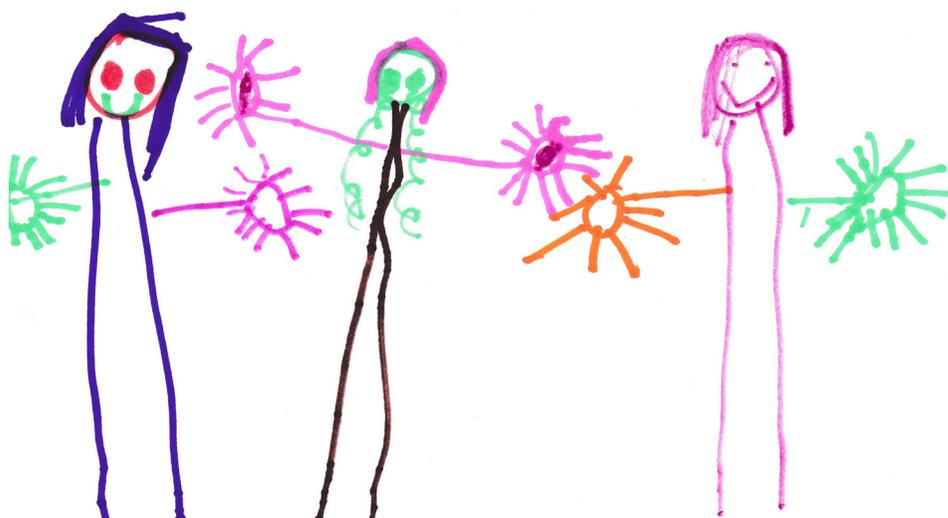




THINGS YOU CAN DO



IF YOUR FRIEND IS SAD OR HURT



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IF YOUR FRIEND IS SAD OR HURT

A 2017 CHILDREN FIRST BOOK

Words & Pictures By

Aion Freelon Asante

Alena Sun

Avery Coffman

Chloe Higgins

Elisabeth Heitsch

Finn Posey

Lia Guajardo

Lillian Pence

Lior Cohen

Miles Wofford-Kao

Parker Eggleston

Sam Linton



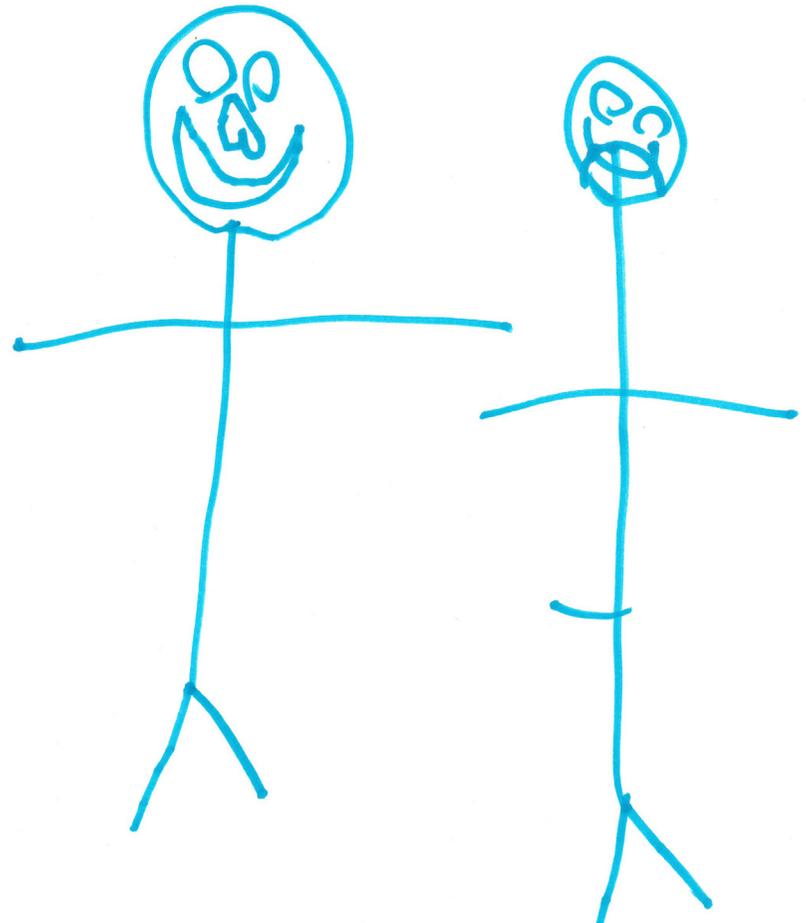
*This Book is dedicated to the memory of Judy Byck
Psychotherapist and Children First Mom
A passionate and gifted practitioner of presence, empathy and connection*

May 7, 1962 – July 12, 2017

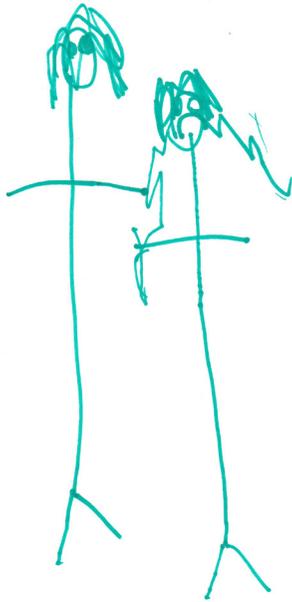
Children Firsters worked with teachers to create this content in 2015, thirteen years after Judy's son Noah graduated from Children First. Judy and I remained close friends during those years, and I told her about this project during one of our long, rich walking conversations about empathy, feelings and human nature. She asked to borrow the binder where we'd collected the kids' words and drawings; fell completely in love with their work; and immediately began encouraging me to publish and share it widely. I know she would be happy that you are holding this small but powerful book in your hands.

—**DONNA KING**, Children First Teacher

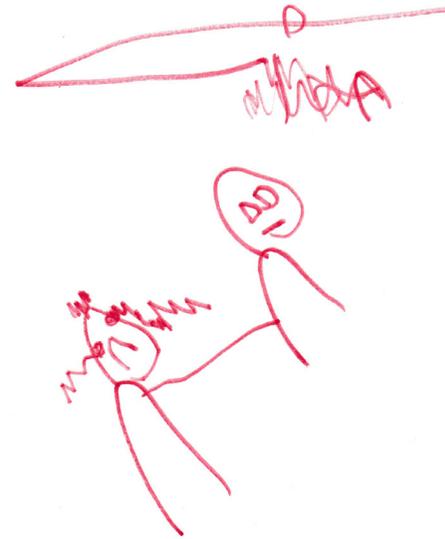
When your friend is feeling hurt or sad, you can . . .



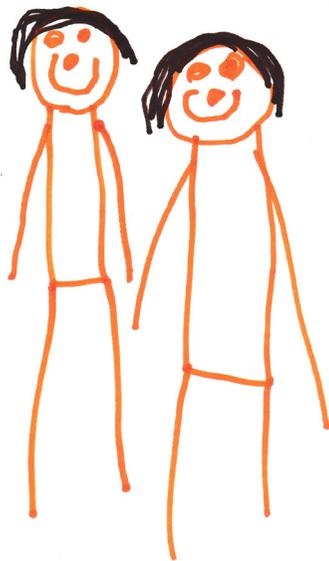
Check on them.



Wait for them.



Stay close beside them. If they like to be touched, rub their back.
If they don't like to be touched, just sit there quietly.



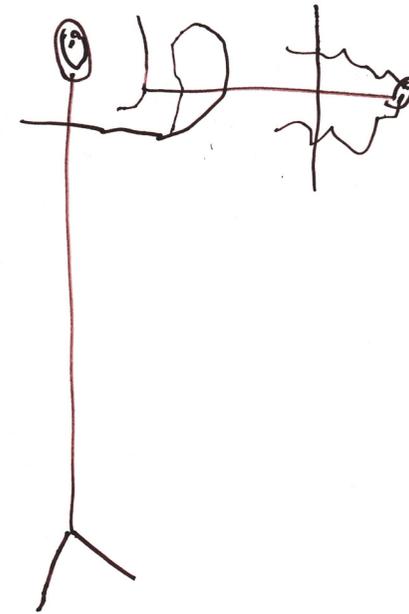
Ask if they want a grown-up.
If they say "Yes," go find a mom or a dad
or a teacher to help.



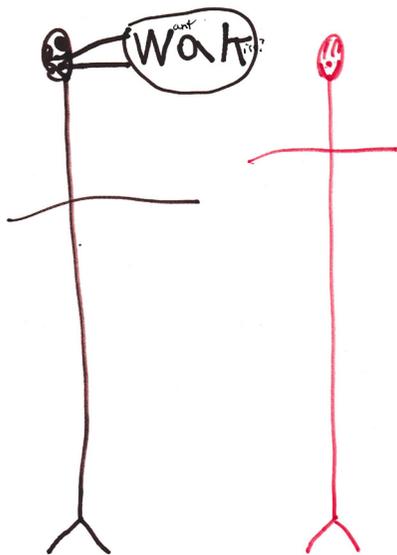
Say, "It's okay."



Give them a hug (but ask first).



You could ask if they want you to pick them up.



Give them a kiss (but ask first).



Get them a cloth.
Ask them if they want it to be wet or to be dry.

Afterword

BY DONNA KING, CHILDREN FIRST TEACHER

Watch your fear shrink as your empathy expands...

—Parker Palmer

Empathy turns us toward the living world with... willingness to experience the vulnerability of disequilibrium. Empathy sizes us in right proportion to others, not more-than, or better-than, or worthier-than, but connected by the shared capacity for joy and suffering.

—Ann Pelo

Aion is four, a sensitive, imaginative, and well-liked member of the kid community. Right now, he is standing in the middle of the bike deck, crying loudly. Around him, the loud and energetic play continues with barely a pause. If anything, the kids who are pedaling and throwing balls and running seem MORE intent on continuing their high-action games. Walking toward Aion to help, I notice my own strong emotional response to the scene. I see that when I interpret what is happening as callous indifference to a friend's distress, I feel an almost visceral shock and strong disapproval. I also see that as I consider the hyped-up energy on the deck more carefully, I discover other stories. I see certain kids who feel overwhelmed by empathy, who identify so strongly with Aion's distress that they instinctively seek distance. I see other kids who worry that stopping to help would mean admitting that Aion's distress is somehow their fault. Some are uncomfortable at the prospect of blaming themselves and feeling guilty; others are more concerned about being seen critically by me. And as a whole, I see many kids who think that taking care of Aion is MY job, and who do not see themselves as having an important contribution to make in this situation.

That first story — the one about callous indifference — leaves me feeling disappointed, worried and discouraged. Not a good landing place for a teacher invested in helping kids learn to live in community.

The second set of stories — the ones that grow from close observation, and an intimate knowledge of these particular kids and their strengths and weaknesses as young social beings — leads us straight into curriculum.

A day or two later, sitting with small groups at lunch, my co-teacher Sarah and I bring the bike deck story back to the children. Many remember the incident. We explain that we want their help to think about a very important question: “What can you do to help when your friend is hurt or sad?” We explain that sometimes when a friend gets hurt or seems sad, the people watching feel worried, and that worried feeling is a signal from their hearts that they should help. The problem is we aren’t always sure HOW to help. Learning how to help is a challenge we can work on together. We promise to write down their ideas so that we can make a book to help us remember that there really *are* powerful things we can do to help friends who are hurt and sad.

Here are some excerpts from those conversations...

From Window Room Lunch six children, ages 4 and 5

Lillian: Check on them.
Lior: Say “Are you OK?”
Miles: If you did it, you could say “Sorry.”
Chloe: Help them. Get them a cloth.
Aion: Give them a hug.
Donna: But remember, there’s something else important about that idea—
Aion: Ask first.
Parker: Give them a kiss.
Donna: But —
Many: Ask first.
Aion: Take them to a nice cool place.

We think together about some pretty places we could take them at Children First — someone suggests the garden.

Chloe: Invite them to dinner.
Donna: Oh, you could ask them to have dinner with you later. But if you want to help right away, maybe you could ask them to join you at the snack table.

Lior: Tell them you want to have a sleepover with me or get lunch at my house.
Aion: Say “Come play with me!”
Donna: That’s a good one—maybe you could say “Come play... whatever your favorite game is...” That makes me wonder — what do you think your friends would invite you to do?
Aion: Play Durham Bull.
Lillian: Play Family or ride a bike.
Donna: I thought you might say “Play Frozen.”
Lillian: (smiling) Yeah.
Lior: A gun game.
Parker: Play Superhero with me. I’ll be Supergirl.
Miles: A gun game.

More ideas (at this point I’d stopped noting names)...

Be there with them.
Rub their back.
Listen to what they want.
You can hold them.

The Window Room lunch kids agree that this would be a good question to survey parents about!

From the Library Lunch Kids six children, ages 3 and 4

Avery: Say sorry if you hurt them.
Elisabeth: Say, “It’s okay.”
Sam: You could pick them up.
Sarah: I imagine you’d ask first.
Sam: Yeah, and say, “Are you okay?”
Avery: If you took something from them and they got sad, you could give the thing back to them.
Lia: Rub the hurt part.
Avery: Get them a cloth.
Sam: A wet cloth.
Avery: Actually, dry.
Sarah: I guess you could ask them which they’d like, and if they’d like one.

Sam: Wait for them.
Elisabeth: For a mom or a dad or a teacher.
Sarah: Could you ask if they'd like for you to get a teacher?
Elisabeth: Yeah.
Avery: Probably they'll get up by themselves.
Elisabeth: Or they might go to that alone space outside or that alone space inside.
Finn: You could get a paint brush and a paint and go in the dark and paint in that hole place. Or on a paper for the friend.
Alena: Probably you could write a letter to them. You could write all of the letters that they like.
Elisabeth: And probably you could read a book to them, like Lillian reads books to us.

We extract the key ideas from these conversations, and make them into individual pages for kids to illustrate. And we help the older kids follow up on their idea to “survey parents” — the children choose the parents they will survey, and ask each adult two questions — “What do you think is a good way to help someone who is hurt or sad?” and “What helps you when *you* are hurt or sad?” As the older kids and I review the parents’ responses together at Window Room lunch each day, we notice how similar most of their ideas are to the ones we already put in the book; when a parent offers an idea that is new to our list, we make those ideas into book pages, too.

When the book is finished, and has been read aloud, and shared with families, it goes on a low shelf beside our big “Book of Agreements.” Sometimes we pull it out when we need an idea. But mostly by now, the ideas seem firmly planted in each child’s workaday memory, and even more obviously, in the collective culture.

The next time I hear Aion crying alone on the playground, I make a simple non-directive statement: “This makes me think about that book we just wrote.” Immediately there are children sitting close to him, listening, touching, and asking how to help. Within two minutes, the problem is identified, and there is an enthusiastic committee working on a plan to help Aion rescue his lost baseball from the creek.

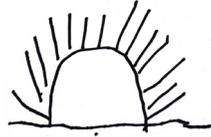
For individual children and for the group as a whole, creating this book brought important information into clear focus, and activated a sense of moral agency; that information and agency, in turn, unlocked empathy and kindness. This sort of transformation is what we hope for when we use the words “teaching” and “learning” and “community.”



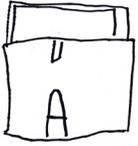
Alieha



Miles



Aion



Avery



Parker



Lillian



Sam



Elisabeth



Lior



Finn



Lpa



Chloe

This book was designed by Miles's Dad over at Horse & Buggy Press.

In an edition of copies, you are holding number