



MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES
DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS

NOAH'S GROWING UP DIARY

I DON'T WANT TO BE A BROTHER



Illustrated by Nelson Lip



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"Happy Birthday Noah! Make a wish!" said Mum and Dad. Noah thought hard for a moment and said, "I wish I can play football with Dad, and go on a picnic with Mum."

"That's wonderful! But remember Noah, you are now six years old and you will become a brother soon. We have renovated our storeroom and it's now become your room where you can play, study and sleep," said Mum.

"Your little sister is joining us soon, so it is time for you to learn how to take care of yourself. Then you can help Dad and Mum to look after your little sister," said Dad.



"Hurray! I can display all my toys in the room and choose what to play with every day. But I don't want to sleep alone. I'm scared of the dark! Can't I sleep with you like we used to?" Noah begged Mum and Dad.

"We will be busy taking care of your little sister soon. We have to feed her, help her to change and put her to sleep. It's time for you to learn to sleep on your own," explained Mum.

"Then why can't my little sister sleep on her own? I don't want to sleep alone," Noah started crying and throwing his things around.



"Stop, Noah! You will hurt your Mum and put your little sister in danger," Dad raised his voice and stood in front of Mum, trying to protect her.

"I don't care. I don't want to sleep in the new room alone!"

"Dad and Mum have always given you all our love and attention. That's why we got you a football and all the other presents for your birthday – and now you're being rude to us. Stay in your room and think about how naughty you've been!" Dad said angrily. He then walked away with Mum to calm down in the living room.





Noah was upset about being left behind. He unwrapped the present Dad and Mum had left in the room. He tried to hold the football but it slipped, and a “bang”, “bang”, “bang” sound filled the room as it bounced away.



Noah was very sad and confused. Tears started falling from his eyes. “Why do I have to be a brother? Why do Mum and Dad always only care about my little sister?” As Noah tried to wipe away his tears, he couldn’t help but feel worried that Mum and Dad did not love him anymore. “I just wanted to have fun on my birthday,” sobbed Noah.



Suddenly, the silence was broken.

“Hi Noah, why are you crying?”

Noah turned around but couldn't see anyone else.

“Who are you?” Noah trembled with fear.

“I am a Super Ball from the Universe. I can be your playmate, your listener and your best friend.” Ball stood in front of Noah among the birthday balloons and waved to Noah, “Are you looking for something fun and interesting? I can accompany you to do whatever you want.”

“Really?” Noah asked, wide-eyed.



“Did you have fun, Noah? It’s time to go home. Dad and Mum are waiting for you,” said Ball. All of a sudden, Noah felt his heart sink, and his smile faded.



My little sister isn't even born yet and already Dad and Mum have stopped caring about me. They just want to spend time with her while I am to stay quiet in my room.

You might not remember but when you were a baby, your parents gave you all their time and attention, and they still do.



But why do I have to be a good brother?



Do Dad and Mum still love me?

Do you remember that Dad has Auntie Florence as his sister and Mum has Uncle Fred as her brother? They took care of each other and had fun together when they were young. Having a sister means that you will have someone to play football with and someone to grow taller together.



Your parents can't spend all their time with you doesn't mean that they don't love you! Talk to them and tell them what you feel if you are unhappy.



As the sun set, Noah and Ball were on their way home. Suddenly, they found Dad and Mum, who were looking for Noah in the park and were anxious.



"Noah, where have you been? We've been searching for you for hours," worried Mum asked.

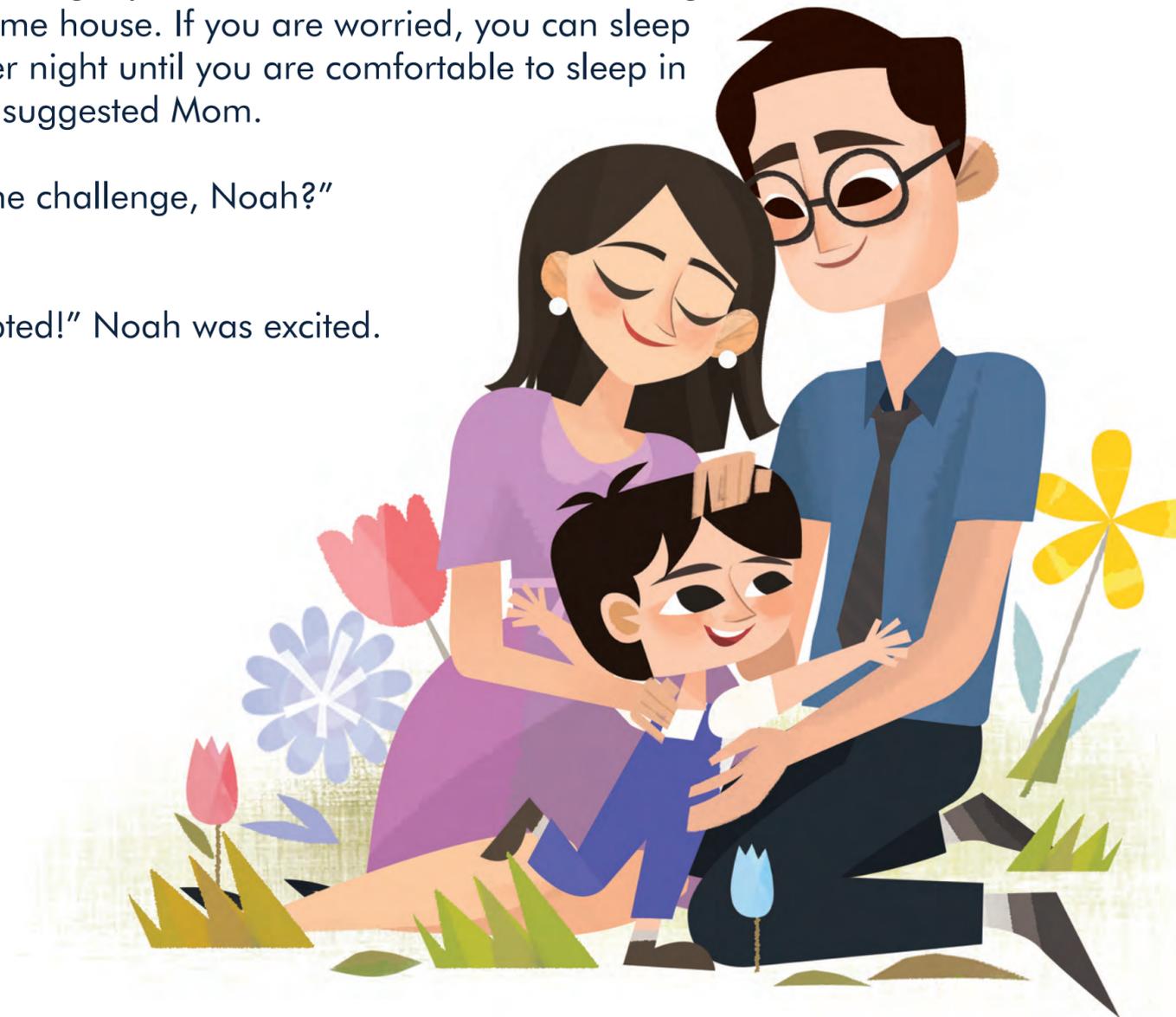
"Mum! Dad!" cried Noah, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have thrown things at you. I didn't behave well."

Dad and Mum looked at each other and smiled knowingly.

"My dear boy, you've got your own room but we are still living together in the same house. If you are worried, you can sleep with us every other night until you are comfortable to sleep in your own room," suggested Mom.

"Do you accept the challenge, Noah?" asked Dad.

"Challenge accepted!" Noah was excited.



Parents' Corner

What do parents need to know about adjustment-related anxiety?

Adjustment-related anxiety is a condition where a child feels nervous, worried and angry in reaction to stress. The child may also fear losing important people in his or her life, such as Noah, who was worrying about losing his parents to his little sister. It is natural for a child to feel jealous when a new sibling is born. Unlike adults, children display more behavioral symptoms. But we should try to remember that the child is not misbehaving on purpose. Instead, they are struggling to adjust to the new situation.

Big changes that upset children can include welcoming a new sibling, attending a new school or moving to a new neighborhood. At first, children can feel left behind, uncared for or even unloved. As they become more familiar with the new arrangement, they will feel happy and safe again. When a child feels anxious for a long time and that starts to interrupt their daily activities, such as by preventing them from joining family activities or going to school, then it becomes a condition that requires professional support, such as from a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Signs of adjustment-related anxiety can start to show up in children from age six, and include (but are not limited to):

- Difficulty concentrating or refusing to go to school
- Altered eating patterns, loss of appetite or a drastic increase in food intake
- Difficulty sleeping, bad dreams and bed-wetting
- Being more irritable and prone to angry outbursts
- Being sad frequently
- Losing interest in favorite toys or activities
- Withdrawing from friends and family members or becoming more clingy
- Complaining of tummy aches and feeling unwell



How do we help children with adjustment-related anxiety?

Encourage your child to share their worries with you.

- Set a fixed time to talk to them and ask them about what makes them afraid.
- Tell them about when you felt worried or afraid about a new situation and how you worked through your anxiety. Let them see that it's OK to have fears and to talk about them – and that you can understand and support them.

Try to talk through what they are feeling: "I can see that you're angry. It must be difficult to wait for your turn while I change the baby's clothes. It is not OK to shout or throw things, but you really can tell me when you're not happy about things."

- This is also an ideal time to reward and praise your child's good behavior.

Establish a solid daily routine for your child, with fixed times for learning, rest, hobbies and interaction with family members.

- Stability and consistency can help your child to feel safe in the midst of new situations, reducing any stress for them.

Encourage them to join in in social activities such as outings, meals and gatherings.

- Familiar friends and loved ones can help your child to recognize that they are not alone in facing new situations, and also help to take their mind off their worries.

If you are worried about your child's adjustment-related anxiety or notice that it is starting to affect going to school or joining activities, it is important that you speak to a mental health professional such as a psychologist or psychiatrist. You are not alone in facing this and your child can get better with professional help.

Visit our website to learn more mental health tips:

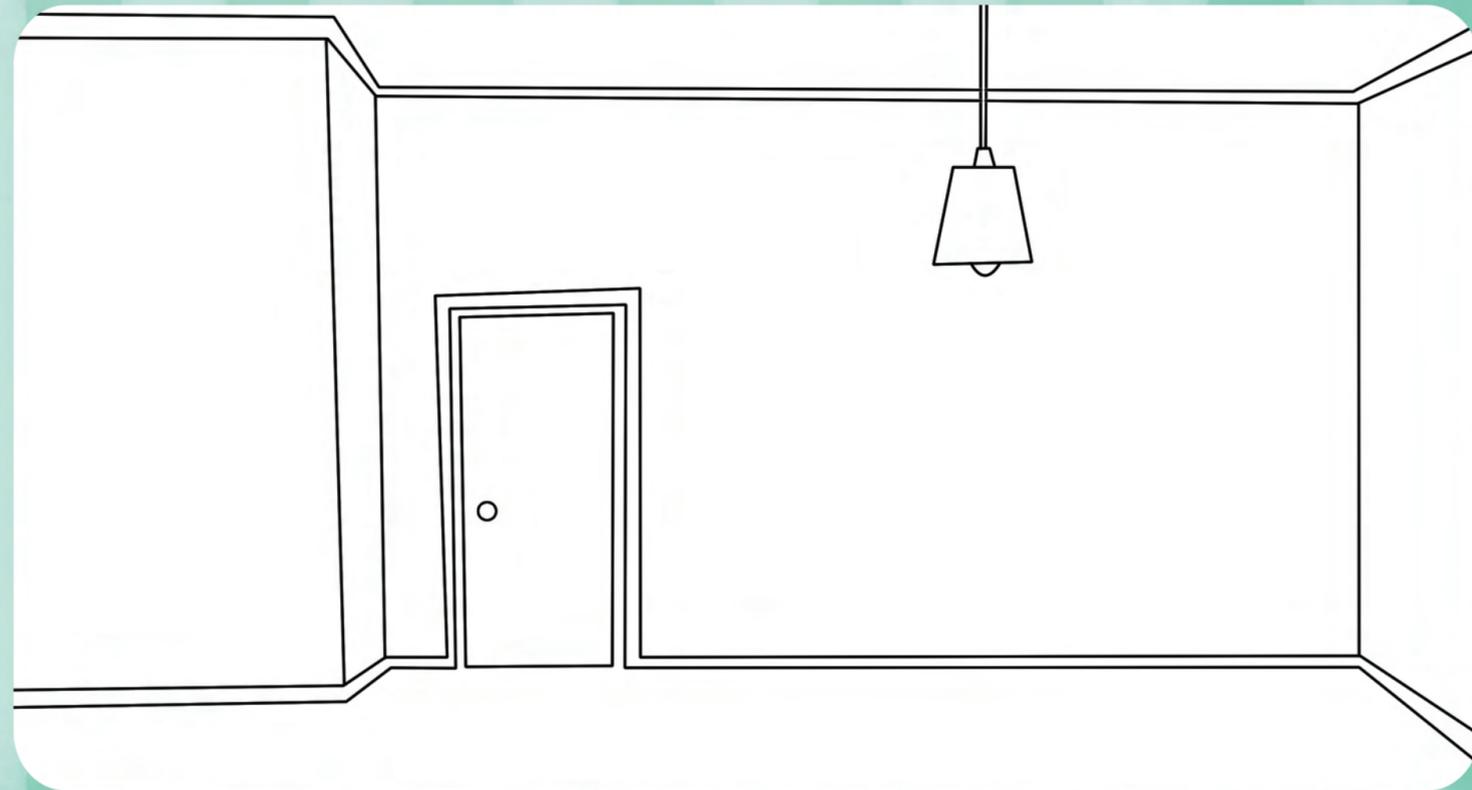
howareyou.msf.hk/en/anxiety/



Relaxation Time for Parents and Kids

We are a family!

Your little brother/sister is joining your family soon. Let's prepare and design the room for him/her. Draw and color the furniture and items you think a newborn baby needs in the picture below.



 *Tip: Inviting your child to help prepare for the arrival of new sibling is one of the ways for them to cope with the new adjustments gradually.*

Standby you

With the arrival of new family member, you may want to rearrange the time you spend with your family, your friends and on studying. Plan your timetable below and see if you have shared out your time evenly for different activities. Draw the icons for those activities in the boxes for the day. When you've filled in the month and you think there's a fair share of each activity, show it to your parents.

-  Helping Mum and Dad to take care of little sister/brother
-  Having fun with friends
-  Studying hard
-  Family time

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
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 *Tip: With the arrival of a new child, parents should dedicate time for the older child to prevent him/her from having a feeling of being left behind.*

There are many ways to help your child to cope with anxiety. Explore the most suitable way with your child!



About Médecins Sans Frontières

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is an international, independent, medical humanitarian organisation that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, natural disasters and exclusion from healthcare. We offer assistance to people based on need and irrespective of race, religion, gender or political affiliation. In 1998, MSF formally recognised the importance of providing mental healthcare as part of its emergency work.

About “Noah’s Growing Up Diary”

“Noah’s Growing Up Diary” is a series of three storybooks on mental health created and produced by MSF Hong Kong with the support of MSF psychologists. The story is centred around Noah, a six-year-old boy, who started attending primary school and who will soon be a big brother. The stories are designed to help children to prepare for and go through challenging circumstances and as a support for parents to draw out conversation with their kids. Noah’s emotional experience is normal and common amongst kids going through transitions. We highly recommend parents to read the storybook series with their kids.



I don't want to be a brother



First day of School



I am sick!

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*Visit our website to know more about mental health:
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