

A book series for children and teens  
How to understand your emotions: LOVE

# The Mother Tree



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Story + exercises

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# The Mother Tree

As soon as the sun's rays brightened the entrance to the Hedgehog family's nest, the youngest of the five-member bunch – Stan – jumped out onto the still damp grass and rushed as fast as he could, given his short paws, to the burrow of his friend Ziggy the rabbit.

“Today is the day!” he cried out as soon as he saw Ziggy's moving snout. “Today I will find out what love is and if it can be hidden, seen or tried out,” the words poured out of him like torrential rain.

“What are you talking about? Can you slow down and explain what's going on in your spiky head,” replied Ziggy the rabbit, simultaneously stretching his body so much that he seemed twice as big as in





reality. “If I remember correctly, you recently argued with your sister about all this love.”

“Eh,” gasped Stan, resigned. “She is only interested in a good meal and a roof that doesn’t leak,” he continued ironically. “But you know how important it is, you took my side after all.”

“Yes, as always,” Ziggy patted his friend on the back in a friendly manner. “Now it’s time for a decent breakfast and some exercise,” he dashed forward.

“Hey! What are you doing!?” the little Hedgehog ran after him. “We’re off to visit Mother Tree today.”

“I don’t think so,” replied Ziggy calmly, and took a dip into the bushes. “Mother Tree is far away, I have two training sessions scheduled today and need time to recover.”

“Are you blowing me off!?” Stan shouted indignantly only to see his hopping friend’s fluffy tail disappear. He still managed to cry out: “But it’s only today, on the day of the summer solstice, that the trees can provide answers!”

Without waiting for an answer, Stan found moss growing on the nearest tree and headed north. “No one else is interested in what love is,” he thought. “I will therefore find the answer myself.” And so he did.

He had already travelled quite a while when he heard his tummy rumble so much that he could no longer ignore it. Suddenly, in the middle of a hazel grove, something hit him.

“Owww!” Stan cried out and noticed a hazelnut right next to him. “That’s interesting,” he stated, rubbing his forehead. “Where did it come from this early in the summer?”

His whining was interrupted by a squeaky giggle.

“Who’s there? Who is laughing at me?” he called out in exasperation.

“Not at you, but at your reasoning,” replied the squeaky voice from above, and a red tail flashed between the branches. “I guess even if a dinner plate fell onto you, it would not make you happy,” Stan heard the voice followed by laughter from between the leaves.

“Who are you?” replied Stan, offended.

“Vera,” the squirrel replied resolutely, and jumped down right in front of the little hedgehog. “I shared breakfast with you,” she giggled.



“I’m Stan,” whispered the little hedgehog without a hint of satisfaction. “What breakfast were you talking about? Are you making fun of me?” he hissed.

“I love to laugh, but not at others,” replied Vera judiciously. “I threw a nut, which unfortunately hit you on the forehead. This is my breakfast.



Try it,” she suggested.

“Where did you get it?” he asked, biting at the nut.

“They are not in the tree.”

“Mom gave it to me for breakfast,” Vera replied cheerfully. „Home supplies.”

“Oh! I’m very grateful, but I have to go now, otherwise I will never make it to Mother Tree,” said Stan, worried. He quickly said goodbye to the somewhat surprised squirrel and continued on his way.

Unfortunately, he didn’t get very far, as thirst parched his throat and made him think of nothing else. Even a certain noise which had been getting louder for some time, no longer interested him.

“If I don’t drink soon, I think I’ll wither,” complained little Hedgehog.

A small bird flew over, but Stan paid no attention to it.

“If only there were berries here or other fruits, but there is only moss and rotten branches,” he whined quietly.

“There’s a stream right over there, have a drink,” the small grey bird chirped.

“What stream? I can’t see any stream,” Hedgehog replied tearfully to the animal sitting in the tree.

“I’m Greg the sparrow and I know what I’m talking about,” he replied with unusual confidence for his thin voice. “You may not see it, but you can hear it, can’t you? It hums as if it wanted to summon everyone in the forest,” he puffed out his feathery chest proud of his every word.

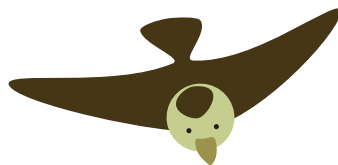
The little hedgehog looked around in despair, but all he could see were tree branches, blackberry bushes, mosses, boulders and ferns and more ferns.

“But where is it? Please, show me the way,” begged Stan, folding his paws and staring at Greg.

“There, there. You don’t have to beg me,” replied the sparrow still proudly, but now more friendly. “It’s right there, behind the tallest ferns. Let’s fly,” he commanded. “I mean, let’s go” Greg quickly corrected himself and for the first time he gave a slight smile.

As soon as Stan passed the ferns, he saw the most wonderful sight. A silvery blue ribbon of a roaring stream. The little hedgehog reached the bank and dipped its paws and snout in the water.





“Thank you, Greg,” he replied after a while, once he had had a drink. „I would never have thought that the solution to my problem was right under my nose.”

“Noise is not always just noise,” replied little Sparrow philosophically. “We often see things differently than they are. For me, a stream is a blue line between green trees, and for you it’s noise. Will you remember?” asked Greg somewhat full of himself.

“I think so,” replied a grateful Stan. “Maybe you know what love is?” he asked hopefully.

“Well, this is a very serious question. Aren’t you too young for such topics?” the little sparrow replied evasively and began to pluck feathers under its wing nervously.

“I am very worried that I will never know the answer. Do you know where Mother Tree is? I need to get there before dark.”

“Of course I know,” came the quick reply. “But it’s far and you won’t get there, so you’d better go home.” On that note, he flew off.

Left alone, Stan looked for moss covering the trees and headed north again. The forest was getting darker and darker, and he was already losing hope that he would make it in time. He knew that the trees only allow others into their circle of wisdom at dusk.



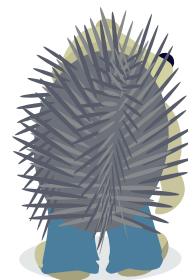
“Where are you wandering to like that?” he heard the quiet question.

Only when he saw four hooves in front of him did Stan realise that he was not alone. With his snout open, he looked up and much to his surprise he saw giant antlers. Like branches of a large tree, only without leaves.

“I, yes, well...” Stan began to stammer “I mean to visit Mother Tree...” he finished the sentence.

“To visit Mother Tree you say...” the giant deer got curious. “It’s far away, and soon night will come. Are your parents around?”

“I don’t think so,” came the tentative reply. “But I have to get there to ask the trees a very important question.”



“Well, yes, I understand. This is only possible today. Hop on my back, young friend,” said the big deer and then knelt down in front of the hedgehog.

“Thank you, Sir,” said Stan timidly.

“I am Richard the deer, and please do not tell anyone that you rode on my back. This is a special favour, only for little hedgehogs in great need,” he said cheerfully. “Now hold on tight, we’ll jump around a bit.”

“Ow!” cried out Stan as soon as the deer took off. “And I’m Hedgehog Stan and I think I have motion sickness.”

Richard the deer ran through the thicket of the forest. He ran and jumped. Stan, snuggled with his snout against his saviour’s neck, couldn’t even see where they were going. And suddenly they were standing in a small clearing and in front of them there was a dewy oak towering over all the willows, alders, birches and pines.

“We have arrived,” Richard broke the silence. “This is Mother Tree, the Mother of All Trees. It’s time for me to go. And you, youngster take care of yourself.” Without further ado, he took off into the woods.

Stan, shaking with fear, approached the big oak tree and gently touched the porous bark.



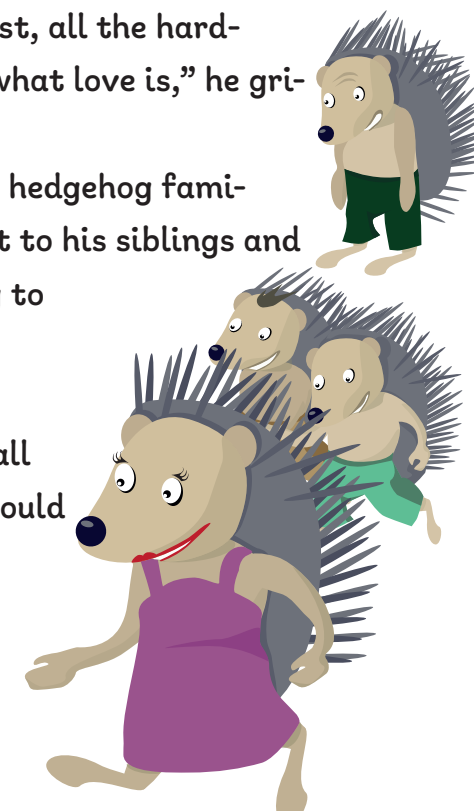
“Mother of All Trees, I would very much like to learn what love is,” he said.

He froze in stillness and waited. But nothing was happening. Disappointed, the little hedgehog sat down and unconsciously watched the last rays of the sun disappear from the treetops. When night had fallen, bright and lunar, that’s when it all started. The oak tree boomed with unfamiliar whistles and whispers. Hazels, willows, alders and even pines and other conifers intoned a forest song. Stan knew they were humming about something important, but he didn’t understand any of it. Tears flowed uncontrollably from his black beady eyes. “All in vain, then,” he thought. “The whole trip, the quarrel with his family, the fear, the hunger and thirst, all the hardships. All for nothing. No one in the whole forest knows what love is,” he grieved.

And then another miracle happened. He saw his entire hedgehog family running into the clearing. Mom ran in front, right next to his siblings and at the end, with a clear effort, Dad Hedgehog was trying to catch up with everyone.

“Mommy!” cried Stan desperately.

“Son, what have you done, we’ve been looking for you all day. If it weren’t for Ziggy, Vera, Greg and Richard we would never have ended up here.”



“I am so happy,” sobbed the hedgehog. “I thought it was all pointless, but I now understand why I am here.”

“Why are you here?” Mom looked into her son’s eyes, surprised.

“To learn what love is,” replied Stan.

“Oh dear! You again about this love, there was so much trouble because of it,” Mom said, worried.

“You could have learned this at home, too,” said the little hedgehog’s Dad, jokingly.

“No, I just felt it now,” came the bold answer. “When I saw you guys. Now I know that love has no colour, taste or practical use. Or maybe it does, it has all the colours, flavours and is the most practical. It makes us feel safe, important, needed and brave. Thank you for teaching me this,” he looked at his entire family and hugged everyone affectionately.



## GAMES RELATED TO THE MOTHER TREE STORY

NAME OF EMOTION: **LOVE**

1

“**My map of love**” (to be done with another person or on your own after preparing the materials)

**Goal:** identifying love

**Essential materials:**

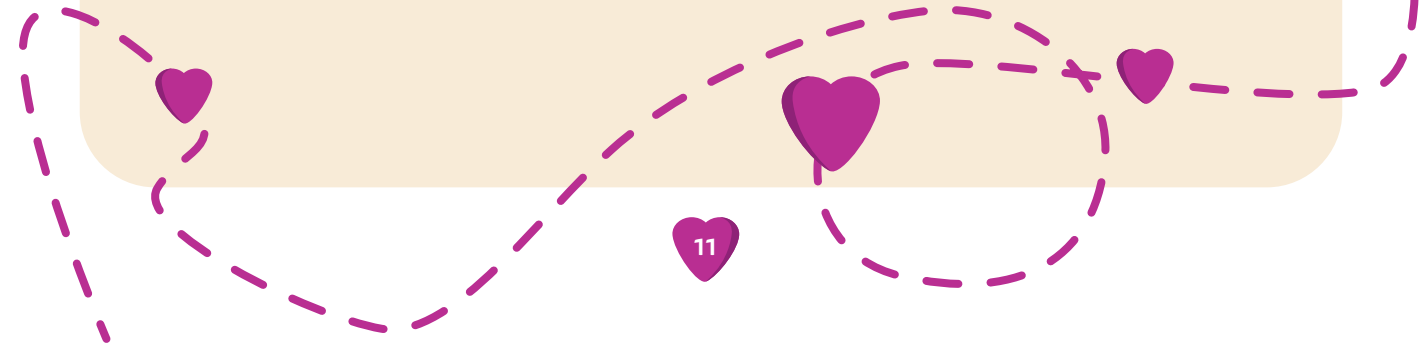
- a sheet of grey paper,
- art supplies,
- a marker.

**Description of the game:** the aim of the game is to create a collage with everything the child loves, associations around love and where they can find it.

**Instructions:** Remember that in the story Stan learned how much he is loved. He was looking for love that was right next to him. Today, you will make your map of love, so that you never lose your way, and mark all the places where your love can be found, and where the people who love you are. When you’re having a difficult time, you can take a look at this map.

**Tip:** The caregiver and family can leave their mark, e.g. write their names on the child’s map.

**Possible modifications:** such a map can also be created on a tablet or computer in a graphics program, especially in the case of the children who are not fond of drawing/painting.



## 2. **“Mother Tree, Mother Tree, tell me...”**

(to be done with another person)

**Goal:** expression of feelings, psychoeducation

**Description of the game:** by talking and encouraging the child to play a role, we facilitate learning to express feelings. The caregiver can take on the role of Mother Tree and the child can play the role of Stan. You can ask questions such as: What colour is love? What is the smell of love? What does love mean? How can you show love?

**Instructions:** What if Stan talked to Mother Tree? I wonder what Mother Tree would tell him... We can play in such a way that I'll be Mother Tree, and you can ask me questions as Stan. Later, if you want to, we can switch.

## 3. **“This song of mine is about love...”** – creating your own song

(to be done with another person or on your own)

**Goal:** expressing feelings

**Essential materials:**

- a notebook, pen,
- a musical instrument (if possible).

**Description of the game:** encourage the child to create their own song about love.

**Instructions:** It is difficult to talk about love, perhaps it would be easier to sing about it. Tell me what songs you like best. Do you know any song about love?





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