

When Can We Go Home?

An Activity Book For Kids Who've Had To Leave Their Homes

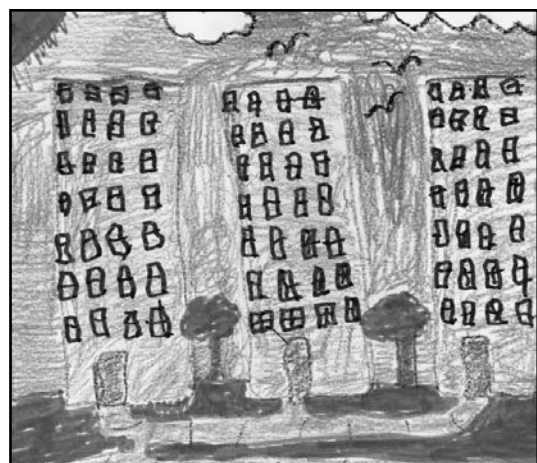


Written By Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D.

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To the Grown-Ups Using This Book

Children have to leave their homes for many reasons. Natural disasters, like Hurricane Katrina, can uproot hundreds of thousands of children in just a few days. Many other children become homeless in less dramatic ways. For financial or other family reasons, children may find themselves living with relatives, in foster homes, or in shelters, instead of in the homes they know and love.

This book is designed to help children do two things: cope with the reality of being away from their homes and develop the “emotional intelligence” skills they need to be resilient throughout life. Although children may not truly be satisfied until you can answer the question posed by the title of this book—*When can we go home?*—you need to know that there are things you can do every day to make life easier for children who have had to leave their homes.

Rather than just giving this workbook to a child, look through the activities first and find the ones that will be most helpful. Keep in mind that some activities will not be appropriate for some children and that any activity can be modified for younger or older children.

If you are a parent whose child has had to leave home, here are some other important things for you to do:

- Tell children to let you know if they are upset or scared.
- Establish routines as quickly as possible.
- Encourage children to have fun.
- Help children make friends.
- Find out about resources available for you and your child.
- Meet your child's new teacher and other school personnel.
- Keep your child's medical information, including the phone numbers of doctors and dentists, in a safe place.
- Encourage children to talk about their feelings and concerns, but don't force them to talk if they don't want to.
- Be prepared to answer your children's questions honestly.

While the activities in this book are a starting point in helping children become more resilient, what matters most is talking with children, playing with them, and being a good role model.

Sincerely,
Lawrence E. Shapiro, PhD

To the Kids Using This Book

If someone has given you this book, you are probably going through a difficult time in your life. For reasons you may or may not understand, you have had to leave your home, and it may be many weeks or even months before you will have a place that you feel is your home. Some people would say that you are "homeless." Being homeless is a feeling of not having a place where you belong, a place you can call your own. But even though you don't have a place to live that feels like your own, you can still go to school, have friends, and enjoy your family.

I hope that you will soon have a place you can call home. Until then, I think that the activities in this workbook can help you feel better about your situation.

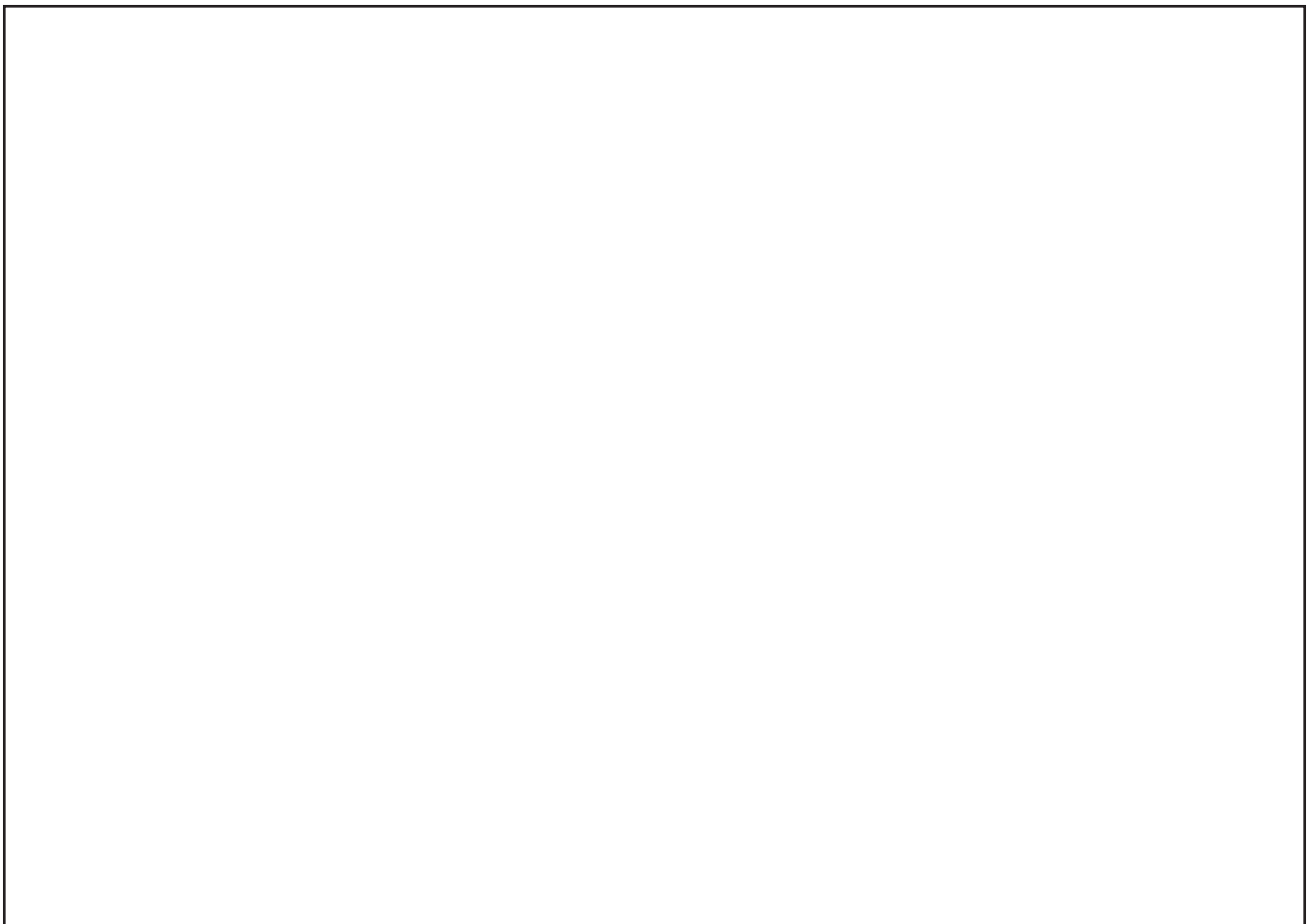
Probably the most important thing for you to remember is that there are many adults who want to help you. Talk to them if you are worried or scared, and tell them what you need to feel better.

Best wishes,
Dr. Lawrence E. Shapiro

For You to Think About

Most children who are away from their homes miss one special thing, like a toy, a stuffed animal, a photograph album, a computer game, or even a TV. They hope that the special thing they left behind will be taken care of until they can get it again. Even though you can't have many of the things you miss, you can have good memories about them, and you can make new things special to you.

In the frame below, draw a picture of something special you will always have with you. It can be a memory or something you still have from your home.



Activity 1

Special Things You Left Behind

Now draw a picture of something special you want to have in your new home. It can be something to replace what you had or something entirely new!

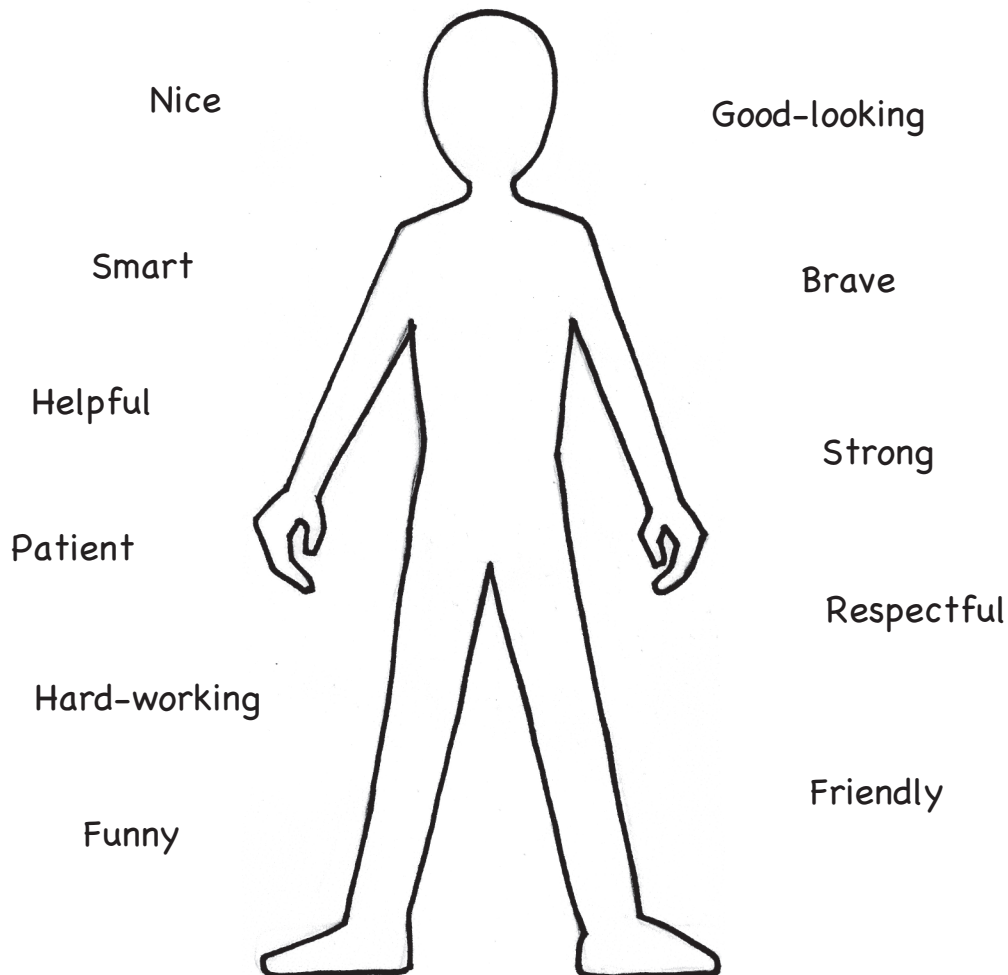
A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing. It occupies most of the page below the instructions.

For You to Think About

When children have big changes in their lives, it can be very upsetting. You might feel sad, or scared, or even angry. You may have to meet a lot of new people and do many things you have never done before. Most children don't like it when too many new things happen at once.

Even though you may have many new things in your life, the one thing that stays the same is YOU! You are someone very special, and no matter what happens in your life, the things that make you special will not change.

Fill in the outline below so that it looks like you. Circle all the words around the picture that describe you best.



For You to Think About

Children should always feel safe. When you don't feel safe, you need to find a grown-up to help you with the things you are worried about. You may need to talk to a parent, a teacher, a counselor, or a police officer. You should tell them why you don't feel safe and what you need to feel better.

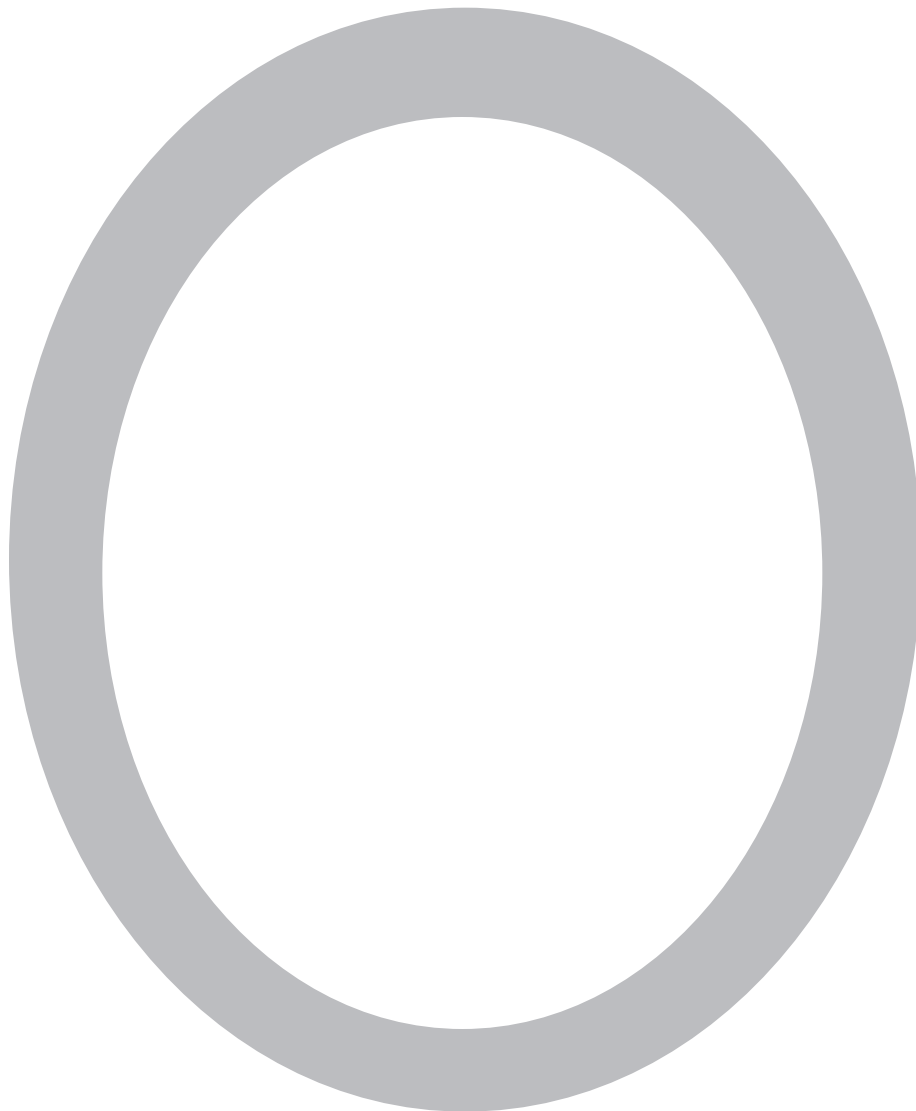
In the box below, draw a picture of yourself talking to someone who can help you feel safe. Show your drawing to the person in the picture and tell that person about your feelings.



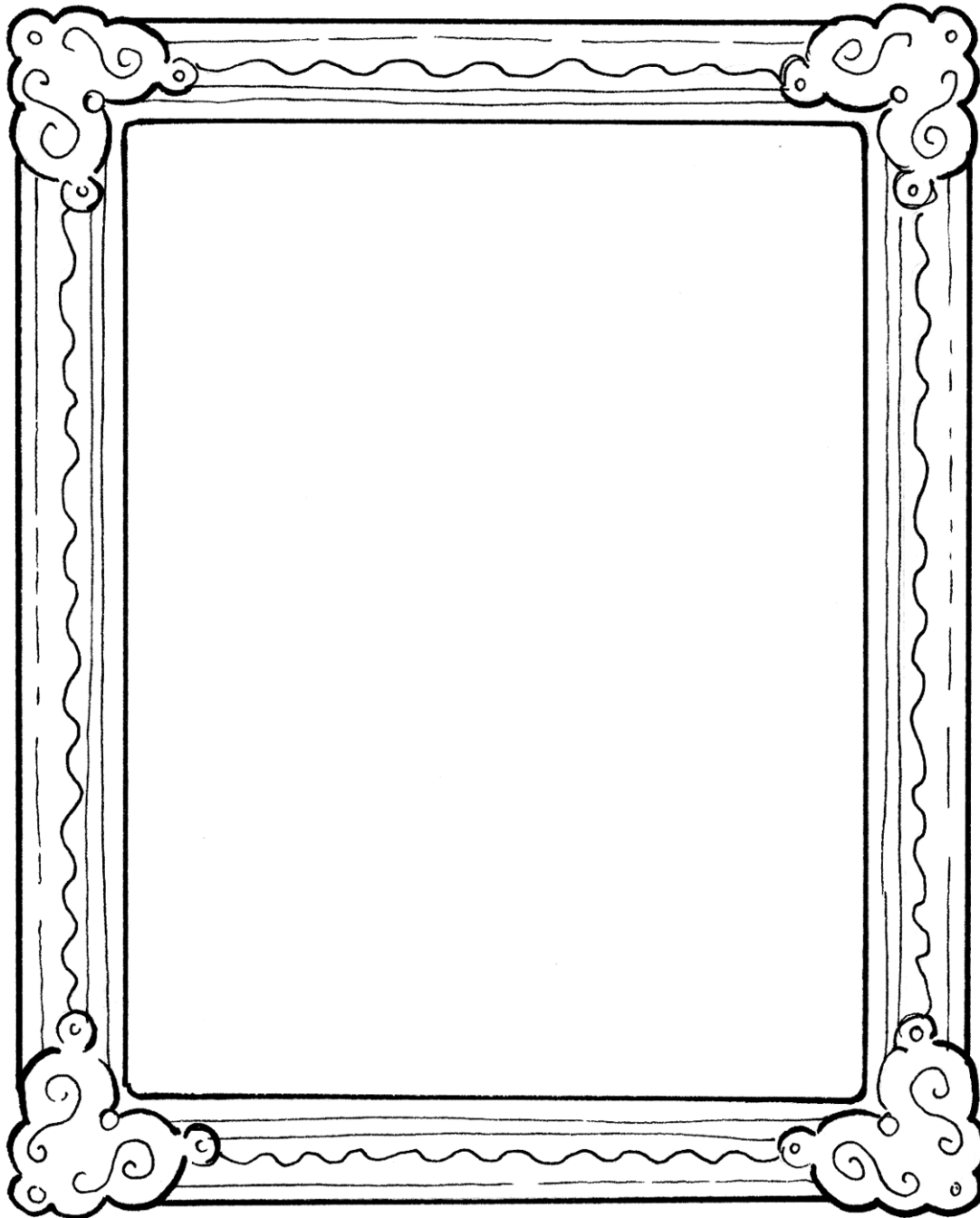
For You to Think About

It is important for you to think about the ways you want your life to change. Daydreaming about these things can be fun, and it can help you deal better with problems you are having now.

In the magic mirror below, draw something that you hope will come true soon.



In the space below, you can draw a picture to hang in your new bedroom.



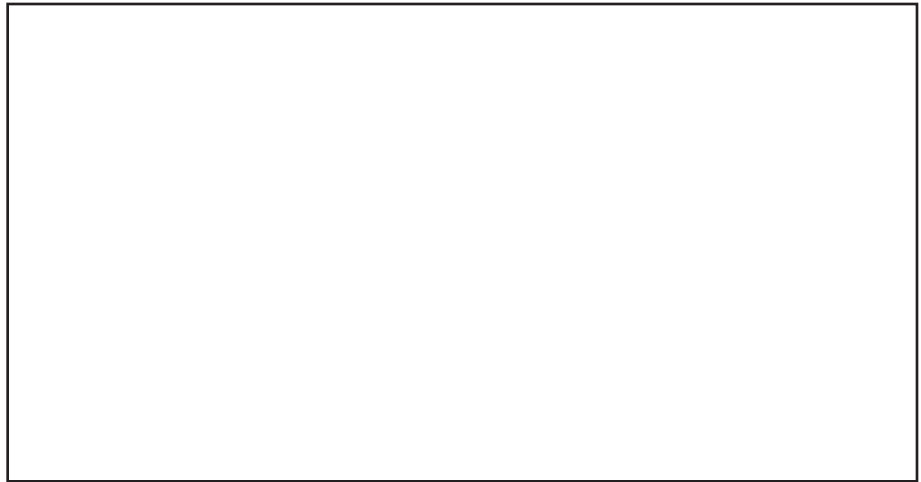
For You to Think About

Even when children are not in their own homes, they need to feel that things will happen at the same time every day. When things keep changing all the time, it is hard to feel good. Having a schedule can help you feel better.

Ask an adult if you need help answering the questions below. You can draw the pictures in the spaces next to each question.

What time does school start? _____

Draw a picture of the things you take to school.

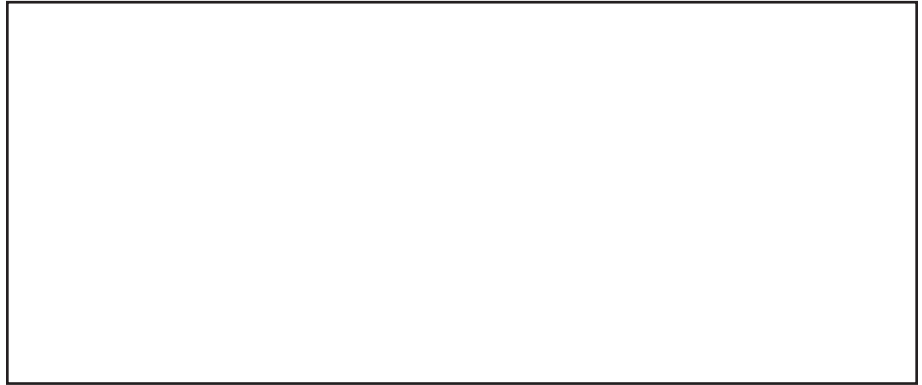


How do you get to school? _____

What is the first thing that happens at school? _____

What time do you eat dinner? _____

Draw a picture of your favorite dinner.



Who usually eats dinner with you? _____

What do you do right after dinner? _____

What is your bedtime? _____

Draw a picture of your bed.



What do you like to do every night before you go to bed? _____

Activity 6

Having a Schedule

In the space below, you can write in all the things that happen at the same time each day.

Things That Happen at the Same Time Each Day	
6 a.m.	
7 a.m.	
8 a.m.	
9 a.m.	
10 a.m.	
11 a.m.	
12 noon	
1 p.m.	
2 p.m.	
3 p.m.	
4 p.m.	
5 p.m.	
6 p.m.	
7 p.m.	
8 p.m.	
9 p.m.	
10 p.m.	
11 p.m.	



For You to Think About

Kids don't have to wait for adults to solve all their problems. There are many problems you can solve by yourself. And as you get older, you will be able to solve more and more problems. The better you are at solving problems, the better you will feel.

Think about how these kids might solve their problems, and write your answers on the lines below.

Tyrell was invited to go bike riding with his friend Jake, but Tyrell didn't have a bike. What could he do?

Sara didn't have even one friend in her new class. Every day at recess, she would stand by herself while the other kids played. What could she do?

Cornell had a hard time with the math his teacher assigned. Sometimes it took him hours to do his math homework, and he still got some of it wrong. What could he do?

Activity 7

Learning to Solve Your Problems

Can you think of a problem you are having today? Write it below.

Now write three possible solutions to your problem. Put a star next to the one you think is best.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

For You to Think About

Even though you have had many problems, good things still happen every day. When you pay attention to these good things, you will develop a positive attitude, and a positive attitude will always make you feel better.



A positive attitude makes a big difference in how you feel!

Each day this week, write down three good things that happened.

Monday 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Tuesday 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Wednesday 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity 8

Focusing on Good Things That Happen

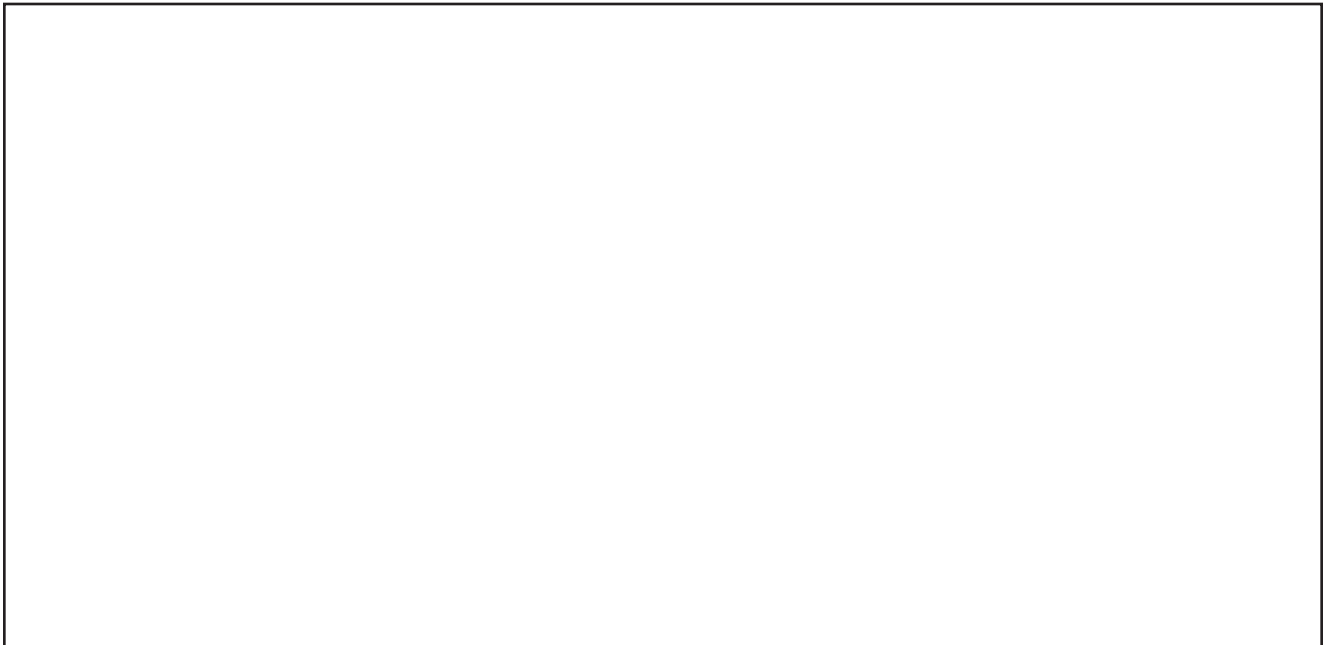
Thursday 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Friday 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Saturday 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

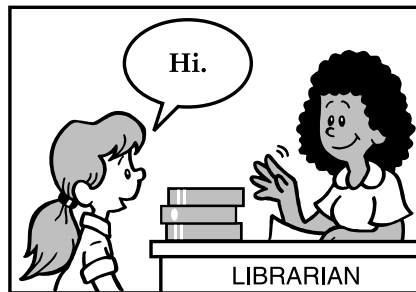
Sunday 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Draw a picture of the best thing that happened to you this week.



For You to Think About

Whenever new things happen in your life, you probably have to meet new people, too. The best way to meet new people is to smile, look them in the eyes, and say hello loud enough for the person to hear you.

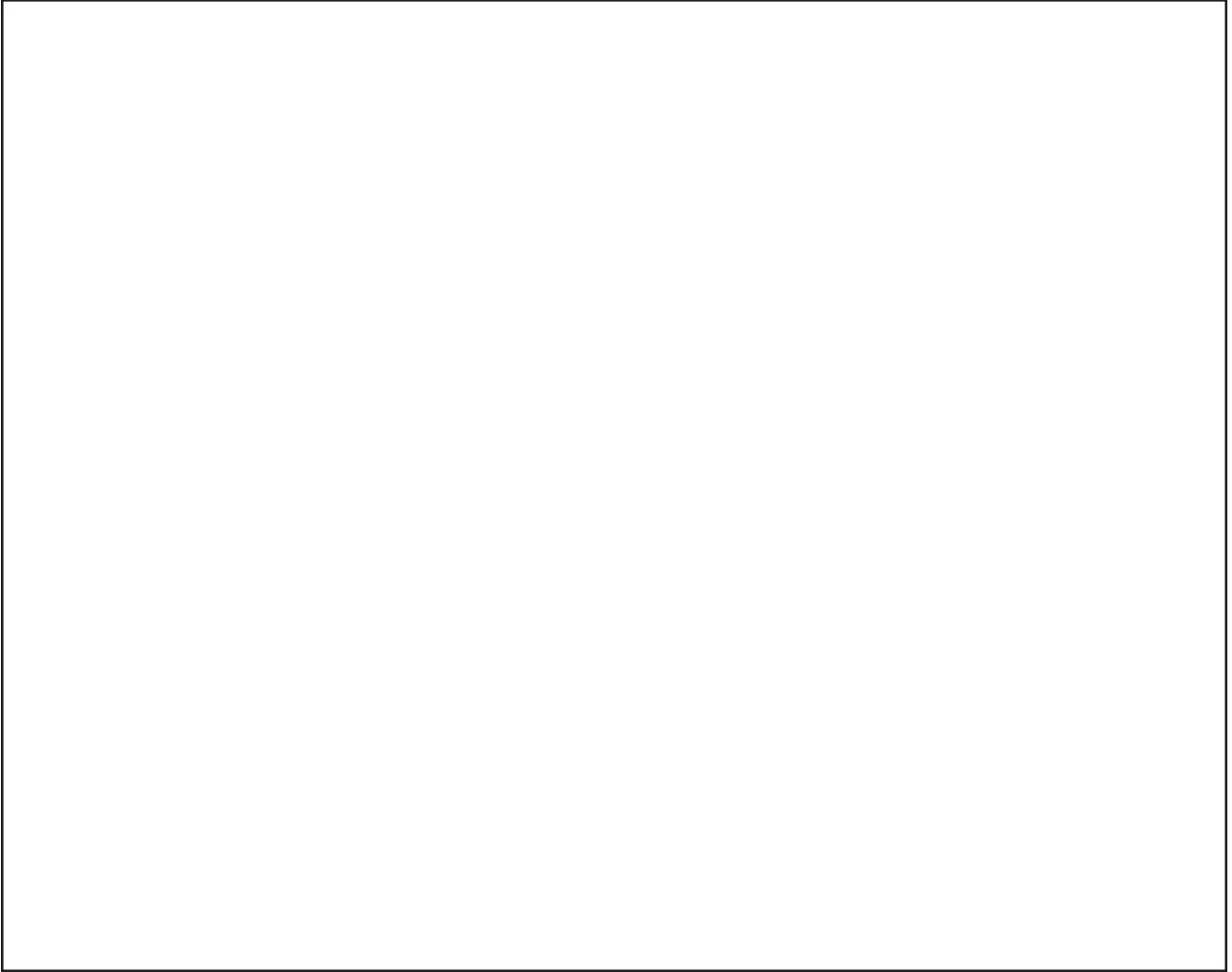


Whether you are meeting new kids or new grown-ups, being polite and helpful is also important. Here are some things you can do to be polite and helpful:

- Say please and thank you.
- Hold the door open.
- Help with a chore.
- Share your things.
- Ask how someone is feeling.

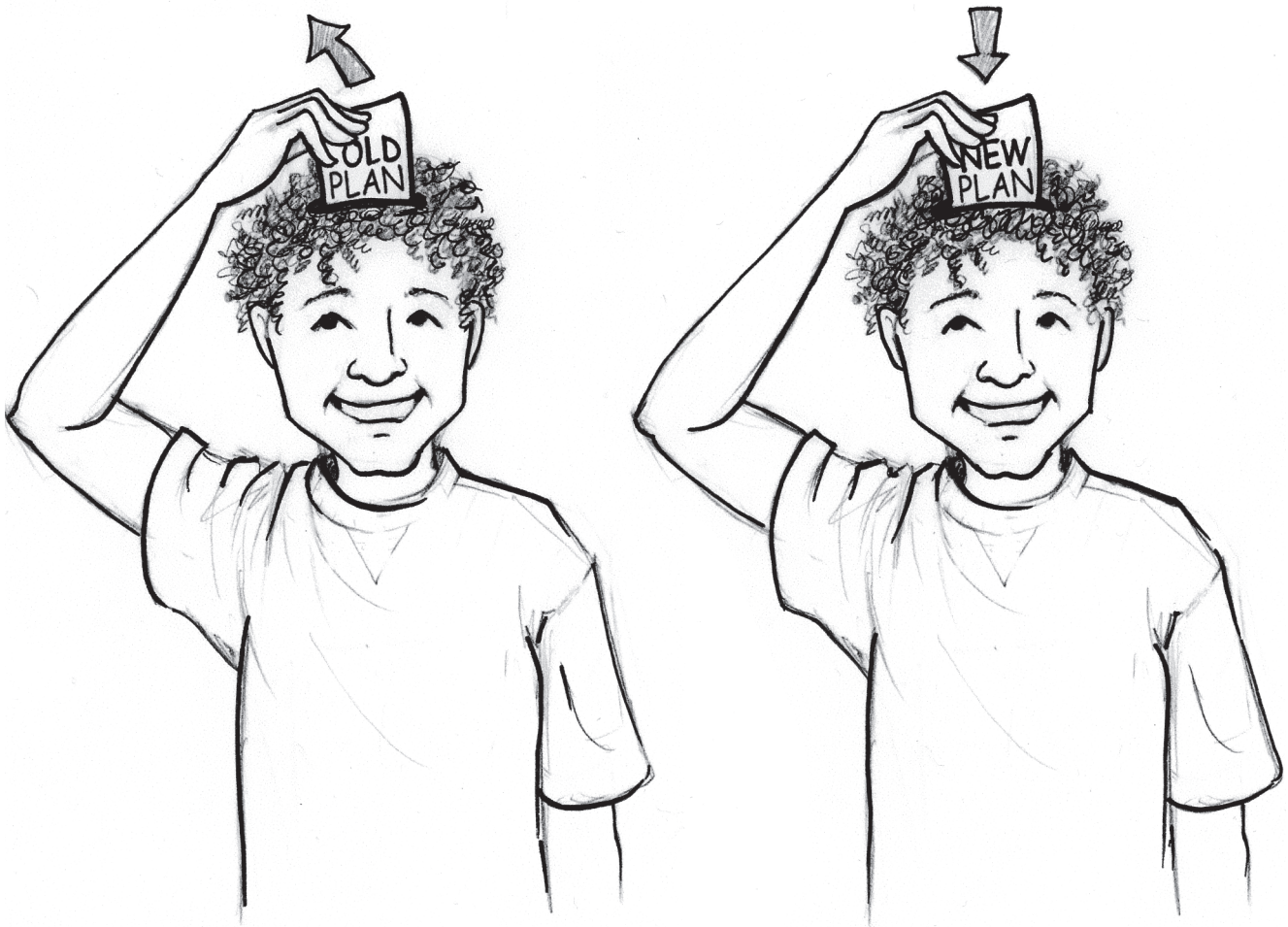
What are some other ways to show you are polite and helpful?

In the space below, draw a picture of someone new that you met who was polite and helpful to you.



For You to Think About

Before you had to leave your home, you probably had lots of plans for things you wanted to do. Maybe you had a sport you wanted to play, a musical instrument you wanted to learn, or places you wanted to go. Some of these things you can still do, and others you can't. It may be time to make a new plan that will help you do the things that are most important to you.



In the box below, draw a picture of something that you really want to do from your new plan.



Now write the steps you need to take to make sure that your plan comes true:

For You to Think About

There are many people besides your parents who can help you and take care of you.

Parents are usually the most important people in children's lives. But sometimes parents cannot take care of their children and give them all the things they need. Many adults have jobs that involve caring for children. Some of these adults are:

Teachers	Counselors	Doctors
Coaches	Nurses	Librarians
Dentists	Social workers	Police officers

There are many ways that these people can help you.

In the space below, circle the ways that adults, other than your parents, have helped you in the past few weeks:

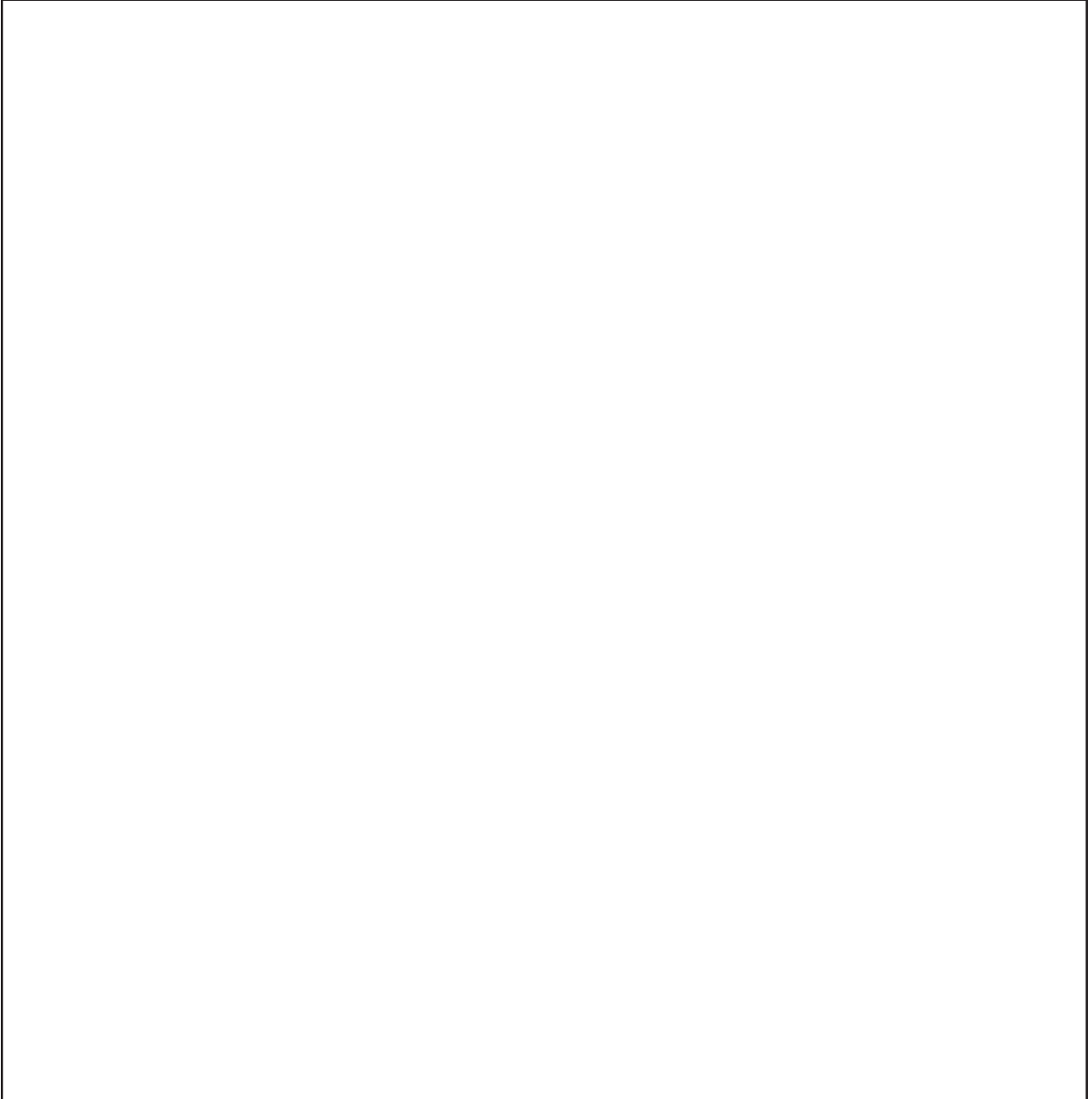
Driving you to school	Playing a sport with you
Listening to you	Answering your questions
Teaching you	Playing games with you
Helping you shop	Helping you with your homework
Preparing your food	Watching a movie or video with you

Now think of any things you need from adults that you have not gotten yet. Write those things on the lines below, and show an adult what you have written.

Activity 11

Finding People to Help You

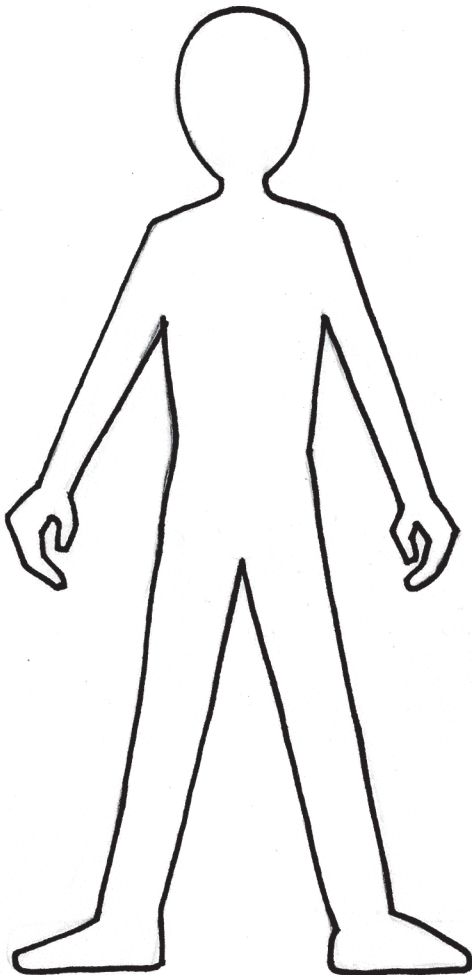
In the space below, draw a picture that you can give to the adult who has helped you the most.



For You to Think About

Going through lots of change can be very stressful. When you are under stress, you may feel tired, you may have stomachaches and headaches, or you may just feel unhappy.

In the picture below, color the part of your body where you feel stress. Use a red crayon if you have one.

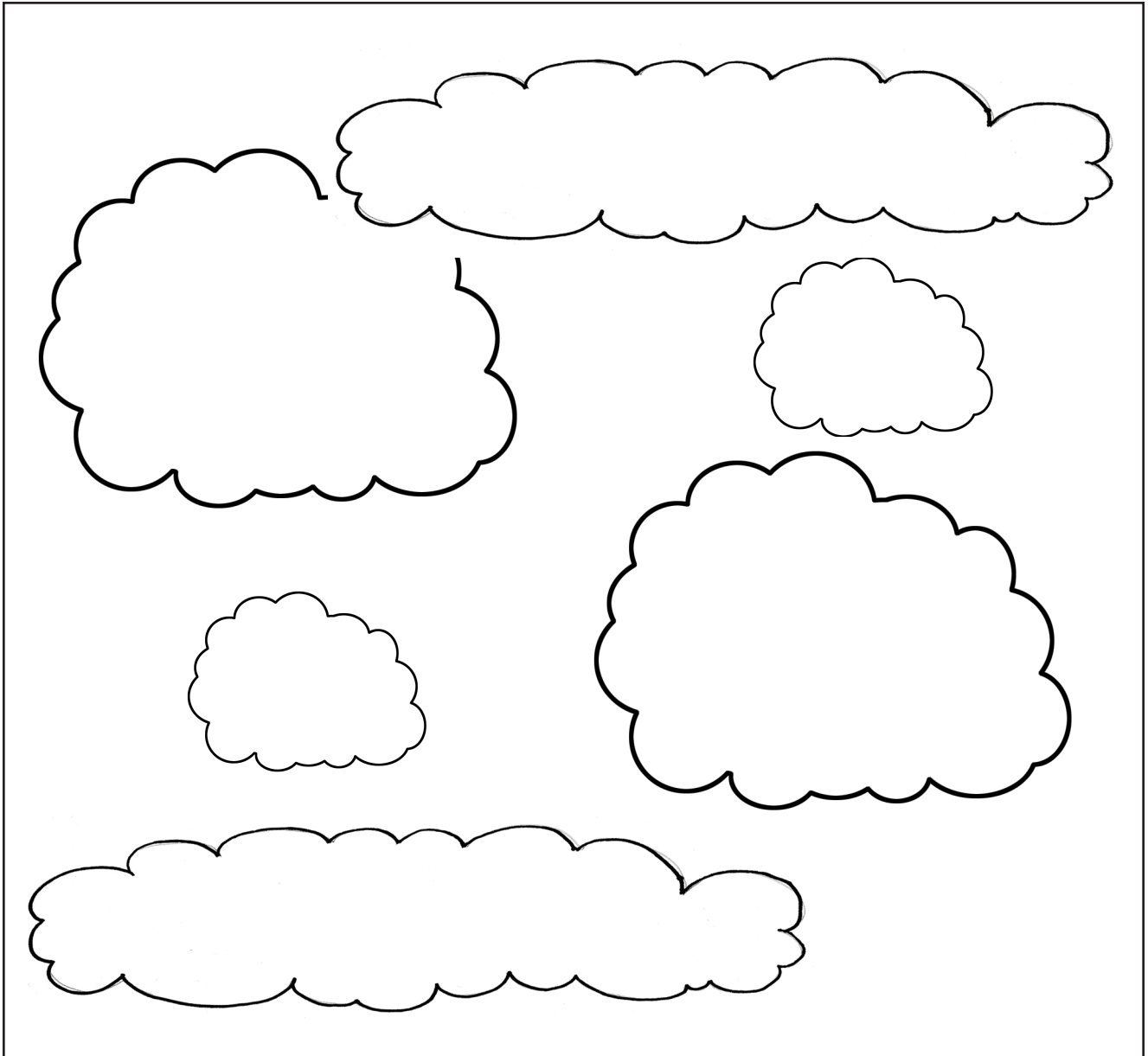


Here are some things you can do when you feel stressed and upset:

- You can try to solve the problem.
- You can talk to an adult.
- You can concentrate on positive things.

But even when you do these things, you may still feel bad. Sometimes things take awhile to change, and while you wait for things to get better, you can still feel stressed. Many people find that thinking about peaceful things while they breathe deeply and relax their muscles can help with stress.

Look at the clouds in the picture below. If you have crayons, color the sky blue and the clouds white with a little gray. As you color, breathe slowly and deeply. Then look at your picture and relax your body as you breathe. Do you feel calmer? Do you feel relaxed? If this helps, try to practice thinking about peaceful things, breathing deeply, and relaxing every day.



For You to Think About

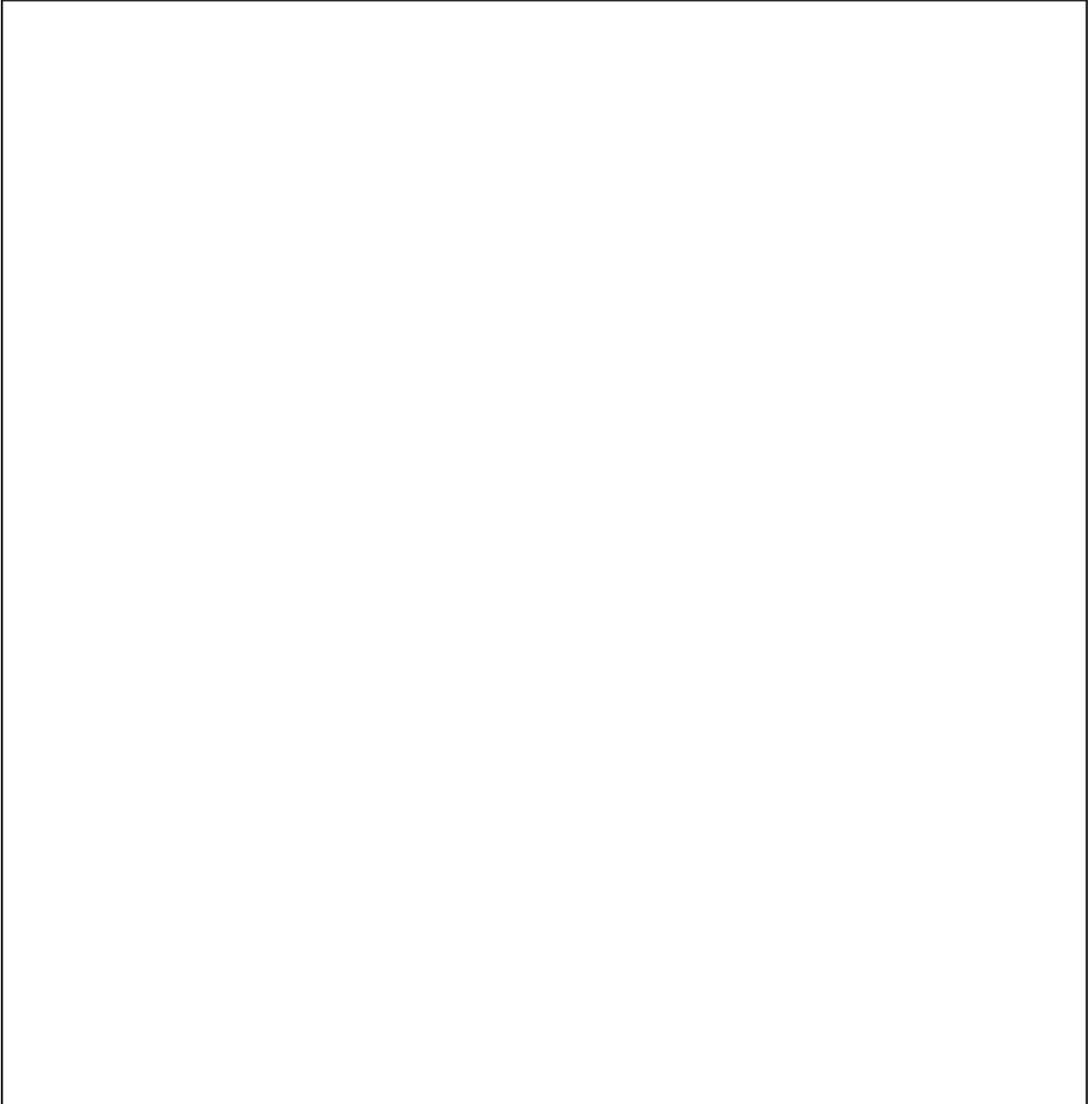
Having fun is one of the best things about being a child. When you don't have a home, it is harder to have fun. You probably miss the toys and games that you had at home and worry more than you used to about what will happen to you. But even though things are different, and may be difficult, it is still important to have fun. The grown-ups around you still want you to enjoy being a kid.

Here are some of the games that you can play almost anywhere:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Tag | Statues |
| Simon Says | Catch |
| Hide and Seek | Hopscotch |
| I Spy | Thumb Wrestling |
| Rock, Paper, Scissors | Follow the Leader |
| Miss Mary Mack | Red Light, Green Light |
| Mother, May I? | Duck, Duck, Goose |
| Red Rover | Simon Says |

On the lines below, you can write other games that you like to play:

In the space below, draw a picture of yourself playing your favorite game. Remember, you can still have fun!



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This book is designed to help children do two things: cope with the reality of being away from their homes and develop the “emotional intelligence” skills they need to be resilient throughout life. Although children may not truly be satisfied until you can answer the question posed by the title of this book—*When can we go home?*—you need to know that there are things you can do every day to make life easier for children who have had to leave their homes.

Includes 13 activities to help make children more resilient in any difficult situation.

About the Author: Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D. is the author of *How to Raise a Child with a High EQ: A Parents' Guide to Emotional Intelligence*, *The Secret Language Of Children*, and many other books and games designed to help children with their emotional development.