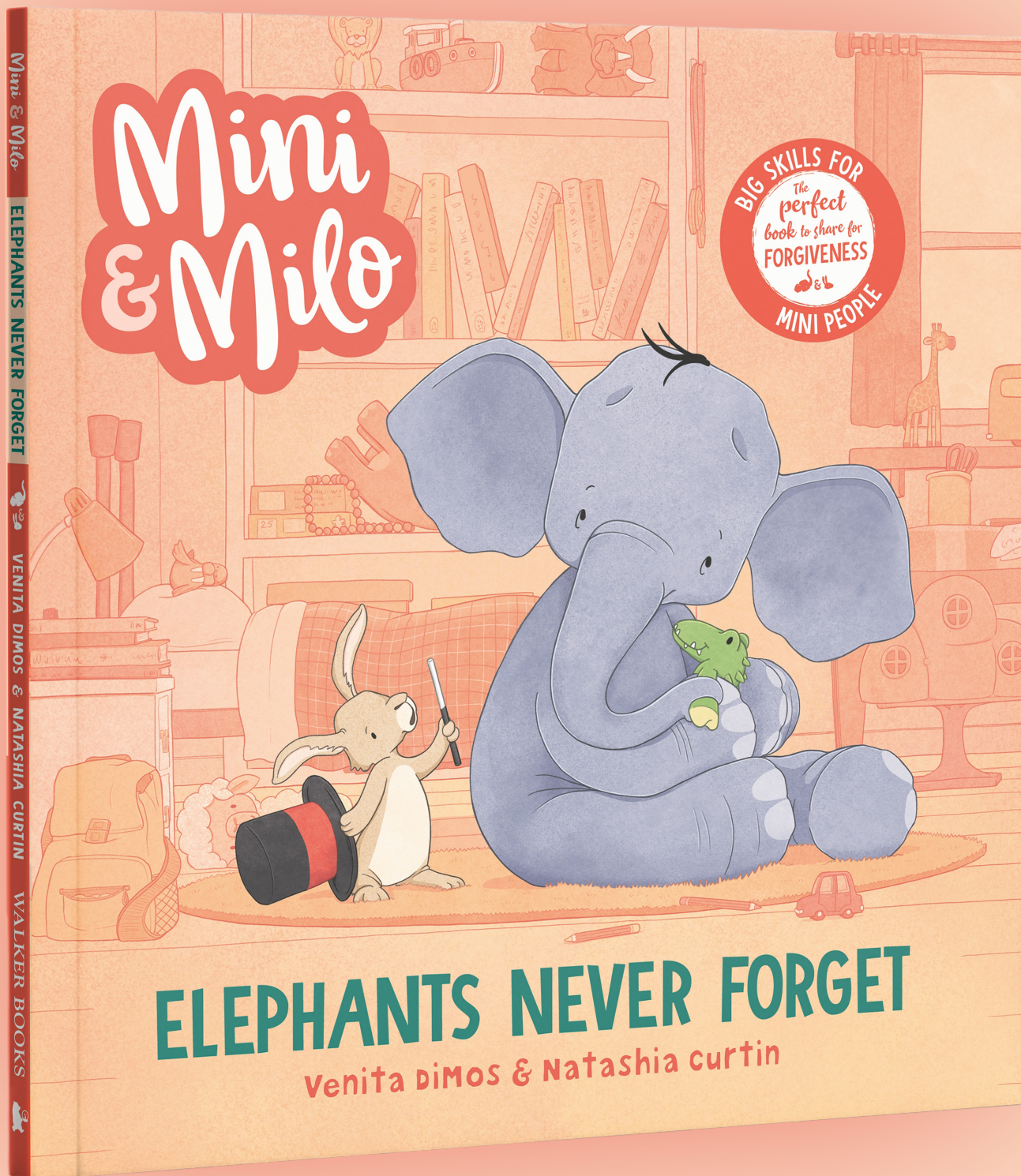




TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Venita Dimos

WALKER BOOKS

About the Series

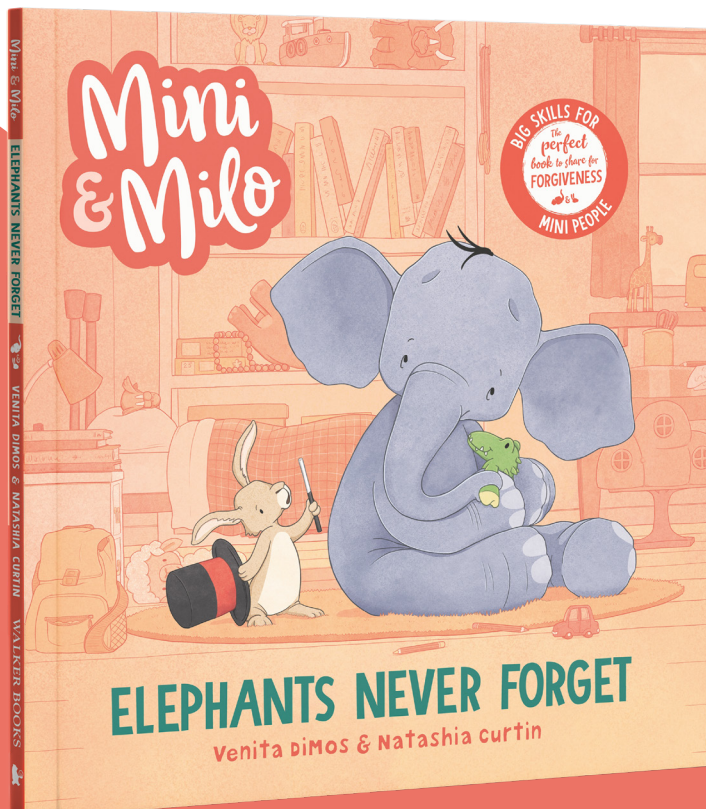
MINI AND MILO: THE LAST PLUM
CREATORS: VENITA DIMOS AND NATASHIA CURTIN
ISBN 9781760656171 HARDBACK
SEPTEMBER 2024

Story-led, with humour and heart, this series follows the adventures of Mini the elephant and Milo the rabbit as they navigate friendship and all its ups and downs. Each book explores aspects of social and emotional intelligence, such as mindset, positive self-talk, listening, communicating about emotions, competitiveness and collaboration, problem solving, and managing conflict, with further books to come.

The books explore key life skills in a fun, humorous and imaginative way; with Mini the elephant finding a resolution for each problem through trial and error. This helps build young readers' confidence in problem solving.

The books reward repeated readings because of their humour, dynamic read-aloud texts and satisfying plot resolutions. The detailed illustrations supplement the texts and create a fully dimensional world for Mini.

They are ideal for early childhood settings, as well as classroom use up to Grade 3.



The perfect book
to talk about emotions and
moods, empathy and interpersonal
conflict, 'letting things go' and repairing
relationships.

Mini has the best memory in the whole animal kingdom. She remembers the good stuff, the bad stuff and everything in between. And because Mini remembers everything, she also remembers mistakes. Usually other people's mistakes. So when her best friend Milo accidentally loses Mr Cuddles, Mini has to learn how to forgive ... and forget.

THEMES INCLUDE:

- Self-Management/Self-Regulation • Friendship and Interpersonal Skills
- Forgiveness • Conflict Resolution • Letting go of anger • Communication Skills

These notes are designed for using the book in grades 1-3 classrooms. They provide the following:

- Act as a guide for reading the book with a class;
- Offer detailed suggestions and scripts for exercises and activities to develop an understanding of effective communication about emotions and how to communicate calmly, with kindness. Worksheets and reflective questions are also provided (at the end of the document);
- Highlight other themes for discussion; and
- Link the book to curriculum focus areas such as reading comprehension, vocabulary and visual literacy.

About the Author:

Venita Dimos is an experienced Lawyer, Mediator and Neuroleadership coach. For over 20 years she has helped thousands of people solve complex problems and navigate difficult times in their lives. As a mother of three daughters, she is passionate about empowering children with the skills and resilience to navigate the inevitable curveballs that life throws at them. Venita's books explore key life skills in a fun, humorous and imaginative way. Her *Mini & Milo* series has been driven by the importance of teaching children emotional and social intelligence early on, so they arrive into adulthood armed with skills that support their future success and happiness.

Venita is an outright optimist, loves heartfelt conversations and has a penchant for all things chocolate.

Visit her online at www.mediationcompany.com.au, Linkedin and Instagram @venitadimos

About the Illustrator:

Natashia (pronounced NA-TAR-SHA) **curtin** is developing a reputation for the charm and emotional clarity of her illustrations. She is the creator of *Just Like You* (Walker Books), based on her experiences growing up in Ramingining, Northern Territory in the 1970s-80s, and the illustrator of the *Mini and Milo* series among other works.

You can follow her on Instagram, Facebook or at natashiacurtin.com

Notes from Venita:

Forgiveness has been a deeply personal journey in my life. Like many others, I have experienced significant moments of deep hurt that haven't been easy to let go of. It took a lot of soul-searching to realise that letting go of anger, hurt, and disappointment isn't about benefiting others - it's about making life lighter for myself.

Children experience social struggles, rejection, and disappointment daily - on the playground and in their friendships. I wrote this book to give them a way to understand that letting go isn't just for others, it's for their own wellbeing. It helps them feel lighter, move forward, and build stronger friendships. At the same time, it's important to recognize that forgiveness has limits—not all behaviours should be excused, and setting boundaries is just as important as letting go.

From my heart to yours, this book is my gift to children everywhere, reminding them that mistakes, forgiveness, and second chances are part of growing, learning, and loving. And to the beautiful teachers using this program, may you also find lightness, peace, and the courage to let go and move forward.

Reviews for the series:

"An important message for all of us."

Reading Time review of *The Teeny-Tiny Voice*

"A gentle story told with warmth and empathy and delightful illustrations bursting with colour and energy will ensure children love spending time with this pair and learn plenty of things along the way. Problem solving, working together and how to be a supportive friend are at the heart of Mini and Milo's story."

A Word About Books review of *The Big Flappy Ears*

"These are the feelings that we can't always put into words ... I think this is why this series is good for readers of all ages, to help us understand how we feel, how others feel, and how everyone navigates the world differently and understands the world differently."

Ashleigh Meikle (The Book Muse) review of *The Big Flappy Ears*

"Appealing animal characters paired with stories about important life skills makes the Mini & Milo series pitch perfect. They're a great prompt for discussion, but can also be read for pure enjoyment."

Kids Book Review of *Elephants Can't Jump*

"A series written for our youngest readers to not only help them manage their emotions but help them navigate their way through relationships as they venture into the world of friendships beyond family and have to learn about competitiveness, managing inner voices, learning to listen, and communicating effectively."

The Bottom Shelf review of *Elephants Can't Jump*

Teacher Notes

BEFORE READING – THE BOOK COVER

If this is the first *Mini and Milo* book you have read with your class, begin by pointing out the series name and book title.

The main characters in this book are called *Mini and Milo*. What does Mini mean? Based only on the cover, which character do you think would be called Mini? Mini is actually the elephant character. Are elephants small? Discuss this use of a joke/humour.

Alternatively, if you have read other *Mini and Milo* books with the class before, begin by reminding them about the characters on the front cover. Do they remember what happened to Mini in a previous book? Mini has a problem to solve in each book in the series – can they predict what the problem is in this book? Do they think Mini will be successful in solving it?

WHILE READING – MINI'S EMOTIONAL ARC

“But Mini was proud of her excellent memory. It made her feel special and smart.” Can students identify some positive things about *having a good memory*? And some negative things about *not forgetting*?

“Bring him BACK!” The language and images on this page depict a moment of very heightened emotion, immediately after something has gone wrong. What elements in the illustration tell us that Mini is feeling very strongly (the colours; the rays radiating from her; the **body language** of raised trunk, frown and stamping foot)?

Can students name some of the emotions Mini might be feeling (anger, shock, confusion ...)? What about the emotions Milo would be feeling?

Mini lies awake all night thinking about ‘the BIG mistake’. Sometimes when we think about problems at night they can feel even bigger – is this something students can identify with? Why do they think this is? (Because we are on our own, we don’t have other things to distract us, the things we would normally do to make ourselves feel better or solve problems are not available ...) Mini decides that she **SHOULD** forget Milo’s mistake. Why should she do this?

“Mini learned that sometimes you can let things go.” What does this mean? Does it mean Mini doesn’t remember what happened? (No, but it means that she no longer has to feel the emotions as strongly and she would prefer to focus on her friendship with Milo).

BIG FEELINGS (IDENTIFYING FEELINGS)

Understanding and identifying emotions is the first step in developing emotional intelligence. The exercises in this part of the program will help children understand that it’s normal to feel many different emotions throughout the day. Instead of thinking of feelings as “good” or “bad,” children will learn that some emotions feel **heavy** (like sadness, anger, or worry) and some feel **light** (like joy, excitement, or relief). Both are important - heavy feelings help us know when something is wrong and we need support, while light feelings remind us of what makes us happy and safe.

Understanding this helps children accept their emotions and express them in healthy ways.

Children are also invited to consider the emotions of others, which is key to developing empathy/understanding and strong interpersonal skills.

Mini & Milo's Mood Tracker

The attached **Worksheet**, “Mini & Milo’s Mood Tracker” lists several key moments from the story and asks students to consider how Mini and Milo each felt during that moment.

Before students complete the exercise, introduce the idea that two people might feel differently in the same situation. For example, if Mini won a competition and Milo didn’t, Mini might feel proud and excited while Milo might feel disappointed. Mini might feel scared riding on a roller coaster because it’s up so high, while Milo might be happy because he loves the feeling of the air rushing past his ears.

Students could write or draw their answers on the worksheet.

Alternatively, the exercise could be delivered as a classroom discussion, in which the teacher reads out each key moment in the book and the students use the **Mini & Milo ‘Feelings Wheel’** (available as part of the *Elephants Can’t Jump* Teachers Notes, here: https://www.walkerbooks.com.au/wp-content/uploads/resource/MINIMILOECJ_TeacherNotes-pages.pdf) to identify the emotions.

Light as a Balloon or Heavy as a Big Rock?

The attached **Worksheet** “Light as a Balloon or Heavy as a Big Rock?” teaches children that all feelings are normal.

Some emotions lift us up and feel *light* as a *balloon* while others weight us down and feel heavy as a *big rock*. By identifying and recognising emotions, students gain skills to recognise, manage and accept their feelings.

Reflection Questions after completing the ‘Balloon or Rock’ worksheet

1. Think of a time when you felt a heavy feeling. How did it feel in your body?
2. Think of a time when you felt a light feeling. How did it feel in your body?
3. Can a big heavy rock feeling ever turn into light balloon one? How?
4. How can we help a friend who is feeling heavy like a big rock?
5. What’s one thing that makes you feel light and happy like a balloon?

HURT FEELINGS (MANAGING HURT OR ‘HEAVY FEELINGS’/PRACTISING SELF-REGULATION)

This part of the program helps children learn healthy ways to manage big emotions. In *Elephants Never Forget*, Mini felt **heavy** feelings like anger, frustration, and sadness when Milo lost Mr Cuddles. We all experience strong emotions, and they can sometimes make us say or do things we don’t mean.

Learning calming strategies strengthens children’s self-awareness, problem-solving, and emotional control, helping children respond to challenges and conflict in a healthy, constructive way.

Mini's ‘Feeling Lighter’ Cards

Mini’s Feeling Lighter Cards offer a range of coping strategies to help lighten big feelings. Instead of thinking of emotions as “good” or “bad”, working with the cards reinforces that all feelings are normal and that we have tools to manage them.

Print a set of the attached **PRINTABLE** “Mini’s ‘Feeling Lighter’ Cards” for each student. Discuss the strategies listed on the cards and how they help manage emotions. Encourage students to share which strategy is their favourite and how they’ve used them in real life. Feel free to join in by sharing your own strategies for feeling better! Sharing your strategies helps normalise big emotions and creates an open, supportive space where students feel comfortable exploring what works for them.

Have students colour in the cards before cutting them out. Invite them to draw other strategies they like to use on the two blank cards

As an **optional additional activity**, students could play a **Mini Memory Game** using the cards. To do this you would divide students into pairs and ensure each pair has two sets of cards between them (i.e., there is a duplicate of each):

- Shuffle the cards and lay them face down. Students take turns flipping over two cards at a time.
- If the cards match, the player keeps the pair. If not, they turn them back over.
- The game continues until all the pairs are found.

FEELING BETTER (FORGIVENESS, APOLOGIES. REPAIRING AND REBUILDING FRIENDSHIPS)

This section of the program helps students develop strategies for ‘fixing’ relationships and/or deciding what to do next when a mistake happens.

It helps them understand the power of forgiveness, by experiencing self-forgiveness for their own mistakes. No-one is perfect and mistakes are part of every relationship, but holding onto guilt can make us feel stuck.

This step empowers children to recognise that mistakes don’t define them and that they have the power to forgive themselves and move forward. By practicing self-forgiveness, students develop empathy and begin to understand that everyone makes mistakes. This, in turn, helps them extend the same kindness and understanding to others when conflicts arise.

It helps them practice how to show they are sorry, through both words and actions. And finally, it helps them understand that as powerful as forgiveness is, it also has limits. Sometimes forgiveness takes time. And sometimes, problems cannot be easily fixed and forgiven and may require setting a boundary or getting help from a trusted adult.

My Let-it-Go Balloon

This activity allows students to acknowledge their mistakes without judgement. It helps shift their focus to self-compassion by writing a supportive message to themselves.

Through this process, they experience self-forgiveness in a meaningful way. At the end of the activity, they will practice ‘letting go’ - just like Mini did - by imagining their balloon floating away, symbolising forgiveness and a fresh start.

The attached “Let-it-Go Balloon” **Worksheet** can be used in one or more of the following ways. Please consider your student’s privacy and what is appropriate for your particular class group:

1. Ask students to think of a mistake they’ve made and write or draw it inside the balloon. They then choose a kind message to themselves from the list (or write their own) and place the message inside, outside or around the balloon.

Then they colour in the balloon, and as they colour it in, encourage them to imagine it floating away – letting go of the mistake and starting fresh.

2. In this option, the worksheets become part of a group display. Have students close their eyes and think of a mistake they've made but NOT write it down. They then choose a kind message to themselves and write just the kind message in the balloon, and decorate it. Each balloon is cut out and the teacher can tie a string to each one and "float" the balloons by hanging them up as a class display, reminding the students that mistakes don't have to weigh them down and of the power of letting go.
3. In this option, students focus on forgiving others rather than themselves. Think of a time when someone else made a mistake which upset them. Choose a kind message for the other person, as a way to let go and give a second chance. This reminds us that not only do we deserve a fresh start, so do others.

My Sorry Tree

This activity helps students understand how to offer a meaningful apology, using both words and actions.

It encourages them to think about how they can repair friendships and show they care, reinforcing that apologies are about making things better, not just saying the right words.

Begin by discussing the elements of a true apology, encouraging children to think about the difference between an **apology** and an **excuse**. A real apology takes responsibility, while an excuse avoids it. Guide students through the key steps of a real 'sorry'!

SPEAK: "I'm sorry for..." and name the mistake

FIX: Say what they will do differently next time (e.g., "Next time I will ...").

SHOW: Do something kind to show you're sorry.

ASK: "How can I make it better?" to help make things right.

Then, encourage students to think about ways to show they are sorry through actions - just like Milo did for Mini, through kind actions like making a daisy chain.

Students can use the below "My Sorry Tree" **Worksheet** to choose some actions they could use to show someone they are sorry (or write/draw their own).

Reflection Questions after completing the 'My Sorry Tree' worksheet

1. How do you think Mini felt when Milo tried to apologise?
2. Why is saying sorry important?
3. How does it feel when someone says they are sorry but doesn't try to fix the problem?
4. What can you do if someone isn't ready to forgive you yet? What did Milo do?
5. When we have made a mistake, how can we make sure we don't repeat the same mistake?

Class Discussion - Feeling Better Can Take Time

Even when we have strategies to help lighten heavy feelings and we understand how to demonstrate that we are sorry, sometimes we can't make things better right away.

You might choose to discuss the role of time in helping us to forgive and move on.

Script

Forgiveness doesn't always happen right away, and that's okay. Imagine Mini and Milo have a big argument. At first, they feel mad, but later, they start to miss each other. Time helps big, hurt feelings feel smaller and lighter.

Have you ever been upset about something, but after some time, it didn't feel as bad? Sometimes, we need time to calm down and think. It's like when we scrape our knee – at first it hurts, but then every day it feels better until it's gone. Sometimes, forgiveness takes time and friendships need a little rest before they feel better again.

Class Discussion/Story Scenarios - Little Mistake or Big Deal?

This teacher-led classroom discussion will help students understand that while forgiveness is important, it also has limits. Some mistakes, like small accidents, are easy to forgive, while repeated or serious behaviour requires setting boundaries or seeking help.

The five story scenarios below are designed for you to read aloud as discussion prompts, to encourage students to think critically about when to forgive, when to set boundaries, and when to ask for help.

1. Milo borrows Mini's favourite book but forgets to return it for a long time. When Mini asks, Milo apologizes and gives it back.

Should Mini forgive and let it go, or is this a bigger problem? What would you do in this situation?

2. Mini accidentally sits on Milo's puzzle and ruins it. She feels bad and offers to help fix it.

Should Milo forgive her? Why or why not? What would you do in this situation?

3. A friend makes a joke about Mini's big ears, and it hurts her feelings. He says, "I was just kidding," but doesn't say sorry.

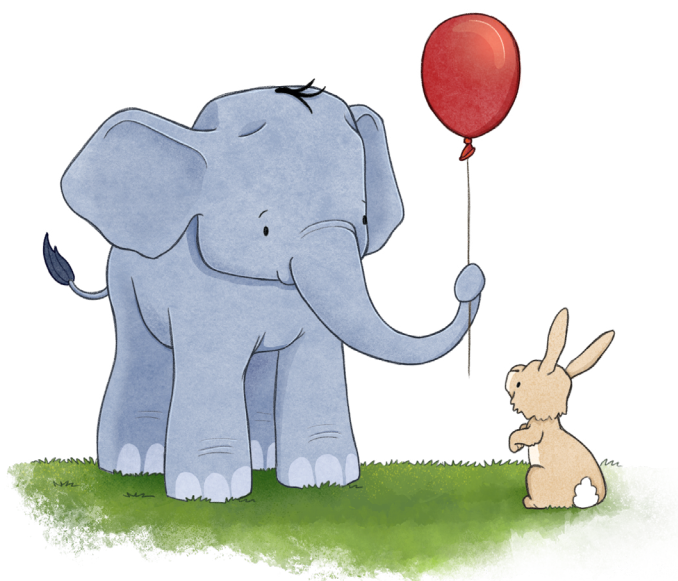
Is this something Mini should forgive and forget? What else could she do? Is there a way of making things better?

4. Mini hasn't played with Milo for two weeks. She keeps promising to play with him but then forgets.

Is this a small mistake, or is it becoming a bigger problem? What would you do in this situation? Is there a way of making things better?

5. A friend keeps teasing Milo about his magic tricks, even after he asks them to stop. It happens again and again.

Should Milo keep forgiving, or does he need to do something else? What would you do in this situation?



1. Mini and Milo's Mood Tracker

Here are some important moments (plot points) in the *Elephants Never Forget* story. What do you think Mini and Milo are feeling when these things happen?

Choose from a list of feelings or write your own:
Angry, Confused, Worried, Happy, Excited, Sad, Loved, Scared

1. Milo plans his magic trick

Mini's Feelings:	Milo's Feelings:

2. Milo's magic trick works and Mr Cuddles disappears!

Mini's Feelings:	Milo's Feelings:

3. Milo can't bring Mr Cuddles back

Mini's Feelings:	Milo's Feelings:
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4. Milo tries to show he's sorry

Mini's Feelings:	Milo's Feelings:
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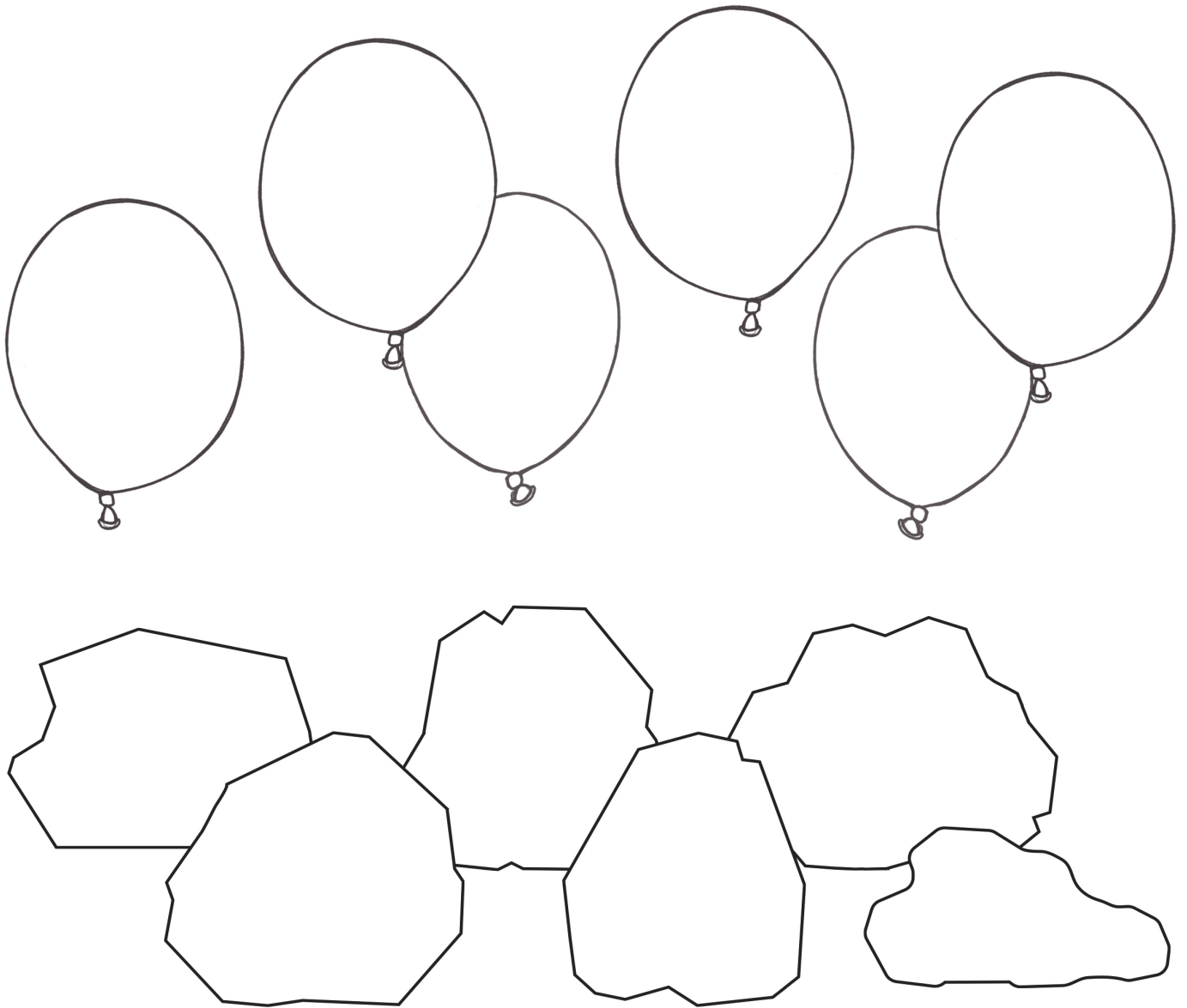
5. Mini lets the big mistake go and forgives Milo

Mini's Feelings:	Milo's Feelings:
------------------	------------------

2. Light as a Balloon or Heavy as a Big Rock?

Some feelings feel light as a balloon and make us feel happy, while others feel as heavy as a huge rock and weigh us down. Do you think the below feelings are heavy or light? Write each feeling inside either a balloon (light) or rock (heavy).

Angry, Confused, Worried, Happy, Excited, Sad, Loved, Scared



3. Mini's Feeling Lighter Cards

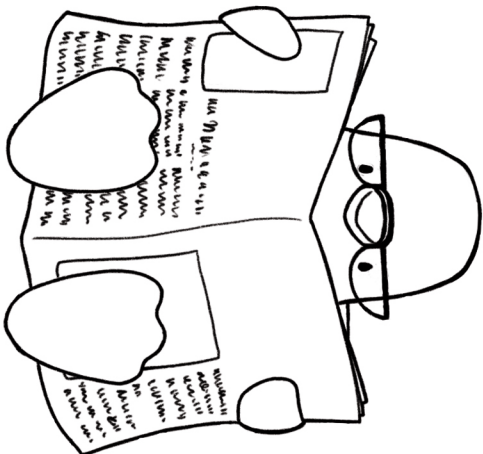
Big Feelings don't last forever and you have the power to manage them! Here are some of Mini's ideas for feeling lighter.

Draw your own suggestions on the blank cards.

What makes you feel better?

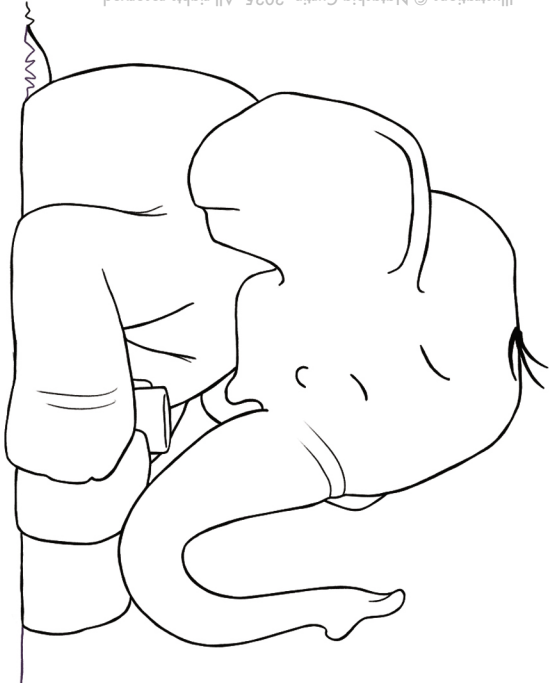


READ



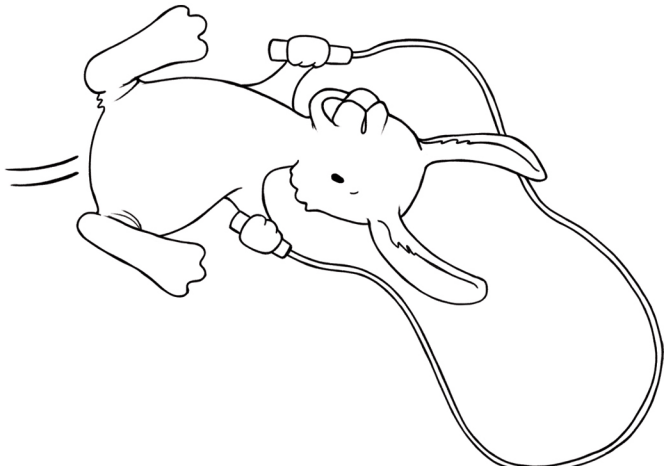
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BREATHE



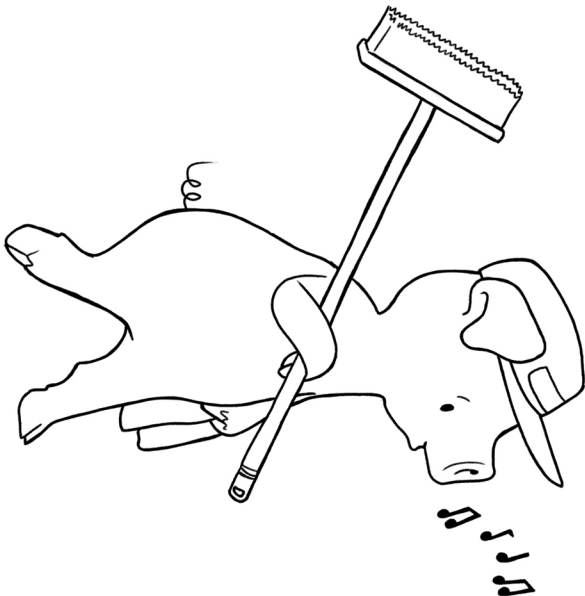
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SKIP



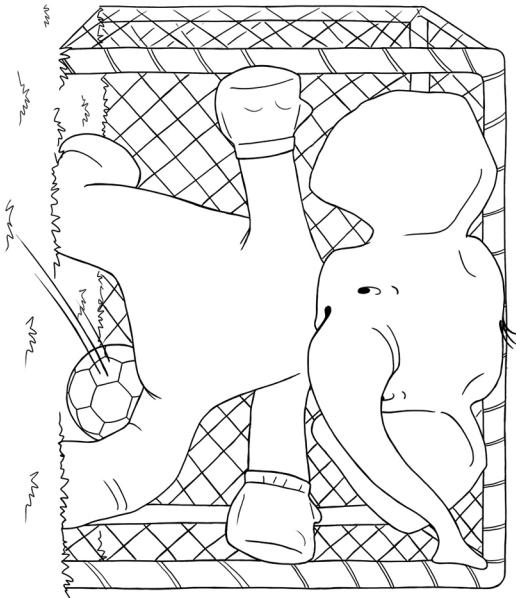
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MUSIC



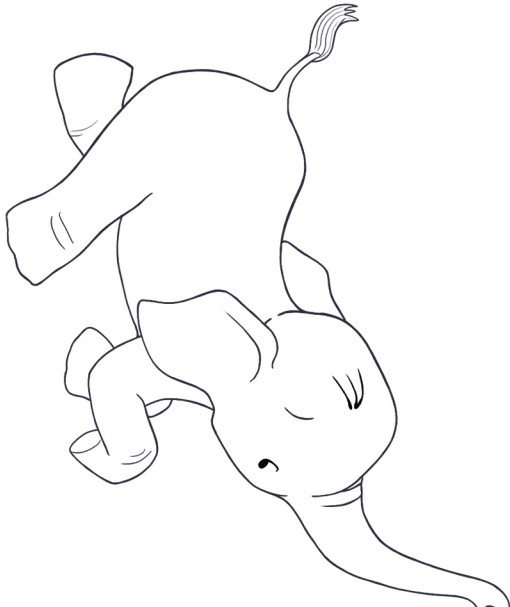
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SPORT



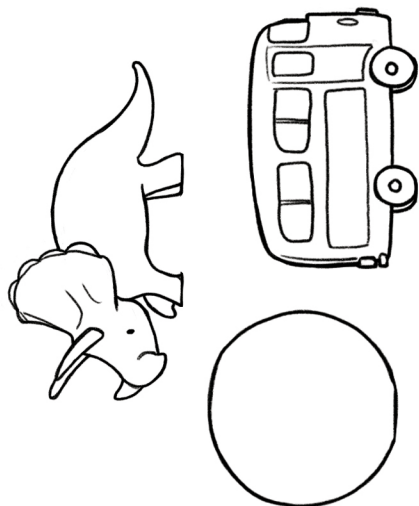
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WALK



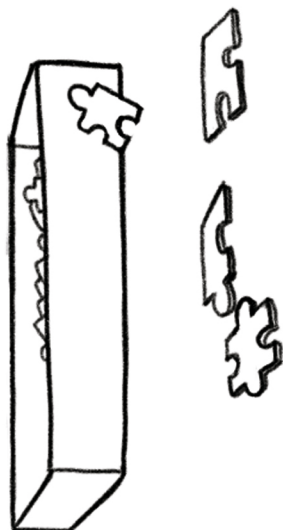
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FAVOURITE TOYS



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PUZZLE



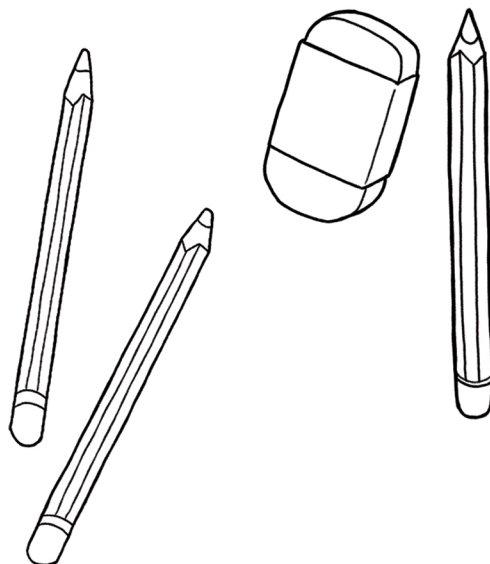
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HUG



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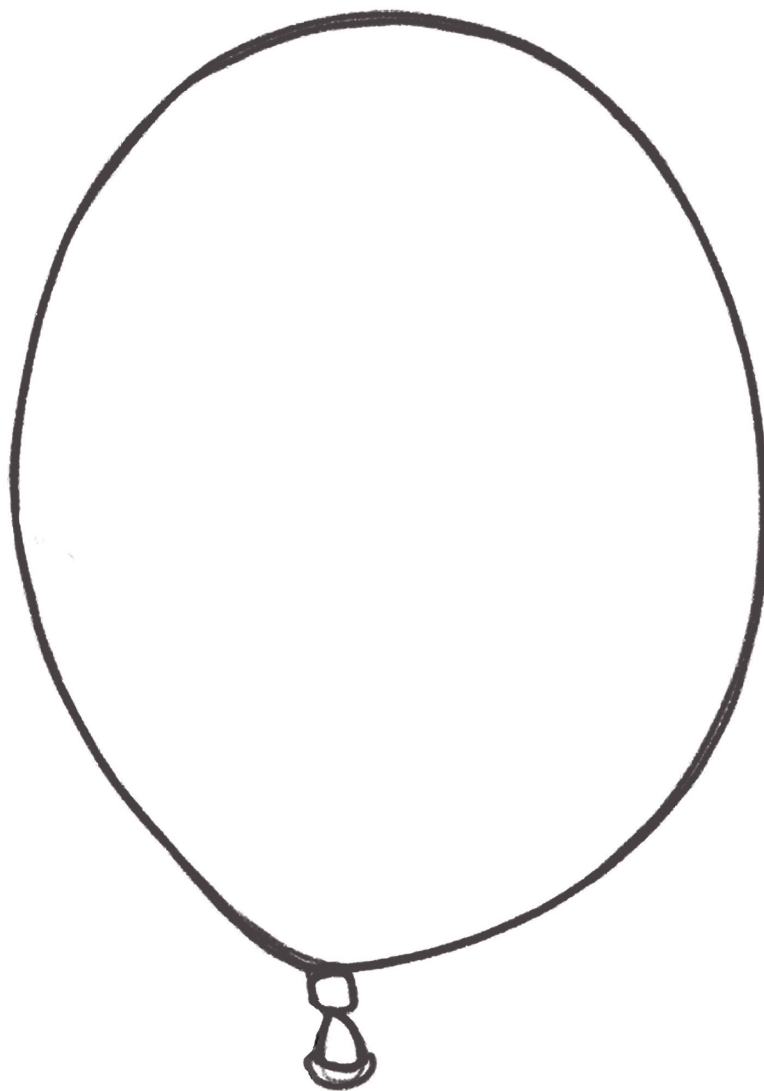
DRAW



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4. My Let It Go Balloon

Pick a kind message from below and write it in the balloon.



I will learn from my mistake.

I forgive myself.

I can try better next time.

I am kind to myself.

Letting go helps me feel happier.

I can fix this and move forward.

Every mistake is a chance to learn.

I did my best.

I let go and give myself a fresh start.

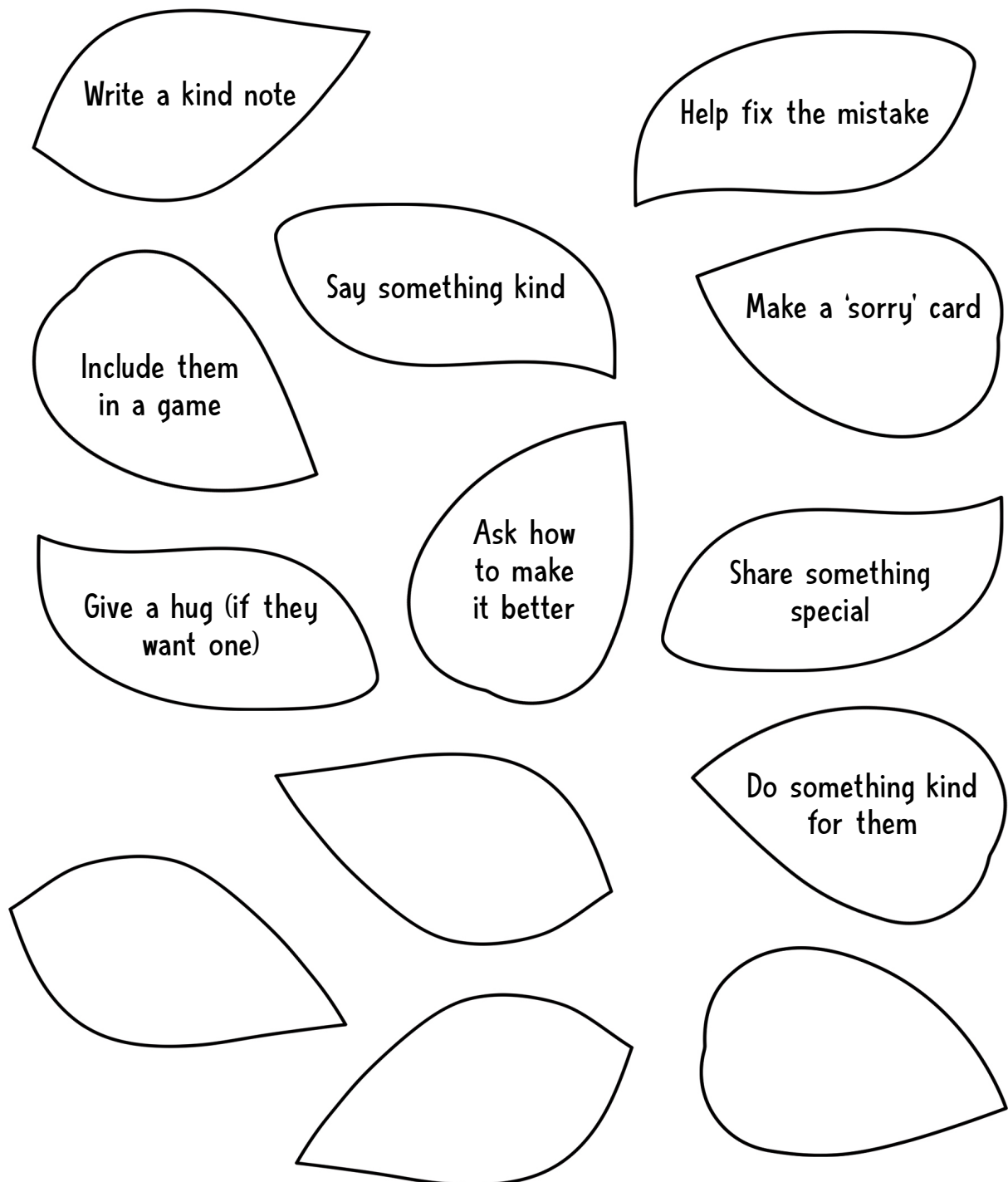
I made one mistake, but I do kind things for
my friends too.

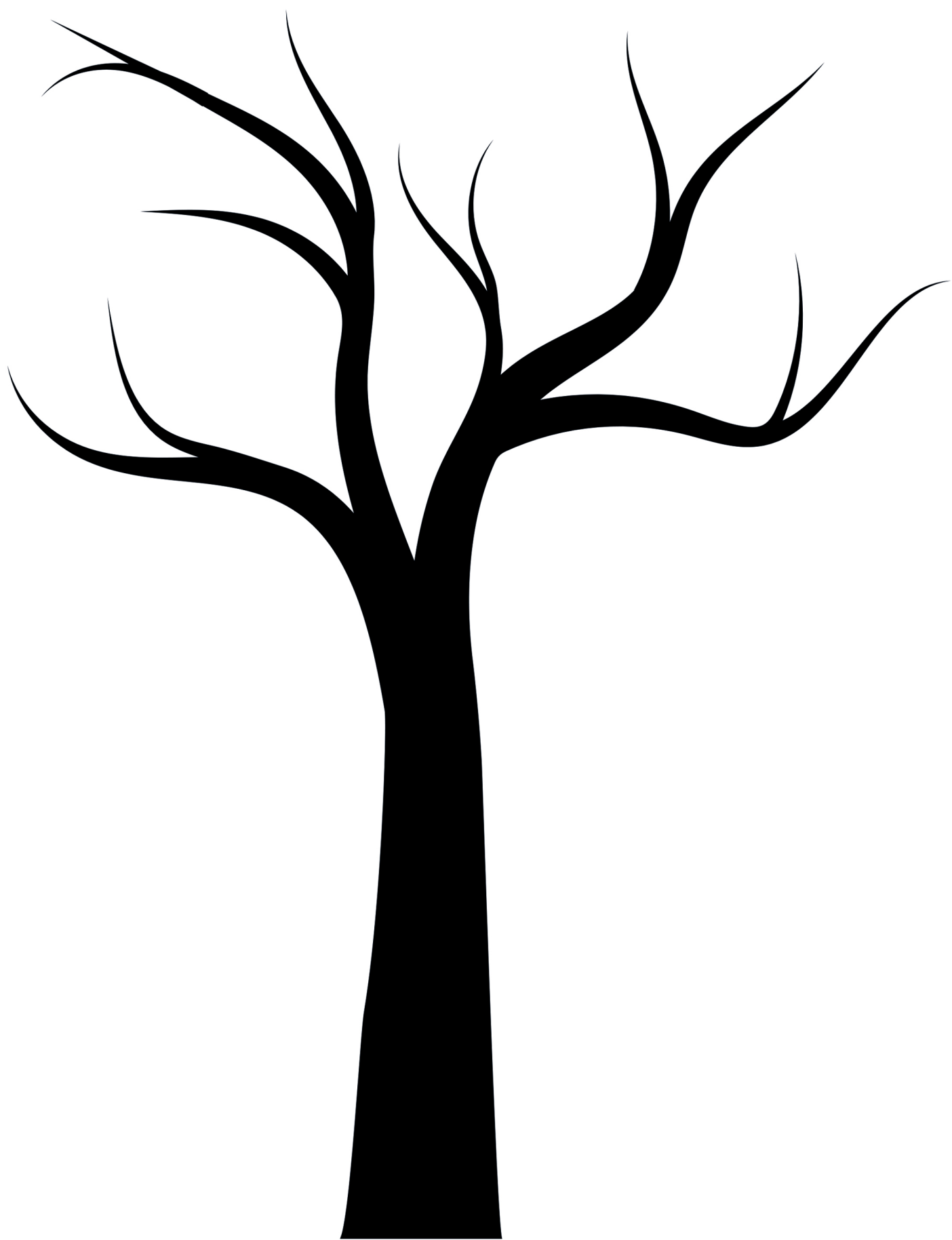
Everyone makes mistakes – what matters is
what I do next.

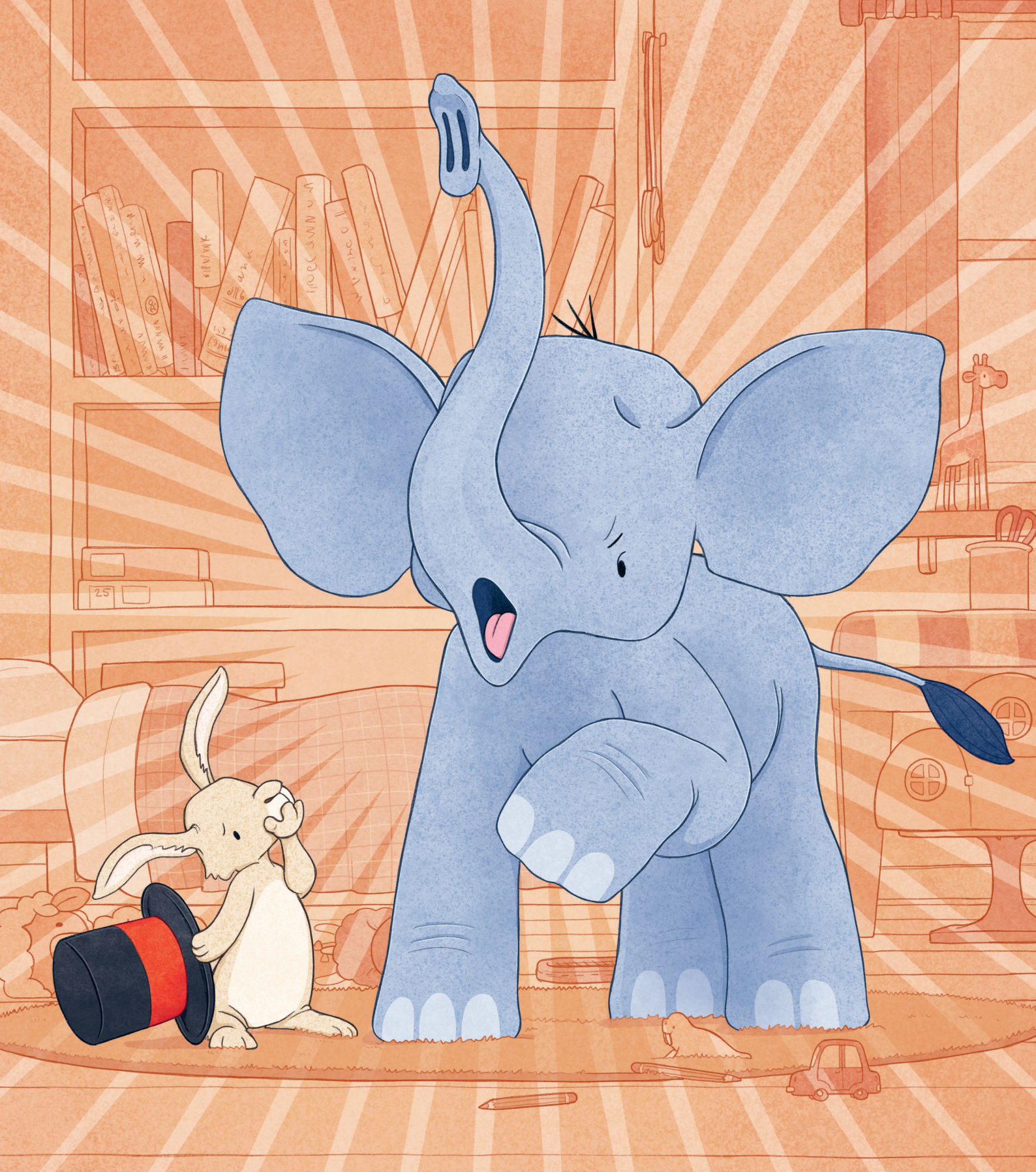
5. My Sorry Tree - A real sorry helps friendships grow

Imagine you have done something to upset a friend and want to show them you are sorry. Choose some of the actions you would like to do and colour in their leaves and cut them out. Or, write your own ideas in the blank leaves.

Then, glue the leaves on your Sorry Tree.







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