



When something bad has happened

Workbook for children

Preface

To practitioners:

This workbook was created by the Barnahus Team within the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Trauma Unit for the Stockholm region. We have drawn inspiration from established treatment models (such as TF-CBT, CFTSI, etc.), as well as from our clinical experience of working with children at Barnahus in Stockholm.

The workbook is designed for children and young people who, along with their caregivers, are offered crisis support. It is our hope that the contents of this workbook will make crisis support work easier for children, young people, caregivers and practitioners.

The contents of the workbook are not intended to be used in a particular order, and we do not think everything in the book should be used for all children and young people. The book can be used in different ways, in accordance with the unique needs and experiences of the individual you are supporting.

As authors, we have based the workbook on established knowledge about trauma, trauma symptoms and interventions, and tailored its contents to reflect the nature of crisis support as a short and limited intervention. The contents are written by us and the words are our responsibility. We have borrowed ideas from and been inspired by colleagues from a range of professions in our current and previous places of work. We are grateful for the support, feedback and inspiration we have received along the way.

The workbook should be used for what we call child psychiatric crisis support. It has been developed in the context of child psychiatry and we think that as a practitioner, you should have basic child psychiatric skills. Please note that practitioners should only use the workbook and apply it in their crisis support work after consulting the accompanying Handbook.

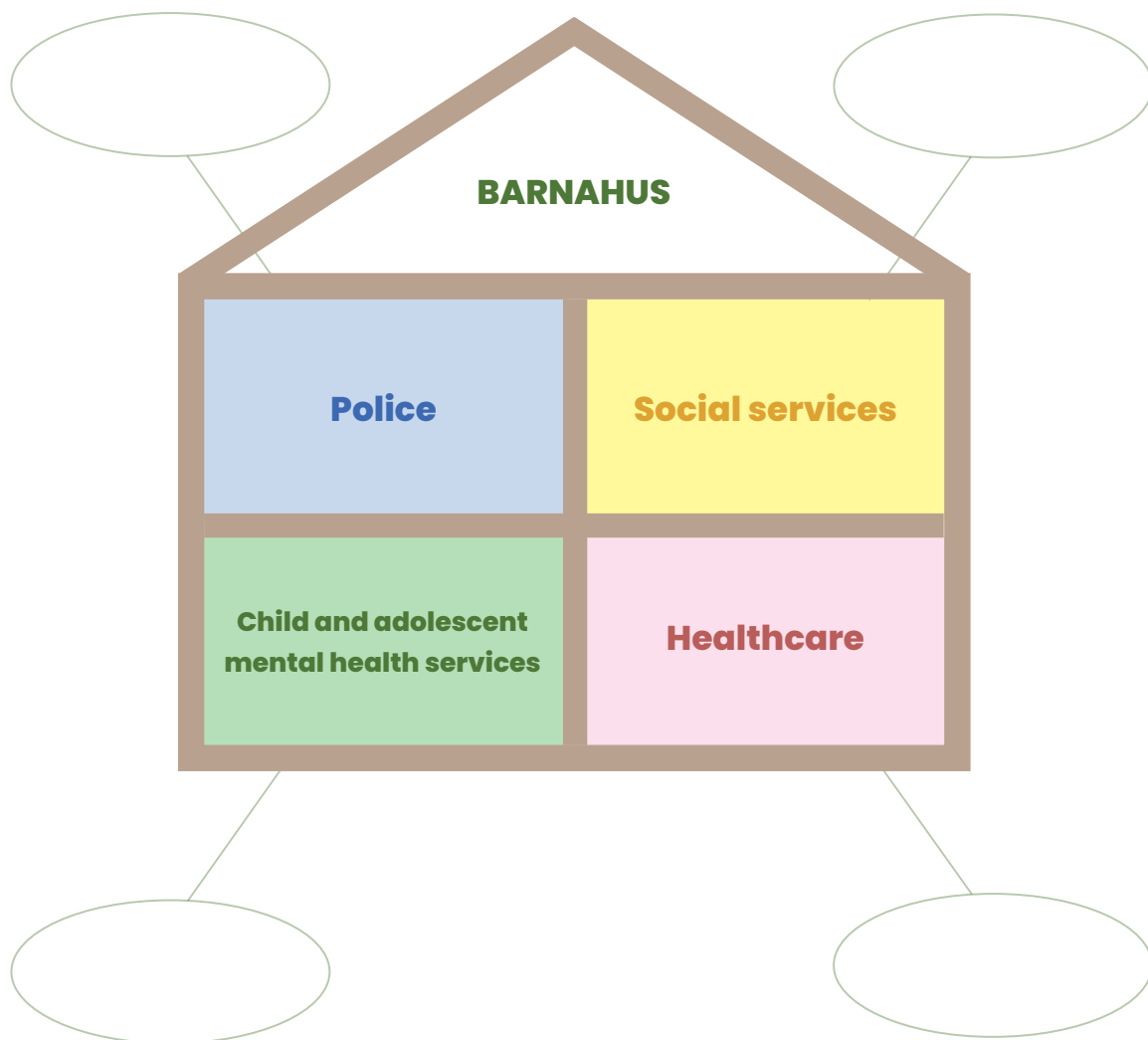
Hello and welcome!



My name is _____

I am ___ years old.

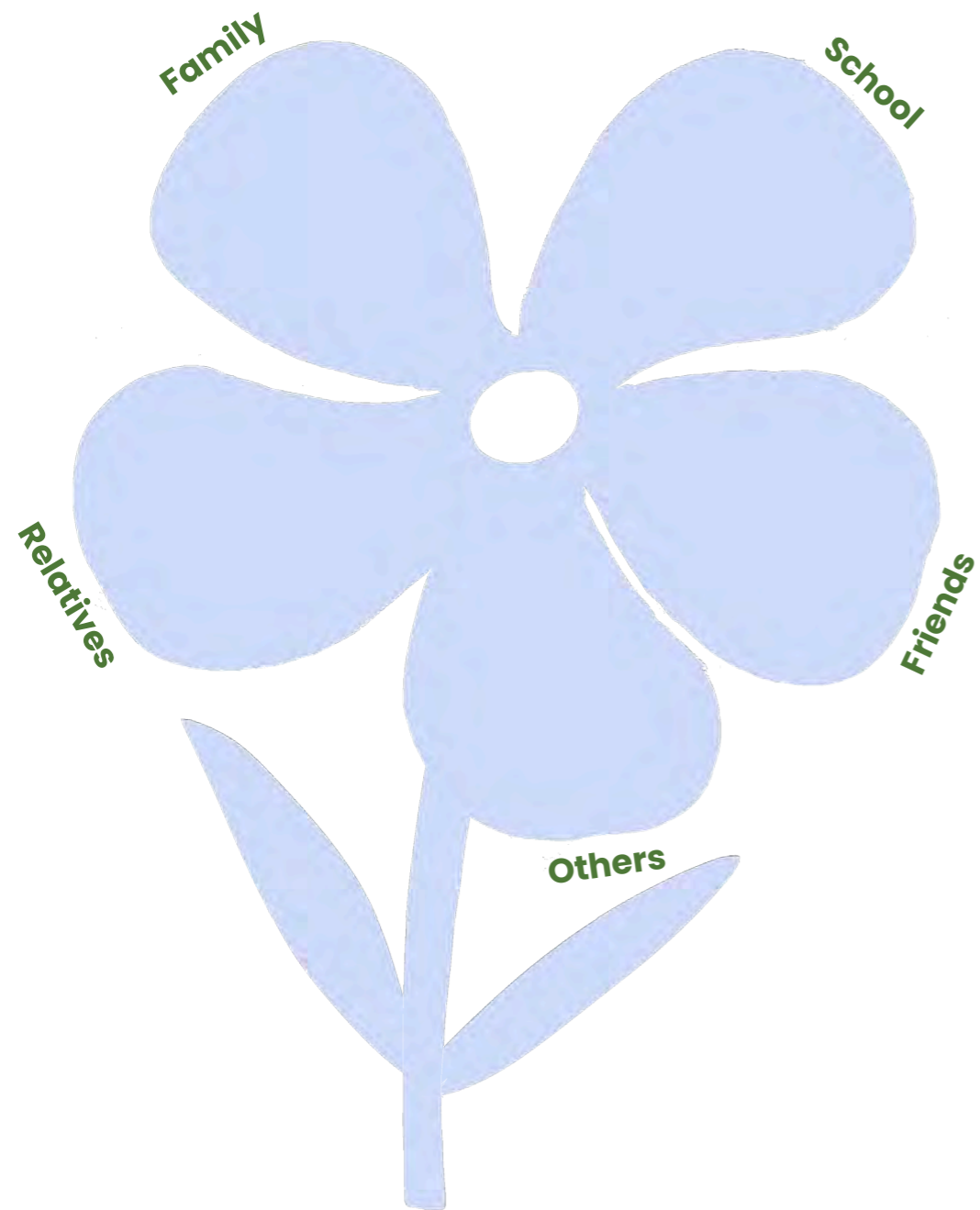
Three things I like are:



We are here to talk about how you are feeling and to help you to feel better.

Children come to Barnahus because something hard has happened. What is it that happened to you?

Important people in my life



Introduction



My life timeline

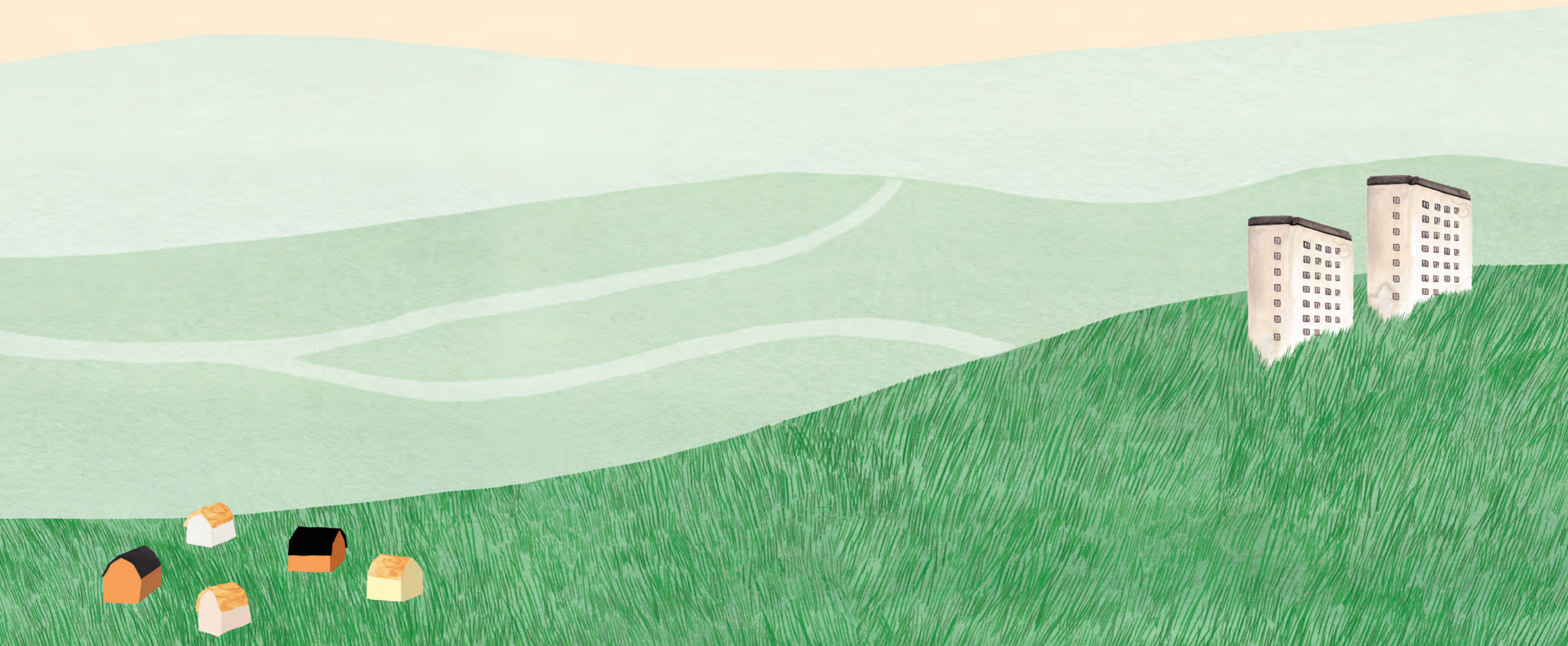


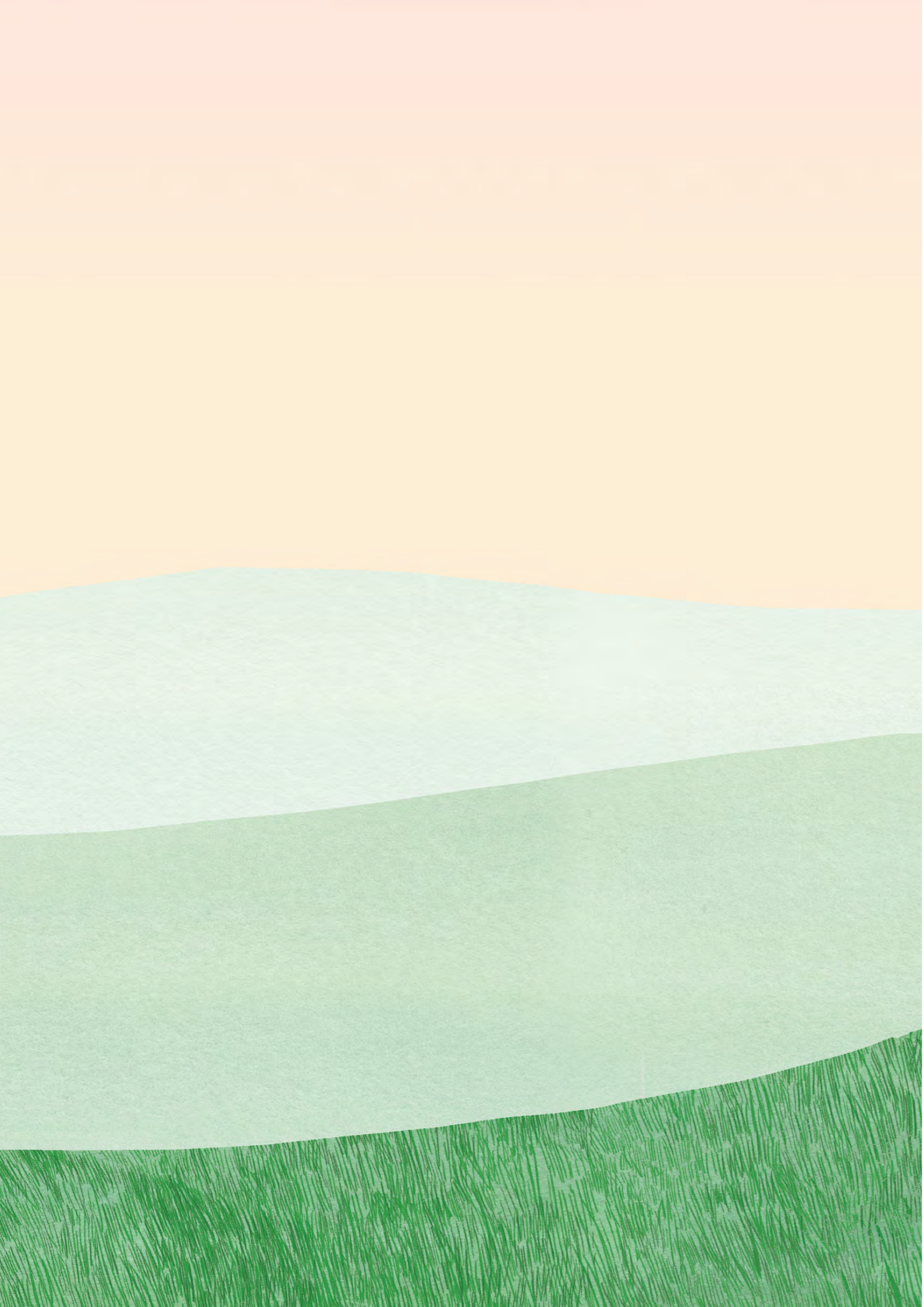
I was born





The Future





Common reactions after difficult events

When we have been through a difficult event, it affects us in different ways. The reactions we have can be called stress reactions or crisis reactions. Usually, those reactions decrease over time. If the reactions last longer, they are called trauma symptoms. Trauma means that you have been through something frightening or unpleasant. It might be that an adult has hit you, or touched your body in a way that felt strange or is not okay. Other examples are seeing someone in your family being subjected to violence or someone threatening you.

It is more common than you might think for children to experience frightening things. You can't see it from the outside, and often a child will not speak to anyone about what happened. So, lots of children may think that they are the only one to have experienced frightening events.

When you go through frightening or upsetting things, it is common to feel lots of strong emotions, like anger, sadness or fear. Some children find it hard to sleep or get a sore head or sore tummy.

Some children who have been through frightening events notice that they begin to do things again that they did several years ago when they were little. They might need an adult there to be able to sleep at night or need a special soft toy to feel safe again. It is common not to want to be with friends or family as much as you were before the bad thing happened. You might feel worried about how a parent is feeling and it might be difficult to talk to each other about it.

It is not surprising we have these reactions when something bad has happened and they usually go away by themselves with time. But it can also be a relief to get help to feel better more quickly.



Examples of common trauma symptoms



Re-experiencing

Bad memories and thoughts about what happened can pop up in your head when you don't want them to. Your brain replays your experience like a film or as images, and you can't stop thinking about the bad things that happened. Some people have lots of nightmares about what happened or other scary dreams.



Feeling overly tense

The brain and the body may be on high alert, and you find it hard to relax. Some people notice that they become angry and irritated more easily. You may get scared easily and be alert to danger, and you may find it hard to concentrate.



Feelings of unreality

It can feel like nothing is real. It is as though, for example, you see reality in a dream but you are not there yourself. You can feel a bit distant or empty.



Avoidance

Often, you really don't want to think about what happened or don't want to be in places that, or meet people who, remind you of the bad experience. You would rather not talk about it.



Negative thoughts

It is common for people to have negative thoughts about themselves, the world and the future. Things don't feel fun anymore and it can feel as though everything bad that happened is your own fault. It can feel hard to be happy.



Hard to trust other people

You can find it hard to trust other people and the world can feel dangerous.

The brain's alarm system

Humans are designed to react quickly to danger, which helps us to survive. The brain has an alarm system which warns us if something scary seems to be happening, and makes us prepared to run away quickly, play dead or perhaps go on the attack. Our responses are automatic and we don't choose how we are going to react.

- **Fight** means that we try to protect ourselves by resisting or fighting back.
- **Flight** means that we try to flee from things that are scary or frightening.
- **Freeze** means that the body freezes up and it feels like you can't move or do anything. This reaction is especially common when someone is sexually abused and when a dangerous situation feels completely impossible to cope with

The brain's alarm system is designed to protect us and help us get through difficult situations. After we have been through frightening situations, the brain can be extra ready for dangers. The alarm becomes more sensitive and goes off more often, more quickly and more powerfully. It reacts to anything that reminds it of the dangerous thing, even when it doesn't need to. It can leave us stressed, tense and on our guard long after the frightening thing has stopped happening.



Tips for feeling better

The most important thing is that the frightening thing that happened is over. You need to be with people you feel safe with.

- Continue to do what you normally do and what you like doing, even if you don't always feel like it. That can be going to school, playing with friends or carrying on with your hobbies or activities.
- Spend more time with people you like and feel safe with. Do fun things together.
- Get active outdoors, for example, cycle, play, climb or swim.
- Do things you like, such as drawing, building Lego, playing video games, baking, reading or crafting.
- When you're feeling bad, speak to an adult about how you're feeling, so they can help you to find ways to feel better.
- Your body needs both sleep and food for you to feel well. If you are finding it hard to sleep, an adult can help you with tips for getting to sleep

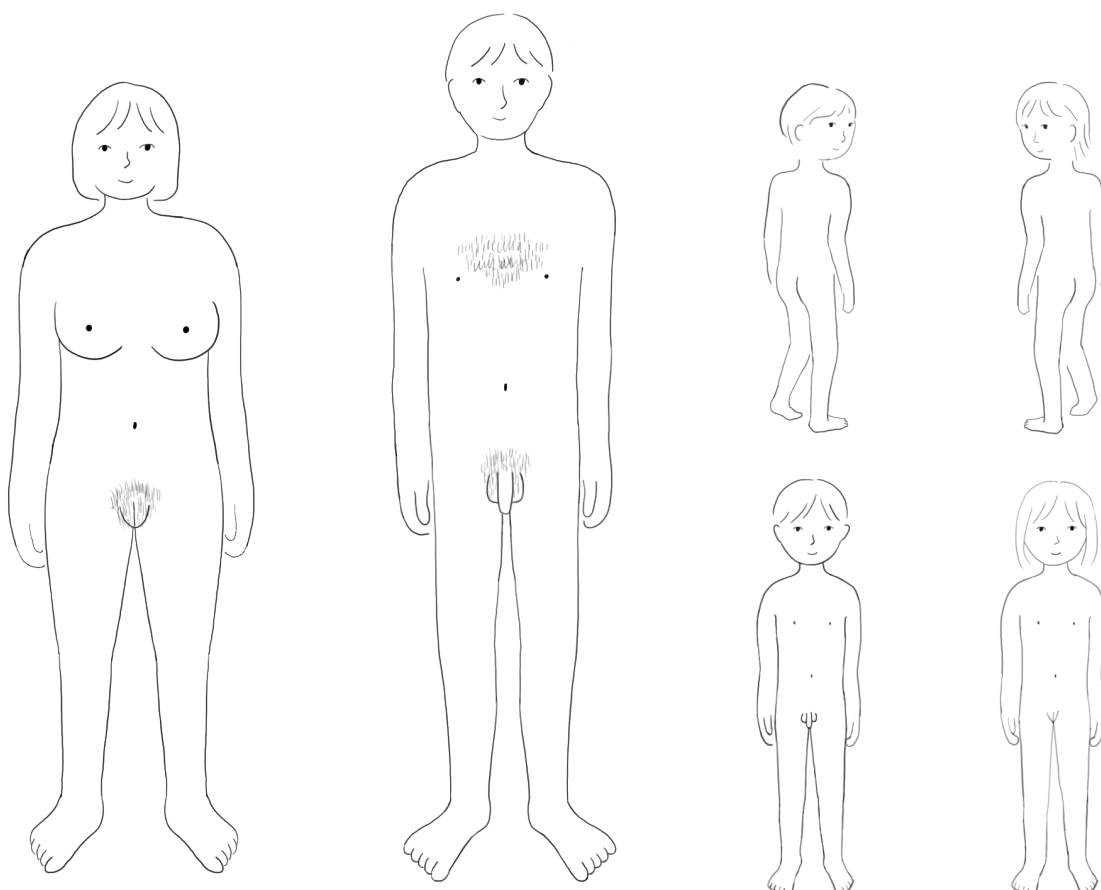
Here are three things I like to do to feel better



Private body parts

Have you heard that there are certain parts of the body that are called private parts? Private means they are parts of the body which you decide over yourself and which no one is allowed to touch if you yourself don't want them to. If an adult needs to help you with something involving touching your body or, for example, if a doctor needs to examine your body, it is important for the adult to explain to you why and for them to ask you if it is okay.

Which parts of the body do you think are private?



Body rules

Just as there are rules for what you are allowed and not allowed to do at school, there are also rules about the body. These rules apply to all children.

1

No one is allowed to frighten, threaten or hurt children or adults. No one is allowed to pinch you, pull your hair, hold you too hard, hit you or threaten to hit you.

2

A parent is not allowed to frighten, threaten or hit the other parent. That is forbidden

3

Adults are not allowed to touch a child's penis, vulva, vagina or bottom or get the child to touch the adult's private areas. No one is allowed to force anything into your mouth.

4

If a child wants an adult to touch them, it is the adult who has to know and do what is right.

5

You are allowed to touch your own penis, vulva, vagina or bottom if you are alone and it feels okay.

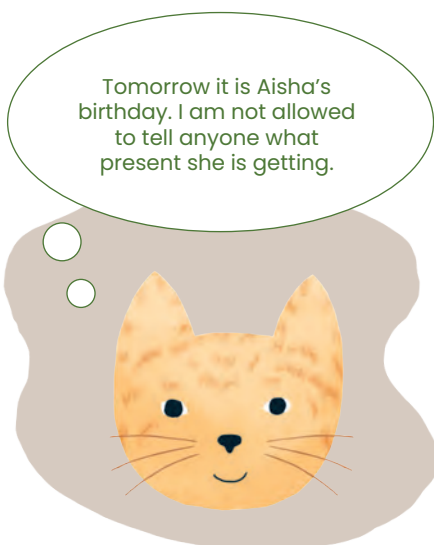
6

A child is not allowed to touch another child's penis, vulva, vagina or bottom unless both children want to and it feels okay. Children are allowed to play body games with each other if they both want to and they are not hurting each other.

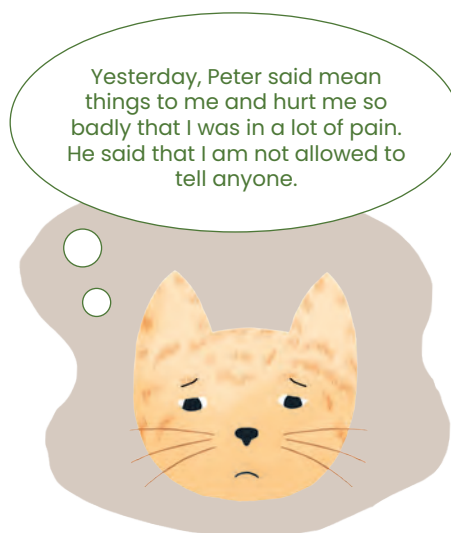


Good and bad secrets

There is a difference between a good and a bad secret.

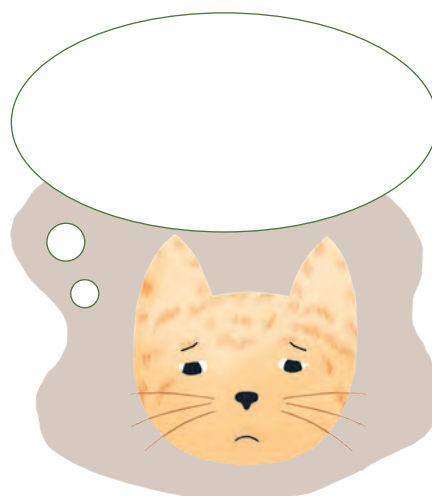
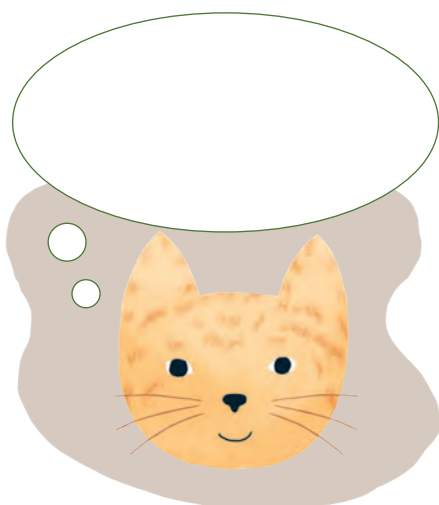


A good secret is something that makes you happy.



A bad secret is something you feel sad about or that gives you a sore tummy.

Can you think of a good secret and a bad secret?



Are you allowed to tell someone about a good or bad secret? _____


If it's a good secret, you should try to keep it, but if it's a bad secret, you should tell someone, even if someone has told you are not allowed to tell anyone. Why is it good to tell someone a bad secret?

Who can you tell if you have a bad secret?

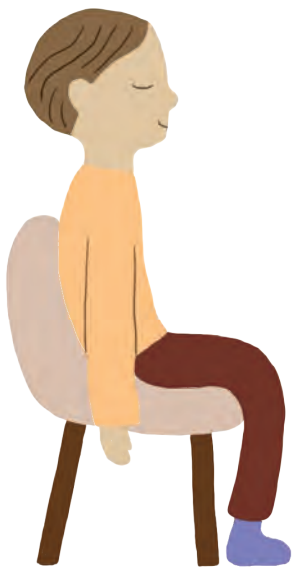
Relaxing

When we go through horrible or difficult events, our body often becomes more tense, even once it is over. Both the body and the brain often believe we are still in danger. We therefore need to teach our brain and our body that we are not in danger, so that we can calm down and feel less tense.

What do you do to calm yourself down?

The image shows four identical, light blue, cloud-like shapes arranged in a 2x2 grid. These shapes are intended for writing answers to the question 'What do you do to calm yourself down?'. Each shape is roughly rectangular with wavy, irregular edges, giving it a soft, cloud-like appearance. They are positioned in the lower half of the page, below the question text.

Relaxing our muscles



Sit comfortably in a chair with your arms hanging over the sides and your feet firmly on the floor. Close your eyes or look down at the floor while you are doing this exercise. Imagine you are holding a lump of clay in your right hand. Squeeze the clay as hard as you can! Feel how hard your muscles in your hand and arm are when you squeeze. Count to five when you are squeezing and then drop the clay and let your hand hang down loosely. Feel the difference when the muscles in your hand and arm are relaxed. Say to yourself, "my hand is relaxed".

Now do the same thing, but with your left hand. You can do that with any parts of your body – arms, feet, legs, tummy, back, chest, shoulders, face. You can do it with one part of the body at a time or all at once. Which one would you like to start with?

Belly breathing

Place one hand on your chest and the other on your tummy so you can feel if it is your chest or tummy that changes when you breathe in and out. Imagine your tummy is a balloon. When you breathe in, you are inflating the balloon and your belly puffs out. When you breathe out, you are releasing air from the balloon and your tummy sinks in. Try and breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

You can also lie down on your back. Place a soft toy on your tummy, breathe in so your tummy pushes out and the toy rises up. Then breathe out and let your tummy and the toy sink down.



Cooked spaghetti

Imagine spaghetti that is not cooked. It is straight, stiff and hard. Now we are going to try to be like the uncooked spaghetti. Stand on your tiptoes and stretch your arms up. Try to tighten your whole body so that you are just like hard, uncooked spaghetti. Then we put the spaghetti in the water and cook it. Notice how you become more and more relaxed and then soft and floppy like spaghetti. When you're finished, the cooked spaghetti will be lying on the floor, all soft and relaxed.

Mindfulness

Sit comfortably or lie down and close your eyes, if it feels comfortable. Relax your tummy and take deep breaths down to your tummy. Follow your breathing, in and out. If thoughts pop up, just note that they are there and return to focusing on your breathing. Continue this for a few minutes.



Shifting focus

It is difficult to tell yourself not to think about bad things. This is an exercise in being able to focus on something else. Sit comfortably and take a deep breath down to your tummy. Describe, without judgement, three things you see, three things you hear and three things you feel in your body.

Safe place

In this exercise, we are going to practice using our imagination to create nice images and feelings, instead of bad thoughts and memories. Take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes and breathe normally. Picture a place where you feel safe, calm and secure. Imagine you are standing or sitting there. What can you see in your safe place? Can you hear any sounds? Are there any smells or tastes there? Is there anything you want to touch? Now imagine that someone special is with you in your place, which makes you feel calm and happy. Once you feel calm and safe, have seen the place, smelled it, touched it, and heard a sound or a voice, you can open your eyes and come back.



Child massage

Sit in front of your parent and let them massage your back, neck and arms in the following ways.

1. Clothes peg (neck, shoulders)
2. Glasses (shoulder blade)
3. Bear claw (back)
4. Slide (arms down)
5. Rope climbing (arms up)
6. Feathers (back)
7. Rain (back)



Crafts and games

Here are a few exercises which will suit you if you find it easier to be active

- You can roll a ball forward and back with an adult
- You can throw a ball in the air. If that is too easy, you can take two balls to play with..
- With an adult, you can say the name of an animal and then the next person says an animal that begins with the letter at the end of the name of the first animal. Then continue until you can't think of any more animals.
- You can colour in mandalas
- You can colour in a picture
- You can blow a ping-pong ball forward and back with an adult.



Different emotions

There are different emotions, which everyone feels sometimes.
Which emotions can we feel?



Happiness



Disgust



Sadness



Anger



Fear



Shame/guilt



Curiosity

Some emotions feel great, but others can feel hard.
What emotions do you usually feel?

No feelings are dangerous, and feelings change over time.
We can influence our emotions.

Why do we have emotions?

Emotions help us understand what is happening and what we want to do.



Fun! I don't want to stop.

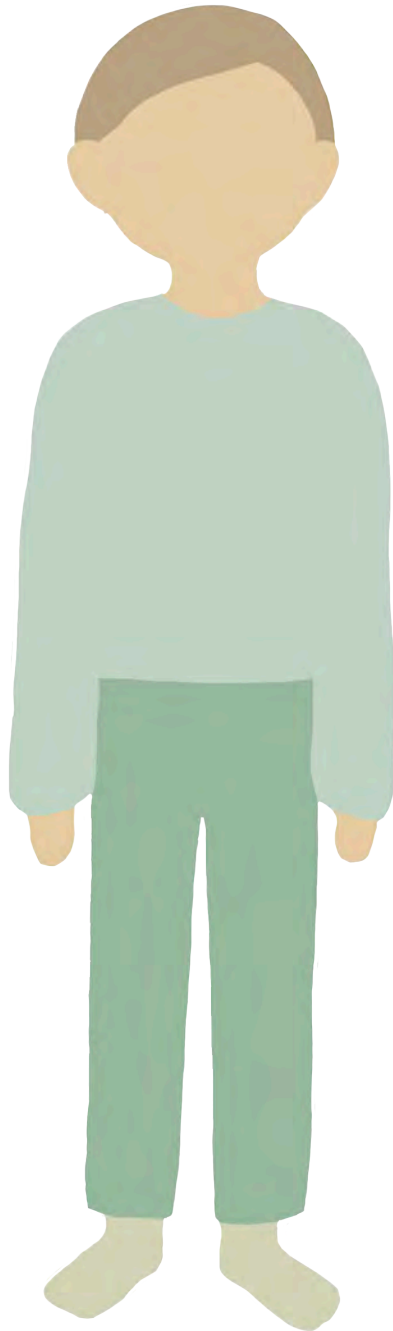


Boring! I don't want to do this anymore.

We feel emotions in our bodies and sometimes they are visible on the outside. This is so that others can understand how we are feeling.

Emotions are felt in the body

Where in your body do you feel your emotions?



Angry

Scared

Happy

Sad

Shame/guilt

Curious

Confused

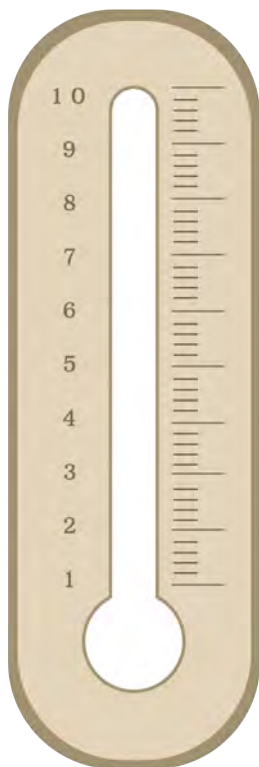
Emotions can be felt differently

Emotions can feel weak and **STRONG**

A 3 for happy might be being content and calm. A 10 for happy might be being super happy.

A 3 for fear might be worried. A 10 for fear might be feeling terrified.

A 3 for angry might be being irritated. A 10 for angry might be feeling rage..



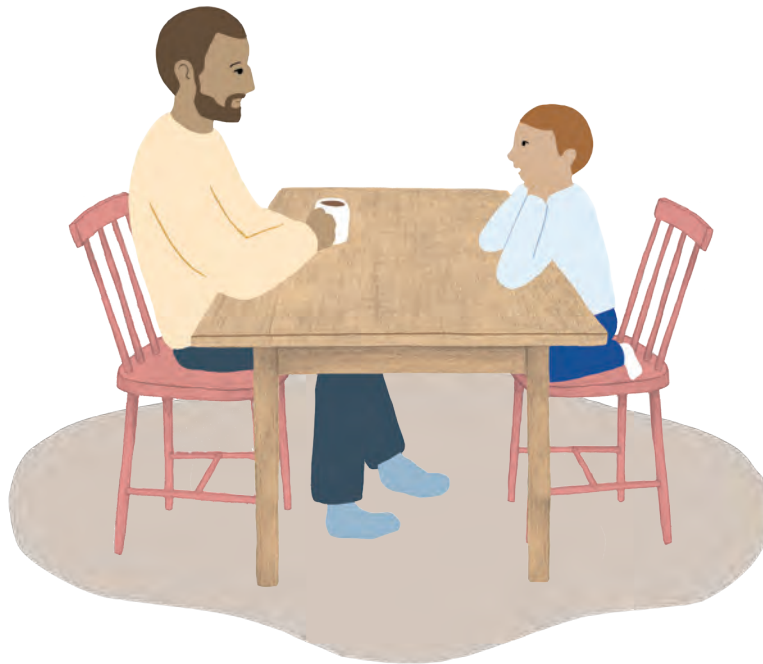
When are your emotions strong?

Emotions behind other emotions

Sometimes you have one emotion behind another emotion. Like when you are angry on the outside, but actually mostly sad on the inside.



Sometimes it can feel easier to be angry than sad or scared. Sometimes you can feel empty or like you don't feel anything at all. Sometimes it is difficult to know what you are feeling. It can be difficult to show others how you are feeling.



Talking to an adult you trust about how you are feeling or what you are thinking usually makes you feel better.

My list of emotions

This makes me happy

This makes me calm if I am afraid or worried

This is good for me when I am sad

This is helpful when I am angry



When life changes

After you have been through frightening events, some things in your life usually change. For example, you might not see the person who did that to you anymore or you might have to go and live with another family or change school. Some children find it hard when parents behave differently or feel bad or when the family atmosphere changes. Some changes can feel good and important, while others can feel difficult and stressful.

What has changed in your life since you told someone what happened?



My important list

Now we are going to write down the things that are important to you for you to feel good. We have spoken about the importance of peace and quiet and of fun things happening to make you feel good.

What are you going to put on your list?

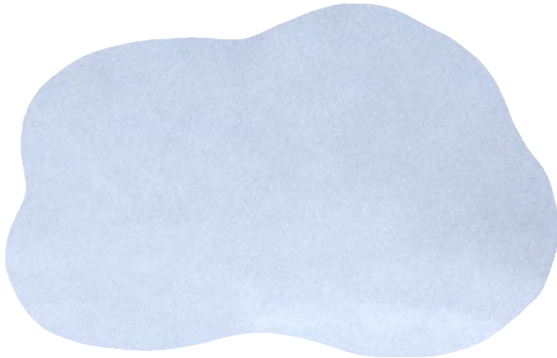
A large green rectangular area with horizontal lines for writing a list. The background is a light green with a subtle texture. There are ten horizontal lines spaced evenly across the area, providing a guide for writing.

Who are we going to show the list to?

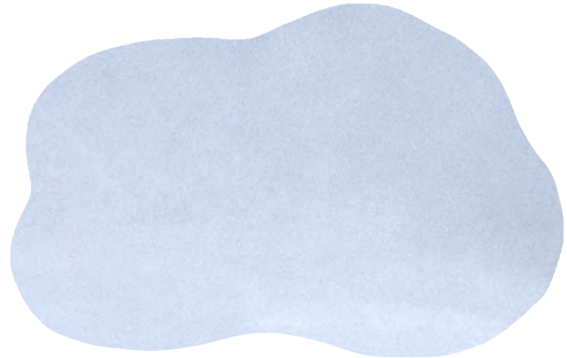
Time to sum up

Now we are going to summarise what happened, what has helped and how you want it to be in the future

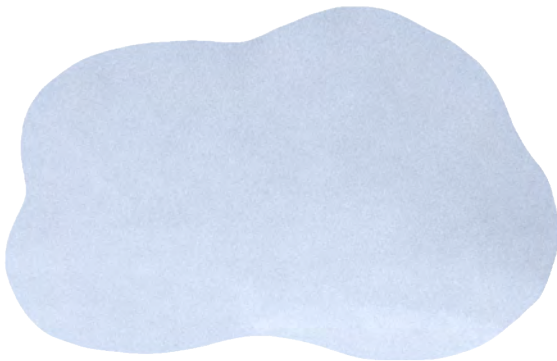
Before it happened



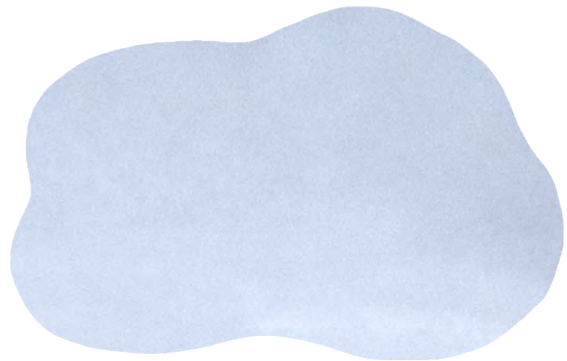
What happened



When I came here



This helped me feel better



In the future I want



**This is what I can do if
something happens again**



Sexual abuse

If someone touches your private body parts when you don't want them to or when you don't consent to it, it is sexual abuse and it is forbidden. This could be someone touching your penis, vulva, vagina or bottom. But it could also be being forced to look at or touch someone else's private body parts. Being forced or tricked into showing your body or forced or tricked into doing sexual things to yourself is also sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can happen both online and in real life.

The person who commits sexual abuse may be an adult, a child or a teenager. Unfortunately, sexual abuse is more common than many people think. Most of the time, the person committing the sexual abuse is someone the child knows, for example a parent, relative, teacher, coach or another child. But it can also be someone they don't know.

When someone is sexually abused, it is common for them not to scream or struggle. That can be because they are scared, or go completely numb and don't want to think about what is happening. Some people can even find it feels nice or feel as if they want it, but it is still forbidden and it is still the perpetrator's fault. Often it is not a conscious choice. The brain decides that you are going to stay still - as a kind of protection against what is happening. Afterwards you might think that you should have done more to try to stop it. But the abuse took place against your will, even if you didn't scream or struggle. We don't choose how we react when we are abused.



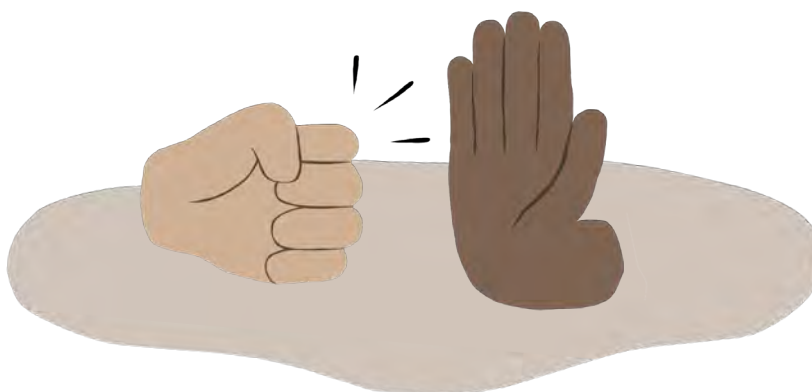
Violence

Violence can be both physical and psychological. Physical violence is when someone harms your body. Psychological violence is when someone says something that makes you feel bad. Examples of physical violence are when someone hits, shoves, bites, pinches, kicks or shakes you. Physical violence also includes, as examples, being locked in a wardrobe, or being locked out on a balcony. Psychological violence includes when someone says mean things to you many times. It can also involve making threats and getting very angry. Seeing someone else being hit can be just as scary as being hit yourself. It could be a parent who is being hit, parents who hit each other, an older sibling who hits a parent or a parent who hits a sibling.

Although violence against children is illegal, it does happen. It is more common than many people think for children to be subject to and/or see someone in their family be subject to violence.

Children are affected by violence in different ways. The effect is greater if the perpetrator is a family member – someone who is supposed to provide love and safety – than if it is someone you don't know. It also different if you were hit once or many times. Usually, you feel even worse if you have been hit many times.

It is common for people who are subjected to violence to believe that it is their own fault. The person who hit you may even say that it is. But it is always the person who hit you who is in the wrong and who has broken the law.



Exposure to abuse online

When adults trick children on the Internet to sexually exploit them, this is called grooming. For example, they may be trying to get the child to take their clothes off in front of the web camera or to get them to send naked pictures.

Adults who target children online may pretend to be the same age, a different gender, as or having the same interests as the child. It can be very hard for the child to realise that the person they are in contact with online is actually an adult. Many children therefore feel tricked and ashamed when they find this out. Many are also embarrassed about other people finding out what has happened.

After being subjected to sexual abuse online, you can sometimes feel as though you are being secretly watched. Usually the child will not know who the perpetrator is and can then get scared and start to think that anyone could be that person. This can lead to the child starting to find things hard, which they would normally cope with and enjoy. Since the abuse and the contact with the perpetrator will have often taken place at home, over the phone, on a tablet or a computer, the child can feel uncomfortable in their own room, even if the abuse has stopped.

Adults who harm children online often trick, threaten and shame the child to get what they want. Many children are scared that bad things will happen if they tell someone what has happened. Many children also find it hard to talk about what has happened. It usually still feels good though to get help and not to be alone with all those thoughts and feelings.

When someone is sexually abused, it is never their fault, even if – for example – they have replied to messages or sent pictures or videos.



Homework

Before the next time we see each other, I am going to practice:

When am I going to practice this?

Tick a box each time you practice:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

How did practicing this exercise feel?

How can this exercise help me?



Certificate

**This workbook was produced by
Children and Adolescent Psychiatry Barnahus Team
Stockholm 2023**

**Carl Brunell
Ylva Edling
Moa Gisterå
Kajsa Jung
Thora Magnusdottir
Jonas Viksten**

**Illustrations and graphic design
© Jasmine Berge**

Co-financed by the Stockholm Region Innovation Fund

Translation and adaptation from Swedish into English

Translator – Janet Cormack

International adaptation – Linda Jonsson and Anette Birgersson, Marie
Cedershölms University, Sweden

Editor – Shawnna von Blixen-Finecke, Barnahus Network

The translation and adaptation of this publication from Swedish into English was co-funded by the European Union as part of the PROMISE Elpis project. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Barn- och ungdomspsykiatri
REGION STOCKHOLM