

University of Dundee

When People Die

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When People Die

Stories from Young People



WHEN PEOPLE DIE: STORIES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Edited by Golnar Nabizadeh, Chris Murray, Divya Jindal-Snape, and Phillip Vaughan



When People Die: Stories from Young People is a comic that tells numerous stories about death and resilience from a group of young people. The comic helps readers gain different and better perspectives on grief and what grieving means for young people.

These stories and scenarios have been written by a group of young people selected from **Children's Hospices Across Scotland** (Robin House), **HMYOI Polmont**, and **Richmond's Hope**, and put together by the team at the **Dundee Comics Creative Space**. This comic will help people such as school teachers, guidance counsellors and anyone who reads it to learn more about how it feels to be in the position of a grieving young person, and how to act in situations that may come up with a grieving child.

This comic means a lot to me, and the other young people, as it has been an outlet for the feelings I may have kept inside; it has given me the opportunity to help other young people and adults who may not know what to do in order to help a bereaved young person and has allowed me to also come to terms with my situation and my feelings.

It is a sad subject, but don't worry, it's not all sad! These stories and scenarios show not only how the young person may feel, but also talk about how to help and what makes us feel better – the purpose is to educate and help others, and that is exactly what this comic has allowed us to do.

None of this would have been possible without the extremely hard and amazing work from the team at **Dundee Comics Creative Space** and the artists at **Ink Pot Studio** and everyone else involved, so a massive thank you to them!

I hope that you, the reader, enjoy the comic as much as we have enjoyed producing it and I hope that you are able to take something away from it.

Abbie Gunn

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Front and Back Cover by Mark Brown. Intro images by Rebecca Horner. Production by Rebecca Horner.



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In creating this comic, our aim was to honour the voices, perspectives, and insights that each of the young people brought with them in creating the stories and tips you're about to read. For this reason, this comic is constructed a little differently to other titles our team has worked on before. We have organised the contents so that the young people's original artwork is reproduced as it was drawn. Artists from Ink Pot Studio then prepared responses to these artworks, as well as tips and suggestions from the young people. You'll see some of these responses facing the original artwork. The young people worked with the artists to feedback into the finished comics pages, and tips pages, and their mutual appreciation, led to a highly productive and fruitful collaboration. We hope you enjoy reading the original contributions and the responses alike.





COMICS USE WORDS **AND** IMAGES TO TELL STORIES. READERS INTERPRET WORDS, IMAGES, AND GESTURES TO CREATE MEANING.

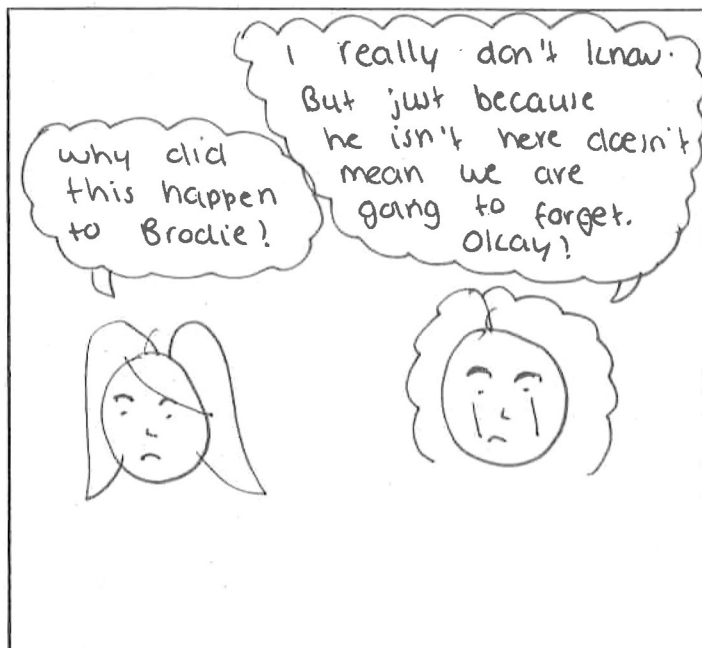
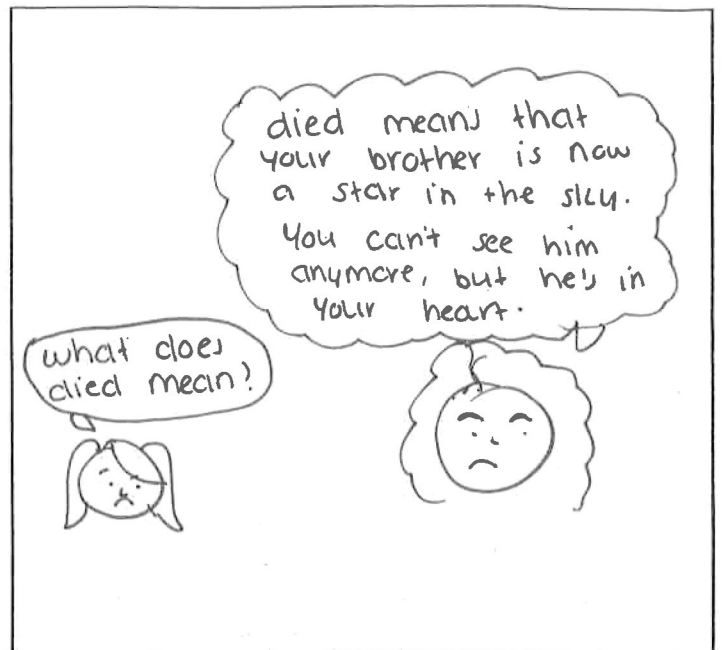


FOR THIS PROJECT ON BEREAVEMENT, IT IS THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE THE EXPERTS, AND THEY GENEROUSLY VOLUNTEERED THEIR TIME AND ENERGY TO CREATE THE SCENARIOS, STORIES, AND TIPS YOU'RE ABOUT TO READ.



PARENT TALKING TO YOUNG CHILD ABOUT DEATH

BY ABBIE GUNN



TIPS FOR PARENTS

STORY: HANNAH BRADLEY ART: MONICA BURNS



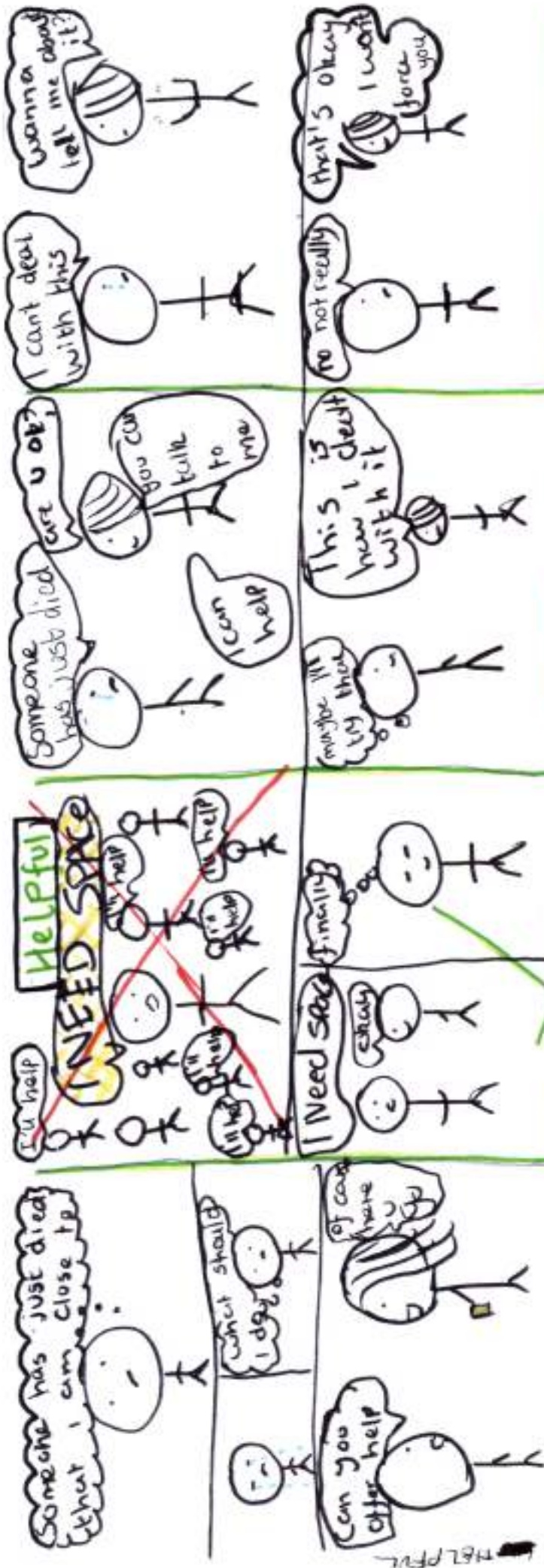
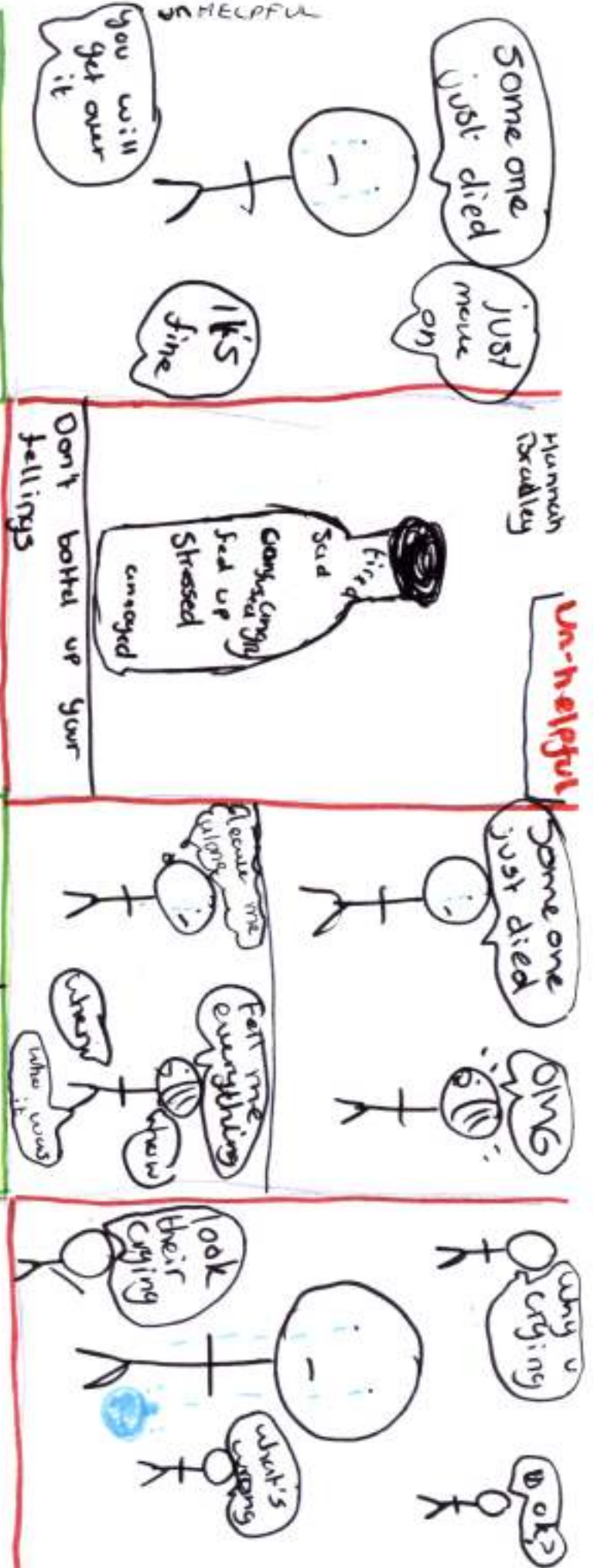
PARENTS SHOULD TELL THEIR CHILD ABOUT DEATH AND INFORM THEM ABOUT IT— JUST LIKE THE BIRDS & BEES. RULES OF LIFE.



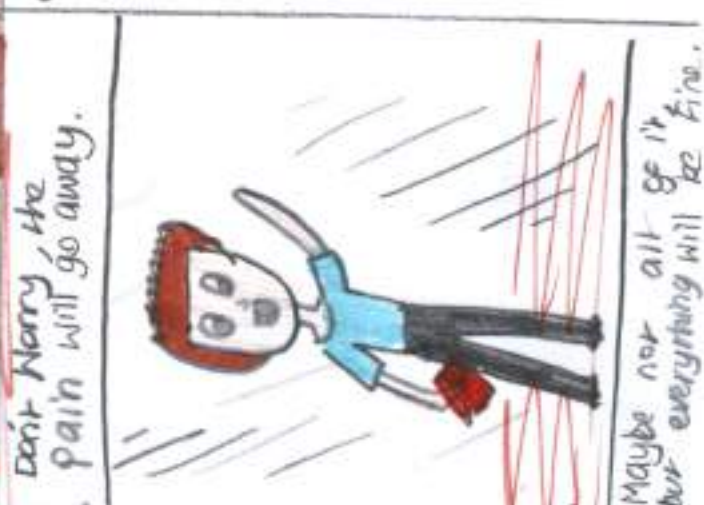
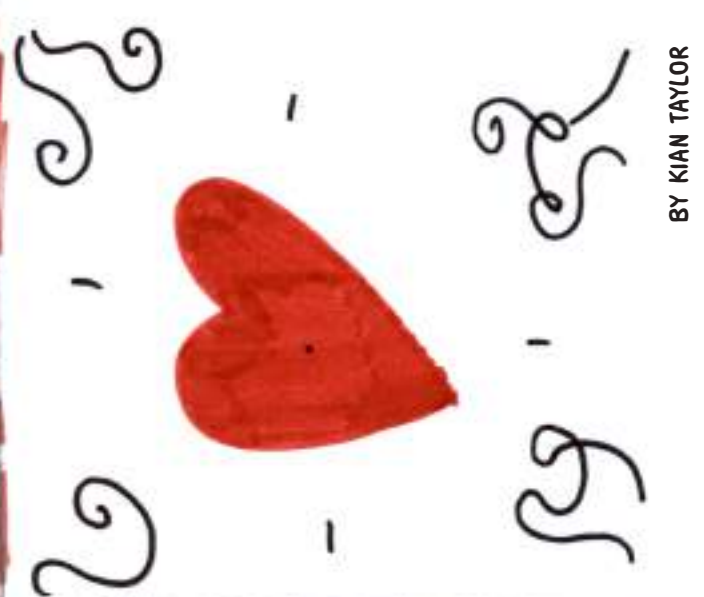
INFORM THEM ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE DIES. IF YOU ARE RELIGIOUS, TELL THEM ABOUT HEAVEN.



TELL THEM NOT TO BE SCARED OF DEATH. TELL THEM THE GOOD SIDES OF DEATH.



DEALING WITH GRIEF



HANNAH'S TIPS

ART: REBECCA HORNER

SUGGESTING HELP (RICHMOND'S HOPE)
LETTING THEM TALK ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON
IF YOU HAVE GONE THROUGH SOMETHING SIMILAR,
GIVING THEM ADVICE THAT HELPED YOU
LETTING THEM BE ALONE IF THEY WANNA BE
IF SOMEONE DOESN'T WANNA TALK
ABOUT IT, DON'T FORCE THEM

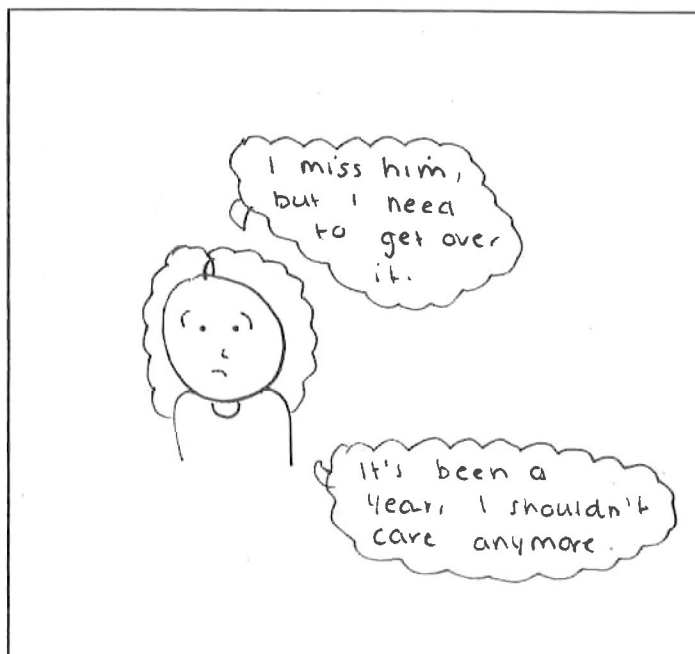
H E L P F U L

U N H E L P F U L

SAYING "MOVE ON"
SAYING "OH IT'S FINE"
CROWDING THEM IF
THEY ARE CRYING
FORCING SOMEONE TO
GIVE EVERY DETAIL
ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED
NOT TALKING ABOUT WHAT
YOU'RE GOING THROUGH

CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW

BY ABBIE GUNN



PRACTITIONERS' TIPS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN EXPERIENCING BEREAVEMENT

WORDS: LYNSEY SEMPLE + AMY MALOY (RICHMOND'S HOPE) ART: MARK BROWN

- Allow children and young people to have control because they didn't when their person died. For example: Would they like to go to the funeral? Would they like to see their person's body?
- Give them informed choices – A child may not know what happens at a funeral. Explain to them what is going to happen.
- Be prepared to answer questions over and over: A child is trying to understand and process the death and needs your help. If you don't know how to answer then tell them you don't know rather than making something up. Tell them you will do your best to answer their questions and seek support and advice from bereavement practitioners.



- Really listen to a child. Don't rush in to try and 'fix things'. They just want you to hear how they are feeling. You help them heal by listening with empathy.

- Do not hide your feelings when you are grieving. Children need to see your expression of grief. You can model how to grieve and young people will be less likely to hold their feelings in when they see adults expressing themselves in healthy ways.

- Be open and honest about the death and how you feel, even when the death has been under traumatic circumstances. This will let the child know that you are trusted and safe. This will encourage them to open up to you.

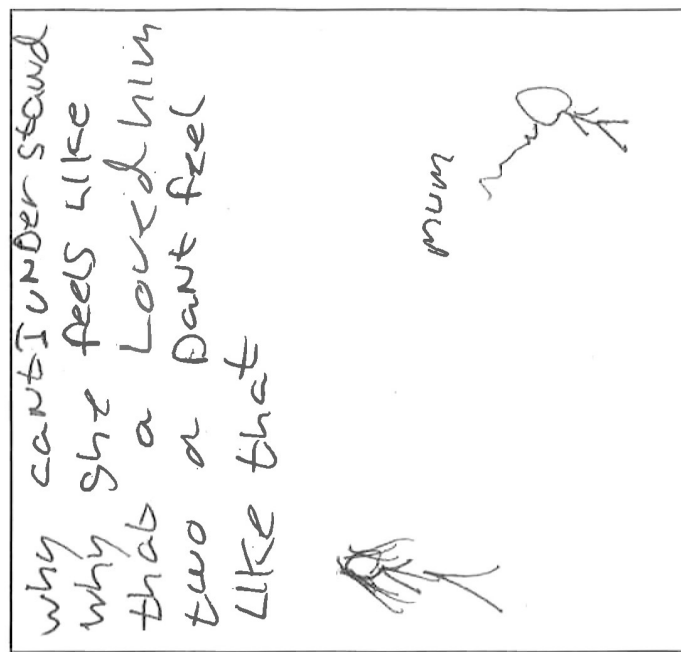
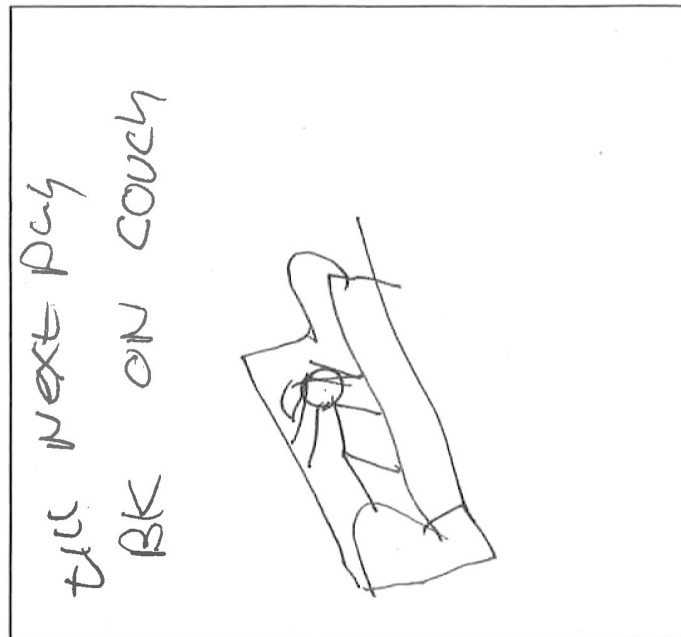
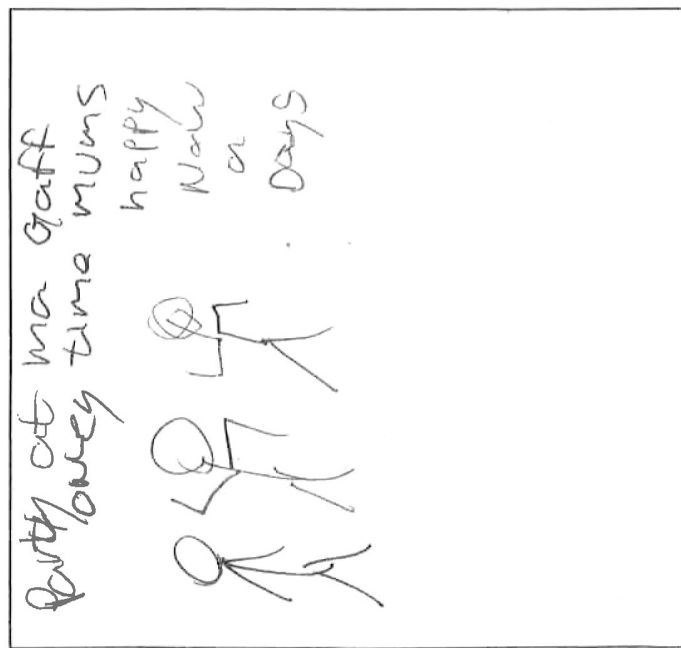
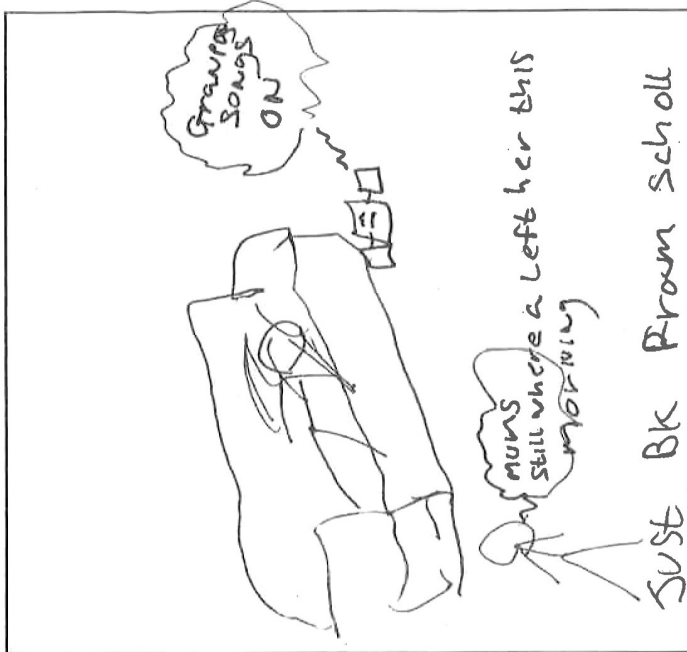
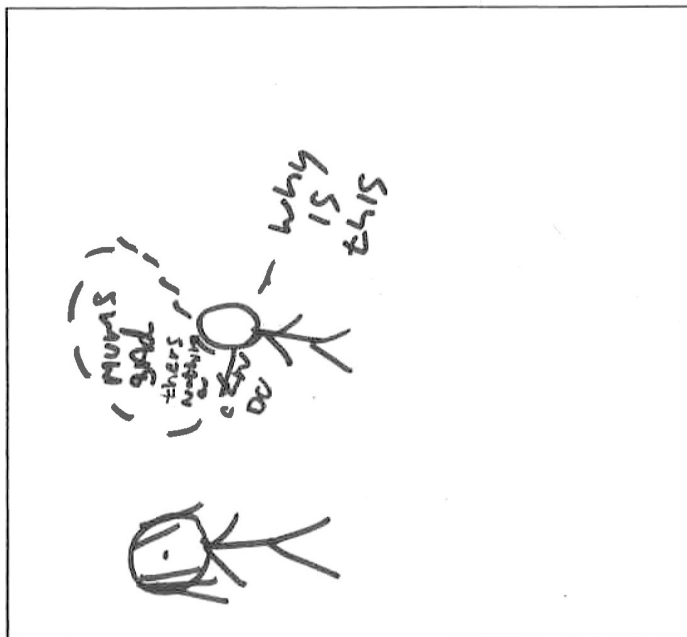
- Reassure a child that you can cope with their feelings. Often children try and protect their adults from how they are feeling and keep their own feelings inside.

- If you cry, tell the child that crying helps get the sad feelings out.

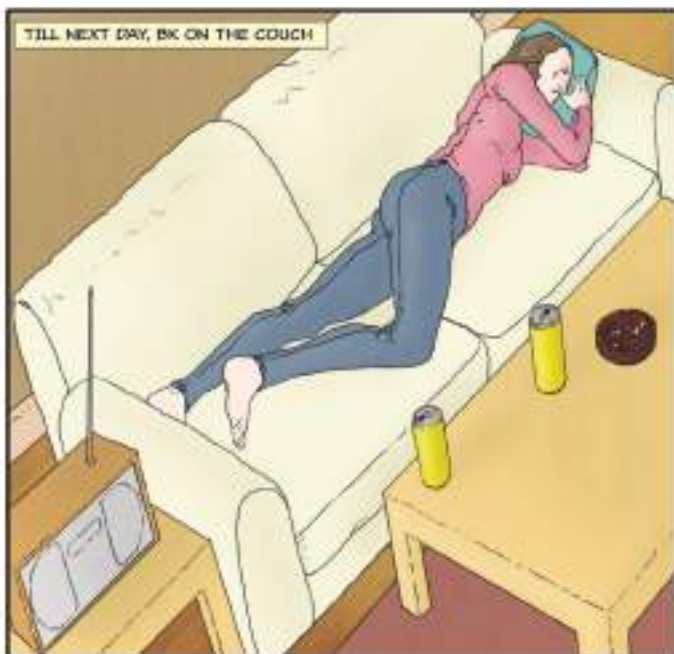
- If a child's behaviour gets worse after a death, explore with them how they might be feeling, and why they are behaving that way. Acknowledge with them that the feeling is okay but the behaviour is not, and explore with them ways they can express their feelings differently.



1) PAPA PASSED AWAY



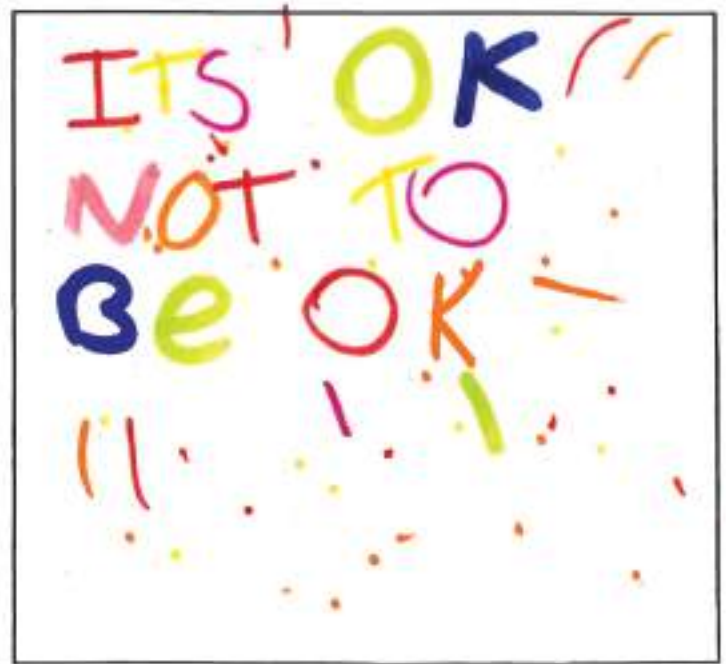
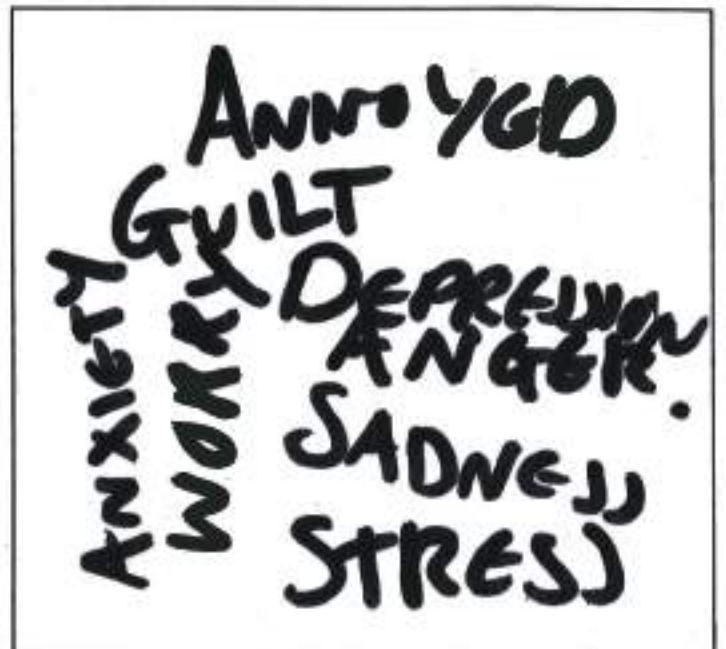
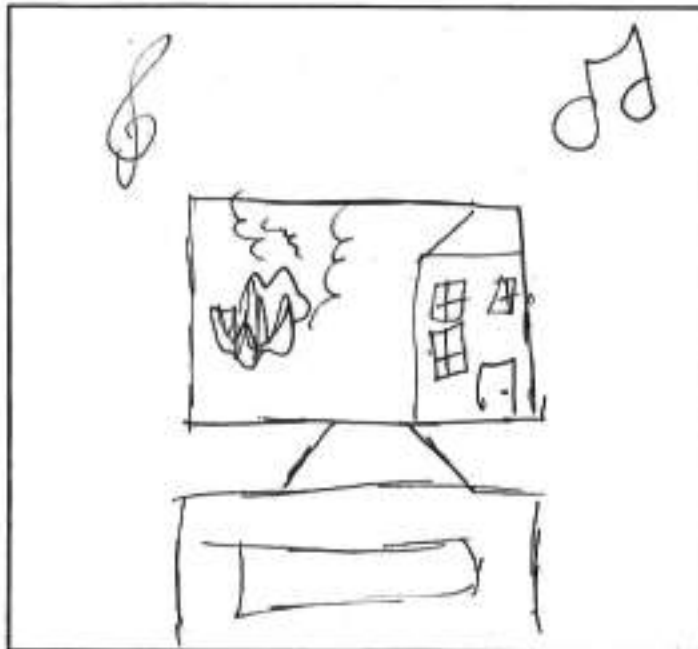
PAPA'S PASSED AWAY



ART: GARRY MAC

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK

BY EMILY GUNN



2:30 AM...

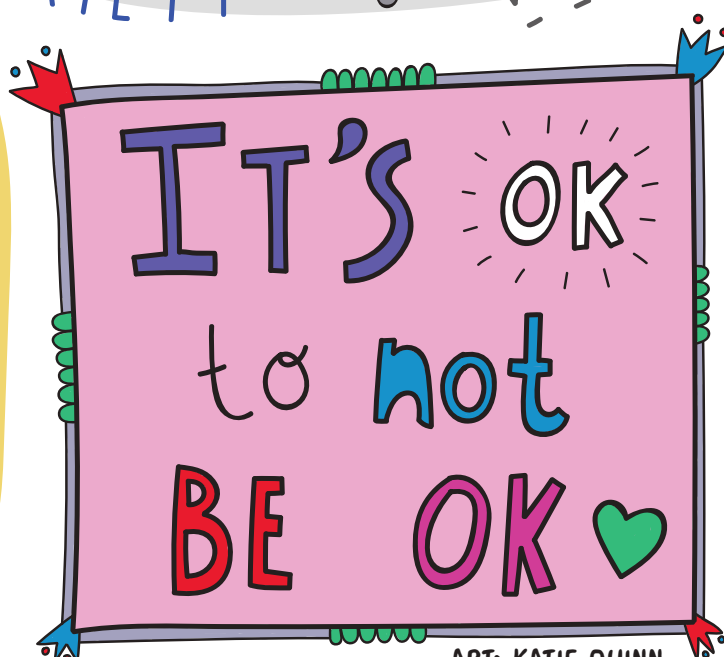
WHAT'S
HAPPENED?

MUM, I
CAN'T SLEEP.



STRESS
GUILT
ANNOYED
ANGER
DEPRESSION
SADNESS
ANXIETY
WORRY

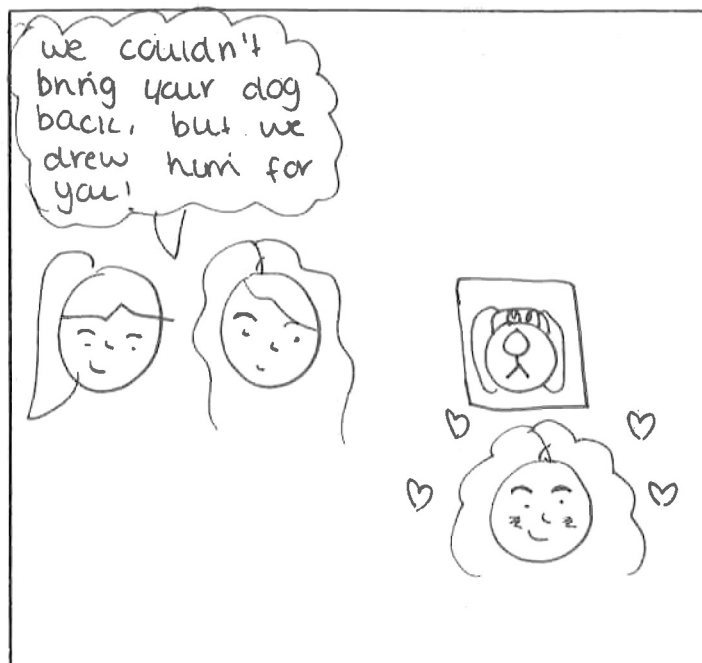
SOMETIMES
YOU JUST NEED
TO TALK... YOU
MIGHT NOT WANT
TO RIGHT NOW,
BUT IT'S THE BEST
THING YOU CAN
DO. EVEN TALK TO
FRIENDS, OR JUST
TO ME. AS LONG
AS YOU GET
IT OUT...



ART: KATIE QUINN

YOUNG PERSON TELLING FRIENDS A PET HAS DIED

BY ABBIE GUNN



LOSING A PET IS A BIG THING. YOU CAN'T BRING THEM BACK BUT THERE'S ALWAYS SOME WAY TO REMEMBER THEM.



One Love by Steven Kerr

When I was 8 my dad sadly past away it was the hardest thing to handle in my life. And also my gran give away my pet penny but when I saw my dad lying on the ground I started to get really ~~even~~ angry...

In 2016 that was when he died and he was 28 years ~~old~~ ^{old} and his birthday was last week and I can't say how much I miss him 3 years no seen and I love you dad.



One Love, one heart Let's get together and feel all right hear the children crying (one Love) hear the children crying (one heart).

... Dad...
If I could write a story it would be the greatest ever told of a kind and loving dad who had a heart of gold I could write a million pages but still be unable to say just how much I love and miss him. Every

Single day I will remember all he taught me I'm hurt but I still love you because you will always be my where my dad

DAD...

I Love ♡...



WHEN I WAS 9 MY DAD PASSED AWAY - IT WAS THE HARDEST THING FOR ME TO HANDLE IN MY LIFE AND ALSO, MY GRAN GAVE MY PET PENNY AWAY - BUT WHEN I SAW MY DAD LYING ON THE GROUND, I STARTED TO GET REALLY ANGRY...



DAD



IN 2016 THAT WAS WHEN HE DIED, AND HE WAS 30 YEARS OF AGE AND HIS BIRTHDAY WAS LAST WEEK. I CAN'T SAY HOW MUCH I MISS HIM, IT'S BEEN 3 YEARS SINCE I LAST SAW HIM.



I LOVE YOU DAD.



ONE LOVE · ONE HEART · LET'S GET TOGETHER AND FEEL ALRIGHT · HEAR THE CHILDREN CRYING · ONE LOVE



Dad...

IF I COULD WRITE A STORY IT WOULD BE THE GREATEST EVER TOLD OF A KIND AND LOVING DAD WHO HAD A HEART OF GOLD
I COULD WRITE A MILLION PAGES BUT STILL BE UNABLE TO SAY JUST HOW MUCH I LOVE AND MISS HIM, EVERY SINGLE DAY.
I WILL REMEMBER ALL HE TAUGHT ME, I'M HURT BUT I STILL LOVE YOU, BECAUSE YOU WERE MY DAD.

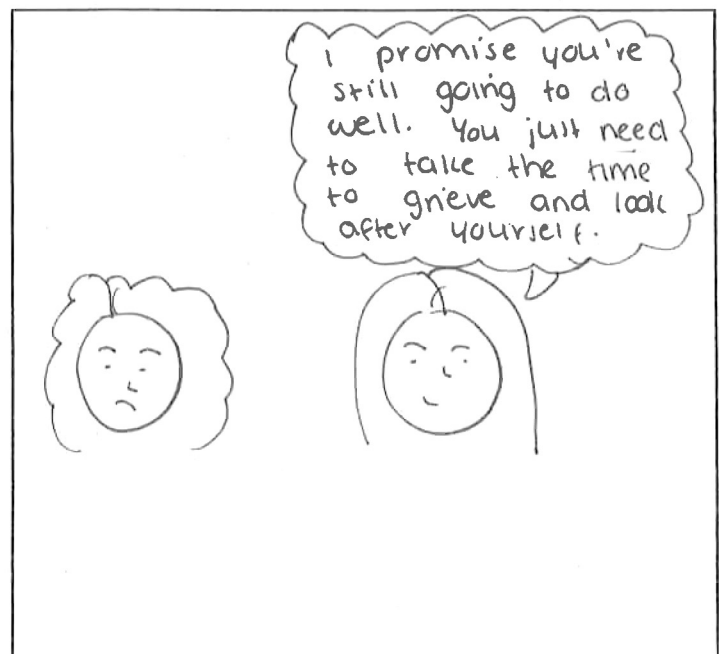
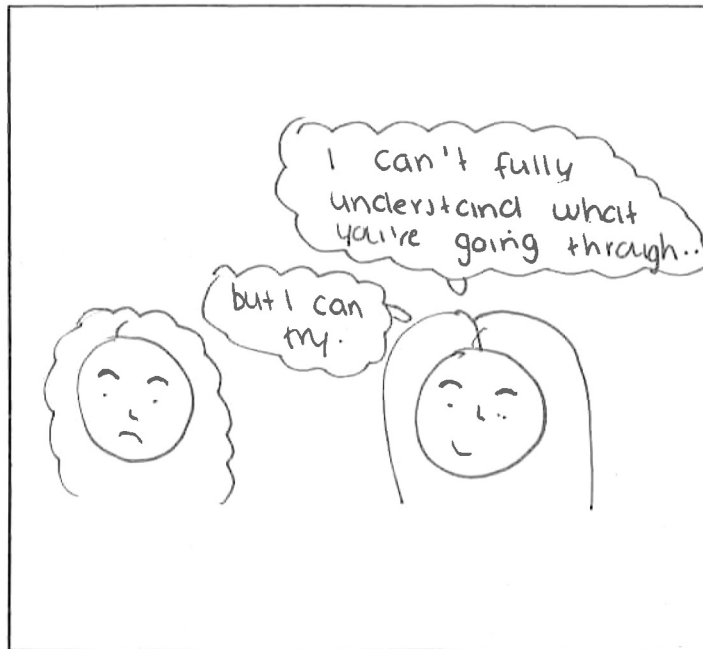
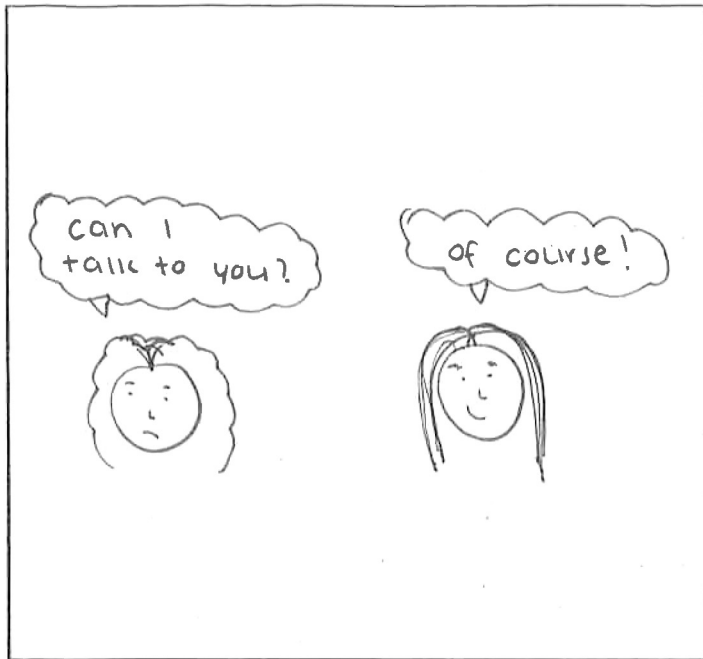
one love



I LOVE YOU DAD AND MISS YOU SO MUCH.

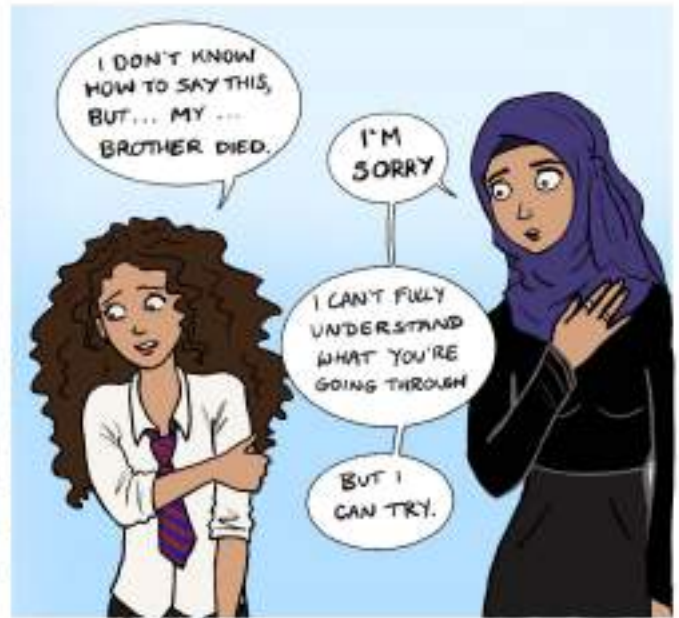
GRIEVING CHILD TALKING TO A TEACHER

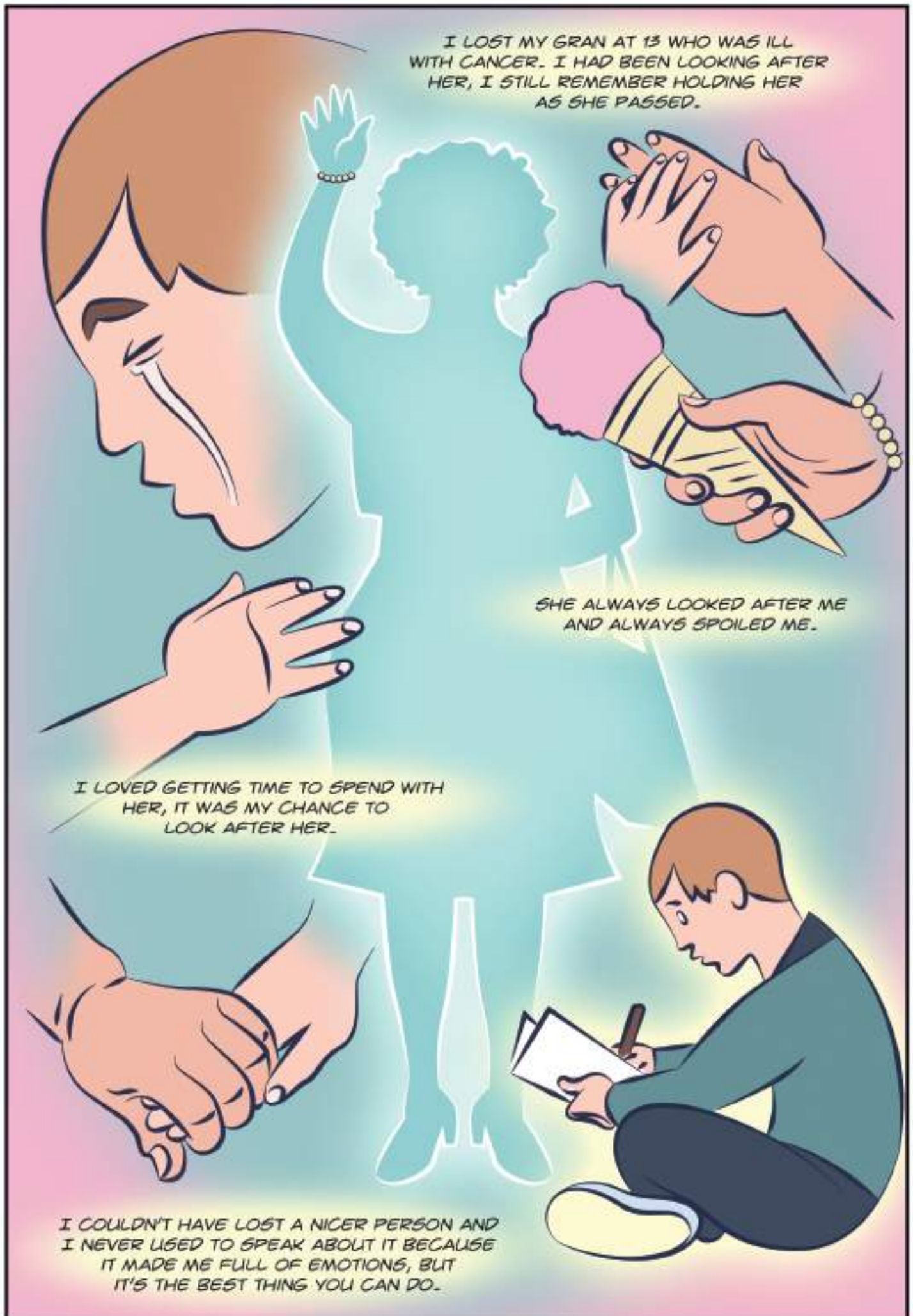
BY ABBIE GUNN



ART: MONICA BURNS

ART: MONICA BURNS







Unhelpful

TRYING TO GET INFORMATION OUT OF ME ABOUT WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH.

CONSTANTLY ASKING IF I'M OKAY IN FRONT OF OTHERS - IT DRAWS ATTENTION TO ME.

SAYING YOU'LL CHECK UP ON ME AND THEN NOT FOLLOWING THROUGH.

WHY WERE YOU OFF SCHOOL?

EMMA, WHY ARE YOU CRYING?

IT WILL BE FINE!

JUST GO BACK TO CLASS

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH HER?

HOW DID SHE DIE?

Quick Tips

Listen to me. Let me speak. don't put words in my mouth.

Don't say things like "she's in a better place!"

Don't brush it off

Remember, everyone reacts differently to grief

Helpful

BEING UNDERSTANDING

CHECKING UP ON ME OFTEN IN PERSON - ONCE A MONTH IS A GOOD AMOUNT.

MAKING SURE OTHER PUPILS ARE BEHAVING APPROPRIATELY AROUND THE SUBJECT.

UNDERSTANDING THAT I'LL NOT JUST 'GET OVER IT' QUICKLY AND SOME DAYS WILL BE WORSE THAN OTHERS.

IF YOU NEED TO TALK OR TAKE TIME OUT, I'M HERE.

OFFERING ME TIME OUT OF CLASS IF I NEED IT.

Listen up Teachers! Here's how you can help!

Some schools offer a pass to let grieving pupils leave class and go to the guidance room whenever they need to.

Teach PSE* classes on death, mental health, loss and how it can affect people, and common disabilities.

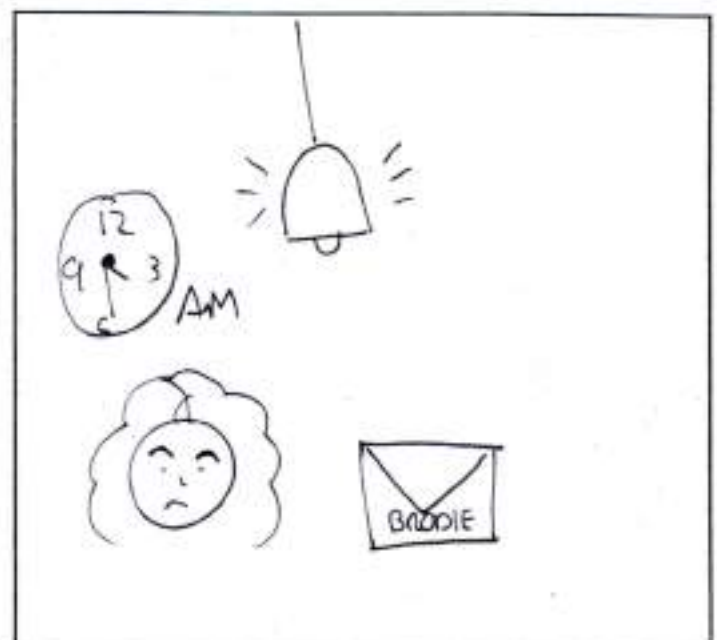
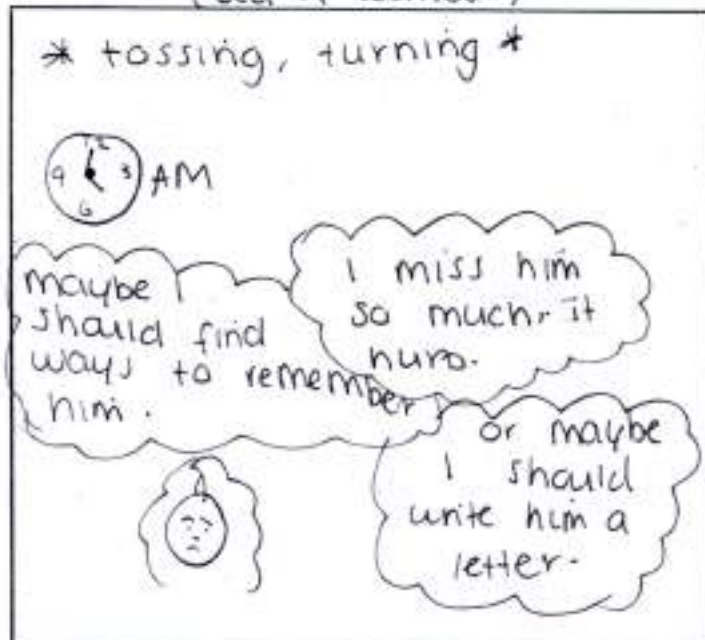
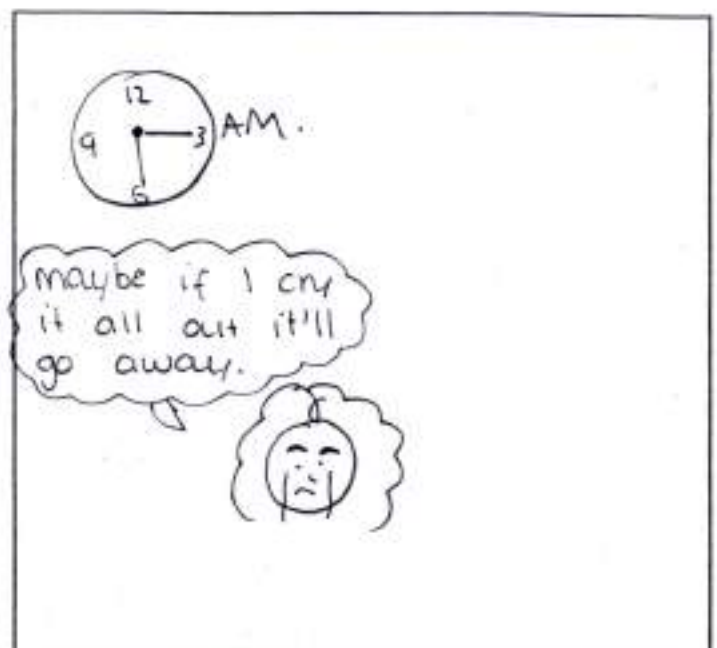
* Personal and Social Education

YOUNG PERSON IS SAD AT NIGHT OVER A DEATH JUST BEFORE BED

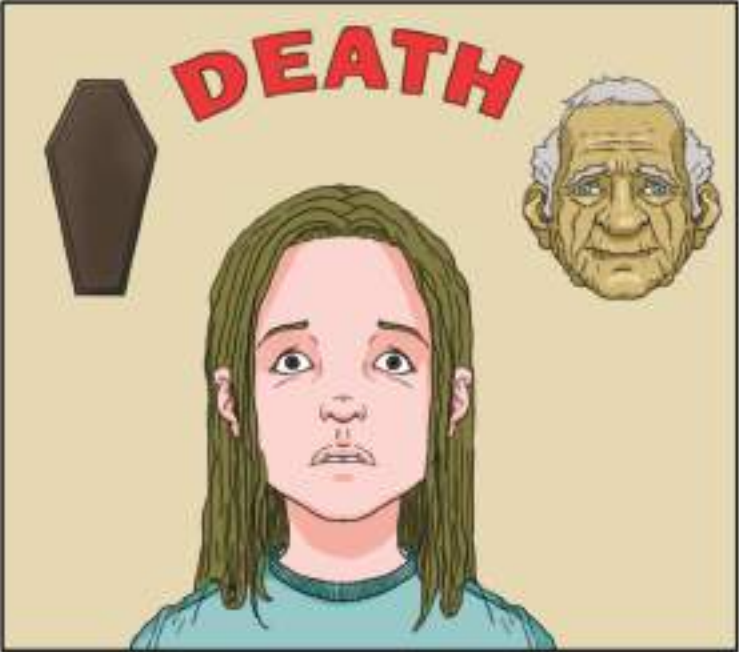
BY ABBIE GUNN



(bed of worries.)



THINKING ABOUT DEATH AT NIGHT



ART: GARRY MAC

Abbie's Thoughts

Art: Rebecca Horner

• Just LISTEN to the
grieving person.
If you don't understand
then don't pretend to.

• Just let the young person
know you're there for them;
be understanding but not forceful

• Never make the young person
feel like a burden / invalid
emotions.

Make them feel
comfortable. Tell
them it's okay
to cry / grieve.

IT'S OKAY
NOT TO
BE OKAY



Imagine a tunnel in front of you. You're driving a cargo truck with loads of boxes and crates.


On the side you're on it's dark, sad, scary, and lonely.

Every day, week, or month you can drop a box or break it.

You keep breaking the boxes so you can fit through to the other side, where there's happiness and normality.

You CAN get to the other side.

HAPPY TOWN
AHEAD



Having someone, especially someone you're close with, pass away can cause all sorts of things. It can bring down so much confidence and it can lower your self esteem.

Let them talk about the person who passed, and how they made them happy.

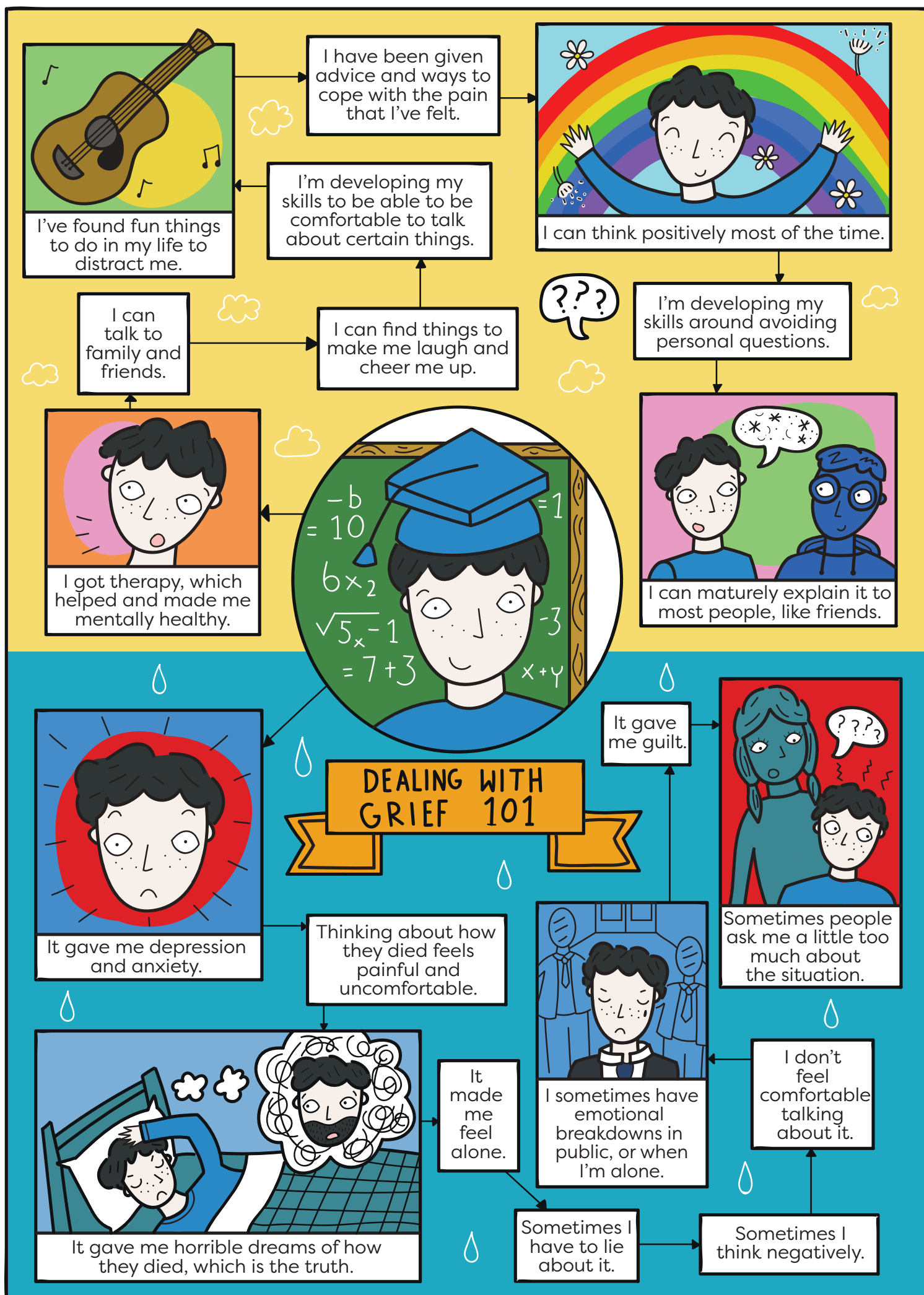
Don't let them feel embarrassed or guilty about being sad or depressed.

Tell them it's not bad to cry. Sometimes that's the only thing that helps or can get your feelings and emotions out.

Be there for them even if it's just to let them complain, because it can mean so much to know someone is there to listen...

Just telling someone you're there for them can help so much. Make sure they can trust you.

The small things can go a long way.



EMILY'S ESCAPE PLACES

ART: REBECCA HORNER



WRITING



FURTHER RESOURCES



Barnardo's Scotland

www.barnardos.org.uk/scotland

Child Bereavement UK

www.childbereavementuk.org

Children's Grief Awareness Week

www.childrensgriefawarenessweek.com

Children's Hospices Across Scotland (CHAS)

www.chas.org.uk

Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief

www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk

Richmond's Hope: Supporting Bereaved Families Since 2003

www.richmondshope.org.uk

Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice

www.cycj.org.uk

Dundee Comics Creative Space

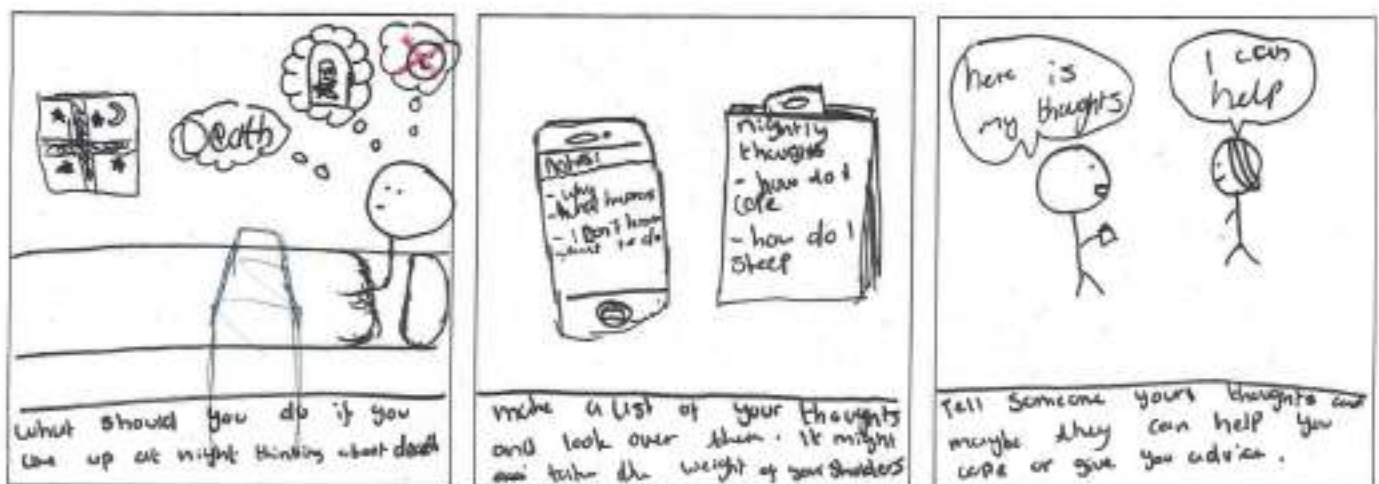
dundeecomicscreativespace.com

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SKETCHES

TIPS FOR PARENTS ORIGINAL COMIC BY HANNAH BRADLEY



THINKING ABOUT DEATH AT NIGHT ORIGINAL COMIC BY HANNAH BRADLEY



EMMA'S TIPS ORIGINAL DRAWING BY EMMA MOORE



DILLON HIPSON'S DRAWINGS

DILLON
H



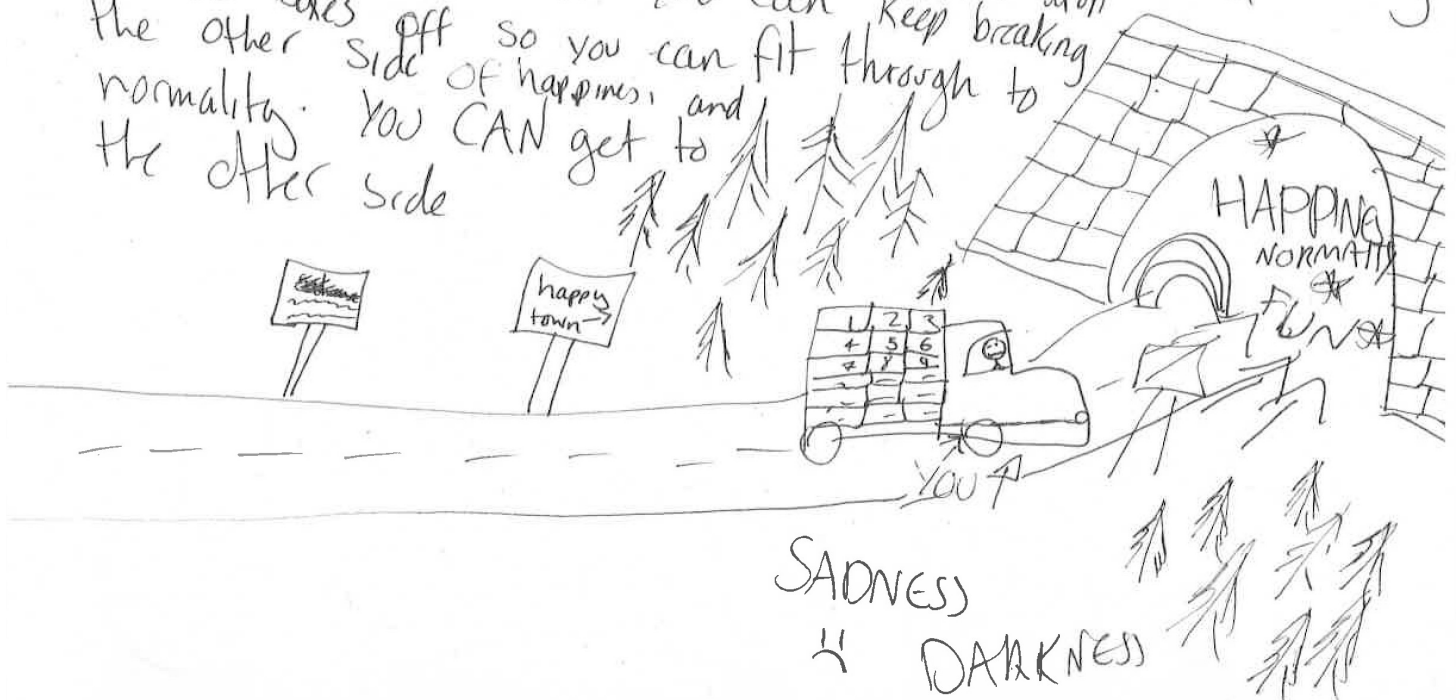
PROCESS

THINGS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE

ORIGINAL DRAWING AND TIPS BY EMILY GUNN

1. The small things go a long way so even just telling someone you're there for them and give them a hug can help so much.
2. Letting them know that you can get help... It's ok to not be ok. Don't let them feel embarrassed about or guilty about being sad or depressed.
3. ~~It's not bad to cry~~ IT'S OK TO CRY! ~~don't~~ tell them it's not bad to cry. Sometimes that's the only thing that helps or can get your feelings and emotions out.

4. Something to help you:- Imagine a tunnel ~~in~~ in front of you. on the side you're on it's dark sad and scary. & lonely imagine driving a cargo truck with loads of boxes and crates every day/week or month you can drop a box or break it. You can keep breaking the boxes off so you can fit through to the other side of happiness, and normality. You CAN get to the other side



PAGE 1: DIGITAL SKETCH AND FIRST PASS BY REBECCA HORNER



PAGE 2: FURTHER TIPS BY EMILY GUNN, DIGITAL SKETCH BY REBECCA HORNER

- ⑤ Be there for them even if it's just to let them complain because that means so much to know someone is there to listen.
- ⑥ make sure they know they can trust you.
- ⑦ Talk to them about how the person that passed makes them happy and things they did that put a smile on their face.
- ⑧ Having someone - especially someone you're close with - pass away can cause all sorts of things. It can bring down so much confidence and it can lower your self-esteem so much.
- ⑨ Sometimes helping them by telling them they can get help! it's ok!

The end
bye



CONTRIBUTOR BIOS



Hi, I am **Abbie Gunn** and I am 18 years old. I was 16 when my little brother died and I have felt very alone for the majority of the past 2 years as there was never any resources for grieving teens my age and I just hope that with this comic I can help people in similar positions.



Hi, I'm **Hannah Bradley**, I am 16 years old and interested in drama and art. I love making videos for social media and I would like to become an actor. I also enjoy photography and creative art (making a headpiece for higher art). I lost a close relative 2 years ago to cancer and I felt confused and isolated from my friends who often did not know what to say to me. I have enjoyed working on this project and I hope that the comic book will help everyone who reads it to understand the emotions of someone who is grieving and how best to help them.



Hi. I am **Emily Gunn** and I am 13. Sadly my little brother died at just nine months old when I was 11. I am grateful to be part of this project in the hope that I can maybe help other young people who have also lost someone they love.



My name is **Dillon Hipson** I am 12 years old. I like playing football and going out with my friends. I attended Lynsey's session at Richmond's Hope and was asked to take part in this project and thought it would be a good idea.



My name is **Steven Kerr**. I am 12 years old. I love to play football with my friends. I decided to take part in the comic book project as I wanted to share my story with other kids.



I'm **Emma Moore** and I'm 13 years old. I love drama and music, I really enjoy musical theatre like going to see shows and volunteering to help younger people in their drama groups. I wanted to take part in this comic book project because since I lost my sister Isla I want to help other people who have lost someone special to them. I think that everyone should have access to help and support and this is a way of showing others how they can support someone suffering bereavement.



Hello, my name is **Kian Taylor**. I am 13 years old and I love music and theatre. Ever since I was young, I've always wanted to sing and act. I also love art, which is what inspired me to participate in this comic.



Hello, my name is **Amy Maloy** and I've worked at Richmond's Hope Glasgow for 2 years. Working here allows me to meet lots of people and to be present as children and young people develop their own ways of managing their grief. One of the things that I love about my job is the fact that I am constantly reminded of how resilient and resourceful people can be, even if they don't always realise it themselves.



Hi I am **Janet O'Connor**. I am a social worker with Children's Hospices Across Scotland. It is an honour to support children and young people in my role. Supporting the young people with this project has been a truly inspirational experience for me.



I'm **Lynsey Semple** and I work at Richmond's hope in Glasgow supporting bereaved Children and Young People for over 3 years. What I love about my job is building a trusting safe space with young people and seeing them manage better with what has happened to them through their support.

We would like to say a special thank you to all of the participants from Polmont, who shared their stories over two workshop sessions. Our work at Polmont would not have been possible without the support of Michelle Anderton, Youth Worker with Barnardo's Scotland and Polmont, so many thanks to her. A very special thank you to Damon Herd and Elliot Balson, who worked as artist facilitators for the two workshop session at Polmont.





Professor Divya Jindal-Snape is Chair of Education, Inclusion and Life Transitions in the School of Education and Social Work. She is Director of the Transformative Change: Educational and Life Transitions (TCELT) Research Centre. She does research on life transitions, including the impact of life limiting conditions and bereavement.



Professor Chris Murray is Chair of Comics Studies at the School of Humanities, University of Dundee and he leads the MLitt in Comics Studies and Graphic Novels course. He is Director of the Scottish Centre

for Comics Studies and Dundee Comics Creative Space, co-editor of *Studies in Comics* (Intellect) and UniVerse Comics, and has produced several public information comics for research and engagement purposes.



Dr Golnar Nabizadeh is Lecturer in Comics Studies at the University of Dundee. Her research focuses on comics and visual studies and particularly on representations of trauma, migration, and memory in

these fields. She is the author of *Representation and Memory in Graphic Novels* (2019), published by Routledge.



Sally Paul is a Lecturer in the School of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Strathclyde. Previously, she worked for 10 years as a professional social worker in the statutory and voluntary

sectors, both in Scotland and the USA. She is actively engaged in a number of research projects and knowledge exchange activities with specific interests in: death, dying and bereavement; loss; public health approaches to palliative care (including compassionate communities); children and young people, among others.



Dr Susan Rasmussen is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Strathclyde. Her research focusses on understanding suicide and self-harm, and the experience of being bereaved by

suicide.



Nina Vaswani is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice, an independent centre hosted by the University of Strathclyde. She has worked at Glasgow City Council, helping

to develop the city's evidence-based approach to youth justice policy, practice and service

development and also managing the Youth Justice Research and Development Team. Her key research interests are the experiences and impact of bereavement and loss in young people as well as the vulnerability of young men.



Mark Brown graduated from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, then moved to London where he cut his teeth creating content across various platforms such as digital TV, games consoles, mobile phones, newspapers and magazines. He is now focussing on illustration which has always been his true passion. markbrown.online



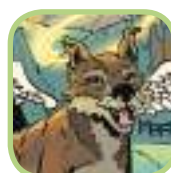
Monica Burns is an artist at Ink Pot Studio, and a graduate of the MLitt in Comics and Graphic Novels at Dundee University. Their special interest is in adapting Scottish literature into comics, and they are currently working on James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. [@monicaburns_art](https://twitter.com/monicaburns_art)



Rebecca Horner is a cartoonist, colourist, and creative educator. She is Workshop Lead at Dundee Comics Creative Space and has done production on many books, including this one. rebeccahorner.com



Garry Mac is a writer and artist from Glasgow. Recent work includes *The Sea of Paperwork* with Maryhill Integration Network and ConFAB, a commission for queer times school with GoMA Glasgow, and a short film, *We Were Always Here*, for BBC Scotland and LUX Scotland, co-directed with Michael Richardson. He is currently a PhD Researcher at the University of Dundee.



Norrie Millar is a Scottish comics artist based in Dundee. He self-publishes his own work and is also a freelance illustrator, providing work for numerous companies and publishers. behance.net/norriemillar



Katie Quinn is an illustrator and comic book artist based in Edinburgh. Her work has been exhibited and sold around the UK and published in the likes of *Counterpoint Magazine* and *Wilma*, Ink Pot Studio's anthology of girls' comics. Her illustration clients include Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh and Cranachan Publishing. oohkatieq.co.uk

