



7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

CRACK THE CODE

A Story by Arkedelic



Parents' Guide

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CRACK THE CODE

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CRACK THE CODE

“Three minutes left!”

Jane shouted from across the darkened room.

Nik didn't look up. He was too busy punching numbers into the keypad on the glowing treasure chest. “I've got it! 1739!”

Beep. Red light.

“Try 1937!” he said.

Beep. Another red light.

“Nik, wait—” Sid began.

“Just let me do this!”

The buzzer blared again.

“Two and a half minutes!”

Nik's fingers moved faster. 3197. Beep. Red. 7139. Red. The Squad's first-ever escape room challenge at the town library was spiraling out of control. They had entered as the favourites —



the Sunshine Squad, after all. Five friends. One hour. Riddles, puzzles, secret locks. Escape to win.

But now, the hour was almost up.

And they were trapped.

“Time’s up!”

The overhead light turned on. The fake wall didn’t open. The digital timer blinked: 00:00:00.

The room guide stepped in. “Oh no,” she said cheerfully. “You were one code away!”

Nik threw his hands up. “We lost because that keypad lagged! And also, the music was distracting. Who puts bird sounds in a library?”

Sam folded her arms. “We lost because someone kept guessing codes without solving the actual riddle.”



“That’s not fair!” Nik snapped.

“Guys,” Mario said, always the peacemaker. “Let’s just go upstairs.”

Jane grabbed her clipboard and walked out in silence.

Up in the beanbag lounge, Nik flopped onto a squishy chair and buried his head in his hoodie.

Sid sat next to him, quiet for a while.

“You okay?” he asked eventually.

Nik shrugged. “I could’ve cracked it. I knew the logic.”

“But you didn’t follow the logic,” Sid said gently. “You rushed.”

“I had to! We were running out of time!”

“Not really. You started rushing at the twenty-minute mark.”

Nik didn't respond.

Sid continued, "You do that sometimes. Like you're trying to outrun the pressure. Like if you stop for even a second, you'll mess up."

Nik stared at the ceiling. "Because sometimes I do mess up. And if I just go faster, I don't have to think about that."

There it was.

The real code.

The next morning, the library offered a rematch round. New puzzles. No extra fee.

Jane didn't want to go. Sam had swimming. Mario was 50/50.

But Nik surprised them.

"I want to try again," he said. "But this time... I'll do it differently."

That got their attention.

Round two.

The Squad entered the escape room again. A new setup. Different clues. A timer reset to 60:00.

"Okay," Jane whispered. "Let's stay calm this time."

Nik nodded. He let Jane read the first clue out loud. Twice. He waited while Sam decoded the Latin phrase etched onto a mirror. He held the flashlight steady for Sid without tapping his foot.

And when the music got louder? He asked the guide to lower it — calmly.

At the thirty-minute mark, they hit a tough clue. A cipher inside a book, linked to a wall map, pointing to a riddle about moon phases.





Nik's fingers twitched. His brain raced ahead. He could guess a few likely answers. He could try the lock now.

But this time, he paused.

Instead, he looked at Jane. "Want to work through it together?"

She blinked. "Who are you and what have you done with Nik?"

He smiled. "Trying something new."

They cracked the cipher with ten minutes to spare. The final lock clicked open with 4:22 still on the clock.

The door swung wide. No alarms. No fluster. Just five wide smiles.

"Wow," the guide said. "That was smooth."

"Yeah," Nik said, almost to himself. "It was."

Later, on the library steps, Mario handed around mini muffins from the café. Jane sipped hot chocolate. Sam high-fived Sid.

Nik sat quietly for a moment, watching the traffic roll by.

Sid nudged him. "So?"

Nik grinned. "Turns out, the real code I needed to crack was in my own head."

THE END

VALUES FROM THE STORY



1. How can I help my child stay focused, manage time, and be patient?

Context in the story: Nik rushes through puzzles, guesses answers without finishing clues, and ends up missing key logic steps — all in an effort to beat the clock. His impulse is to solve fast, not solve right. It's only after a conversation with Sid, and the decision to approach the challenge differently, that he shifts. In the second round, Nik paces himself, listens to others, and begins managing his time thoughtfully instead of reacting with panic.

Real-world connection: Many children struggle with time awareness, especially under pressure. They either rush, skip steps, or get stuck — mistaking speed for smarts. Learning to be both accurate and calm is a life skill that supports not just academics, but emotional growth and teamwork.

How parents can use the story: This story offers a strong way to talk about balance between urgency and patience. Parents can use it to ask: “Do you ever feel like Nik, like you need to race through things before it gets scary?” Use the story to explore what it feels like to pause and think, even when time feels tight. It can also spark a conversation about trust, trusting that slowing down doesn't mean falling behind. Encourage your child to practice “resetting” their pace in daily life: during homework, games, or even getting ready for school.



2. How can I help my child stay calm under pressure?

Context in the story: In the first escape room attempt, Nik buckles under the pressure of the ticking clock and competition. His mind races, he becomes impulsive, and lashes out when things go wrong. But in the rematch, he actively slows down, breathes through the tension, and even politely asks the guide to lower the music when it distracts him, showing a clear step forward in emotional regulation.

Real-world connection: Children today face pressure not just from tests and competitions, but also from unspoken expectations — to be fast, right, or in control. Many internalise this pressure and develop anxious or avoidant behaviours. Learning to stay calm in small challenges helps prepare them for bigger ones ahead.

How parents can use the story: This story lets parents highlight that pressure doesn't have to control how we act. You can ask your child: "What helps you stay calm when things start to feel tense?" Then brainstorm real strategies — taking a breath, asking for a break, checking in with teammates. Use Nik's rematch as a mirror, not a fix, showing that learning calm is a process, not a performance. It begins with awareness, not perfection.





3. How can I help my child pause and think — instead of acting on every impulse?

Context in the story: Nik’s default pattern is to act quickly — solving problems before others can catch up, making guesses instead of checking facts, and rushing into locks without listening. These impulses don’t come from arrogance but anxiety. The story shows his shift from impulsivity to intentionality, especially when he catches himself mid-game and actively chooses to pause, rethink, and collaborate.

Real-world connection: Impulsive behaviour is common in children, especially when they feel pressure to perform or prove themselves. But over time, unchecked impulsiveness can impact relationships, learning, and emotional growth. Teaching children to notice the urge and choose the pause is a powerful habit.

How parents can use the story: Use Nik’s story to ask your child: “Have you ever done something quickly and then wished you’d stopped to think?” Validate their experience without blame. Then explore together what that pause might look like next time. Give them language like, “Wait — what’s the full picture?” or “Let me double-check.” Help them feel proud of pausing, not just acting fast. That small shift can help them navigate both school life and social choices with more maturity.

Assessment Questions for “Crack the Code”



Q1. Why did Nik start feeling angry and impatient during the first escape-room round?

Purpose: To help children recognise how time pressure can cause stress and affect decision-making.

Follow-up: How do you feel when you're running out of time — calm, rushed, or upset?

Q2. What did Nik realise about himself after losing the first game?

Purpose: To show that releasing a memory isn't the same as pretending it never mattered.

Follow-up: Can you think of a time you didn't win but still learned something valuable?

Q3. How did Nik’s team finally manage to solve the code in the second round?

Purpose: To show that slowing down and paying attention can solve problems faster than rushing.

Follow-up: What helps you focus better — silence, teamwork, or taking small pauses?

Q4. How did Nik’s attitude towards his friends change between the first and second challenge?

Purpose: To build awareness that great teamwork depends on listening, not just leading.

Follow-up: Why do you think listening is as important as speaking in a group?

Q5. What did Jane mean when she said, “Sometimes cracking the code isn’t about the puzzle — it’s about you”?

Purpose: To help children understand that patience and composure are victories in themselves.

Follow-up: What kind of ‘wins’ do you want more of — the quick ones or the calm, thoughtful ones?

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