

JULIE STOKES

You Will be OKAY



**Find strength,
stay hopeful
and get to grips
with grief**

SCHOOL RESOURCES: KS2+

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURÈNE BOGLIO

YOU WILL Be OKAY

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ABOUT THE BOOK

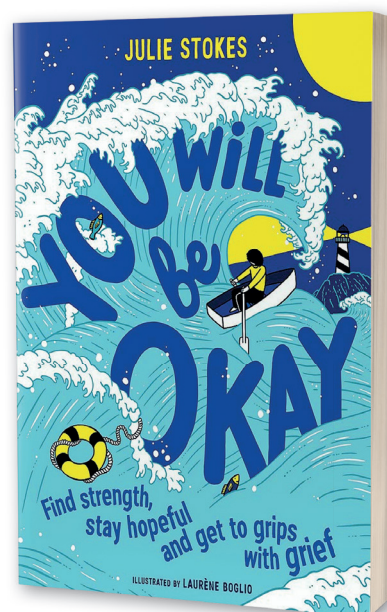
An essential handbook to provide comfort and guidance for children aged 9+ experiencing loss, from clinical psychologist, coach and founder of children's grief charity Winston's Wish, Julie Stokes OBE

The death of a parent, other family member, sibling or friend is one of the most traumatic experiences for a child and it can be hard to know how to talk to them about it. In this honest, comforting and strength-building guide, children will be able to look toward the future with hope.

Written by clinical psychologist, executive coach and founder of childhood bereavement charity Winston's Wish, Julie Stokes OBE, *You Will Be Okay* is a toolbox for children navigating grief. Julie shares case studies of children's stories of loss. She offers comforting and practical advice for coping, remembering and taking time for you. Strong emotions come and go. Intense sadness can flip into anger or happiness - all while trying to be 'normal' - so it's no surprise that navigating these emotions can be tricky. But she shows young readers that there is no right or wrong way to grieve, you just have to find your way. *You Will Be Okay* teaches children that there are many things they can do to build strength and resilience in order move forward with life.

Themes: ✓ Grief and loss ✓ Understanding difficult emotions ✓ Asking for help and support ✓ Talking about difficult feelings ✓ Finding strength in adversity

Subjects: ✓ Literacy ✓ PSHE



CONTENTS

Theme 1: Talking about grief

Activity: Write down words and phrases to describe how people experiencing grief might feel.

Objectives: To know that grief comes with big emotions and to be able to name some of the emotions often associated with grief.

Theme 2: The two sides of grief

Activity: Sort activities into those that might help in the 'land of loss' and those that might help in the 'land of rebuilding'.

Objectives: To begin to understand the dual process theory of grief. To be aware of different strategies that might be helpful for people experiencing grief.

Theme 3: Asking for help

Activity: Create a class charter to ensure that everybody in the class feels safe, comfortable and able to ask for help if they need it.

Objectives: To understand that asking for help can feel hard but it is a sign of strength. To know how to help others feel supported.

Theme 4: Being a supportive friend

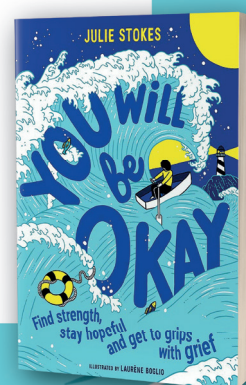
Activity: Write a letter to somebody who is experiencing grief.

Objectives: To understand the needs of those experiencing grief. To feel more confident about being able to offer help and support to those experiencing grief.

Theme 5: Growing around grief

Activity: List strategies that might be helpful for somebody experiencing grief.

Objectives: To know that grief is something a person can 'grow around'. To be aware of strategies that might help manage grief.



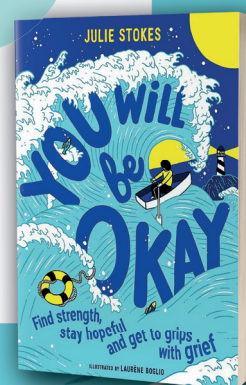
THEME 1: TALKING ABOUT GRIEF

HOLDING ON

When you are experiencing grief, it can feel like you don't have control of what's happening. You might find yourself sobbing when you didn't expect tears to come. Or you might have a sudden angry outburst triggered by something small that has nothing to do with the person who has died. For example, going into the kitchen when you are rushing for school only to find there's no cereal left. *'Who ate the last of the cornflakes?!'* you scream. You slam the door, feel stupid and you struggle to apologise because grief gets in the way, whether you realise it or not. It's somehow easier to get angry about cornflakes than the fact that the person who has died is no longer here. You know how it is. Nothing is the same, yet life still goes on. You might start to notice other people's lives in a way you didn't before. *'How come she is moaning about her mum all the time? Doesn't she realise she's so lucky to have a mum?!'*

No wonder it can sometimes be tempting to shut all of your emotions away and never talk about them. Trouble is, if you do this, the grief then gets stuck inside and annoyingly doesn't go away. A girl I know, Zara, described grief to me as feeling like she had a whole apple stuck in her throat, which meant she couldn't speak about her dad's death. In this book we will help you to find good, healthy (and even fun) ways to acknowledge your grief and move forward to rebuild your life. Zara found it a great help to join a group where she met others who totally got it because they had been through the same thing. She is now 23 and can talk about her dad whenever she chooses to with people she trusts.

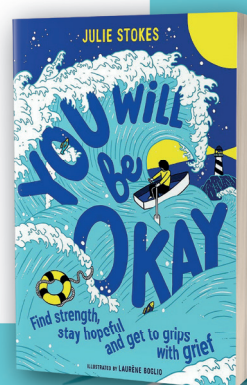
Another boy I worked with called Jack, whose dad died from a heart attack when he was 13, also said to me, *'You have to feel it to heal it.'* Jack also admitted that at first, he found it hard to do this. Thinking about the person who died and how they died is a first step to help with this healing. It makes me smile when I think about how Jack and Zara found their voice and their confidence.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is grief?
- How might somebody who is experiencing grief feel?
- Does grief feel the same all the time?
- Do you think everybody feels grief in the same way?
- Why did Zara feel like she had a whole apple stuck in her throat?
- Why do you think it's important for people experiencing grief to be able to talk about their feelings? Who might they be able to talk to about their feelings?
- Imagine you could go back in time and talk to Zara when she was younger. What would you like to say to her?

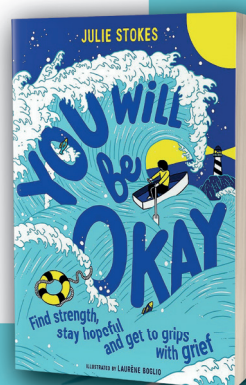
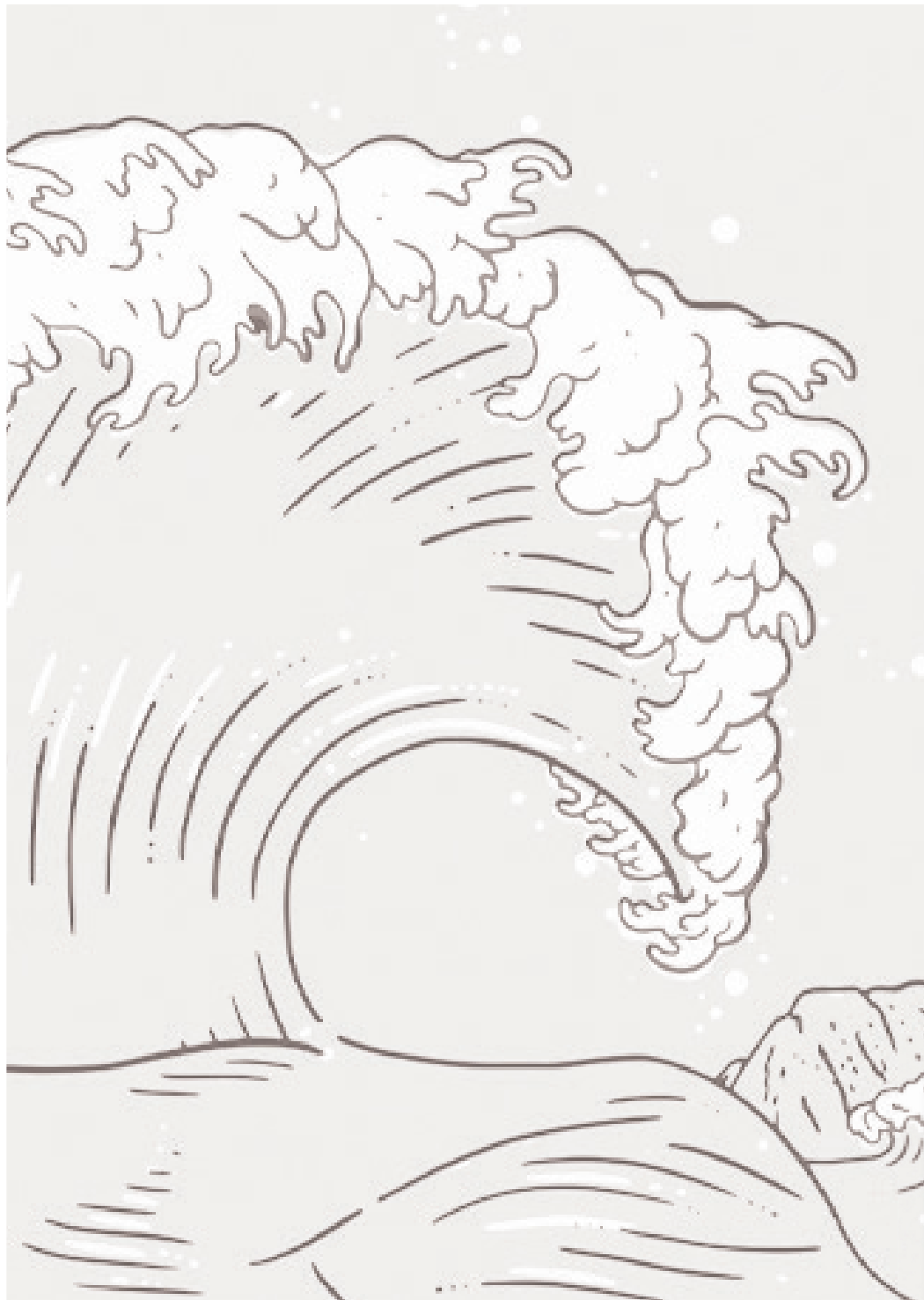
Tip: On page 77 we learn a bit more about Zara. You might like to have a read now to find out more about how she coped with her grief when she was younger and how she feels now that she is older.



ACTIVITY 1: FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

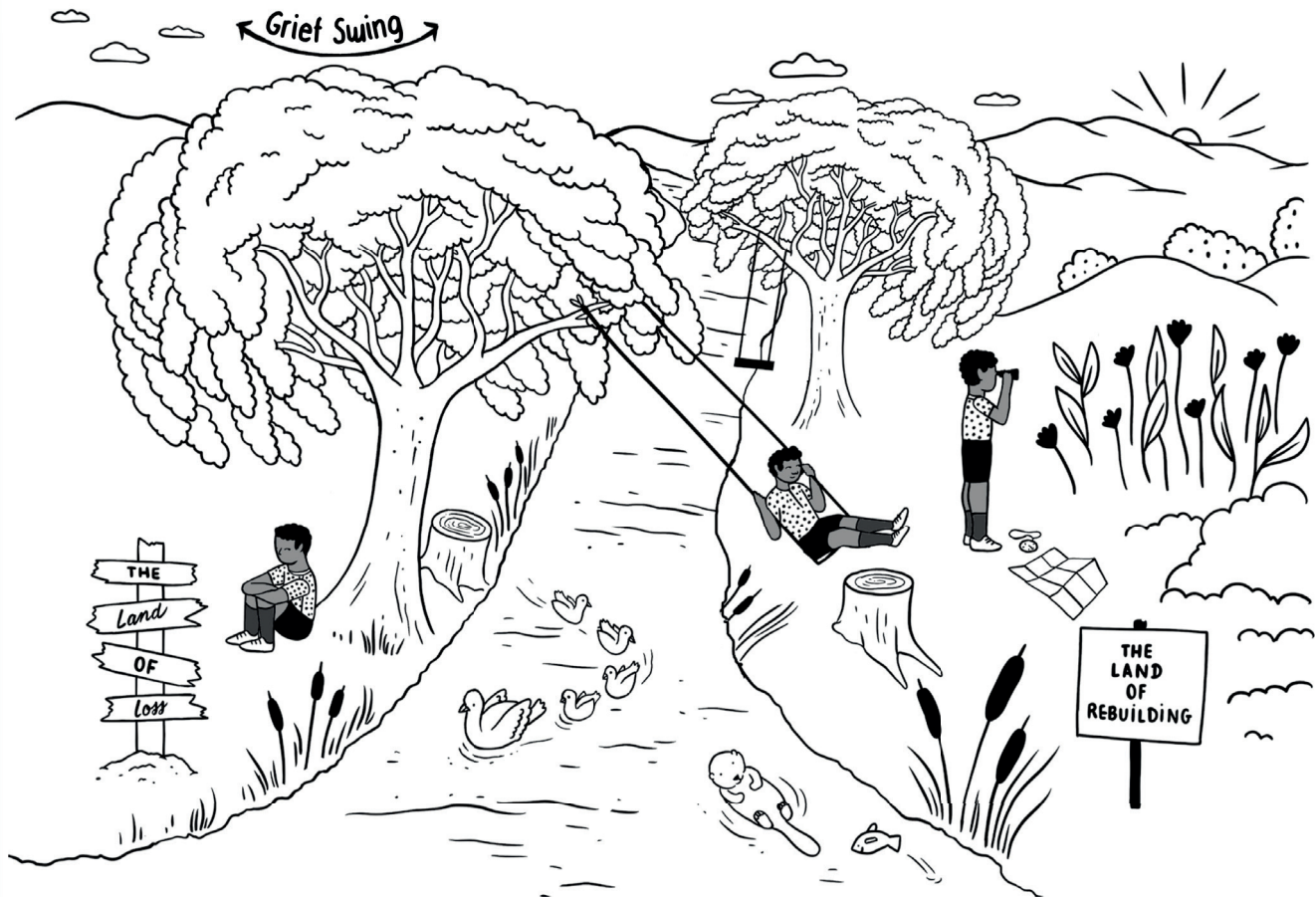
Inside the wave, write down as many words and phrases as you can to describe how somebody who is experiencing grief might feel.

You could use colour to show these emotions too. What colours best represent the emotions you have included? Why not add a character in a boat (like the one on the front cover) to represent somebody navigating the difficult waves of grief?



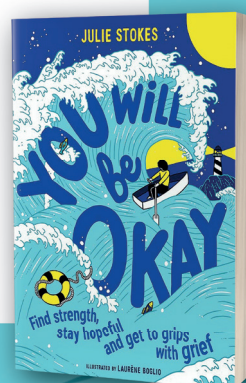
THEME 2: THE TWO SIDES OF GRIEF

Read pages 43-50 together and have a look at this picture:



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you describe the 'land of loss'? Why do you think it is helpful for someone who is grieving to spend time in the 'land of loss'?
- Can you describe the 'land of rebuilding'? Why do you think it is helpful for someone who is grieving to spend time in the 'land of rebuilding'?
- Is there one side that's more important than the other?
- Are there any rules about when a person experiencing grief should move from one side to the other? Who gets to decide when they move from one to the other?
- What do people who study grief call this process of moving backwards and forwards between the two states?
- If you see somebody who has been bereaved laughing and having fun does that mean that they are no longer experiencing grief?
- What does grief look like?



ACTIVITY 2: THE LAND OF LOSS AND THE LAND OF REBUILDING

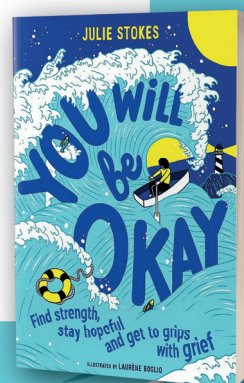
In pairs, sort the below actions into actions you think might be helpful in the 'land of loss', and actions you think might be helpful in the 'land of rebuilding'? (You could either cut them out and sort them by placing them on either side of the picture, or you could colour them in two different colours.)

Talking about the person who has died with a trusted friend	Enjoying a good book
Playing with friends	Having a cry
Feeling difficult emotions without bottling them up or hiding them	Setting new goals for the future
Creating a memory box	Holding onto something that belonged to the person who has died
Listening to feel-good music	Starting a new hobby
Expressing anger by shouting or punching a cushion	Raising money for a good cause
Watching something funny on TV	Writing a letter to the person who has died
Visting a special place to rememebr the person who has died	Planning a fun activity to do with friends

Reflect:

- Have you learnt anything new about grief from this activity? Does anything surprise you?
- How could you support a friend who is grieving? Can you think of one thing you could do to help and support your friend in the 'land of loss', and one thing you could do to help and support them in the 'land of rebuilding'?

Tip: There is no one way to grieve. When somebody is going through grief, only they can decide what feels helpful for them at any time.



THEME 3: ASKING FOR HELP

Pre-read questions!

- How do you think most people feel most of the time when they ask for help?
- How do you feel when somebody asks you for help?

Now that you've thought about these questions, have a read of pages 64 – 66.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do your answers to the questions above compare to the answers given by the businesspeople the author questioned?
- Why do you think asking for help can feel so hard?
- Can you think of a time when you've had to ask somebody for help? How did you feel?
- Why might somebody who is going through grief find it particularly hard to ask for help?
- What makes asking for help easier?
- What could you do to let a friend know that you are here if they need to ask for help?

ACTIVITY 3: A KINDER CLASSROOM

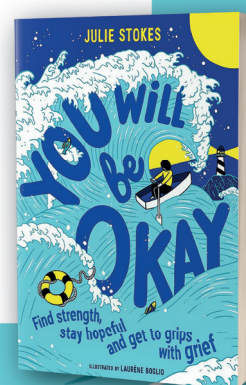
Imagine a classroom environment where everybody feels able to ask for help if they need it. What does this classroom look like? How do people act? How do people feel?

Work together as a class to create a class charter to help make your class a space where everybody feels able to ask for help when they need it. You could begin by listing words to describe how you want everybody to feel. Then, think of all the things you can do as a class to help everybody to feel this way. You might include actions like be friendly and welcoming, encourage each other, pause before making judgements, offer help, check in with each other.

Your class charter might look something like this:

<u>Our Class Charter</u>	
We want everybody to feel...	
We will...	

Tip: Creating a kind *classroom* is good for everyone. We all need to ask for help sometimes. Asking for help is a sign of strength and courage.



THEME 4: BEING A SUPPORTIVE FRIEND

How could you help a friend who is experiencing grief? Discuss in pairs and then collect a list of ideas as a class. Now, read this letter from pages 67 – 68.

A few years ago, the people at the **Child Bereavement Network** came up with a great idea. They realised that even trusted friends sometimes struggle to know what to do or say. They created cards for you to show to a friend (and others) so they would know how to help you. I have created a similar one below. You may want to change it and make your own or you could simply show your friend this list and then chat about which ones matter most to you.

Asking for help from a trusted friend

Dear (name of your friend)

As you may know my (name of your person) has died. You are a good friend and I trust you. I have ticked some of the things below that are particularly important to me now. I hope that reading them may make it easier for both of us.

- ☒ Be my friend and be yourself – even if you don't know what to do or say. Just knowing you are there helps
- ☐ Please don't act differently around me
- ☐ Ask me if there's anything you can do if I am having a bad day
- ☐ Give me a hug if I look sad
- ☒ Help me to have fun and laugh sometimes

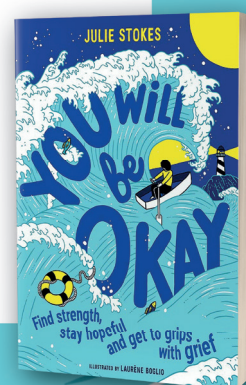
- ☒ Ask me if I want to talk about the person who has died, sometimes I do and sometimes I don't
- ☒ If people keep crowding in and asking me too many questions, can you help me out, so I don't have to talk to everyone about it all the time?
- ☐ Give me space sometimes, I know you care
- ☐ If you are worried about me and think I need to go and see someone, talk to me so I can ask where I may be able to find that help
- ☐ Don't feel you have to do things to please me
- ☒ When we talk about important topics, I need to know that you won't tell others without asking me
- ☒ Give me a break if I am acting a bit strangely, having a bad day or being a bit grumpy. I may be upset about something and need to be alone. Please don't get offended. My feelings are all over the place

Please understand that the ones I have ticked are for how I feel now, things may change. Let's chat some more and thank you for reading this – you are a **good friend**.

From _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think this letter template might be helpful for somebody who is going through grief?
- Does everybody who is experiencing grief have the same needs?
- Are there any suggestions in the letter that you hadn't thought of before?
- Are there any suggestions that surprise you?
- The letter contains a list of different things that might be helpful for someone who is going through grief. In pairs, choose one of the suggestions from the list and create a short **role play** based on this idea. Perform your role play to the class, can they work out which idea it is based on?
- How would you feel if you received a letter like this?



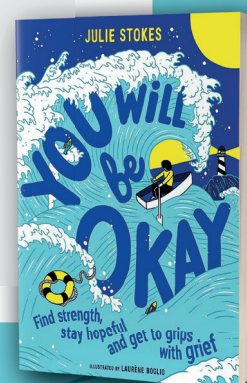
ACTIVITY 4: LETTER OF SUPPORT

Imagine you have received the letter on page 67-68 from a good friend of yours. Look at the boxes they have ticked and write a short note to them in response.

You might want to:

- Tell them how you felt to receive the letter
- Reassure them that you want to help
- Show them that you've read and understood their letter
- Tell them how you feel about them and their friendship

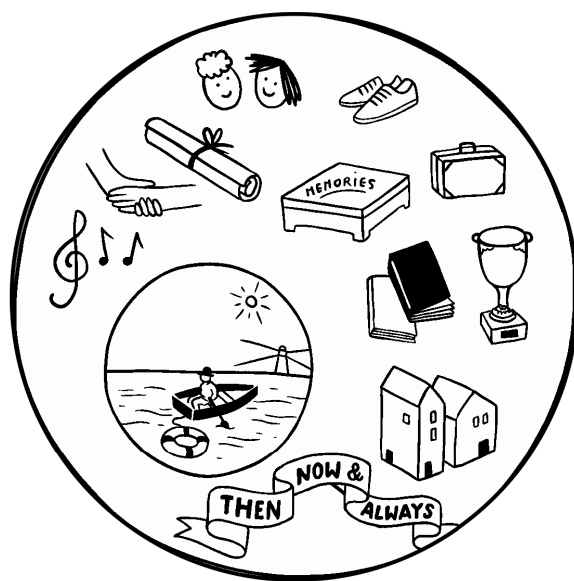
Tip: Everybody deals with grief a little differently. Each person might need slightly different things from their friends and this might change over time. As a friend of somebody who is going through grief, you might not always get it right and that's ok. The most important thing is that your friend knows that you are there and that you care about them. If you are struggling to know how to support a friend, maybe you can talk it through with a trusted adult such as a teacher or carer.



THEME 5: GROWING AROUND GRIEF

Have a look these two images. The images are taken from the last chapter of the book. With a partner, compare the pictures.

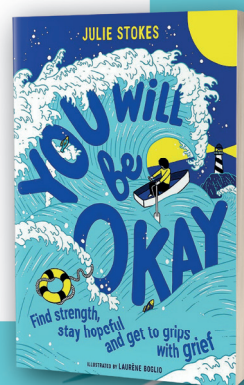
- What can you see in each of the pictures?
- How are they similar and how are they different?
- What do you think each of them might represent?
- Can you predict what this section of the book is about?



Now, read pages 179-182 together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

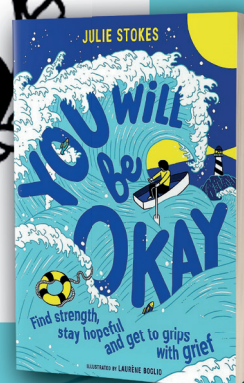
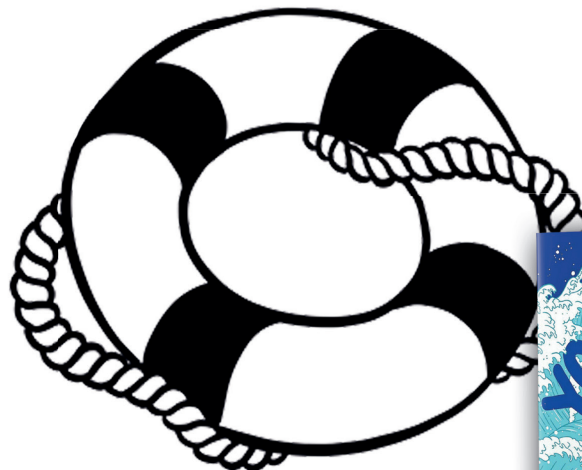
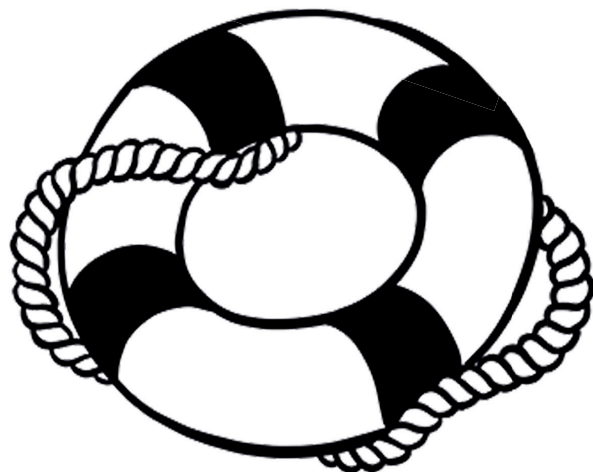
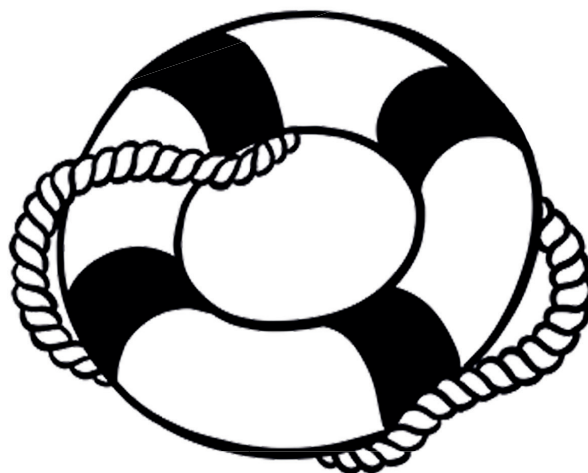
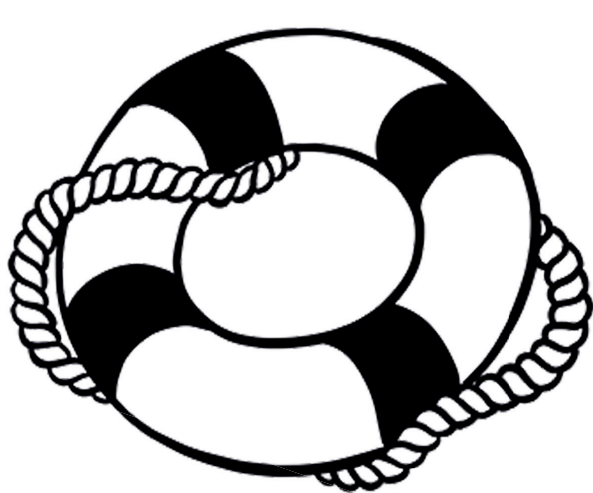
- How does the text help you understand the two images?
- What does the first image show? What does the second image show?
- What do you think each small part of the second image represents?
- How do most people think grief changes over time? Are they right?
- What does it mean to 'grow around grief'?
- Think about one of the people you have read about in this book. How have they grown around grief? What things would be in their larger circle?



ACTIVITY 5: GRIEF STRATEGIES

What grief strategies have you learnt about in this book?

In the life belts write down some things that people might do to help manage their grief:



Remember
strength does
not come from
what you can do.

Real strength
comes from
overcoming
the things you thought
you could not do.

Quote taken from *You Will Be Okay* by Julie Stokes

