

A NUSSBAUM MIND STORYBOOK

# Motty and the Helping Hand

A story about asking for help

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For ages 3-6

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Motty wants to zip his coat himself. Up, up, up. The zipper sticks. Down, down. Try again. The zipper sticks again. His boots are on. His hat is on. His patience is nearly off.



"NO!" shouts Motty. He stamps one boot. His face feels hot. His hands want to pull very hard. The coat is not a bad coat. Motty is not a bad boy. This is a very big frustrated feeling.



Mommy sits beside him. "That zipper is hard today. I am here." Motty does not want a lesson about zippers. He wants the zipper to MOVE. Mommy stays close and keeps her voice quiet.



Motty lifts his hand as if to hit Mommy. Mommy leans back and gently puts the coat aside. "I will help keep you safe," she says. "You can be angry. I will not let you hit." She stays close enough to help and gives him space.



"Help," says Motty. One small word. Mommy hears it. "Yes. Would you like to sit beside me or hold my hand?" Motty sits beside her. No hug today. Just beside.



Mommy breathes slowly. Motty watches. Then he tries one gentle breath too. In like smelling warm cocoa. Out like cooling it. Mommy does not count how fast his feelings should leave.



Motty is still upset. His eyes fill with tears. "I wanted to do it myself." "You really wanted that," says Mommy. She listens. Sometimes help is a grownup staying while you cry.



After a little while, Motty can look at the coat again. His hands feel softer. "You start. I pull?" he asks. "We can try together," says Mommy. She lines up the zipper carefully.



Zip! Motty pulls. The coat closes. "Together," he says. Mommy nods. "Together." Getting help did not make him small. It helped him do a hard thing.



Outside, Dovi drops his mitten. "Oh, bother," he says. Motty knows one helpful thing to do. He picks it up and asks, "Want this?" He does not have to be in charge of Dovi's feelings.



That night, Motty tells Totty about the zipper. "I had a big feeling. Mommy stayed. Then we tried together." Totty tucks him in. "You can ask for help whenever you need it." Motty likes knowing that.

# Motty's Tool Reminder

1

## **A big feeling is okay.**

Angry, sad, excited, or scared feelings can feel big. All feelings are okay. A grownup helps keep actions safe.

2

## **Find a safe grownup.**

Say "Help" or "Stay with me." You can point or reach out if words are hard.

3

## **Let help fit you.**

Sit nearby, hold a hand, or try a gentle breath together. You can say no to a hug.

4

## **Try the next step together.**

There is no rush. When you are ready, a grownup can help with the hard thing.

You do not have to handle a big feeling all by yourself.