

# Growing stronger together

Activity  
book  
5-12  
years



*Waitemata*  
District Health Board

Best Care for Everyone

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# For the grown-ups

This activity book was developed for children whose parents are physically or mentally ill.

## **Examples of physical illness may include:**

- Diabetes
- Heart problems
- Recovery from surgery
- Brain tumor
- Longterm health problems, e.g. thyroid disease
- Auto immune disease

## **Examples of mental illness may include:**

- Depression, including postnatal depression
- Anxiety
- Bipolar disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder

It can be very hard for children when a parent is ill. Most children don't understand much about illness. Children who don't understand illness can feel anxious, scared, stressed or angry. This activity book is meant to be shared by a parent (or other caregiver) and their child.

## **It aims to help parents and their children to:**

- Talk about being ill
- Talk about feelings
- Find ways to reduce the intensity of uncomfortable feelings
- Build strong relationships
- Problem solve together
- Have a stronger sense of hope

The activity book includes information, interactive questions, fun activities and tools to deal with the impact of parent/ caregiver's illness on their children. Please see pages 46 and 47 on how to make the best use of this activity booklet.

# About me

Draw or paste  
a picture of  
yourself here.



My name is

All about



I am  years old

My friends are...

I live with...

I like to watch...

My favourite

Colour:

Food:

Book:

Animal:

My favourite things to do are...

When I grow up I want to...

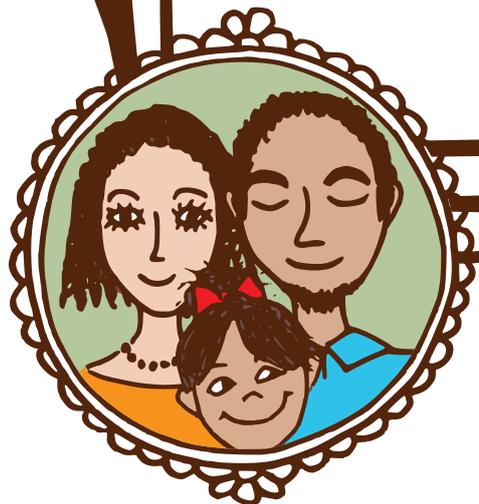
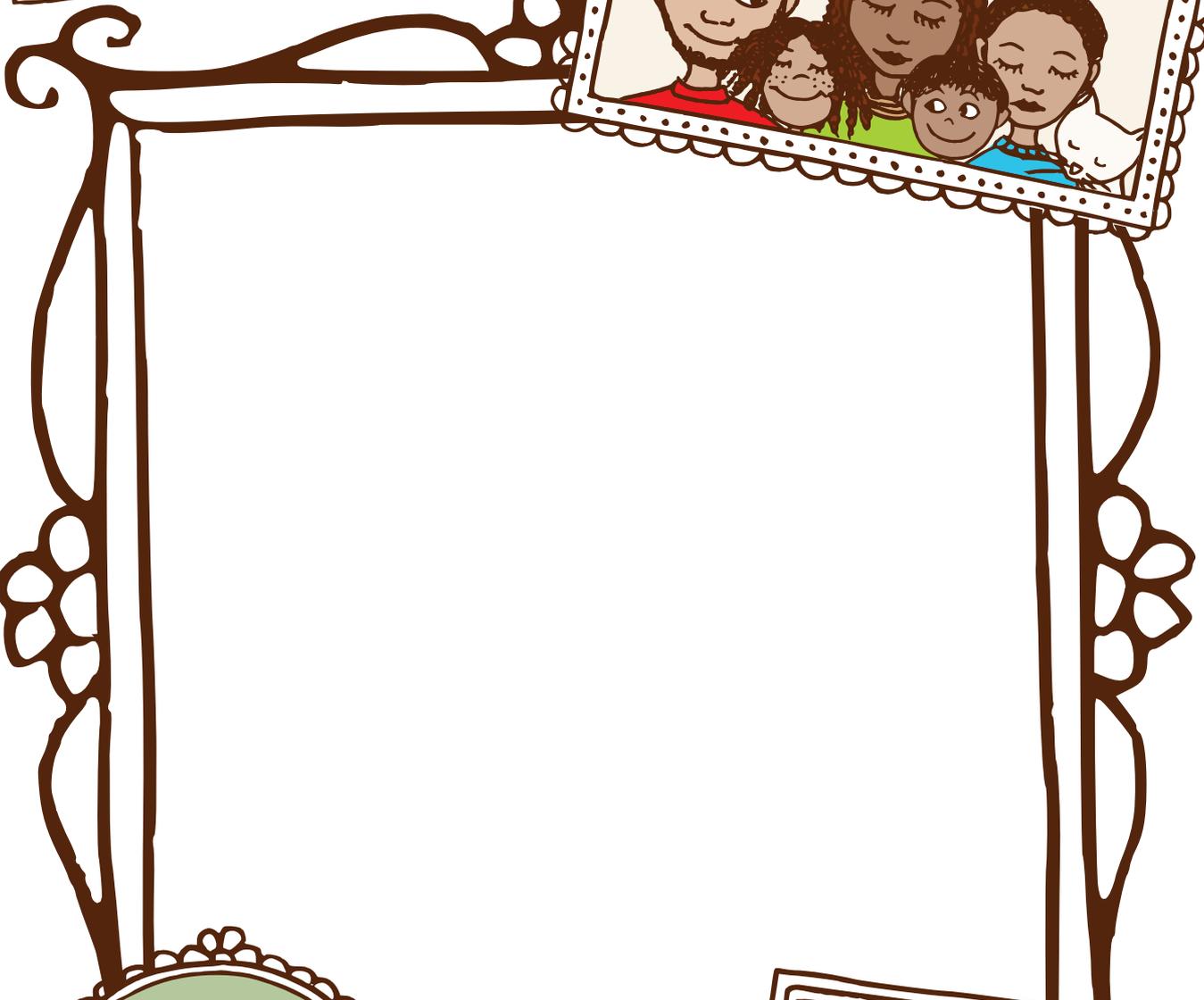
I am good at...

Tip for parents/  
caregivers

Praise and  
encourage the  
child's ideas  
and creativity.  
Do not expect  
perfection!

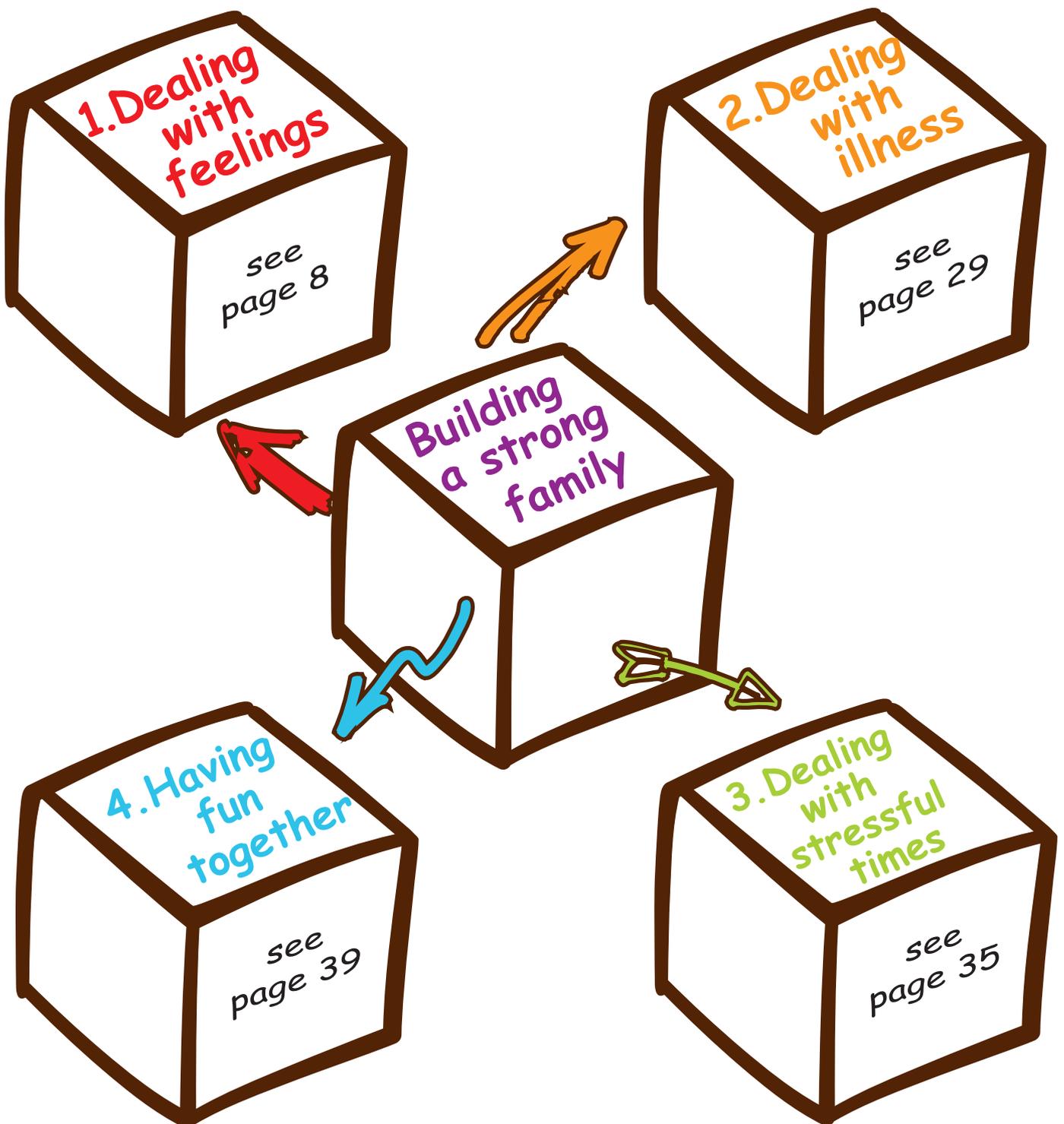
# My family/Whanau

Draw your family having  
a happy time



# Building blocks to have a strong family

This activity book includes 4 building blocks to build a strong family:



# 1. Dealing with feelings

Colour the cars that describe some of the feelings you had during the last week.

**Tip for parents/caregivers**  
Thinking about how you like to be treated when you are upset or worried will help you to understand your child's needs better.



excited



unhappy



scared



angry



happy



worried

# Word search

Find and circle the following 'feeling' words  
(the letters must be in touching boxes):

afraid    loved    unhappy  
angry    mad    worried    happy  
excited    scared    sad

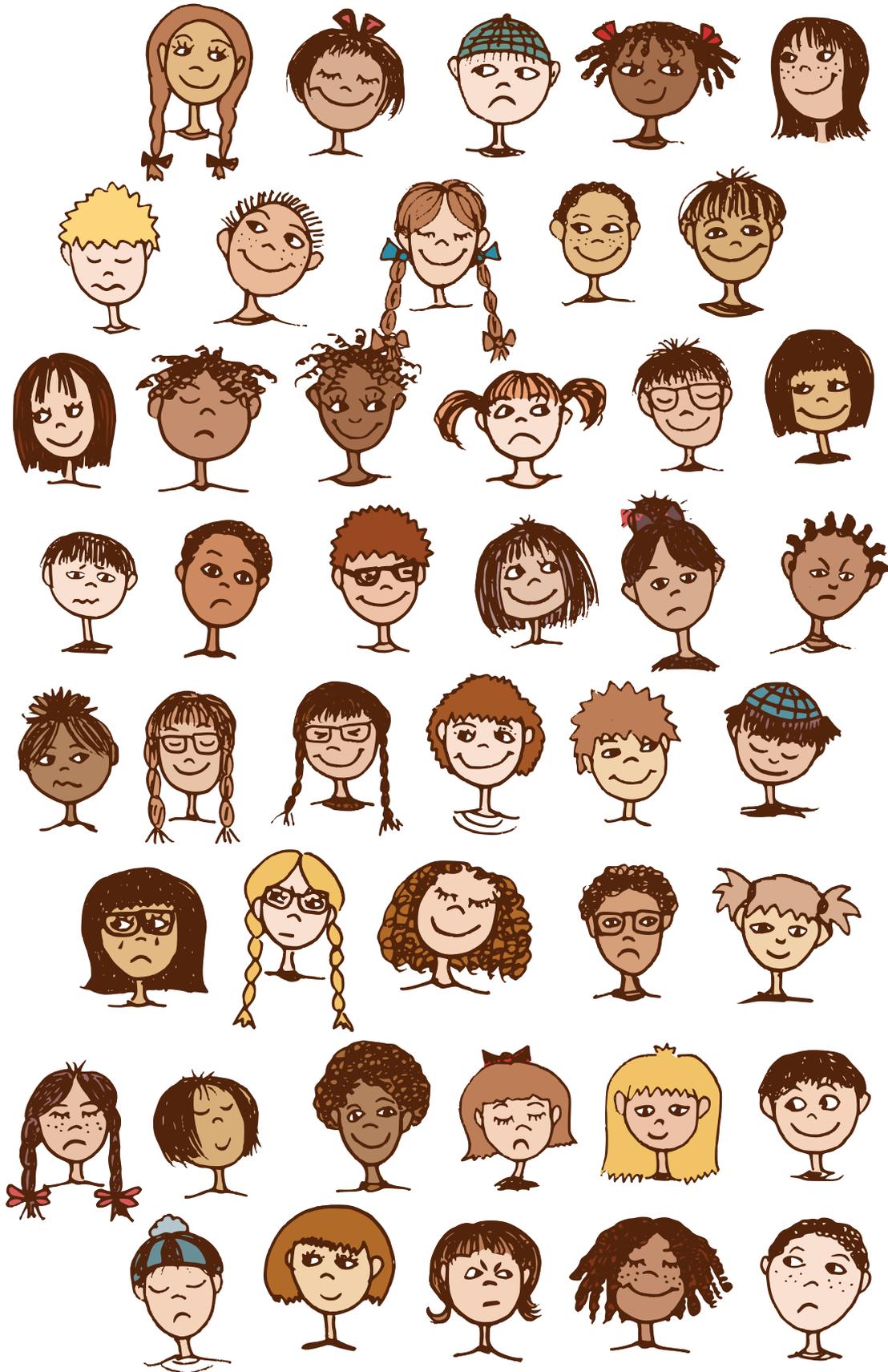
a	s	w	r	f	s	h	a
f	r	o	o	s	c	h	n
r	g	r	i	m	a	d	g
a	u	r	a	w	r	e	r
i	n	i	c	i	e	t	y
d	h	e	l	v	d	i	p
s	a	d	o	x	l	c	p
k	p	o	v	u	s	x	a
a	p	a	e	h	l	e	h
b	y	s	d	v	a	e	d



# Your happy place

Make a drawing of your happy place:

# Circle the faces that show how you are feeling



# What happens when people are unhappy or sad?

*Tip for parents/  
caregivers*

*Validate the child's  
responses and feelings,  
e.g. by saying:  
"That would make me  
cross too".*



They cry  
They don't smile  
They feel horrible inside



Things that make me unhappy or sad

1. -----

2. -----

3. -----

4. -----

5. -----

# Things that I can do to make me happier

1. Play with a friend

2. Do a puzzle

3. Colouring

4. Water plants

5. Sing

6. Read

7. ....

8. ....

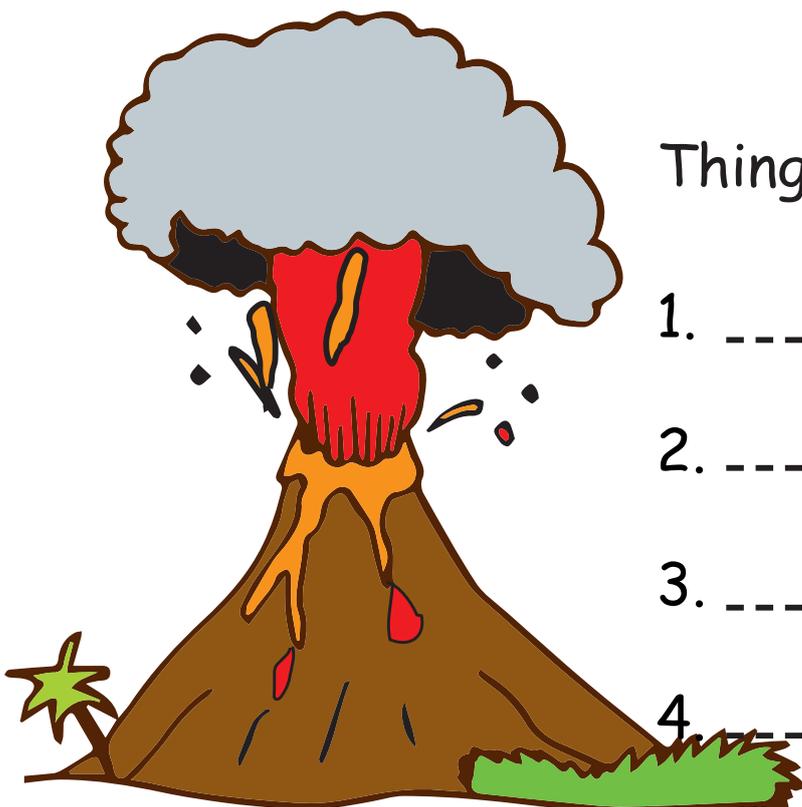


# Feeling angry

Everybody gets angry sometimes. Anger can feel like a volcano inside you.

Sometimes kids get so angry that they do things that are not OK.

Yes, some kids scream, slam doors, break or throw things and hit the wall or someone else. We can use our brain to think of helpful things to do with all that anger energy instead.



Things that make me angry

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

# Where in your body do you usually feel anger?

Show the area and write down what you feel

e.g. head feels dizzy 



*Tip for parents/  
caregivers*

Acknowledge the child's feelings, for example, say: "You are very upset that you cannot go to your friend now."

When I get angry I...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

# Anger rules

**What to do:** Calm yourself down in a safe way,

because .....

Talk about it and try to sort out the problem.

**What not to do:** Don't break or throw things,

because .....

Do not hurt others, animals or yourself.

## Colouring-in time

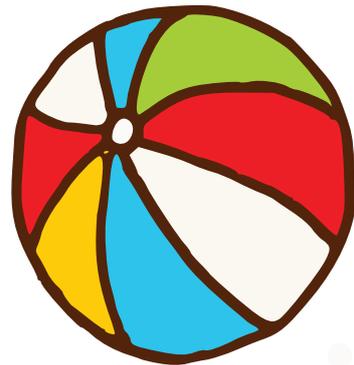


# Things you can do when you are angry

Underline the things that you could do when you are angry. What else could you do?

## Do physical activities:

- Play outside
- Play with a ball
- Do sport
- Dance
- Jump up and down



## Talk to someone:

- Tell someone what is making you angry.
- Put your feelings into words. For example, say: "I feel angry when I need to stop watching TV and go to bed."

## Other things I could do:

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----
4. -----

# Feeling worried

Kids sometimes get worried about things.



Things that I worry about:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

When I worry, I...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Things I can do when I am worried:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

# Feeling Scared

Everyone feels scared sometimes.

## When kids feel scared:

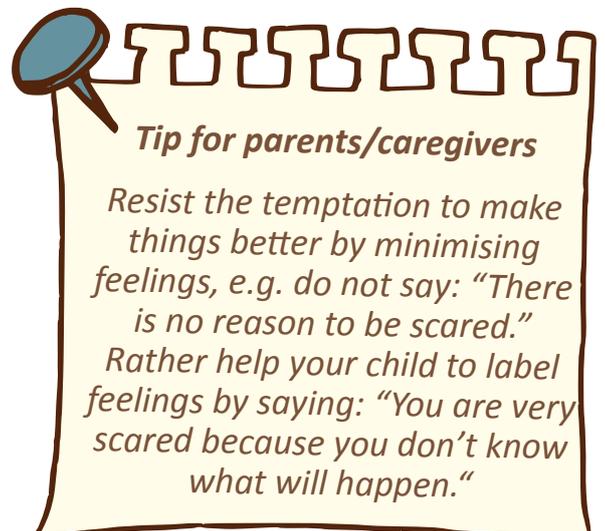
- Their heart beats loud and fast
- Their body trembles and shakes
- They feel like hiding in a safe place
- They want to run away

## What are you afraid of?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## When I feel scared, I...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



# What makes me feel better when I am scared?

- Telling someone I am scared
- A hug
- Ask/ yell out for help

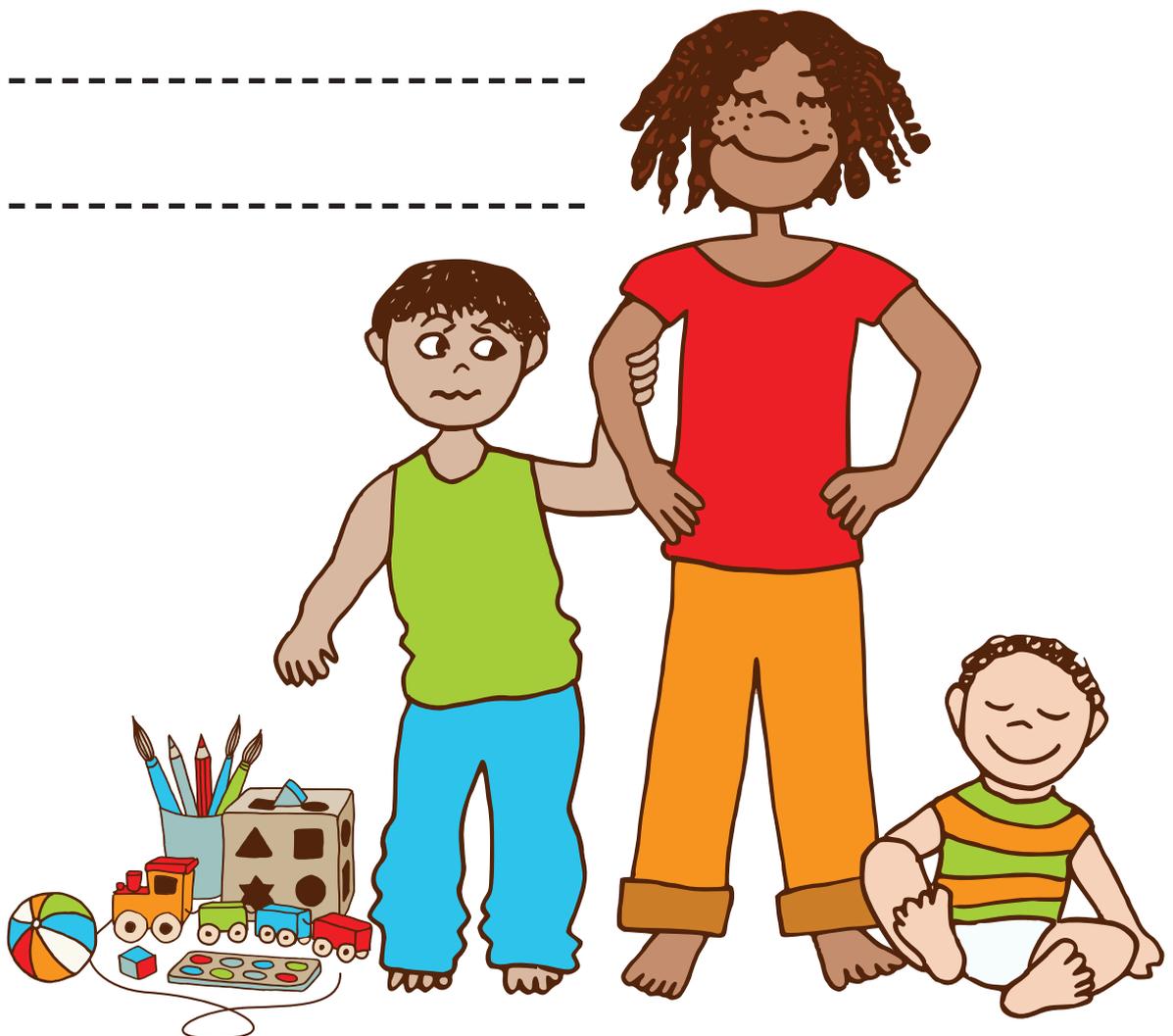
1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

4. ....

5. ....



# Puzzle

Complete the crossword puzzle.

**Across:**

1. It helps to talk about my f\_\_\_\_\_ when I am sad.
2. It helps to t\_\_\_\_ to someone when I am scared.
3. I w\_\_\_\_y when the wind blows very strong.

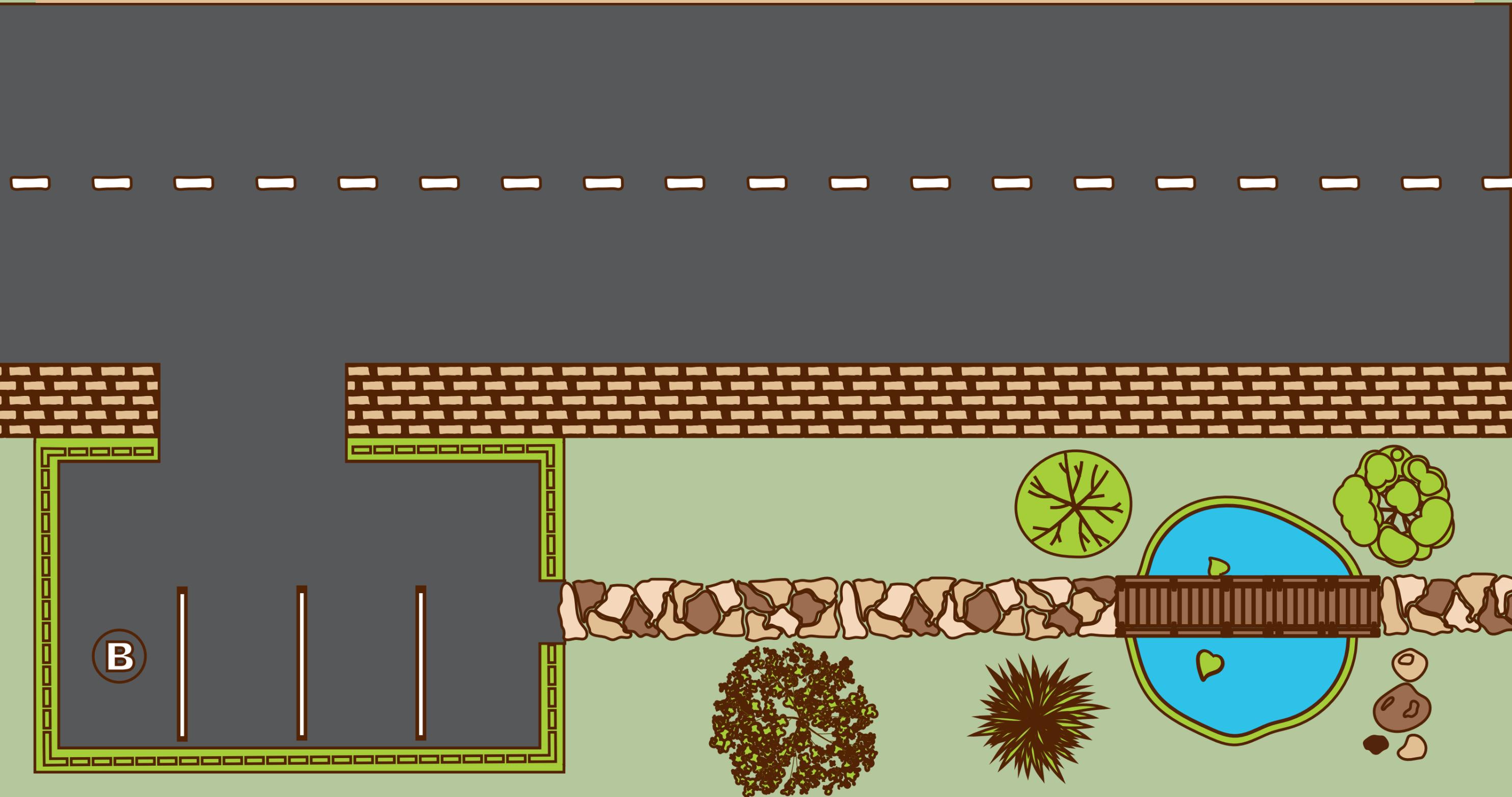
**Down:**

4. I s\_\_\_\_\_ when I feel tired.
5. I feel sad when someone in my family is s\_\_\_\_\_.
6. I smile when I am h\_\_\_\_y.

		4					
1							5
					6		
				2			
	3						

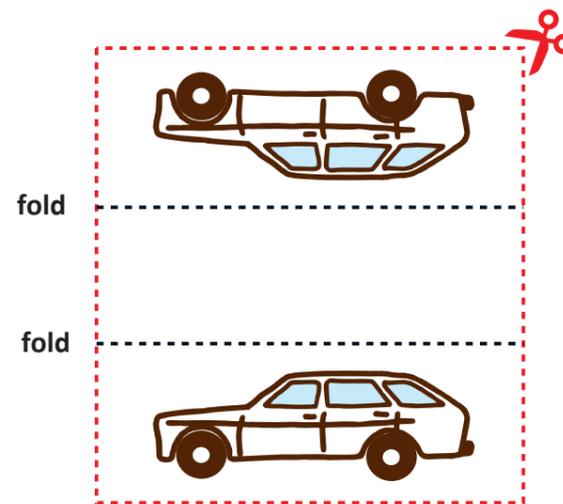
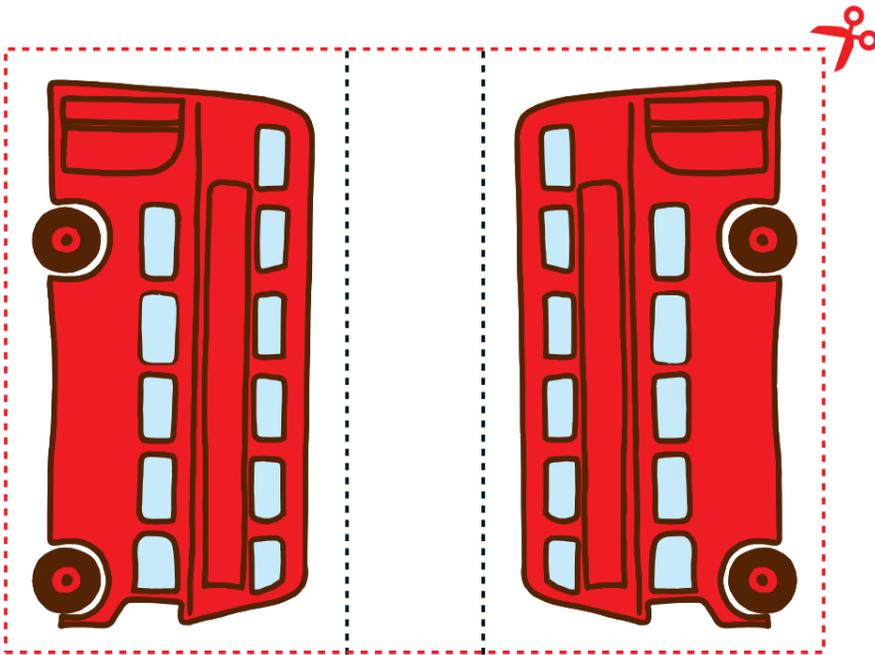
glue stick here

glue stick here



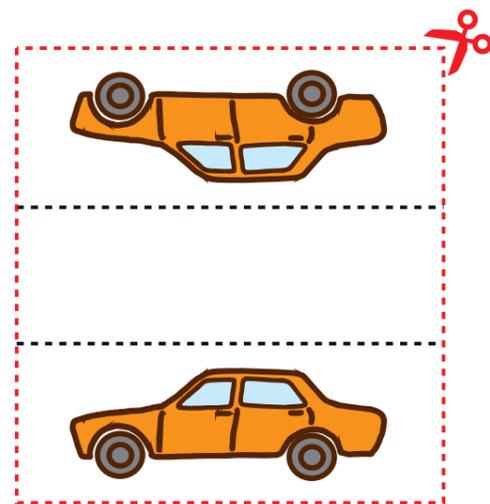


fold



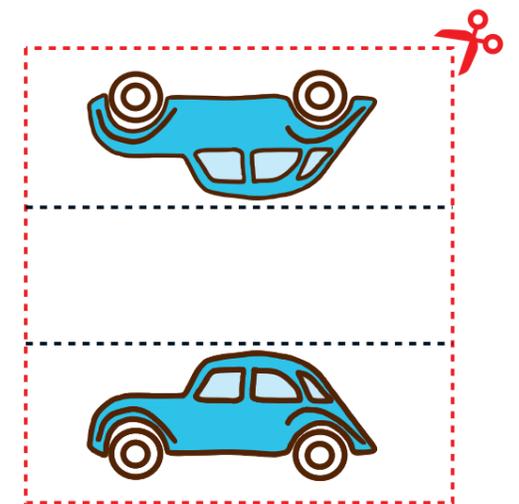
fold

fold



fold

fold

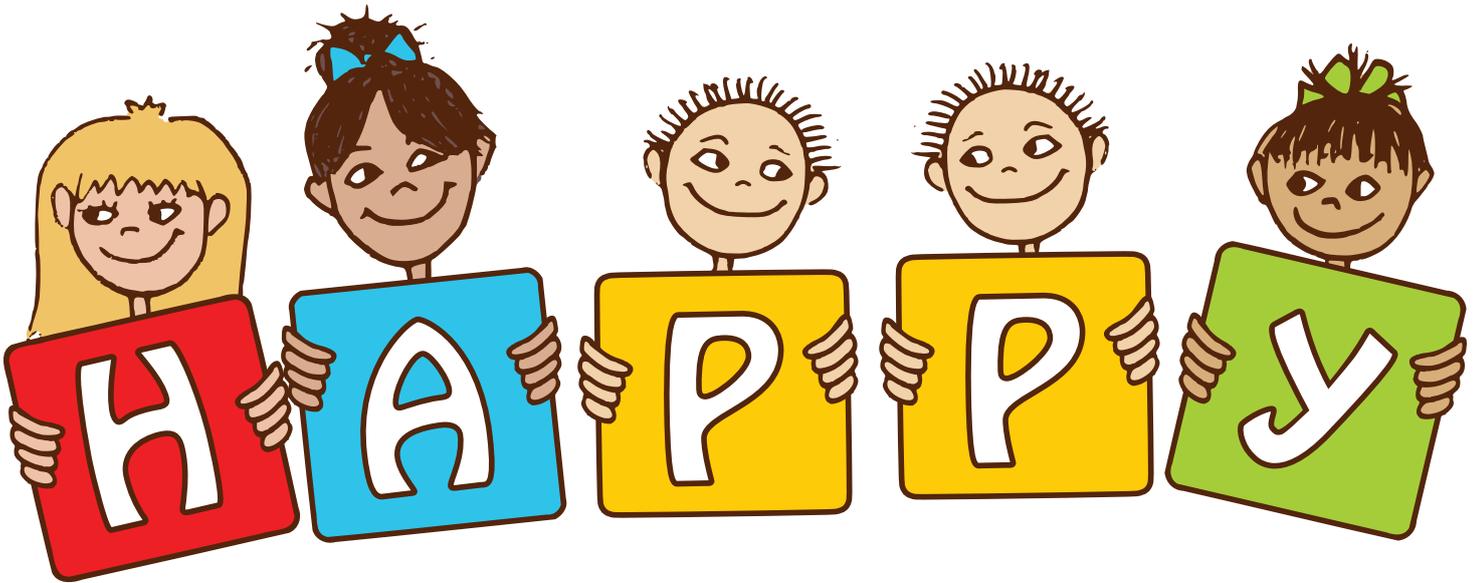


fold

fold

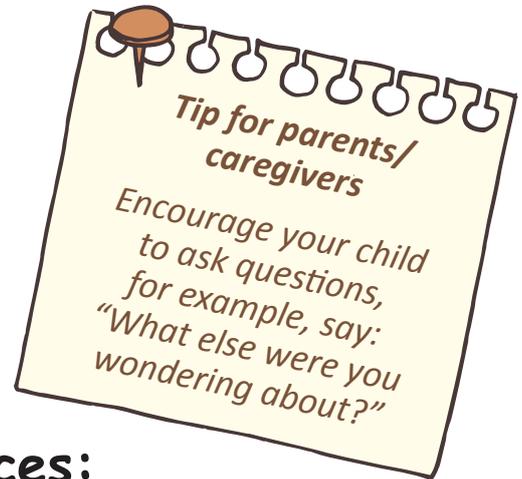
# Spot the differences

Circle 7 differences



## 2. Dealing with illness

Not everyone feels or acts the same when they are sick. Some people get angry; some are quiet and others just want to be left alone.



**Complete the following sentences:**

When I am ill, I feel .....

When the person who looks after me is ill they feel

.....

When the person who looks after me is ill, I feel

.....

The person who looks after me has an illness called

.....

**What I know about their illness:**

---

---

**What I want to know about their illness:**

---

---

**The treatment they get for their illness:**

---

---

**Other help they get for the illness:**

---

---

Things I find hard when ..... is ill:

-----

-----

How many cats can you count?



*Tip for parents/  
caregivers*

*Do not jump to  
conclusions. Ask more  
questions to get a better  
understanding of what  
the child means.*



# Plan for when the person who looks after me is ill

Who will take care of me?.....

Who could I talk to?.....

Who will prepare food?.....

Who will take me to kindy, school or daycare?

.....

Who will take me to the doctor when I am sick?

.....

Who will help me with my homework?

.....

Who will read books for me at night?.....

Other plans:.....

.....



Spot the dog...



# 3. Dealing with stressful times

## What is stress?

People can feel very uncomfortable, worried and sad when things are not going well in their lives. This is called stress.

## I get stressed when:

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

My body can feel stress in lots of different ways. Some are listed below. **What else can you think of?**

dizzy

struggling to sleep

headache

weak muscles

feeling cold

eat a lot or not much

tense muscles

racing heart

feeling warm

stomach pain

sweaty

tired

shaking

Below is a list of feelings that you get when you are stressed. What else do you feel? **Write them in the boxes.**

nervous

upset

angry

lonely

When I am stressed my thinking changes.  
**Underline the ways you sometimes feel:**

I feel stupid

It's hard to concentrate

It's hard to listen

I don't want to talk

I can't think clearly

I forget things



# What to do about stressful times

Here are things that you could do during stressful times. **What else could you do?**

1. Blow bubbles
2. Sing or dance
3. Play with a ball
4. Play with your toy
5. Play with a pet
6. Never give up
7. Run or jump
8. Talk to someone
9. Make a drawing or paint
10. Ask for help



---

---

# 4. Having fun together

Things I could do to have more fun:

By myself:

---

With my family:

---

With friends:

---



# My wishes for...

Draw or write what you wish for yourself and your family/ caregivers.

My wishes for myself:



My wishes for my parent (s) or caregiver(s)



My wishes for my brother(s)/sister(s):



# Certificate of Achievement

This is to certify that

has completed the activity book

## Growing Stronger Together

with

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



# Who can help me and my family

## Support

### Asian Community Service Trust (ACST)

[www.cnsst.org.nz](http://www.cnsst.org.nz)

570-9099

### Asian Family Services (PGF)

[www.asianfamilyservices.nz](http://www.asianfamilyservices.nz)

0800 862 342

### Asian Network Inc. (TANI)

[www.asiannetwork.org.nz](http://www.asiannetwork.org.nz)

815-2338

### Auckland Single Parent's Trust

[www.meetup.com/Auckland-Single-Parents-Trust](http://www.meetup.com/Auckland-Single-Parents-Trust)

### Brainwave Trust

[www.brainwave.org.nz](http://www.brainwave.org.nz)

528-3981

021 266 2264

### Cherish Trust

[pnd.org@xtra.co.nz](mailto:pnd.org@xtra.co.nz)

[www.postnataldistress.org.nz](http://www.postnataldistress.org.nz)

836-6967

### Chinese Lifeline

0800 888 880

### Chinese New Settlers Service Trust (CNSST)

[www.cnsst.org.nz](http://www.cnsst.org.nz)

570-1188

### Family Action

[www.familyaction.org.nz](http://www.familyaction.org.nz)

836-1987

### Family Services

[www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory)

### Family Works

[www.fwn.org.nz](http://www.fwn.org.nz)

448-2633

### Fresh Perspective

[www.freshperspective.org.nz](http://www.freshperspective.org.nz)

0800 555 300

### Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)

[www.greatpotentials.org.nz](http://www.greatpotentials.org.nz)

### Kidsline

[www.kidsline.org.nz](http://www.kidsline.org.nz)

0800 543 754

### Lifeline

[www.lifeline.org.nz](http://www.lifeline.org.nz)

0800 543 345

522-2999

### Mainly Music

[www.mainlymusic.org.nz](http://www.mainlymusic.org.nz)

### Parent Aid (Waitakere)

<http://www.parentaidnorthwest.org.nz>

0800 222 402

420-7002

### Parent Support

North Shore: (09) 486 4666

021 240 8414

### Problem Gambling Foundation (PGF)

[www.pgf.nz](http://www.pgf.nz)

0800 664 262

### Strategies with kids – information for parents (SKIP)

[www.skip.org.nz](http://www.skip.org.nz)

### Te Puna Hauora Health & Social Services

[www.tepuna.org.nz](http://www.tepuna.org.nz)

489-3049

### Thrive teen parent support

[www.thrive.org.nz](http://www.thrive.org.nz)

551-4367

### **Toolbox Parenting Groups**

[www.theparentingplace.com](http://www.theparentingplace.com)

524-1386

### **Youthline**

[www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)

0800 376 633

Free text: 234

## **Counselling/therapy**

### **Family Court Counseling & Mediation Services**

[www.justice.govt.nz/family](http://www.justice.govt.nz/family)

(North Shore: 916-5894)

family@justice.govt.nz

### **Grief Centre**

[www.griefcentre.org.nz](http://www.griefcentre.org.nz)

418-1457

### **Health and Wellbeing Centre**

Auckland University of Technology

921-9998

### **Home and Family counselling**

[www.homeandfamily.org.nz](http://www.homeandfamily.org.nz)

419-9853

### **Psychology clinic (Massey University)**

[Centre for psychology@massey.ac.nz](mailto:Centre_for_psychology@massey.ac.nz)

441-0800 ext 43095

### **Raeburn House**

[www.raeburnhouse.org.nz](http://www.raeburnhouse.org.nz)

441-8989

### **Strengthening Families**

[www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz)

441-8989 ext 702

027 498 7074

## **Mental Health**

### **After hours Mental Health Service**

North Shore: 486-8900

West Auckland: 839-0000

### **Anxiety NZ Trust**

[www.anxiety.org.nz](http://www.anxiety.org.nz)

846-9776

### **Asian Mental Health Service (WDHB)**

487-1321

486-8920 Ext.7321

[www.amhcs.org.nz](http://www.amhcs.org.nz)

### **CADS Auckland Community Alcohol and Drug Services**

[www.cads.org.nz](http://www.cads.org.nz)

### **CARE Waitakere Trust**

[www.carewaitakere.org.nz](http://www.carewaitakere.org.nz)

### **Child and Youth Mental Health (Marinoto)**

North Shore: 486- 8983

West Auckland: 837-6624

### **Mental Health Foundation**

[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

623-4810

### **Maori Counselling Service (Takapuna)**

822-8557

### **Mothers Matter**

[www.mothersmatter.co.nz](http://www.mothersmatter.co.nz)

### **Vision West Counselling**

[www.visionwest.org.nz](http://www.visionwest.org.nz)

818-0760

### **Skylight Trust**

[www.skylight.org.nz/children](http://www.skylight.org.nz/children)

[info@skylight.org.nz](mailto:info@skylight.org.nz)

(04) 939 4759

# Violence

## Family Violence

[www.areyouok.org.nz](http://www.areyouok.org.nz)

[family@justice.govt.nz](mailto:family@justice.govt.nz)

## Living Without Violence

[www.livingwithoutviolence.org.nz](http://www.livingwithoutviolence.org.nz)

489-3770

## Ministry for Vulnerable Children

### Oranga Tamariki

[www.mvcot.govt.nz](http://www.mvcot.govt.nz)

0508 326 459

# Fathers

## Father and Child Trust

[auckland@fatherandchild.org.nz](mailto:auckland@fatherandchild.org.nz)

525-1690

021 163 9223

# Websites

[www.mothersmatter.co.nz](http://www.mothersmatter.co.nz)

[www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk)

[www.copmi.net.au](http://www.copmi.net.au)

[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

[www.panda.org.au](http://www.panda.org.au)

[www.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz](http://www.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz)

## Waitemata District Health Board

Asian Mental Health Service & Maternal Mental Health Service

Private Bag 93-503

Takapuna

Auckland

0740

New Zealand

[www.waitematadhb.govt.nz](http://www.waitematadhb.govt.nz)

[www.amhcs.org.nz](http://www.amhcs.org.nz)

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# How to make the best use of the activity booklet

## Encouragement for parents and caregivers

- Parenting is sometimes challenging especially when you are unwell. Be kind to yourself. Try to create opportunities to relax or do something that you enjoy.
- Feeling guilty about not always being there for your child may mean that you really want the best for him or her.
- Acknowledge disappointments, but invest your energy and time in making the best of the moment.
- Talk to someone, e.g. your health professional, or get extra help when your feelings are too overwhelming. It is easier to support your child when you feel in control of your emotions. Also see the resource list in the back of the activity booklet.
- Ask someone else to go through the activity booklet with your child if you are unable to do so.
- People cannot always change their situation, but they can change how they think about the situation, for example, it is more empowering to think: “Illness may cause loss and grief, but it can also build strength” than to think: “The illness took over my life and is destroying everything”. Also see [www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk) for ideas on how to focus on more helpful thoughts.

## Support the child

- Encourage your child to do the activities in the booklet. When your child gets tired. Take a break or continue on another day when your child gets tired.
- Get down to your child’s height if you can. Sitting next to your child could show you care.
- Give the child your full attention. Putting your mobile phone or tablet away communicates that you value your child.
- Decide beforehand how you will explain the illness to the child.
- Thinking about how you like to be treated when you are upset or worried will help you to understand your child’s needs better.

## Prompt the child

- Invite discussion about the child’s perception of the illness. Then offer age-appropriate explanations.
- Acknowledge the child’s feelings, for example: “You are very upset that ...”
- Encourage your child to ask questions, for example, say: “What else were you wondering about?”
- Try digging a little deeper, for example, ask: “What do you think?” or say: “That’s interesting.” “Tell me a bit more about it.”

## Give the child space

- Let your child decide which colours he or she wants to use when colouring a picture.
- Allow your child to try first before you offer help. Learning to problem solve will build the child's confidence.
- Listen to what your child is saying before you offer information or solutions.
- Put yourself in your child's shoes and think about the situation from their point of view.
- Choose a place or create a space where your child will feel free to talk.



## Validate the child's responses and feelings

- Accept your child's feelings. Focus on helping your child to manage his or her feelings.
- Acknowledge the fact that everyone sometimes feels lonely, scared, sad or angry.
- Resist the temptation to make things better by minimising feelings, e.g. do not say: "There is no reason to cry." Rather help your child to label feelings by saying: "You are very sad that ..."  
"I can see that really hurt your feelings." "That would make me cross too".
- Praise and encourage the child's ideas and creativity. Do not expect perfection!

## What to do when you are concerned about the response of the child

- Ask more questions to get a better understanding of what the child means.
- Talk with a spouse, family member or friend about your concerns.
- Build a partnership with the child's daycare provider or school teachers and strive to maintain regular and effective communication.
- Get professional help if you continue to be concerned, e.g. see your GP or talk to a nurse or other health or mental health professional.
- Have a look at some self-help websites in the list of support organizations and websites at the back of the activity booklet.





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