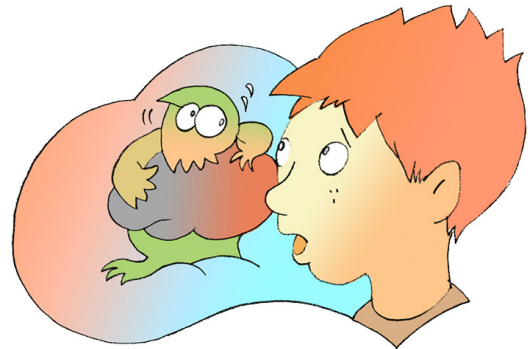


# TEO AND...

## the old woodworm syndrome

Like everyone else his age Teo was always thinking about something and talking about something and doing all sorts of things. He was so busy thinking, saying and doing things that he would get everything mixed up! He would forget what he was thinking about, say things that he did not think of, and do all those things he had promised not to do!



At school Miss Wilson told her students all about recycling. She explained how important it is to separate litter according to the material it is made from. Teo was all ears and keen on becoming an expert recycler. "I'll use a separate container for collecting glass, a grocery bag for paper, a plastic bag for plastic and a trash bin for cans." He thought. But afterwards he forgot all about his good intentions and continued to throw things out without giving it a second thought. Just like before.

One day Teo and his friends went to the movies. The movie they went to see was crude and violent. "I don't like this movie". He thought. "The characters are mean and ugly. They make me feel sick! I'll never see anything like this again!" Teo's friends had another opinion... "Wow! What a great movie, hey, Teo?!" So, even though Teo had decided to tell them what he thought about the movie, for some funny reason all he could do was mumble: "Ehm... sure, well, yeah, 'wow'!" And when a few months later his friends asked him to go see the second part of the sequel Teo begged his dad to drive him over to the movie theater where he jumped out of the car and dashed in to see the film without any hesitation at all!

We could make lots of examples like this..., but the heart of the matter was always the same: Teo's thoughts would fly in one direction, his words leap out of his mouth and take another one, and his actions yet another! At the beginning he would try to catch his flying thoughts, but once a thought begins to fly away on its own it is hard to catch up with it, so changing thoughts soon became a habit. And doing all those things Teo had always said he would never do became a habit too! This is why in no time at all Teo became feeble minded and insecure.

No one noticed the symptoms of the terrible disease that the boy had caught, the syndrome he had fallen prey to, for it was such a widespread plague among people that it passed unseen. But deep down inside Teo felt that something was gnawing at him... which is just what you feel when you are affected by "the old woodworm syndrome"! It sits there and notches at kids like Teo, indenting the roots of their character and making it so weak and fragile that when they grow up there won't even be the shadow of a character left!

Would a super dose of vitamins and minerals do the trick? Could heaps of carrots and spinach defeat that old wiggly woodworm? No! A woodworm may look like an insignificant little beast and may even be an old one, ... but when it gets into the structure of wood it starts gnawing and gnawing at it until it reduces the wood to dust! In other words, day after day the syndrome of the old woodworm crept into Teo's thoughts, words and deeds munching at them, separating them and making them lose their consistency, leaving him confused and feeling ruffled and jittery and totally upside down.

**But one day Teo got better! Yes! He recovered from his bad disease!  
Do you know how?**

Like all kids Teo had lots of relatives, like Grandpa Joe. Teo loved being with his grandfather because he was just like Teo, always thinking and talking and doing all sorts of things. One day the two of them went for an outing. They walked up the old mule trail that Teo had taken so many times with grandpa, and slowly entered the woods. Grandpa Joe walked in silence, absorbed in his thoughts, then he halted and brushed a bunch of leaves off the trail.

"I was thinking, Teo, that maybe we should clean up this trail after lunch. What do you say? It's difficult to walk up to our cottage without tripping..."

Grandpa was right. The trail was almost hidden by broken branches and mountains of dry leaves...

"Great idea!" said the boy. "I'll help you, grandpa!"

Soon after the twosome reached the stone cottage and sat down for lunch. Teo loved the cottage half hidden in the woods. The sun was shining, and a warm breeze seemed to be calling him out to play. He gulped down the last morsel of grandma's luscious apple pie and... "I'll be back in no time, grandpa!".

“Oh? Are you off somewhere, Teo?” grandpa seemed surprised. “But didn’t you say that you would help me clean up the trail after lunch?”

“Ehm... well... yes...”, replied Teo a bit fidgety, while Grandpa gazed, oh so lovingly, into his bashful brown eyes.

“If you want grow strong and self-confident Teo,” he said, “your thoughts, words and actions need to work together as if they were one”.

Teo kept quiet for a few seconds. He knew that grandpa Joe had seen the woozy woodworm in their whereabouts. He knew that thinking in one way and acting in another had become a bad habit, but he didn’t know how to break it.

“It’s not difficult to set your thoughts, words and deeds in place, Teo.” Said Grandpa Joe, as if he had heard Teo’s silent call for help.

“You start by taking your thoughts to your heart before acting on them and then you ask your heart if it approves of what you thought of doing. If your heart feels good about your intentions, go ahead with them and be respectful towards yourself by acting in accordance with what you think and what you feel. When your thoughts are clear and your feelings are in harmony with values like sincerity, respect and kindness, and the two follow each other, you will feel good about whatever you do! And you will see the results too!”

Teo’s face lit up. While grandpa was talking he felt something stir within him. It wasn’t the old woodworm but a positive part of himself that tingled with joy. By asking his heart to guide him he would always make the right decisions, and follow his good intentions! The gift he received from Grandpa Joe that day was super special! It taught him something about important qualities like self-confidence and character. He would cherish it forever. Teo held onto that special feeling for a moment and then flickered a smile:

“Let’s go grandpa!” He said, taking his grandfather’s hand. “It’s time to clean up the old mule trail!”

**Turn the page! Don’t miss the worksheet!**

# WORKSHEET

## THE SYNDROME OF THE OLD WOODWORM

Why do you think Teo forgot to recycle things at home even if he had planned to do so?

Why did Teo tell his friends that he liked the movie he saw with them when he didn't?

What kind of disease plagued Teo?

How did he get it?

How did the disease make him feel?

Who helped Teo defeat the old woodworm syndrome?

What kind of cure did he need?

Are you afraid to speak up when you think differently with respect to your friends?

What is a habit? Do you have any bad habits?

Teo wants to be more coherent with himself. How will this bring value to his life?

Our heart plays an important role when it comes to being coherent. What is it?

What values does the virtue of being coherent give you?

**TELL THE STORY IN YOUR OWN WORDS. WHAT IMPRESSED YOU THE MOST?**

