Rhino and the Rattly Bundle

A little story about trying a different way.

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Ages 3–5





Clatter, clatter! Rhino's dry stems tumbled onto the mat. Elephant was waiting at the big baobab. Together, they wanted to make a little welcome rattle for their shady home. First, Rhino had to bring the stems over. “I want to carry all ten,” Rhino said. “All the way to our tree!” A soft cord lay beside the mat. Rhino nudged it aside and scooped up the stems. Come closer. This was going to be a very rattly delivery.



Rhino took a step. One stem slid under an elbow. Another tickled a knee. Rhino squeezed tighter, but the slippery stems spread wider. Down they went! They were safe in the grass, but they were not at the tree. “My arms can't hug every little stem!” Rhino said. Elephant stayed beside the baobab. “I'm here. There's time.” Rhino gathered the stems back onto the mat. This time, the mat could do the holding. That ought to work.



Rhino lifted the mat like a tray. The stems stayed on top. One step. Two steps. But when the mat tilted, a stem slipped off the edge with a little tick. Rhino stopped and put the mat down. Nine stems rested on it. The last one lay beside a foot. “Nine here. One here. I haven't lost you!” Rhino picked it up. Ten again. The mat had helped, but the stems could still slip apart. Something had to hold them together.



Rhino sat beside the mat. No bigger squeeze. No faster steps. Just a quiet moment to look. The soft cord was still there, curled like a sleepy tail. “Stop. Try a different way,” Rhino murmured. Rhino slid the cord underneath the ten stems, brought its ends around, and pulled them snug. A little bow held the stems together. “Stop. Try a different way.” This time, Rhino lifted one bundle. The stems could no longer slide away from one another. The mat stayed on the ground.



Rhino carried the bundle to the baobab. Step, step, step. All the stems arrived together! “One bundle of ten,” Rhino said. “I changed the holding, not the stems!” Elephant held the mat steady while Rhino opened the bow. Rhino laid the stems down, touching each one in turn. “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.” There they were: the same ten stems. Loose again. Elephant reached out a foot. Rhino met it with a soft high five. Their welcome rattle was ready to make.



Rhino tied the ten stems loosely at one end, leaving room for them to tap together. Elephant gently shook their new rattle. Its little clatter floated through the shady home. That sound! It was the same clatter that had meant “not there yet.” Now it meant “welcome home.” Rhino's shoulders relaxed. “Stop. Try a different way,” Rhino said with a smile. “Now our clatter has a job!” They sat together under the baobab and tried one soft shake each. Little one, when your first way does not work, stop and try a different way.

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A quiet stop, a soft cord, and one bundle of ten that learned to rattle.

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