

Introduction to Psychosocial Support

Community Information
Session Toolkit





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Contents

Community Information Session Toolkit

Using this toolkit	4
Preparing to run an information session	5

Basic Psychosocial Support

Topic 1: Understanding psychosocial support	7
Topic 2: The key elements of psychosocial support	11
Topic 3: Providing good care	14
Topic 4: Conducting psychosocial support	18
Topic 5: Caring for ourselves while supporting others	21

More topics to explore

Topic 6: Referring people to professional support	24
Topic 7: Recovering from disaster	26
Topic 8: Act on stress	29
Topic 9: Supporting children to recover	32
Topic 10: Look, Listen, Link	35

Supporting materials

Referral pathways	37
Information brochures and flyers	39
Image cards	43

Using this toolkit

This training toolkit and supporting materials are for use by Community Trainers when preparing community members to provide psychosocial support after a traumatic or disaster event.

This community information session toolkit contains three sections:

Basic Psychosocial Support

This section is for Community Trainers to use when they are facilitating information sessions on basic psychosocial support in their communities. The topics will help participants understand the psychosocial impacts of crises and how to provide good support.

More topics to explore

This section is for Community Trainers to use when they are facilitating information sessions in their communities and want to include a little bit more detail.

Supporting materials

These tools include materials to help Community Trainers to facilitate conversation and information for participants of the information sessions to take home. This includes image cards, information on referrals and psychoeducation material. The information brochures and flyers describe psychosocial impacts of disasters, common reactions to stress and provide information on strategies for coping and recovery.

Introduction to Psychosocial Support workshops can be delivered via one of two methods – face-to-face classroom style, or via online webinar. Note that where possible, delivery via face-to-face is preferable.

It is recommended that facilitators read this Toolkit in full and familiarize themselves with the supporting materials before designing an information session.

In this manual:



Discussion question/s icon

This icon highlights any key discussion questions.



Activity icon

This icon indicates that an activity follows.



Time icon

This icon refers to how long the related activity should run for and suggested start and finish times.



Resources/materials required icon

This icon alerts you to resources and/or materials you will require to facilitate the related activity.



Activity/discussion instructions icon

Look for this icon for instructions for the related activity.

Suggested scripts are in ***bold italics***. You don't have to use the script word for word, it's just a guide. Put it in your own words.

Preparing to run an information session

Before running an Introduction to Psychosocial Support session it is important plan appropriately. The following outlines important points to consider and key things to prepare to ensure the session runs smoothly.

General

- What information do participants need? Topics 1 to 5 only, or would some of the additional topics also be useful?
- How many participants will be in the session?
- Method of delivery (e.g. online or face to face)
- If doing Topic 6, research local referral pathways and complete the local referral pathway template

High tech or low tech?

This toolkit has been developed to be flexible and can be adapted for use in a range of contexts. As a Community Trainer using this toolkit, depending on the resources available to you, you could create a digital presentation or simply use the images cards in the Supporting Materials section as conversation prompts. The flexible nature of this material also means you could run sessions for big groups or only a few people.

Face to face delivery

- Do you want to prepare a digital presentation?
- Does the venue have a Smart TV or Projector and adequate space to project slides?
- If you are not using a presentation, print the image cards needed*
- Print relevant supporting materials*:
 - Referral pathways
 - Information brochures and flyers
- Will you need to organise a meal or snacks?
- How does the space need to be set up?
- Find out where the bathrooms, kitchen and emergency exits are.

Online delivery

- Do you want to prepare a digital presentation?
- Have you set up an online link to provide participants?
- Do you have links to supporting materials available to share with participants?*
- Referral pathways
- Information brochures and flyers

*see Supporting Materials.

Basic Psychosocial Support

Each of the Basic Psychosocial Support topics will take between 10–15mins. The purpose of these topics is to build participant understanding and awareness of psychosocial support, elements of providing good care and tips on managing wellbeing.

Sample schedule

Follow the flow and structure of the first five topics in this toolkit:

- Topic 1:** Understanding psychosocial support
- Topic 2:** Providing good care
- Topic 3:** The key elements of psychosocial support
- Topic 4:** Conducting psychosocial support
- Topic 5:** Caring for ourselves when supporting others

Topic 1: Understanding psychosocial support



Aim: To develop participant understanding of common or natural feelings during and after experiencing stressful event and what psychosocial support is.

Key messages

- It is natural to feel upset or stressed after experiencing a disaster, traumatic event or other crisis
- People who are stressed or emotional benefit from psychosocial support



Time: 10 minutes



Materials: Image cards 1 to 4

State

There are two concepts that are important when talking about how we support people after crises. These are 'psychosocial' and 'resilience'.

In English, the term 'psychosocial' combines the two concepts of 'psychological' and 'social'. Psychological refers to: our emotions, how we think, our memory and our ability to make decisions; and social refers to the relationships we have with our family, friends and community. These concepts are interrelated and it is important to consider the impacts of disasters and other traumatic events on both the psychological and social aspects of people's lives.

People can experience a range of psychosocial impacts after a traumatic or shocking event like a disaster. Disasters cause loss and grief, so emotional responses like being sad or angry is normal. Most difficult emotions will reduce over time, most people recover with support from family, friends and their community.

'Resilience' is the ability to adapt and help yourself and your loved ones and community to recover after a traumatic event or disaster. Most people have strengths and capabilities they can draw on to help them recover.



▶ **Discussion instructions – What is psychosocial support?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *considering the terms psychosocial and resilience what do you think psychosocial support is?*
2. If needed, to prompt participants, refer to Image 1, and ask participants: *what is occurring in this image?*

Responses may include:

- A supportive caring response to a person who is suffering.
- It involves:
 - Being a caring listener and letting the person tell their story when they are ready
 - Reminding the person of their own strengths and the strengths they have from their family and community
 - Linking the person to services if they need professional help.



IMAGE 1

▶ **Discussion instructions –**
How do you know if someone needs psychosocial support?

1. Ask participants as a group:
so, how do you know if someone needs psychosocial support?
2. If needed, to prompt participants, refer to images 2, 3 and 4, and ask participants: *what do you observe about the people in these images?*

Responses may include:

- People who are sad, angry or upset
- People who are scared or in shock
- People in distress
- People who are stressed.



IMAGE 2



IMAGE 3



IMAGE 4

State

These are examples of emotional distress. This is different from stress. But both occur in people during and after upsetting, stressful or traumatic events.

▶ Discussion instructions – What is distress?

1. Ask participants as a group: what do you think distress might be? How do you know people are distressed?

Draw responses from participants such as:

- There are many different types of emotional distress.
- Distress can be expressed differently across cultures.
- 'Loud' emotions might look like: crying, shouting, anger, frustration
- 'Quiet' emotions might look like:
 - withdrawal from others – not wanting to be with people
 - shock – wide eyed, blank face, not knowing what to say or finding it hard to talk
 - jumpiness – jumping at loud noises, shaking
 - anxiety – being very worried or scared.

▶ Discussion instructions – What is stress?

1. Ask participants as a group: what is stress? How do you know you are stressed?

Draw responses from participants such as:

- Stress is our body's natural way of responding to danger
- Stress hormones like adrenalin help us to run faster and be strong so we can survive a threat or danger
- Stress can impact negatively on our ability to recover if we cannot calm down after a traumatic event
- Stress affects our brains – we don't remember things as well and find it hard to make decisions
- Stress affects our health – it can stop us sleeping or make us feel very tired all the time, make us more likely to get sick, can make us gain or lose weight



Topic 2: The key elements of psychosocial support

 **Aim:** To develop understanding of how to provide a safe and caring environment for others.

Key messages

There are 5 key elements to psychosocial support:

- Helping people feel safe
- Helping people feel calm
- Encouraging people to use their friends and family for support
- Supporting people to feel empowered and able to help themselves to recover and remind them of their strengths
- Showing you care and helping them have hope for the future



Time: 10 minutes



Materials: Image cards 5 to 8

State

When people are distressed it can help for them to feel safe and calm. As supporters there are ways we can help people calm and steps we can take to help them feel safe.



Discussion instructions – How can you help people feel safe and calm?

1. Ask participants as a group: how might you help people feel safe and calm?
2. If needed, to prompt participants, refer to Image 5, and ask participants: *what is the volunteer doing in this image?*

Responses may include:

- Take people away from anything that is dangerous or threatening their safety.
- If possible, suggest they turn off the TV if they are watching news footage of the disaster
- Listen to people who wish to share their stories and emotions, without forcing them to talk
- Promote getting back to daily routines these can help people feel connected to their normal lives again
- Help people feel emotionally safe by reassuring them that their feelings are normal.



IMAGE 5

State

We know that people cope much better when they are with their family, friends and communities. People do better together after crises. This is also something we can assist with as helpers.

Discussion instructions – How can you promote connectedness/connections?

Ask participants as a group: how might you help people connect with loved ones? What could you do to help people connect with others?

If needed, to prompt participants, refer to Image 6, and ask participants: *what is happening in this image?*

Draw responses from participants such as:

- Help people contact friends and loved ones
- Encourage people to use their family and community, sharing what you have gone through and the tasks of recovery with your family and community helps people recover faster
- Provide information and link people to services that are available

State

After crises, if people and communities feel able to help themselves this helps them to do better in the long term.

Discussion instructions – How can you help people feel able to help themselves and their community?

1. Ask participants as a group: what could you do to help people feel able to help themselves and their community?
2. If needed, to prompt participants, refer to Image 7 and 8, and ask participants: what are the people doing in this image?

Draw responses from participants such as:

- Empower people to believe in themselves by reminding them of how they have coped with difficulties in the past – ask them:
 - “What did you do then to cope?”
 - “What supports do you have in your family and community?”
- Give information about the situation and what services can help them so that they can make decisions about their recovery
- Promote looking after their emotional recovery as well as their physical recovery (like rebuilding their home) by “de-stressing” and taking time to rest and do activities that bring them happiness.

State

People and communities who are hopeful and have belief in the future do better in the long term after crisis. This is not about pretending that things are not hard or sad. Rather, research tells us that feeling hopeful is protective. Hope can help us manage tough times. We can help people feel hopeful by being there to support them through hardship and by reassuring them.

▶ Discussion instructions – How can you help people have hope?

Ask participants as a group: *How can you help people have hope?*

Draw responses from participants such as:

- Show you care and are here to help
- Reassure them that their feelings are normal
- Reassure them that while it is difficult now most people recover after a disaster

IMAGE 6



IMAGE 7



IMAGE 8

Topic 3: Providing good care

 **Aim:** To develop participant and understanding of supportive communication skills and actions we can take to provide good care to others.

Key messages

- Know the boundaries of your ability to provide support and your role in the community – provide basic emotional support not counselling
- Show respect when supporting others, show empathy and think about how you would like to be supported if you were in their position

 **Time:** 10 minutes

 **Materials:** Image cards 1 and 9 to 12. Good communications tips flyer (page 36–37)

State

Psychosocial support is not treating or counselling people who are experiencing mental health problems. It is a simpler form of support.

 **Discussion instructions – What is the difference between basic psychosocial support and counselling?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *what are important skills needed for basic psychosocial support? How is this different to counselling?*

Responses may include:

- Basic psychosocial support is about showing that you care, listening to the person if they want to talk but not asking questions that encourage the person to say more than they are ready to
- Basic psychosocial care is all most people need to help them recover
- A small number of people will need more emotional support, such as counselling. A role of those providing basic psychosocial support is to link those people that need it to these professional services
- There are a range of social services available to communities that you can link people to



IMAGE 1



IMAGE 9

State

It is important to consider the words we use when supporting people who are distressed.

▶ Discussion instructions – Why do we need to be careful about the words we use?

1. Ask participants as a group: *why do we need to be careful about the words we use?*

Responses may include:

- We don't use negative words like 'victim' or 'crazy' to describe people affected by a disaster. Remember emotional reactions are normal after a traumatic event. People are not 'crazy' if they show their emotions
- Words can be hurtful. We need to be aware of how we talk about people and to we use words that acknowledge people's strengths and capabilities
- We must support people in way that empowers them to recover

▶ Discussion instructions – How can we show respect to people?

1. Ask participants as a group: *how can we show respect to people?*
2. If needed, to prompt participants, refer to Image 10, 11 and 12, and ask participants: *what is occurring in these images? Why might this be a problem?*

Responses may include:

- Wear neutral clothes – not anything fancy or too scruffy. Our appearance can create a barrier to providing support so we need to think about wearing clothes that are respectful to those we support
- Avoid wearing sunglasses when providing psychosocial support, people need to be able to see your eyes to know you are listening
- Follow other culturally respectful norms of the community – for example taking off your hat
- Keep what people tell you private between you and them, unless there is risk of harm to themselves or others



IMAGE 10



IMAGE 11

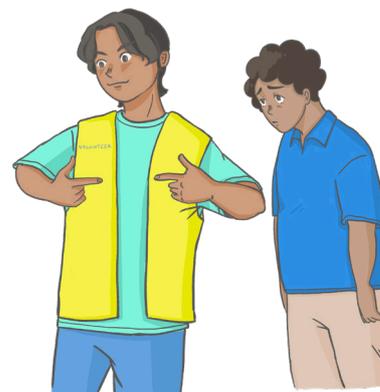


IMAGE 12

State

The way we communicate with people in distress is very important. People who have been through an emergency may be very upset, anxious or confused. Some people may blame themselves for things that happened during the emergency. When providing psychosocial support, being calm and showing understanding can help people in distress feel more safe and secure, understood, respected and cared for appropriately.



Discussion instructions – Do’s and Don’ts of good care

1. Ask participants as a group: *how can we provide good care to people? what is appropriate behaviour when we are providing help?*
2. Lead short discussion on examples of good care.
3. Ask participants as a group: *if these are examples of good behaviour, what may be examples of inappropriate behaviour?*
4. Hand out, or provide link to, the good communication tips handout discusses any points that were not raised by participants.

Draw responses from participants such as:

To provide good care DO:

- Be honest and trustworthy
- Respect people’s right to make their own decisions
- Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices
- Make it clear to people that even if they refuse help now, they can still access help in the future
- Respect privacy and keep the person’s story confidential, if this is appropriate
- Behave appropriately by considering the person’s culture, age and gender
- Try to find a quiet place to talk, and minimize outside distractions
- Stay near the person but keep an appropriate distance depending on their age, gender and culture
- Let them know you are listening; for example, nod your head or say “hmmmm....”
- Be patient and calm
- Provide factual information, if you have it. Be honest about what you know and don’t know. “I don’t know, but I will try to find out about that for you.”
- Give information in a way the person can understand – keep it simple
- Acknowledge how they are feeling and any losses or important events they tell you about, such as loss of their home or death of a loved one
- “I’m so sorry. I can imagine this is very sad for you.”
- Acknowledge the person’s strengths and how they have helped themselves.
- Allow for silence

To provide good care DON'T:

- Don't exploit your relationship as a helper
- Don't ask the person for any money or favour for helping them
- Don't make false promises or give false information
- Don't exaggerate your skills
- Don't force help on people, and don't be intrusive or pushy
- Don't pressure people to tell you their story
- Don't share the person's story with others
- Don't pressure someone to tell their story
- Don't interrupt or rush someone's story (for example, don't look at your watch or speak too rapidly)
- Don't touch the person if you're not sure it is appropriate to do so
- Don't judge what they have or haven't done, or how they are feeling. Don't say: "You shouldn't feel that way," or "You should feel lucky you survived."
- Don't make up things you don't know
- Don't use terms that are too technical
- Don't tell them someone else's story
- Don't talk about your own troubles
- Don't think and act as if you must solve all the person's problems for them
- Don't take away the person's strength and sense of being able to care for themselves
- Don't talk about people in negative terms (for example, don't call them "crazy" or "mad")

Topic 4: Conducting psychosocial support



Aim: To develop participant understanding of how to approach people, provide support, engage in supportive and respectful conversation.

Key messages

- The first step to providing psychosocial support is introducing yourself and helping the person feel safe and cared about
- Encourage people to talk and share their story, if they feel ready, but do not force them to talk if they don't want to or press them for details by asking too many questions
- Show you care by listening well



Time: 10 minutes



Materials: Image cards 5 and 13

State

We have talked about what psychosocial support is. We have also discussed the important actions of helping people to feel safe, calm, hopeful, connected to others and able to help themselves. Now we are going to talk about how we conduct psychosocial support, how we approach people, how we start a conversation and the importance of good, active listening.



Discussion instructions – How do you begin providing support?

1. Ask participants as a group: *how might you begin providing support to a person who is distressed?*
2. If needed, to prompt participants, refer to Image 13, and ask participants: *what is happening in this image?*

Draw responses from participants such as:

- With a friendly introduction, tell them your name and that you are here to help
- Handshake or culturally appropriate greeting
- Show you care and are here to help by being open and friendly



Discussion instructions – How do you start your conversation?

1. Ask participants as a group: *how do you start your conversation?*

Responses may include:

Ask how the person is feeling:

- "How are you today?"
- Ask if they would like to talk:
 - "I am here to listen if you would like to talk and share your story about what happened after the event?"
- Ask what their needs or concerns are:
 - "Do you have any needs or concerns you would like to share?"

▶ **Discussion instructions – How could you respond when people tell you their story?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *how could you respond when people tell you their story?*

Responses may include:

- Reassure them that their feelings are normal
- Reassure them that looking after themselves and their family during the disaster was the right thing to do
- Reassure them that there is hope for recovery and ask them how they have coped with difficulties in the past:
 - “What have you done in the past during difficult times to help you cope?”
- Remember you might not need to say anything, helping the person talk and feel heard is the most important part of psychosocial support

▶ **Discussion instructions – What do you say to people who have needs and concerns?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *what do you say to people who have needs and concerns?*

Responses may include:

- Empower people to believe in themselves by reminding them of how they have coped with difficulties in the past – ask them:
 - “What did you do then to cope?”
 - “What supports do you have in your family or community?”
- Link them to relevant services (see local community referral guide), if they will help meet their needs
- Give information about other services that can provide help



▶ **Discussion instructions – How can you listen well to people who are in distress?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *how can you listen well to people who are in distress?*
2. Reinforce examples provided by demonstrating appropriate body language and the use of encouraging words and sounds.

Responses may include:

- Listening well is active, needs to be conscious.
- Think about your body language. How you stand, where and how you position your body and eye contact are important in showing people they have your full attention
- Use encouraging words or small sounds, like uh-huh, or 'hmmm' show you are listening while the person talks
- Rephrase or summarise what the person has said to you in your own words

▶ **Discussion instructions – How do you end your conversation?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *how do you end your conversation?*
2. If needed, to prompt participants, refer to Image 5 and 13, and ask participants: *what are the volunteers doing in these images?*

Responses may include:

- Give any information you have that might support their recovery
- Say goodbye and wish them well, do not make any promises for support that you cannot keep.



IMAGE 5



IMAGE 13

Topic 5: Caring for ourselves while supporting others



Aim: To develop participant awareness of the importance of self-care when helping others.

Key messages

- Making these 5 Ways to Wellbeing part of your life will improve your happiness and health
- Little things count, just make sure you do them often
- During tough times, such as after a disaster, you need to look after your wellbeing with more care, make sure you continue to do things that bring you joy, help you relax and keep you physically active in order to “keep your batteries charged”.



Time: 10 minutes



Materials: 5 Ways to Wellbeing handout or link

State

Helping others is rewarding and can make us feel good. However, it can also often be stressful and make us sad. Looking after ourselves is an important part of providing good care to others.



Discussion instructions – What are some of the challenges when providing psychosocial support?

1. Ask participants as a group: *what might be some of the challenges you might face when providing psychosocial support?*

Responses may include:

- Difficult seeing people living in challenging situations, people’s problems may feel too big for us to know how we can help
- It can make you feel emotional listening to people’s stories
- You may have also experienced the disaster and be emotionally impacted yourself
- Because you cannot see what you have done or achieved when you provide emotional support (unlike building a shelter or giving non-food items) it can feel like listening is not “doing anything to help”, this can make you feel powerless
- You may feel like there is so much to do that you cannot take a break and get enough rest, and as a result you run the risk of wearing yourself out

State

Having tools and strategies to manage your own stress and wellbeing are important. It is most helpful when you make this part of your everyday routine and practice these strategies even when you are not undertaking a psychosocial support role. That way, when you really need them, you know what to do.

A good way to think about managing your wellbeing is my using the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. The 5 Ways to Wellbeing include:

1. *Take Notice*
2. *Be Active*
3. *Keep Learning*
4. *Connect*
5. *Give.*



Activity instructions – 5 Ways to Wellbeing

1. Hand out the 5 Ways to Wellbeing flyer
2. Ask participants to share examples of how they might practice each of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, starting with Take Notice.

Examples of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing in action:

1. Take Notice. Taking a moment to stop, think and notice the things around you helps you to relax and connect to your environment.
2. Be Active. Physical activity is good for our bodies and our mind. Anything that moves your body and gets your heart pumping counts!
3. Keep Learning. Being curious and picking up new skills keeps your brain going – try new things!
4. Connect. Sharing a laugh and spending time with our friends and family helps us feel part of our communities.
5. Give. Be generous with your time, help a neighbour or volunteer Being kind and doing things for others not only helps them but makes us feel good too.

State

Today we have discussed how we can provide good emotional support and care for people during and after distressing experiences. When you support people remember the difference between basic psychosocial support and counselling, do not try to do more than you can. It is not your role to fix the person's problems, but to support them to feel able to fix them for themselves. People may be frustrated with their situation or experiences, this is not about you, try not to take it personally.

Remember it's okay for you to also be emotionally affected and to seek support from your family, friends or other trusted person when you need it. Share your experiences, have a laugh and support your loved ones. Pace yourself. Relax and do enjoyable things to keep your batteries charged.

Thanks for being a part of our session today. I hope you have learned some new skills to help you support your family, friends and community.

More topics to explore

This section includes additional topics you may like to explore with your participants. These sessions build on the topics in the Basic Psychosocial Support session and will be useful if you will to enhance the skills of your participants beyond very basic psychosocial skills.

Each topic in this section will take between 10–15mins and can be added to the end of Topics 1 to 5 covered in a Basic Psychosocial Support session. The topics can be added to a Basic Psychosocial Support session in any order, you can add only one of the sessions or all five. It all depends on what you'd like your participants to learn about. It is recommended that you consult with your community in order to determine which of the additional topics will be useful to add to a Basic Psychosocial Support session.

Topic 6: Referring people to professional support

 **Aim:** To develop participant understanding of when people may need further support from specialist providers, the signs of family violence and how to encourage people to safely talk and seek support.

 **Time:** 10 minutes

 **Materials:** Image cards 14 to 17. Referral pathways handouts.

State

While most people will do well after disasters and other crisis events, some people will need more support. Psychosocial support are basic skills and activities that can help people feel well and connect with others. However, for some people more specialised support is needed to help them cope. As a supporter it is important to know the limits of your support and when you may need to refer people to some else who can provide them with what they need.

Discussion instructions – What do you see in these pictures?

1. Show participants Image cards 14, 15, 16 and 17
2. Ask participants as a group: *what do you see in these pictures?*

Responses may include:

- Community Volunteers observing a man who is distressed
- Community Volunteer observing signs of domestic violence
- A Community Volunteer making a referral over the phone to a wellbeing service

Discussion instructions – When should we refer a person for professional support?

1. Ask participants as a group: when should we refer a person for professional support?

Responses may include:

- If the person is very emotionally distressed and your support is not enough
- If the person begins to talk about serious emotional needs or serious bad thoughts, and you are concerned about their emotional state
- If you observe signs of violence or the person tells you about abuse or violence occurring in their home
- If the person tells you they have been raped or sexually assaulted, they need urgent care from the police or hospital

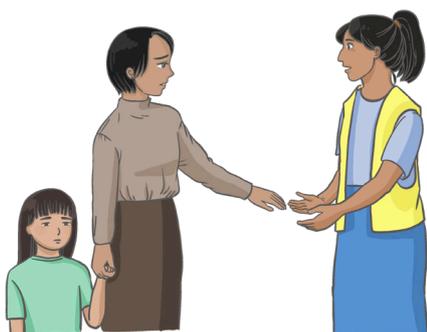


IMAGE 14



IMAGE 15



IMAGE 16

State

Unfortunately, some people experience violence in their homes and communities. Research tells us that anger and violence increase in communities after crisis events. As supporters it is important that we are aware of this and can support people who may share with us that they are experiencing violence.

▶ Question: What is family violence?

1. Ask participants as a group: *what is family violence?*

Responses may include:

- Family violence includes physical violence such as hitting, punching, kicking, slapping. This is typically perpetrated by a man against a woman, another man, or a child. It can also occur among siblings
- Family violence includes sexual abuse, including rape or sexual assault
- Family violence includes psychological abuse, emotional abuse and harassment These include being yelled at or called negative names, a person controlling the movements or activities of another person, behaviour that makes a person feel threatened, and gas lighting (making the victim doubt their own experiences)
- Family violence includes financial abuse, including controlling the finances of another person, their purchases, and how, when, and why they handle their money

▶ Discussion instructions – What should you do if someone discloses that they are experiencing family violence?

1. Ask participants as a group: *what should you do if someone discloses that they are experiencing family violence?*

Responses may include:

- You should listen carefully and attentively
- If you are speaking over the phone or virtually, confirm that they are safe and that it is a safe time to speak
- Believe them
- Thank them for sharing and reassure them that you will support them as best you can
- Ask them if they have an idea of what they would like to do next
- Connect them to the relevant Family Violence and/or Domestic Violence resources listed in your packet

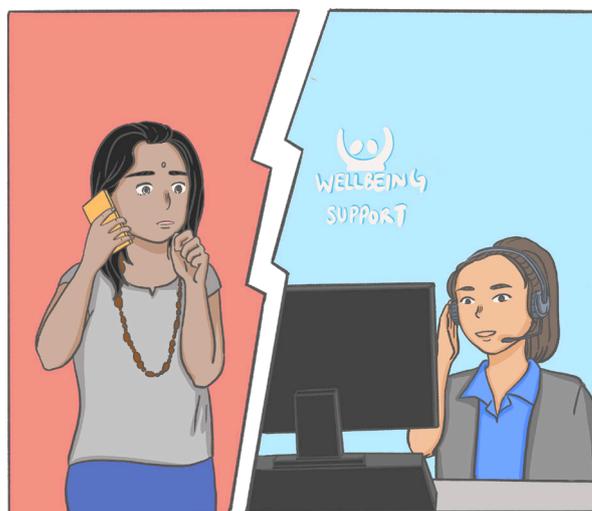


IMAGE 17

Topic 7: Recovering from disaster

 **Aim:** To develop participant awareness of the importance of self-care when helping others.

Key messages

- Recovery can be a long process, but most people end up stronger when they have recovered
- It is normal and okay to feel lots of different things during recovery such as sad, angry, frustrated, proud, lucky
- Use your friends and family to help you recover, talk to them and spend time together
- Get back to doing the things you enjoy



Time: 10 minutes



Materials: Image cards, 2, 3, 4, 19 to 21.

State

Disasters and other crises have complex and long term impacts on people and their communities. All communities are different however, from experience, we know that many communities will have similar experiences in general.

For example, it is normal to feel quite positive after a disaster or other crisis, people may feel like they will be able to clean up and rebuild quickly and that lots of help will be available. However, after some time, people might start to feel worse than they did right after the disaster. They get tired and frustrated. People who have come to help might leave and the community might be left not knowing what to do.

Coping with, and recovering from, a disaster can take a long time. Recovery can be like a “roller-coaster ride”. People can feel “up” with good emotions one day and then “down” with bad feelings the next. This can be confusing.

It can be helpful for people give themselves time to recover and to take care of their wellbeing. Most people recover well after some time and are stronger when they do, they are more prepared for if a disaster or difficult time happens again.

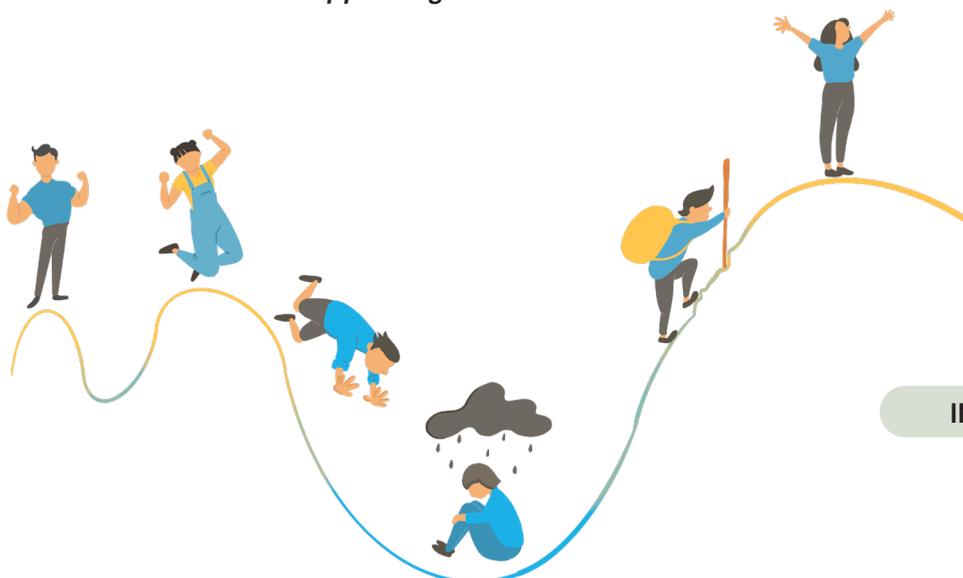


IMAGE 18

▶ **Discussion instruction – What do you see in these pictures?**

1. Show the group images 2, 3 and 4
2. Ask participants as a group: *what do you see in these pictures?*

Responses may include:

- Man crying
- Man looking angry
- Woman looking shocked

State

Disasters are shocking and may take things from us like our belongings, homes, neighbours' homes and even loved ones. It is normal for people to have lots of different feelings and emotions. It is okay to feel bad – sad, angry, frustrated as well as good – proud of how you coped or lucky to have not lost anything. It is helpful to encourage people to give themselves time to feel emotions and to grieve.

▶ **Discussion instruction – What do you see in this picture?**

1. Show the group image 19.
2. Ask participants as a group: *what do you see in these pictures?*

Responses may include:

- Family at community centre/place of worship

State

When people feel ready, sharing their experiences and talking about what has happened to someone who is caring can help them to understand what has happened and help you them look to the future. Talking can help people plan for what they need to do to help themselves and their family to recover. This can also help people feel more in control.

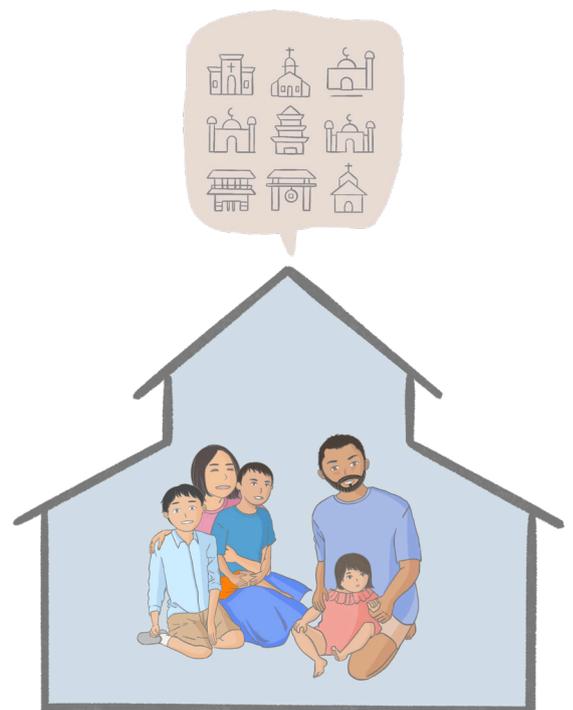


IMAGE 19

▶ **Discussion instruction – What do you see in this picture?**

1. Show the group images 20 and 21
2. Ask participants as a group: *what do you see in these pictures?*

Responses may include:

- Women talking and laughing
- Family playing

State

Socialising with family and friends helps people share what they have been through. Doing things you enjoy and that normally give you pleasure is important for helping you feel good again. When supporting people we can encourage them to participate in activities they enjoy so help sustain them in their recovery.

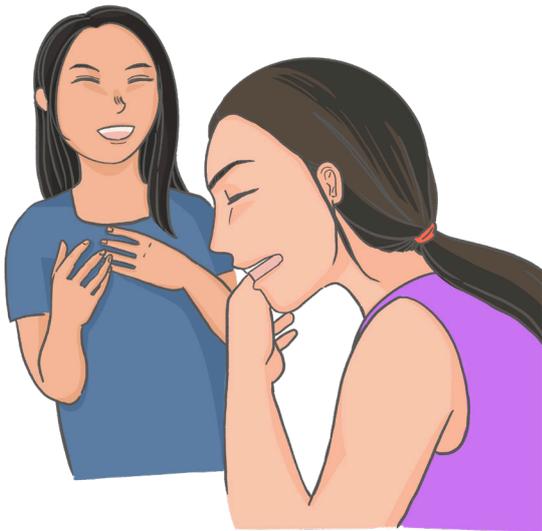


IMAGE 20



IMAGE 21

Topic 8: Act on stress

 **Aim:** To develop participant understanding of the physical and emotional indicators of stress in both ourselves and others.

Key messages

- Stress can seriously affect your health, work and family life
- Don't ignore the signs of stress, they are your body's way of telling you to rest and care for yourself
- Rest and enjoyable activities are the best way to beat stress

 **Time:** 10 minutes

 **Materials:** Image cards 2, 21 to 25.

State

Stress is normal, it is our body's natural way of responding to danger. Stress can help us cope with challenging times. Stress hormones like adrenalin help us to run faster or be stronger so we can survive the threat. Although stress can also affect how we take in information, communicate and make decisions.

When stress persists over the long term it can be harmful to our physical and psychological health and affect our relationships. it can stop us sleeping well, make us more likely to get sick, make us put on weight or lose weight. Stress also affects our brains – we don't remember things well and find it hard to make decisions.



IMAGE 2

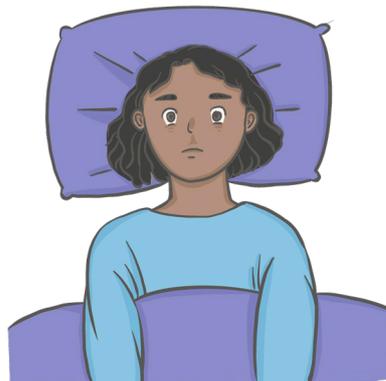


IMAGE 22



IMAGE 23

▶ **Discussion instructions – What do you see in this picture?**

1. Show the group images 2, 22 and 23.
2. Ask participants as a group: *what do you see in these pictures?*

Responses may include:

- Man with back pain; Man having trouble sleeping; Person looking shocked.

State

It can be helpful for people to know the common signs of stress. These include signs of stress in physical, emotional and behavioural signs.

Physical signs of stress include:

- *sleeping problems*
- *headaches*
- *muscle tension/body pain*
- *fast heartbeat*
- *nausea*

Emotional and behavioural signs of stress include:

- *withdrawal from others – not wanting to be with people*
- *shock – wide eyed, blank face, not knowing what to say or finding it hard to talk*
- *jumpiness – jumping at loud noises, shaking*
- *anxiety – being very worried or scared*



IMAGE 24

▶ **Discussion instructions – What do you see in this picture?**

1. Show the group images 9 and 24.
2. Ask participants as a group: *what do you see in these pictures?*

Responses may include:

- Family eating a healthy meal
- Person talking to a counsellor

State

Spending time with loved ones, or if needed, talking to a professional can help us manage problems and stress and strengthen our overall wellbeing.



IMAGE 9

▶ **Discussion instructions – What other things help us to feel better?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *what other things help us to feel better?*

Responses may include:

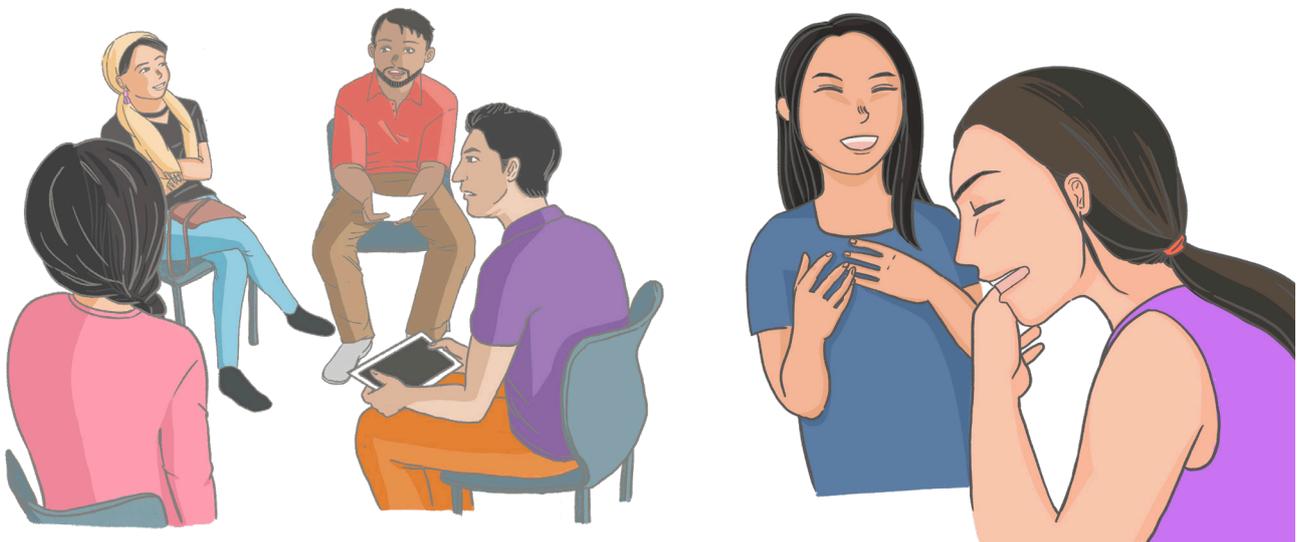
- Talking about what has happened to someone who is caring and you trust, such as a friend, family or other trusted person
- Socialising with family and friends
- Doing things you enjoy that normally give you pleasure

▶ **Discussion instructions – What can you do to care for yourself and reduce your stress?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *what can you do to care for yourself and reduce your stress?*

Responses may include:

- Take a break and rest
- Eat healthy food
- Get exercise
- Get back to your daily routines
- Talk to a professional, such as a counsellor, about what you have been through if you can't reduce your stress yourself



Topic 9: Supporting children to recover

 **Aim:** To develop participant understanding of the basic signs of stress in children and how to support children to recover from a disaster.

Key messages

- It is normal for children to be stressed, just like adults, after a disaster or traumatic event
- Children need to feel safe. Parents and carers need to give comfort and help children feel secure and safe
- Children need to share their fears and worries. Parents and carers need to listen and reassure that it is normal and that they are here to look after them
- Routines help children feel safe, try to keep doing the usual activities together as a family that you did before the disaster



Time: 10 minutes



Materials: Image cards 25 to 27.

State

Like adults, children experience stress and distress. However, the signs of stress and distress are different in children. Children need to feel safe, cared for and be able to share their worries.



Discussion instructions – What do you see in these pictures?

1. Show participants Image cards 26, 27 and 28.
2. Ask participants as a group: *what do you see in these pictures?*

Responses may include:

- Child with sore tummy
- Child holding on to a parent
- Child going to sleep in bed with parents

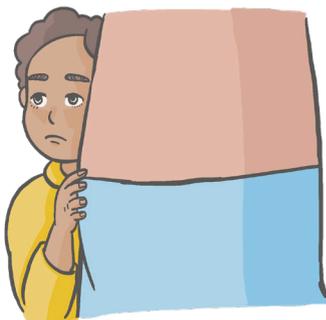


IMAGE 25



IMAGE 26



IMAGE 27

▶ Discussion instructions – How do children show they are stressed?

1. Ask participants as a group: *how do children show they are stressed?*

Draw responses from participants such as:

- Unlike adults children may not tell you “I feel stressed”
- Instead they may show physical signs:
 - Complaining about having a sore tummy or head
 - Not wanting to eat
- They may start to behave differently:
 - Not sleep well
 - Cry easily
 - Be aggressive or quick to get angry
 - Be scared and afraid of things
 - Be ‘clingy’ hold onto their parents/carers and want to be close all the time
 - Not want to talk or play with other children
 - May seem like they are ‘going backwards’ – return to acting like they did when they were a young child, such as sleeping in the same bed as their parents, wetting the bed
- Children may switch quickly between showing signs of stress to playing and having fun. It is normal for children to play even after a traumatic event and doesn’t mean they aren’t grieving



▶ **Discussion instructions – How can parents and carers support children?**

1. Ask participants as a group: *how can parents and carers support children?*

Draw responses from participants such as:

- Encourage children to play with their friends
- Listen to their children's fears and provide comfort
- Listen with respect, do not make children feel silly for feeling afraid
- Encourage children to ask questions about what happened and give them information to help them understand the disaster and what they can do to keep themselves safe next time something happens
- Play with them and do enjoyable fun things together
- Engage children in usual activities and maintain family routines, like eating together, reading together, visiting family. Routines help life feel normal and safe
- Not wanting to eat: try to eat together as a family, parents shouldn't force children to eat but try to make meal times fun and relaxing, be a good role model and eat well at meal times
- Sleep problems: bedtime routines can help children sleep better, such as having some quiet time without exercise before going to bed, telling a story in bed, having a cuddle



Topic 10: Look, Listen, Link



Aim: To introduce participants to the Look, Listen, Link principles of psychological first aid.

Key messages

- Psychological first aid is a psychosocial support approach
- There are three basic sets of actions – LOOK, LISTEN, and LINK – that guide the psychological first aid approach



Time: 10 minutes



Materials: Optional, *Psychological First Aid: Supporting people affected by disaster in Australia* (English), see Australian Red Cross website

State

Psychosocial support activities are varied and can be applied in a range of different ways. From broad communications messages to group support to one on one interactions. Psychological first aid is an approach to psychosocial support that is most often used during or shortly after emergencies. It is particularly helpful in large scale emergencies. The principles of psychological first aid can guide our interactions with people experiencing distress and are helpful to think about whenever you are providing psychosocial support. The principles are Look, Listen, Link. We're going to play a quick game to help you remember the three principles.



Activity instructions – Look, Listen, Link

1. Ask group to stand up, (at their table is fine)
2. Tell the group you are going to play Simon says. Check that everyone knows how to play.
3. Tell the group however that this 'Simon Says' will be related to the actions for LOOK, LISTEN and LINK
4. Provide a first demonstration of the actions LOOK – hand above eyes, looking in the distance
LISTEN – hand by ear LINK – linking arm action
5. Randomly call out "Simon says... LOOK", "Simon says LISTEN" or "Simon says LINK" and see which participants have the correct corresponding action
6. In some of the call outs, make sure not to add "Simon says" before the action. Those participants who follow the action are out of the game.
7. Speed the game up as you go through to catch people out!

State

What do each of these mean? Well, LOOK refers to the safety of helpers and identifying and prioritising who may be most in need of support. To do this, PFA helpers need to gather information on what has happened and what is happening, and assess: who needs help, if it's safe, do people have basic and practical needs and what emotional reactions are you observing. LISTEN refers to the way that helpers communicate with people in distress from the moment they approach and start to interact with them. Finally, LINK has practical outcomes in terms of the helper giving information and helping people attend to basic needs and access the resources they need to cope with their situation.

Supporting materials

The following section includes materials you can use in your session and to hand out to your participants. These include image cards to support the discussion in each topic, information on referral pathways and where to find flyers to give out to your participants.

Referral pathways

Often people we provide psychosocial support to will need the assistance of other service providers. This might be for practical or financial assistance, mental health support or other specialised services. The agencies and organisations that provide these services can vary between communities so it is important that you check what services are available in your local community.

The following template includes space for you to identify the names and contact details of your local service providers so that you can assist your participants to be aware of services available and who they can refer people to. Some important services, such as Legal Aid and Aboriginal Legal Services, are state based so you will need to look up the relevant details in your state or territory.

The first page of the template includes numbers for national support lines, page two has space for you to add relevant services in your area.

Types of services to include:

- Mental health and wellbeing support
- Local general practitioner
- Local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Local health clinic and / or hospital
- Domestic and family violence services
- Financial assistance service
- Government agencies that provide community support and services
- Community groups, sports clubs, mens shed
- Legal assistance
- Services for refugees and asylum seekers

National referral pathways

In the case of emergency, call police, fire or ambulance on 000.

Organisation	Type of service	Contact details	Website
Lifeline	Crisis support	13 11 14	lifeline.org.au
BeyondBlue	Support for anxiety, depression and stress	1300 22 4636	beyondblue.org.au
1800RESPECT	Sexual assault, domestic family violence counselling service	1800 737 732	1800respect.org.au
National Debt Helpline	Financial counselling	1800 007 007	ndh.org.au
Kids Helpline	Phone counselling for ages 5 to 25	1800 55 1800	kidshelpline.com.au
MensLine	Phone and online counselling for men	1300 789 978	mensline.org.au
People with disability Australia	information and referrals to people with disability	1800 422 015 TTY: 1800 422 016	pwd.org.au
Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia	24/7 telephone and online crisis counselling service for anyone in Australia who has experienced or is at risk of sexual assault	1800 211 028	rape-dvservices.org.au

Information brochures and flyers

Australian Red Cross has a range of information materials available to help people navigate the psychosocial impacts of disasters and other crises. These include materials for people and communities affected as well as materials for people and agencies working with disaster affected communities. Some of these materials are available in a range of languages.

It may be useful to have some of these materials available to hand out to participants in your information sessions. These materials can help your participants learn more about the psychosocial impacts of disasters and also help them link people to helpful information.

These materials can be found on the Red Cross website:

redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters

redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters/resources-for-communities

Good communication tips

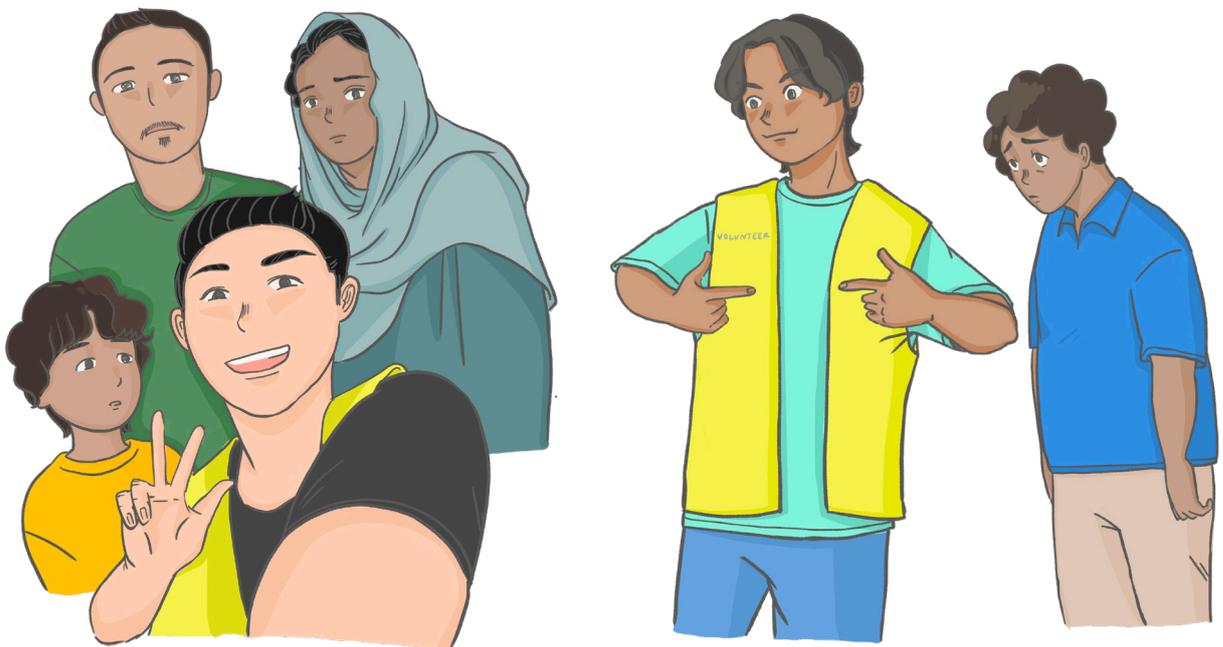
Do's:

- Be honest and trustworthy.
- Respect people's right to make their own decisions.
- Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices.
- Make it clear to people that even if they refuse help now, they can still access help in the future.
- Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, if this is appropriate.
- Behave appropriately by considering the person's culture, age and gender.
- Try to find a quiet place to talk, and minimize outside distractions.
- Stay near the person but keep an appropriate distance depending on their age, gender and culture.
- Let them know you are listening; for example, nod your head or say "hmmmm...."
- Be patient and calm.
- Provide factual information, if you have it. Be honest about what you know and don't know. "I don't know, but I will try to find out about that for you."
- Give information in a way the person can understand – keep it simple.
- Acknowledge how they are feeling and any losses or important events they tell you about, such as loss of their home or death of a loved one.
- "I'm so sorry. I can imagine this is very sad for you."
- Acknowledge the person's strengths and how they have helped themselves.
- Allow for silence.



Don'ts

- Don't exploit your relationship as a helper.
- Don't ask the person for any money or favour for helping them.
- Don't make false promises or give false information.
- Don't exaggerate your skills.
- Don't force help on people, and don't be intrusive or pushy.
- Don't pressure people to tell you their story.
- Don't share the person's story with others.
- Don't pressure someone to tell their story.
- Don't interrupt or rush someone's story (for example, don't look at your watch or speak too rapidly).
- Don't touch the person if you're not sure it is appropriate to do so.
- Don't judge what they have or haven't done, or how they are feeling. Don't say: "You shouldn't feel that way," or "You should feel lucky you survived."
- Don't make up things you don't know.
- Don't use terms that are too technical.
- Don't tell them someone else's story.
- Don't talk about your own troubles.
- Don't think and act as if you must solve all the person's problems for them.
- Don't take away the person's strength and sense of being able to care for themselves.
- Don't talk about people in negative terms (for example, don't call them "crazy" or "mad").



5 Ways to Wellbeing

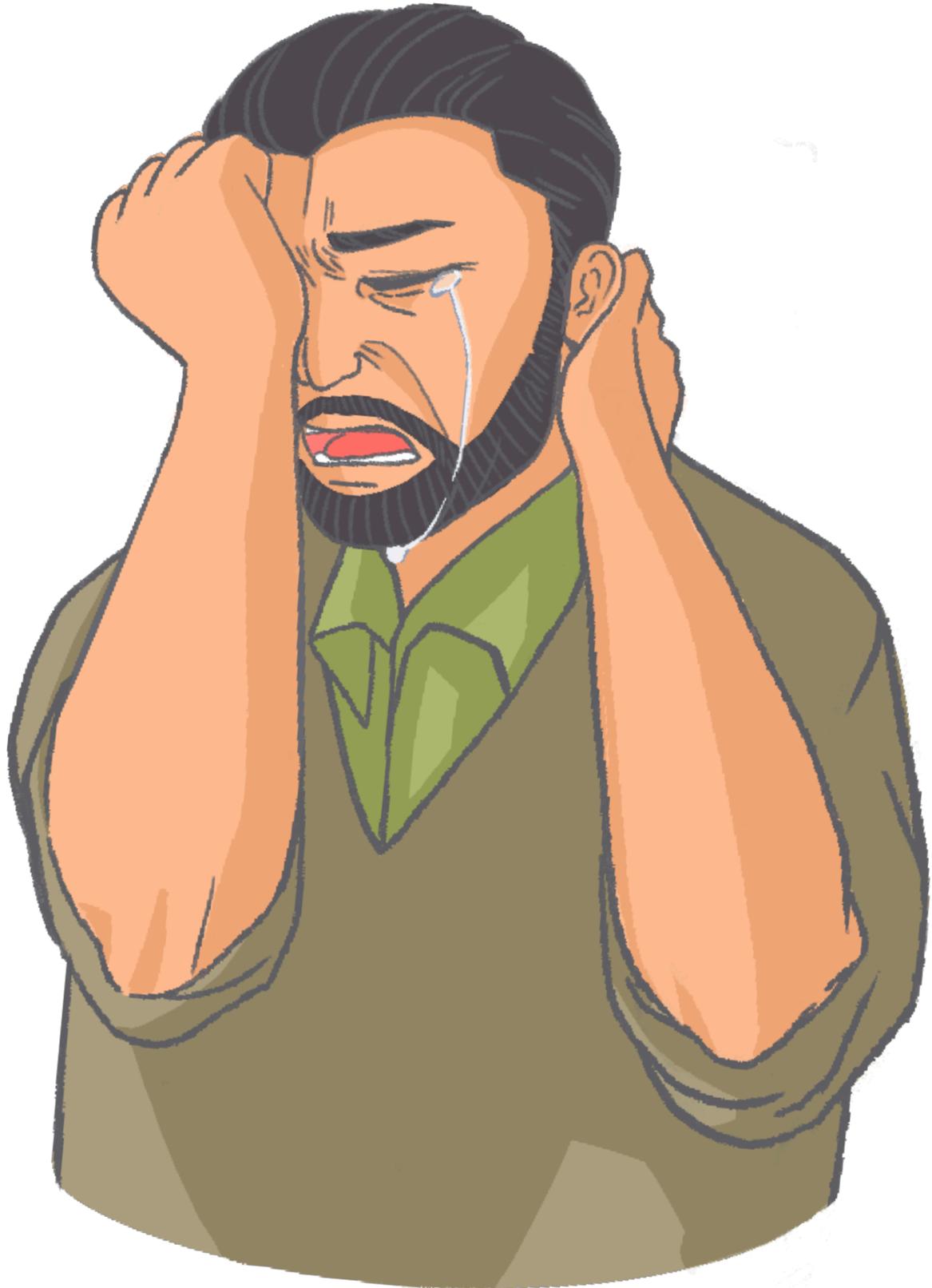
- **Take Notice.** Taking a moment to stop, think and notice the things around you helps you to relax and connect to your environment.
- **Be Active.** Physical activity is good for our bodies and our mind. Anything that moves your body and gets your heart pumping counts!
- **Keep Learning.** Being curious and picking up new skills keeps your brain going – try new things!
- **Connect.** Sharing a laugh and spending time with our friends and family helps us feel part of our communities.
- **Give.** Be generous with your time, help a neighbour or volunteer. Being kind and doing things for others not only helps them but makes us feel good too.





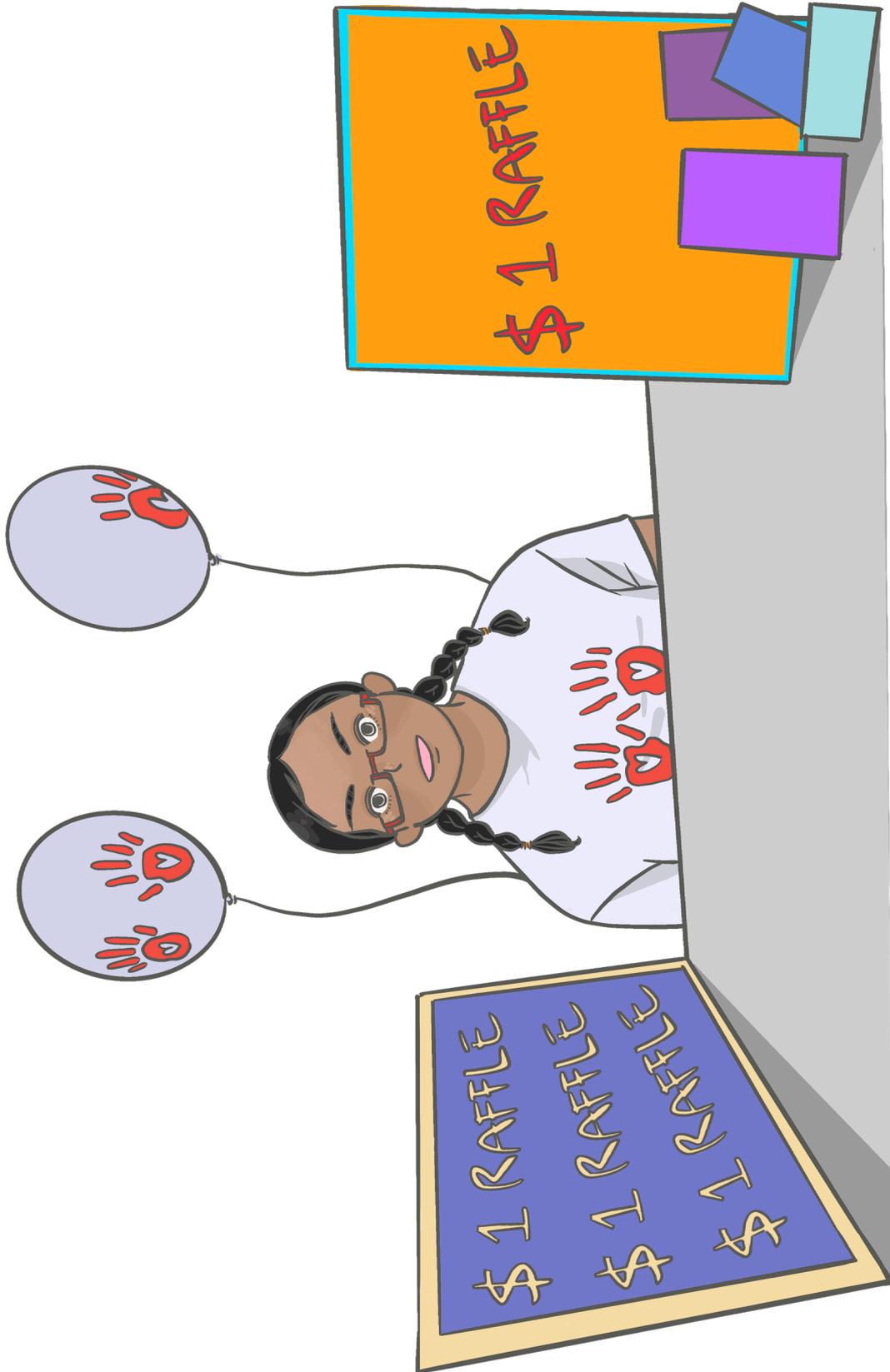




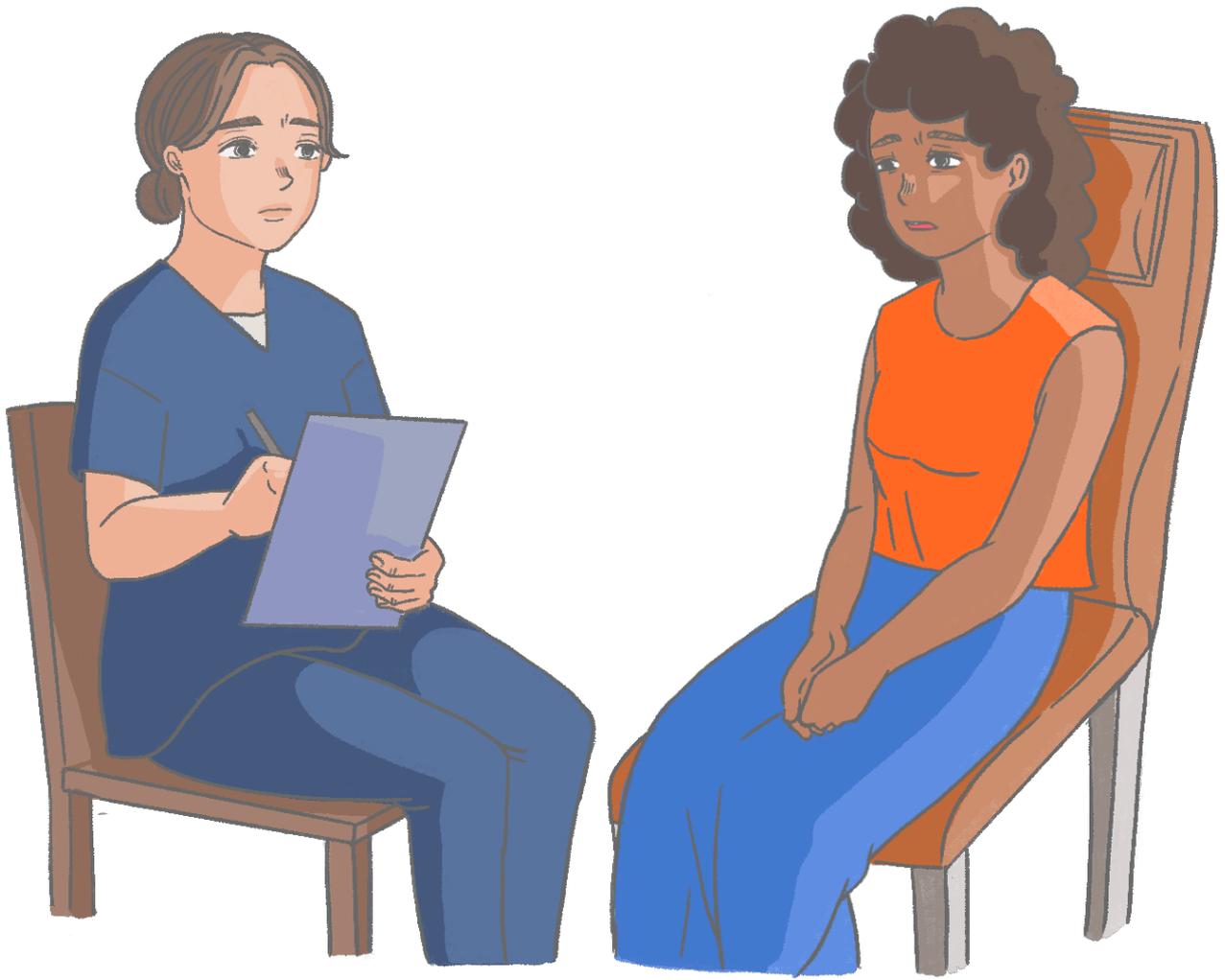




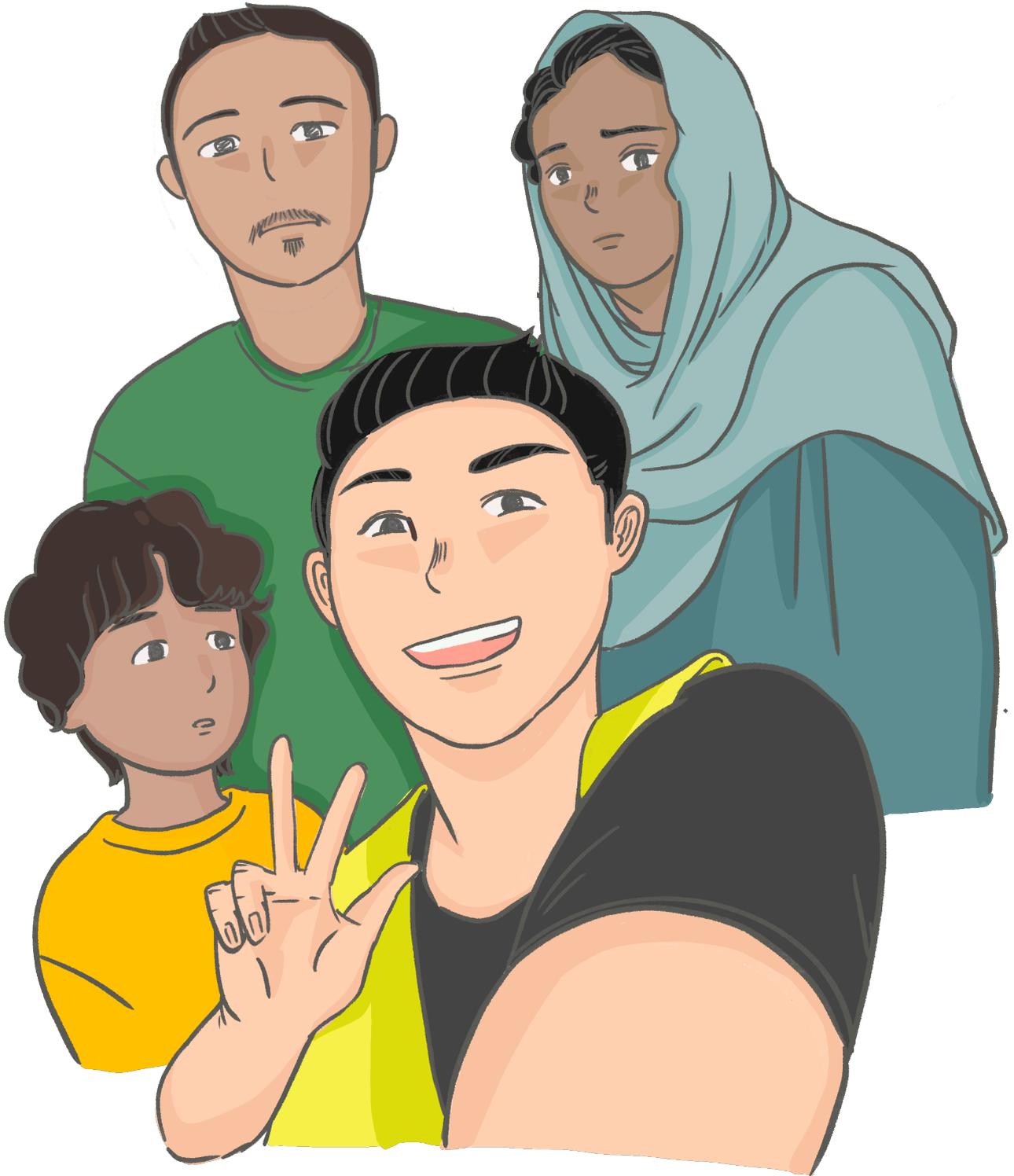


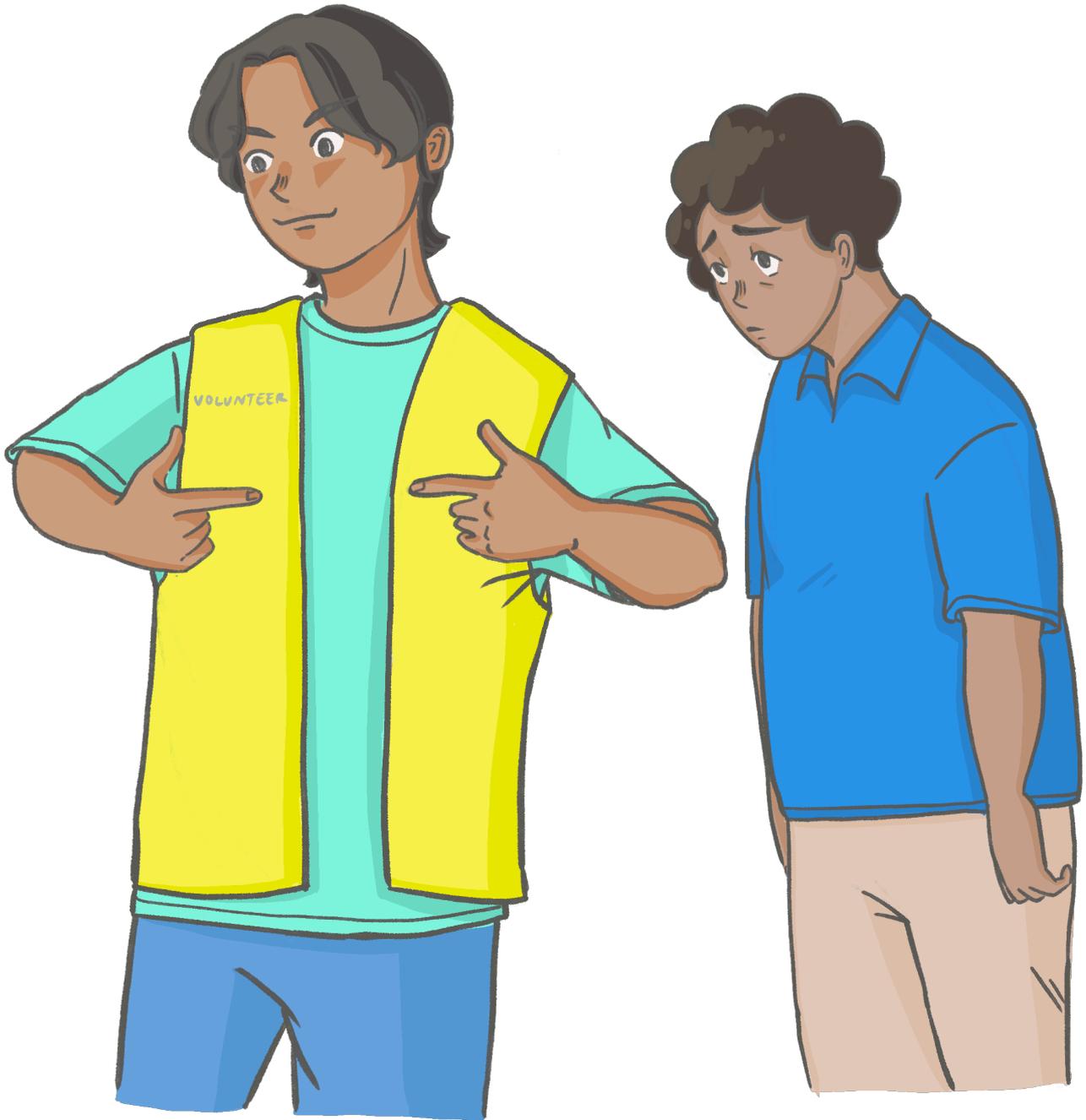




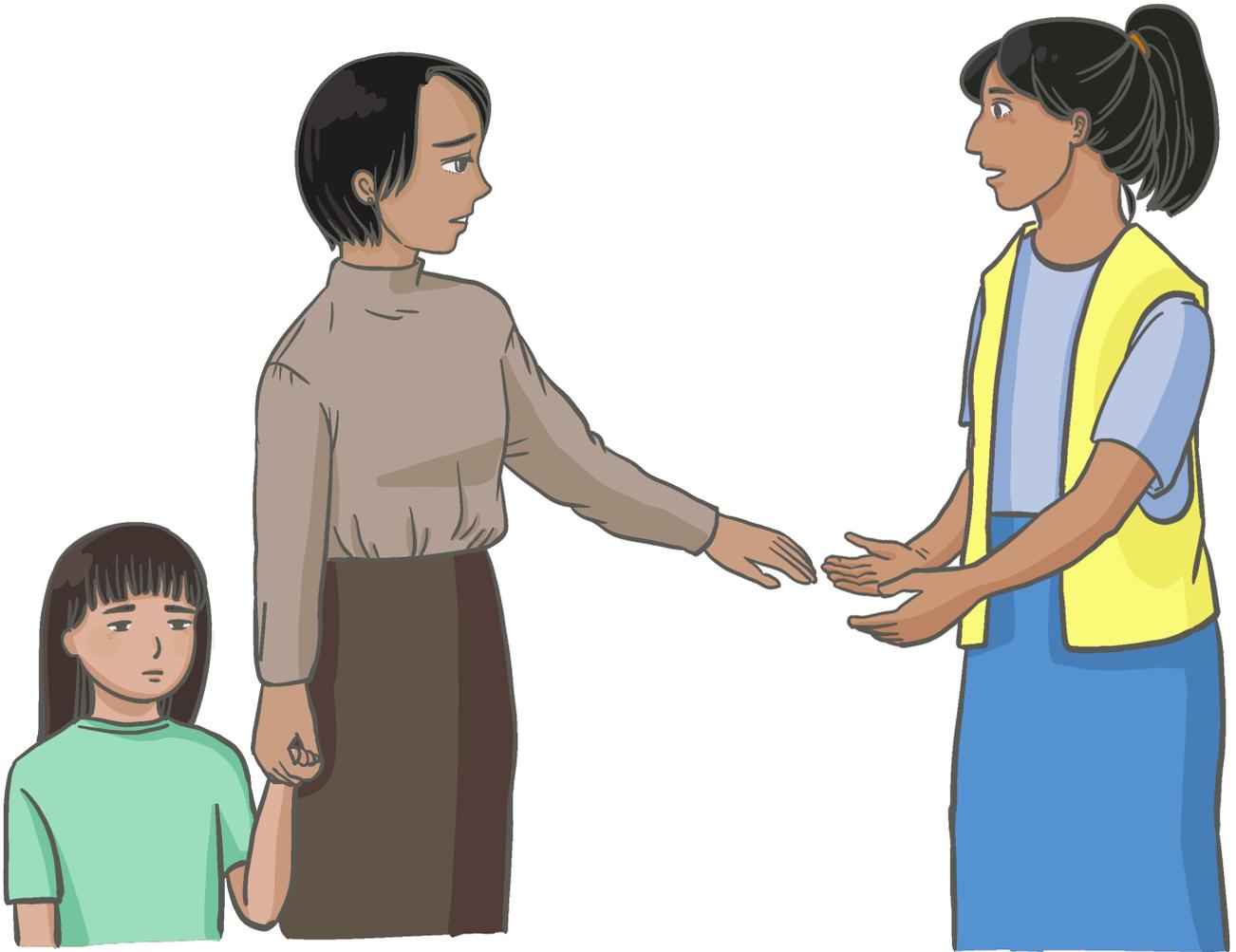


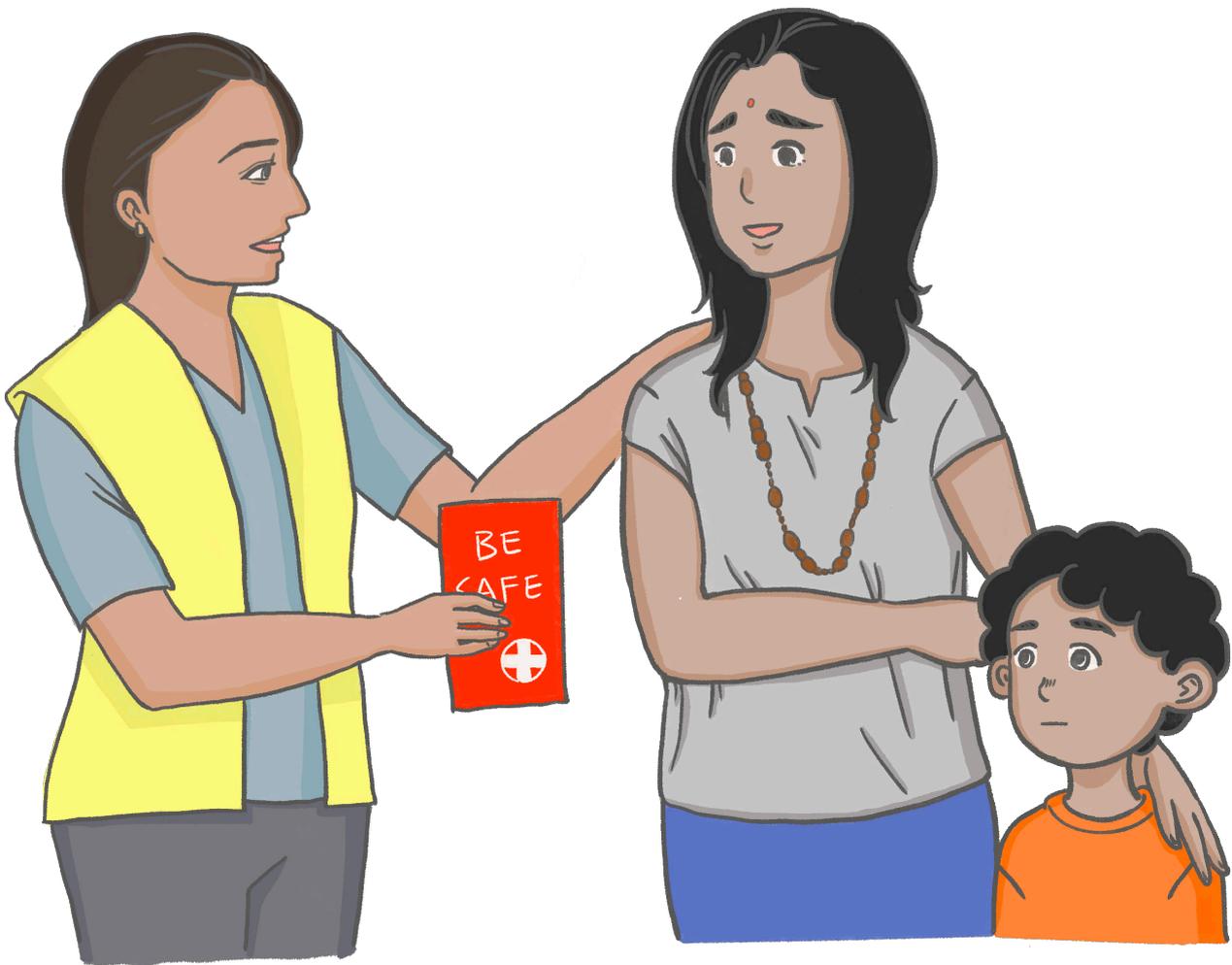




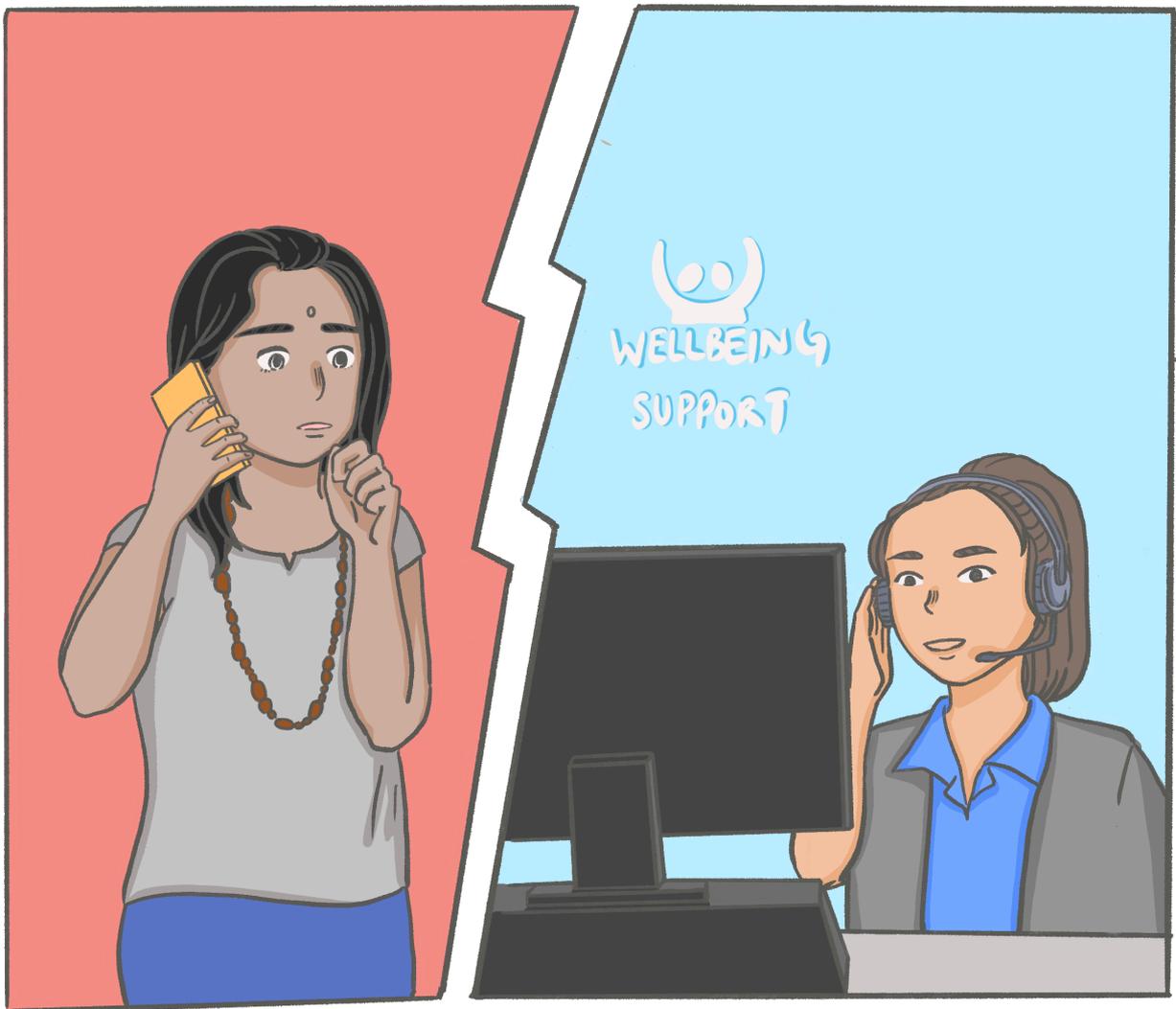


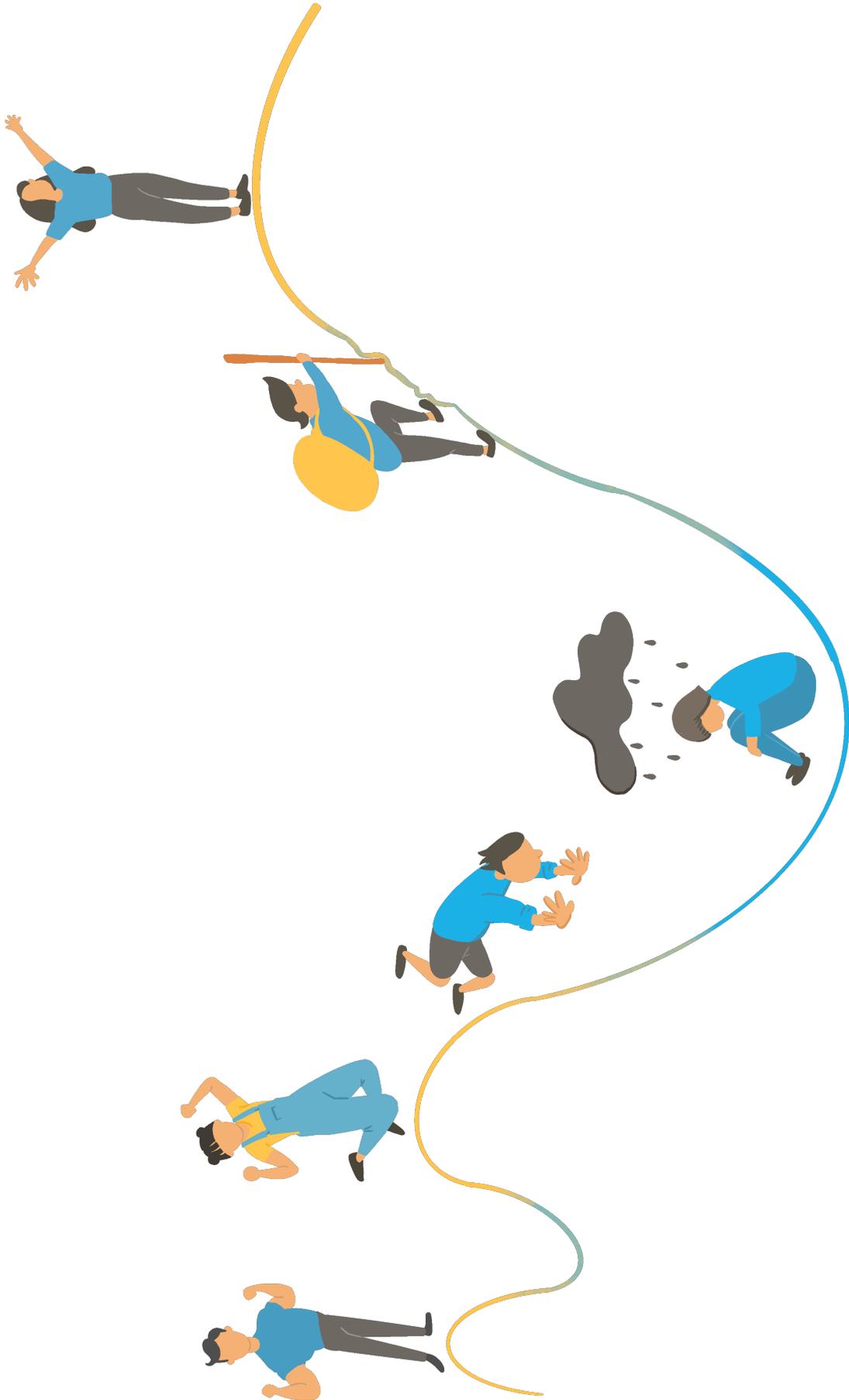


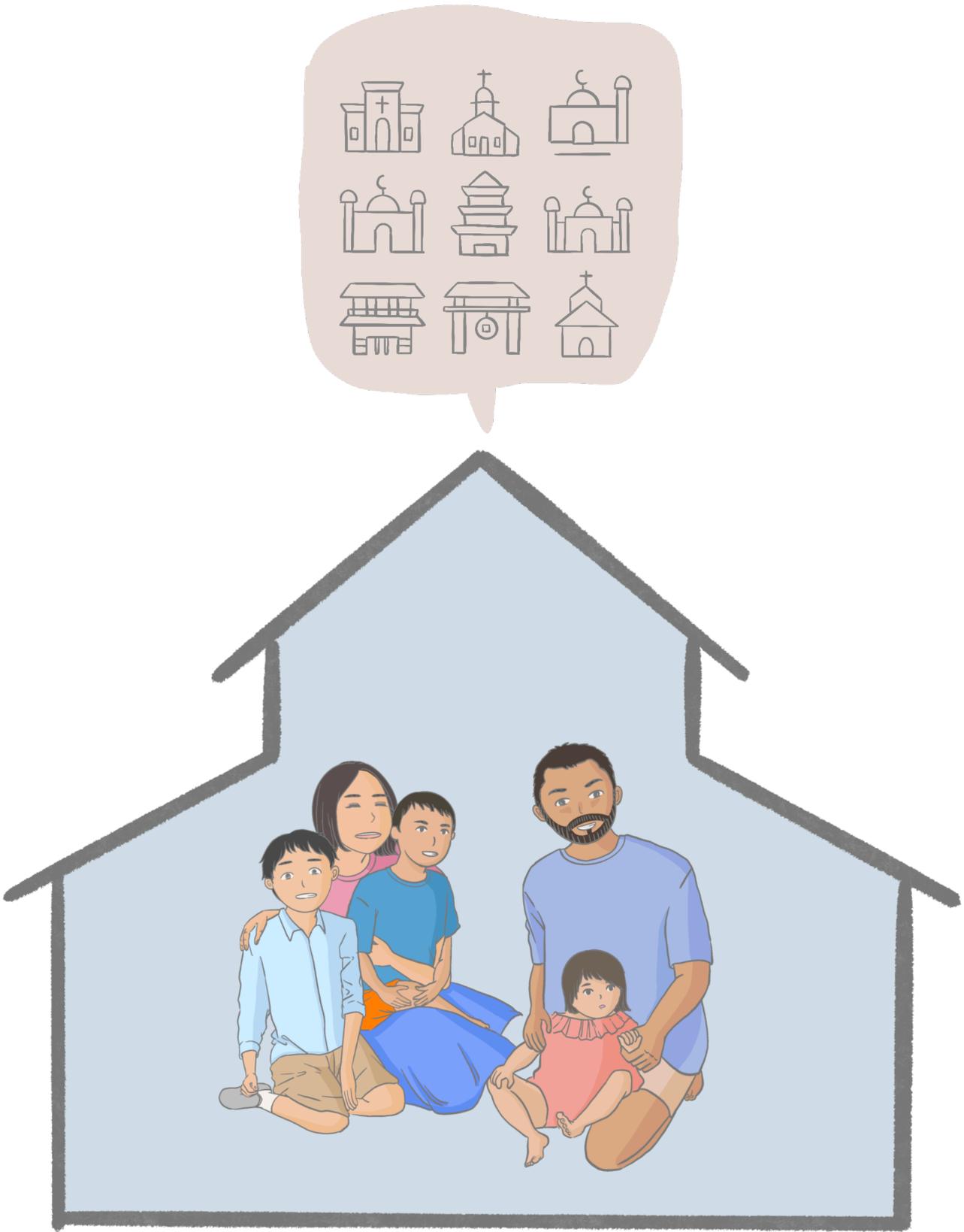


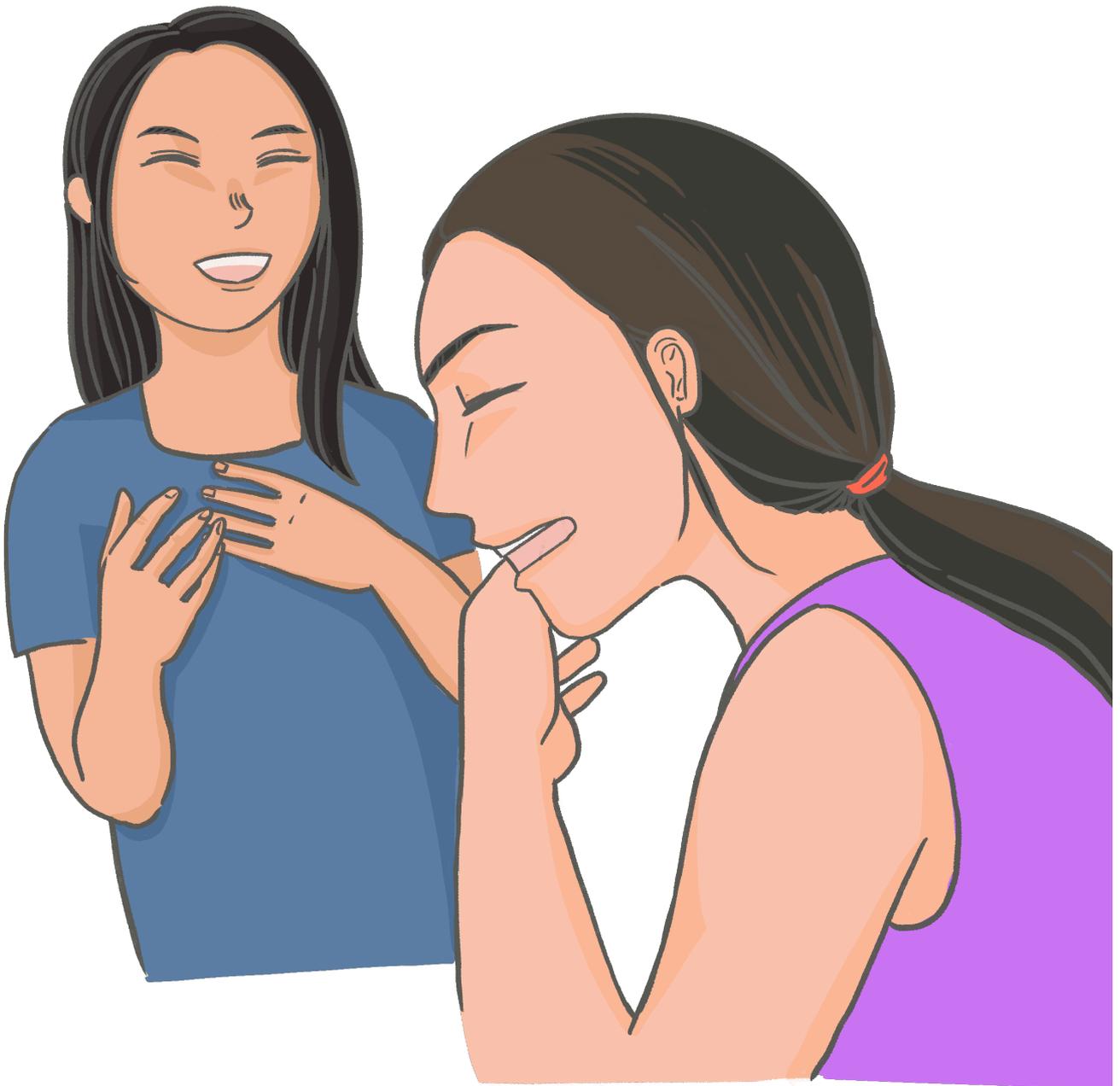


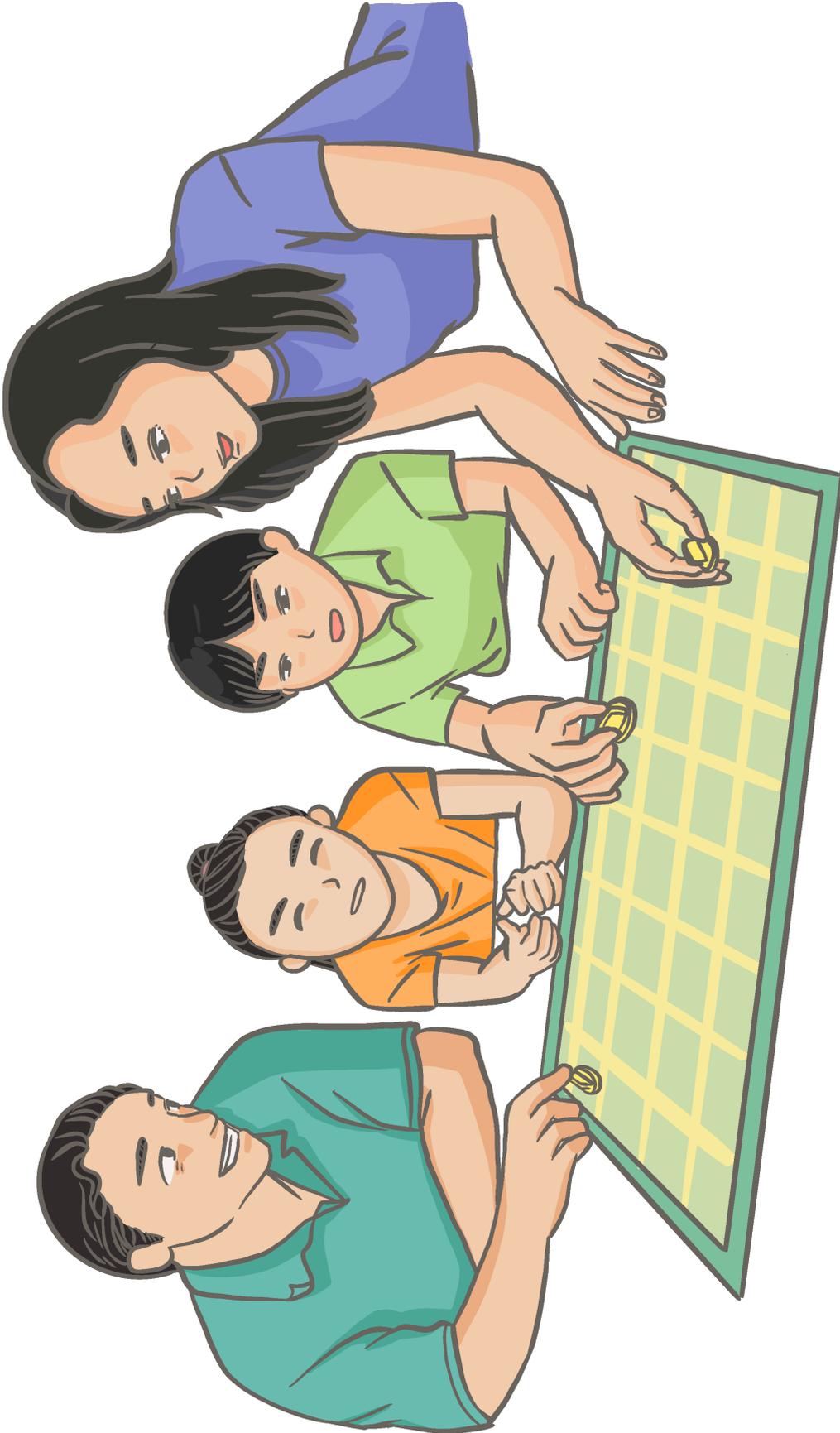






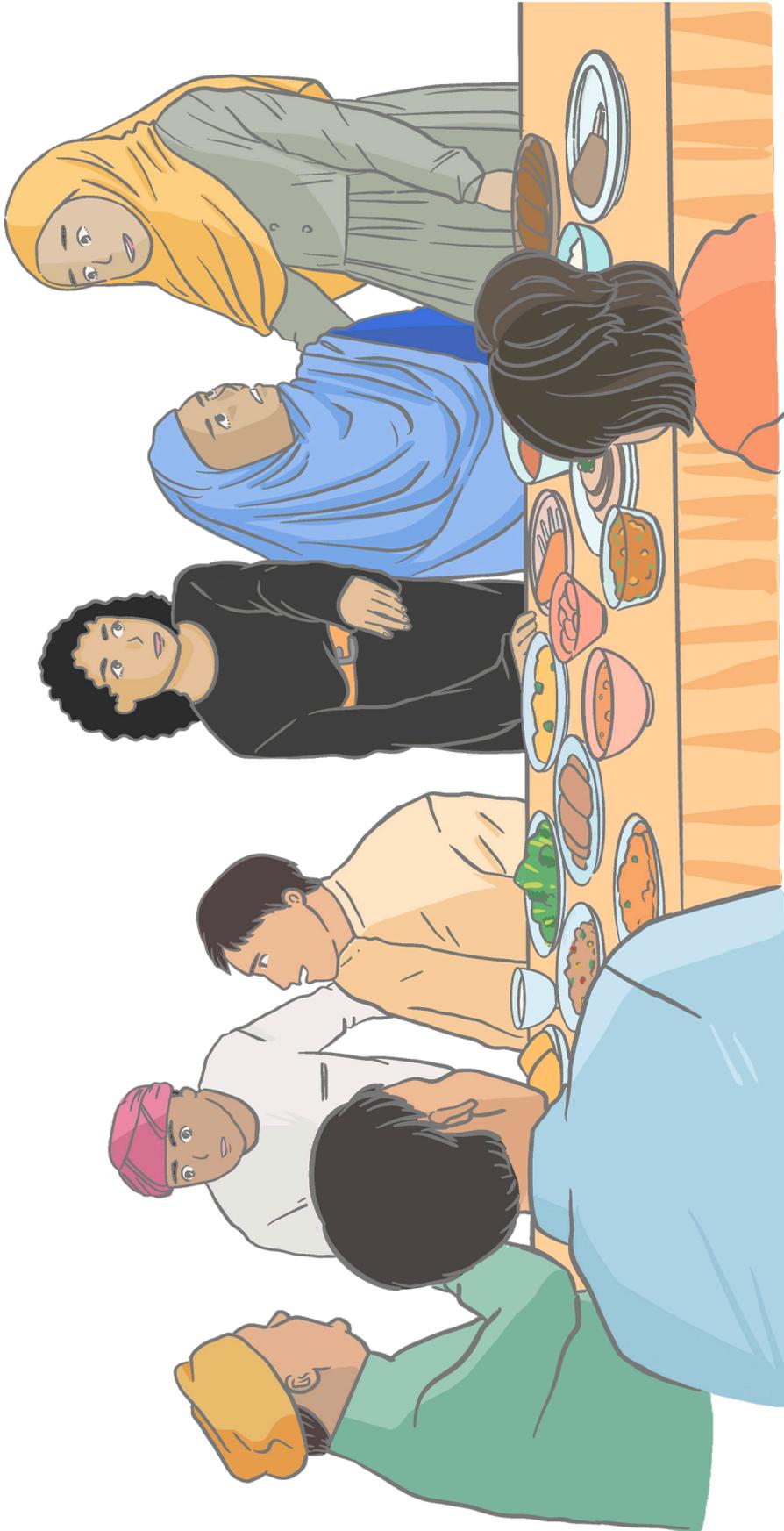


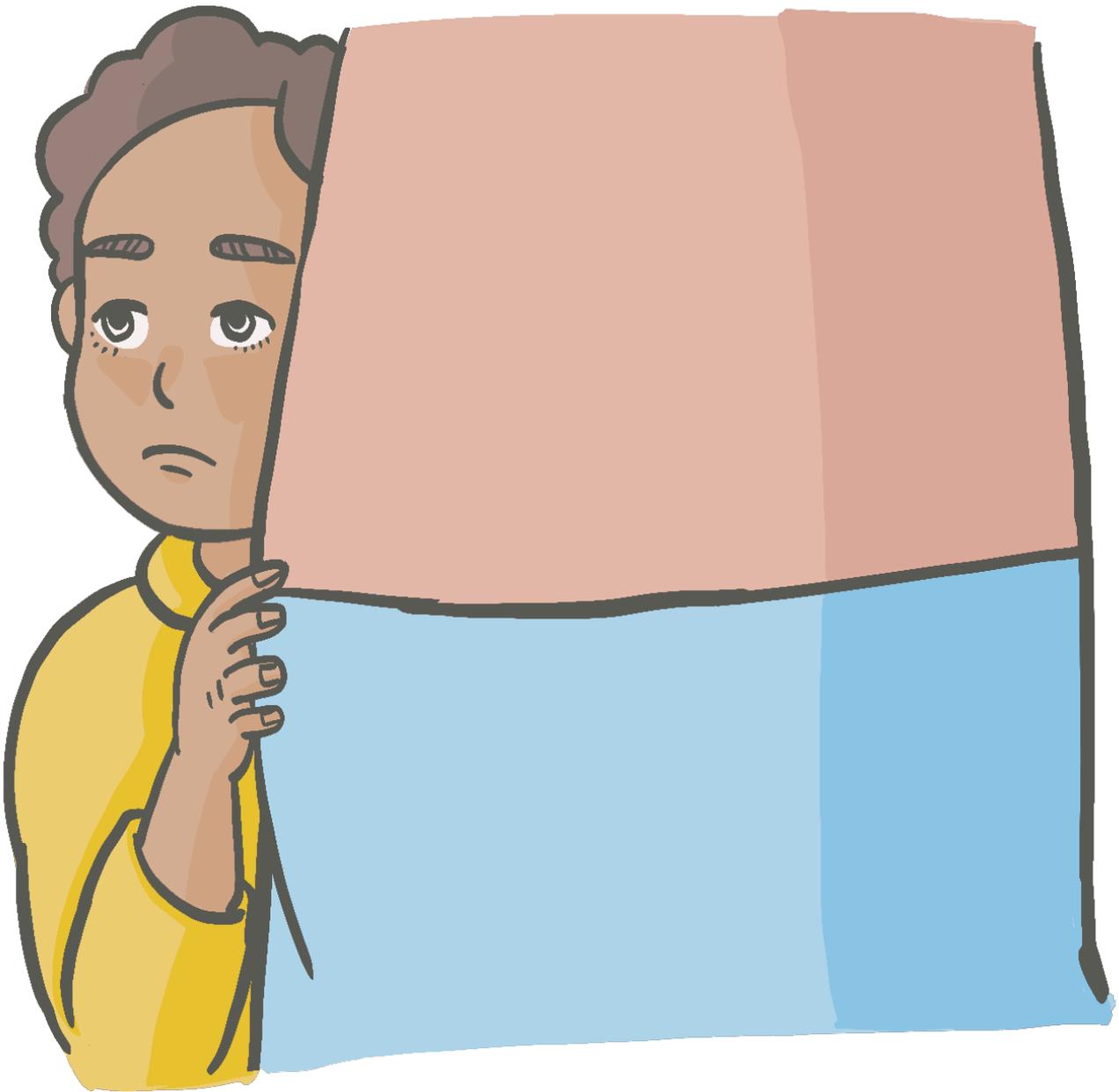


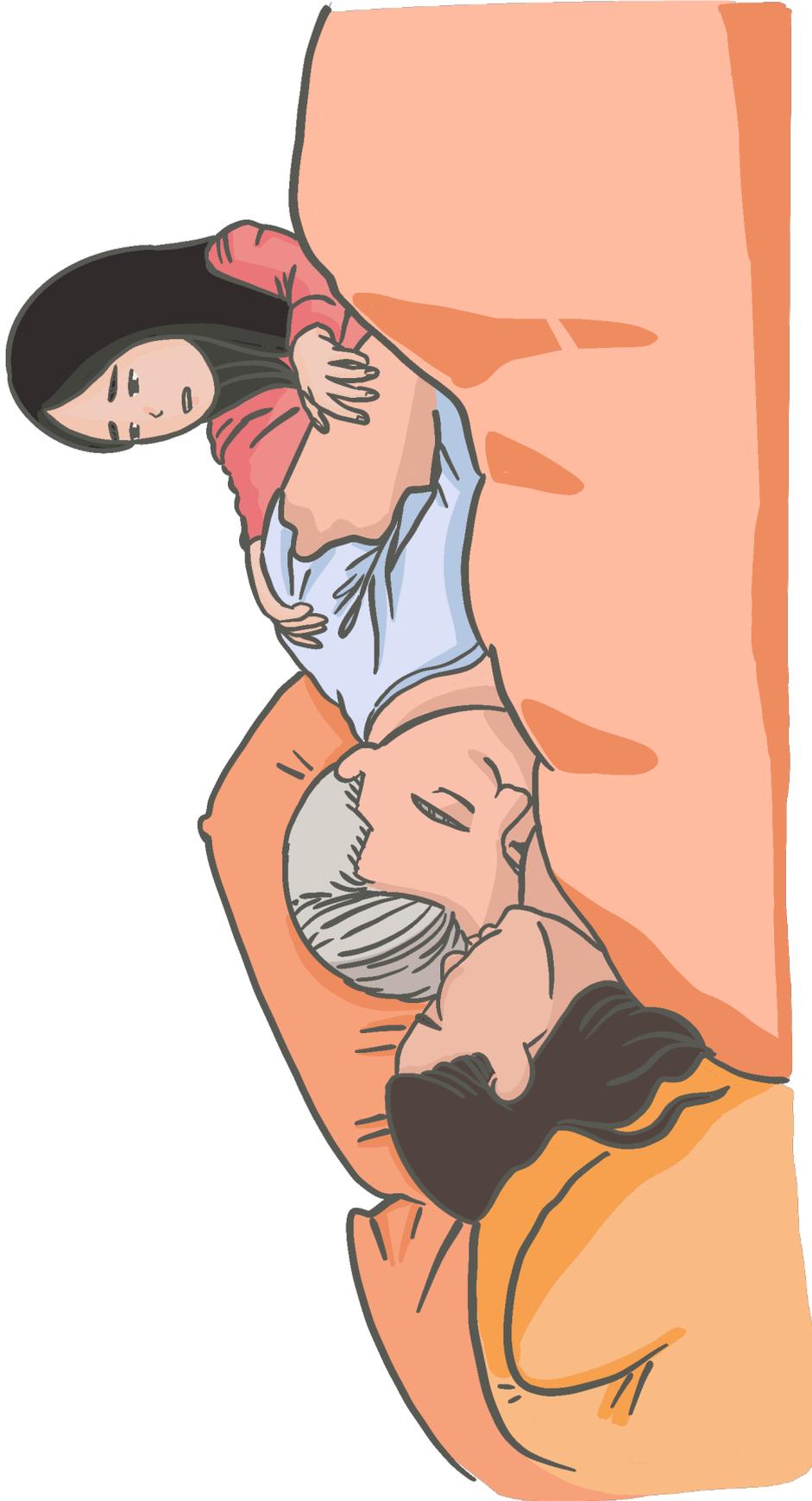
















Act for humanity

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redcross.org.au