



# Beneath the **Rainbow**

HELPING CHILDREN OVERCOME ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

English

Once upon a time, in beautiful Sri Lanka, there were three extraordinary friends named Aanya, Ravi, and Kavi. They lived in a small village nestled amidst lush green mountains and shimmering lakes.

**Questions for Students**

- What things do you like about Sri Lanka?
- What are some of your favorite things about your home?

**Suggestions to Guide Discussion (Teachers)**

- Speak to the children about the things they enjoy about living in Sri Lanka, the people, nature, and the landscape.
- This is a time to connect with the students and gather them around for a story and lesson.



Singalese

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English

**Aanya was a bright young girl who loved to learn. But her upcoming examinations made her feel anxious. She felt pressure from her parents to do well. Her heart raced, and worries filled her mind.**

**Questions for Students**

- Why do you think Aanya is feeling this way?
- Have you ever felt that way Aanya is feeling?

**Teacher Prompts/Discussion Points**

- Prompt the children to name the different sensations described in the text (e.g. racing heart).
- Encourage the children to describe what they experience when they feel nervous about exams.



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English

**Ravi, a kind-hearted boy, was feeling very upset. He had been teased online by some children that he knew from school. The hurtful words on the screen made him feel sad and lonely.**

**Questions for Students**

- What is making Ravi upset?
- What are some things that might make Ravi feel better? If you knew Ravi, what are some things you would do to help him feel better?

**Teacher Prompts/Discussion Points**

- Encourage the children to get as specific as possible about the nature of bullying that Ravi is experiencing.
- Discuss that online teasing is called cyber bullying.
- Encourage children to identify ways that they can help one another cope with bullying.



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English

**Kavi, a brave and gentle soul, had experienced abuse from a family member when he was younger. His uncle used to hit him and touch him in other ways that made him uncomfortable. Though it was not his fault, Kavi did not tell anyone about it and it made him scared and anxious when he thought about telling other people.**

**Questions for Students**

- Why didn't Kavi tell other people about what happened with his uncle?
- What do you think might happen if he told his parents?
- Do you know the number of the Childline in Sri Lanka

**Teacher Prompts/Discussion Points**

- Encourage children to try their best to take Kavi's perspective and identify the different ways that he is feeling.
- Help children explore the different outcomes that may result from Kavi telling his parents, but emphasize the positive outcomes (e.g. they will help him, etc). Childline number 1929



Khmer

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Tagalog

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English

One day, as the sun painted the sky in pretty colours, Aanya, Ravi, and Kavi decided they wanted to find support for their worries. They decided to confide their worries in safe adults who could help them. A safe adult is someone that you can trust and who you think will help you. Safe adults will not blame you for the troubles that you experience and will try to make things better.

**Questions for Students**

- Who are some safe adults in your life?
- What kinds of worries can we tell our safe adult about?

**Suggestions to Guide Discussion (Teachers)**

- Emphasize that experiencing worries is something that everyone goes through. Normalize asking for support.
- Encourage the children to talk to safe adults about their feelings.



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English

They approached a wise and caring monk, who listened patiently to their fears and worries. He taught them to take deep breaths and how to imagine their worries floating away like clouds. He talked about the importance of finding inner peace. He reminded them that they were not alone.

**Questions for Students**

- What are some ways that the monk helped the children?
- What are some activities we can do when we feel stressed?

**Suggestions to Guide Discussion (Teachers)**

- Guide the children in naming the different ways that the monk helped the children (e.g. listening, providing comfort, deep breathing, etc).
- Try a deep breathing practice with the children.



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English

Next, they turned to their kind and loving teacher, who embraced them with open arms. She encouraged them to express their feelings through art, music, and storytelling. She reminded them of their unique strengths and talents.

**Questions for Students**

- What are some ways that their teacher was able to help them?
- What are some strengths and special talents that you have? What are some things that you like to do to help you express your feelings?

**Suggestions to Guide Discussion (Teachers)**

- Speak to the children about different ways to express their feelings.
- Help the children each identify some of their strengths and talents.



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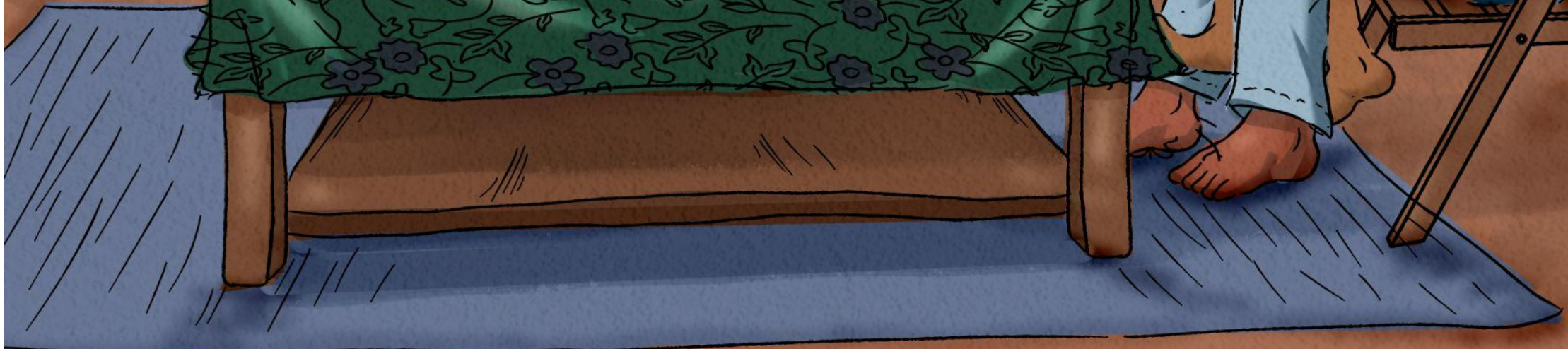
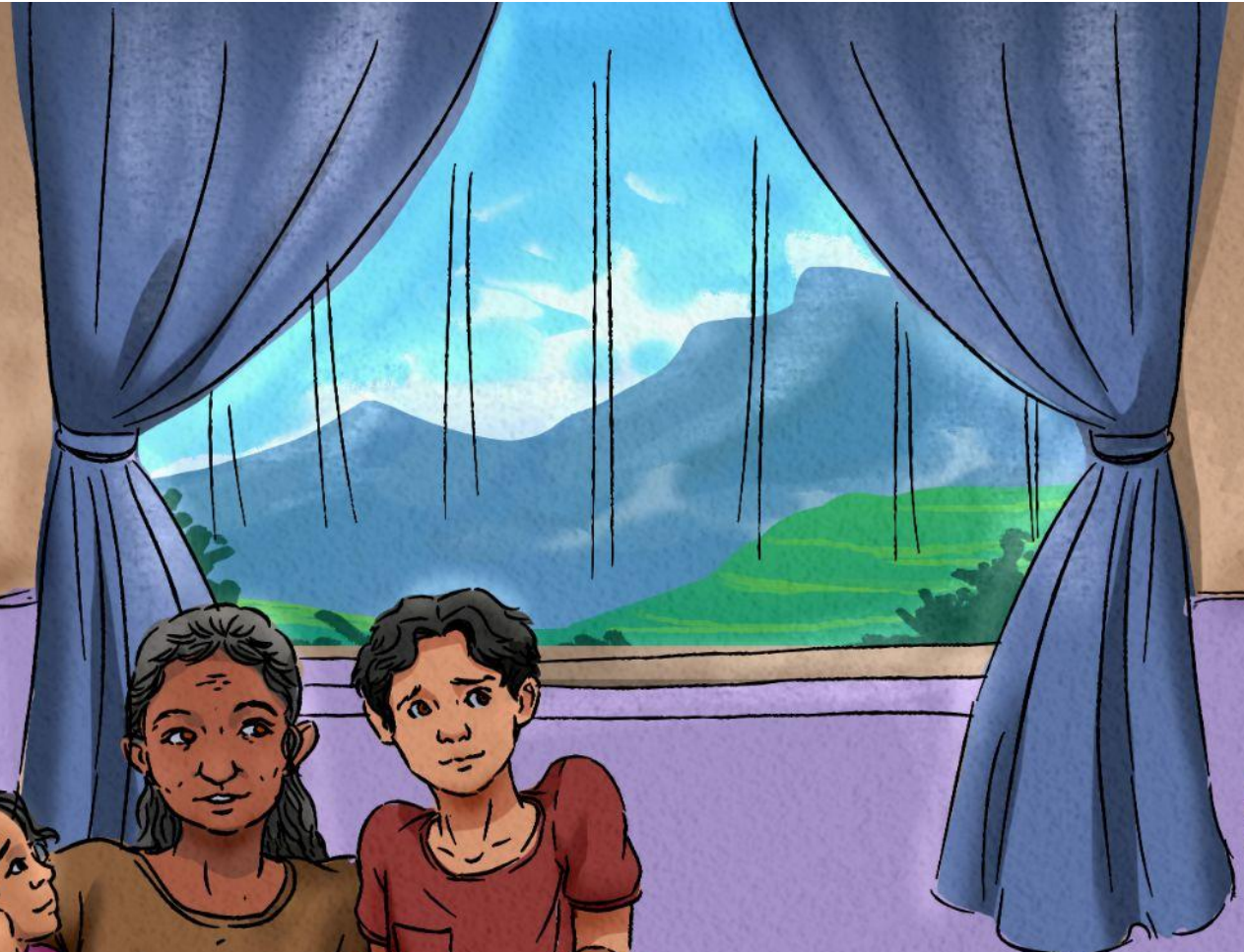
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English

Finally, they sought comfort from their wise grandparent, who held their hands with love. Sharing stories from his childhood, the grandparent showed them that they were capable of overcoming any challenge. Most importantly, he told them that he was proud of them for asking for help when they needed it.

**Question for Students**

- Who are some adults that tell you stories about their life? What do you learn from these stories?

**Suggestions to Guide Discussion (Teachers)**

- Discuss the importance of asking for help when they experience troubling emotions.
- Allow the children to share some things that they have learned from the adults in their lives.



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## English

As the children supported each other through their fears, their friendship grew stronger. They discovered that talking about their worries lessened the weight they carried. They learned the power of empathy and understanding.

### Questions for Students

- What are some ways we can help our friends when they need it?
- What things do you do to help others? How does it feel to help others?

### Teacher Prompts/Discussion Points

- Discuss the ways in which children can support each other.
- Guide the children in some ways that they can help to support each other and how it feels good to help others.



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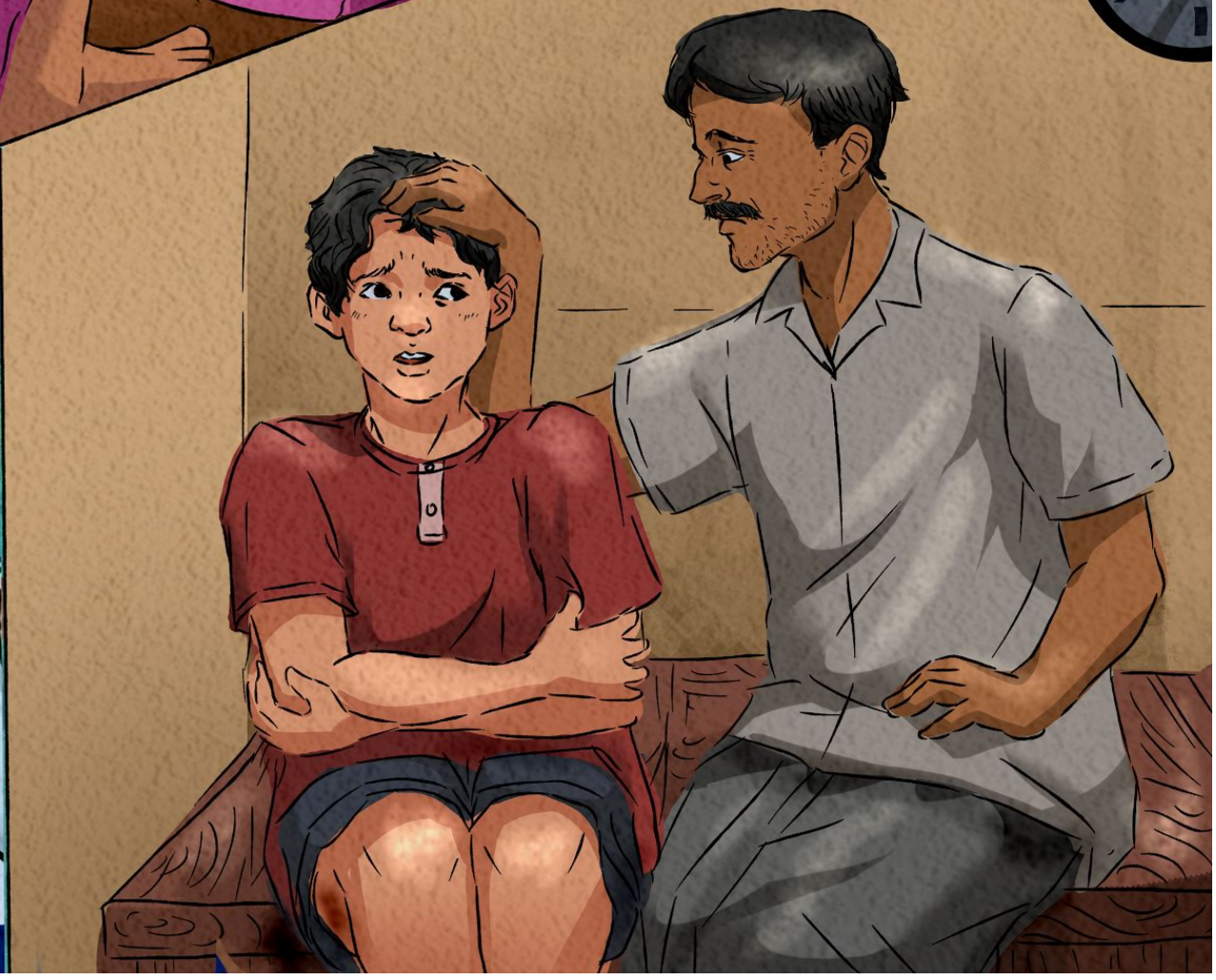
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## English

With newfound strength, Aanya, Ravi, and Kavi felt better than before. They went to adults for help when they needed it.

### Questions for Students

- How do Aanya, Ravi, and Kavi feel differently after going to adults for help?

### Teacher Prompts/Discussion Points

- Make the link for children that discussing fears with a safe adult can help.



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The children's courage shone like a radiant rainbow over their village. Their smiles returned, and laughter echoed through the hills. They were proof that even in the darkest times, hope and healing can be found.

### Questions for Students

- What do you see the children doing in this picture?
- How do you think the children are feeling?

### Teacher Prompts/Discussion Points

- Discuss what prompts in the picture help identify the feelings that the children are having (i.e. they are smiling so they are happy).
- Use this time to discuss the feelings and strength that can come when talking to a safe adult about something that is bothering you.



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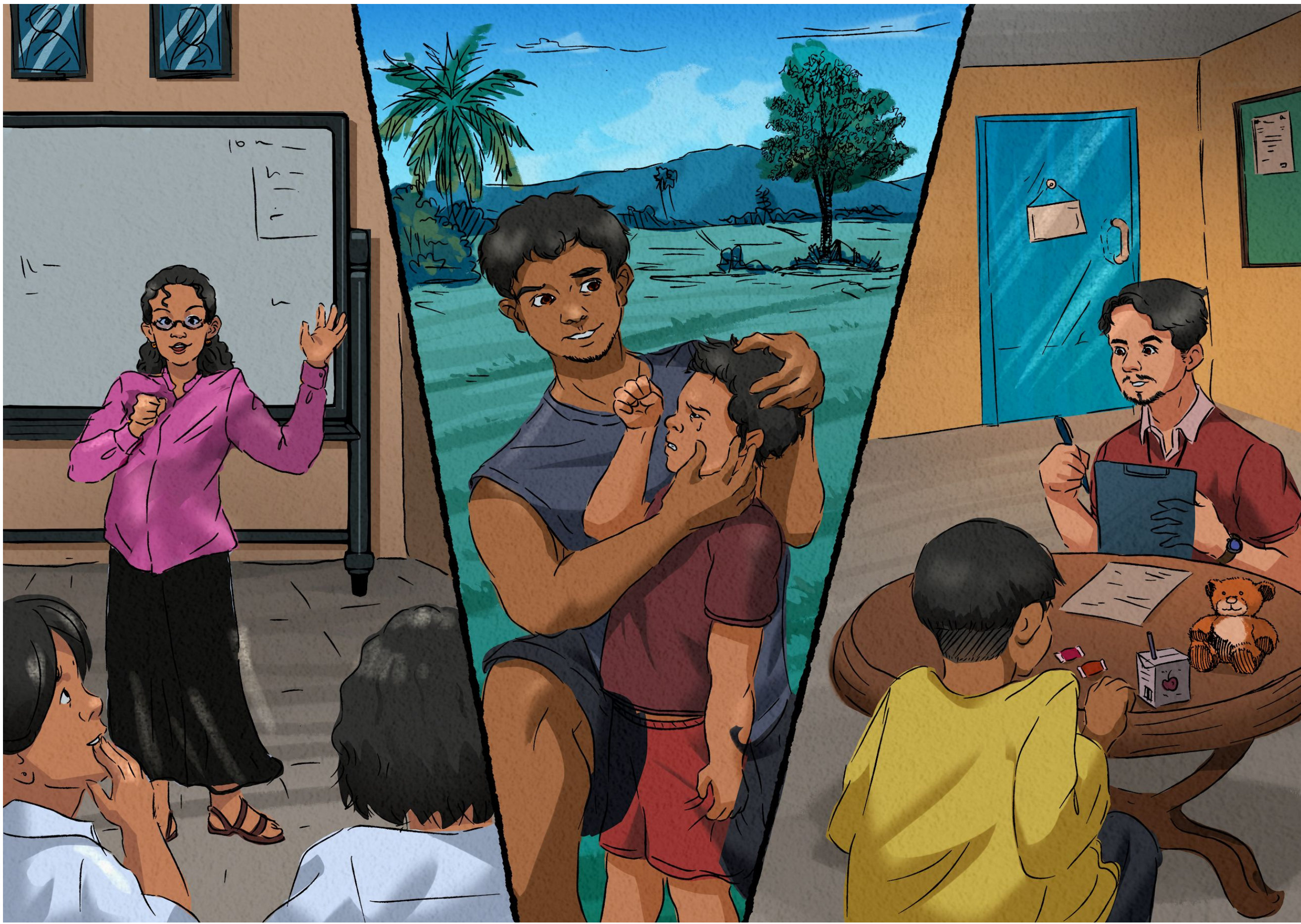
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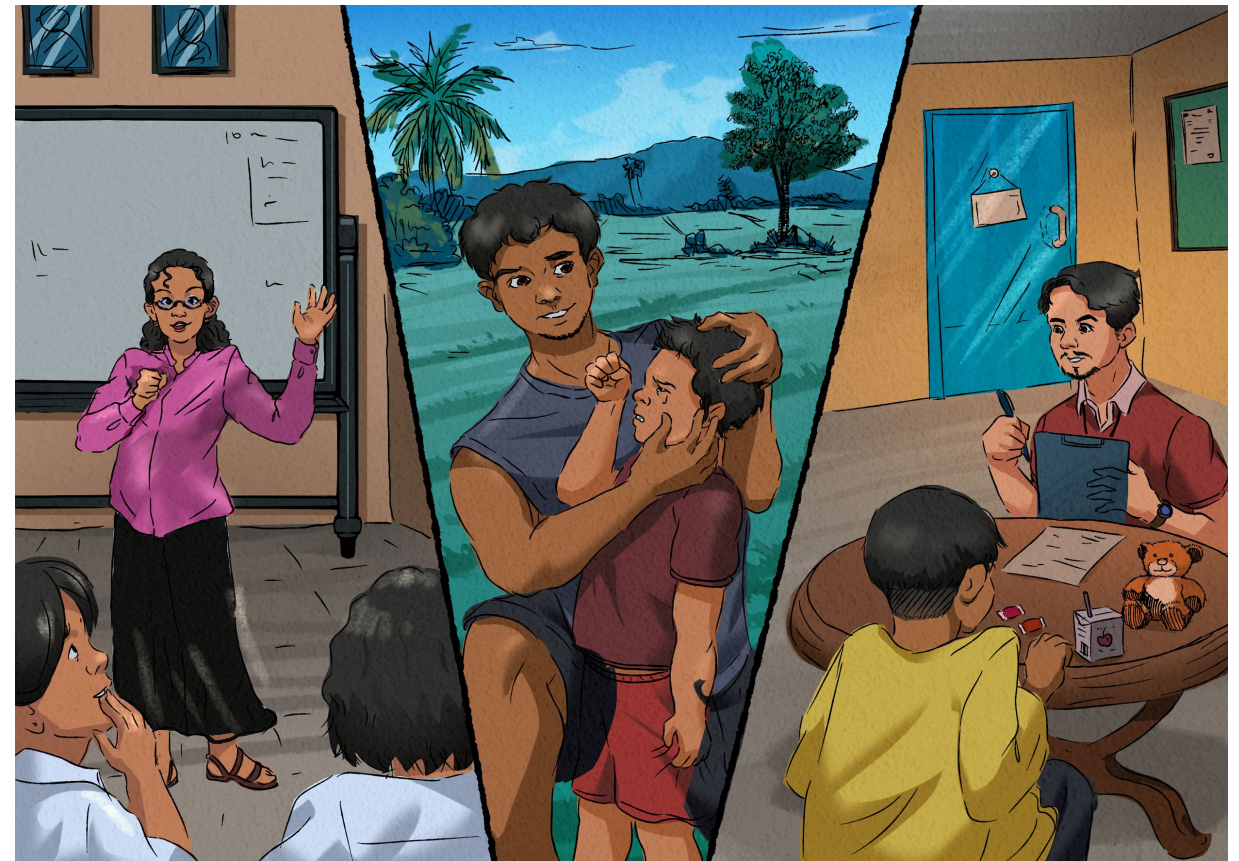
**And so, Aanya, Ravi, and Kavi continued to grow and experienced new things. They reminded others to seek help, to find comfort, and to never give up. Their friendship grew stronger as they continued to have adventures together.**

**Questions for Students**

- What did Kavi, Ravi, and Aanya learn from their experiences?
- How are Aanya, Ravi and Kavi feeling at the end of the story compared to the start of the story?

**Teacher Prompts/Discussion Points**

- Help children identify the different lessons that were expressed throughout the story.
- Help the children identify the changes in the characters' emotions.



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## **KEY MESSAGES:**

**Remember these key messages in your own journey:**

- 1. You are never alone. Reach out to safe adults who can support and guide you.**
- 2. Express your feelings through art, music, or talking to someone you trust.**
- 3. Embrace your unique strengths and talents. They are your superpowers.**
- 4. Be kind to others and stand up against bullying. Your words and actions matter.**
- 5. Remember, there is always hope. With courage and resilience, you can overcome any challenge.**

The following pages consist of some more information on the challenges the children were experiencing.

# Anxiety

**Anxiety in children can manifest as long-term feelings of worry, fear, and unease. This is similar to what Aanya experienced in the story. Children with anxiety may feel nervousness which can be accompanied by physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and irritability. People can experience anxiety for a lot of different reasons. For example, in Aanya's case, she felt like her heart was racing at the thought of her upcoming exams. Some students can experience exam anxiety because they are afraid of failing their exams. Feelings of anxiety can lead to children withdrawing from social activities, refusing to go to school, or avoiding certain people or places to get away from whatever is causing those feelings of stress and worry. In school, anxiety can make it difficult for children to concentrate and participate. It's important to encourage children showing symptoms of anxiety to talk to a trusted adult, as Ravi, Kavi, and Aanya did in the story. Engaging in activities such as mindfulness exercises (e.g. deep breathing), physical activity, creative arts, or journaling can help reduce anxiety.**

# **Some Tips to Help Children Manage Anxiety:**

- 1. When stressful situations, like exams are upcoming, tell children that it is normal to feel nervous or worried.**
- 2. Encourage children to take deep breaths before they start their day and at anytime where they feel nervous. Modeling deep breathing by guiding kids through it, is a great way to get started.**
- 3. Help children identify 2-3 adults that they can talk to when they are feeling anxious. This will support their emotion regulation by reminding them that they are not alone.**
- 4. Encourage children to spend some time outside and with their friends even when they have a lot of school work to do. Exercise and spending time with friends reduces anxiety.**
- 5. For children experiencing intense anxiety, use a grounding technique to help them calm down. Ask them to identify 5 things they see, 4 things they can touch, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell, and 1 thing they can taste.**

# Bullying and Depression

**Bullying occurs when someone uses physical force and harmful teasing to intimidate or hurt another person. In the story, Ravi experienced online bullying from other children. This type of bullying is called cyber bullying, and it can occur on social media or over direct methods of online communication (e.g. email, texting, messaging on apps, etc). Experiences of bullying can lead to feelings of anxiety or depression in children. Children with depression experience long lasting feelings of loneliness, sadness, and low motivation. Some indications that a child is experiencing depression include behaviors such as acting out, being argumentative, having low self confidence, irritability, and changes in regular eating and sleeping habits (e.g. eating/sleeping more or less than usual). Engaging in group activities, playing outside, sharing their feelings with others, and making art can help children manage their experience of depression.**

# **Some Tips to Help Children Manage Depression**

- 1. Normalize the experience of sadness and loneliness by explaining that everyone experiences these emotions**
- 1. Talk to children about the importance of healthy habits, such as sleeping enough, eating adequate meals, and spending time outside. Parents should monitor and encourage these habits.**
- 1. Help children identify 2-3 adults that they can talk to when they are feeling depressed. This will support their emotion regulation by reminding them that they are not alone.**
- 1. Encourage children to spend time engaging in activities that they are good at and those that they enjoy. This helps build their self-esteem and improves their mood. Happy children with balance in their daily activities perform better academically and socially!**
- 1. When possible and necessary, seek advice from professional counselors to learn how to better support children in need. It is important to be patient and kind in your approach.**

# Experiencing Sexual Abuse

**Child sexual abuse, also referred to as molestation, occurs when an adult engages in any sexual behavior with a minor (someone under the age of 18). Most children are sexually abused by individuals that they know, as opposed to strangers. Similar to Kavi in the story, children that experience sexual abuse are at risk for developing anxiety and depression. Additionally, these children are often afraid to tell their family members about the sexual abuse because they are ashamed and scared of getting into trouble. Some children may not have the ability to explain what happened to others. Educating children about sexual abuse, helping them feel safe, and identifying safe adults are all ways to prevent sexual abuse and support children if it does occur.**

# Some Tips to Address Child Sexual Abuse

- 1. Educate children about what sexual abuse is in a developmentally appropriate fashion. Talk to children about “safe touch” versus “unwanted touch”, and help children understand where their private zones are located.**
- 2. Help children identify 2-3 adults that they can talk to when if they experience something that makes them uncomfortable. This will support their emotion regulation by reminding them that they are not alone.**
- 3. If children share a vulnerable experience, remain calm, non judgemental and ask questions to better understand if the child is in immediate danger.**
- 4. When possible and necessary, seek advice from professional counselors to learn how to better support children in need. It is important to be patient and kind in your approach.**