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## Family Discussion Guide for "The Fastest Tortoise in Town"

*Conversation starters for parents and children*

### Getting Started

#### What This Book Is About

"The Fastest Tortoise in Town" tells the inspiring story of Barbara Hendricks, a tortoise who decides to enter a road race even though she knows she's not naturally fast. With only a week to prepare, Barbara worries about competing against other animals, but her friend and owner Lorraine helps her train and build confidence. When race day arrives, Barbara discovers that the other competitors—a slow loris, snail, sloth, and walrus—are just as concerned about their own abilities. Through this experience, Barbara learns that trying your best and having the courage to participate is a victory in itself.

#### Key Themes Your Child Will Encounter:

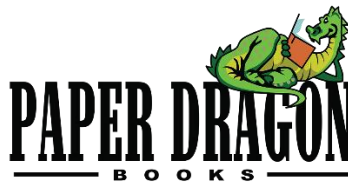
- **Courage to try new things:** Finding the bravery to attempt challenges even when you're nervous or unsure
- **The power of preparation:** How practicing and training can build both skills and confidence
- **Supportive friendship:** How friends and family can encourage us to reach our potential
- **Redefining success:** Understanding that winning isn't just about coming in first place
- **Managing self-doubt:** Learning to handle worries and fears about not being "good enough"
- **Embracing your own pace:** Celebrating that everyone has different strengths and natural rhythms

**Tip for Parents:** This book offers wonderful opportunities to discuss times when your child has shown courage or worked hard to improve at something. Let their own experiences with challenges and growth guide the deeper conversations.

### Character Connection Questions

#### About Barbara

- How do you think Barbara felt when she first decided to enter the race?
- What makes Barbara brave even though she's worried about competing?
- How does Barbara change during her week of training?
- What would you want to tell Barbara before the race to help her feel confident?



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### **About Friendship and Support**

- How does Lorraine help Barbara prepare for the race?
- What makes Lorraine a good friend and supporter?
- How do you think Barbara's training would have been different without Lorraine's help?
- Who in your life helps you when you want to try something new or challenging?

### **Big Ideas to Explore**

#### **Courage and Trying New Things**

- What does it mean to be brave? Is brave the same as not being scared?
- Why do you think Barbara decided to enter the race even though she was worried?
- Can you think of a time when you did something that scared you a little? How did that feel?
- What helps people find courage when they want to try something new?

#### **Preparation and Practice**

- How does Barbara's daily training help her get ready for the race?
- What's the difference between hoping you'll do well and preparing to do well?
- How does practicing something make you feel more confident about it?
- What's something you've gotten better at through practice?

#### **What Does "Winning" Really Mean?**

- Barbara realizes "if she just tries her best, she's already won." What do you think this means?
- Can someone be successful even if they don't come in first place?
- What are different ways people can "win" in life besides competitions?
- How do you know when you've done your best at something?

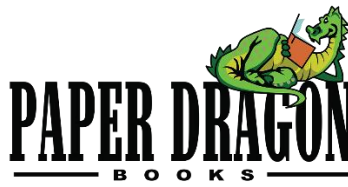
### **Fun Conversation Starters**

#### **The Race and Competition**

- What do you think about the other animals in the race (slow loris, snail, sloth, walrus)?
- How do you think each animal felt when they saw the other competitors?
- If you could add another "slow" animal to this race, what would it be?
- What kind of race would you most want to enter? Why?

#### **Personal Challenges**

- What's something you'd like to try but feel nervous about?
- If you had a week to prepare for any challenge, what would you choose and how would you train?



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- Who would you want to help you prepare for a big challenge?
- What advice would you give to someone who's nervous about trying something new?

### **Friendship and Encouragement**

- How does Lorraine show that she believes in Barbara?
- What's the best encouragement you've ever received from a friend or family member?
- How do you like to encourage your friends when they're trying something difficult?
- What makes someone good at helping others build confidence?

### **Discussion Activities**

#### **Personal Goal Setting**

- Help your child identify something they'd like to improve at or try
- Create a simple "training plan" with small daily steps
- Celebrate effort and progress, not just final results
- Document the journey with photos or a progress journal

#### **Real-World Connections**

- Research different types of races and competitions that celebrate various skills and abilities
- Talk about family members or friends who have shown courage in trying new things
- Discuss how different people have different strengths and that's what makes life interesting
- Explore activities in your community that welcome beginners and emphasize participation

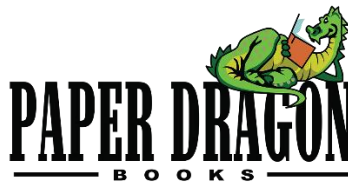
### **Conversation Tips for Parents**

#### **Creating Safe Spaces**

- **Acknowledge that feeling nervous is normal** - validate your child's concerns about new challenges
- **Share your own experiences** with trying new things and feeling worried about them
- **Celebrate effort over outcome** - praise the decision to try and the work put in, regardless of results
- **Follow your child's pace** - don't push them faster than they're ready to go, but encourage steady progress

#### **Encouraging Growth Mindset**

- **Ask about the process:** "What did you learn?" rather than just "How did you do?"
- **Focus on improvement:** "How has your practice helped you get better?"



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- **Explore strategies:** "What could we do differently next time?" or "What helped you feel more confident?"
- **Celebrate courage:** "I'm proud of you for trying something that felt scary"

#### **Making It Personal**

- **Connect to family values:** "This reminds me of how our family believes in supporting each other"
- **Share family stories** about times when family members showed courage or worked hard to improve
- **Plan related activities:** try a new activity together, enter a fun run, or start a family fitness challenge
- **Create encouragement traditions:** develop ways your family celebrates effort and courage

#### **Questions by Age Group**

##### **For Younger Readers (Ages 6-8)**

Focus on basic concepts of trying, practicing, and friendship:

- What's your favorite part of Barbara's story?
- How does Lorraine help Barbara feel better about the race?
- What would you do if you were nervous about something new?
- How does Barbara's training help her get ready?

##### **For Older Readers (Ages 9-11)**

Explore deeper themes of self-confidence, goal-setting, and redefining success:

- How does Barbara's definition of success change throughout the story?
- What does this story teach us about facing our fears?
- How can preparation help us feel more confident about challenges?
- What responsibilities do we have to encourage our friends and family members?

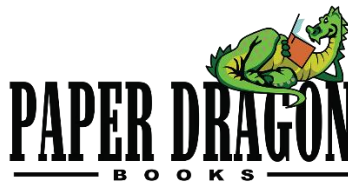
#### **Handling Different Situations**

##### **If Your Child Is Naturally Competitive**

- Discuss how there are many different ways to "win" and be successful
- Explore the satisfaction that comes from personal improvement, not just beating others
- Talk about being a good sport and encouraging competitor
- Emphasize that everyone has different strengths and challenges

##### **If Your Child Tends to Avoid Challenges**

- Start with very small, manageable challenges to build confidence



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- Focus on the courage it takes just to try, regardless of outcome
- Share stories of your own experiences with nervousness and growth
- Celebrate each small step forward without pressuring for bigger leaps

#### **If Your Child Struggles with Self-Doubt**

- Acknowledge that everyone feels unsure sometimes, even adults
- Help them identify their strengths and past successes
- Practice positive self-talk and realistic thinking about challenges
- Focus on effort and improvement rather than comparison to others

#### **Activity Ideas**

##### **Family Challenge Projects**

- Set a family goal that everyone works toward together (like a charity walk or learning a new skill)
- Create a family "courage board" where you celebrate times family members tried new things
- Start a tradition of trying one new activity together each month
- Document your family's adventures and challenges in a scrapbook or photo album

##### **Building Confidence**

- Practice skills together in low-pressure settings before bigger challenges
- Create opportunities for your child to teach others something they're good at
- Celebrate small improvements and personal bests
- Help your child identify their unique strengths and talents

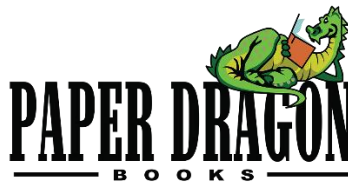
##### **Community Connections**

- Look for local events that emphasize participation over competition
- Find activities where your child can meet others who share their interests
- Volunteer together for causes that matter to your family
- Connect with other families who value effort and growth over just winning

#### **Remember**

"The Fastest Tortoise in Town" provides wonderful opportunities to discuss courage, preparation, and what success really means. Barbara's journey from worry to confidence offers a realistic and encouraging model for children facing their own challenges.

Use Barbara's story as a starting point to explore your child's own goals and dreams. The book's emphasis on friendship, preparation, and redefining success can help your family develop a



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healthy approach to challenges that values growth, effort, and courage over simply being the best or fastest.

Most importantly, let Barbara's discovery that "trying your best means you've already won" inspire conversations about what your family values most and how you can support each other in reaching for goals that matter to each of you.