

# *The Big Five Feelings*



## *and the Sneaky Bug.*

*By Siobhán Sweeney*



## ***Grown-ups, please read this first:***

### **Dear Parents, Caregivers and Significant Grown-ups**

*How are you?*

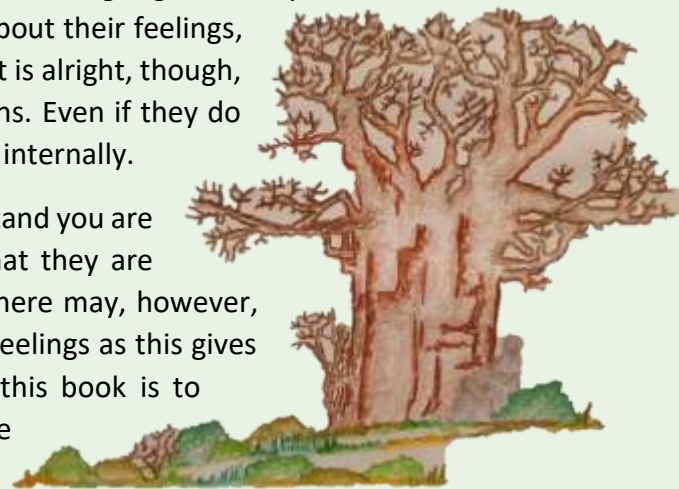
I imagine this is a challenging time for you and your little ones. Times of uncertainty and change give rise to a range of feelings. Children's feelings are raw and their expressions are powerful. It can feel overwhelming having to respond, contain and digest. This book was born from the wish to assist children and their adults with the process of working through existing feelings. I hope to offer young children a tool - a story - which talks to their feelings while also telling the story of feelings to their grown-ups.

The *Big Five Feelings and the Sneaky Bug* is an illustrated book about children's internal experiences in this unprecedented crisis. With the use of representational characters, that are iconic to South African children, the book aims to track how the world has changed for a child. The Coronavirus pandemic has resulted in global restrictions, collective trauma as well as enormous loss in multiple forms. Most adults and adolescents are able to use their words to express their anxieties and frustrations. Young children communicate their anxieties and frustrations in their behaviour and with their body. This book does not aim to be a traditional children's book but rather aims to be a tool which assists with identifying and naming feelings. This book describes feelings, thoughts and behaviours you may notice in young children during this uncertain time as well as explores what behavioural and developmental changes could tell us about a child's emotional and internal world. I hope it can assist parents, caregivers, teachers or any significant adults to understand what a child may be communicating in their acting out or regressive behaviour and somatic complaints. In addition, the book offers ideas for support and thoughts about ways of coping for both children and their significant adults.

There may be parts in the story your child finds difficult to feel or understand so sitting close, while reading to them, will offer comfort and security. Reading together may also give your child the opportunity to talk with you about their feelings, especially when answering the questions in the book. It is alright, though, if a child does not want to talk or answer the questions. Even if they do not respond with words, it is likely they are processing internally.

As the significant grown-up in your child's life, I understand you are anxious about their wellbeing and want to know what they are thinking or feeling so you can resolve the problem. There may, however, also be moments when it is difficult to hear a child's feelings as this gives rise to your own feelings. The purpose for reading this book is to facilitate reflection by creating a safe, symbolic space where thinking - and maybe talking - about feelings

can take place between children and caregivers. Sitting together with the feelings are



meaningful moments you can give to a child. Yet, if there are moments where holding the feelings seems unbearable, be kind and patient to yourself and your child. If your child wants a break from reading, follow their lead and take a breather. If you are concerned about your child's capacity to cope or if you feel you and/or your child could benefit from further support, contact details and links for helpful resources are listed on the next page.

The last point I ask you to keep in mind is that these characters are fictional and there is no current evidence suggesting animals play a significant role in spreading COVID-19. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, April 2020), human-to-human transmission spreads COVID-19. Please visit the NSPCA (<https://nspca.co.za/news/covid-19-and-animals/>), CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>), and WHO (<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>) webpages for more information and updates about COVID-19 and animals. Sources with further information regarding Coronavirus and COVID-19 are provided on the next page.

This book - along with your presence - serves to validate, recognize and acknowledge how young children are grappling with their emotions both outwardly and inwardly. My wish is this story will facilitate mindfulness about the meaning of children's responses to crises, their psychological needs and your *essential* role as their attachment figure. I hope it also contributes to fostering thoughtfulness about the unique emotional experience of each and every individual in this unfamiliar and tough time.

Take care of yourself, be safe but remember this is not something you must suffer alone.

We will get through this together!

All the best



The author intends for this book to be freely distributed as a way to offer support to the South African community facing the COVID-19 pandemic and the difficult consequences associated with this crisis. Afrikaans and Xhosa versions of *The Big Five Feelings and the Sneaky Bug* will also be made available. For general queries or inquiries' regarding distribution, translation and additional translations, please contact the author, Siobhán Sweeney ([siobhan@humannature.co.za](mailto:siobhan@humannature.co.za)).



**Contact details for helpful resources and support:**

*SADAG: The South African Depression and Anxiety Group*

Helplines and telephonic counselling (24 hours): 0800 21 22 23 / 0800 70 80 90 / 0800 456 789

SMS 31393 / 32312 (24 hours) for a counsellor to call you.

Suicide Helpline: 0800 567 567

<http://www.sadag.org>



*FAMSA: Families South Africa Western Cape*

Face to face counselling (Observatory): 021 447 0170

Face to face counselling (Khayelitsha): 021 361 9098

Online counselling: 067 082 1567

<https://www.famsawc.org.za>



*The Parent Centre*

Parenting counselling: [counselling@theparentcentre.org.za](mailto:counselling@theparentcentre.org.za)

<https://theparentcentre.org.za>

*JPCCC: JHB Parent and Child Counselling Centre*

Online Counselling: [gaby@jpccc.org.za](mailto:gaby@jpccc.org.za) or WhatsApp messages to 071 608 9361

<http://www.jpccc.org.za>

*CTCAPG: The Cape Town Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Group*

<https://capechildadolescentpsychotherapy.co.za/find-a-therapist.html>

*Childline:*

Helpline (24 hours): 08 000 55 555

Online Counselling chatrooms: <https://www.childlinesa.org.za/contact-us/>

<https://www.childlinesa.org.za>

*WCAIMH: Western Cape Association of Infant Mental Health*

WCAIMH Covid-19 Support Efforts: <https://www.infantmentalhealth.co.za/covid19.html>

*Centre for Early Child Development*

COVID19 Resources: <https://cecd.org.za/news/covid19resources/>

**Further information regarding COVID-19 can be obtained at the following sources:**

National Institute of Communicable Disease. COVID-19 Guidelines. Available on

<https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/covid-19-guidelines/>

National Department of Health. Corona Virus (COVID-19) – Updated. Available on

<http://www.health.gov.za/index.php/outbreaks/145-corona-virus-outbreak/465-corona-virus-outbreak>

COVID-19 Corona Virus South African Resource Portal. Available on

<https://sacoronavirus.co.za>

And WhatsApp Support Line: 0600-123456

World Health Organisation: Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19). Available on

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>





# HELLO! MOLO! WELKOM!

This is a story about my Big Five Friends and their Big Five Feelings.

Do you know the Big Five? Are they your friends too?!

Maybe you feel the Big Five Feelings just like them? I do and I'm a grown-up!



Let me tell you and your grown-up a story about the Big Five and you can see if you feel the same feelings.

Grab your grown-up's hand and come with me to the Bush!

In this special – and sometimes scary place – live the Big Five Animals:

Lena the Leopard,



Bulumko the Buffalo,



Lerato the Lion,



Enzokuhle the Elephant



and Rudi the Rhino.



The Big Five are busy doing lots of things together – some fun and some not-so-fun like being at school all day!

Some fun things are freely playing outside in sunshine or rain, like Lena climbing up tall trees.

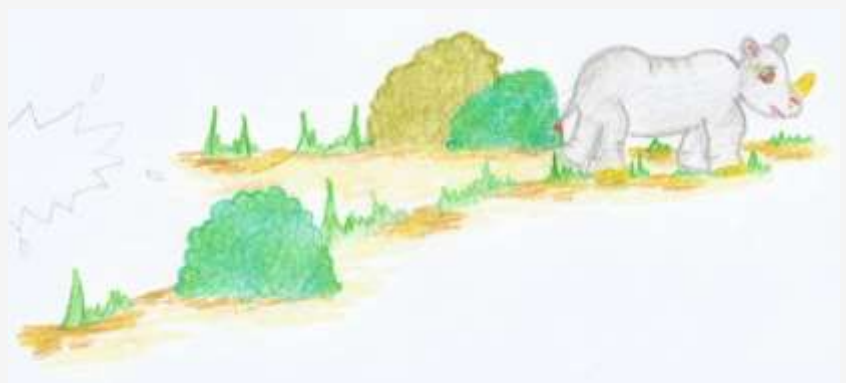


Lerato rolling in the grass with her brothers and sisters.

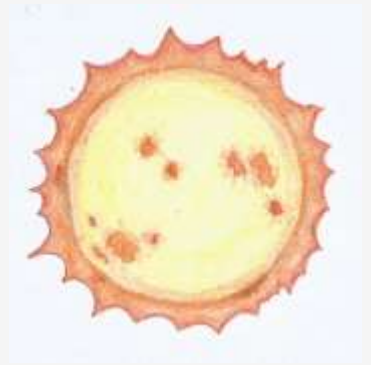
Bulumko visiting his grandparents. Enzokuhle splashing in the watering hole with the herd



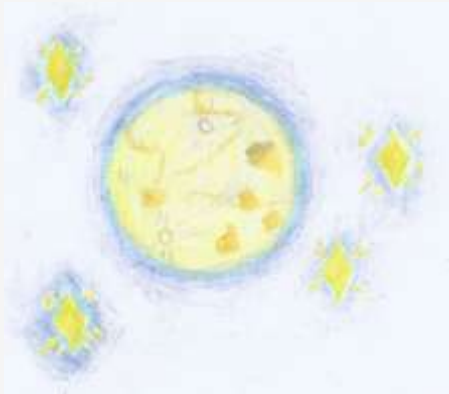
and Rudi going for quiet walks without his loud cousins!



Most months in the Bush are good times. Most days they feel happy. Every day, the Big Five Friends play together. When one friend is having a bad day, a sad day or a mad day, all the friends get together to be with their friend.



Some days are good and some not-so-good. But knowing there will always be good days makes the not-so-good days easier.



One day, a bad thing changed many things making most days feel like bad days.



Before we go on, you might want to make sure you and your grown-up are sitting close. Maybe you want to sit on their lap or hold their hand? It's okay if you want to do this while we read.

**Ready?**

**Great! Me too.**



At first, the bad thing did not seem so bad to the Big Five Friends. Some did not know animals in other parts of the world were sick. But in faraway places, many animals feel ill. They have a sore throat or sore head. Or a runny nose. Or feel really hot and struggle to breathe.



Some go to the hospital where doctors and nurses work very hard to help. Some animals are very sick before they get better and some animals do not get better.



The big animals in the Bush talk about a mean, sneaky bug moving from place to place without being seen. They call it **Coronavirus** or **COVID-19**.



### Maybe you have heard of it?

The smaller animals are confused, “How can a little, invisible bug make us sick without anyone knowing?!”

This tiny bug is sneaky because it hangs in the air when people cough or sneeze. And it jumps from hand to hand or from hand to thing without anyone seeing it.

The sneaky bug moves very fast and very far. It sneaked into the Bush making some of the animals sick. The animals try to stop the sneaky bug from visiting them, their family and their friends. They try their best to be careful and keep everyone safe and healthy.

## What do you think they do to help each other?

Every time they are outside or if they touch something from outside, the Big Five Friends wash their hands while singing a song.



For some time, they stopped going to school, having playdates at their friends' homes, and visiting older family members or neighbours.

And only when they *really, really* have to, they go outside or visit public places.

Tell me, what do you do to stay safe and healthy?

Maybe you can give us some tips!



At first it was like a long holiday at home with the family. This was fun!

But then all the days felt the same.

Now, the world looks different.

Places they knew so well feel strange.



Everyone wears a mask when they leave their house,



they make sure they do not get close to one another



and if the Big Five Friends see someone they know, they cannot give them a hug or a high-five!

Sometimes, they feel cross about wearing a mask or having to stay at home. Sometimes, they feel afraid of going outside. Sometimes, they feel sad they cannot play with their friends.



Before the sneaky bug came to the Bush, Rudi slept on his own. Now, he is afraid of the dark, needing to sleep close to his mom while sucking his thumb. At night, Rudi feels scared and small but, in the day, he acts like a grown-up telling everyone what to do.



Like Rudi, Bulumko tries to control the buffalos in his home. Bulumko is angry when the buffalos leave the home. And he *really* did not like it when he left the house to see the doctor!

Are there times when you do not want to go outside?

Every day, Enzokuhle asks his granddad for 10 hugs, checking his granddad does not have any sickly feelings. Enzokuhle is scared his granddad will die if the sneaky bug catches him.





Rudi watches the news and listens to what grown-ups say about the sneaky bug. Rudi tells his family *everything* he knows about the sneaky bug and orders everyone to stay far apart. This scares his baby cousin and Rudi feels bad.



Rudi is scared the sneaky bug will hurt his family. He is worried the sneaky bug will jump onto him. I wonder if you are scared of this?



Rudi's mom talks to him about his feelings, "Rudi, maybe you do all these **BIG** things because you feel scared and **small** - like baby cousin. I too feel scared sometimes."

"Maybe knowing so much and being in charge makes you feel you can do something about the scary, sneaky bug."



She tells him she will watch the news for him and she will tell him the information she thinks he needs to know. At first, Rudi worried this would be too scary for mom but now he knows mom will sort out the sneaky bug.

Rudi tries to keep his small, scared feelings a secret so his cousins think he is big and smart. But at night Rudi feels small especially when he has scary dreams.

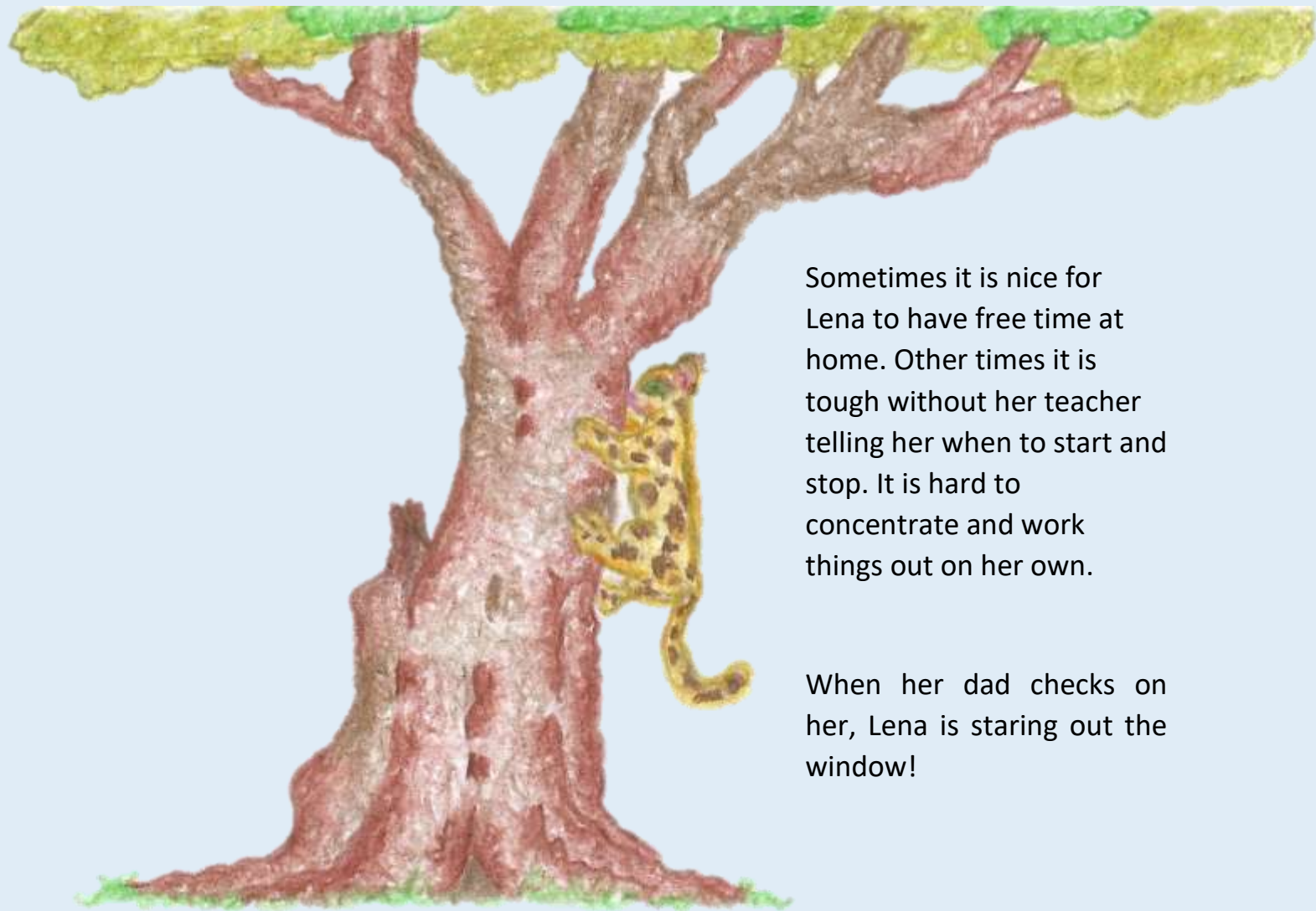


### **I wonder if you have had bad dreams lately?**

It is okay if you want to talk about them now. We can wait so your grown-up can listen to your stories. It's also okay if you do not feel like talking and want to go on.

Bad dreams are really scary for Rudi but he knows when he feels afraid or small, he can talk to his mom. When she gives him a hug, he feels safe again.

### **I wonder what you need to feel safe?**



Sometimes it is nice for Lena to have free time at home. Other times it is tough without her teacher telling her when to start and stop. It is hard to concentrate and work things out on her own.

When her dad checks on her, Lena is staring out the window!

At first Lena's dad told her in an angry voice, "Do your work!"

Later, he wonders why Lena cannot concentrate. Many things are different for her now. Lena is not naughty; her feelings make it difficult to focus. She is sad because she misses the good times.



Lena looks outside and her dad asks, "Lena, what are you thinking?"

**"I am thinking about climbing the biggest tree I can find!"**

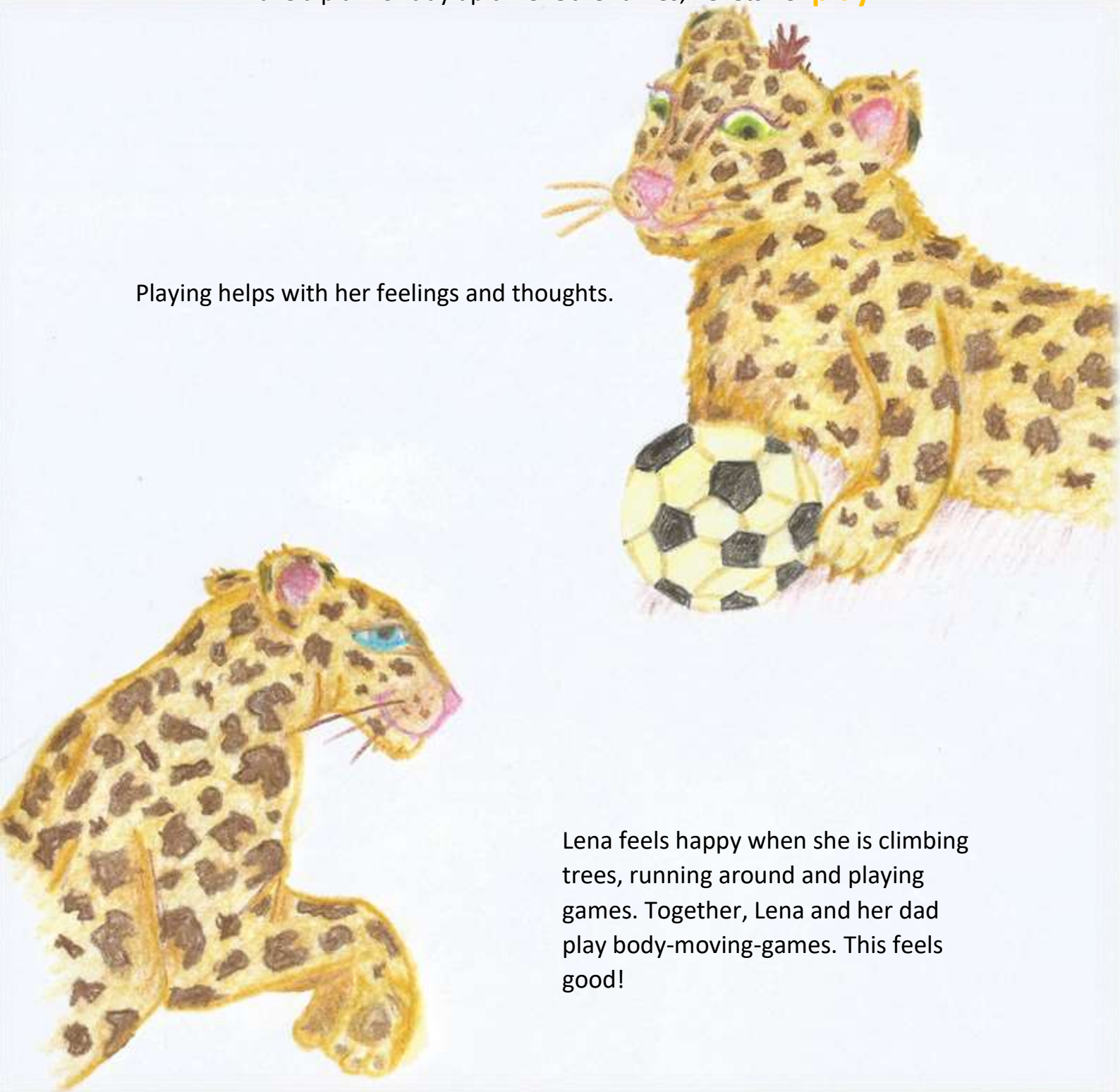
Imagining she can climb the biggest tree reminds Lena of the good times: the times she felt good doing things she was good at doing!

When Lena's dad sees her daydreaming again, he talks to her about her sad feelings.

When Lena starts to clean her room, she forgets what she is doing and plays with the toys. By the end of the day, her room is a big mess!

Lena's dad wonders out loud if her mind feels busy, making it difficult to focus on one thing at a time. Sometimes, he helps her to focus on one thing and to have a plan for tidy up time. Other times, he lets her **play**.

Playing helps with her feelings and thoughts.



Lena feels happy when she is climbing trees, running around and playing games. Together, Lena and her dad play body-moving-games. This feels good!



Bulumko has a sore tummy. The doctor helps Bulumko's tummy but also wonders about Bulumko's feelings.



Bulumko's aunt notices his tummy is sore on days when he is out of sorts. She sits with him wondering if his tummy is telling them he is feeling scared. Maybe he is scared because he cannot stop the sneaky bug that makes some good things go away.

Bulumko just listens. He is too tired to talk. He feels better knowing his aunt is thinking and talking about his feelings. And it *really* helps when she holds him tight!

Bulumko feels he makes lots of mistakes with his schoolwork. He gets cross and calls himself mean names. Bulumko tells his aunt he



must do everything "JUST RIGHT" like keeping his family safe.



Bulumko's aunt sees he feels bad about horrible things happening.

She tells him, "I understand you feel scared - lots of animals feel scared. But **everyone** in the world must do their part. If someone is sick, **everyone** will work hard to help."

Bulumko feels better.

When Bulumko feels scared or cross again, she patiently reminds him the bad things in the world are not his fault.

Lerato feels happy. But if someone says or does something she does not like, she feels angry. Almost like an exploding volcano!

Have you ever felt like a red hot, exploding volcano?

Her parents tell her, “Stop!”

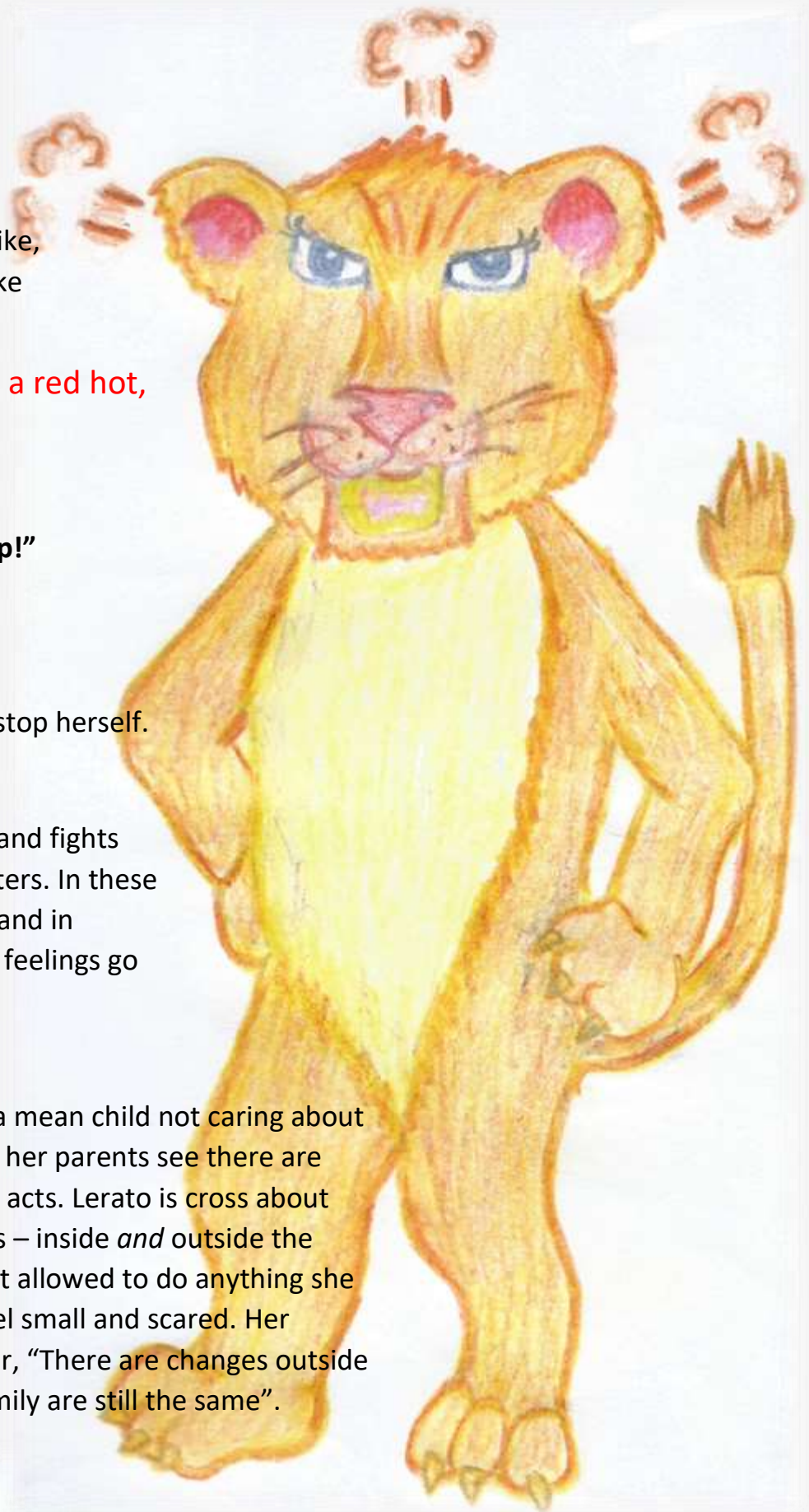
“Sit down!”

“Be quiet!”

But she feels she cannot stop herself.

She shouts back at them and fights with her brothers and sisters. In these moments, she feels **BIG** and in charge, making the **small** feelings go away.

It may look like Lerato is a mean child not caring about others or house rules but her parents see there are feelings behind her angry acts. Lerato is cross about there being so many rules – inside *and* outside the home! She feels she is not allowed to do anything she wants. This makes her feel small and scared. Her parents calmly remind her, “There are changes outside but the home and the family are still the same”.



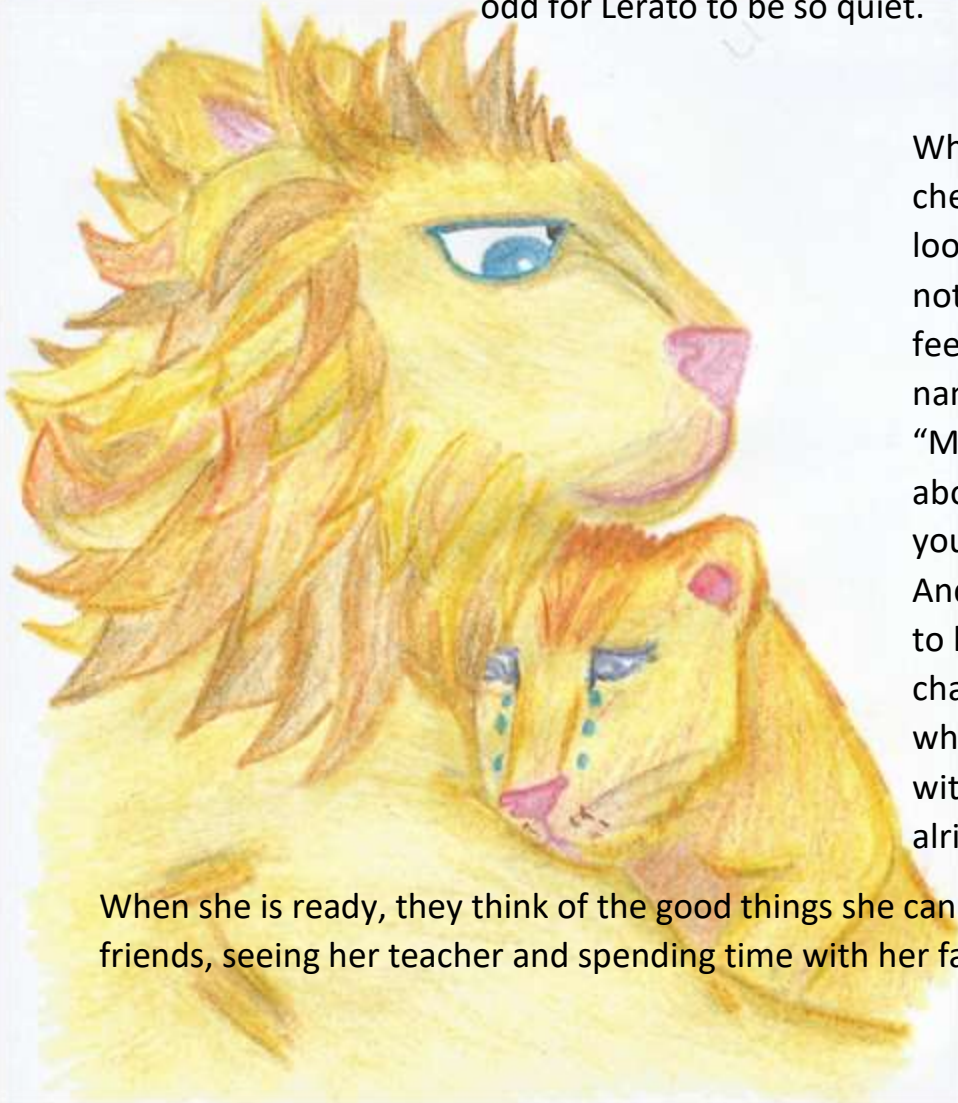


Lerato feels bad about shouting so her parents hug her to show they still love her. They help her think of other ways to work with her angry feelings – like using words for her feelings and pausing for a moment to do calm things.

I wonder what calm things you like to do?



Some days, Lerato sits alone in her room, not wanting to be with anyone. It is odd for Lerato to be so quiet.



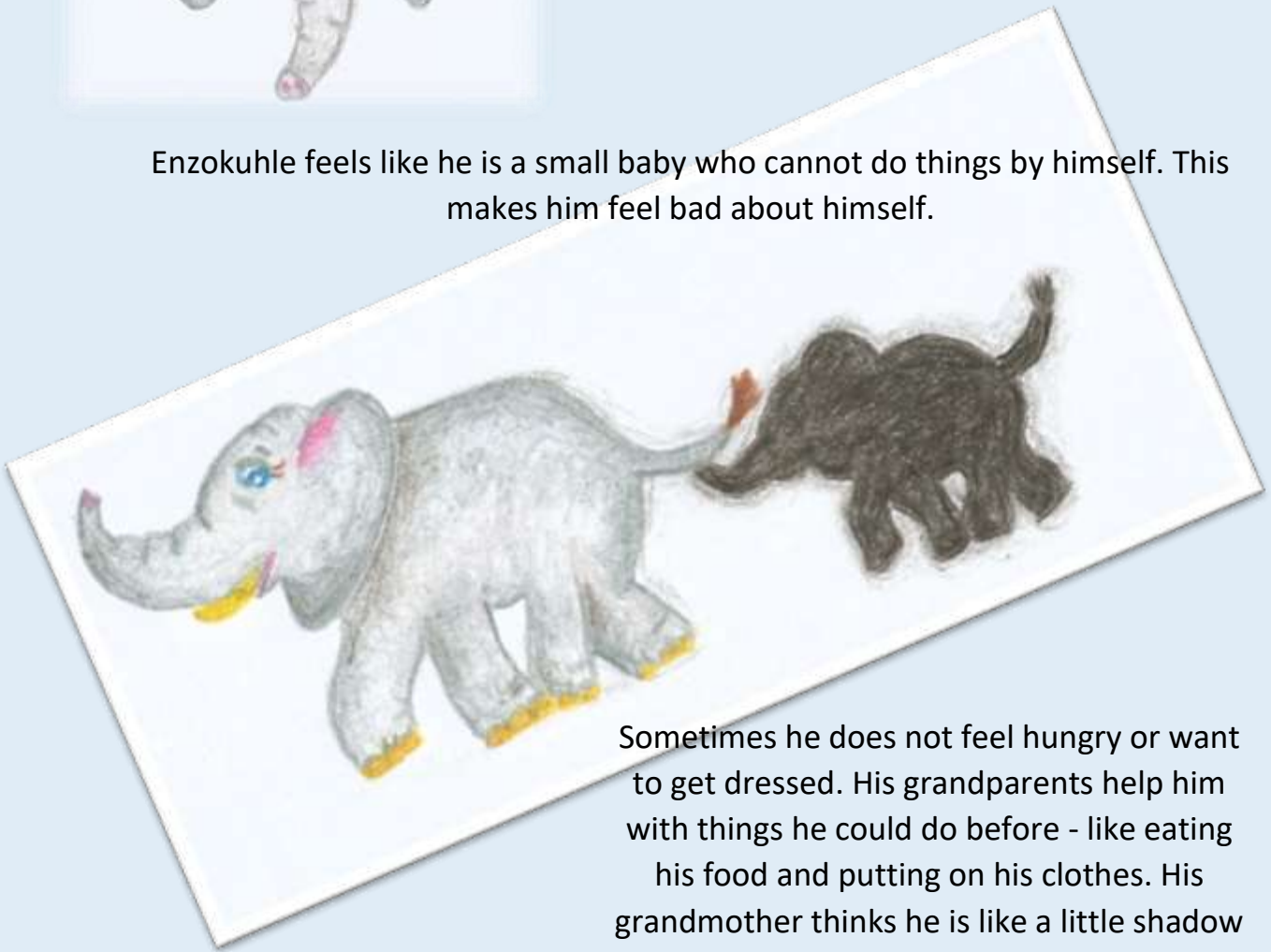
When Lerato's dad checks in on her, she looks down. Lerato does not know what she is feeling. Her dad helps her name the feelings: "Maybe you feel sad about not playing with your friends like before? And maybe it upsets you to know you cannot change this?" It helps when Lerato's dad sits with her, telling her it is alright to feel sad.

When she is ready, they think of the good things she can do – like talking to her friends, seeing her teacher and spending time with her family.



Sitting on the edge of his seat, Enzokuhle is on the lookout for scary things. The changes in his world feel scary. He does not know what school will feel like now. And he is afraid of leaving his grandparents.

Enzokuhle feels like he is a small baby who cannot do things by himself. This makes him feel bad about himself.



Sometimes he does not feel hungry or want to get dressed. His grandparents help him with things he could do before - like eating his food and putting on his clothes. His grandmother thinks he is like a little shadow following her around. If she is in the kitchen, he is there. If she is in the bedroom, he is there!

His grandmother kindly says, "It is scary for you to be alone right now and it is alright if you need to be with us more." She knows staying close lets Enzokuhle know she is there. Then he knows he will be alright. While they are together, she encourages him to do some things by himself. Enzokuhle then feels he is both **big** and **small**!



Enzokuhle cries a lot at home. He feels sad. He knows his grandparents are worried. It feels like everything is falling apart. Falling apart feels scary.

At times, the many changes feel confusing. It feels like the world he knew is lost. It is not the same Bush anymore. This makes Enzokuhle feel **sad**.



When Enzokuhle cuddles up close with his grandparents, he feels calm and safe. This makes him feel **happy**. His grandparents see he needs to be held to feel safe.



Enzokuhle really misses the other animals at the waterhole. He knows his grandparents are with him but, some days, he feels lonely.



In their hugs, grandfather tells Enzokuhle he also misses the herd at the watering hole.

When feeling lonely, they imagine they are with the herd again. They think of the good times and remember there will be more good times together soon!



One day, the Big Five chat together – but of course, this is from a distance!

Lerato tells them about her angry, cross feelings.



Bulumko says “That sounds like what I feel.” The others nod.



Rudi murmurs “And then afterwards, I feel really bad.” All the animals hide their faces saying “So do we...we feel sorry about hurting others and that others can get hurt.”



Enzokuhle says softly “I have days when I feel sad.” Lena and Lerato whisper “We also feel sad sometimes.”

Lena adds “But I can feel happy too!”

Lerato, Bulumko, Rudi and Enzokuhle jump in “Yes, yes, yes!”

They also have happy days.



Rudi quietly tells his friends about feeling scared and at the same time they all call out, “**ME TOO!**”

The Big Five Friends laugh. All of them feel the same feelings.

“We all feel cross, sad, bad, happy and scared!”

**“It is the Big Five Feelings!”**

The grown-ups ask the Big Five Friends, “What helps when you are feeling cross, sad, bad, happy and scared?”

### Do you remember what helps?



Rudi answers, “I feel better when my mom tells me she will keep me safe and protect me from bad, scary things!” The animals also think it helps to know who to go to when they feel the Big Five Feelings.



“I like it when dad listens to me and thinks about what I am feeling inside” explains Lerato. “Even when I do not know how I feel, dad tries to name the feelings for me.”



“Sometimes, even grown-ups do not know what feelings are inside!”

All the animals laugh.



It is alright if there are times when grown-ups do not know because when they are watching the children, they are still wondering what the children’s words or actions or bodies could be telling them about feelings.



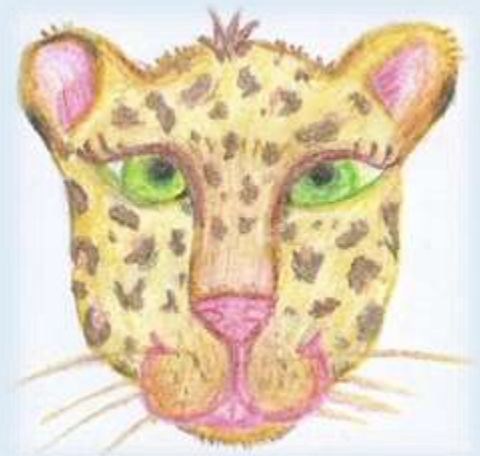
It helps the little animals when a grown-up is there for them and **plays** with them in one-and-one time!

Lena exclaims “Playing together always helps! It helps me to show my feelings and feel happy again.”



Lerato says “It feels good some things - like my day activities, times and even the rules - have stayed the same while lots of other things have changed!”

Lena adds “My dad tells me good sleep, moving around and healthy eating also helps.”



“And my aunt knows some days it is easy to do these things while other days it is difficult. And that is okay” says Bulumko. “It is okay if I do not get everything right or if I need extra time. My aunt tells me it is okay to have good days *and* bad days.”

The grown-ups also know it helps the children to just sit together with the feelings or to have a space to talk about the tough stuff. This helps the children to learn they can deal with their feelings.

Enzokuhle tells them “When I feel I cannot do some things grandma reminds me of the things I can do - like reminding me I can do things that help me and help others!”



“I feel safe when grandpa gives me hugs! It always feels good when I feel loved!”



As time passes, some of the changes do not feel so bad. The sneaky bug does make some things and some animals go away. It makes some things different. But some good things have stayed.



The Big Five Feelings do come back but now the Big Five Friends know what to do and where to go for help. Both big and small animals learnt new ways of working with their feelings. Now they know they can handle feelings in tough times.

**Can you and your grown-up remember what helps the Big Five Feelings?**

In the end, the Big Five know there will always be good days among the bad days.

Good days where the Big Five Friends can play together, talk together and be together.



**How do you imagine your good days to be?**



*The Big Five Feelings  
and  
the Sneaky Bug.*

Written & Illustrated by Siobhán Sweeney

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