wow!” He would scream with excitement. The top was also a

delightful toy. He would often film the top as it rotated several times without stopping for a long long time and watch the replay. He was very proud of his skill at everything he did. But Teddy faced a strange problem.



He could not smile—due to the fact that his face was fixed and his expression unchangeable. Real strange problem for a toy – so Teddy told Sammy one day, “I am tired of looking one way all the time. I too want to express myself. When I feel happy, I want to be able to smile and show my teeth,” he said.

“That’s easy,” said Sammy and took a pencil and marked off a smile, even a grimace but Teddy was unhappy. “You have ruined my face!” he yelled as he looked in the mirror.



“What do you want me to do then? Let me think. Use pieces of chalk as teeth?”

“Nay, that’s worse. They won’t look elegant as I want it to,” retorted Teddy.

“Maybe stick pieces of white paper for teeth?”

“I’d like a sticker that’s ready to use. No glue, no mess. Howz that?”
“Sure,” Sammy said and pulled out a bright smiley sticker and stuck it on his face.

“Interesting! Now you look way happier than before. The wrinkles have disappeared too. Smiling makes you look younger indeed!” said Sammy.

“You’re right,” said Teddy admiring his new look. “I am looking my best with my sparkling white teeth and glint in my eyes.”



So Teddy looked cheerful at all times. When he was bored, he still looked happy. He wanted to ask Sammy for more toys in his toy case. The Rubik’s cube had worn out and the top had broken its point. “I’ll ask him later,” he thought.

At work that day, he had more customers than usual. Little children smiled at him as they passed by. Squirrels too watched him work. He was surprised that a cow visited his stall for the first time. “Hello cow,” he said. “Would you like your hooves mended?” He belched, which meant “NO!” and went away.



He looked so happy - birds came chirping and sat near him as he gave them little nuts to munch on. “I prefer sandwiches,” said little ant. “Take this chocolate instead.”

Everybody seemed to like his new countenance. But Teddy found it difficult to sit in one place mending all the shoes and waiting for the customers to pick them up. Soon he felt tired but he *looked* energetic. More customers came smiling by. He had so much work; he could not finish them all and he could not tell them off either. He had a new problem now.

So he went to Sammy and said, “I love this beatific smile that is getting me a lot of attention. Well, you understand, life for me is not a bed of roses. There are times I feel tired or sad or plain overworked. But my smiling face confuses everybody. They can’t see anything but my happy face—glad to take on more work! I feel burnt out from all the work I am forced to do because people *think* I am exuberant.”

“So what do you want? Do you want to change your expression? What do you think will work for you?”

“I don’t know. But this smile must go. I feel a sad expression would be better. Well, no one would want to burden a sad person with a lot of work,” he smiled genuinely, the first time in a long while.

“That you will have,” said Sammy as he leaned down to remove the sticker.



“Awesome,” rejoiced Teddy, but he was back to his staid expressionless face. “Make me look really sad, even grumpy. I want to look monstrous. Everybody should feel the fear getting near me.”

“You will feel very lonely Teddy,” he said affectionately. But Teddy wanted to look frighteningly sad. “Add a few horns too and black red eyes filled with anger and hate,” he said conjuring up a daredevil persona.

“I’m pasting this sticker on your face. It is done just the way you want it.” “Exactly what I had in mind!” So Sammy stuck it and he looked perfect for the day. “I’m not sure,” Sammy muttered under his breath,



for Teddy's new look struck terror in his heart as well.

“Let's get the day started,” Teddy said. He looked so evil; Sammy did not even wave at him as he rode off.



When Teddy got off his car, there was a lot of commotion. People ran in different directions, even stepping on each other. Soon the streets were empty and nobody could be seen for a long distance.

“Well, this is what I call perfect peace.” mused Teddy. He opened his toy case – there wasn't any work to do. He smiled at the top whose point he had fixed and spun smoothly now.

There was no sound, as if everybody had gone on a vacation. “I am pleased to be here all by myself – no crowing cocks or belching cows or smirking ants.” So he sat quietly watching the wind blow some leaves here and there from time to time. No work to do was hard too. How long could one sit idle? “I am bored, and there's no one to talk to,” he moaned.



He couldn't wait to get back home. He knew the sticker was out of place. He had gone too far. A friendless world is worse than one where there's a lot of work but a lot of caring too.

Sammy was only too pleased to get rid of the sticker. He tore it in the middle to make sure that Teddy could not use it again. "What if he changes his mind? I don't know what came over him? How could anyone choose to be evil? That's outright flawed," he thought, he was glad he had a case in point.

Teddy felt happy that he looked normal again. "I've tried being happy and frighteningly sad. But it seems both flopped in their own way," Teddy said sadly. "I can't think of what I want to look like now...Sammy, can you help?"

“When I feel happy, I smile because it is a reflection of how I feel in my heart. I usually don’t smile when I feel sad. So all my feelings start in my heart and spread to every other part of my body but I can feel it all the same.



It’s the same in your case too – the *only* difference is that you *can’t* show it to anyone else. But you can still *say* what you feel. You can let others know how you feel with your *words*. You can make them smile or cry with your words. It’s just that you’ve got to *speak* more to let others know with your words rather than your outward expressions,” Sammy gleamed.

He continued, “And sometimes it’s better not to show how you feel. It might be better to *think* about how you feel, for feelings change over time and you might not feel so angry when you calm yourself down.”

Teddy nodded his head. “I think you are right. It’s not how you look but what you *think* that matters. If you think happy thoughts, you will be happy and you can become sad *thinking* sad thoughts too.”

Teddy continued, “I think I am **happy** to *stay as I am* and just work on my inner life – the place where I observe and learn about life. **I think it’s interesting to live inside me!**” He laughed so loudly that all the toys turned to look. “Tell us what makes you so happy?” they came asking.



“Nothing. It’s just life,” and he smiled inside.

Takeaway : When you face a problem, look inside your heart. Usually you will find the solution there—right inside your heart.



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