

# THE HERD

- We are a Hull based theatre company who tell **new stories in playful spaces**. We make arts experiences for children and families. We **exist to show children that they are valued**, and that their experiences and voices matter.
- **Whalesong is a brand new picture book and immersive drama workshop project exploring bereavement** has been developed with:
  - Stacey Hart Therapy
  - Hull Schools Library Service
  - Training from Child Bereavement UK



- Confidentiality
- Respect all opinions
- Remain non-judgmental
- Look after yourselves

**Feel free to ask questions at any point  
There will be time at the end**



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# Aims of Today's Training

- Share what the children will be doing in the Whale Song Workshop
- Contextualise the themes of the book
- Children's understanding of death according to age
- Explore how to support bereaved children
- Self care



# Key statistics for child bereavement in the UK

- Approximately **1 in 29** school-age children has been bereaved of a parent or sibling, an equivalent of **one child in every class**.
- A parent of children under 18 dies every 20 minutes.



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# Aims of the pupil Whale Song Workshop

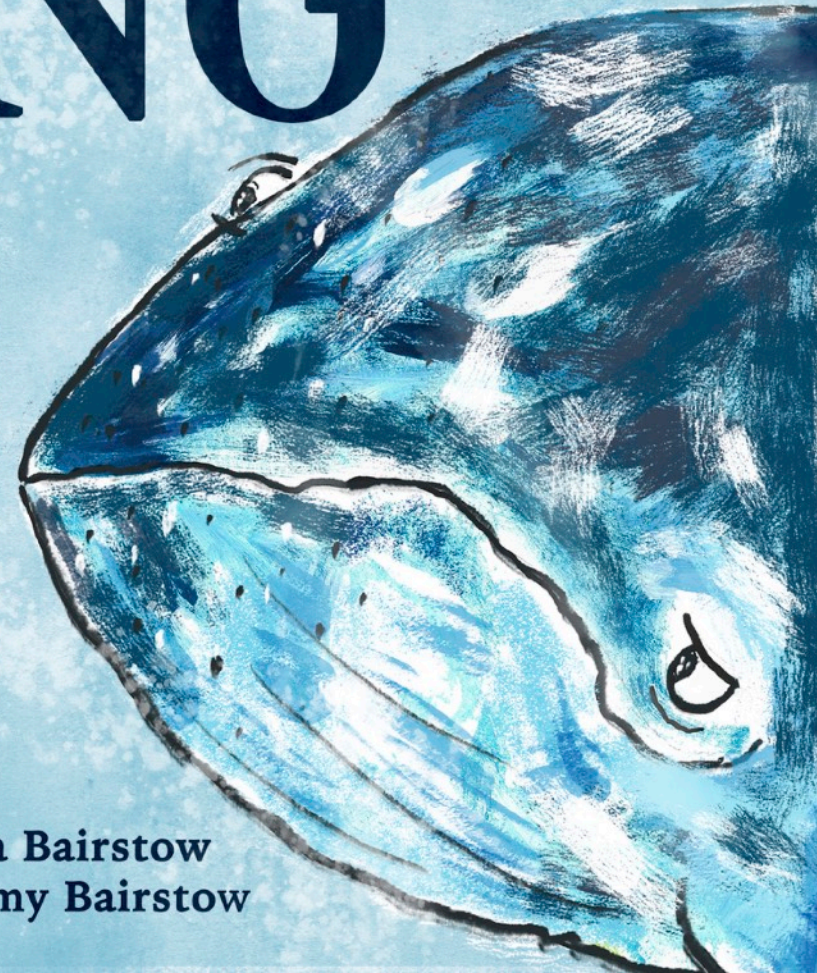
- Talk about death
- Learn about big feelings
- Learn it's ok to express big feelings
- Learn that I can talk to people about my feelings
- Have fun



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# WHALE SONG

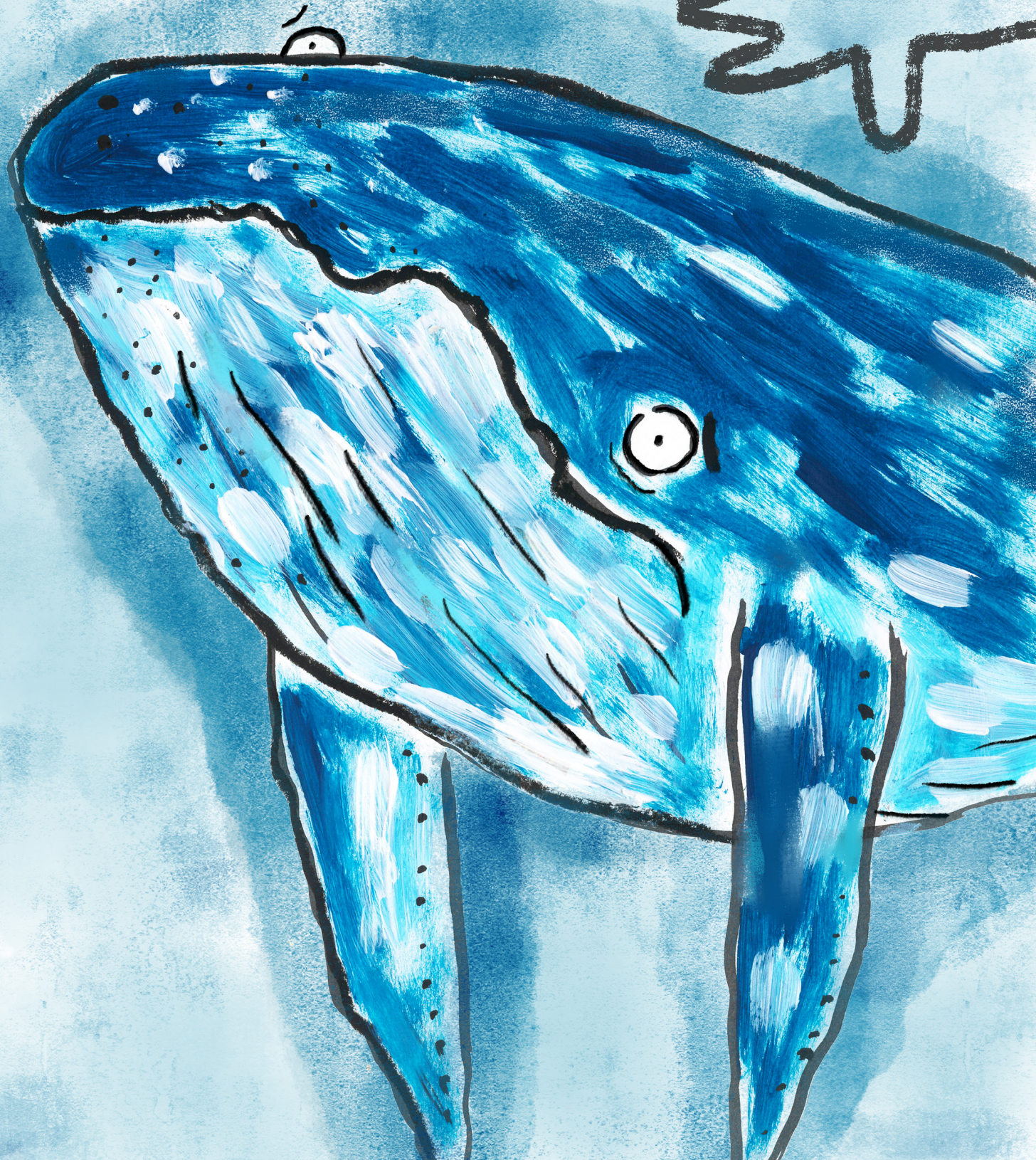


Written by Lua Bairstow  
Illustrated by Amy Bairstow



I am Dolphin

and this  
is my best  
friend Whale



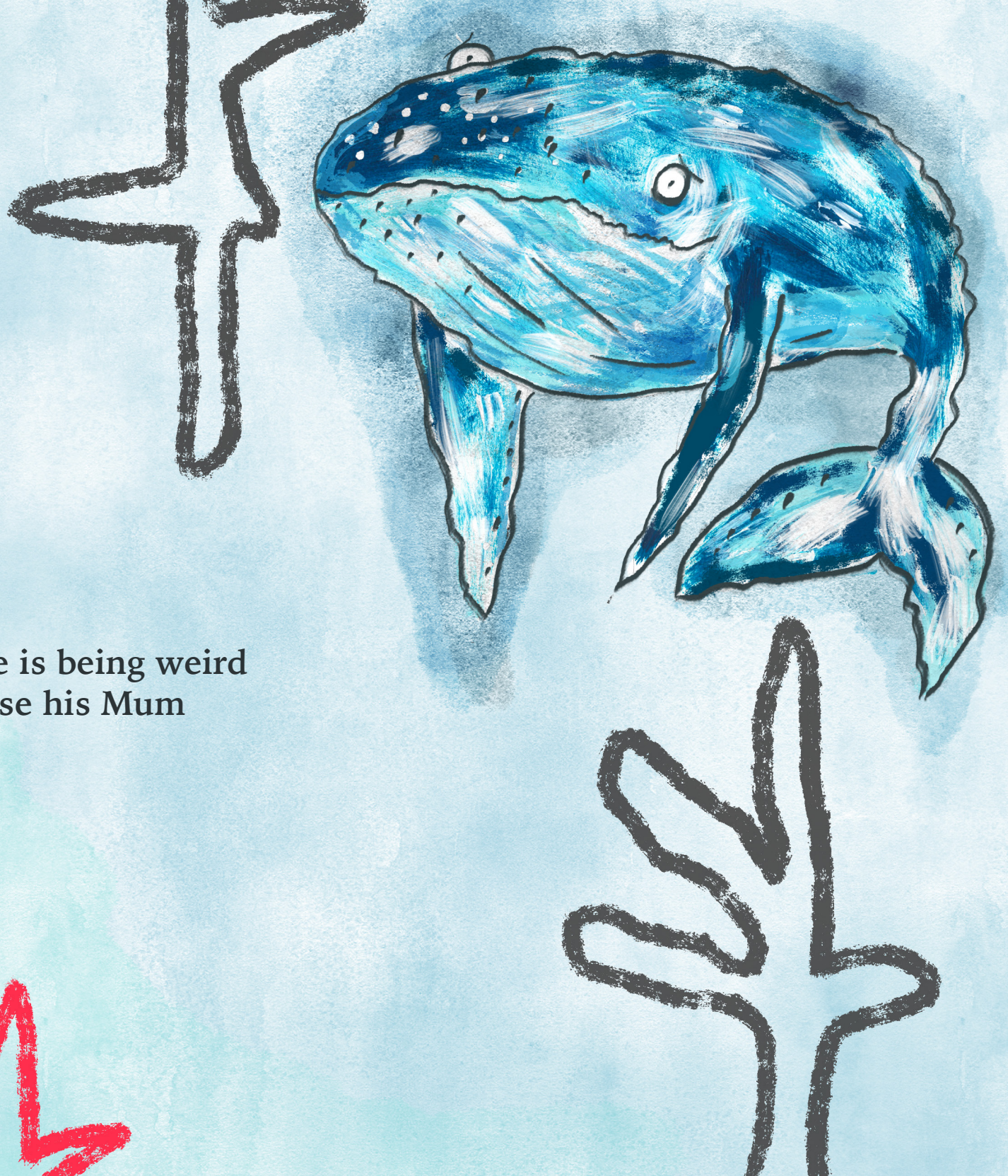


We live in Life Bay





Whale is being weird  
because his Mum

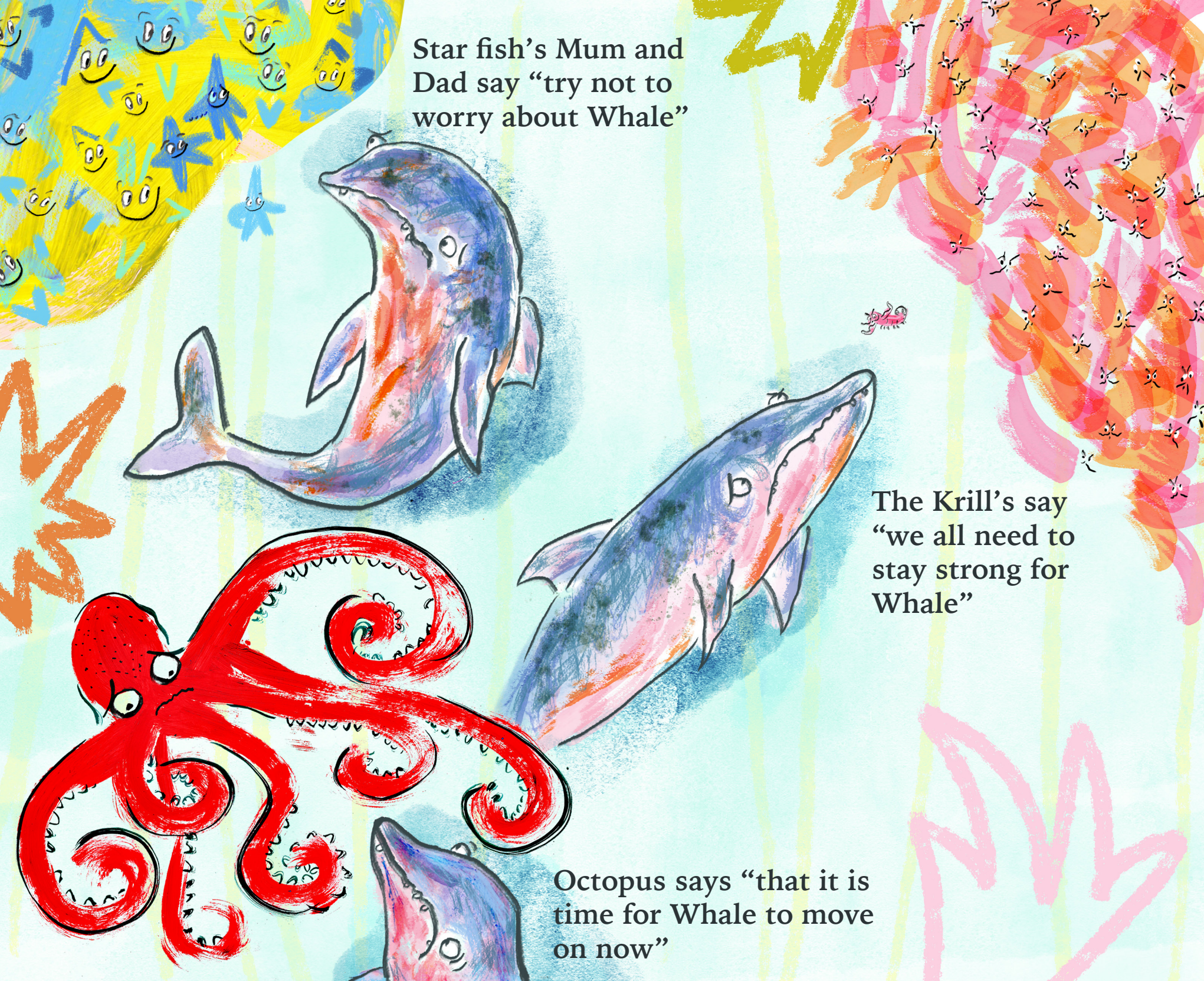




SHHH!



Oh dear, Whale is sad  
and I need some help  
to make him happy



Star fish's Mum and Dad say "try not to worry about Whale"

The Krill's say "we all need to stay strong for Whale"

Octopus says "that it is time for Whale to move on now"

You have changed Whale  
you are not the same



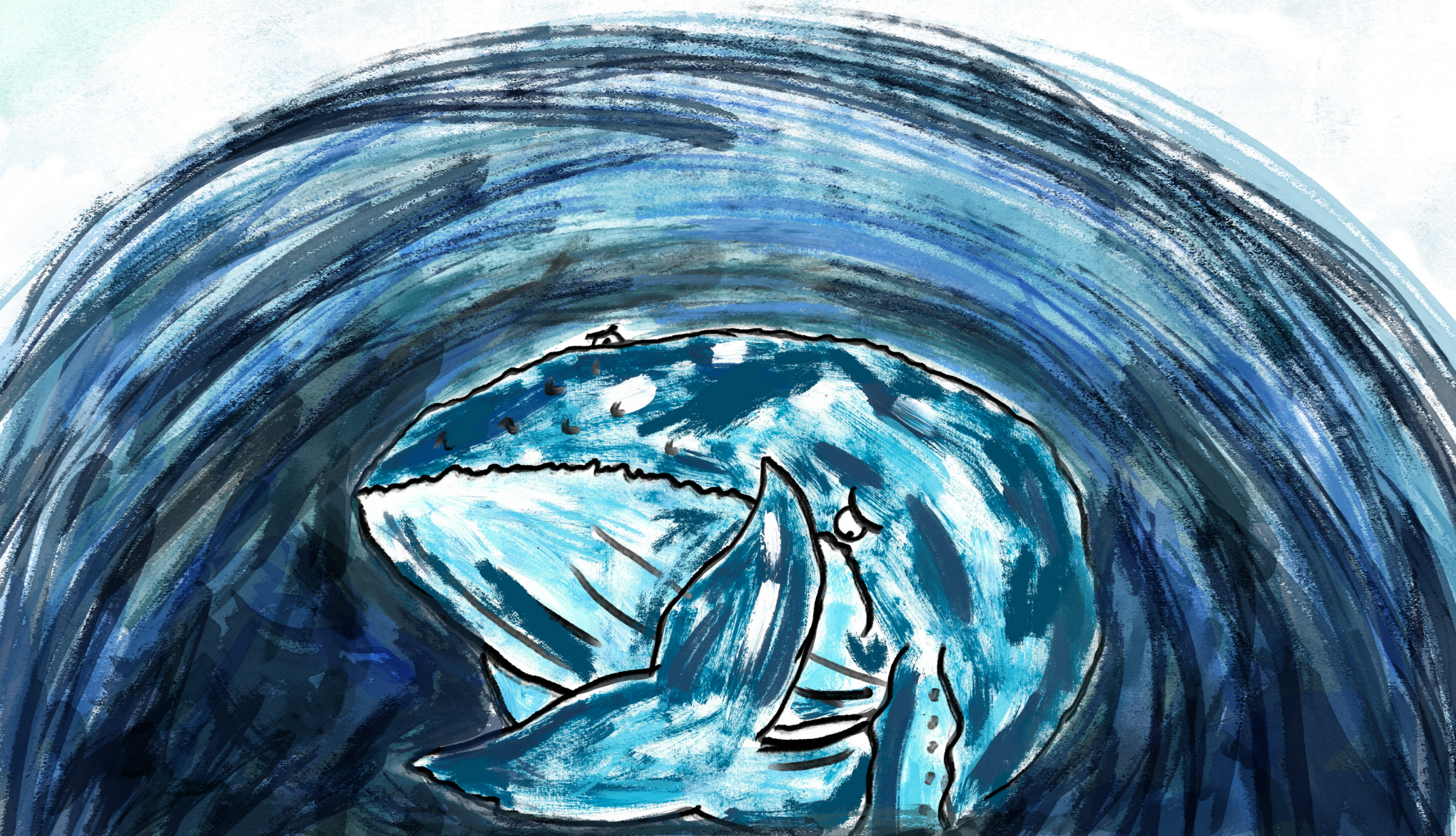
not

ever

since

your

Mum

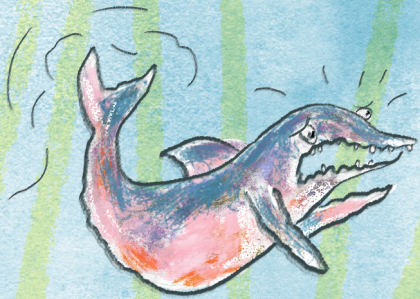




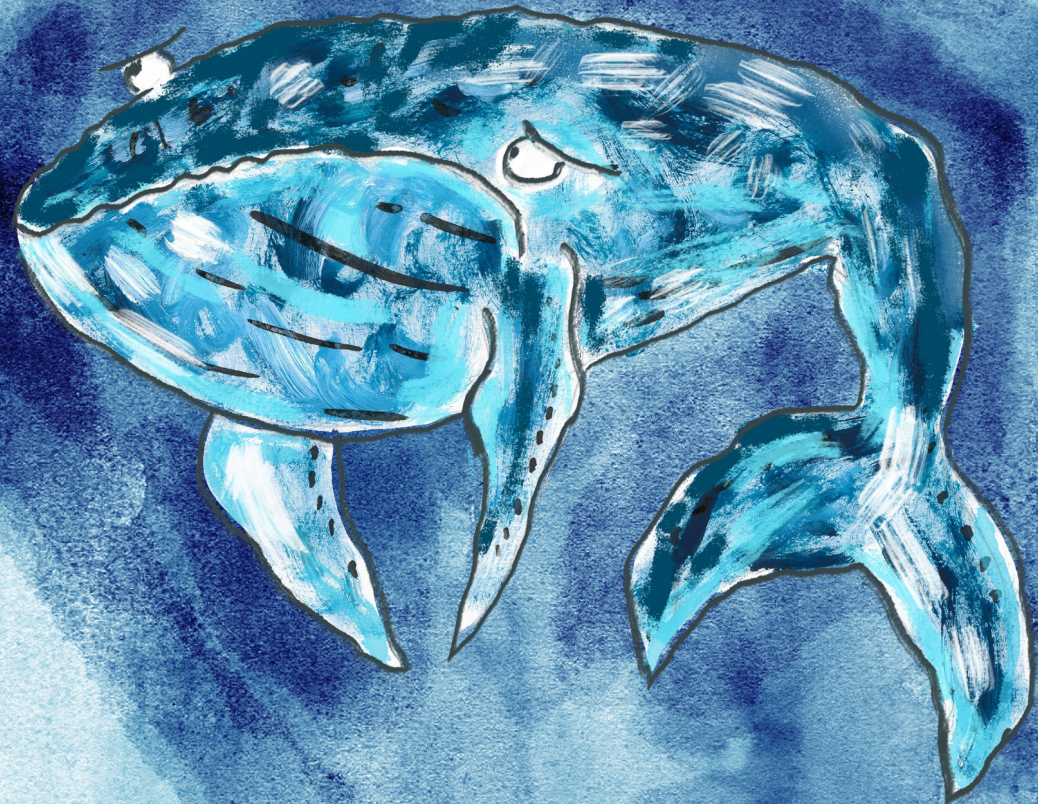
SHHHH!



I speak to Whale and I say

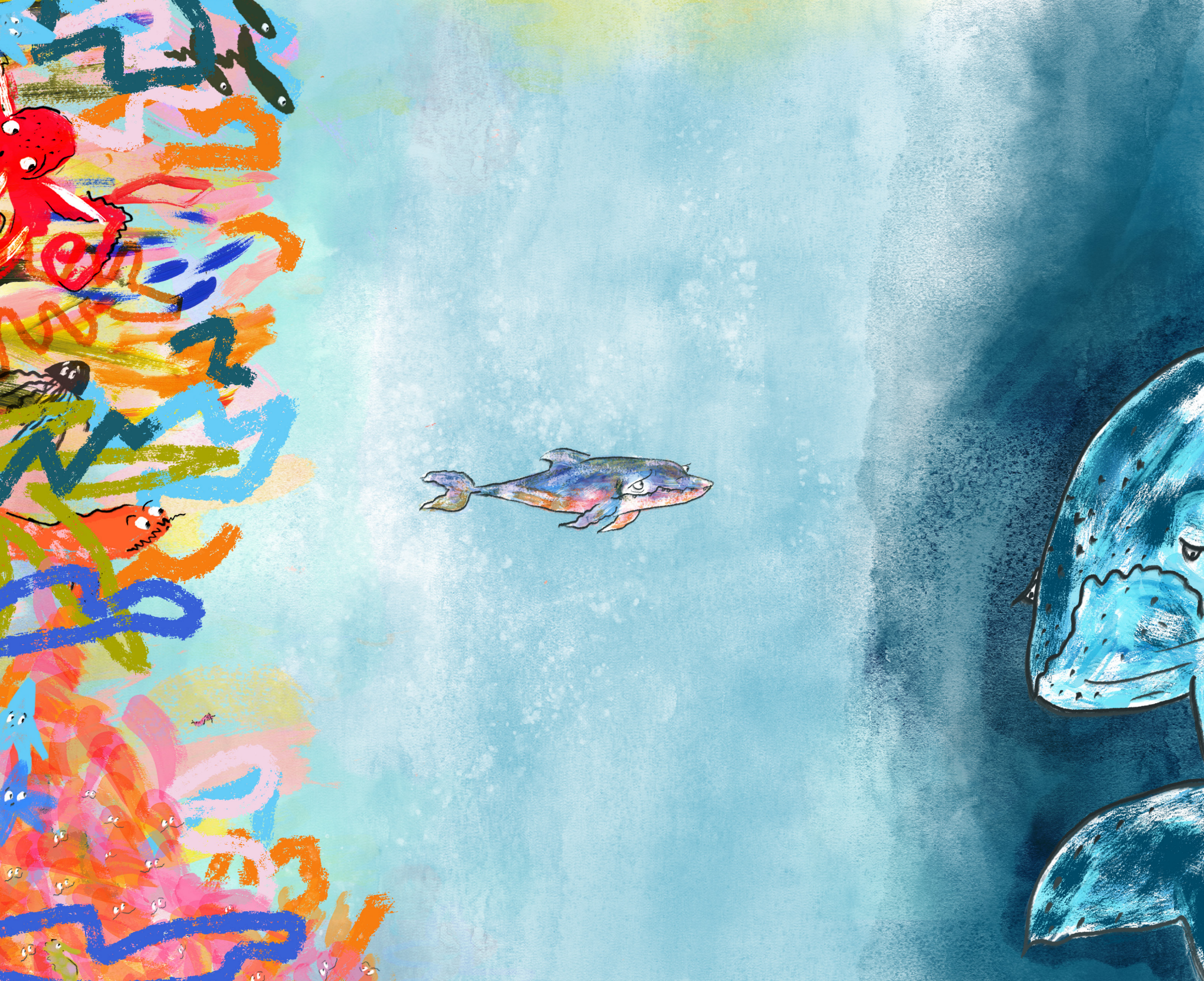


Whale I am worried about  
you and I don't feel strong  
and I don't know how to do  
the moving on, not now, not  
ever since your Mum





SHHHHHH!!





Your Mum died Whale and  
I'm scared

She died Whale and I know  
she did

But we don't know how to  
talk about it or what to do

But I love you Whale  
We all do

And we are here for you

A large blue whale is shown rolling on its back in the ocean. The whale is the central focus, with its body curved and its head tilted upwards. The water around it is a mix of light and dark blues, suggesting movement and depth. The whale's skin is dark blue with small black spots. Its eyes are visible, looking towards the viewer. The overall style is a colorful, textured illustration.

What's happening to Whale!?

He is rolling!

He is on his back!

He is opening his mouth!



# The workshop will include



- ▶ a mindfulness exercise
- ▶ An immersive set in 'life bay', to feel different from their everyday lives.

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# A major bereavement affects children and young people

- Intellectually – threat to the structure of the world
- Behaviourally – breaks habit patterns and creates new ones
- Spiritually – crisis of faith, meaning of life challenges
- Emotionally – feeling strong emotions, being out of control
- Practically – new arrangements for self and family
- Socially – change in role/status



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# The workshop will include



- ▶ a mindfulness exercise
- ▶ An immersive set in 'life bay', to feel different from their everyday lives.
- ▶ **Developing emotional literacy**

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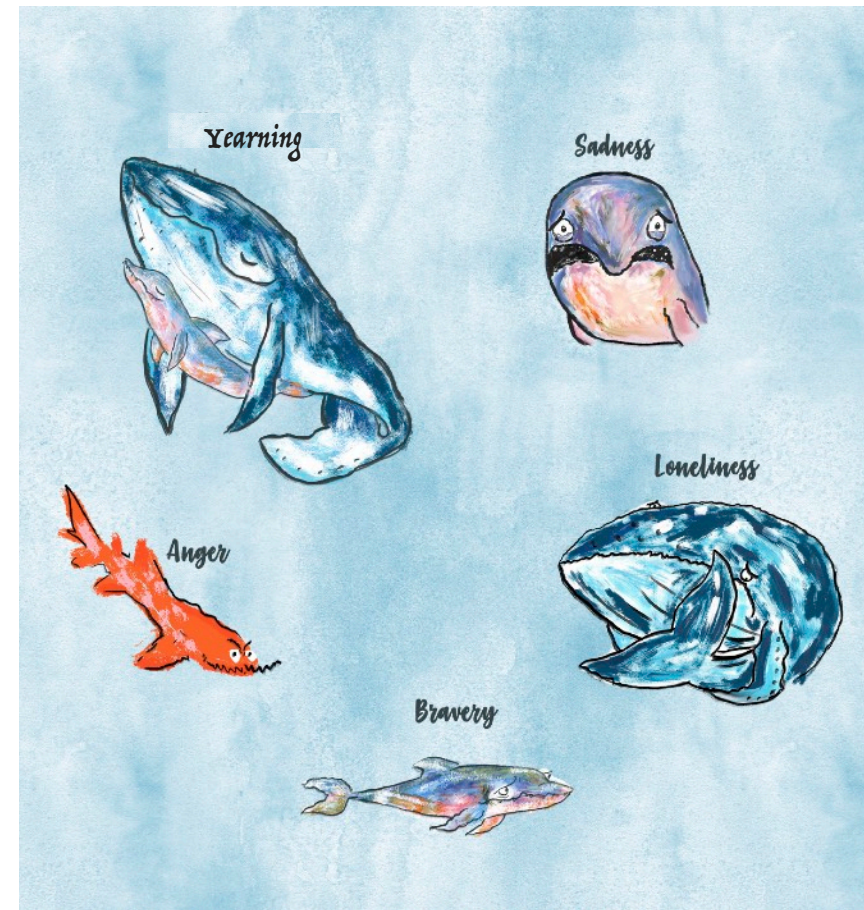


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# When someone dies

## Feelings

- Sadness
  - Anger
  - Guilt
  - Yearning
  - Numbness
  - Shock
  - Jealousy
  - Loneliness
  - Helplessness
- Anxiety
  - Fear
  - Tiredness
  - Relief
  - Worthlessness



# When someone dies

## Thoughts

- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Preoccupation
- Sense of presence (Disassociation)
- Dreams



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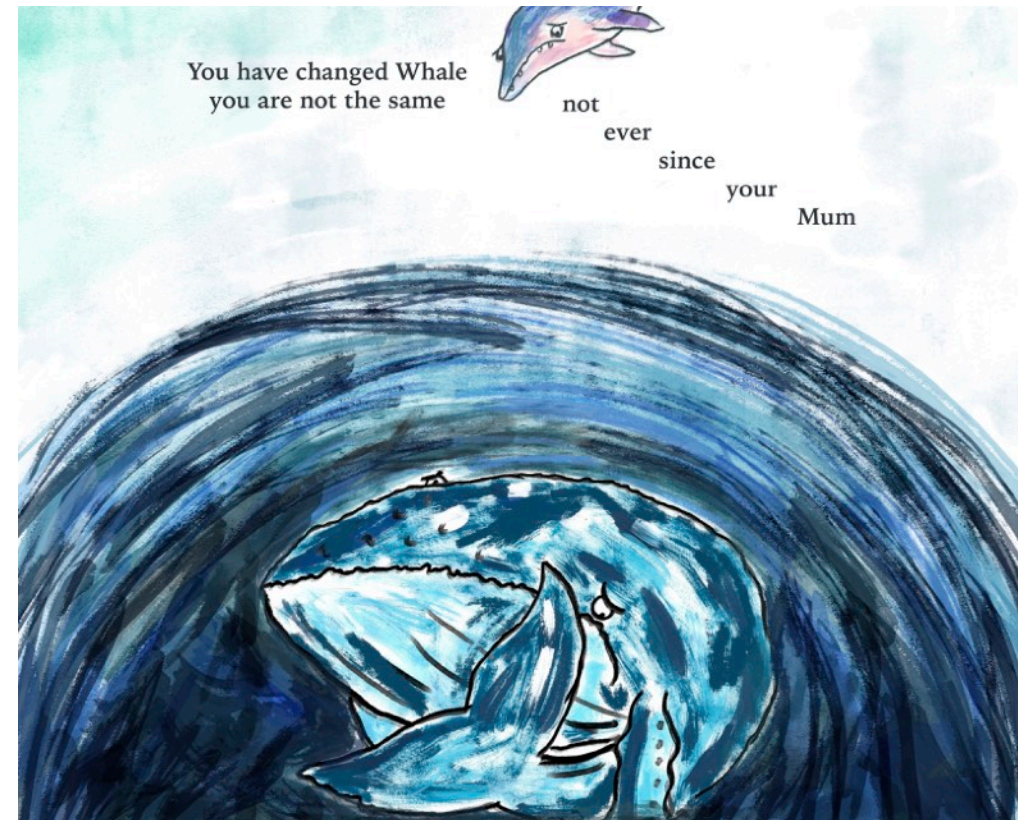


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# When someone dies

## Behaviours

- Sleep disturbance
- Loss of appetite
- Absent mindfulness
- Searching
- Sighing/crying
- Hyperactivity
- Treasuring objects
- Avoiding reminders



# The workshop will include



- ▶ a mindfulness exercise
- ▶ An immersive set in 'life bay', to feel different from their everyday lives.
- ▶ Developing emotional literacy
- ▶ **To stage the story as a play, and experience it physically and emotionally - to aid comprehension.**

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# The workshop will include



- ▶ a mindfulness exercise
- ▶ An immersive set in 'life bay', to feel different from their everyday lives.
- ▶ Developing emotional literacy
- ▶ To stage the story as a play, and experience it physically and emotionally - to aid comprehension.
- ▶ **A scientific explanation of what death is**

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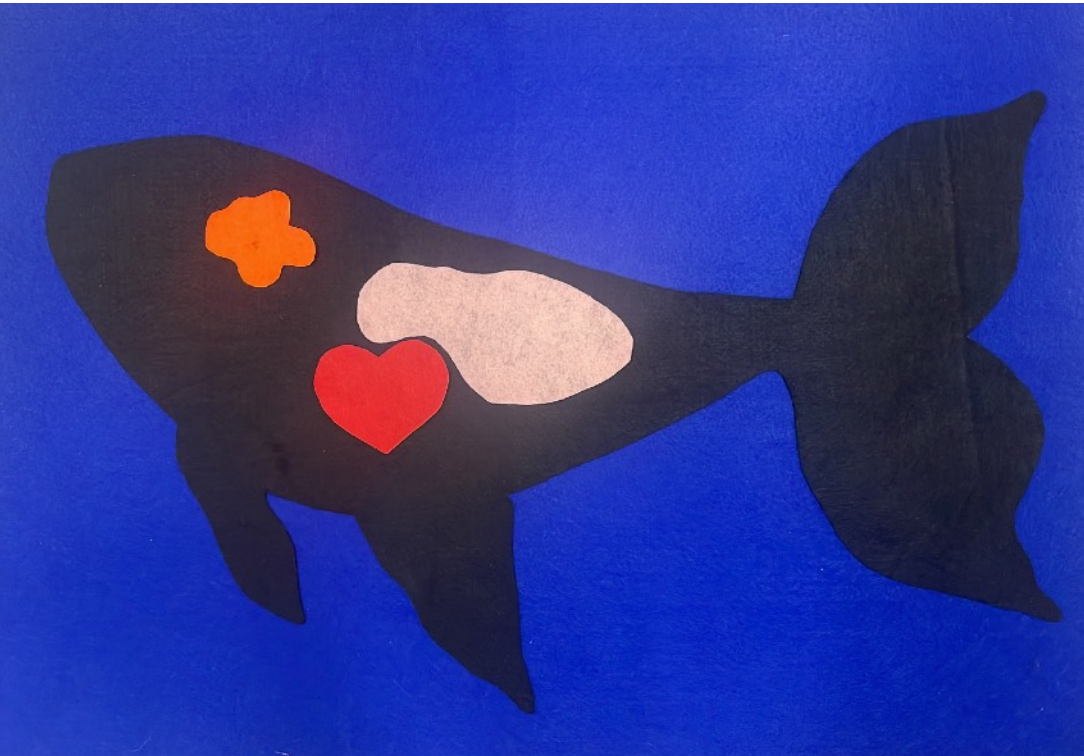
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# Explanation of death



Whale's Mum died which means her heart stopped beating, her lungs stopped breathing, her brain stopped working and her whole body is no longer here.

# In a better place...

With the person next to you think about as many euphemism's for death and dying that you can think of

For instance:

*Gone to sleep*

*Kicked the bucket*

- Why do we use them?
- Are common phrases helpful or harmful?



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# Children's understanding of death at different ages

## 2 – 5 years old

- Use the word dead
- Death is viewed as temporary
- They may ask when the dead person is coming back
- They may be matter of fact or unconcerned when told
- They tend to take explanations literally - avoid confusing phrases
- May react with disturbed sleep or altered appetite
- May show separation anxiety
- Regression ( bed wetting, wanting to be babied)



## 6 – 8 years old

- Begins to grasp the finality of death, that it is permanent
- Knowledge may be a mixture of fact and fantasy
- Children this age may believe they caused the death by bad behaviour
- They may believe the deceased will return if they are very good – magic thinking
- Could be interested in the biological aspect of it
- Denial is a very common reaction
- Focus on their own feeling, egocentric
- Little awareness on the impact of others for instance other family members



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## 9 – 11 years old

- Will understand the permanence and the irreversibility of death
- May feel isolated and different to their peers
- They will have more understanding of the context of loss
- May realise they will die one day
- Can understand what the loss means to others
- Pseudo adult behaviour
- Assume role of deceased parent
- Postpone grief to support other family members
- Their peers may be important for support and consolation
- May repeatedly go over of the incident and death
- Could become anxious, insecure and fearful



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# Puddle Jumping

- It's very common for children to grieve in short bursts, rather than staying in grief continually.



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# Kubler – Ross 1969

## 5 stages of Grief

- Denial – Avoidance, confusion, shock, fear
  - Anger – Frustration, Irritation, Anxiety
  - Bargaining – Finding meaning
  - Depression – Overwhelmed, helplessness, hostility
  - Acceptance – Exploring options, new plan in place, moving on
- 
- They can exist side by side or replace each other



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# Klass and Silverman 1996

## Continuing bonds

- Bereaved remain psychologically and emotionally connected to deceased
- Connection develops and changes over time
- These connections provide solace, comfort and ease transitions from the past to the future



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Tonkins - 1996

# Growing around grief



Lois Tonkin (1996)

# The workshop will include



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- ▶ Developing emotional literacy
- ▶ To stage the story as a play, and experience it physically and emotionally - to aid comprehension.
- ▶ A scientific explanation of what death is
- ▶ **Discussions on helping someone who is experiencing bereavement**

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# A time to talk

- Consider if you are the right person
- Let them know they can talk about it
- Consider time of the day
- Schedule 1 to 1 time
- Keep checking in as time moves on (remember the egg!)



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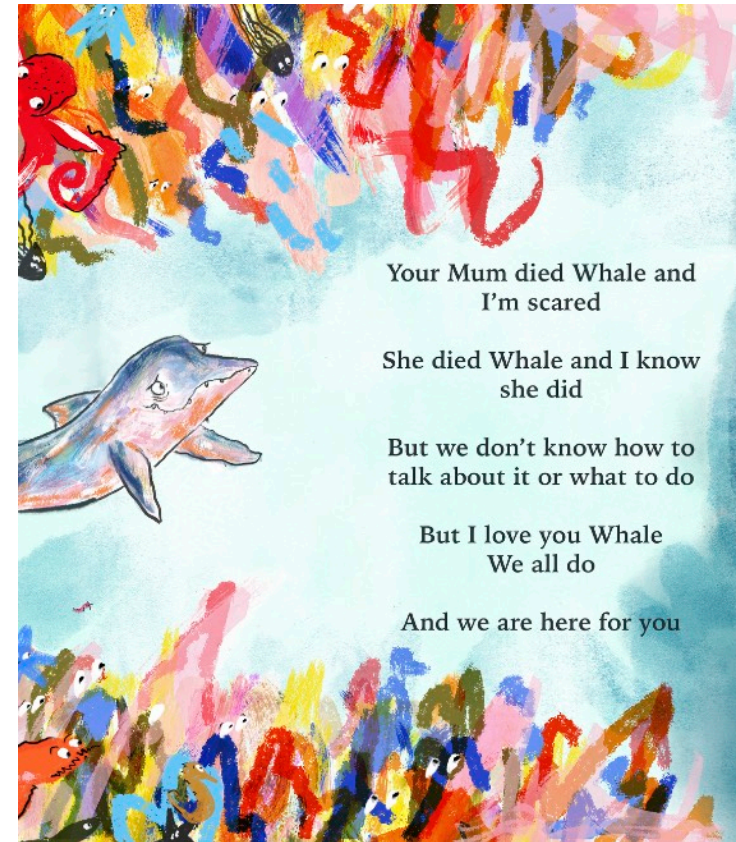
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# Having the conversation

- Actively listen.
- Try and understand from their perspective
- If they don't want to talk that's ok, allow silence.
- Bear their grief; it is OK if you cry, or if they cry, it is a normal reaction
- Give them permission to grieve and let them know however they're feeling is ok
- Don't try to fix
- Give them time and space: everybody grieves in different ways Just 'be' there
- Acknowledge loss and name it - don't be scared to say 'died'



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# How to help at different ages

## **2 – 5 years old**

- Continual reassurance - butterfly taps
- Patience and tolerance
- Keeping to the usual day to day routine to keep things predictable

## **6 – 8 years old**

- Need opportunities to express their feelings and ask questions
- Honest answers that can be built on over time
- Safety in the routine and the predictable

## **9 – 11 years old**

- May seek support from their peers
- Awareness of peers emotional needs too
- Keep usual boundaries of acceptable behaviour



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- ▶ To stage the story as a play, and experience it physically and emotionally - to aid comprehension.
- ▶ A scientific explanation of what death is
- ▶ Discussions on helping someone who is experiencing bereavement
- ▶ **How to look after yourself when you have big feelings**

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# Self-care

- Make your own 'Whale of self care':

*Places or spaces that makes you feel better*

*Activities that make you feel better*

*People you can talk*

- In a moment of pain (panic/ overwhelm/ grief/ sadness) try and bring your self to the present moment with a grounding exercise:

*Notice 5 colours you can see around you.*



# Further information and support



Resources, videos and training at

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

**Professionals Helpline: 08000288840**



Referrals and support in Hull & East Riding

<https://camhs.humber.nhs.uk/>

**Emergency Referrals Hull: 01482 301701**



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# Further information and support



Local child bereavement support

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

**Local Hull Branch Helpline: 01482 966000**

Local child bereavement support groups

<https://www.dovehouse.org.uk/children/>

**For referrals call: 01482 785745**

**Or 07890 630864**

**Or email: [children@dovehouse.org.uk](mailto:children@dovehouse.org.uk)**



**dovehouse**  
hospice

# Further information and support



## **NHS Mental Health Advice and Support Line: 0800 138 0990**

The Mental Health Advice and Support Line is available 24 hours a day for anyone in the Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire area who requires information, advice and support with their mental health.

You can also contact this line if you are worried about family or friends who may be struggling with their mental health.

**Hull 01482 240200**

**[info@heyhound.org.uk](mailto:info@heyhound.org.uk)**



Hull and East Yorkshire Mind  
Mental health services

**[www.heyhound.org.uk](http://www.heyhound.org.uk)**

**Hull 01482 240200**

**[info@heyhound.org.uk](mailto:info@heyhound.org.uk)**



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# Further information and support

The Samaritans logo consists of the word "SAMARITANS" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font, centered within a solid green rectangular background.

## Samaritans Helpline

If you need someone to talk to, they'll listen.  
They won't judge or tell you what to do

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Call: 116 123

email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

The NSPCC logo features the letters "NSPCC" in a large, bold, green, sans-serif font.

## NSPCC Helpline

If you're concerned about a child

Call: 0808 800 5000

The Herd logo features the words "THE HERD" in a colorful, stylized font where each letter is filled with a different pattern or color.The logo for Hull Schools Library Service, featuring the letters "sls" in a stylized font with a book icon above the "s", and the text "HULL SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICE" below.The logo for Hull Culture & Leisure, featuring a crown above the text "Hull Culture & Leisure" inside a green circular border.The logo for Arts Council England, featuring a stylized hand holding a paintbrush and the text "ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND" and "LOTTERY FUNDED".

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