

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.



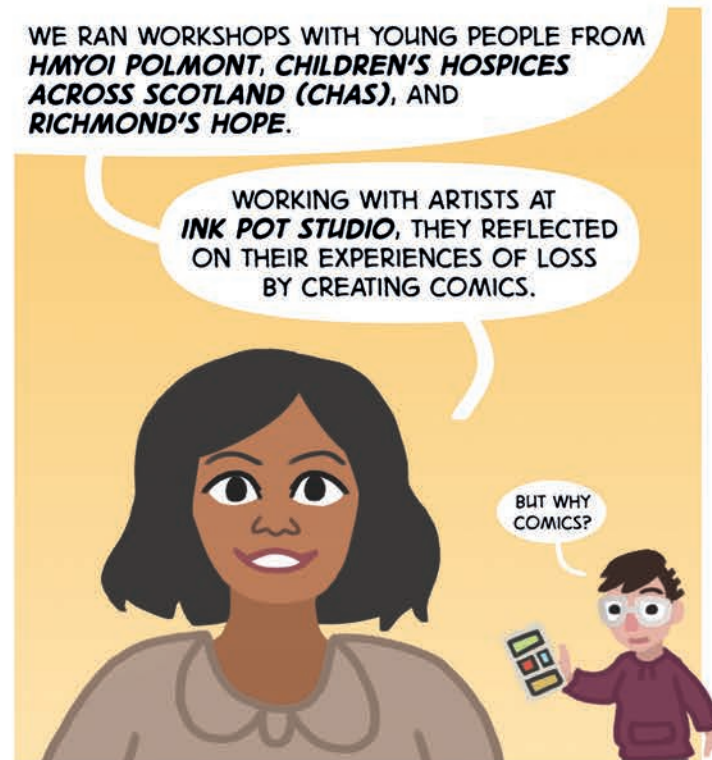
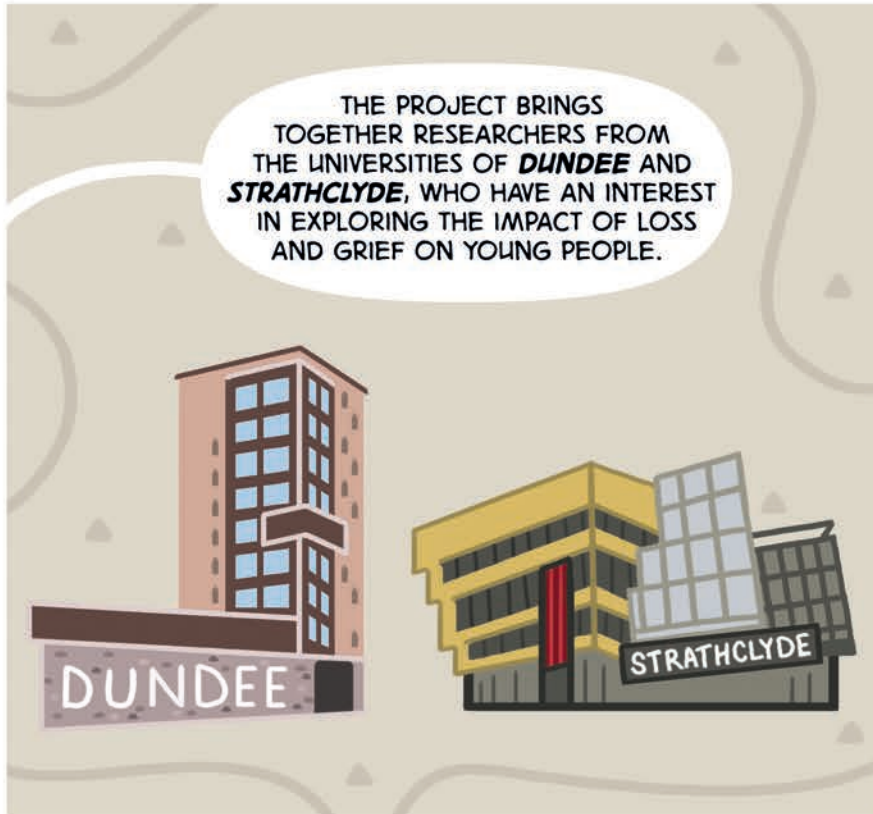
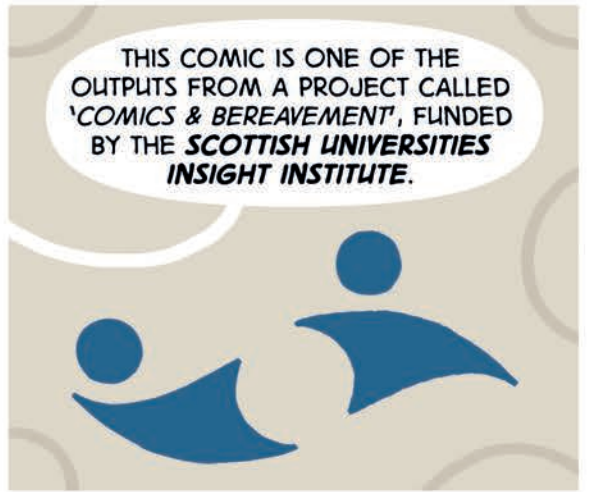
Golnar Nabizadeh

Lecturer in Comics Studies
University of Dundee

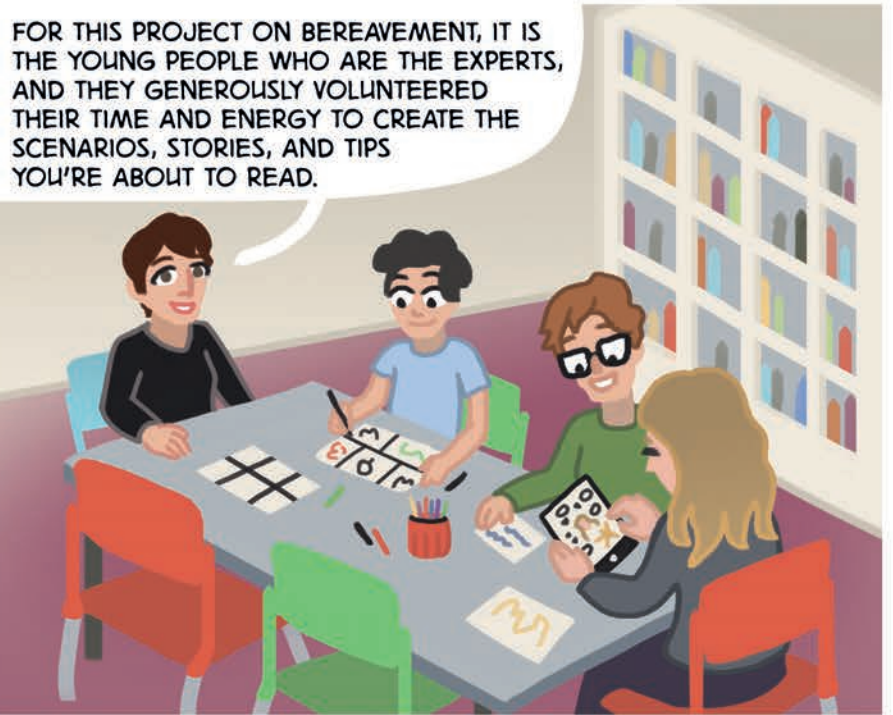
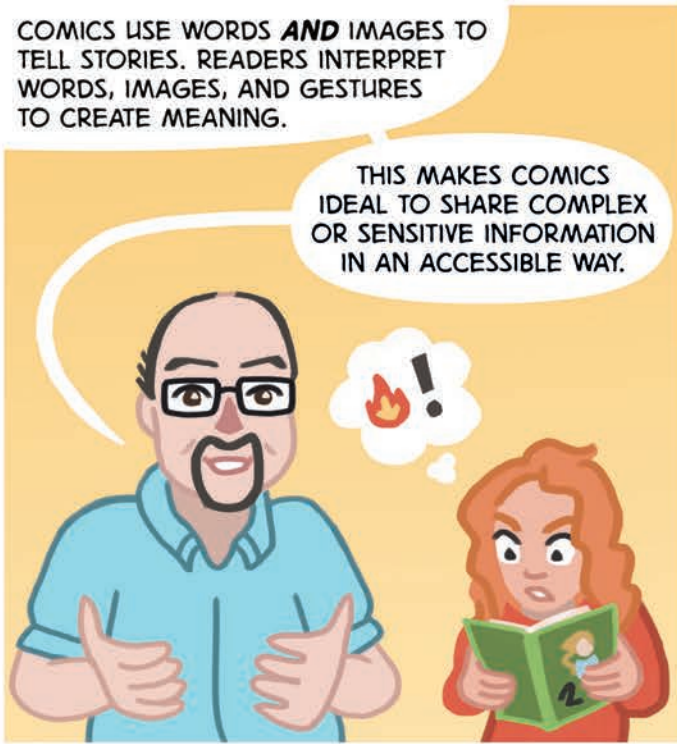
g.nabizadeh@dundee.ac.uk

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.



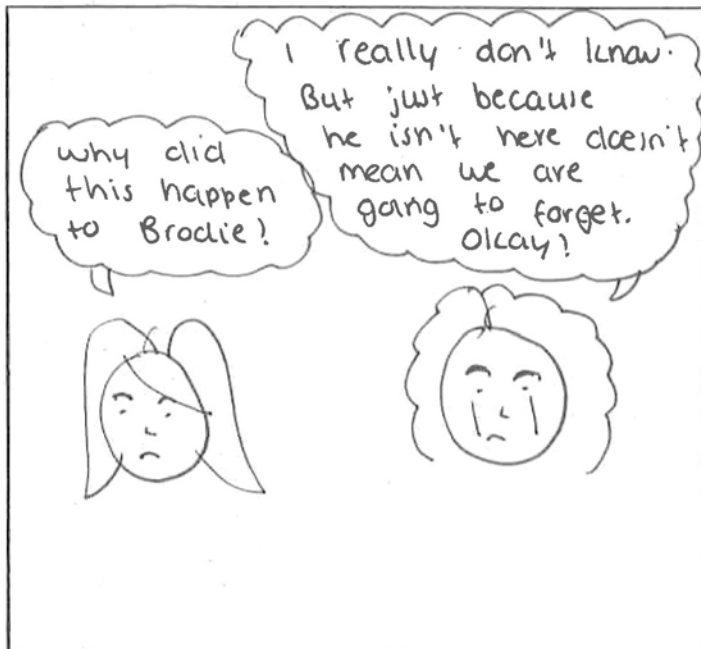
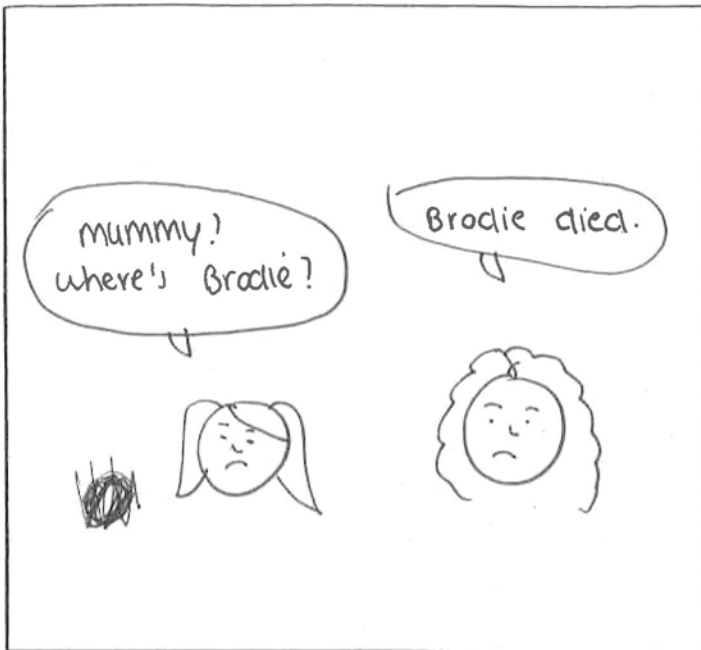


COMICS USE WORDS **AND** IMAGES TO TELL STORIES. READERS INTERPRET WORDS, IMAGES, AND GESTURES TO CREATE MEANING.



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.



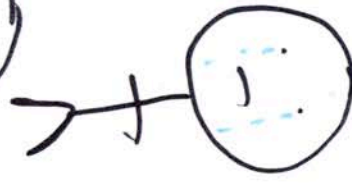
INFORM THEM ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE DIES. IF YOU ARE RELIGIOUS, TELL THEM ABOUT HEAVEN.



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

Someone just died

JUST move on



you will get over it

It's fine



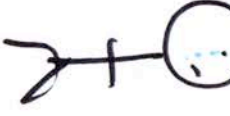
Hannah Bradley

Un-helpful!



Don't bottle up your feelings

Someone just died

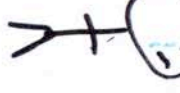


OWG



Felt me everything

Please me along



Shaw who was

Why u crying



What's wrong

Look their crying



OK?

That's okay I won't force you



no not really



This is what I deal with it



maybe I'll try that



I need space finally



stray



Can you offer help

THELPR

wanna tell me about it?



I can't deal with this



care u ok? you can talk to me



Someone has just died



well I can help

Helpful

NEED SPACE



I'll help

Someone has just died what I can close to



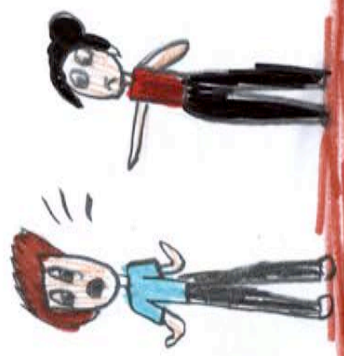
what should I do?



Hello, my name is Kian. Today, I'm going to be giving you tips on how to deal with grief. I've experienced grief, so I know what it's like.



Also make sure you talk to somebody about your thoughts. This is important in order to feel better.



DEALING WITH GRIEF

First of all, don't tell people personal information that you don't feel comfortable talking about.



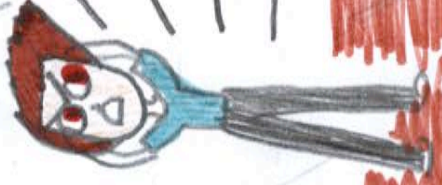
Getting advice from family and friends.

Well..

Guys, what should I do?



SHUT UP!

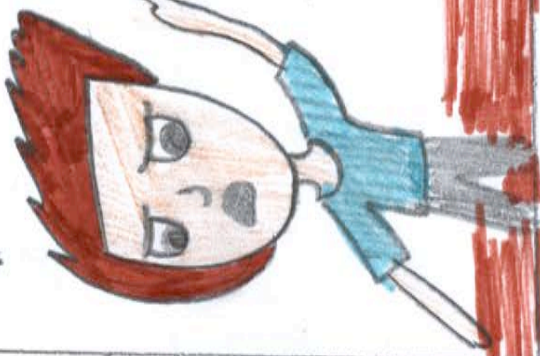


Don't worry, the pain will go away.

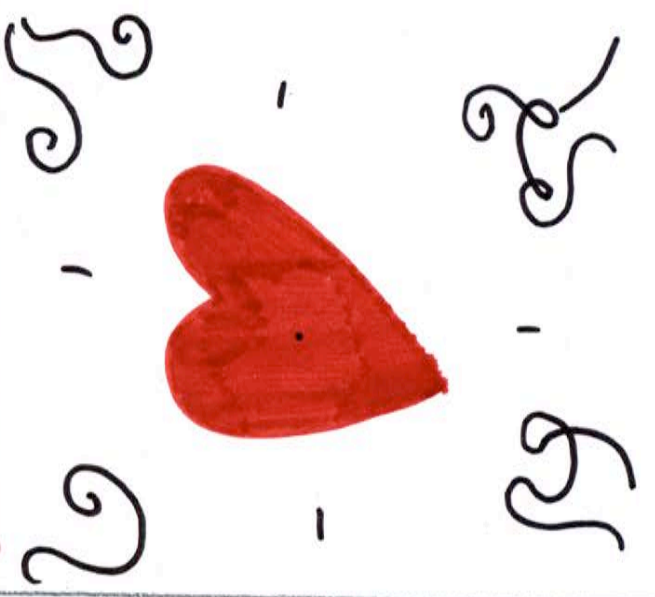
So how did your dad die?



Just kidding, don't say that.



Try be more... polite.



Maybe not all of it, but everything will be fine.

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



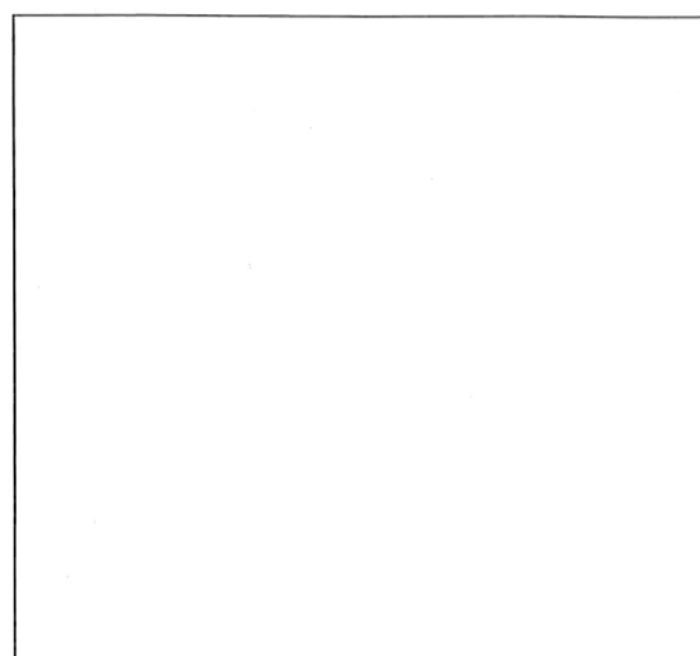
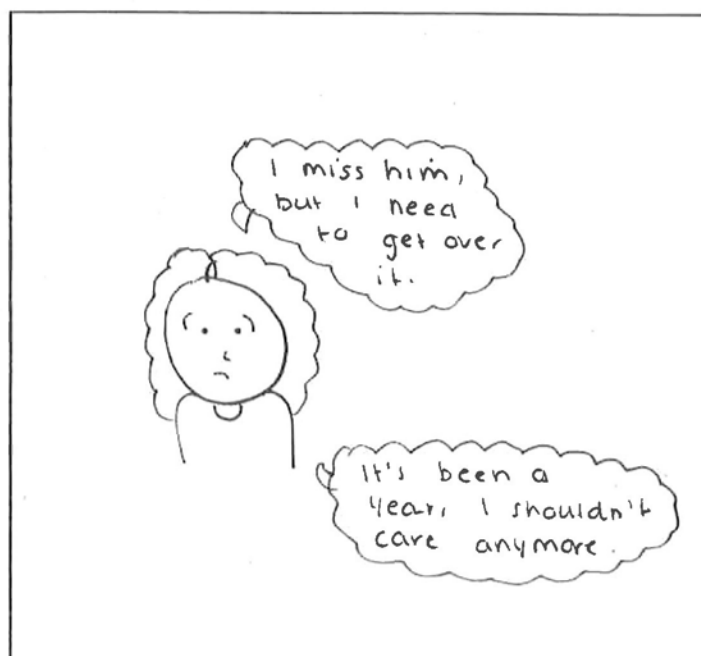
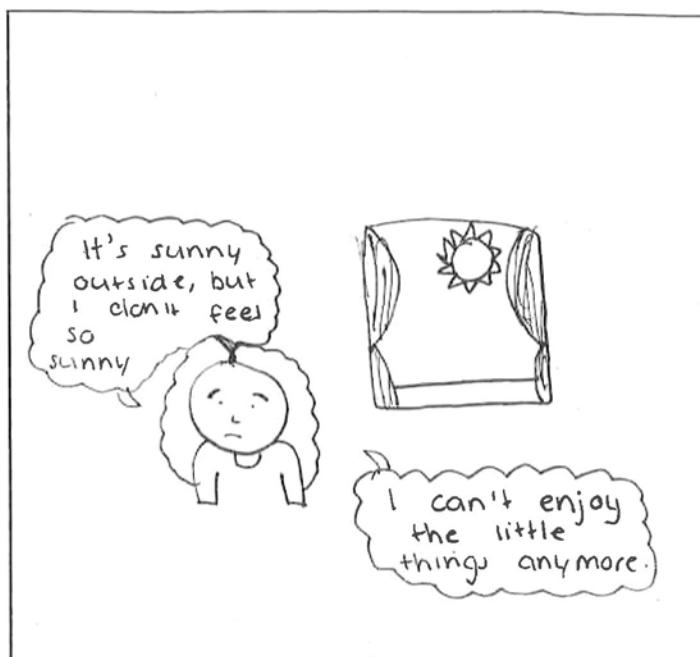
U N H E L P F U L



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.

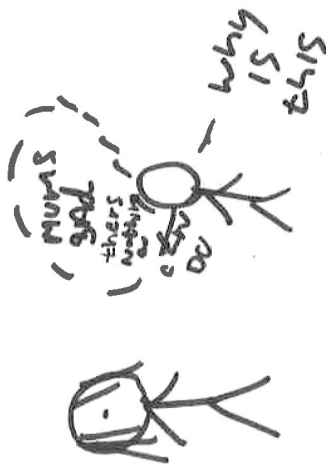
- Reassure a child that you can cope with their feelings. Often children try and protect their adults from how they are feeling and keep their own feelings inside.

- 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.



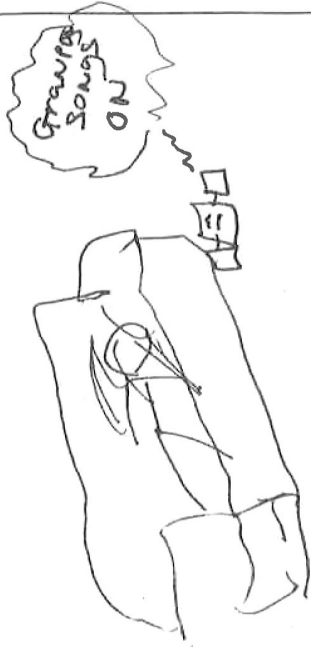
1) PAPA PASSED AWAY



Party at ma gaff
 'owey time MUMS
 happy
 Naw or
 Days



till next pay
 BK ON COUCH



Dad MUMS still where a left her this morning

Sust BK From scholl

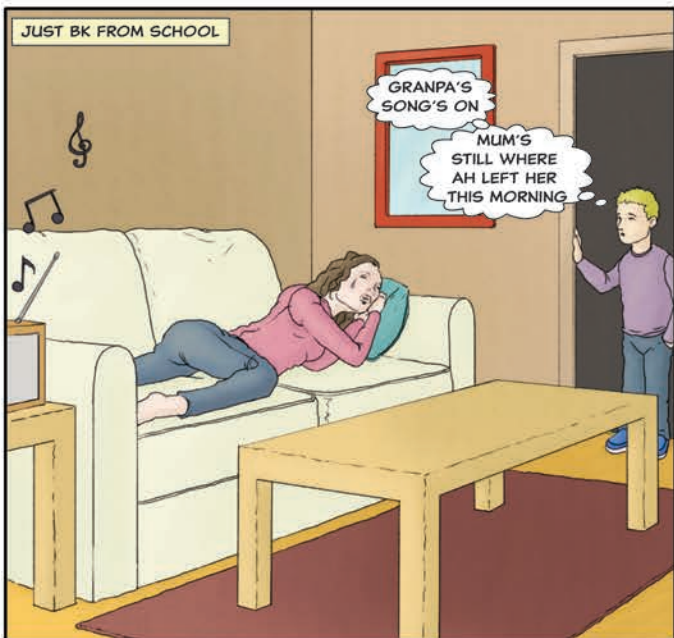
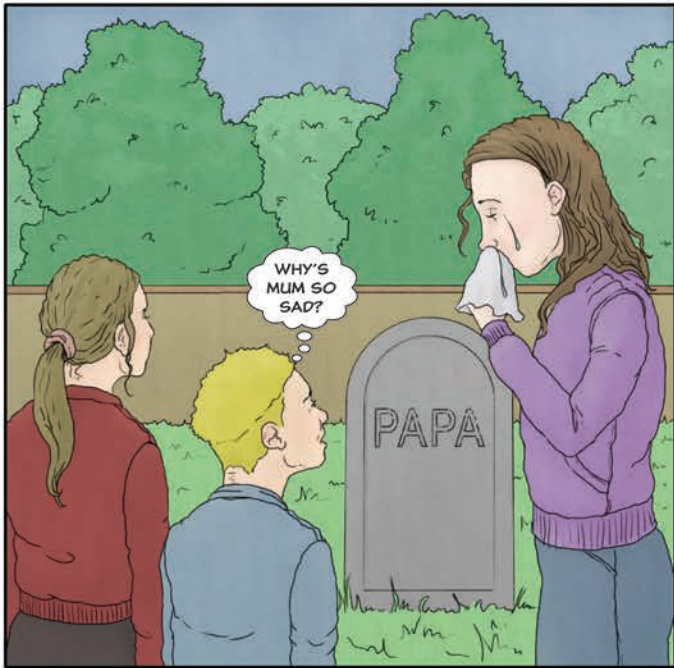
why cant I under stand
 why she feels like
 that a loved him
 two a Dont feel
 like that



MUM



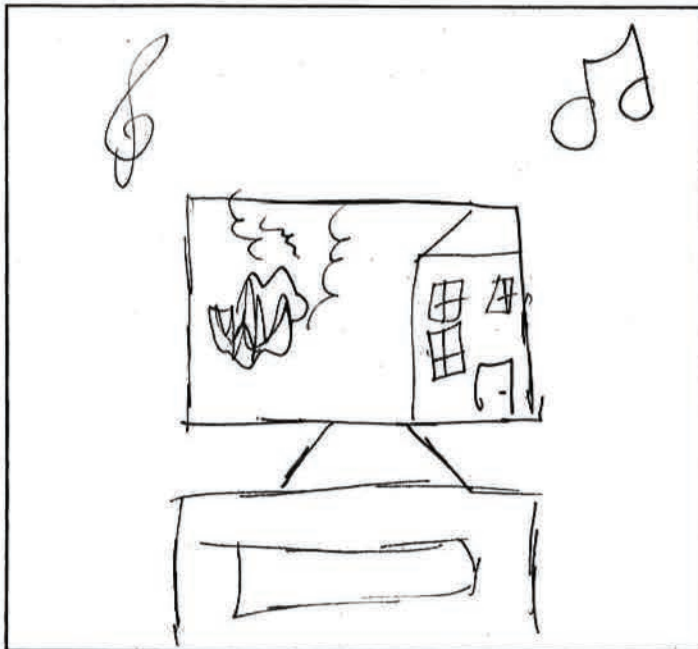
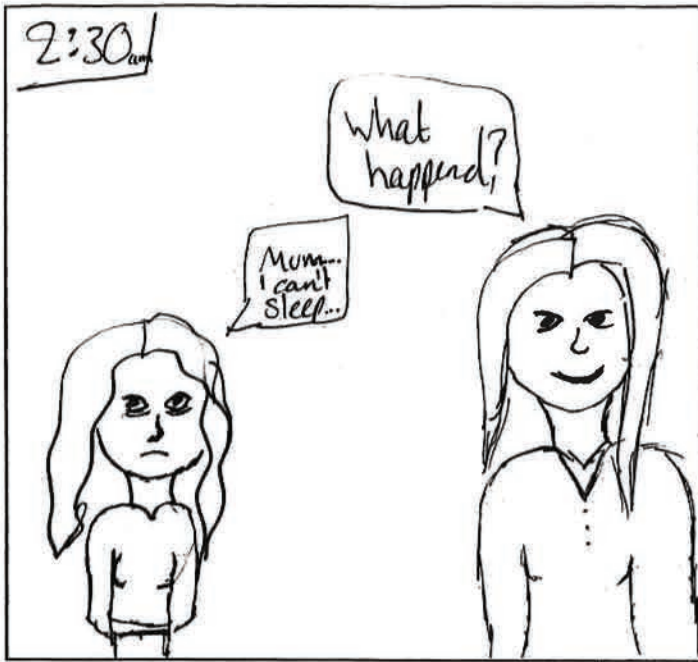
PAPA'S PASSED AWAY



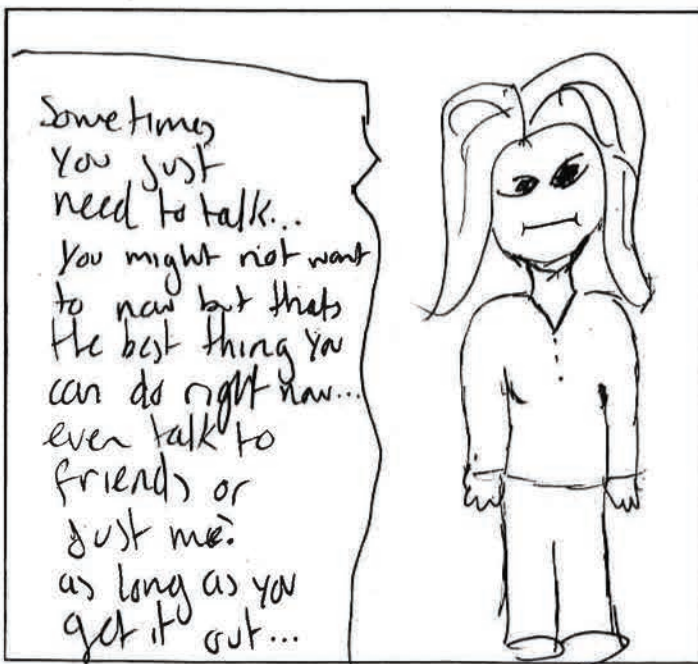
ART: GARRY MAC

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK

BY EMILY GUNN



ANNOYED
GUILT
DEPRESSION
ANGER
SADNESS
STRESS
WORRY
ANXIETY



IT'S OK
NOT TO
BE OK

2:30 AM...

WHAT'S HAPPENED?

MUM, I CAN'T SLEEP.



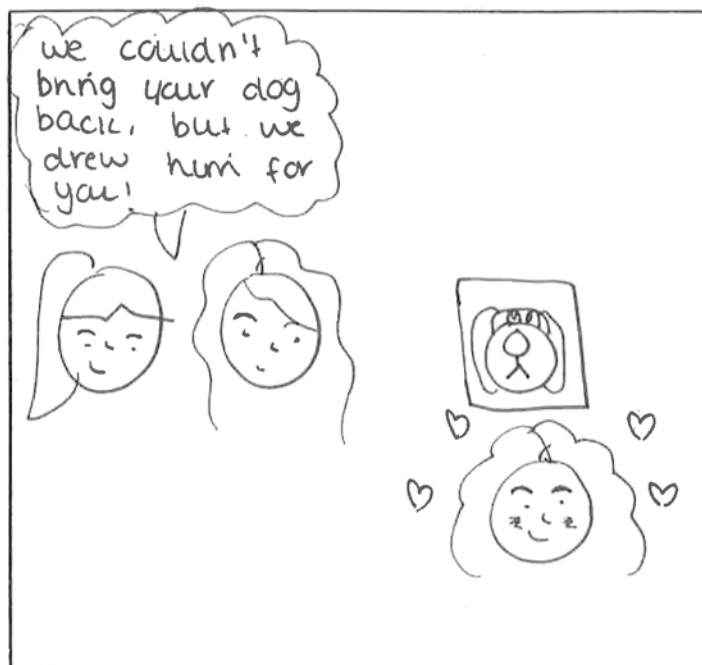
SOMETIMES YOU JUST NEED TO TALK... YOU MIGHT NOT WANT TO RIGHT NOW, BUT IT'S THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO. EVEN TALK TO FRIENDS, OR JUST TO ME. AS LONG AS YOU GET IT OUT...



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 ~~more~~ 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 Love

R.I.P
Dad
one love

ONE LOVE


One Love

One Love, one heart let's get together and feel all right heart 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.



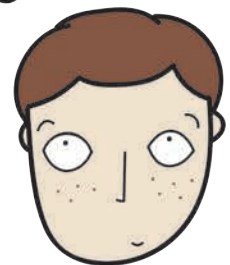
ONE LOVE · ONE HEART · LET'S GET TOGETHER AND FEEL ALRIGHT · HEAR THE CHILDREN CRYING · ONE LOVE

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.

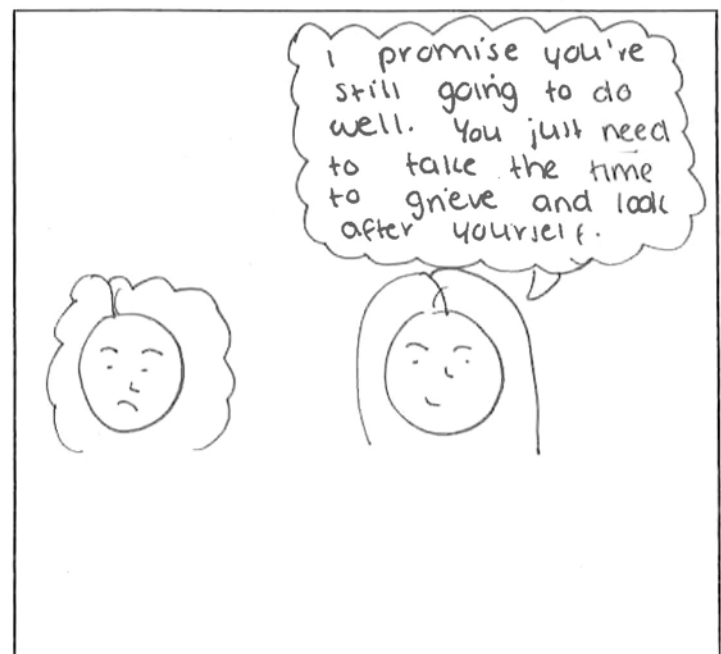
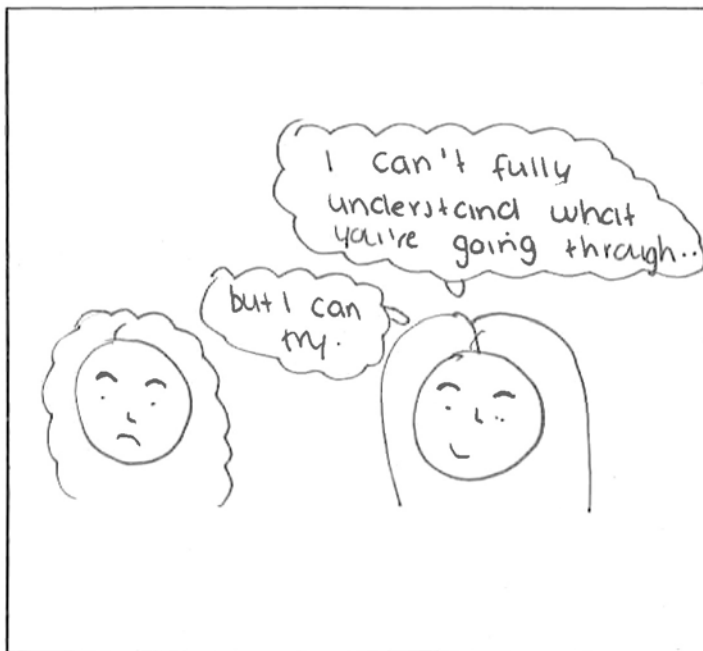
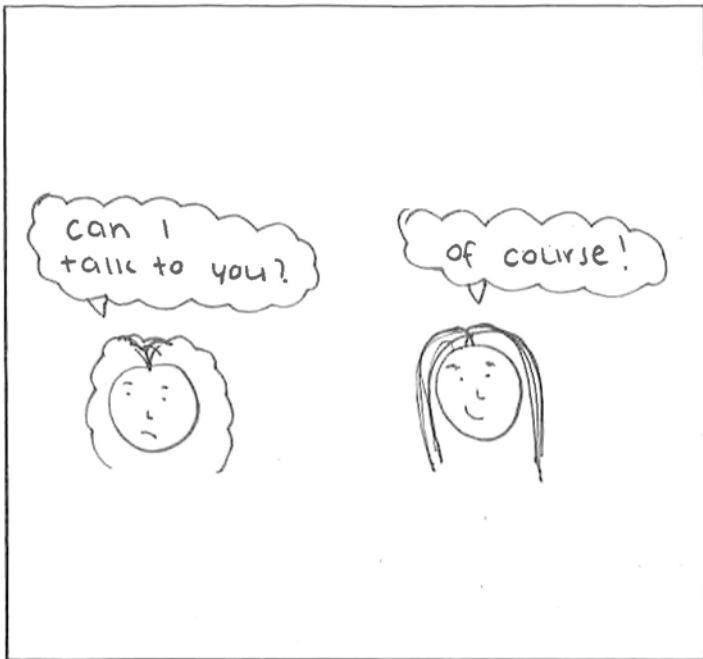
one Love



I LOVE YOU DAD AND MISS YOU SO MUCH.

GRIEVING CHILD TALKING TO A TEACHER

BY ABBIE GUNN



I LOST MY GRAN AT 13 WHO WAS ILL WITH CANCER. I HAD BEEN LOOKING AFTER HER, I STILL REMEMBER HOLDING HER AS SHE PASSED.

SHE ALWAYS LOOKED AFTER ME AND ALWAYS SPOILED ME.

I LOVED GETTING TIME TO SPEND WITH HER, IT WAS MY CHANCE TO LOOK AFTER HER.

I COULDN'T HAVE LOST A NICER PERSON AND I NEVER USED TO SPEAK ABOUT IT BECAUSE IT MADE ME FULL OF EMOTIONS, BUT IT'S THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO.

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?

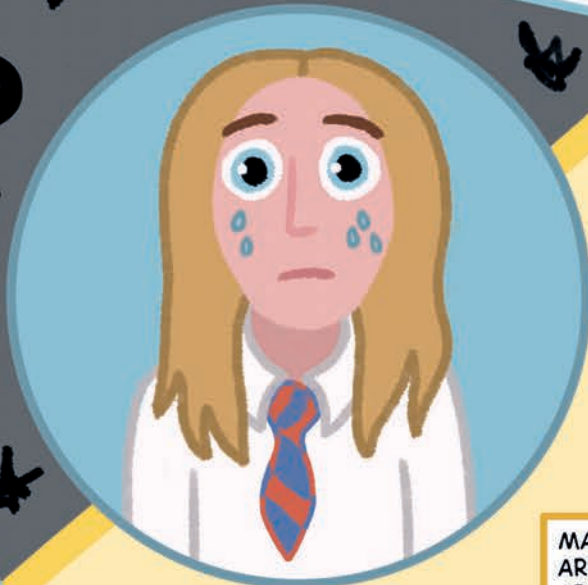
EMMA, WHY ARE YOU CRYING?

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!

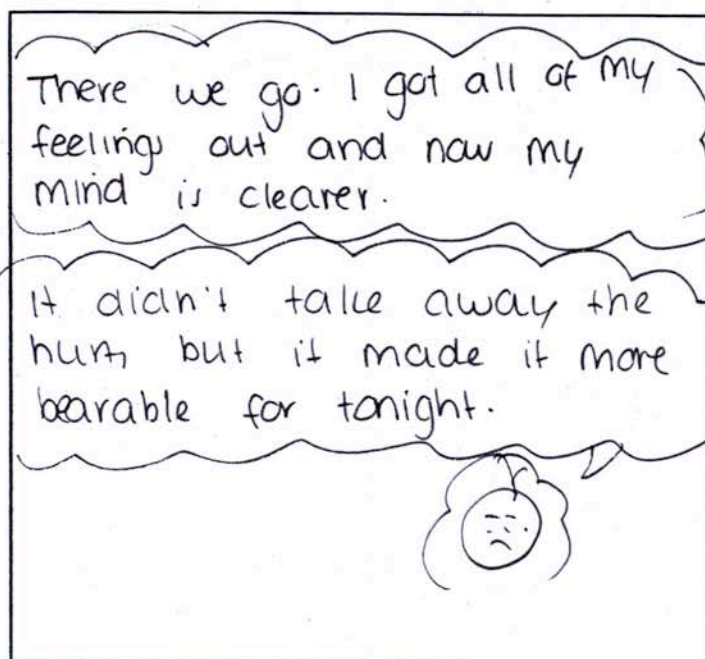
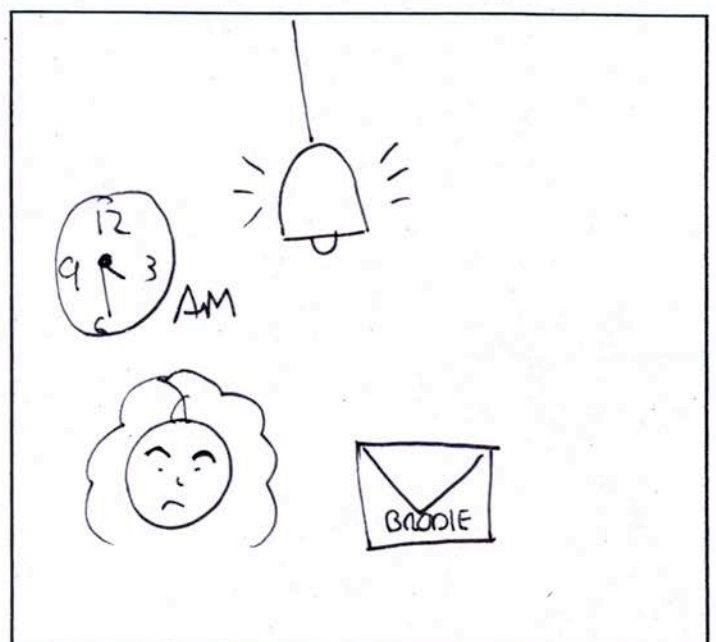
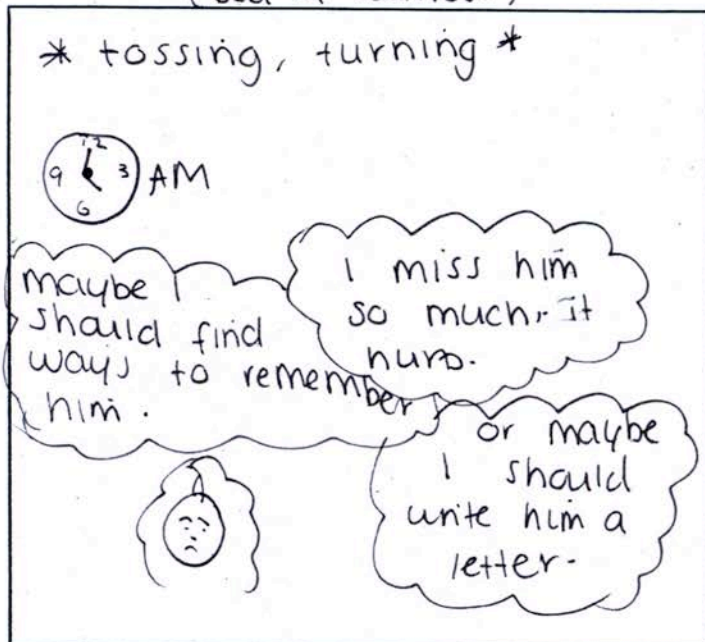
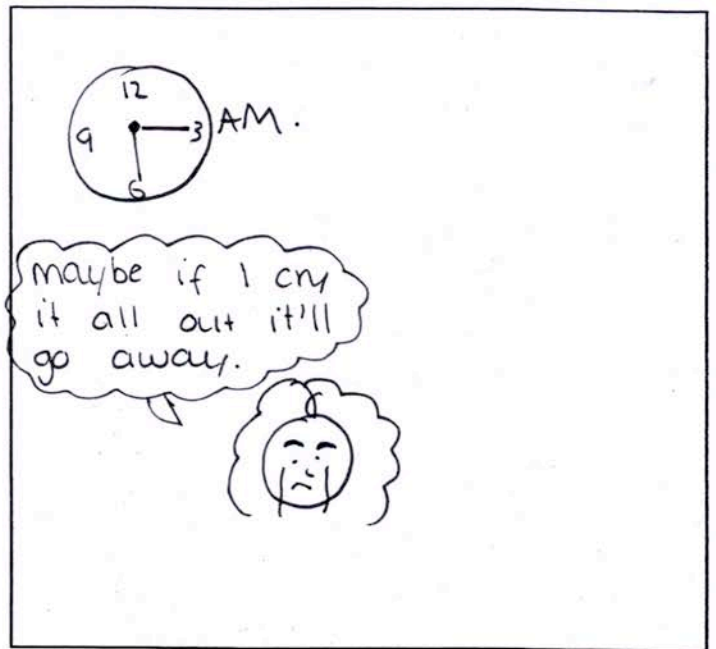
- Some schools offer a pass to let grieving pupils leave class and go to the guidance room whenever they need to.
- Teach PSE* classes on death, mental health, loss and how it can affect people, and common disabilities.

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

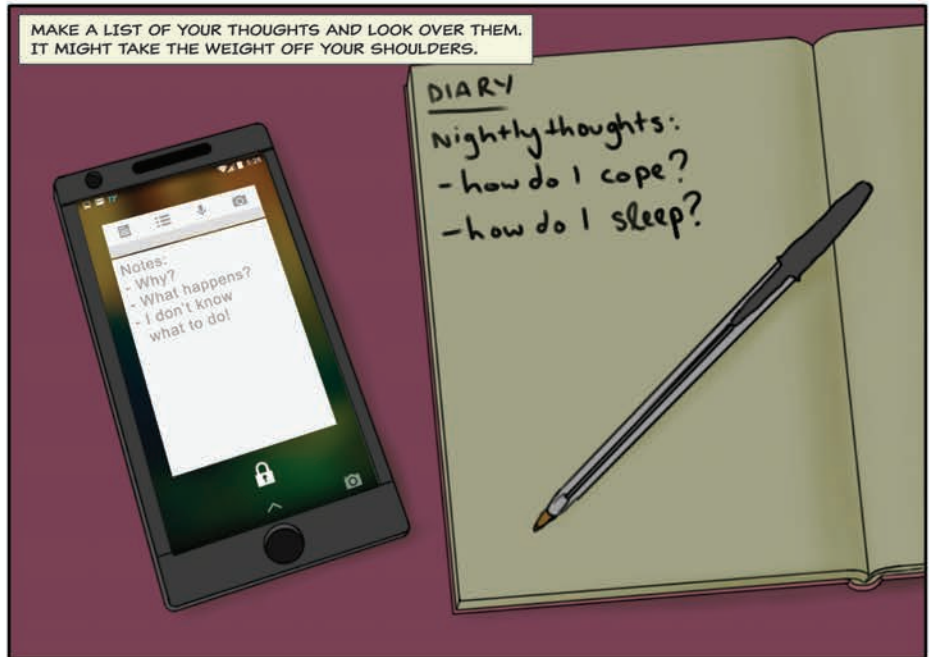
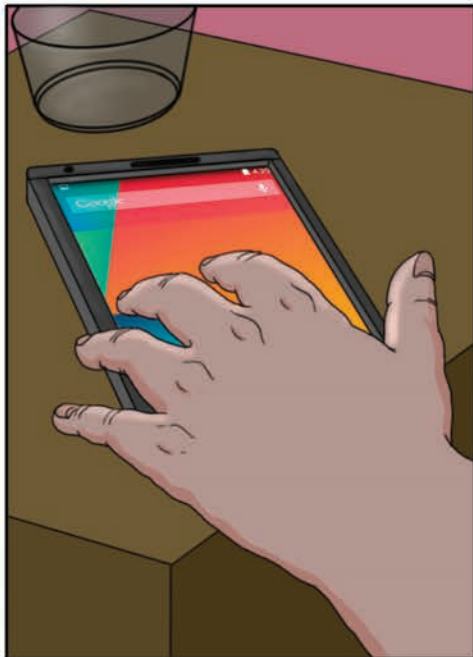
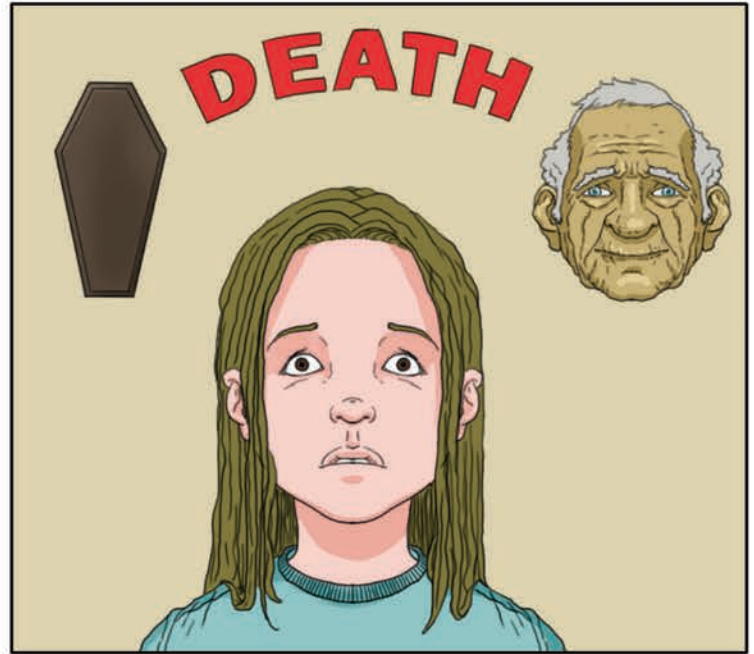
BY ABBIE GUNN



(bed of worries.)



THINKING ABOUT DEATH AT NIGHT



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.

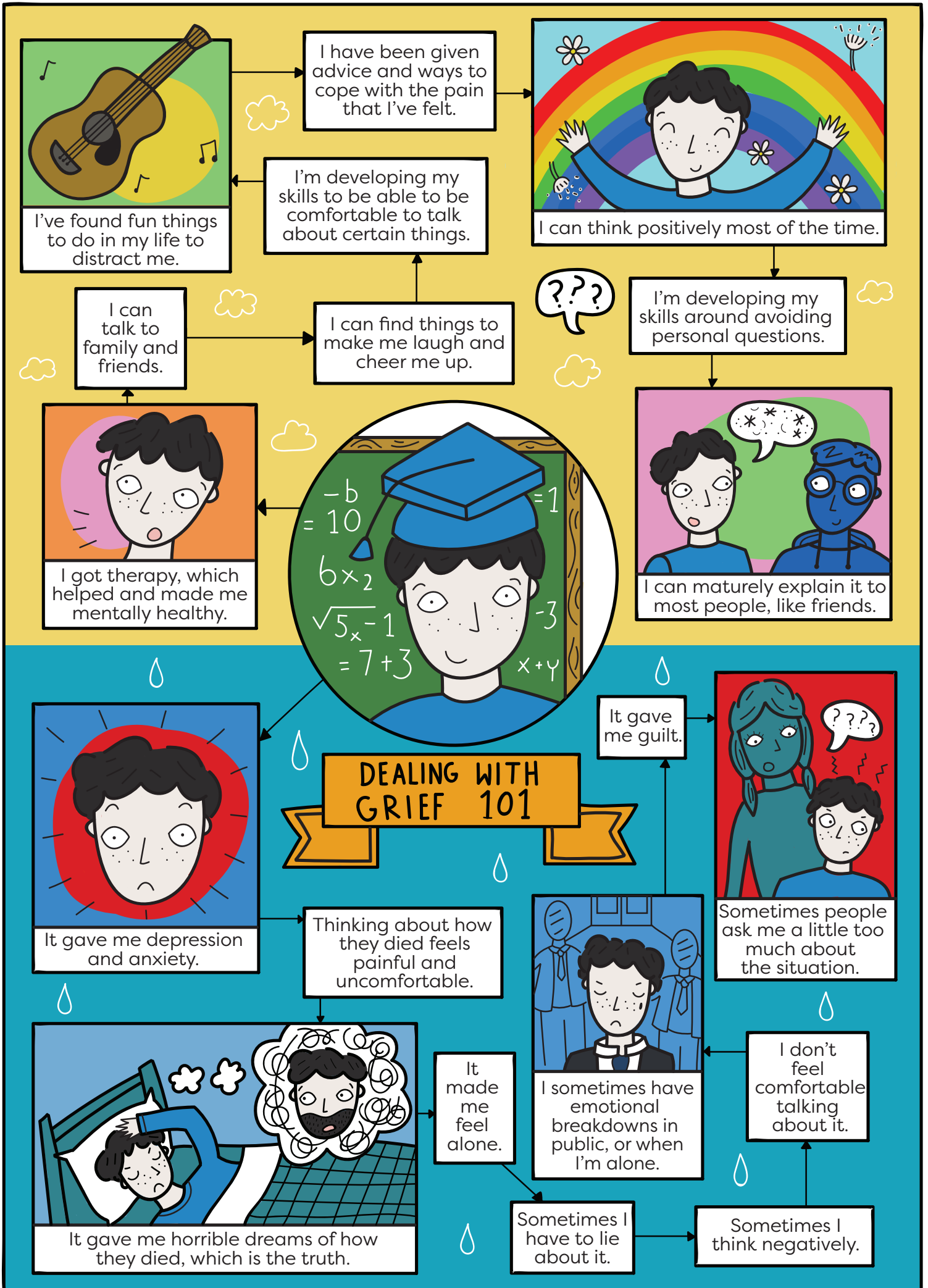
Don't let them feel embarrassed or guilty about being sad or depressed.

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...

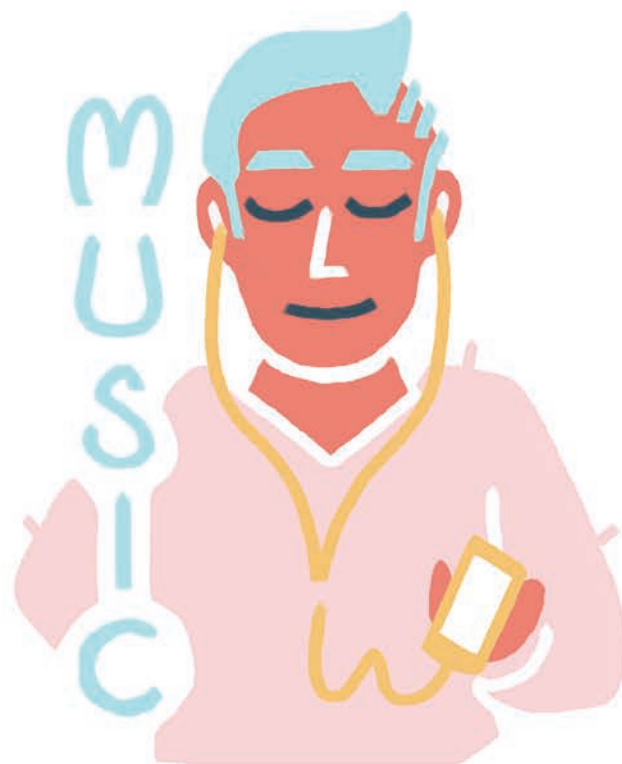
Just telling someone you're there for them can help so much. Make sure they can trust you.

The small things can go a long way.

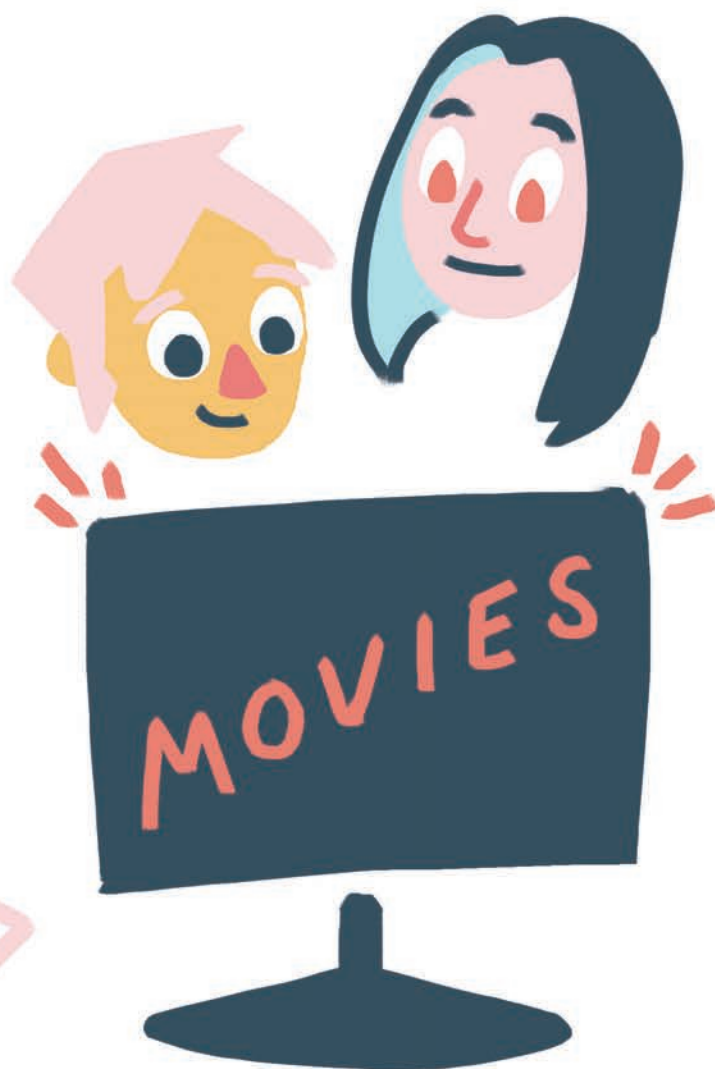


EMILY'S ESCAPE PLACES

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



Parents should tell their child about death and inform them about it just like the birds & bees. rules of life

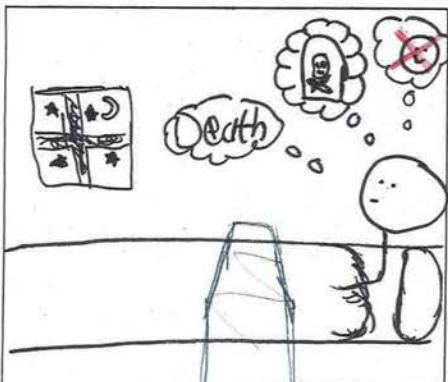


Inform them about what will happen when someone dies

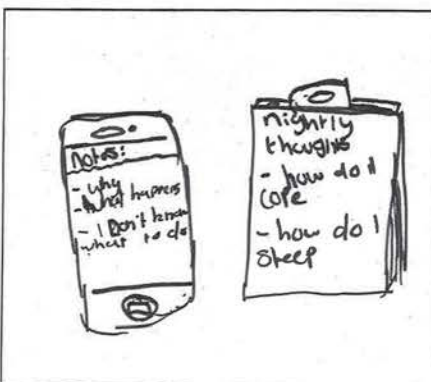


Tell them not to be scared. If you are religious tell them when the dead go AKA heaven. Tell them with good sides of death

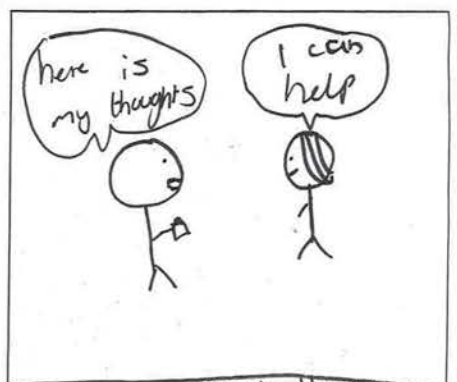
THINKING ABOUT DEATH AT NIGHT ORIGINAL COMIC BY HANNAH BRADLEY



What should you do if you wake up at night thinking about death



make a list of your thoughts and look over them. It might ease take the weight of your shoulders



Tell someone your thoughts and maybe they can help you cope or give you advice.

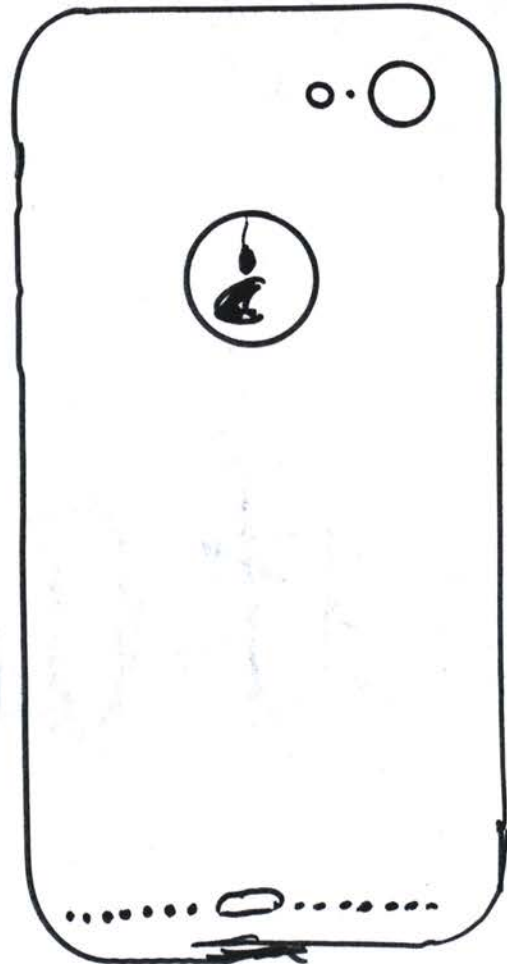
EMMA'S TIPS

ORIGINAL DRAWING BY EMMA MOORE



DILLON HIPSON'S DRAWINGS

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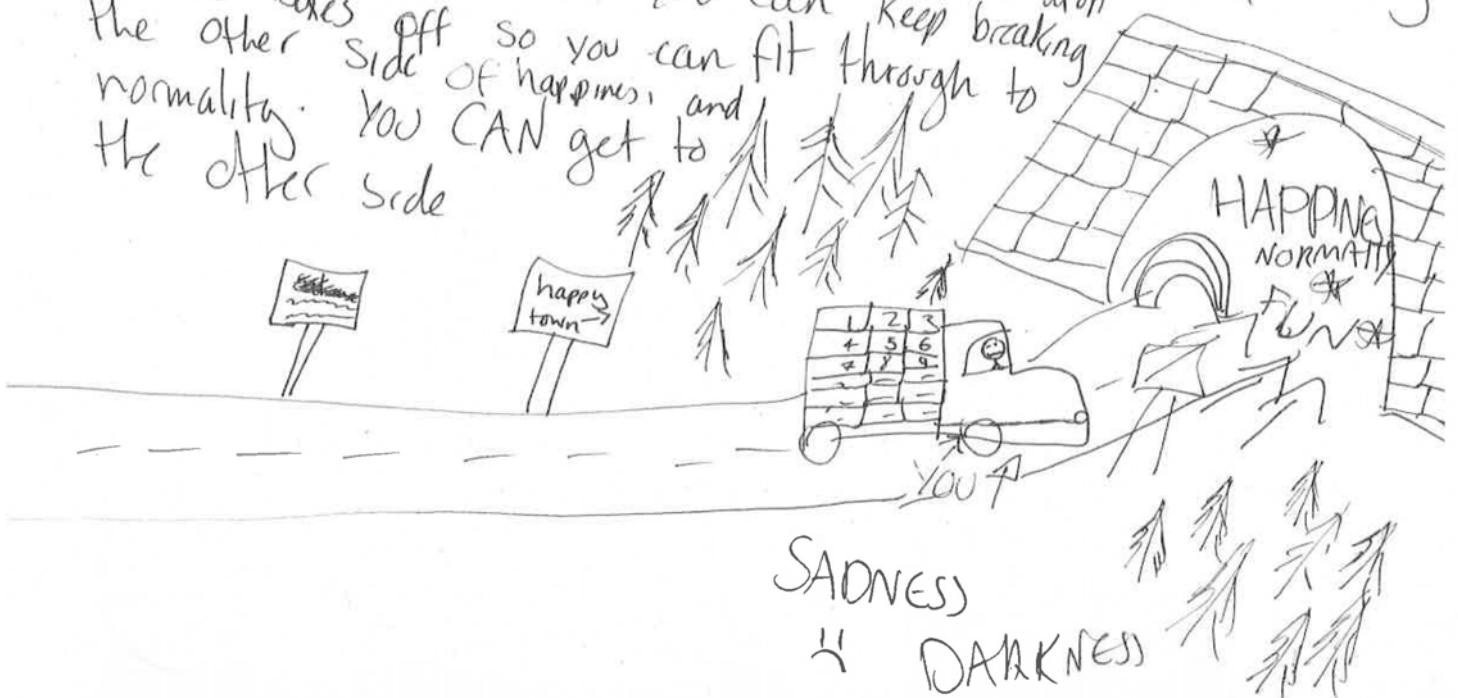
PROCESS

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... Its ok to not be ok. Dont let them feel embarrassed ~~about~~ or guilty about being sad or depressed.
3. ~~Its so common to~~ ITS OK TO CRY! ~~Just~~ Tell them its not bad to cry, sometimes thats the only thing that helps or can get your feelings and emotions out.

4. Something to help you:- Imagine a tunnel ~~is~~ in front of you. on the side you're on its dark sad and scary. ~~if~~ loudly 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



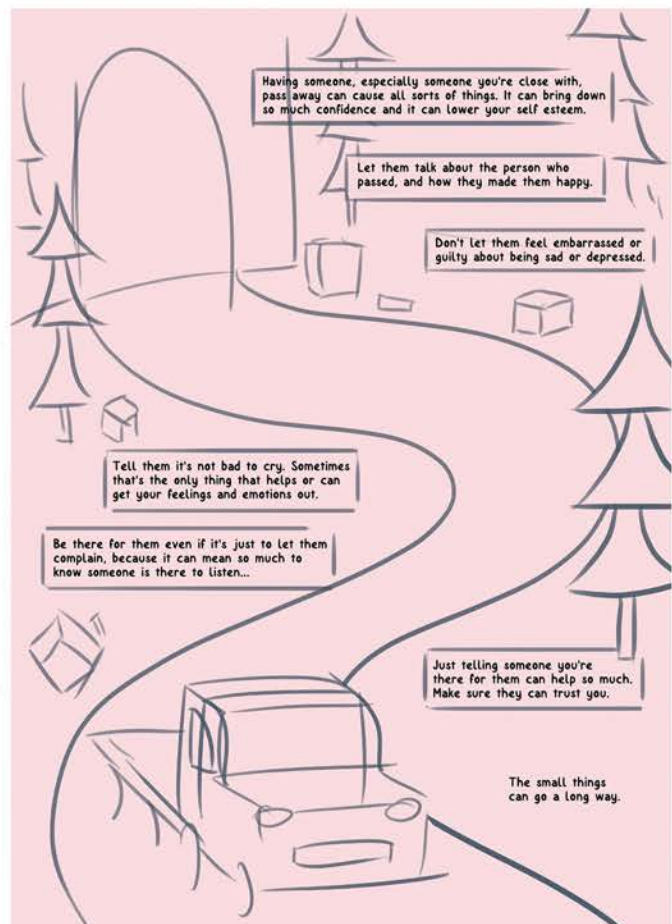
PAGE 1: DIGITAL SKETCH AND FIRST PASS BY REBECCA HORNER



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

5. Be there for them even if its 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 your 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! Its 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.

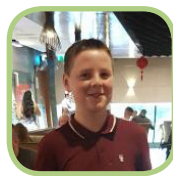


My name is **Steven Kerr**. I am 12 years old. I love to play football with my friends. I decided to take part in the comic book project as I wanted to share my story with other kids.



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](https://www.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

