

For children and adults to read together

# Someone has died suddenly



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Produced by



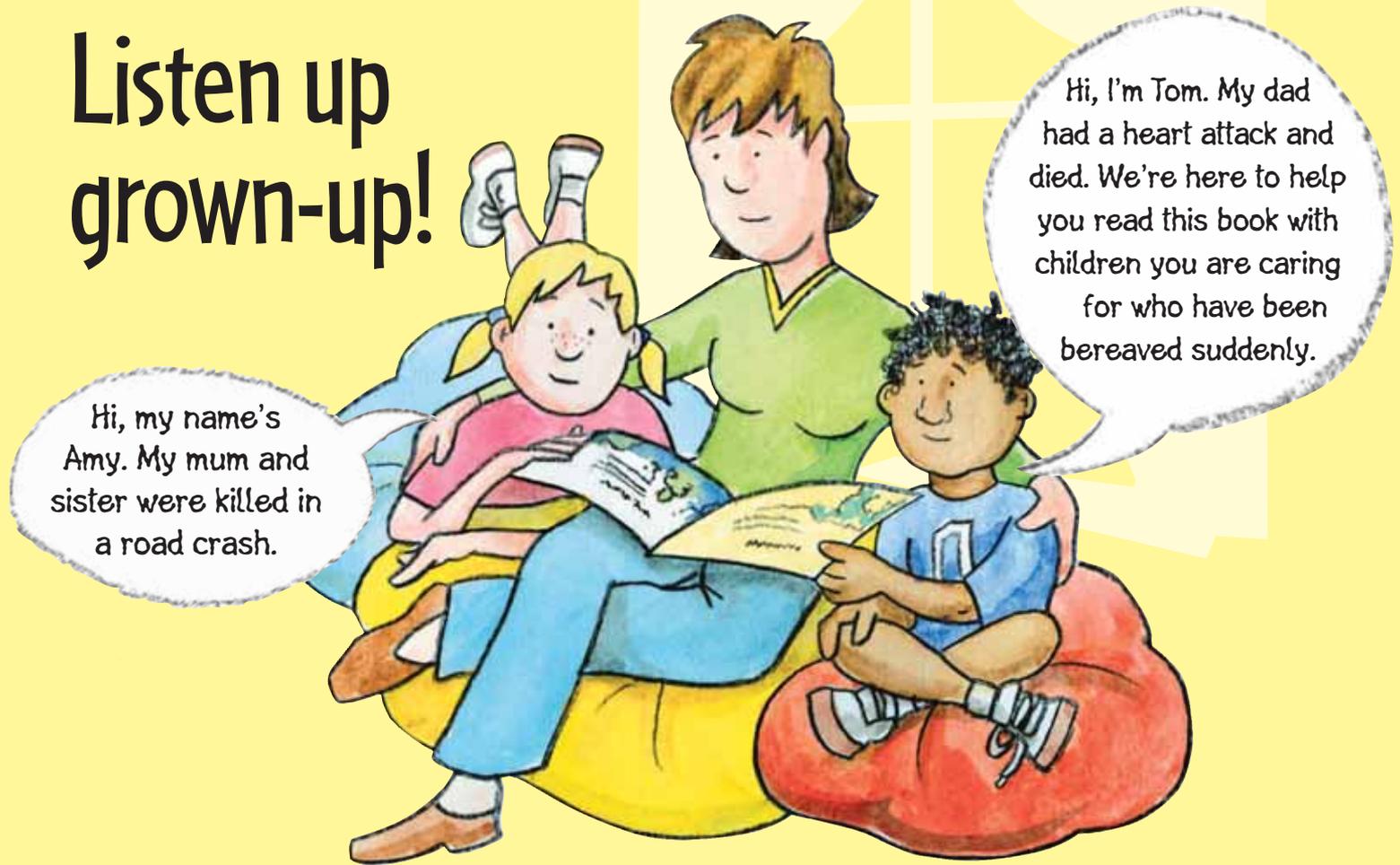
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# Listen up grown-up!



Hi, my name's Amy. My mum and sister were killed in a road crash.

Hi, I'm Tom. My dad had a heart attack and died. We're here to help you read this book with children you are caring for who have been bereaved suddenly.

## Here are a few tips before you get started.

### Read this book on your own first

Think about the issues raised in it and how you will answer children's questions. (It contains lots of good advice that grown ups can benefit from too.)

### It's for children of all ages

You can also read it with more than one child at once. (It isn't meant for reading with big groups of children, however.) For younger children, use the pictures as talking points. For older children, there are interesting fact boxes. Use the book to stimulate conversation, the sharing of grief and the giving of comfort and information.

### Find a quiet space

Make sure you are in a quiet room (without TV or radio) and your child or children are calm. Sometimes children just don't feel like reading a book!

### Read together

Explain that you are going to read the book together. Use the questions at the bottom of the pages as a prompt for discussions.



## It's up to you what you read

Don't think you have to read this book all at once. You might want to read particular pages at particular times. For example, page 9 is about emergency services and page 21 is about funerals. You might decide never to read some pages. For example, page 15 is about organ donation, which may or may not be relevant.

## Be open and honest

This book helps you to talk with children as much as possible about what happened and discuss emotions openly. Research shows it is better to tell children things in a caring and trusting environment than to keep them in the dark.

This book includes challenging subjects such as an explanation of why people die and a discussion about what different people believe happens after you die. Children often want to know about these things. The explanations are clear and dignified and non-judgmental. This is a book for everyone, whatever your beliefs.

This book is full of bright colours and pictures of Amy and Tom doing normal things like eating and playing. We've thought about what children do, and what children want to look at.



Before you begin reading this book with children, have ready a pen and a photo of the person (or people) who died and some sticky tape (see page 1).

## Involve and give choices

This book encourages you to involve your children in things and give them choices and the chance to air their thoughts. For example, pages 17 and 18 are about seeing a body and contain handy tips about what to expect if your child chooses to see a body.

## More support for children and you

Of course, reading this book won't make everything alright. A bereaved child will need lots of love and support and honest answers forever. A family that has been bereaved suddenly will need particular support because there has been no time to prepare for the death or deaths. Turn to the last page of this book for more sources of help.



Thank you for taking the time to use this book and help children.

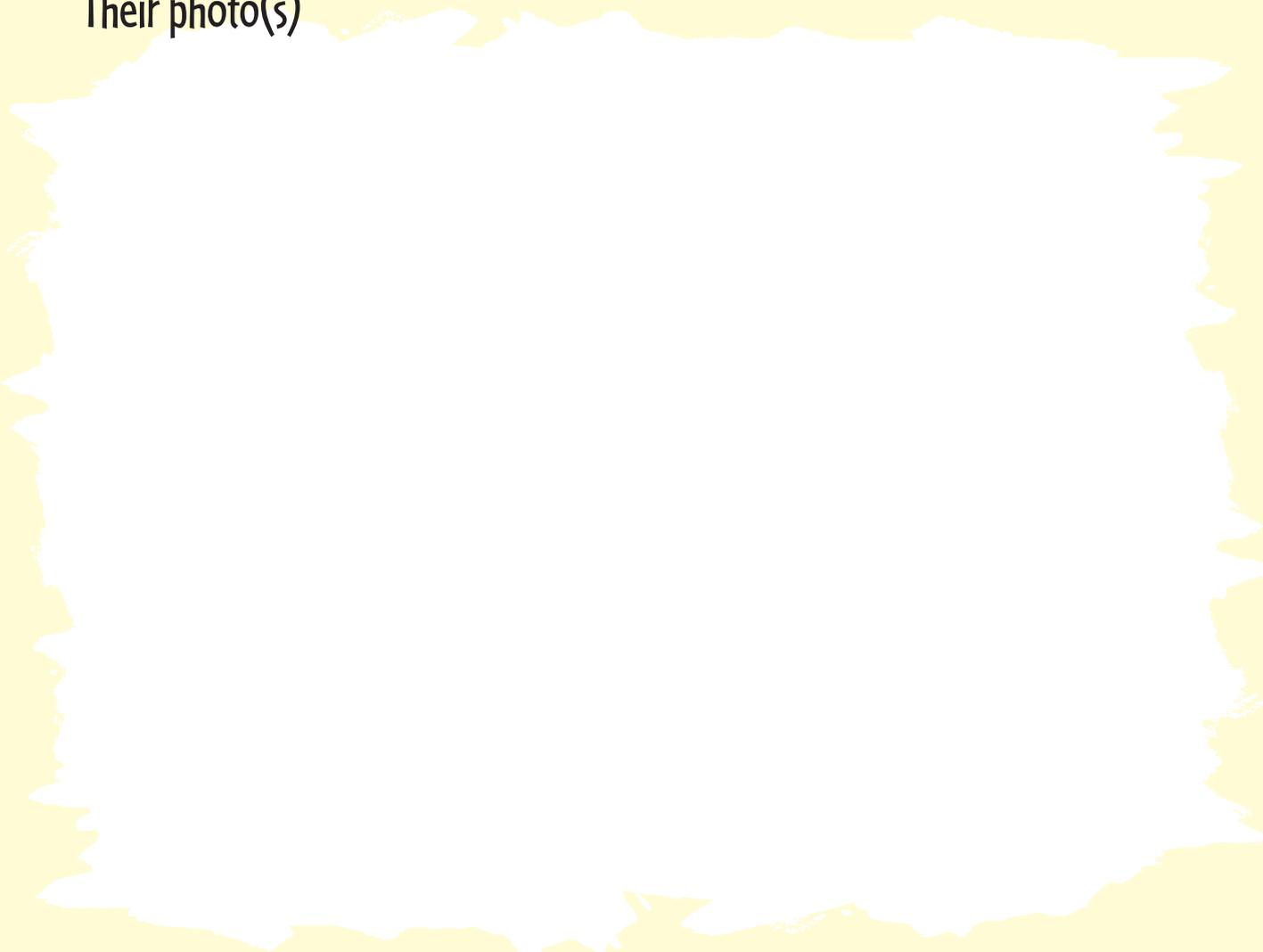
If you want to make a donation to the charity that wrote this book, go to [www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk)

A very special person or people have died suddenly.  
It is very, very sad.



Their name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Their photo(s)



These are the names of some of the people who are very sad about it:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## This book has been written to help YOU.

This book will help you understand what happened, how you feel about it and some of the things that are going to happen now.

Hi, my name's Amy.

My mum and my sister were killed in a road crash. I'm going to tell you some things that might help you, because they helped me.

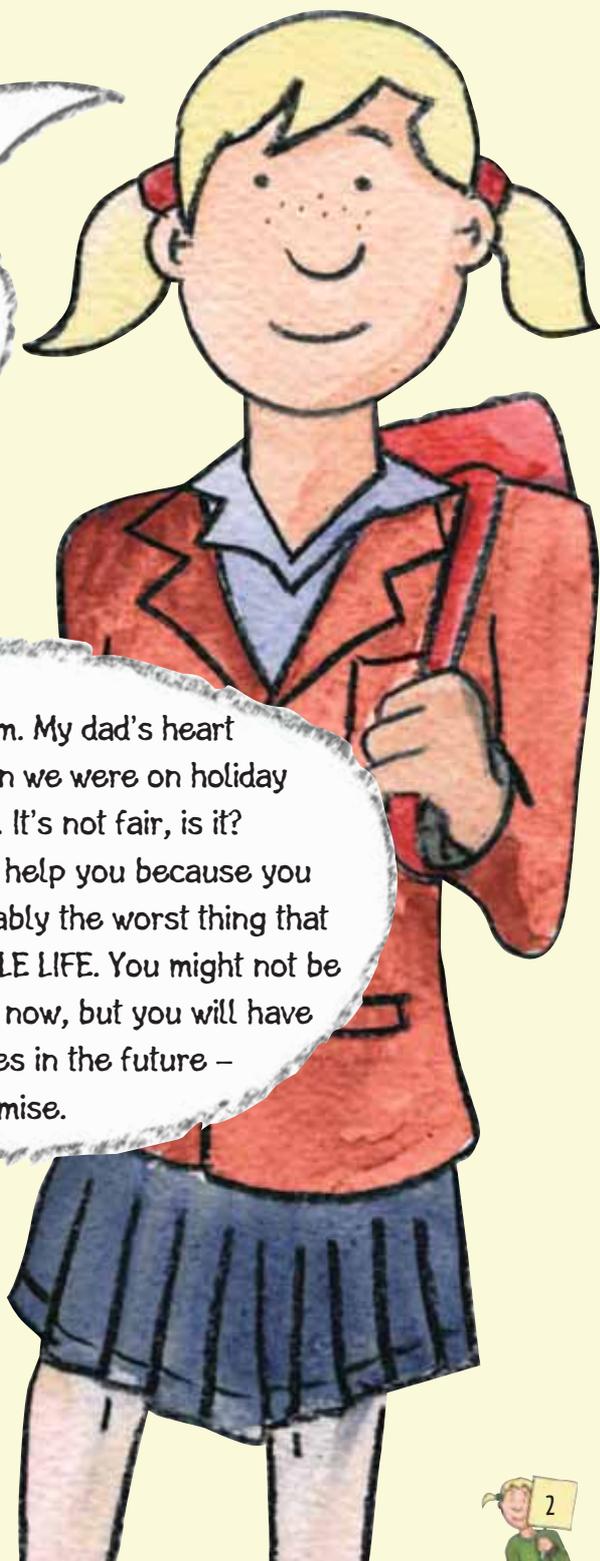
It's really terrible when someone dies suddenly. A grown-up who cares about you is going to help you read this book and talk about the things in it.

You probably won't read it all at once – just a bit at a time.



Hi, my name's Tom. My dad's heart stopped working when we were on holiday last year. He died. It's not fair, is it?

Lots of people want to help you because you are so sad. This is probably the worst thing that will happen in your **WHOLE LIFE**. You might not be able to imagine it right now, but you will have **LOTS** of good times in the future – I promise.



Do you want to read some of this book now?

# Why did they die?

People die when their bodies are too badly injured or too poorly to work any more.

Sometimes, people who are dead look like they're asleep, but sadly they're not. Dead people can never wake up.

When someone dies, they stop breathing forever. Their brain stops thinking and their body stops moving.

People think different things happen when someone dies.



Some people think that everyone has a special spirit, which some people call a soul. When someone dies, their spirit leaves their dead body and goes somewhere else. Different people belong to different religions and think different things about where the spirit goes.



Some people don't think spirits exist. They think that the part that makes people special is their brain, inside their head. This is the part of the body that thinks and controls what we say and how we move. When someone dies, their brain dies too. This is because dead people do not breathe air any more and the brain needs air to survive.

What do you think happens when someone dies?

# I don't believe it has happened!

Sometimes it's hard to believe that someone is dead and you will never talk to them again.

This is because it is a terrible shock. No-one knew they were going to die suddenly. No-one expected it to happen.

A cartoon illustration of a young boy with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a blue suit, and a young girl with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a green dress. They are both smiling and hugging a large brown teddy bear. The boy is on the left, and the girl is on the right, with her arms around the bear.

After my dad died, I would sometimes wake up in the morning and forget it had happened – and then remember all over again, which made me feel extra sad.

That used to happen to me, too. I always asked someone who loved me to give me a hug straight away – it made me feel a bit better.

A film strip frame showing a young boy with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a red shirt and white pants, sitting up in bed. He has a happy expression, with his arms raised. A blue alarm clock is on the bedside table.

What a lovely sleep

A film strip frame showing the same young boy from the previous frame, now wearing a blue shirt and looking sad. He is sitting up in bed with his arms crossed. A blue alarm clock is on the bedside table.

Oh no, I remember what happened!

Would you like a hug?

# All about shock

Shock is the nasty feeling that we get for the first minutes, hours and days when we are told something horrible. Being told that someone is dead is very, very horrible, so the shock can be really bad.

People who are in shock sometimes feel really cold and shiver, or don't want to move about much, or don't feel like talking or eating much. It's like they are frozen by the horrible news they have been told. Not everyone has this happen to them, but many people do. But with lots of love and a little time they feel a bit better and can start to get on with life again.



If you are suffering from shock, remember that these feelings are normal to begin with, and should go away. It's like being really ill. Lots of hugs with people you love really helps. So does eating your favourite food.



### Amy's top tip -

If you feel cold, get warm. Ask an adult to make you a hot water bottle! They're great to cuddle.



**GO AWAY!**



That feels a bit better

# Feeling sad

Feeling terribly sad is the most normal feeling of all when someone dies. Everything can feel miserable.

Sometimes it's hard to imagine ever being happy again. Sometimes it's difficult to remember a time when you were happy.



Feeling sad when someone dies has a special name. It is called **GRIEVING**. It is normal to grieve. When you grieve, you have lots of different feelings. But it's normal to feel exactly how you do. That's what grieving is all about.

Some people describe grieving as being a bit like going on a roller coaster. One minute you are up and at it and feel fine. The next you are down in the dumps and feel rubbish.



Who cares about you? Who can help you feel a bit better?

# Strong feelings

When someone dies suddenly it's normal to have all sorts of feelings that you don't normally have. As well as feeling sad, you might feel angry, or jumpy, or just very down, or lots of other strong feelings. It can feel very confusing.

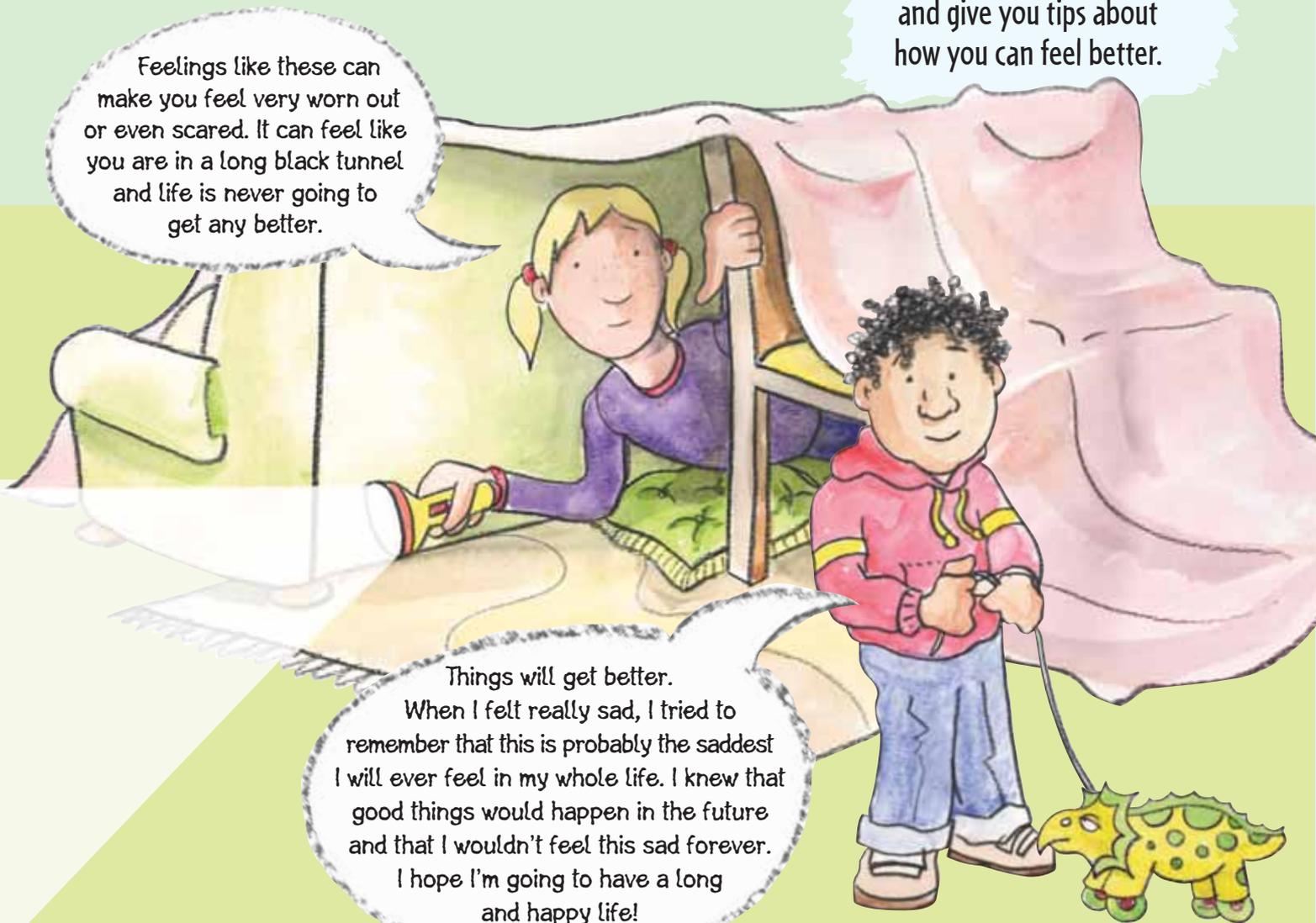
Other people close to you probably have strong feelings too. This might be the first time you see a grown-up really sad and upset.

You, and people around you, might feel differently at different times. Understanding this can help you all to help each other.

Later in this book we are going to show you some of the feelings you might have while you are grieving, and give you tips about how you can feel better.

Feelings like these can make you feel very worn out or even scared. It can feel like you are in a long black tunnel and life is never going to get any better.

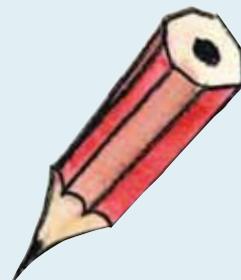
Things will get better. When I felt really sad, I tried to remember that this is probably the saddest I will ever feel in my whole life. I knew that good things would happen in the future and that I wouldn't feel this sad forever. I hope I'm going to have a long and happy life!



# What happened?

Sometimes it's obvious what happened. Sometimes, it isn't.

You can write down what you know here:



Where did it happen? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was there? \_\_\_\_\_

What do we think happened? \_\_\_\_\_

My dad died when my family were on holiday. We'd had a lovely day at the beach and had just got back to our tent when my dad said his chest really hurt and he fell down. An ambulance came and took him to hospital. The doctors couldn't save his life. They said his heart was too poorly to keep working.

My mum and sister died when another car crashed into our car. I was in the car too and broke my arm and had to go to hospital. I knew my mum and my sister were badly hurt because they were very quiet after the crash. I didn't want to believe it when my dad told me they had died.



What don't we know? What would we like to know?

# All about the emergency services

When someone is dying, somebody else usually rings for an ambulance as soon as possible.

An ambulance is like a little hospital on wheels. It has beds, medicine and other medical equipment in it.

Medical staff called paramedics come in the ambulance. Their job is to try to save the life of the dying person and take them to hospital in the ambulance.

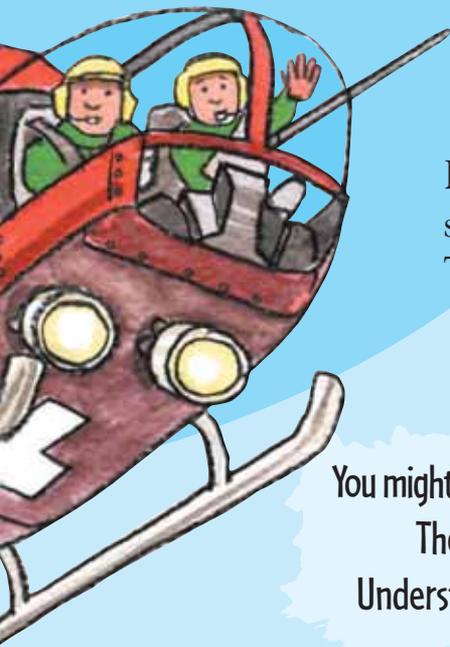


Sometimes an air ambulance is used.  
An air ambulance is a helicopter.

If someone is dying because of a road crash or a fire or some other emergency, a fire engine often comes to help. Fire officers are trained to try to rescue people.



If someone dies before they can be taken to hospital, the ambulance takes their body to a building called a mortuary.

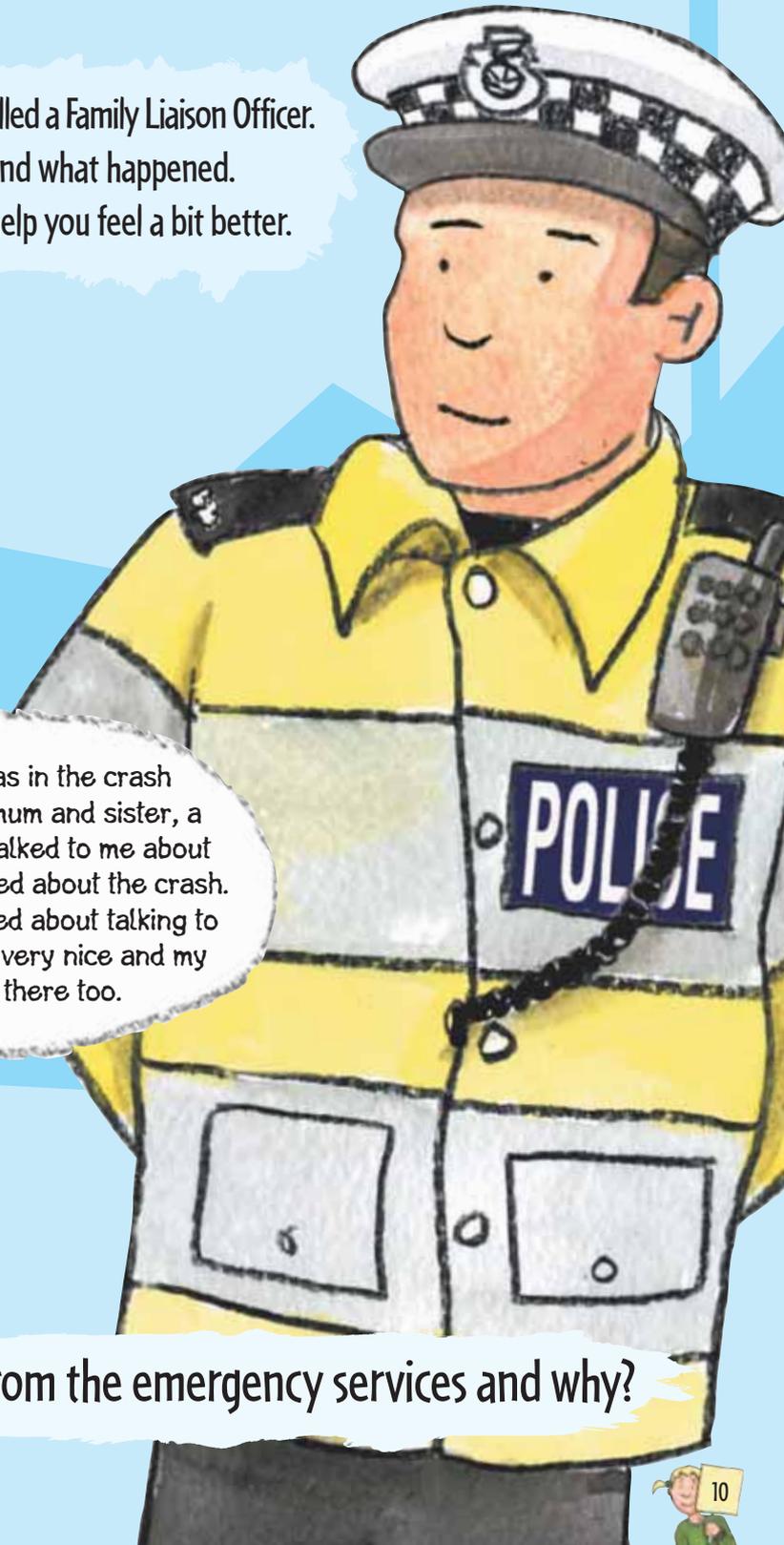


If somebody died because they were hurt by something or somebody else, then a police officer might visit your home. Their job is to find out if anyone broke the law.

You might meet a special police officer called a Family Liaison Officer. Their job is to help you understand what happened. Understanding what happened can help you feel a bit better.



Because I was in the crash that killed my mum and sister, a police officer talked to me about what I remembered about the crash. I was a bit worried about talking to him but he was very nice and my dad was there too.



Who have we met from the emergency services and why?

# Why do some people die suddenly?

Your special person might have died suddenly because their body was very badly damaged by something or someone else, and their body couldn't work anymore.

Or your special person might have died suddenly because their body was very poorly. Usually when someone is poorly they know about it because they don't feel very well. They are given medicine and then get better. But sometimes a person gets poorly very quickly and is so poorly that they die suddenly.



When someone dies suddenly, their body might look very hurt on the outside. But sometimes you can't see any damage to their body because the damage is all inside.

Everyone has important machinery inside their body called 'organs'. Our lungs breathe air in and out of our body. Our stomach turns the food we eat into energy.



Our brain does all the thinking so we can talk and move. Our heart pumps our blood around our body.

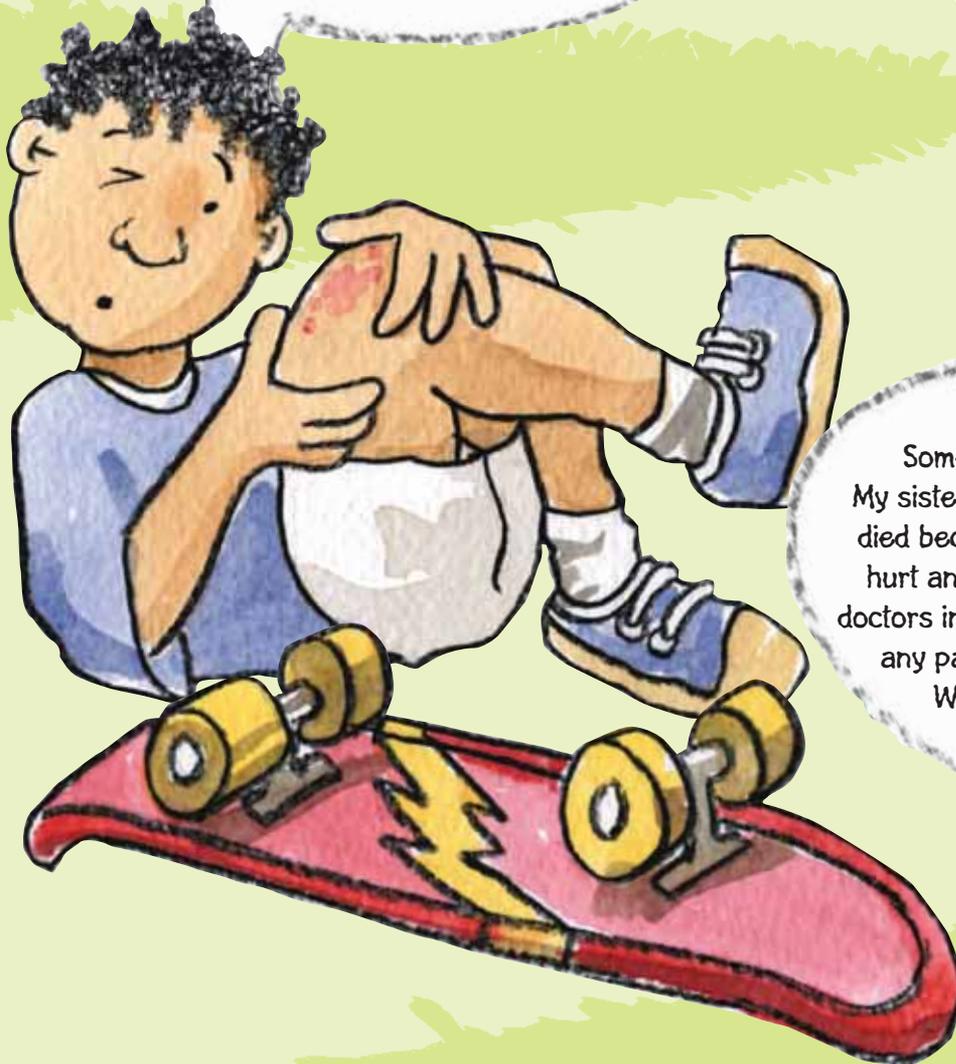
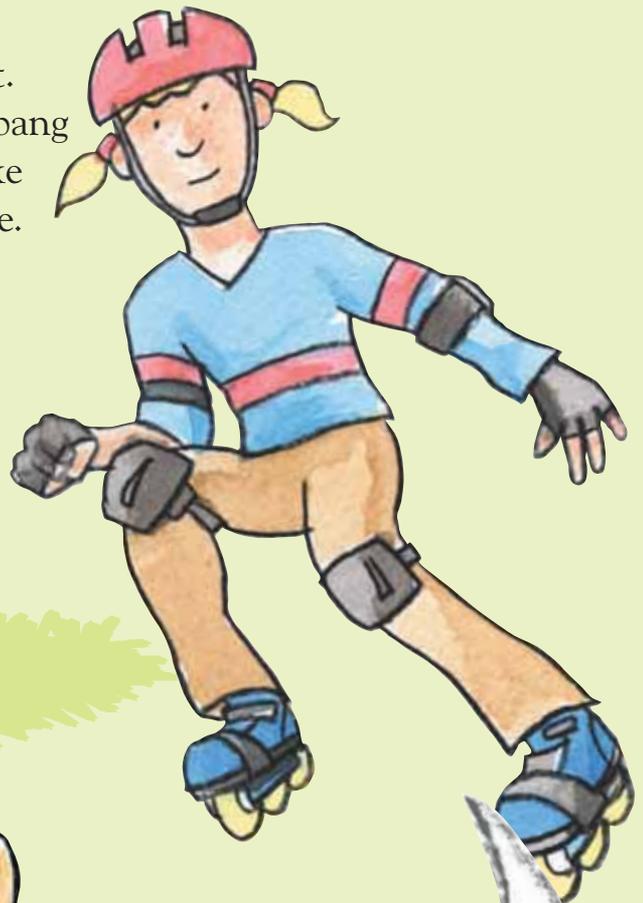
Sometimes one or more organs are damaged or poorly and don't work any more and the person dies.

Which bits of my special person's body were damaged or poorly and why did this mean they died?

# What does it feel like to die?

Everyone knows what it feels like to be hurt. When you fall over and hurt your knee, or bang your head on a table, it's painful and can make you cry. It might carry on hurting for a long time.

When someone dies suddenly it's very different. They might feel pain to begin with, but when they die their brain switches off and they can't feel pain any more.



Some people don't die straight away. My sister lived for two weeks but then she died because her body was just too badly hurt and she couldn't get better. But the doctors in the hospital told me she didn't feel any pain because she was unconscious. When you are unconscious you are asleep and can't feel pain.

Did my special person feel any pain?



# Dying in a hospital



Some people die after they have been taken by ambulance to a hospital.

When someone who is dying arrives at hospital they go straight to a special bit of the hospital called the Accident and Emergency Department.

Doctors try their best to stop the person from dying. This includes trying to help them to breathe and trying to stop any bleeding. But if someone's body is too badly injured or poorly the doctors sadly can't save their life, and they die.

Sometimes the person doesn't die straight away and is carefully taken to another special bit of the hospital called an Intensive Care Unit.

Here, doctors look after the person using special medicine. This includes medicine that stops the person hurting and that often sends them to sleep. When someone is asleep they cannot feel hurt.

Sometimes the person lives for days or even months but then sadly dies. The doctors tried really hard to save the person's life, but their body was just too badly damaged or too poorly.

# Giving parts of a dead body to someone who is still alive to help them get better

Sometimes, parts of a dead body can be removed and used to help poorly people who need these parts to get better.

For example, somebody who has gone blind might be able to see again because part of a dead person's eyes are removed and put in the blind person's eyes.

Sometimes someone with a poorly lung who cannot breathe properly can have their poorly lung removed and replaced with a lung from a dead person's body.

Moving part of a dead person's body into a living person's body is called a 'transplant'. Sometimes it is called 'organ donation'. Donation means to give something for free.

It's a present from someone who's died to someone who's alive.

Doctors called surgeons carry out a transplant. The living person is given medicine to make them sleep during the transplant.

Sometimes organ donation isn't possible because the dead body is too badly damaged.



Many people think a transplant is amazing because it is something good that happens after something terrible. They want part of their special person's dead body to be used in this way.



Some people don't want part of their special person's body to be transplanted because they don't want part of their body taken away from the rest of the body. That's ok, too.



Want to know more? Go to [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)

# Can I see their body?

Some children want to see their special person's body.

Some children want to touch or kiss the body for the last time, to help them say goodbye and to see with their own eyes that they are dead.

Sometimes the body of someone who has died looks nearly the same as their body when they were alive. But sometimes it looks very different because of their injuries or illness. A grown-up can tell you if your special person's body is very badly damaged and you can decide, with their help, whether or not you want to see the body. If you want to see the body, but it was very badly damaged, it may be possible for you to see a part of their body that wasn't so badly damaged.



Sometimes a body is not damaged on the outside, and all the damage is on the inside.



Some people do not want to see a dead body. They want to remember someone as they were when they were alive. You do not have to see a body if you don't want to.

**What does your special person's body look like?  
Do you want to see it?**

# Seeing a body

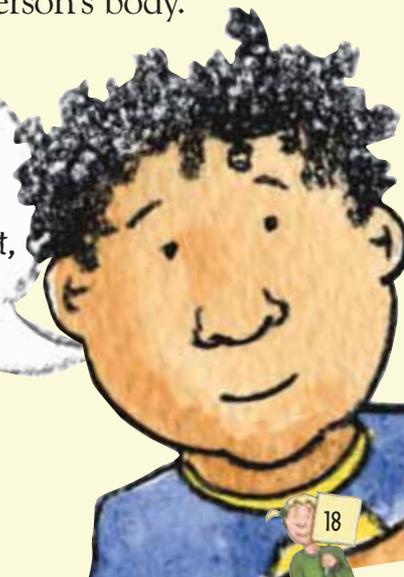
If you decide to see a body you will probably go to a special building called a mortuary or a funeral home where bodies are kept before a funeral.

If you are going to see a body, there are some useful things to remember...



- 1.** If you touch their body it will feel cold. This is because their blood has stopped pumping round their body.
- 2.** Sometimes the skin on dead bodies is a different colour to skin on live bodies. You can ask a grown-up if the body's skin is going to be a different colour before you see it. That way you don't get a shock.
- 3.** Different people have different feelings when they see a body. You might want to cry. You might not. You might want to spend a long time with the body. You might not. Whatever you feel is absolutely fine and normal.
- 4.** You are going into a building where dead bodies are kept. But this doesn't mean you will see lots of dead bodies. You will only see your special person's body.
- 5.** People who work in mortuaries and funeral homes know you are sad. They won't be surprised if you cry or show any other feeling at all.

I decided to see my dad's body. It was OK. It helped me understand that he was definitely dead. I'm glad I went, but different people feel differently about it.



# What happens to my special person's body now?

A doctor called a pathologist might look at your special person's body to find out why they died. They will find out which bits of their body stopped working.



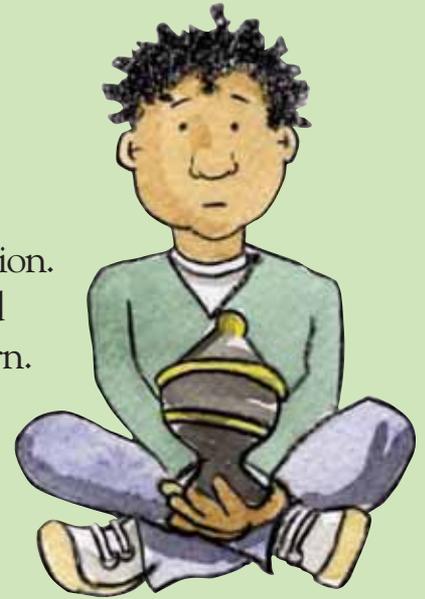
## Tom's top tip -

The pathologist does an important job. They are finding out the facts - why your special person died.

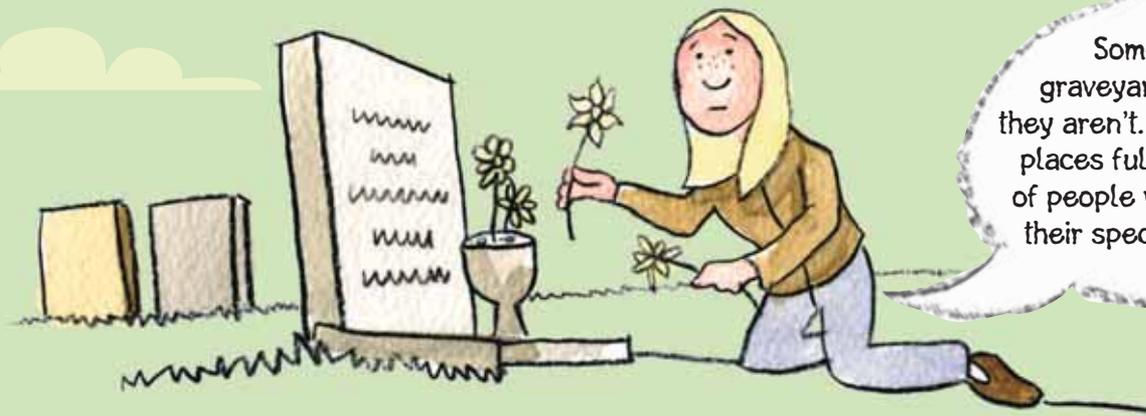
# What happens to the body then?

One of two things will happen to your special person's body. It will either be burnt or it will be buried. This can't hurt the person who has died. Dead bodies can't feel anything.

Some bodies are burnt in a very hot fire. This is called a cremation. The body is cremated until every bit of it turns to dust, called ashes. Sometimes, people keep the ashes in a pot called an urn. Sometimes they scatter the ashes in a place that was loved by the person who has died, or in a special garden called a cemetery or graveyard.



Some people think graveyards are spooky but they aren't. They are often pretty places full of flowers and full of people visiting the graves of their special people's bodies.



Some bodies are buried in the ground, in a graveyard or cemetery or in a special wood or field. They are buried in a special box called a coffin or wrapped in a cloth called a shroud. Where someone is buried is called a grave. You can tell where a body has been buried because there is a big stone with writing on it or something else on the grave to show you. When the body is buried it decays and becomes part of the earth. This means that after a year only the bones will be left. This is called a skeleton.

Bodies must be buried or burnt. If they weren't there would be millions of skeletons lying around the place.

## What's going to happen to my special person's body?



## We are having a funeral

A funeral is a special day when everyone who knew the person who has died gets together to say goodbye to them and remember them.

Lots of people at a funeral know each other and talk to each other and often hug each other. Often people cry at a funeral.



Sometimes, people laugh at a funeral too! This isn't because they are happy that someone has died, but because they are remembering wonderful things about the dead person's life and how lovely they were.

### Amy's top tip –

A funeral is a special day for remembering your special person. But you will go on remembering your special person forever.

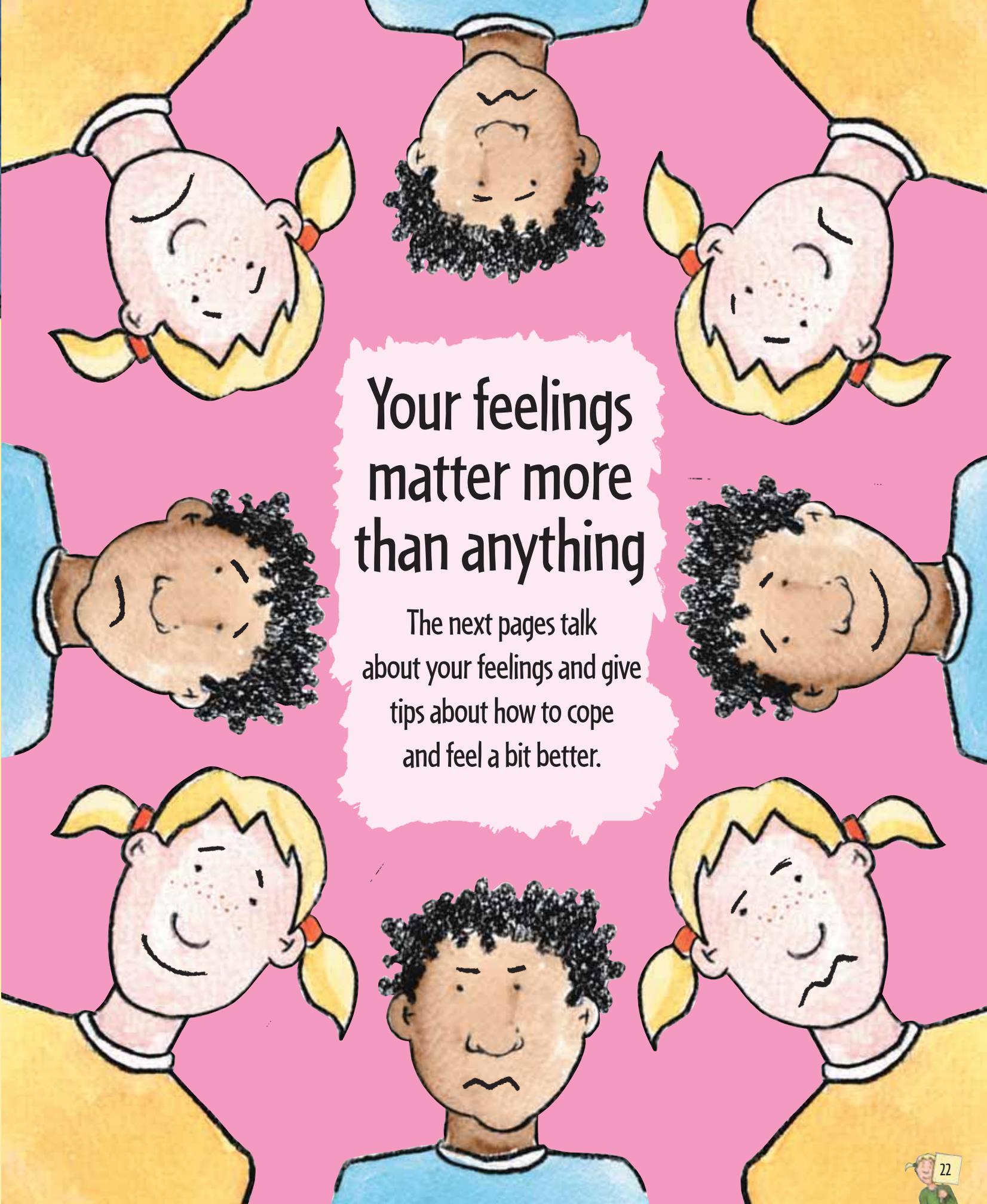
### Did you know?

People with different beliefs do different things at funerals. It is traditional to wear black at a Christian funeral, but sometimes people wear colourful clothes. At a Hindi funeral it is traditional to ring bells and eat cakes.

Different people do different things at funerals. Often, the body of the person who has died will be cremated or buried during the funeral. People talk about the person who has died. Sometimes people sing or read poetry, or, if they have religious beliefs, say something about their religion.

Are you having a funeral for your special person?  
What will happen at it? Do you want to go?





# Your feelings matter more than anything

The next pages talk about your feelings and give tips about how to cope and feel a bit better.

# Common feeling 1 I WANT TO CRY



It's good to cry. Crying is the most natural thing to do when you feel really sad. Some people think it is girly or pathetic. It isn't. I cried heaps and heaps when my dad died. I cried at the funeral, I cried at school and I cried at bed time. I even cried in the shower – that's a good place to cry because you don't need a tissue!



## Tom's top tip –

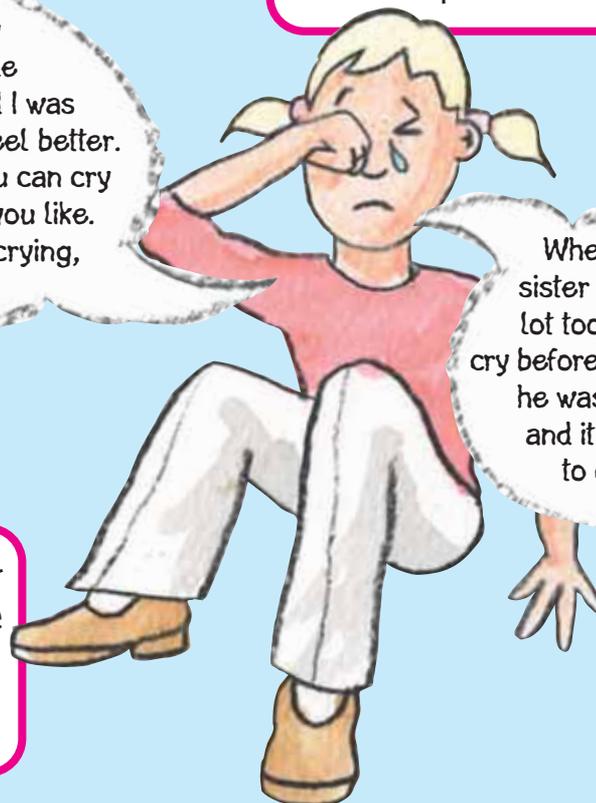
Cry on someone's shoulder when you have a hug! Sometimes getting some fresh air, doing some exercise or playing your favourite music can help as well.

Sometimes I would try not to cry. I would bottle up my feelings and pretend I was alright. But it never made me feel better. It was much better to blub! You can cry any time you like, wherever you like. Sometimes I didn't feel like crying, and that was OK too.



## Amy's top tip –

After you stop crying have a big glass of your favourite drink to replace the liquid you have lost and maybe a biscuit or chocolate to give you some energy. It will make you feel a bit better.



When my mum and my sister died, my dad cried a lot too. I'd never seen him cry before. But then I understood he was as upset as me and it was OK for him to cry too.

What do you like to do after you have been crying?



# Common feeling 2 I'M REALLY ANGRY



Sometimes I would feel really grumpy. I was really mad that my mum and sister had died. I was really cross that they weren't there any more. They couldn't play with me. They couldn't talk to me. Why hadn't somebody else died, instead of them?

One day when I felt really angry I beat up my favourite toy. Luckily it could be mended afterwards! After that, I used to hit a cushion instead. I called it cushion rage! The cushion got a bit squishy but it didn't matter and it made me feel better.

When I felt angry I would jump up and down and shout and scream. But that was OK. Everyone knew it was because I was very sad and I was letting out my feelings. I felt tired afterwards, but a bit better.

## Amy's top tip -

Cushion rage is more sensible than hitting another person or hitting something hard or even hitting yourself. If you ever think you want to do those things, take it out on a cushion or a pillow instead, and tell someone you trust how angry you feel. Exercise can help you feel better too.

What do you want to do when you feel angry?

# Common feeling **3** IT WAS MY FAULT



When someone dies, the people who love them sometimes worry that it was their fault.

When my mum and sister were alive, I used to worry that they might die. I even worried that they would be killed in a road crash! I was really scared it would happen. When it actually happened, I thought that it was my fault. I thought they had died because I had imagined them dying. This is nonsense and I don't think it any more.

Sometimes I think 'if only...' If only I had stopped us getting in the car that day. Then I remember that I couldn't have known we were going to crash. It isn't my fault they died.

NO IT WASN'T!

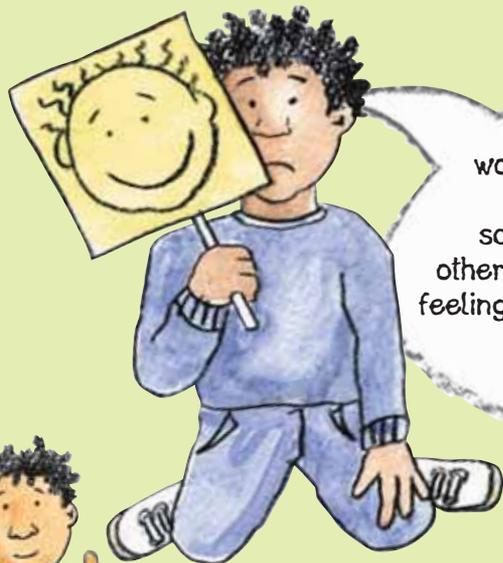
Once, when my dad was alive, I had a fight with him. I said: "I wish you were dead!" I didn't mean it, but when he died, I thought it was my fault. That's stupid though. You can't wish someone dead. Now I try to remember the nice things I said to my dad and the fun times we had together.

Nothing you thought, or said, or did, made your special person die. It wasn't your fault.

# Common feeling 4 I FEEL ALONE



Feeling lonely is horrible. But you aren't alone. There are lots of people who want to help you and can help you feel better.



I felt that no-one understood how I was feeling and they wouldn't be able to help me feel better. I felt different to all the other children at my school. What you have to remember is this – other people can't always tell how you are feeling just by looking at you. Sometimes I had a happy face but I felt miserable inside.



## Tom's top tip –

The best thing is to talk to someone you trust and tell them how you are feeling. Then they can talk to you and help you feel a bit better and not alone.

When I didn't want to talk I used to visit some websites that are for children whose special people have died. You can chat to other children and hear about their experiences. See page 40 for weblinks. It can also help to read other books about when a special person dies.

Sometimes I thought I was the only person in the whole world who was so sad. Then I remembered that a girl in my class at school had been to a funeral last year. I talked to her and now we are friends. She understands how I feel.



Do you feel lonely sometimes?  
Is there anyone you want to talk to?  
Has anyone been kind or unkind to you?

# Common feeling **5** THINGS THAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY

Sometimes other people might say daft things to you because they don't understand about death or how you are feeling.

For example, some adults think that children don't understand death. So they say things like 'your special person has gone to sleep'. Or, 'I'm sorry you have lost your special person'. You know they aren't asleep or lost. They are sadly dead.

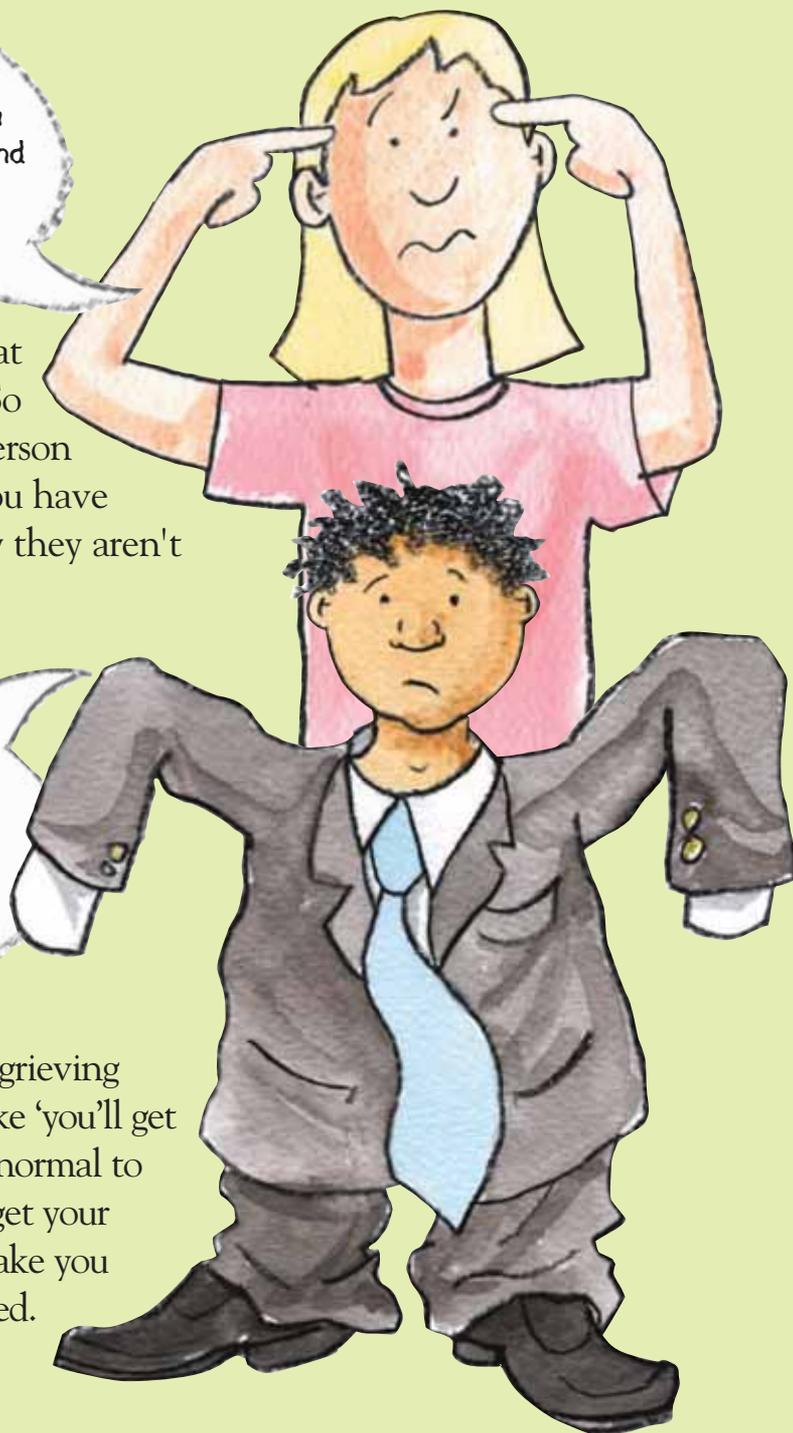
Sometimes adults say things like 'you've got to be strong' or 'you're the man or woman of the house now'. This is really silly. It's important to grieve and you are still a child and need to be looked after.

Some people don't understand that grieving takes a long time. They say things like 'you'll get over it' or 'don't think about it'. It's normal to be happy again, but you'll never forget your special person and no-one can make you forget them or the fact they've died.



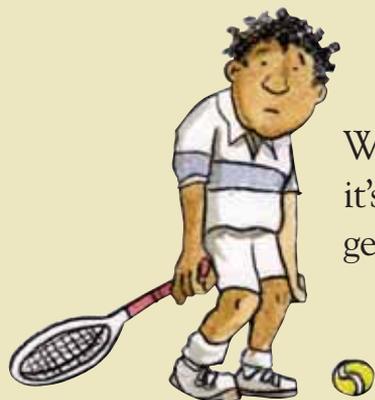
## **Amy's top tip -**

Some people who don't know you very well might say 'I know how you feel' when they don't know how you feel at all! They're trying to help.



Has anybody said anything silly to you?  
Who understands how you feel?

# Common feeling **6** I JUST DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING ANY MORE



When we are really sad, it's difficult to have any get up and go.

When I was asked if I wanted to go to the park I used to answer: 'No, sorry, my get-up-and-go got-up-and-went!' I just didn't want to do anything. There didn't seem any point because I was so sad. Then my friend Ahmed introduced me to a new hobby – indoor rock climbing! I have lots of fun doing it and it's something I really look forward to every week.

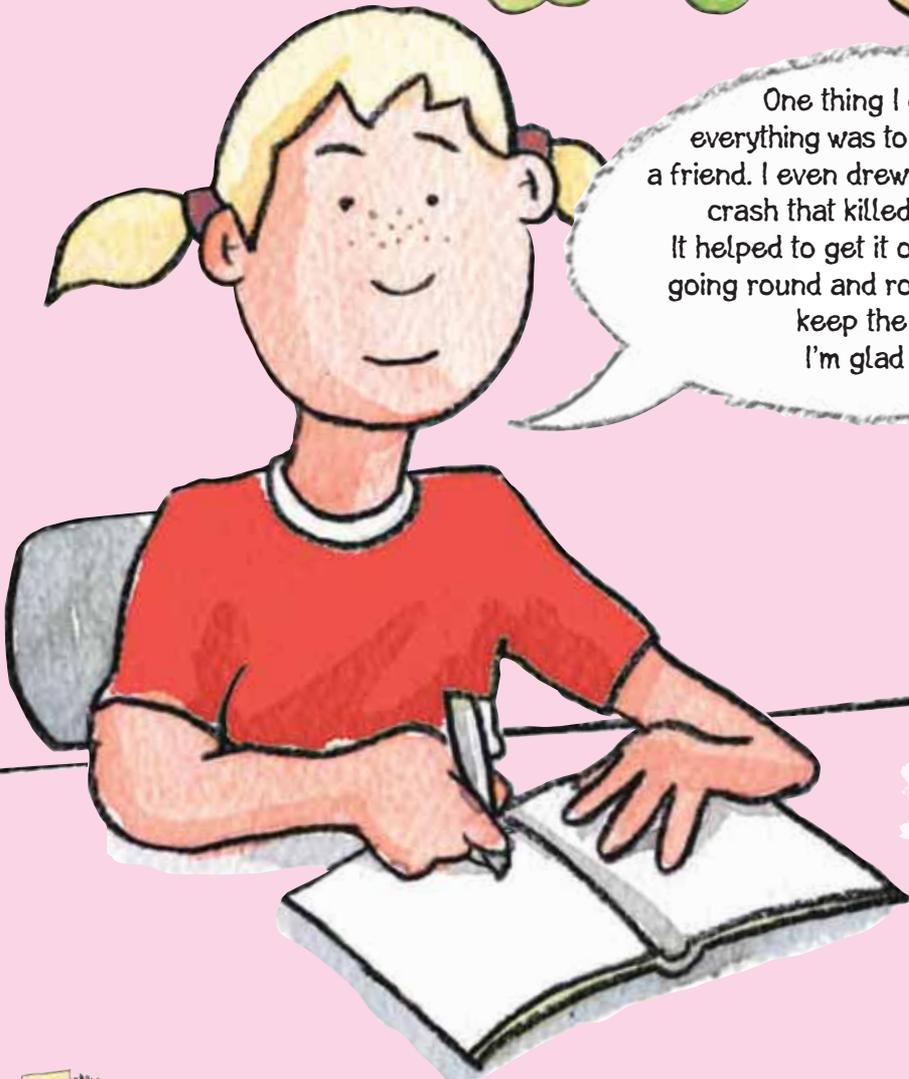


After my dad died, I didn't even want to go to school. I just couldn't be bothered. I didn't want to talk to my friends because I didn't think they would understand how terrible I felt. But one of my teachers was really kind. She talked to me and let me take time out of lessons when I was feeling upset. It got better and I started enjoying school again.

# Common feeling **7** I KEEP THINKING ABOUT IT



Most children want to know exactly what happened. I know I did! I was there when my dad died but I still had questions afterwards. It's much better to know than have lots of questions that nobody answers. My imagination is quite good and I think it's better to know the truth than make it up in your head from bits of information.



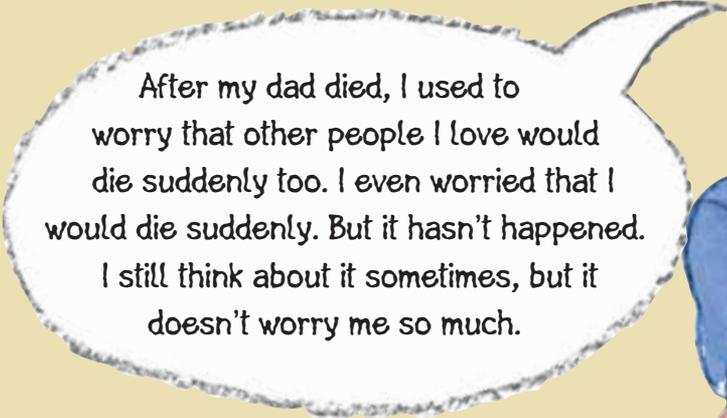
One thing I did when I knew everything was to talk about it a lot with a friend. I even drew some pictures about the crash that killed my mum and sister. It helped to get it on to paper. It stopped it going round and round in my head. I didn't keep the pictures, but I'm glad I drew them.

Sometimes it can feel like it's happening all over again. This is called a flashback. Not everyone has flashbacks.

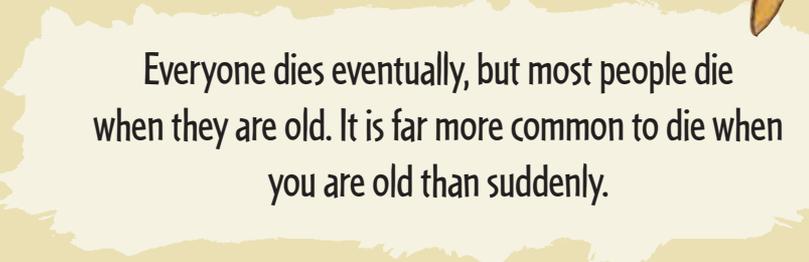
It can really help to talk to someone called a counsellor. A counsellor is someone who helps people like you to talk about what has happened to try to help you feel a bit better. A grown-up can help you find a counsellor. See page 40.

# Common feeling **8** ARE OTHER PEOPLE I KNOW GOING TO DIE SUDDENLY?

No-one knows what good or bad things may happen in the future. But most people don't die suddenly.



After my dad died, I used to worry that other people I love would die suddenly too. I even worried that I would die suddenly. But it hasn't happened. I still think about it sometimes, but it doesn't worry me so much.

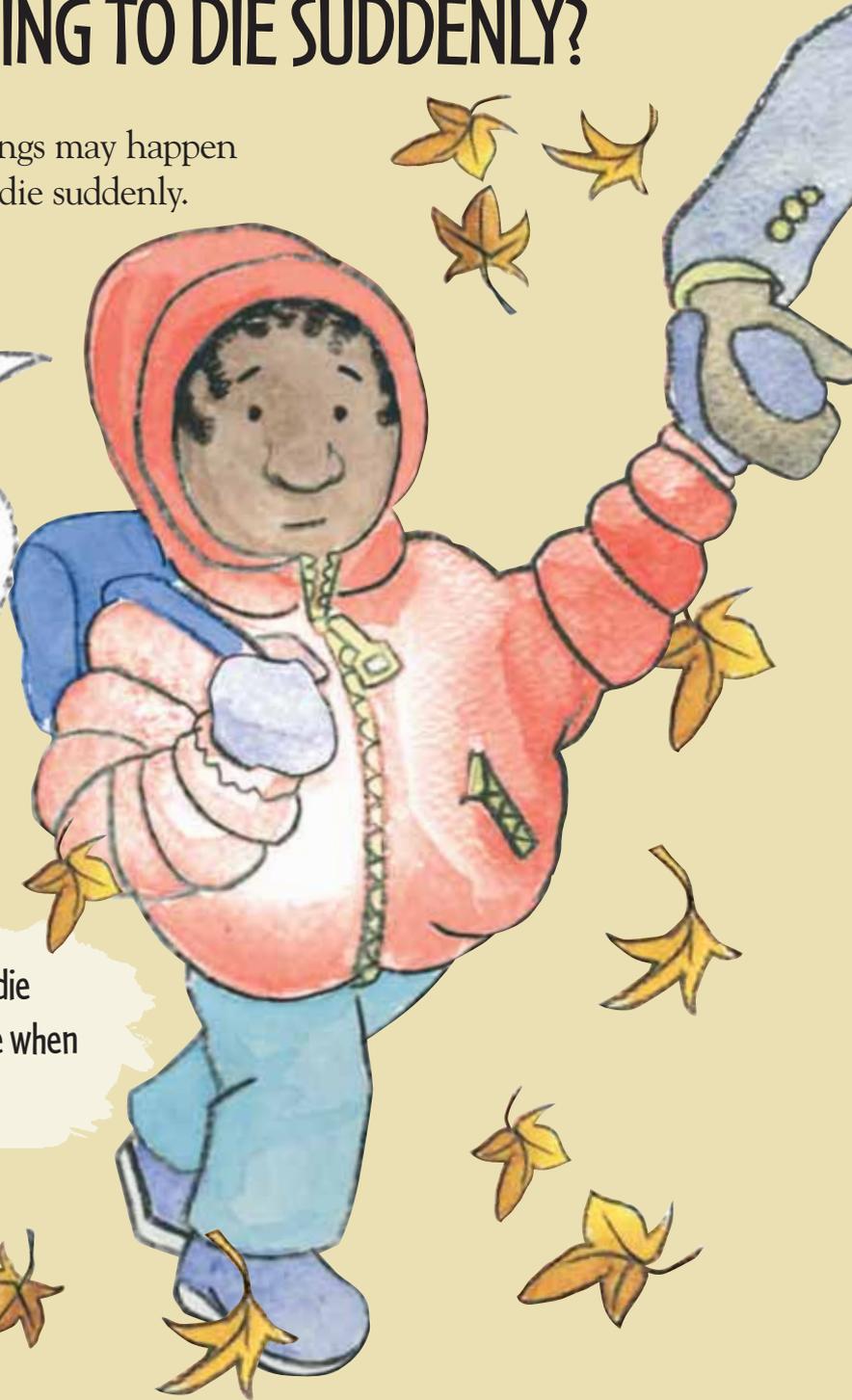


Everyone dies eventually, but most people die when they are old. It is far more common to die when you are old than suddenly.



### **Amy's top tip -**

Try to think about the future and all the good things that you hope will happen.

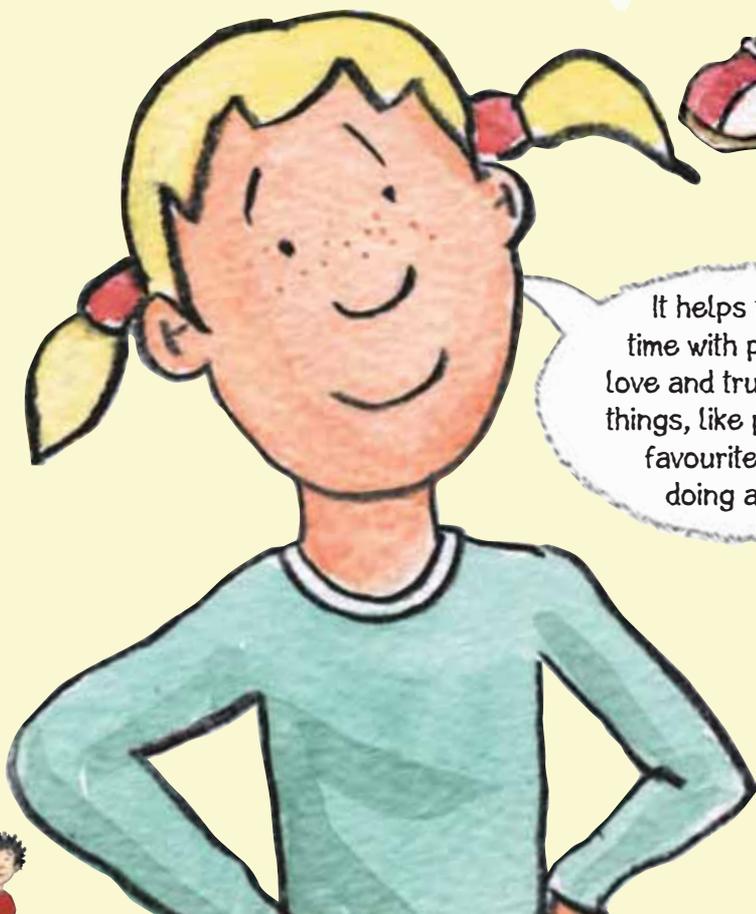


Are you worried anyone else will die?  
Are you worried about dying?

# When will I feel better?

When you are feeling terribly down in the dumps it is important to remember that you **WILL** stop feeling so sad. Maybe you already feel a tiny bit better reading this book.

There is an old saying that time is a great healer. It's a bit corny, but it's true. It means that as time passes, you will feel less sad and more happy. It doesn't mean you are forgetting someone who died. You will remember them **FOREVER**.



It helps to spend time with people you love and trust doing fun things, like playing your favourite game or doing a hobby.



## Tom's top tip -

It helps to look forward to things. Do you have a holiday coming up? What are you looking forward to?

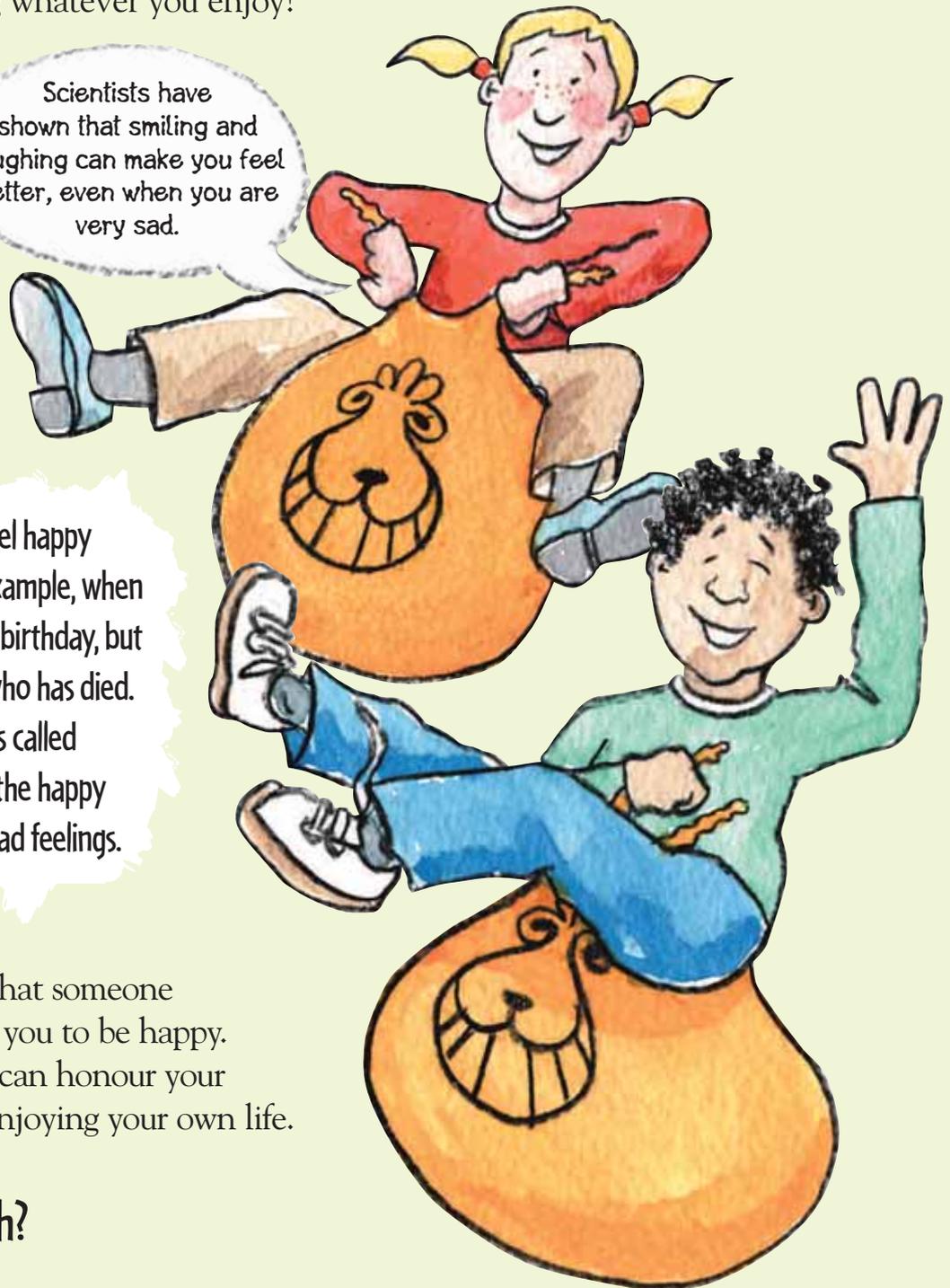
What do you like doing?

# Having fun is good for you



You don't have to smile or laugh or have a good time if you don't want to. It's OK to be sad whenever you feel like being sad. But if you do want to have a good time, then that's great. Enjoy yourself doing whatever you enjoy!

Scientists have shown that smiling and laughing can make you feel better, even when you are very sad.



Sometimes you can even feel happy and sad at the same time. For example, when you get a great present on your birthday, but you can't show it to someone who has died.

It's a strange feeling. This is called a mixed feeling, but overall, the happy feelings should outweigh the sad feelings.

It can help to remember that someone who has died would want you to be happy. One of the best ways you can honour your special person's life is by enjoying your own life.

## What makes you laugh?

# How to remember

There are lots and lots of ways you can remember someone who has died. Just because they aren't there doesn't mean that your feelings and memories about them will go away.



Here are some top tips to help you remember them.

## Amy's top tips -

Go somewhere special that reminds you of them. Where would you like to go?

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Just sit and think about them in your head. You can think about them any time you want!  
Try to think about the happy times you spent together. What do you want to think about?

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Talk about them to someone who knew them too.  
Make a list of people you can talk to here -

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## Tom's top tip -

You can draw pictures too. I drew a picture of dad and me playing football. I've stuck it on my bedroom wall next to a photo of him.





### Tom's top tip -

Make a special box out of a shoe box covered in nice paper, or any other box you have. This is your MEMORY box. Fill it with things that help you remember your special person. Mine has got all sorts in it - cards my dad sent me, photos, a lock of his hair and an old ticket for a concert we went to together.



What would you put in a memory box? Let's make one!

Sometimes, people plant a tree or a bush or a flower in a garden or a special place to remind them of someone who's died. We planted a cherry tree and I love it when it flowers each year. It'll be really massive one day.



What do you want to do to remember?

# All about them

You can use this page to help you remember. Fill in the spaces below.



Their favourite colour was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Their favourite food was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Their favourite hobby was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Their favourite clothes were \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Their favourite thing to say or their favourite joke was

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My favourite thing that we used to do together was

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Do you still like to do anything that they liked to do? It can help you remember them and the fun they had during their life.



# My poem

Another way to remember someone is to write a poem about them.  
It's easy. Finish off the sentences below.



Our best day out was \_\_\_\_\_

It was great because \_\_\_\_\_

The weather was \_\_\_\_\_

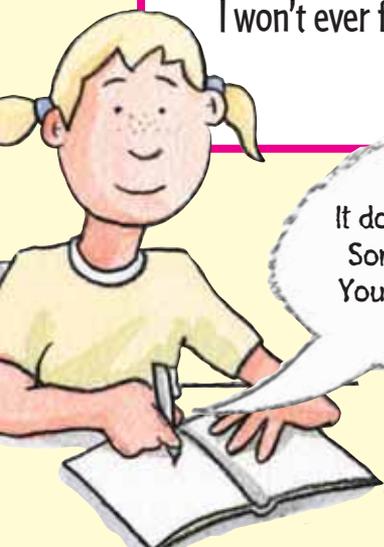
It smelt like \_\_\_\_\_

We talked about \_\_\_\_\_

The things we did included \_\_\_\_\_

When we went home \_\_\_\_\_

I won't ever forget \_\_\_\_\_



When you've finished, take away the words that you didn't write, and what is left behind is your poem! It doesn't have to rhyme to be a great poem. Some of the best ever poems don't rhyme. You might want to have a few attempts to get the perfect poem!

You will remember them FOREVER.

# Back to school

You have probably had some time off school (or nursery or playgroup if you are not yet at school).

Going back and seeing all your friends can be great. But it can also be hard to begin with. Most other children don't know what it's like to experience someone close dying suddenly. They might not know what to say to you. You are probably still having strong feelings and it can be hard to feel sad when everyone around you seems to be happy.

Your teacher can talk with you about how you are feeling and how they can help you. They'll have lots of good ideas. They will let you leave a classroom quickly if you feel too sad. They will make sure there is a quiet room where you can go and someone you can talk to if you are upset.

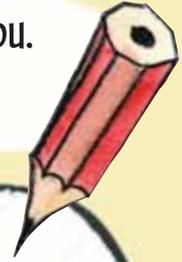
I'm glad to be back at school. I love playing sports at break time with my friends. It makes me feel a lot better. And my best friend Dave is really nice to me when I'm feeling sad because of my dad dying.



Me and my mate Dave won 5-0!

# Our promise

This page is a special promise for you and grown-ups who care about you.  
Read it together and tick the boxes.

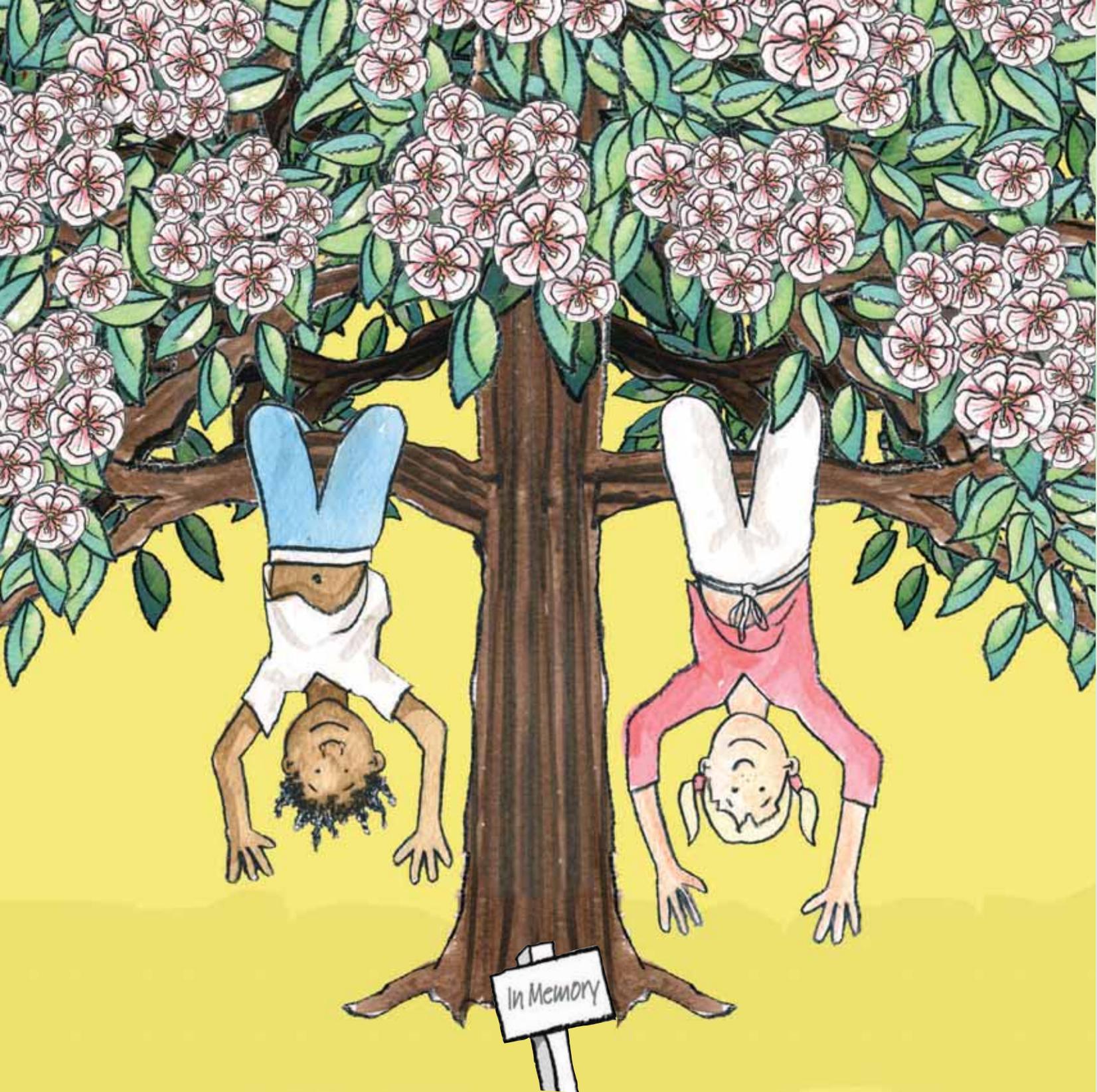


- We/I can**
- Ask questions about what happened
  - Ask you for help when I need it and cry if I am sad
  - Tell you what I need to make me feel better
  - Have a hug whenever I need one
  - Talk about my feelings, whatever they are
  - Laugh and have fun, even when I am sad
  - Keep something that belonged to my special person
  - Do something special on anniversaries
  - Have something to look forward to

- My grown-up/s can**
- Be honest with me when I ask questions
  - Understand that I am very sad that my special person has died and I have lots of feelings because of my grief
  - Tell my school what has happened and tell me who I should talk to at school if I need help
  - Talk to me about any changes in my life before they happen
  - Let me play and have fun
  - Tell me about their feelings too and cry if they are sad

Sign your names here

Signed .....	Signed .....



We will remember our special people FOREVER.

# More help for you

## Help from health professionals

It is common for the very strong feelings to subside gradually and go away, even though there is still grief and sadness. However, sometimes families who have been suddenly bereaved can develop conditions such as depression or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Treatments such as one to one talk-based sessions with a specialist therapist can help you to recover. Sometimes these treatments can be available via the NHS.

To seek a needs assessment of your symptoms, visit your GP. You can refer them to the NHS guideline no. 26 from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. You, or your GP, can view this guidance at [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

You can also find contact details of private therapists near you at [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk) or [www.babcp.com](http://www.babcp.com)

## Help from charities

You can get help from support charities such as those listed below. They offer services ranging from face to face support, to helplines, interactive websites and more books. There may be other organisations local to you – ask your GP.

### The Sudden initiative

[www.suddendeadth.org](http://www.suddendeadth.org)

This initiative supports people bereaved suddenly (rather than as a result of an expected death) by sharing best practice, research and resources among professionals and carers who work with them. Sudden is an initiative of the road safety charity Brake, which wrote this book. If you have been bereaved by a road crash you can call the Brake helpline on 0808 8000 401 for emotional support and information.

### Grief Encounter Project

[www.griefencounter.org.uk](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk)

The project's website has online activities plus a shop in which you can buy a workbook for children.



### Winston's Wish

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

Among other services, this charity for bereaved children provides residential weekends, books, and a helpline on 0845 2030405

### Cruse Bereavement Care

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

Provides face to face support for bereaved people, a helpline for adults and young people 0808 808 1677, and a website for young people [www.hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.hopeagain.org.uk)

### Childline

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

A free 24 hour helpline for children and young people 0800 1111

### Child Death Helpline

[www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)

Freephone helpline staffed by bereaved parents 0800 282 986 or 0808 800 6019

### Compassionate Friends

[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)

Support from other bereaved parents. Helpline 0345 123 2304

### Child Bereavement Charity

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

Support for bereaved families and professionals supporting bereaved families. 0800 028 8840

### Bereaved Parents Network

[www.careforthefamily.org.uk/bpn](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/bpn)

Support for bereaved families of any faith or no faith from a Christian organisation. 029 2081 0800

# Thank you!

*Someone has died suddenly* was developed with the invaluable help and support of a number of organisations and individuals. Thanks to:

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Jackie Browne, Queen's Medical Centre

Alison Curry, Treetops Child Bereavement

Christine Pentland, counsellor

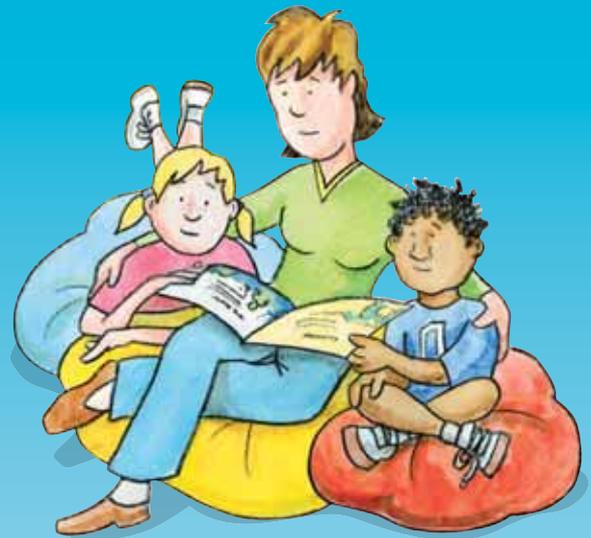
David Trickey, child psychologist

### Special thanks to:

Jane, Nick, Brenda, Stephanie, Bryony, Felicity, Jo, Karren, Richard, and Julia

When someone you love dies suddenly it is a shattering experience, whether you are a grown-up or a child. As a parent or carer, it can be particularly difficult to know what to say to bereaved children or how to behave around them.

**This book has a very simple goal – to help children to recover and develop into happy and balanced people.**



The book uses simple language and colourful pictures to communicate important messages and encourage discussion and honesty between children and their carers. It is a simple way for families in distress to share emotions and support each other at a bleak time. The book is narrated by two children – Amy and Tom – who have both been bereaved suddenly and are recovering from their grief.

The book starts with an introduction to death, shock and sadness. It then gives opportunities for frank discussion about what happened, what it feels like to die and what happens to the body. This is followed by a section on different emotions that bereaved children often feel and how to cope. The book ends with a section on how to remember the person who has died, including space to write down memories in the book.

The book is by Sudden, an initiative which shares best practice, research and resources among professionals and carers working with suddenly bereaved people. Sudden is run by Brake, the road safety charity.

Thank you for taking the time to use this book and help children. If you wish to make a donation to Brake, go to [www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk).

“ This book is wonderful and I am positive it will really help children deal with and understand their grief. With its very accessible writing style and eye-catching design, it will prove an extremely useful tool for families going through a sudden bereavement. ”

**Jacqueline Wilson** children's author

Supported by



Funeralcare

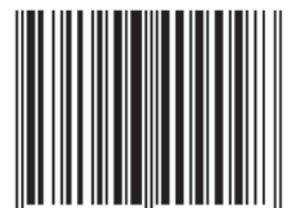
Co-op Funeralcare is the UK's leading Funeral Director with funeral homes nationwide. We hope the information and guidance in this book will be of benefit to children who are bereaved.



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Visit [www.suddendeath.org](http://www.suddendeath.org)