

## THE SNAILS

*From: Stories, Parables and Fables of life of  
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### Intent of the Story

- ✓ *Te make people aware of the so called “escape mechanisms”*
- ✓ *Withdrawal is one of the most common and crippling ones.*
- ✓ *Problems, dangers, threats and difficulties are to be faced not escaped.*

## The Story

Have you ever seen snails? Surely, after the rain you may see them all over the countryside. Crawling out of their hiding places, with their shells on their backs; slowly they move all over on the open fields. Oh, how they like to stroll on wet grass!

Now see what happened to one of those snails. He was young, full zest for living and desirous to see the world outside. It was the first time he left his hiding place to stroll on the sunny wet grass. Oh, how he enjoyed the bright sun, the blue skies and the freshness of the countryside.

He stuck his neck out of his shell for a little while. It was so pleasant. He was delighted. All of a sudden he saw a strange and ugly creature. What was it? It must have been a harmless thing like a butterfly. But, when that strange little creature stared at him it was too much for our snail.

Vow! How threatened and frightened our little snail was. Without caring to find out whether the visitor was a friend or an enemy, quickly he withdrew into his shell. There, he felt secure and saved from danger.

Time and again, he tried to come out of his shell to enjoy the brightness of the day and the beauty of the country side...But, again, every time he saw an stranger looking at him, in fear, quickly, he withdrew into his shell.

Very soon, our little snail remained locked inside himself; of course, feeling secure and protected; yet, alone, unwanted and unloved.

**Safety and peace became” the be all and the end all” of his life.** Safety kept him away from danger; true, but prevented him from enjoying a happy and meaningful life

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARIG

1. Why do snails spend most of their time inside their shells?
2. If you were a snail how would you feel inside your shell? Explain why.
3. Are there human snails? – I mean men and women, boys and girls snail-like? What are their characteristics?

4. How do they behave when they face strangers, dangers, new challenges and difficulties? Describe them.
5. What does finally happen to them? Will they ever assert themselves and do great things in life? Why?
6. When you meet something that you do not like, or something that threatens you, what do you do? What's your normal reaction? Describe.
7. While dealing with some unknown persons and/or unpleasant characters how do you cope with them?
8. When in your studies or in your work situation, you find something difficult, how do you tackle it?
9. What's the best way to solve problems? Explain.
10. Can you describe the difference between a daring person and shy one?
11. What is shyness? And its causes? Its effects? And its remedies?
12. What's the difference between the way a "shy" and a "bold" person faces threats, difficulties and challenges?
13. Have you ever heard of "escape mechanisms"? Can you name some of them?
14. What do they do to us? Do they ever solve any problem? Why?
15. Is "withdrawal"- what the snails do- an "escape mechanism"? Why?
16. Explain the following sentences:
  - When faced with problems and difficulties the best policy is to face them, not run away from them.
  - Problems and difficulties are there to be solved not to be shelved.
  - Bold and courageous people do great things because they think they can.
  - We learned walking by walking, not sitting down.
  - No one will ever leave his foot-prints in the sand of time sitting down.
  - Hardships, problems faced chisel us to perfection.
  - A lost battle is not a lost war.
  - Difficulties are not stumbling blocks, but stepping stones to success.
17. Are there any questions you would like to make about how to grow self-assured, self-confident and assertive

## **IDEAS FOR AN INPUT**

One of the temptations of our time is withdrawal and lack of involvement, in civic, social and political issues, and our neighbor's problems. This is a harmful escapist attitude which we rationalize with beautiful names, like: inability, prudence, peace, discretion, common sense, etc.

In the story of the snails, this human escapist stance is clearly portrayed. The snail's shell is a symbol in itself. When there is danger or unpleasantness we withdraw into our shells.

In real life, though, it looks funny; we find men and women snails. Nay, not only men and women snails, but also, children snails – boys and girls snails. Let some problem or difficulty come their way, immediately they withdraw within themselves.

Withdrawal is one of the many "escape mechanisms" we take recourse of to escape the difficulties and problems life entails. Any escape mechanism never solves a problem, but only avoids it.

Actually speaking, “escape mechanisms” not only do not solve problems, but create bigger ones for future life..

To call to mind some common escape mechanisms people may take recourse, we mention: forgetfulness, day dreaming, alcohol, drug-addiction, businesses, procrastination, pouting, sickness, loneliness, etc. Not to mention the greatest and final escape: suicide

Escape mechanisms stop us from growing, make our life barren, cut us off from reality and lead us to mental illnesses and make us social misfits.

### **People in the grip of escape mechanisms:**

**They seem to enjoy peace and quiet within, but not really. Inside their shells:**

- They feel lonely, uncared for and unloved.
- They feel bored without knowing how to while away their time.
- They are afraid to see and face life.

**They are running away from life:**

- They are not interested in their works and studies.
- They are not willing to get involved in the lives and problems of others..
- Without their being aware of it, they go deeper and deeper into themselves, thus missing the best of life.

**They are not ready to experience the pains of growing.**

- The meaning of life,
- The joy of sharing ourselves with others.
- Growing to be mature and fruitful human beings.

**Slogan to say to oneself when facing problems and difficulties**

***I AM BIGGER THAN THIS!***

## **APPENDIX**

**WHY HAVE TO GET INVOLVED**

**IN THE PROBLEMS OF OUR WORLD?**

**We have to follow the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ,**

- Who being divine left the security of heaven and became human.
- Who lived amongst us and became equal with us in everything except sin..
- Who found meaning and fulfillment in sharing with us all he had and was..

**As Christians we have to get involved in our world and its problems.**

- By getting out of our shells and being interested in people.
- By sharing in their joys and sorrows.
- By fighting for justice and equality among all men and women.

**We have to show concern in the burning problems of our world: Let us not say:**

- There is nothing I can do about it
- “It’s none of my business to interfere.
- “Let the Government and the Authorities see to it.

**We have to keep telling ourselves.**

- I am born to make my world a better one.
- It’s better to light a candle than to curse the darkness”
- Watch out lest I miss the goal of my life.

**Withdrawing not allowed..**