

# Sebi the dung beetle

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*Theme: If we have a positive outlook on things we can turn negatives into positives*

*Appropriate age group: All age groups, but more meaningful for 8 and older*



Once upon a time there was a young dung beetle called Sebi. Sebi got her name because she worked hard every day – she couldn't remember a single day in her life when she didn't work hard. (Sebi is short for Sebenza which means work in isiZulu, one of South Africa's languages.)

Day after day Sebi collected animal dung and rolled it into balls with her back feet. Most of the time she worked with her back feet in the air and head down on the ground, upside down and back to front. All the other dung beetles did the same all day, every day. Whenever she wanted to take a rest, one of the others would remind her, "You can rest at night but in the daytime dung beetles don't stop working for a minute!"

Sebi was sick and tired of rolling dung the whole day. She really wanted to change her life. She hated the smell of dung and her little feet got sticky and smelly from working with dung all day long. Sometimes she pretended to be pushing balls of the sweet-smelling honey that all the animals loved to eat. At night the smell of dung bothered her so much that she



couldn't sleep properly. She was haunted by the dung balls. She even had bad dreams about pushing gigantic dung balls all day and all night! Sometimes she lay awake at night, when all the other dung beetles were fast asleep. She thought the other dung beetles would never understand how she felt.

Sebi kept worrying about how smelly she must be. The other animals wrinkled their noses at her, and sometimes they teased her for doing this dirty, smelly job. That made her feel dirty and smelly inside. After a while she stopped talking to the other animals and kept away from them. That made her feel quite lonely.



And every day Sebi rolled more dung balls – but she was working slower and slower. She really didn't want to do this job any more. She wanted her life to be more than rolling dung balls. But she wasn't sure what else to do because that's what dung beetles do. All the other dung beetles seemed content to roll their balls all day. Why did it bother her so much?

Days and months went by and Sebi felt worse and worse. She was waiting for something to happen to make her feel better, but nothing did happen. And so one day she woke up and said to herself, "I can't go on like this. Today something must change. I must do something to make things change. Today is the day I must decide what to do."

Well, something did happen. It happened when Sebi stopped for a moment, got on top of her dung ball and had a good view of the veld. She saw the pretty flowers and the bright colours that made her happy, she smelt the sweet smells of the veld, and her heart jumped for joy.

Sebi asked herself, "How can I find some way for my work to make me happy for a change?" And at that moment she decided to change her life. She told herself, "I was created to be a dung beetle and I will always be a dung beetle. I will always roll dung balls and I know that dung beetles do an important job. But I can see a way to change my life – I can use my dung balls to make a beautiful flower garden! Yes, that's what I'm going to do!"

And so Sebi chose a patch of sand for her garden. She spent days and days rolling dung balls to her patch and spreading the dung over the sand. Then she collected seeds from flowers that were going to seed. She sowed the seeds carefully, making sure that each one had enough sunlight and water to grow.

Every day Sebi came to take care of her little flower patch. She was happy when the first green leaves came up. She was really excited when the little flower buds began to open. Day by day, more flowers began to bloom. The patch Sebi had planted became a beautiful garden, full of different colours and fragrant scents!

The bees and other insects came to collect pollen and soon animals came from far and near to see Sebi's beautiful dung ball flower patch. The other dung beetles stopped rolling dung and came to look at what she'd done. Some of the visitors understood that Sebi had turned something smelly and sticky into something beautiful and sweet-smelling. They asked each other, "How did she do this? What's her secret?" The answer is that Sebi decided to make her life happy, no matter what. She made a choice to be happy.

? Possible discussion points:

- *At times life can be very tough. Think of someone who is having a tough time and think of something that is positive in his or her life.*