

## The Tale of the Overflowing Glass

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Jules was usually the kind of kid who laughed easily, especially when playing football or drawing silly cartoons with his friends. Most days, he felt like things rolled off his back like water off a duck.

But not today.

Today started with a jam stain on his shirt. Then he missed the bus and had to run to school. In class, he realised he had left his homework on the kitchen table. His teacher gave him that look—not angry, but disappointed. Just enough to make Jules's stomach twist.

All morning, little things kept piling up. The classroom was noisy. His pencil broke. Someone laughed when he tripped over a backpack. At lunchtime, he couldn't find a place at his usual table.

He tried to smile. He told himself everything was fine. But inside, it didn't feel fine.

When the bell rang for group work, Jules was paired with Betty and Malik. Betty was chattier than usual. Malik was tapping his ruler. Jules tried to focus on their science project, but he couldn't hear himself think. The tapping, the voices, the buzzing fluorescent lights—it all started to feel like too much. Like a flush of hotness in his brain, making him unable to think.

His hands clenched. His breathing sped up.

Then it happened.

“Can you stop tapping?!” Jules snapped at Malik, loud and sharp.

Everyone turned. Betty stared, then blinked, shocked. Malik looked startled.

Jules wanted to say sorry, but something inside felt like it was boiling - his brain, all red hot inside. His chest tight. His throat stuck, unable to swallow the saliva. The air around him seemed too thick and too loud.

He stood up, knocking over his chair, and rushed out of the room.

In the hallway, he sat down against the wall, pulled his hoodie over his head, and breathed hard, trying to swallow a lump in his throat that felt too big to ignore. He was not sure if he was more angry or embarrassed. His hands were shaking.

A few minutes later, Madame Leclerc, the school counsellor, appeared. She sat down on the floor beside him, not too close, not saying anything at first.

After a while, she asked, “Do you want to tell me what’s in your glass today?”

Jules frowned, confused, not knowing what the teacher was talking about.

“What glass?”

She reached into her pocket and pulled out a small, laminated card. On it was a drawing of a water glass, almost full. Each drop had a word: tired, pressure, noise, being late, feeling left out, stress.

“Sometimes,” she said gently, “each little thing in a day adds a drop to our glass. We don’t always notice. But if the glass gets too full... it spills.”

Jules stared at the card. “I think my glass got too full today,” he whispered. “Like—really, really full.”

She nodded. “That’s okay. It happens to everyone. But we can learn to notice when it’s getting full. And when we do, we can find ways to empty it—bit by bit—before it spills. Do you want to tell me what were the things that added drops to your glass today?”

Jules stayed quiet for a moment, then started enumerating all the unfortunate events of the day: from the jam stain on his white, freshly-cleaned shirt, through the missed bus and forgotten homework, to his classmates smirking, Malik tapping his ruler and Betty, overexcited, not being able to stop talking today. He then paused for a second, and added “I didn’t think any of those things were that big. But I guess they added up.”

“They do,” she said. “Missing the bus, a broken pencil, someone laughing at you—each one adds a drop. Even small things matter when they pile up.”

He looked down at his shoes. “I didn’t want to yell. I didn’t mean to.”

“I know,” she said. “But that’s why this is useful. If you can learn what your ‘full glass’ feels like—tight hands, fast breathing, feeling stuck—you can take action sooner.”

“Like what?”

“Take a few deep breaths. Go for a quick walk. Ask to step out for a moment. Write it down. Or just say to someone, ‘I think my glass is getting full today.’”

That evening, Jules made a drawing of a glass in his notebook. He filled it with raindrop-shaped words: late, dirty shirt, forgot homework, noise, too many people. Next to it, he wrote: When my glass is full, I can empty it slowly. One drop at a time.

He brought it to school the next day and showed it to Malik.

“Sorry I yelled,” Jules said. “My glass was full.”

Malik gave a small smile. “That’s okay. My glass gets full too sometimes, you know.”

They talked. Betty joined them. Soon, other classmates wanted to make their own drawings. One drew a volcano. Another, a balloon that got tighter and tighter. Someone else drew a head full of buzzing flies when it had too many thoughts.

Their teacher noticed the drawings and soon decided to give them time each week to talk about their glasses, volcanoes and balloons (or to be clearer, their feelings), and check in. Madame Leclerc helped them make cards with their personal signs and calming strategies.

It didn’t stop bad days from happening. But it gave them tools to name what they were feeling—and space to do something about it. The fact that they knew about each other’s signs definitely helped, too.

And from then on, at Marnay Primary School, it became normal to hear someone say, “I think my glass is getting full,” or “I need a moment to let a few drops out.”

Because they had learned that emotions don't have to be hidden and should be talked about. They need to be understood, too—and that even a full glass can be managed with care, one drop at a time.

And you, what's in your glass today?