



My Sibling Has Cancer

Paediatric Psychology and Liaison Service (PPALS)
Royal Hospital for Children and Young People, Edinburgh





Hello!

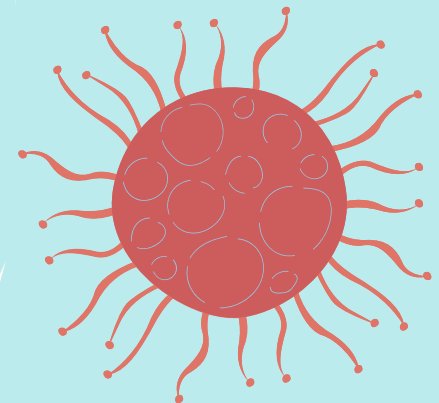
If your brother or sister has cancer, then this book is for you. It will try to answer some of your questions and help you understand your feelings better. You might have lots of big emotions or scary thoughts, and that is okay. Hopefully this book can help you manage some of them.





Your sibling is unwell, they might have been unwell for a while or it might be really new. They are unwell because they have something called cancer.

Cancer happens when tiny parts of our bodies we can't see do not work the way they should. It can be in any part of the body. Very few children have cancer, and it's not anyone's fault when it happens.



How is cancer treated?



There are different ways to treat cancer. Some of the treatments you might hear about are:

Chemotherapy or 'Chemo':

This is medicine that is given in a tablet, or sometimes through a little plastic tube into the arm or chest.



Radiotherapy:

This is a big machine that sends invisible cancer fighting beams into the body.

Surgery:

This is an operation to remove the cancer. Your brother or sister would be asleep during surgery so they wouldn't feel anything.

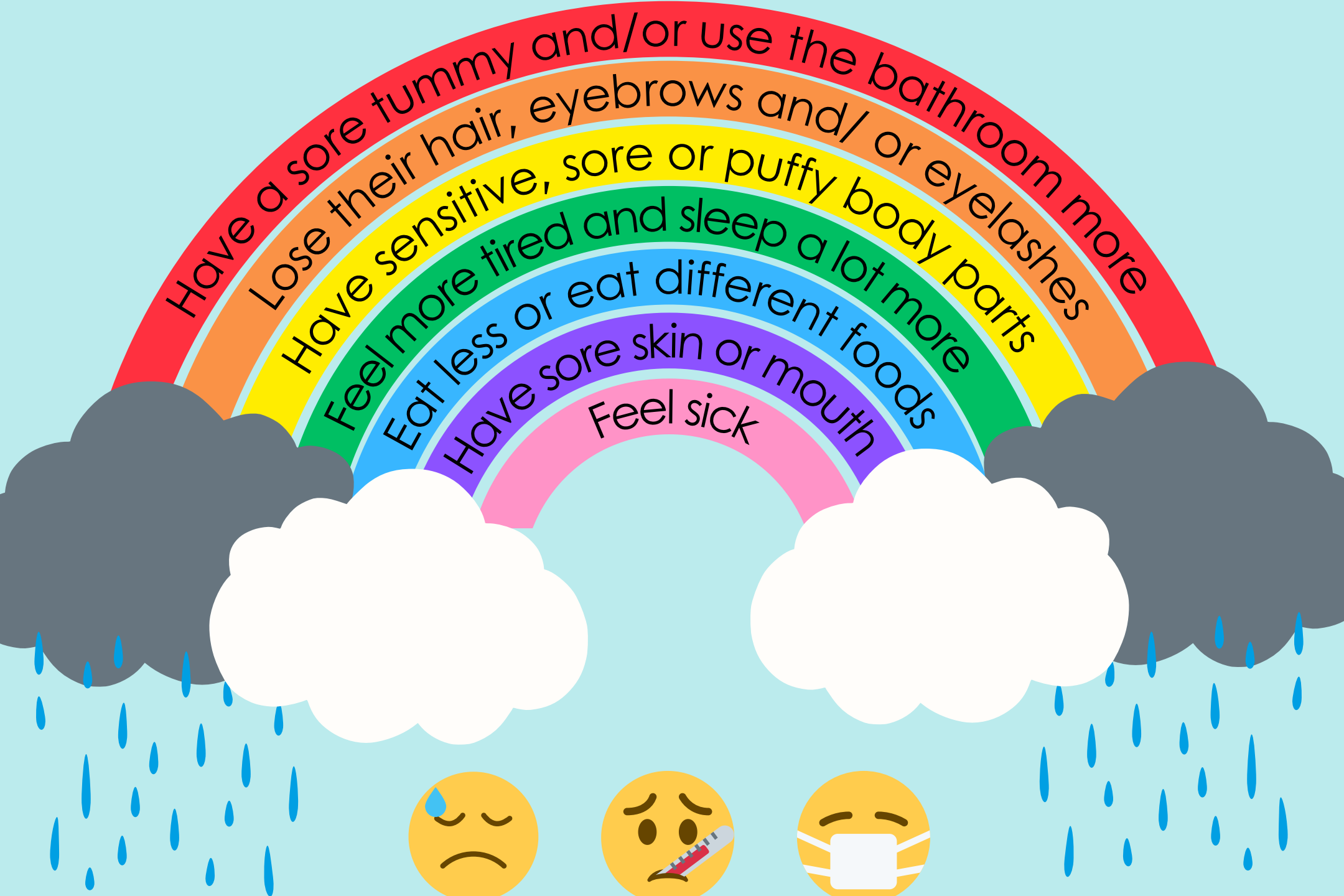
Did you know... ?

Treatment for children with cancer can take either a little bit of time or a long time depending on what kind of cancer it is



Cancer treatment can make your brother or sister feel poorly

They might...



Have a sore tummy and/or use the bathroom more
Lose their hair, eyebrows and/ or eyelashes
Have sensitive, sore or puffy body parts
Feel more tired and sleep a lot more
Eat less or eat different foods
Have sore skin or mouth
Feel sick





How do you feel when your
sister or brother is in hospital

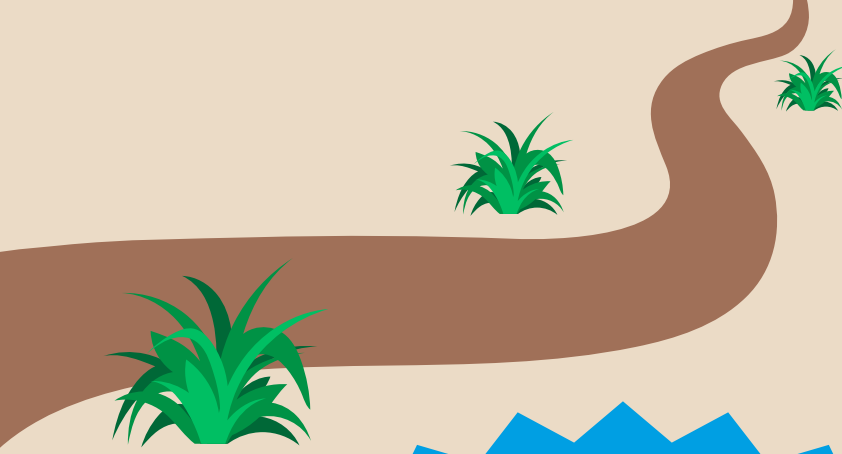


- It can be really **hard** having a brother or sister who is not well
- You might feel **sad** or **worried**
- You might **miss** your family when they are at hospital
- Sometimes you might feel **angry, fed up** or **jealous**
- It is ok to have lots of **big feelings**

If you're having any big feelings, it is important to speak with someone you trust

This could be a parent, friend, grandparent, and/or teacher...





With everything happening, you might notice changes in other parts of your life...

School

It is important to try to keep going to school. People might ask about you, your family and if you are doing ok. If that bothers you, tell an adult—they can help!



Home

Your parents might be really busy and might be spending nights in hospital with your sibling. You might stay at your grandparents, aunties, uncles or at friends houses more, or they might be around more to help cook, clean or do school runs.



Hospital

Your brother or sister might spend a few days or a long time in hospital, this can be scary and you might miss them - If you want to you can ask your parents if you can visit or video call them!

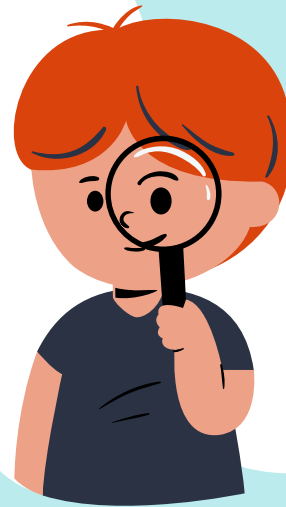


Other People

Your brother or sister might get more gifts from friends and family or do less chores because they're sick - this can seem really unfair and you might feel jealous (this book will help with some of those big feelings!)

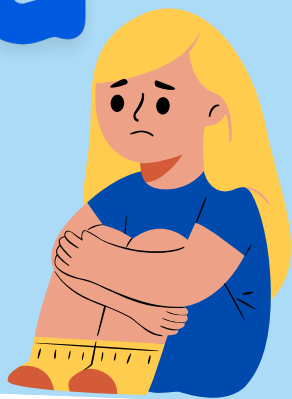


BIG FEELINGS



It's normal and ok to feel...

Sad



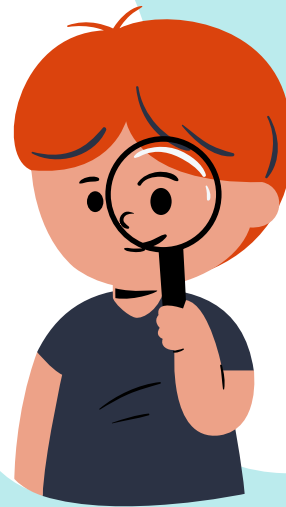
You might find that you cry more often or that you don't want to do your usual activities.

Worried / Scared



Going to hospital can be scary and you might be worried about what is going to happen.

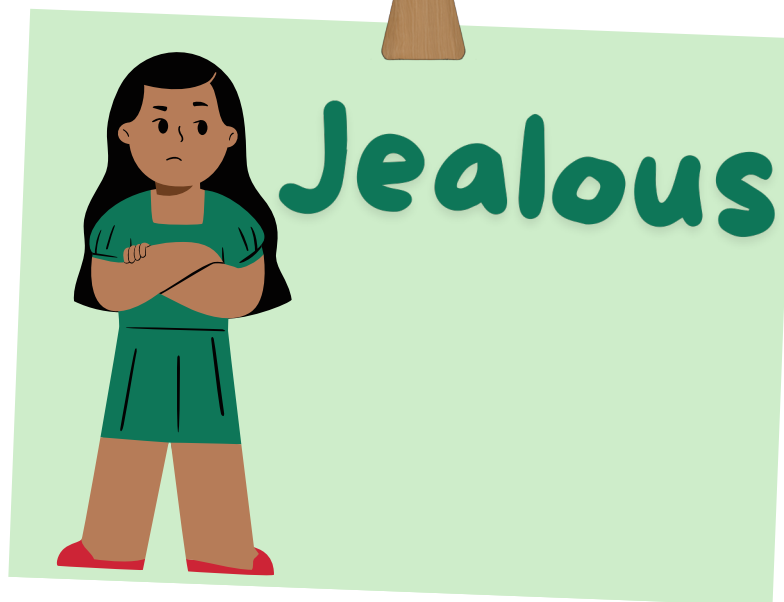
BIG FEELINGS



It's normal and ok to feel...

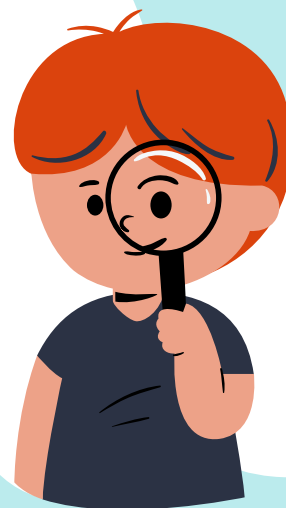


You may feel annoyed coming to the hospital, at your parents for not being around, or at your sibling for being sick, or that things are unfair.



Your sibling might get more attention or gifts because they're sick, you might feel jealous. You might also be jealous of children whose siblings are not sick.

BIG FEELINGS



It's normal and ok to feel...

Lonely



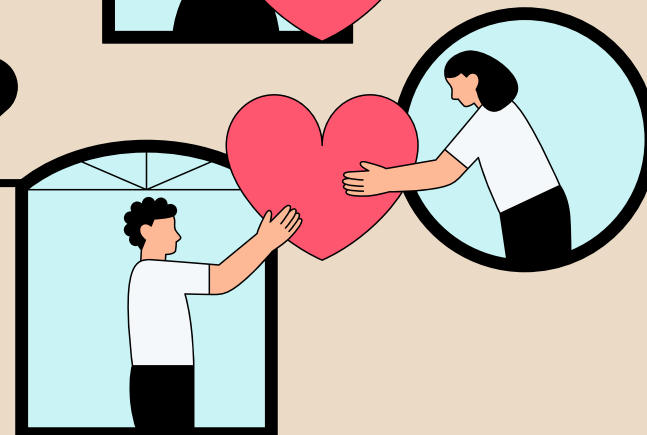
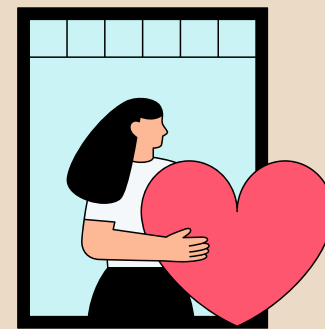
You might feel lonely when you don't have anyone to talk to or play with.

Guilty



You might feel guilty, like you have done something wrong or bad. We can feel guilty even if we have done nothing.

What can help?

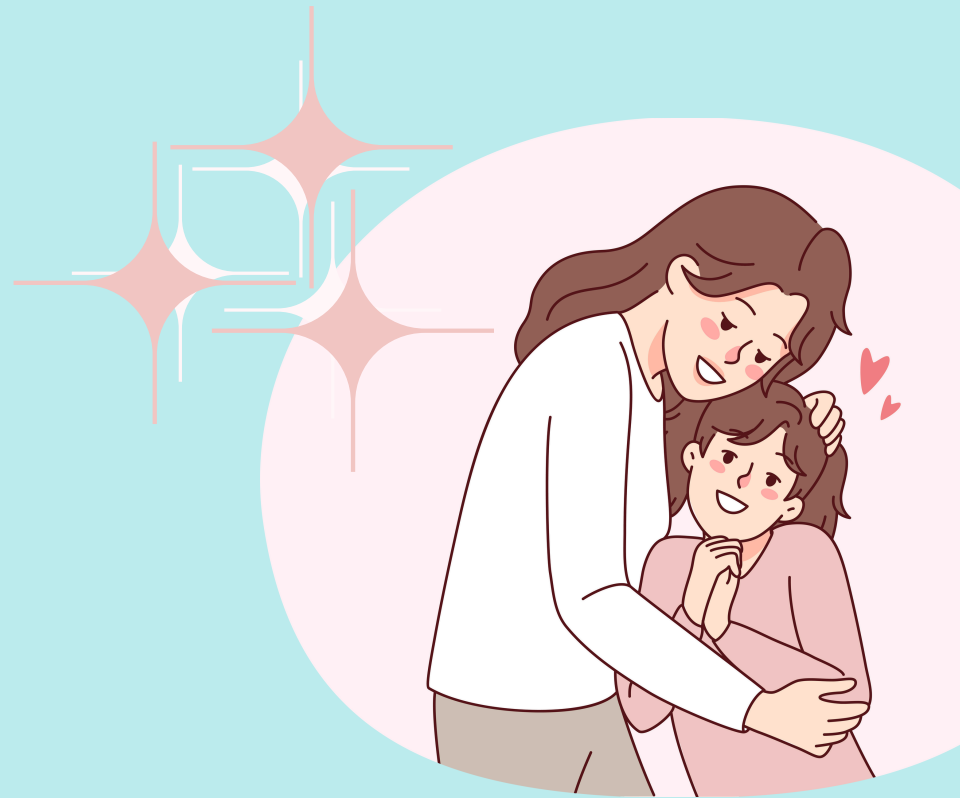


When we have big feelings, it can be hard to know what to do. Below are some helpful tips!



Talking to someone you trust

When we have these big emotions, they can feel so big we don't know what to do. Talking to someone you trust like a parent or teacher can help you to understand the emotion or to find ways to make you feel better.



Hugs!

Hugs can help our body relax and feel safe, they're like magic! Its ok to not always want a hug, sometimes we don't feel like one.

Eating and sleeping!

If we don't eat and sleep then everything becomes much harder for us like school and playing and you might have big emotions more often! If eating or sleeping is tricky let an adult you trust know.





Make time for fun!

It's normal to still want to do things you enjoy, and it is important to still do them! they can help you feel normal and help you to relax. It's really important to still find time for fun even when things are hard!

Keep your routine

Having a routine by getting up at a certain time, going to school, attending clubs and seeing your friends, helps us to feel normal. Routine gives our brain time to turn off for a bit and relax. There will be times that you can't be in a routine, and that's ok, but when you can, try to be in one!

I LIKE
HAVING A
ROUTINE





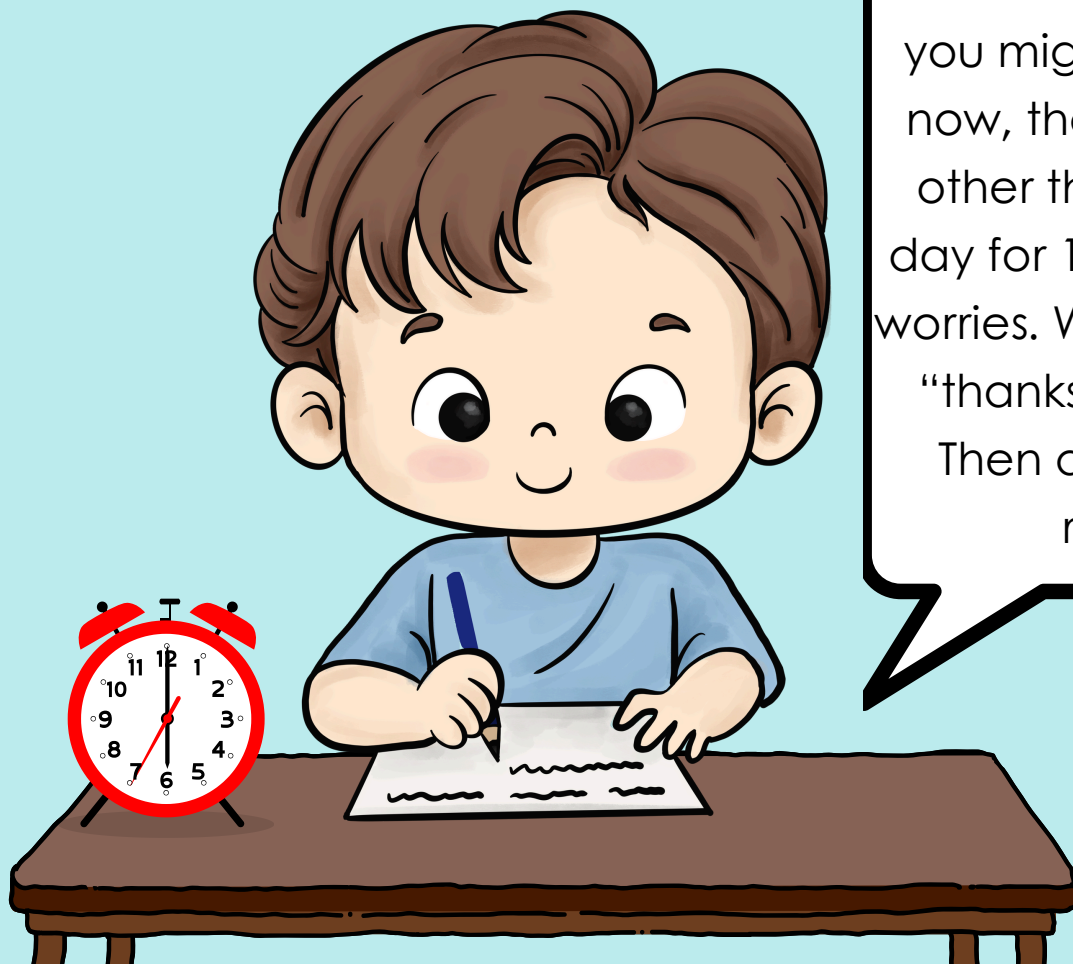
Muscle relaxation and breathing

When we have big emotions sometimes our bodies tense up and our breathing gets quicker! Relaxing our bodies and slowing our breathing can help send a message to our brains saying 'its ok, we will be ok'.



'Worry Time'

you might have a lot of worries right now, that is ok. It can be hard to do other things. Set "Worry Time" each day for 10-20 minutes to address your worries. Write it down, or tell your brain "thanks, I'll worry about that later". Then during 'worry time' you can return to your worries.



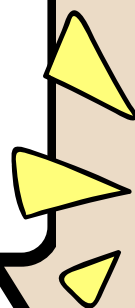


Plan your week

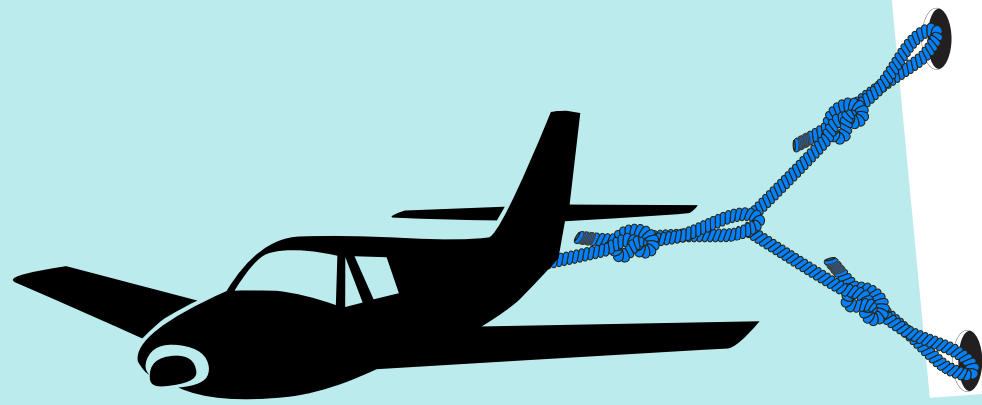
Having a plan for the week can help us to know what is going to happen next, and feel a bit safer. Ask mum, dad or carer to let you know what is happening each week like who is picking you up from school. Sometimes the plan might need to change but you can ask them to let me know if it does.

Plan things to look forward to

It's important to have things coming up that you are excited about. It's okay to feel excited about the future. So plan things you want to do so you can look forward to them!



YAY!



I HAVE QUESTIONS...

'Will my sibling be ok?'

Lots of children with cancer get better. The doctors and nurses are working really hard to try and help them get better.

'I feel sick, do I have cancer?'

It's really unlikely you will have cancer, but you can always chat to your parent or an adult you trust. They can ask a doctor to give you a check if you need it, but most kids don't get cancer.

'How can I help?'

Your sibling will have lots of people taking really good care of them. If you want to help you can ask your mum or dad if there is anything you can do, but try not to worry too much about this.

I don't want to talk about it...

It's ok if you don't want to talk about your sibling's cancer. Just know that you can if you want to. Some children prefer to draw about how they are feeling and some run or jump their feelings out!



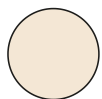
I HAVE QUESTIONS...



'I am worried about my Mum or Dad, what should I do?'

Your mum and dad might be having lots of big feelings about your sibling's cancer too. If they are more upset than usual, this is normal and ok. You can let them or another trusted adult know if this is worrying you or you want to talk about it. Your mum and dad will be well taken care of too.

write or draw any other questions you have below:





Tips for Sleeping Well



Try...

- Try to go to bed at the same time each night
- Your bedroom should be kept for rest and sleep
- At night time, it should be dark, quiet, not too hot or too cold
- Make sure your bed is comfortable
- Try and exercise during the day but it is best not to exercise close to bedtime, as it may keep you awake
- Go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time every day
- If you are worried about something, it may help to write it down or talk to someone about it



Try not to...



- Avoid having fizzy drinks like Coca Cola before bed
- Don't eat too much or too late at night
- Try not to watch TV or go on your phone before bed - try switch off all screens two hours before bedtime

Breathing Exercises

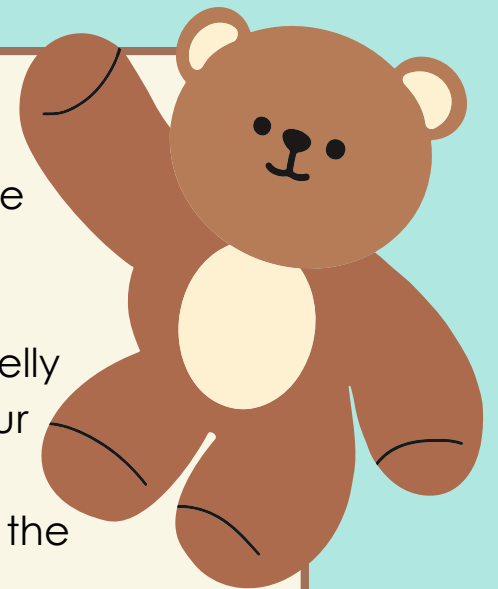


Breathing exercises can help when we have big feelings:
Below are some helpful examples!

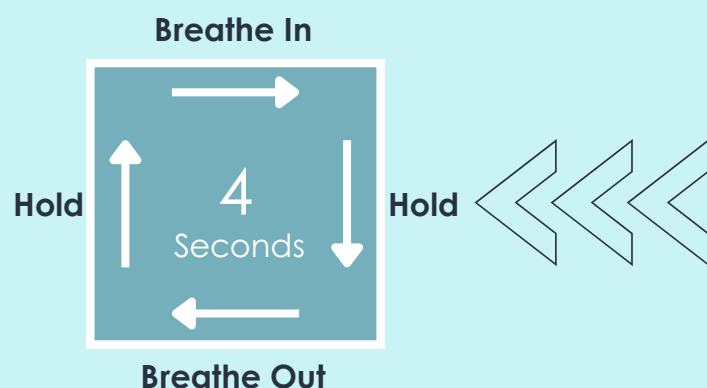
Teddy Bear Breathing

What you need: Comfortable clothes, floor space, and your favourite teddy bear, toy, pillow or even just your hands

1. Lie down comfortably with your teddy, pillow or hands on your belly
2. Count to three in your head as you take a big inhale through your nose. You should feel your belly rise and see your toy rise up
3. Count to four as you exhale slowly, noticing your belly shrink and the teddy or pillow go down.
4. Repeat for five to ten rounds, as often as you like!



Did you notice any changes in how you feel?




Square Breathing

- Inhale slowly through your nose filling up your lungs, to the count of four
- Hold your breath to the count of four
- Exhale slowly emptying the air from your lungs to the count of four
- Hold your breath to the count of four
- Repeat as often as you like

Muscle Relaxation Exercises




“The Lemon”

- 
1. Imagine your holding a lemon and squeeze it really hard
 2. Hold this for about five seconds, then release it
 3. Repeat this a couple of times for both hands
 4. You can do this with your feet too! follow the above steps with your toes

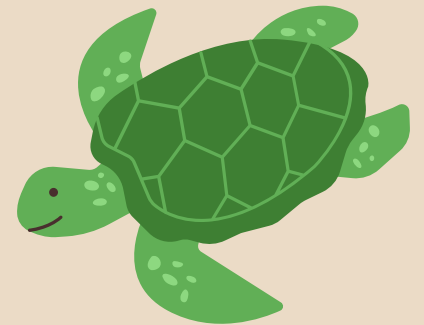
Can you feel your muscles relaxing?




“The Turtle”

- 
1. Pull your shoulders up to your ears - Imagine you are just like a turtle trying to hide in a shell!
 2. Hold this for a few seconds and then slowly release
 3. Repeat this a couple of times

Just like how a turtle would come out of their shell when they are feeling safe and relaxed!



“The Balloon”

- 
1. Imagine you are filling up like a balloon!
 2. Take a deep breath and puff out your cheeks
 3. After holding your breath for a brief moment, you can “pop” your balloon by breathing out forcefully and relaxing your cheeks

This exercise combines breathing (like on the page before this one) with muscle relaxation - offering double the benefit!





What are some things you found useful in this book?

Write or draw what you found useful or any questions you have below!





Helpful Organisation:

Team Jak

Website:

<https://www.teamjak.org.uk/>

Phone: 01506 412302

Email: info@teamjak.org.uk

Sibs:

Website:

<https://www.sibs.org.uk/>

Ask a sibling advisor:

<https://www.sibs.org.uk/youngsibs/ask-sibling-advisor>

Tom's Trust:

'Sibling Toolkit'

Resource:

<https://www.tomstrust.org.uk/sibling-toolkit/>

Helpful Apps:

Smiling Minds

Provides different guided relaxation and mindfulness exercises.

Chill Panda

Work through quests and tasks based on how you are feeling and provides breathing and stretching exercises.

