

ZIP'S ADVENTURE

Alongside the 2025 Slow Down Childhood Challenge



This year, we'll be slowing down right alongside a very special little snail named Zip. Zip loves to move fast - until one day she realizes she's lost her slow! So begins her gentle adventure to find it again, meeting wise new friends and rediscovering the wonder tucked inside every unhurried moment.

At the beginning of each week, you'll read one part of Zip's story together. Her journey follows the same rhythm as the 2025 Slow Down Childhood Challenge, so keep an eye out for how many of the Slow Down Challenge days match the story!

WEEK 1

Zip woke up and stretched her antenna, blinking as the sunlight streamed in. She was so excited, every day was another chance to get her to do list done. While all the other snails were still sleeping, Zip was already up sipping her morning drink. She got it from her friend Blur, the hummingbird, what he drank to fly so quickly, and he gave her some of the nectar. It was just the thing she needed to get moving faster than the other snails in her village.

Zip decided there was too much to get done to eat breakfast, so she headed directly to her first task - harvesting the last of the fall vegetables in the garden. As Zip zipped (as she often did), she heard the other snails just waking up, their shells glinting like soft marbles in the light. Their slow voices called to one another, greeting the morning.

Zip's trails crossed and looped through the garden. She watched the bees darting from bloom to bloom, desperate to sip the last of the summer sun before frost came. Zip sighed, wishing she too had wings so she could work faster.

By the time her snail family gathered to share breakfast greens, Zip was already heading out the garden gate. She heard them calling her name, but the words got lost in the wind. There was simply too much to do.

And so Zip hurried on.

WEEK 2



The next morning, Zip woke before dawn as usual. There was a chill in the air, the stars still fading. She stretched her antennae and waited for that spark of excitement to buzz through her body. But today something felt different.

She took a sip of Blur's nectar, but it didn't give her the same zing. She looked at her to-do list, but every item on it felt overwhelming. Even the hum of the bees, normally her favorite background music, seemed to fade far away.

Zip looked around her tiny home. Everything was quiet, except for a soft drip, drip, drip of water sliding down from a leaf above. She watched the droplets gather and fall, and for the first time, she wondered when was the last time she just watched the rain? She shook it off and set out for the garden. While she worked, her trails felt heavier than usual. Along the path, she passed her friend Moss, who was sitting on a stone soaking up the morning dew.

"Mornin', Zip," said Sister Moss slowly, as she always did. "Where are you off to in such a hurry?"

"To the next thing!" Zip replied automatically. "There's always a next thing."

Moss smiled kindly. "But when was the last time you stopped to notice the thing you're in?"

Zip tried to laugh, but instead she felt her chest ache a little. She couldn't remember. She couldn't even remember what her slow felt like.

She stopped just for a moment letting the wind swept softly across her shell. Zip closed her eyes, took a slow breath, and listened. A small calm bloomed inside her, fragile but certain. She didn't know how or where, but she knew one thing for sure...she had to find her slow.

WEEK 3



Zip set out before dawn, a soft ache of determination in her chest. “If I’ve lost my slow,” she whispered, “then I’ll just have to go find it.”

She followed the winding trails beyond her familiar garden, past the stone wall lined with moss, past the small pond where the dew gathered like pearls. And finally found herself in the great meadow, a place she’d only heard in the elder’s stories. The first friend she met was Brother Turtle resting in the shade.

“Excuse me,” Zip asked, “Have you seen my slow?”

“I’m so sorry I haven’t, but come climb up on my shell and help me catch one!”

Together they laughed as leaves swirled down around them. Soon a deep voice joined in their laughter. Zip followed the sound and trail of fallen leaves until her eyes reached the great tree, ancient and wide, with roots curled deep into the earth.

“Hello,” Zip said softly. “Grandfather Oak? I’ve heard tales of you!”

“I am,” he rumbled, his voice echoing softly all around her. “And what brings you here, little snail?”

“I’ve lost my slow,” Zip said softly.

Grandfather Oak chuckled, branches creaking. “You can’t lose what you are made of. Every ring in my trunk took a season of being.”

“I don’t quite understand,” Zip said.

Grandfather Oak spoke again, “Stay awhile in this meadow little one and you will. You’ll be safe here.”

Zip tucked herself among Grandfather Oak’s roots. The meadow was hushed except for the whisper of Autumn’s last crickets, the light fading from golden to violet then deep blue. One by one, the stars blinked out. Then, slowly, Grandmother Moon rose above the horizon, a waning crescent but her silver light still bright enough to spill across the field.

WEEK 3 CONTINUED...

“Wee one,” came a voice as soft as wind through petals, “what keeps you awake beneath my glow?”

Zip lifted her eyes. “I’m afraid I’ll never find my slow again.”

Grandmother Moon smiled, “Little one,” she said softly, “you are not separate from the world you hurry through. You are nature - made of the same rhythm and cycle as everything that grows and rests. See how the tides rise and fall, how I wax and wane? In the wild world all unfolds in perfect time.”

Her light shimmered over Zip’s shell, tracing the spiral that mirrored the swirl of galaxies, the heart of a sunflower, the unfurling of waves.

“Your slow,” whispered Grandmother Moon, “has been here all along, you just stopped believing in it”

Rest now and dream, in the morning all will be new.

WEEK 4



Zip opened her eyes beneath Grandfather Oak, feeling rested in a way she never had before.

“I’m ready to go home,” she whispered.

She followed the trail of fallen leaves back through the meadow, past the mossy wall and the sparkling pond. But everything looked different now...brighter, softer, alive in a way she had never noticed before. The world hadn’t changed; she had.

When Zip reached her garden, the air was humming with evening sounds. The bees were drifting lazily, their wings catching the last of the sun. Fireflies blinked in slow, steady patterns, and the scent of honeysuckle drifted through the air. Her family spotted her right away.

“Zip! You’re back!” they called.

“I am,” Zip said, smiling. “And I brought something wonderful with me.”

“What is it?” asked the youngest snail, eyes wide.

“My slow,” she said simply. “And I want to share it.”

That night, the garden twinkled with life. The snails polished their shells until they gleamed. Long leaves were laid out as tables, and dewdrops sparkled in acorn caps, ready for a toast.

Squirrels brought platters of acorn pudding, the beetles arrived with seed cakes, and the bats flew in hawthorn berry pie. Even the shy worms peeked up from the soil to hum along as the crickets began a lilting tune.

There, surrounded by her wild kin, and the steady breath of the Earth, Zip felt the deep joy of being home in her own rhythm, a tiny spiral in the great, unfolding circle of life.

With love in her heart she spoke, “Let’s toast to each other and to remembering our slow!”