Trinka and Sam
Fighting the Big Virus:
Trinka, Sam, and Littletown Work Together

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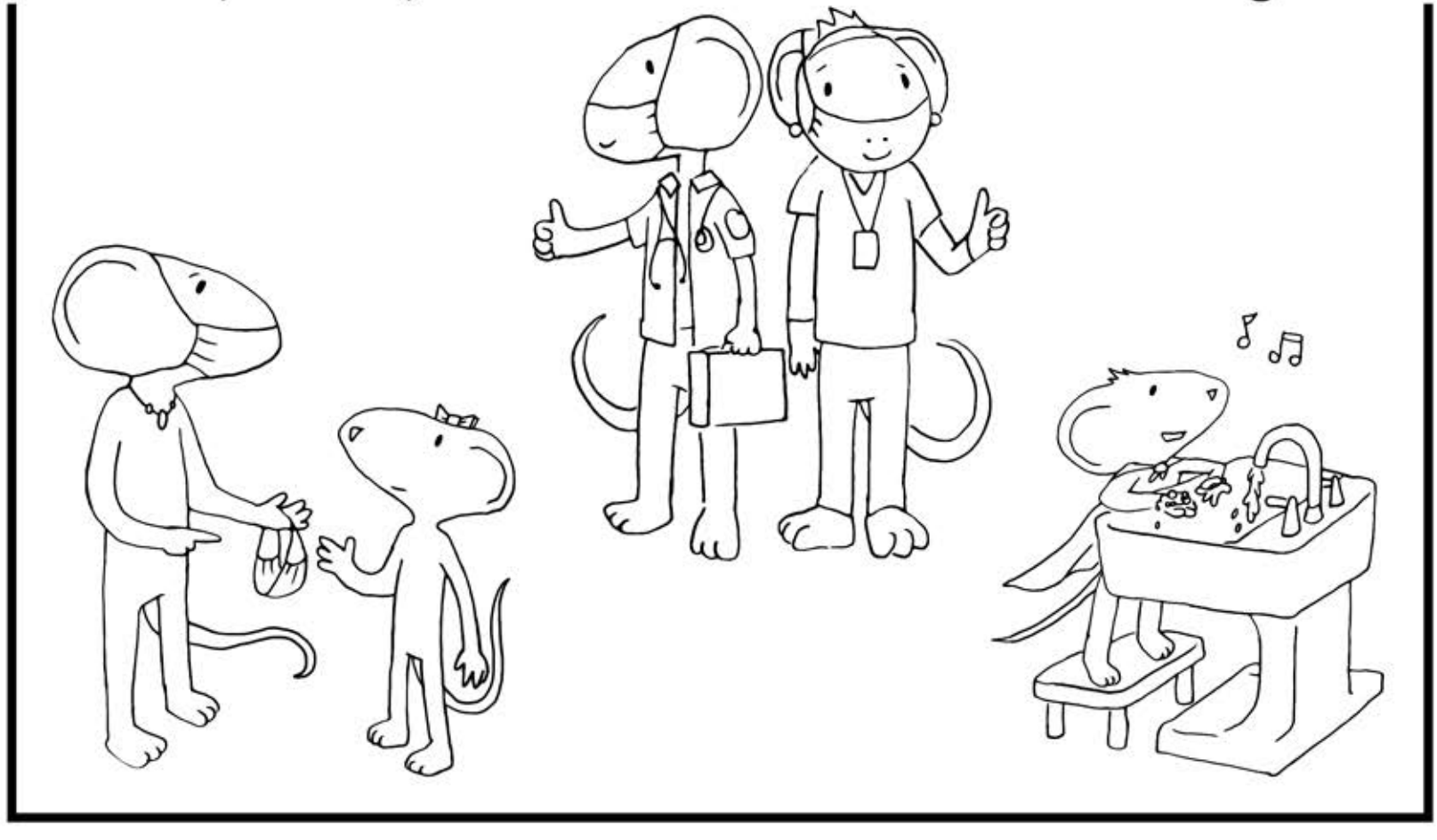

Fighting the Big Virus:
Trinka, Sam, and Littletown Work Together

by Chandra Michiko Ghosh Ippen
and Melissa Brymer

Illustrated by Erich Ippen, Jr.

Note: This story was designed to be used either on its own or jointly with the companion booklet, *Fighting the Virus: Trinka and Sam's Questions*

The story and companion booklet were developed to help young children and their families begin to talk about their experiences and feelings related to the global coronavirus pandemic.

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Please feel free to link to this resource and share it from either https://piploproductions.com or https://nctsn.org.

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More information about the story, the use of the story, and the team who created the story can be found at: https://piploproductions.com. The website also has other stories and resources to help children and families heal after stressful or traumatic experiences.

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The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

More information about how to help children and families who have experienced stressful or traumatic events can be found at www.nctsn.org.

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A PARTNER IN NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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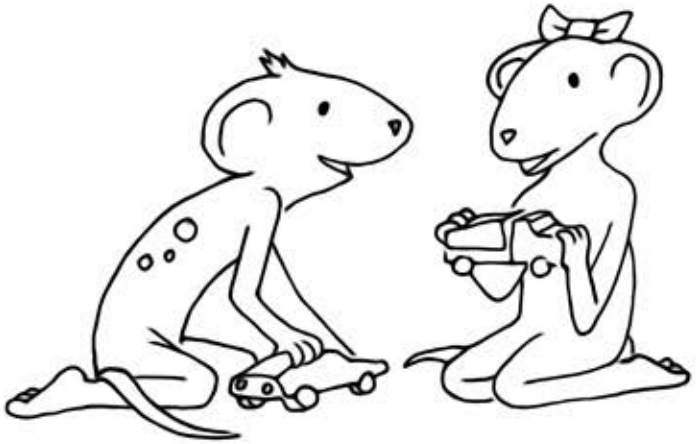
For the children of the world and all the frontline workers. You are in our hearts!

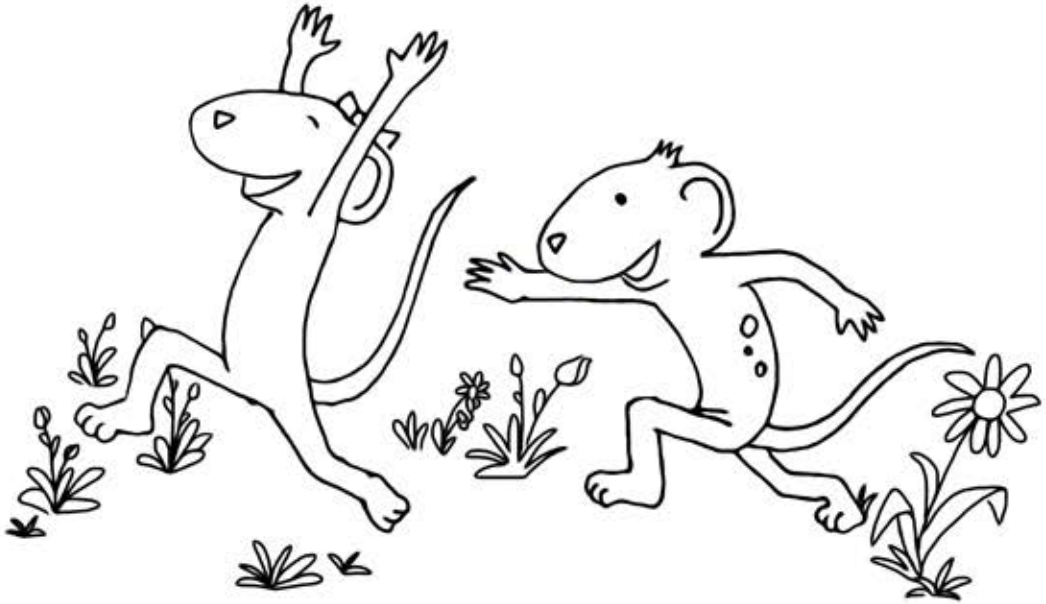
Adults: This story was designed to help children cope with fears and worries related to COVID-19. Please read it by yourself first and think about how you will use it with your child. Review the parent guide and the accompanying booklet *Trinka and Sam's Questions.* Even if you choose not to read specific pages to your child, the story, the booklet, and the parents' guide at the end of the book, may help you better understand your child's reactions to COVID-19. If you decide to read the story with your child, you may want to encourage your child to color in some of the pictures. If people in your area are wearing masks when they go outside, you and your child can color masks on the mice when they are outside.

This is Trinka.

And this is Sam.



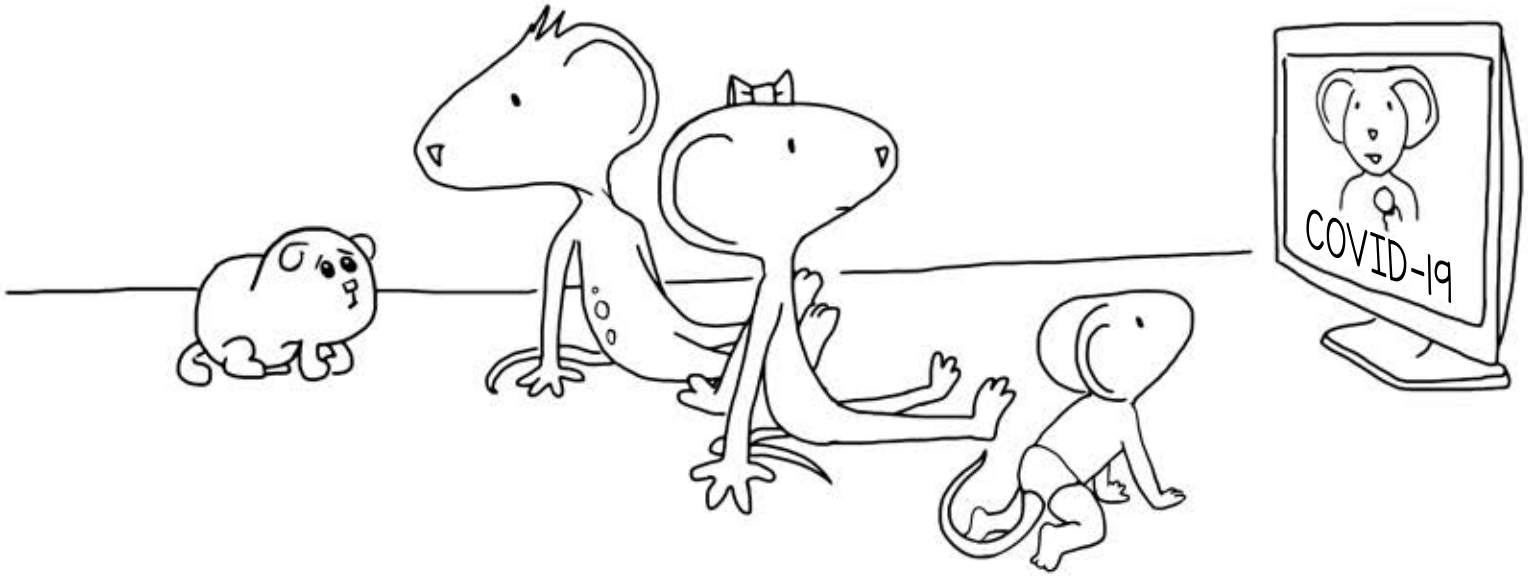
They are neighbors, and they like to play together.



In the spring, they run outside and welcome the flowers.

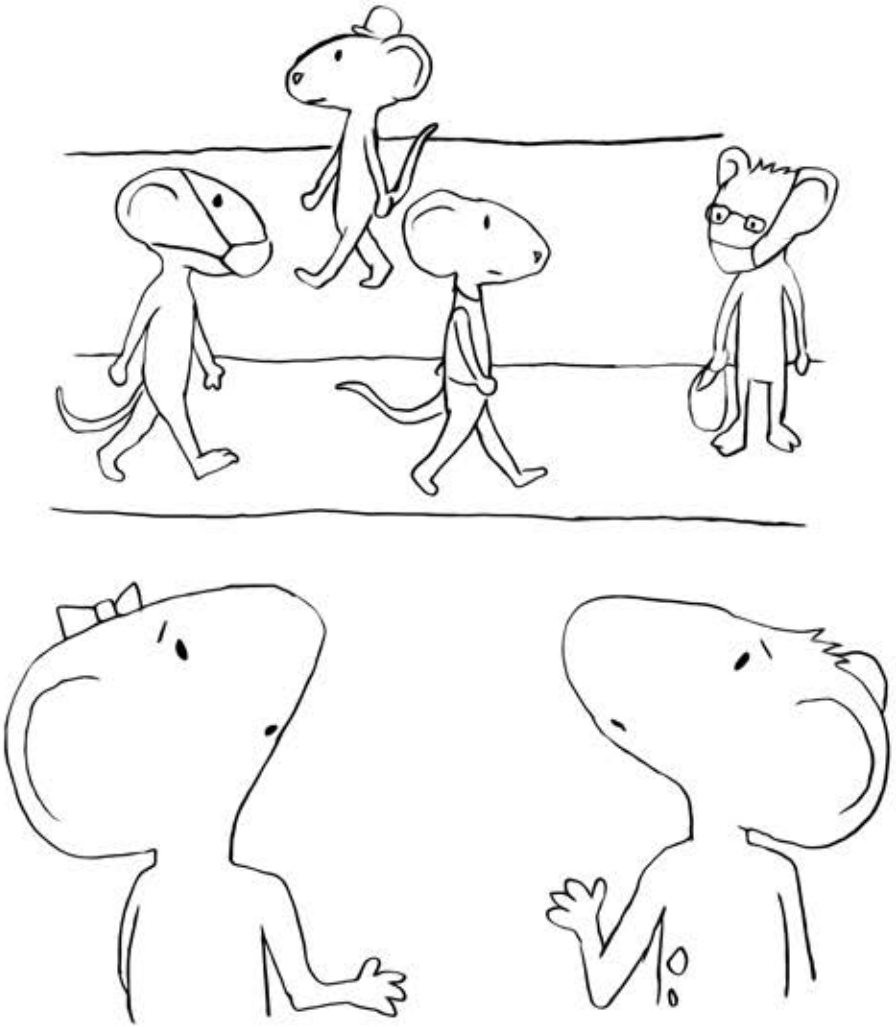
And when it rains, they love to go puddle stomping.

And they always listen when it's time to stop. Well, . . . almost always.



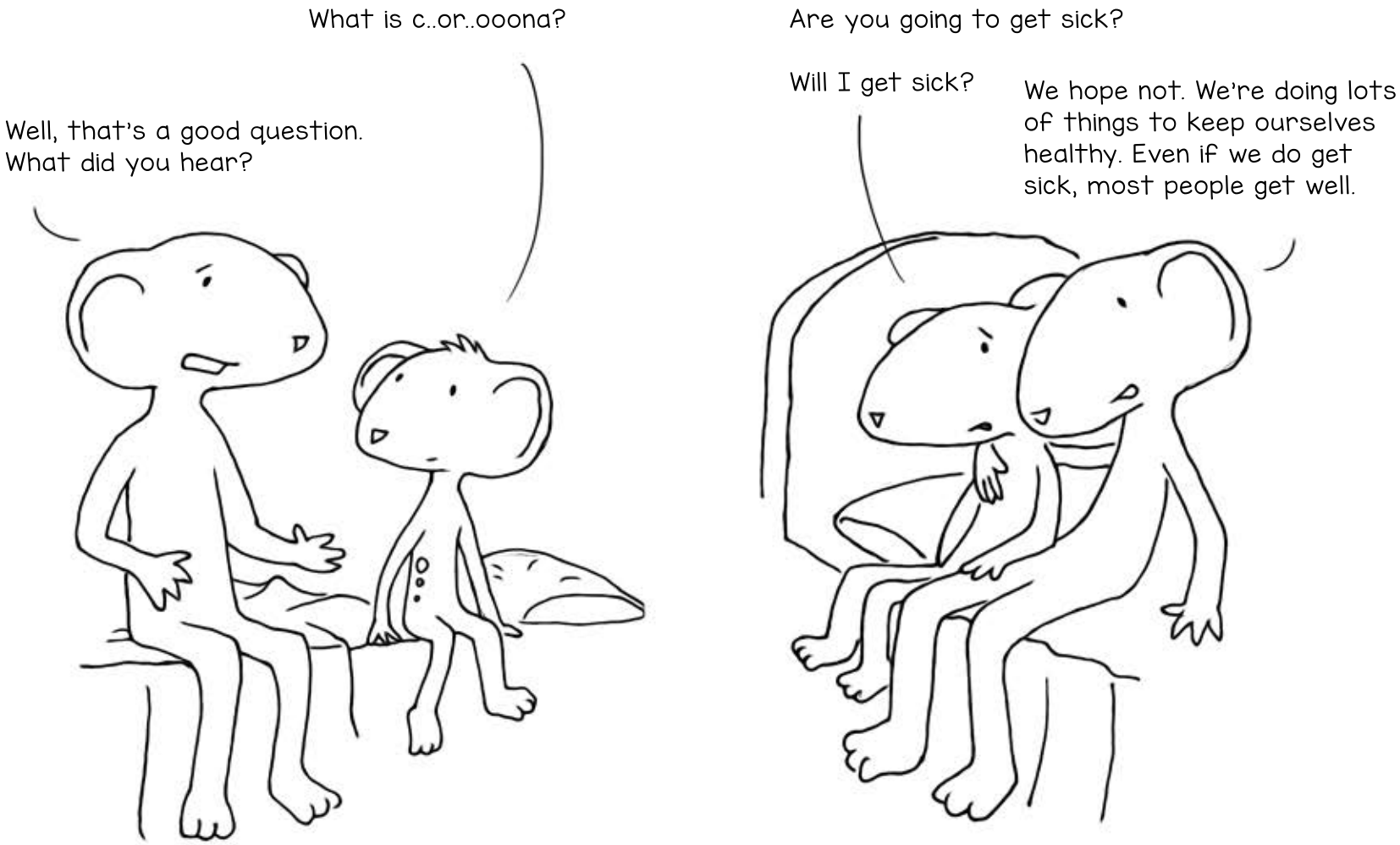
One day while they were watching TV at Sam's house, they heard about an illness that was spreading and making lots of people sick. The grown-ups on TV were worried.

Trinka and Sam were worried too. Even Sam's baby brother, Cal, and their pet Juju seemed to know that something scary was happening.



A few days later, they saw people wearing masks on their faces. They didn't understand why.

They saw people buying lots of groceries, and sometimes the things they wanted weren't in the store. That was strange.



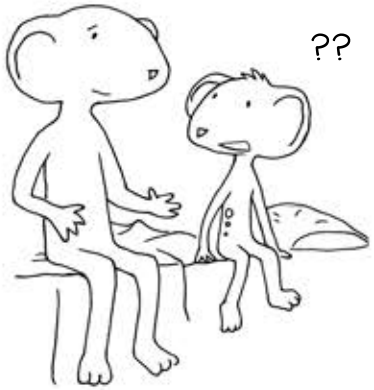
That night Trinka and Sam asked their parents lots of questions and talked to them about their worries. Their parents listened carefully. Then they helped them understand why people were worried about this new BIG virus and what they could do to stay safe.

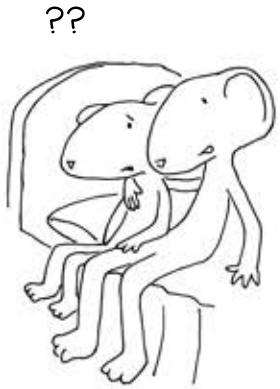
NOTE: You can add pages from the booklet Trinka and Sam's Questions after this page.

Trinka and Sam's Questions & Worries

Note for Parents and other Caregivers

- Trinka and Sam had lots of questions.
- Their questions are included in a companion booklet Trinka and Sam's Questions, which can be downloaded from http://piploproductions.com/trinka-and-sam-virus/
- Your child may have some of these questions too.
- Look through the pages and decide which ones you want to include when you read the story with your child.
- You may choose to leave out pages if you don't think they'll be helpful because of how the virus is affecting your community and family or if your family has already talked about these things.





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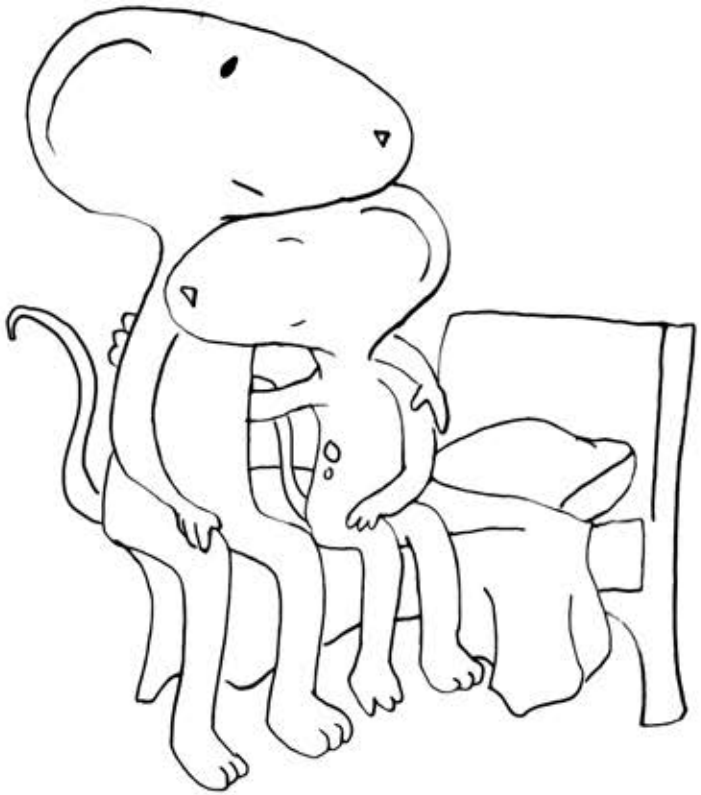
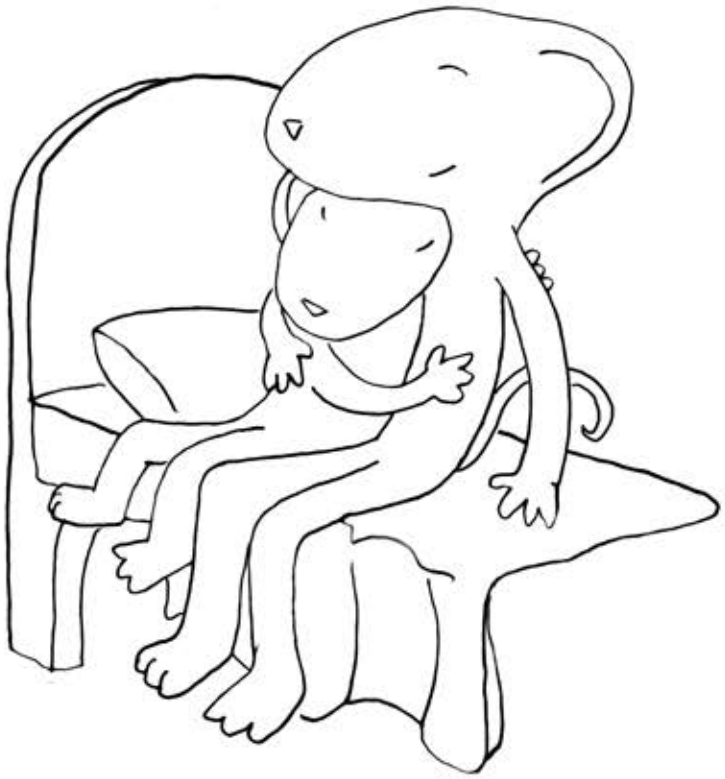
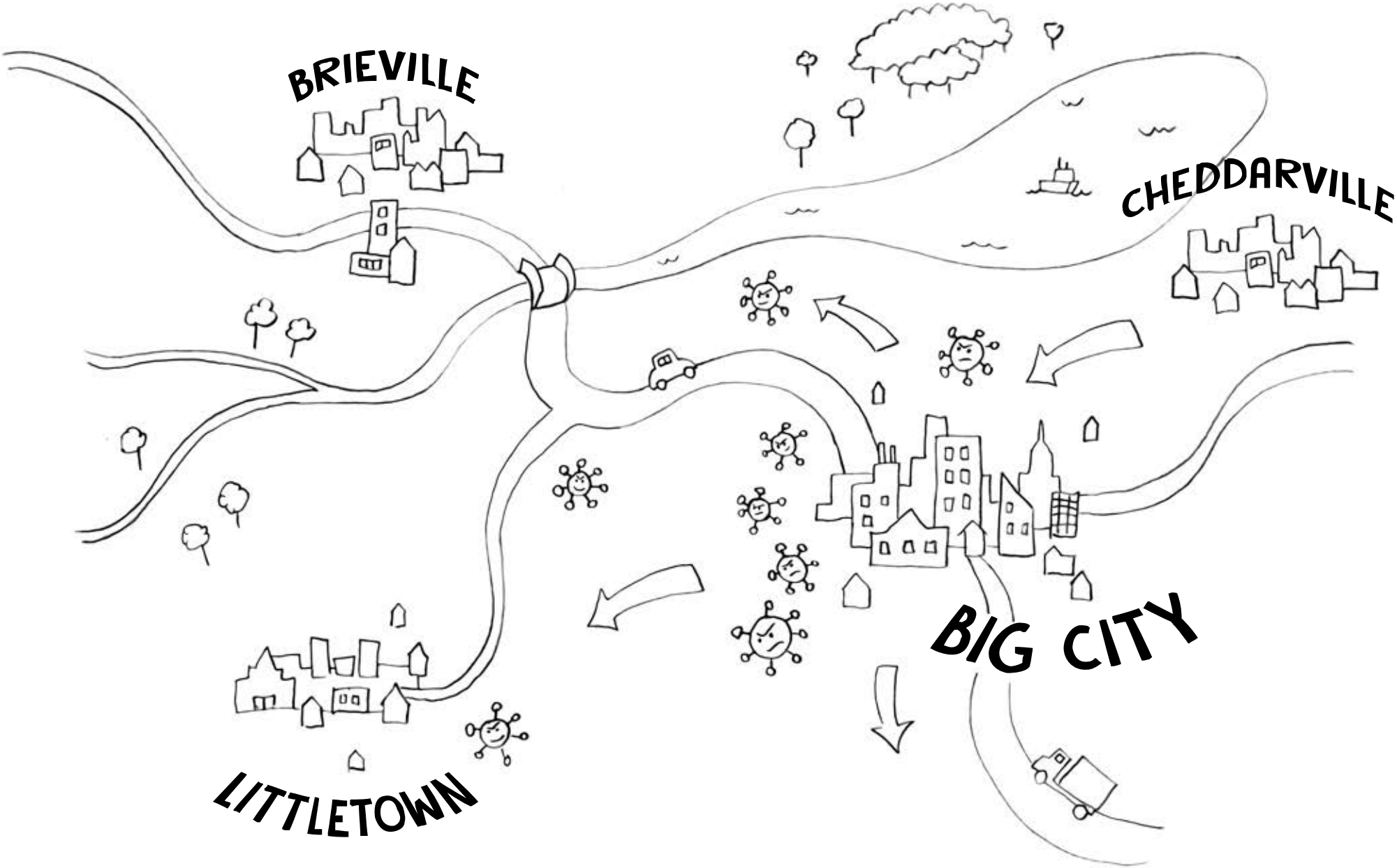
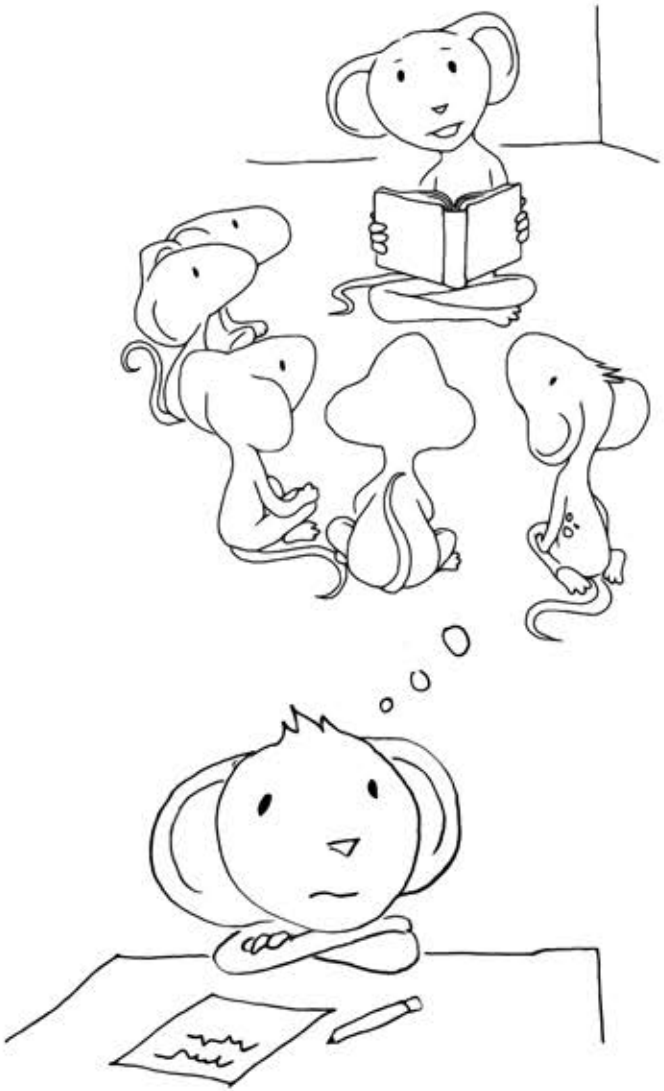




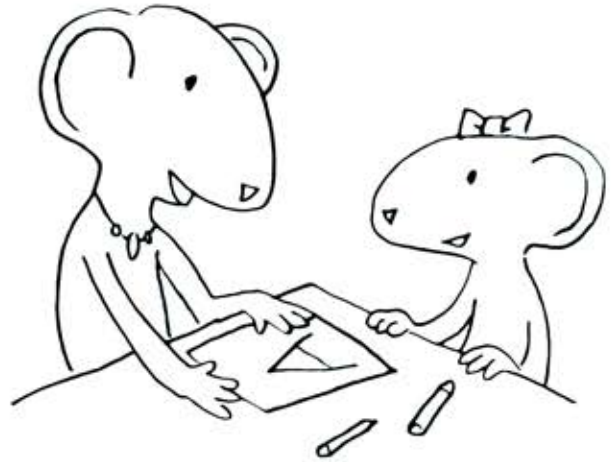
Trinka and Sam felt a lot better after talking to their parents. Even though the virus was still in Littletown, it was good to share their worries and think about all the good things their family and town were doing to stay safe.

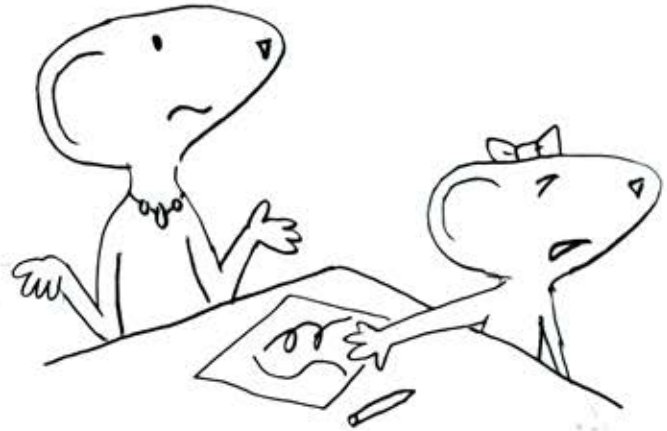


As the virus continued to spread, their lives changed in many ways . . .

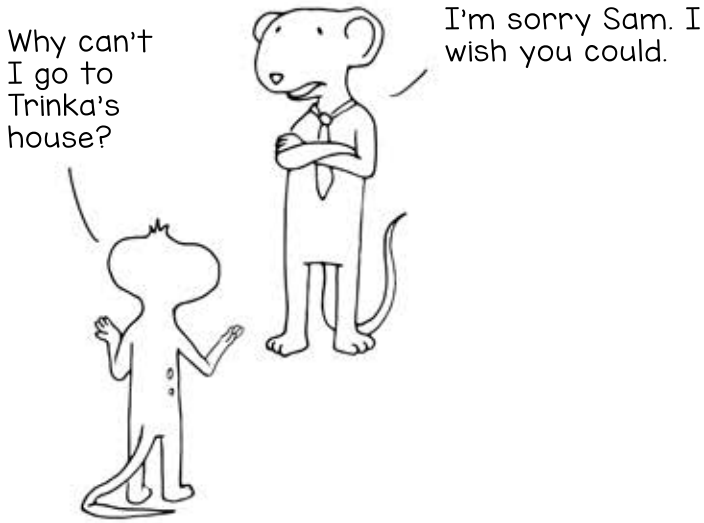


Sam couldn't go to school. He missed his teacher and his friends. He wondered when he would see them again.

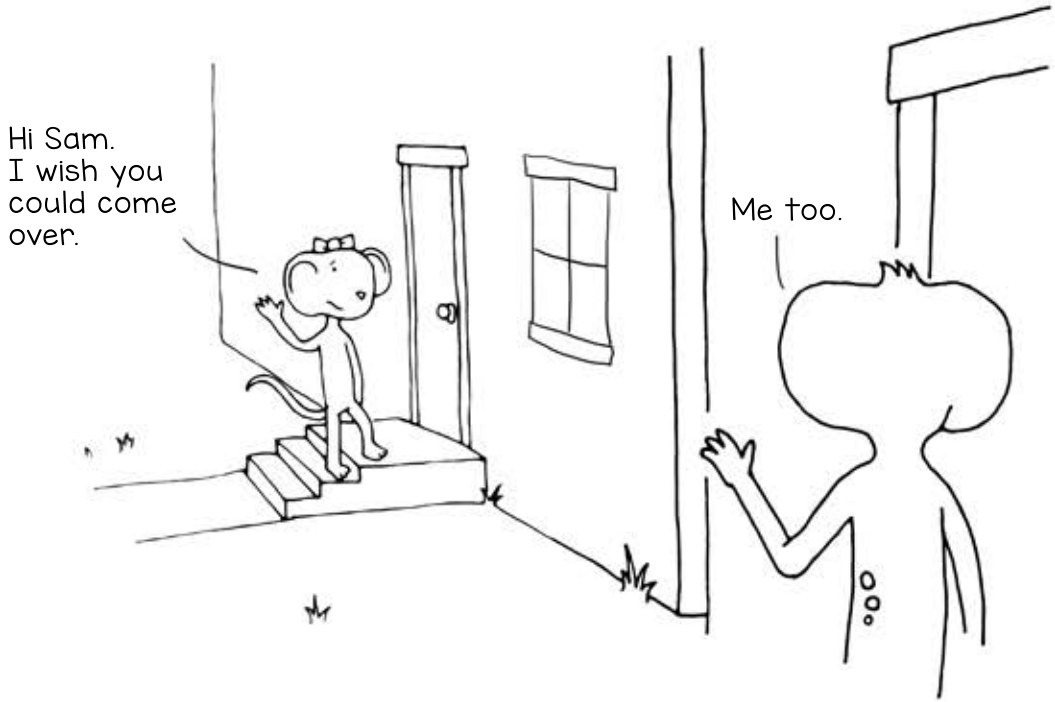




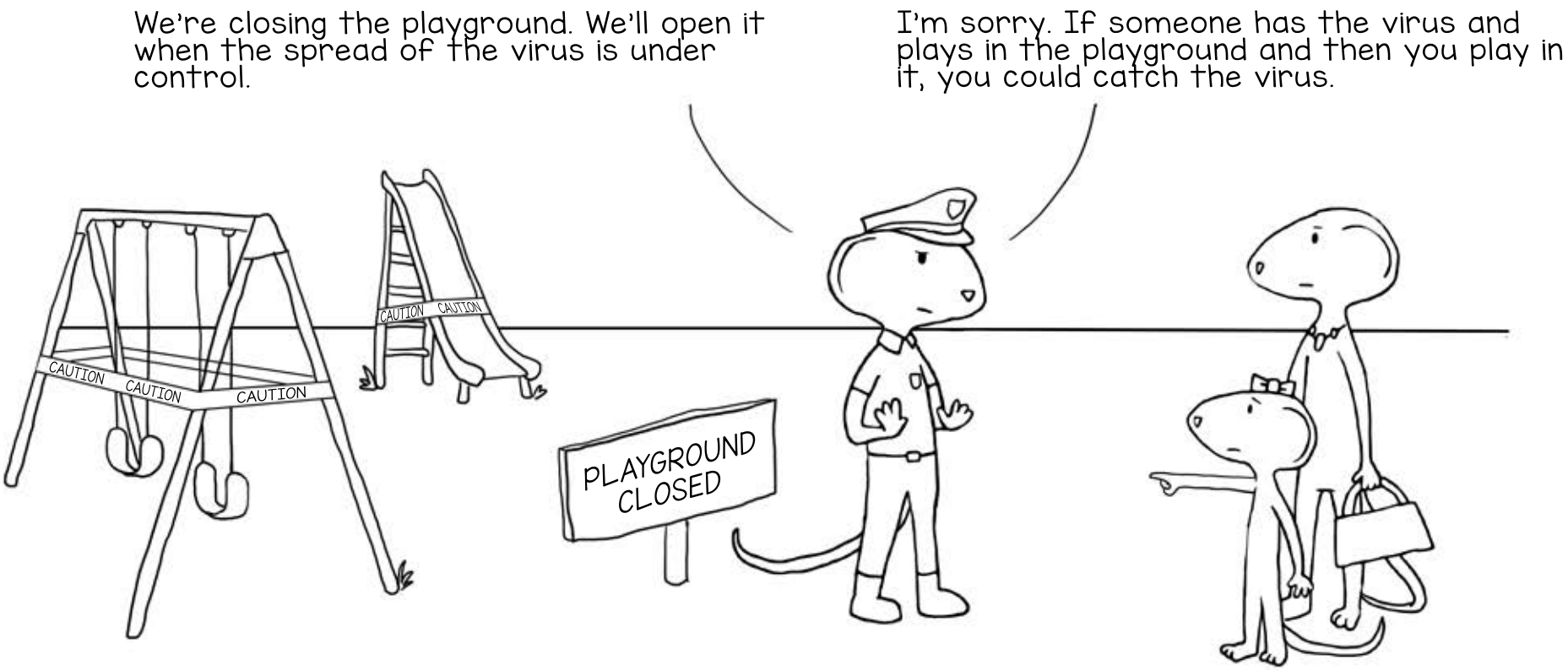
Trinka's mom tried to teach her things. Sometimes that went well, and other times both Trinka and her mom ended up feeling very frustrated.



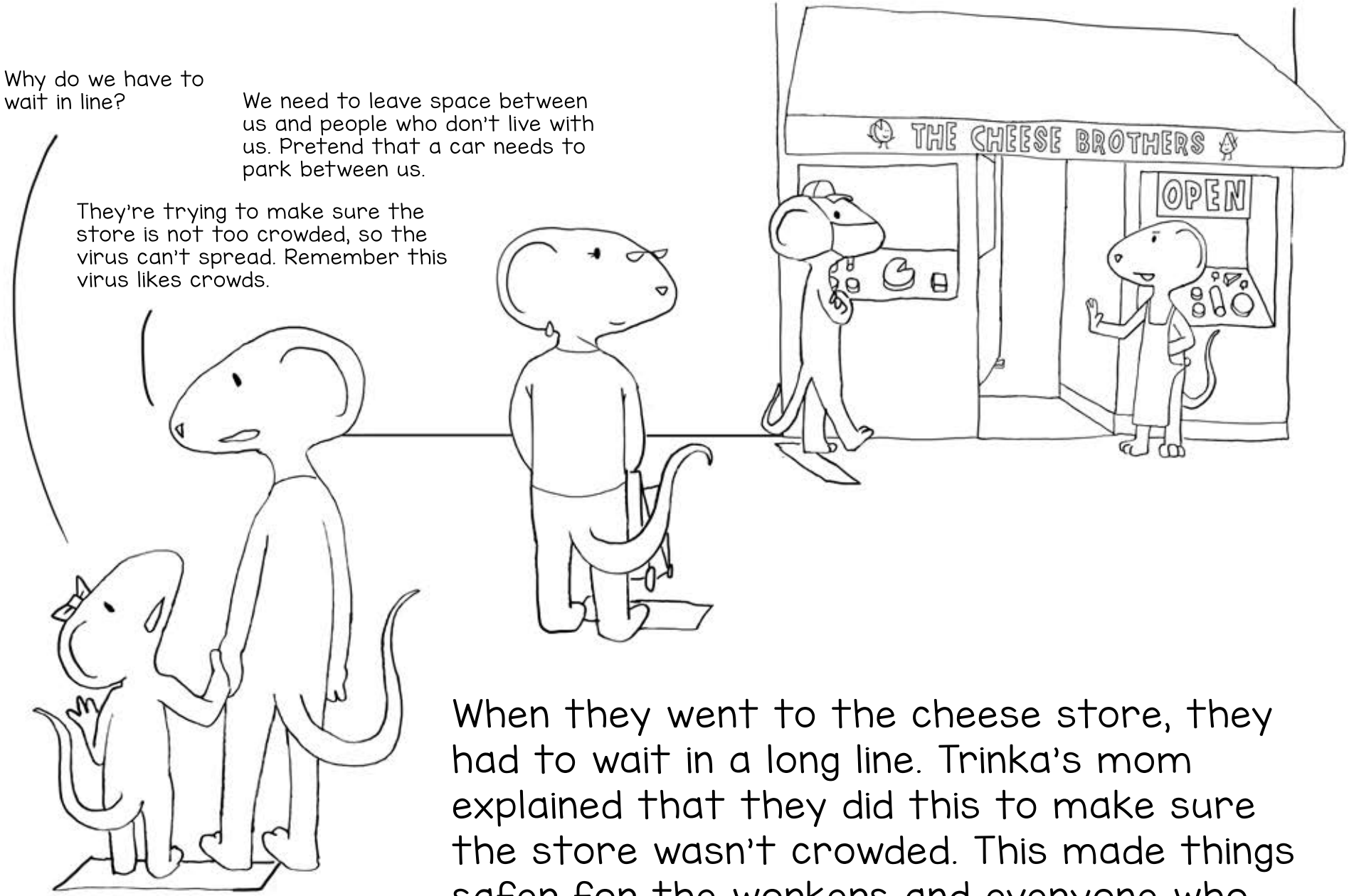
Trinka and Sam wanted to play with each other, but they couldn't.



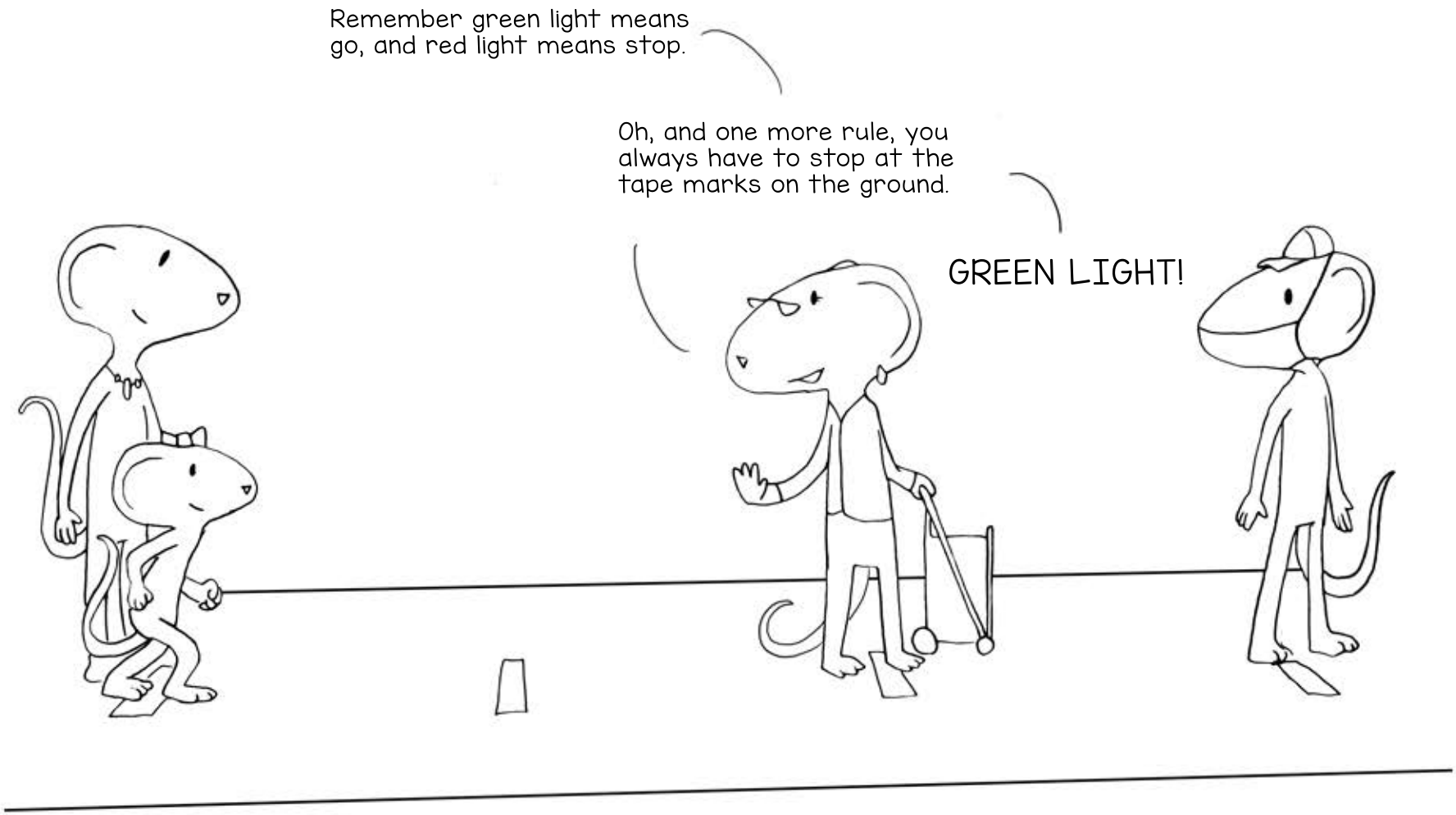
They could wave at each other and play rock, paper, scissors from their doors, but it wasn't the same. They missed each other.



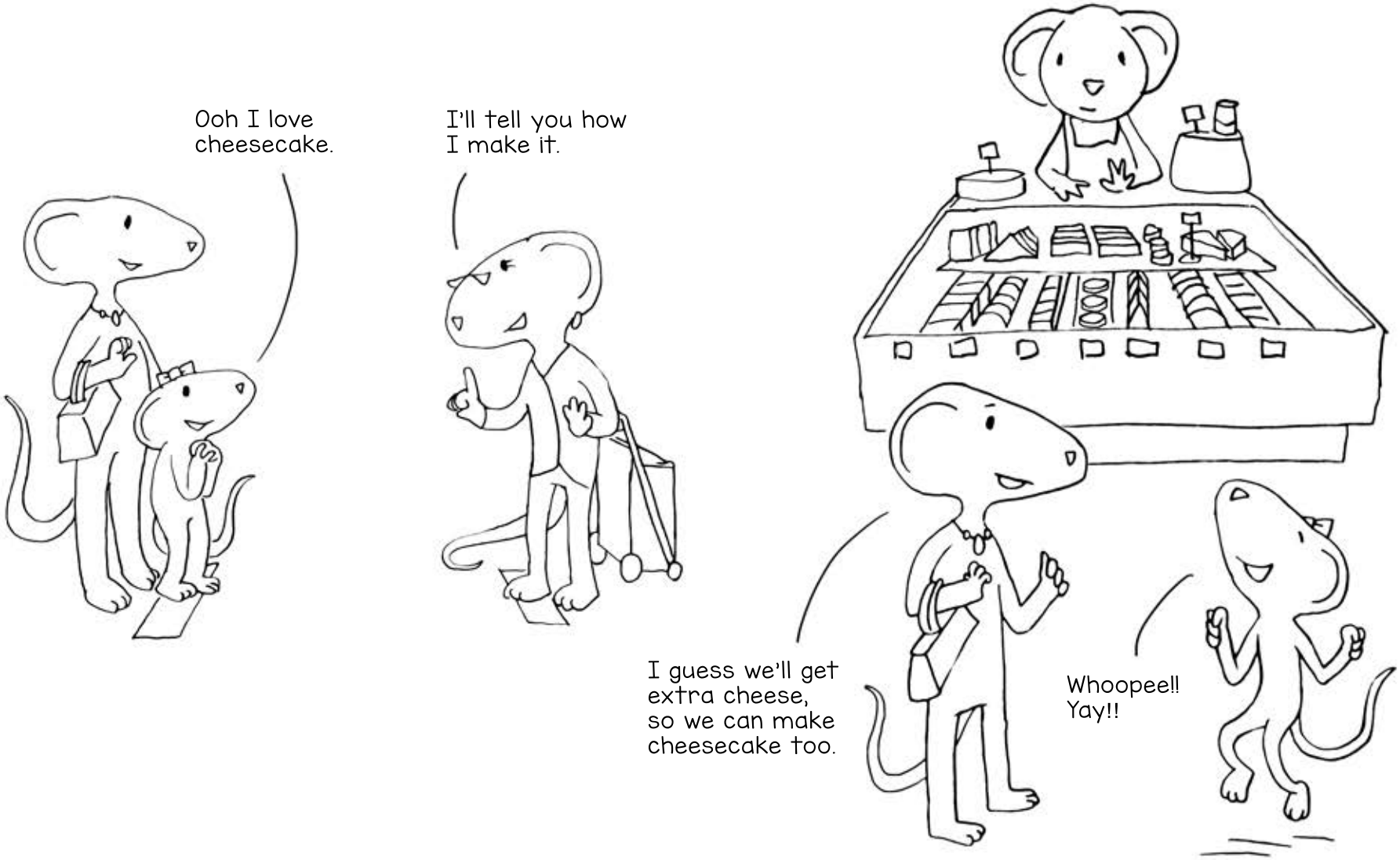
They could go for walks outside, but the playground was closed. Trinka was upset. She wanted to play on the slide, but Officer Clemmons said they had to close the playground to keep the virus from spreading. By closing the playground, they were working together to stay safe.



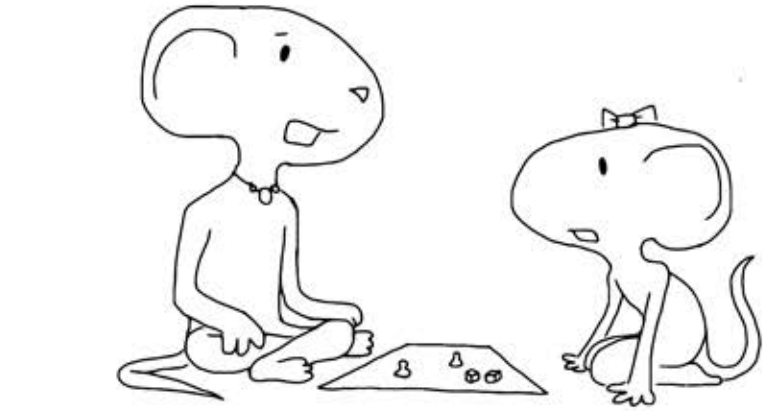
When they went to the cheese store, they had to wait in a long line. Trinka's mom explained that they did this to make sure the store wasn't crowded. This made things safer for the workers and everyone who went to the store.



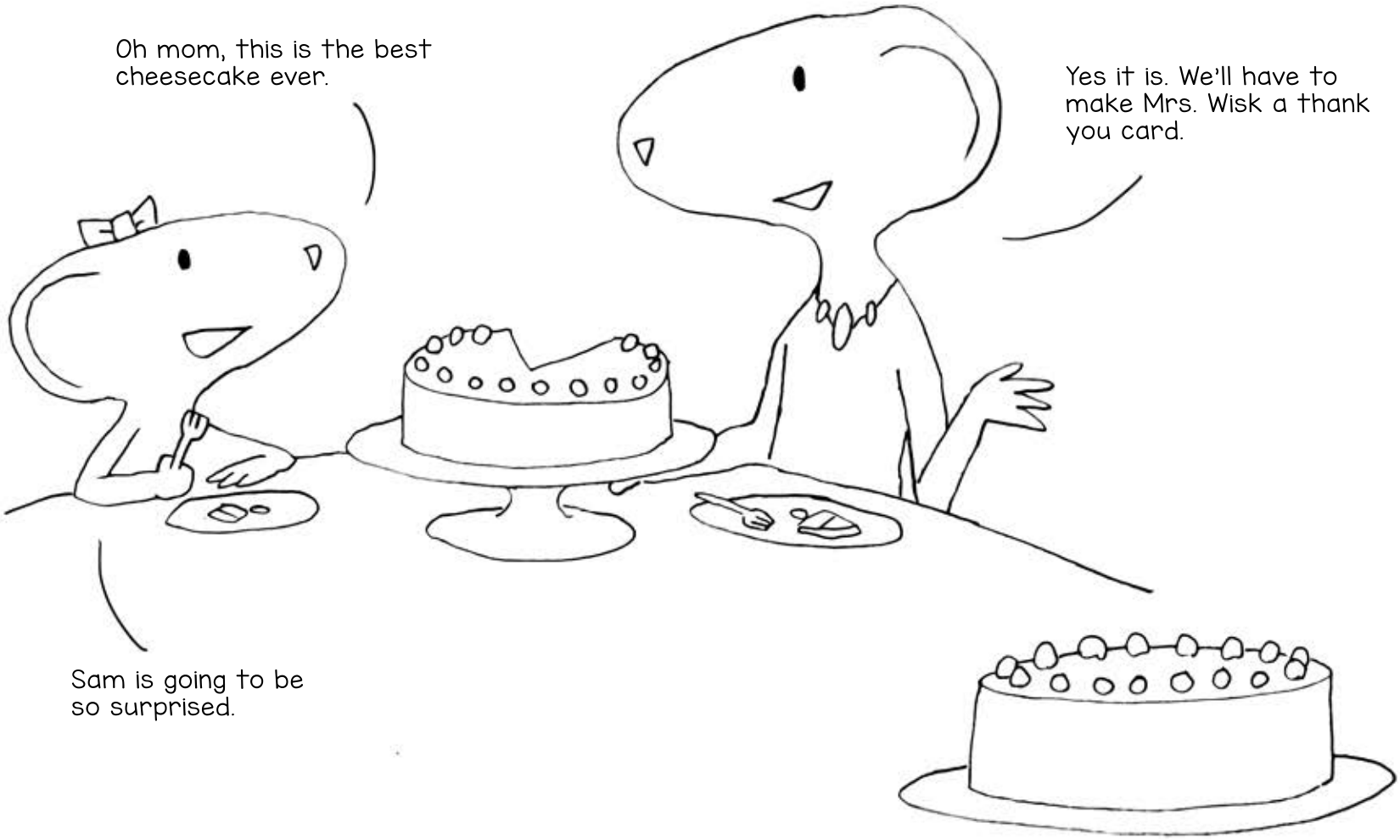
Waiting was boring, but it wasn't all bad. They met a really nice lady, Mrs. Wisk. She played red light, green light with Trinka and her mom. Pretty soon the whole line was playing. It made the time go much faster, and it was nice to make new friends.



Mrs. Wisk was buying cheese to make a cheesecake. She couldn't see her grandchildren right now, but that afternoon, they were going to bake together by video. When she learned that Trinka loved cheesecake, she shared her secret recipe with them.

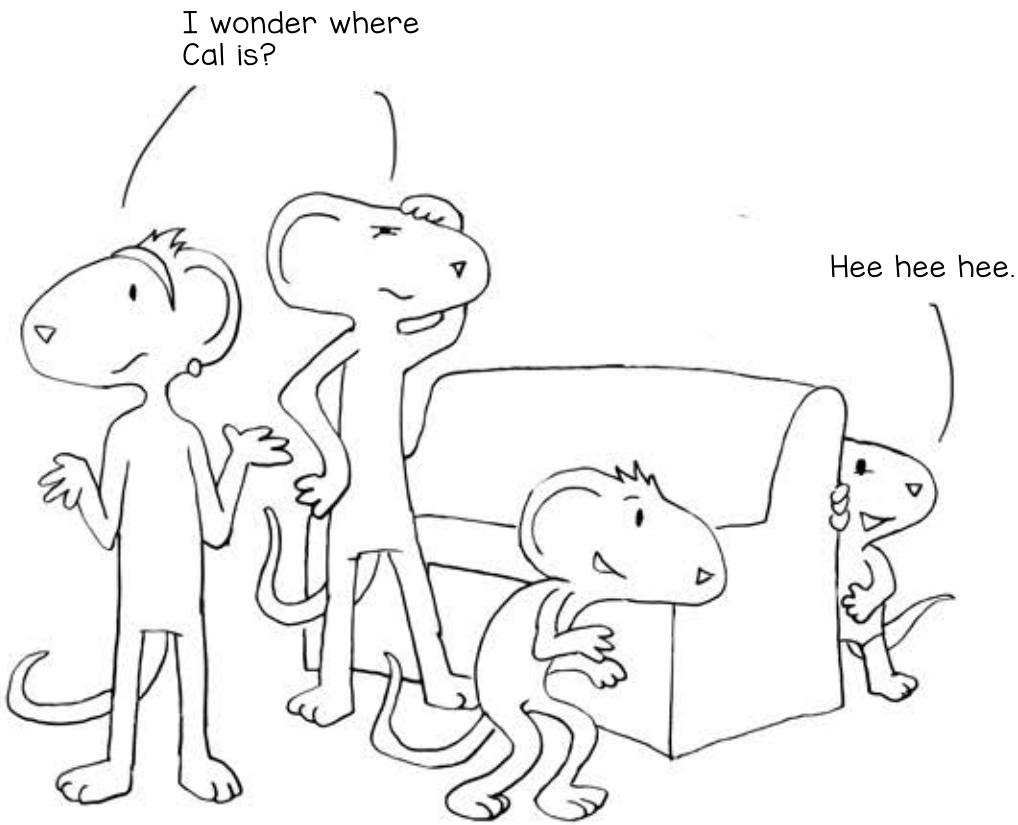


It was hard to have to stay inside and not be able to do the things they usually did. Each family tried to do fun things to make the time pass. Trinka and her mom played lots of games.



Oh, and of course, they made cheesecake following Mrs. Wisk's secret recipe, and they decided to share the love and make one for Sam's family too.

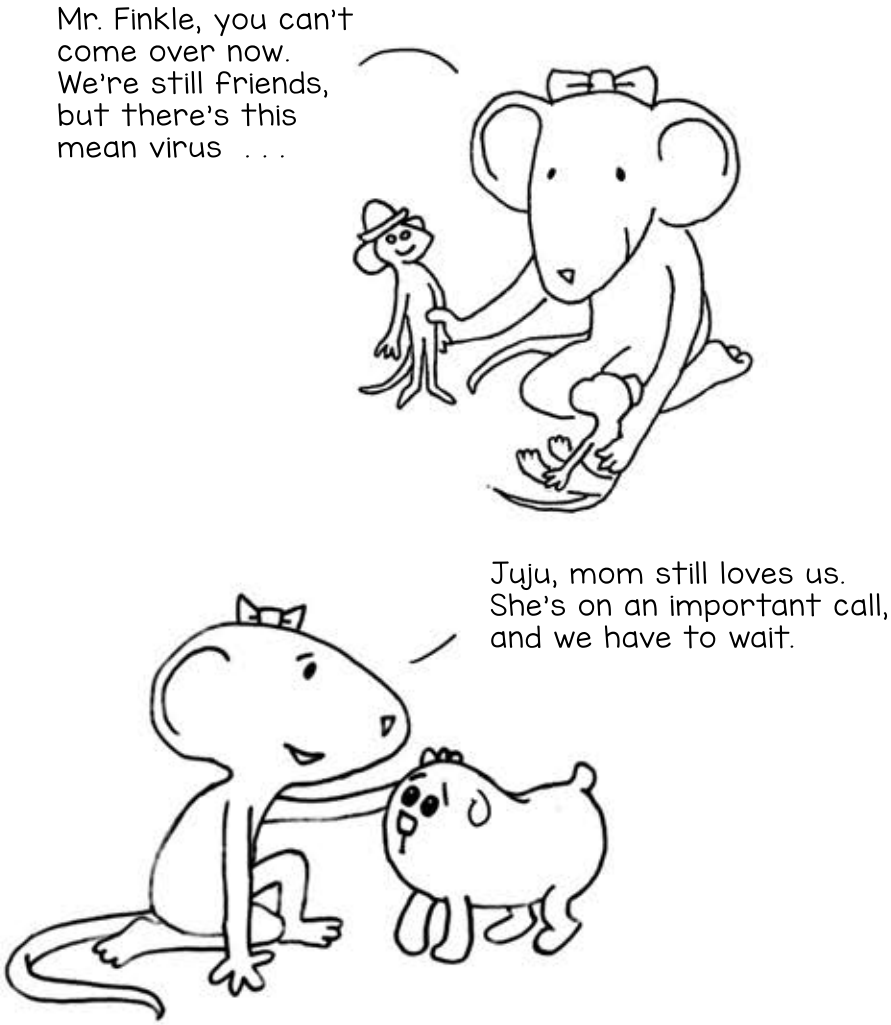
Sam and his family planted seeds and watched them grow.



They also played lots of hide and seek. Cal loved hide and seek even though he wasn't so good at hiding.

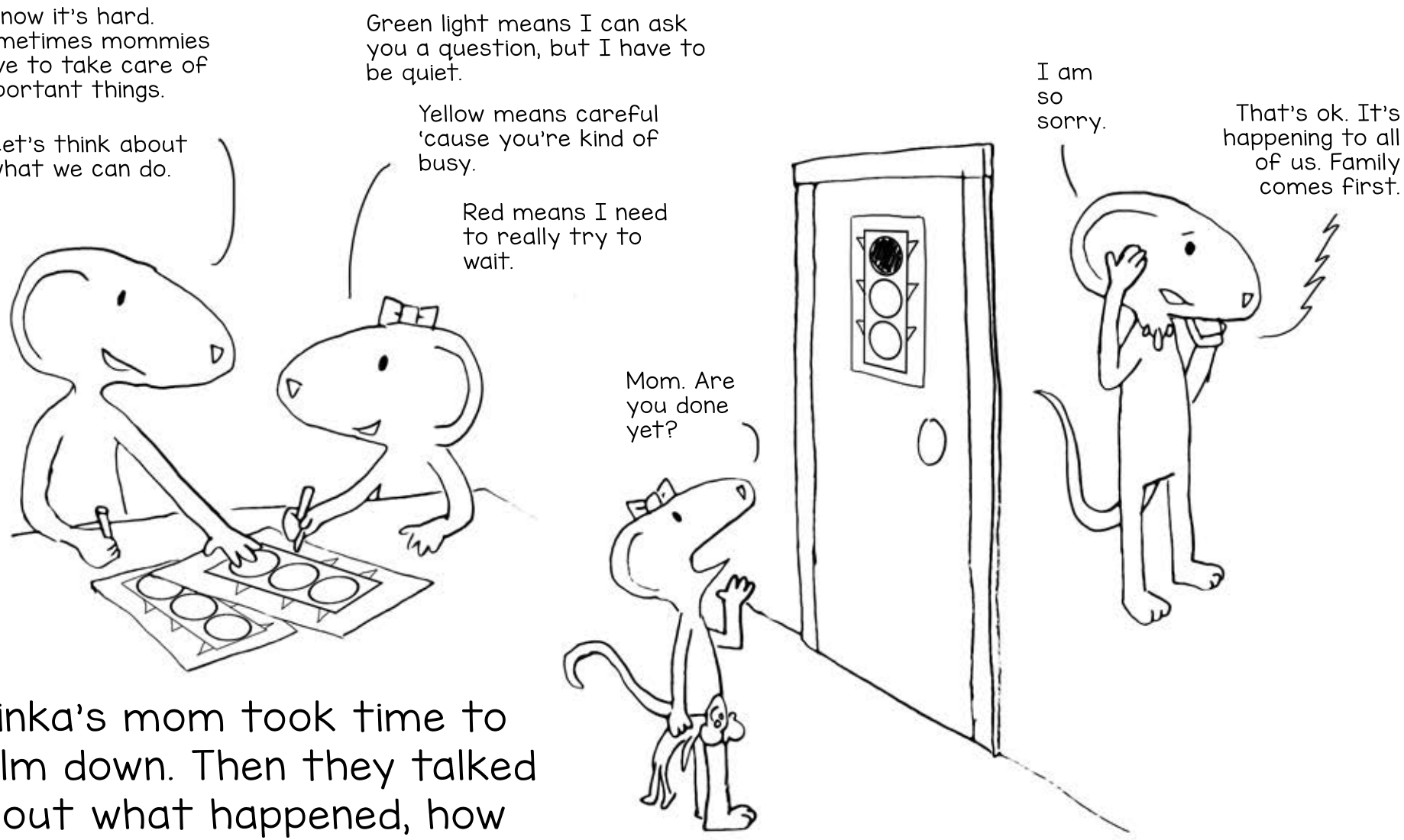
The families had good times, but they also had hard times. There were days full of tears and times when Trinka wouldn't listen.

There were times when Trinka needed her mom, but her mom was busy trying to take care of so many things.



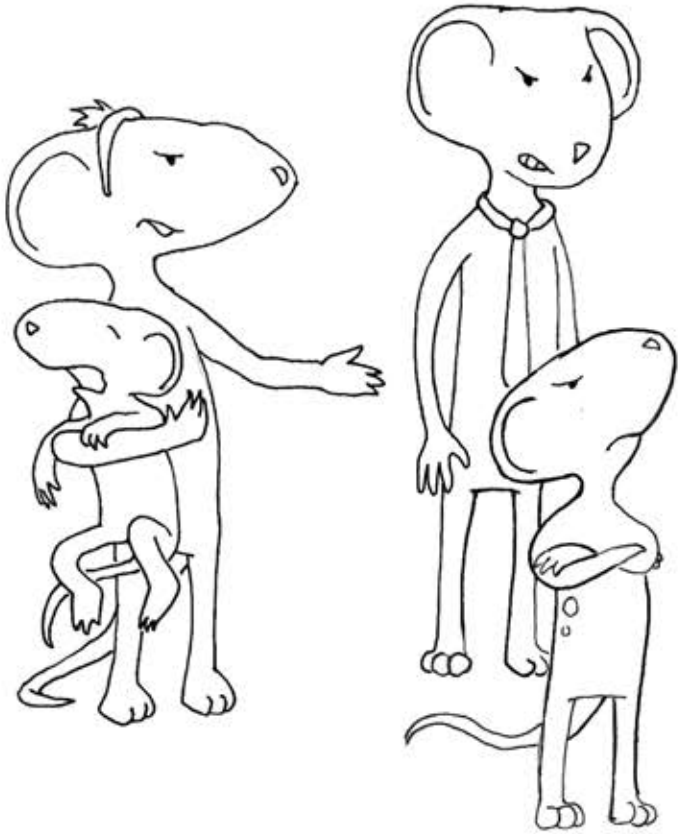
There was the time when Trinka's mom had an important call. She told Trinka that she needed to play by herself.

Trinka tried to listen and follow directions, but it was hard to wait. She and Juju decided to see what her mom was doing. Her mom was not happy about this.

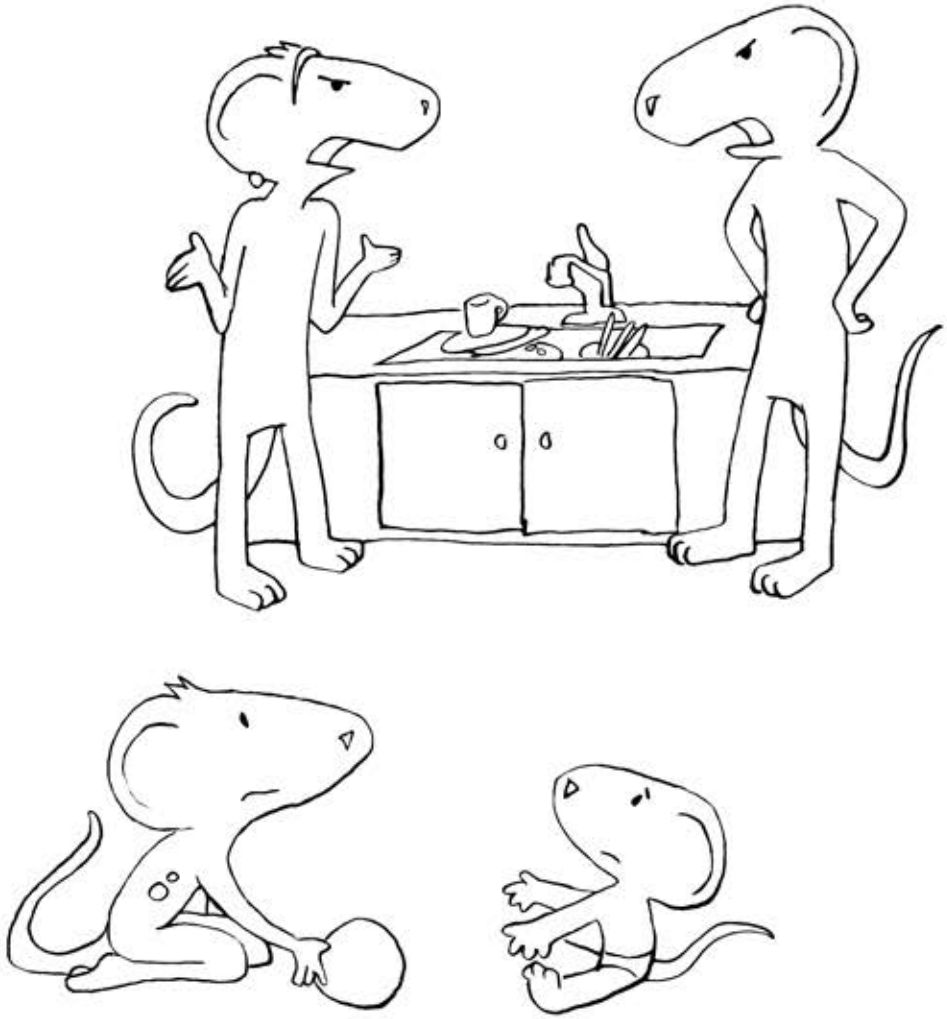


Trinka's mom took time to calm down. Then they talked about what happened, how they both felt, and they made a plan. Together they drew signs that Trinka's mom could put up when she was busy.

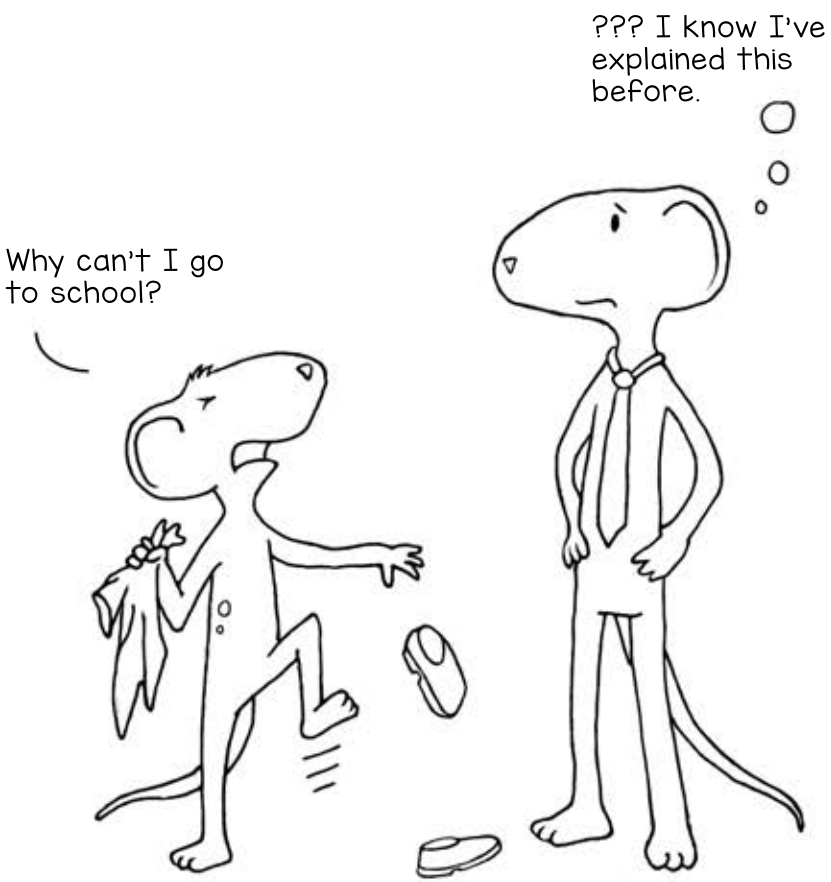
Trinka mostly followed the signs, but it was hard when she wanted her mommy.



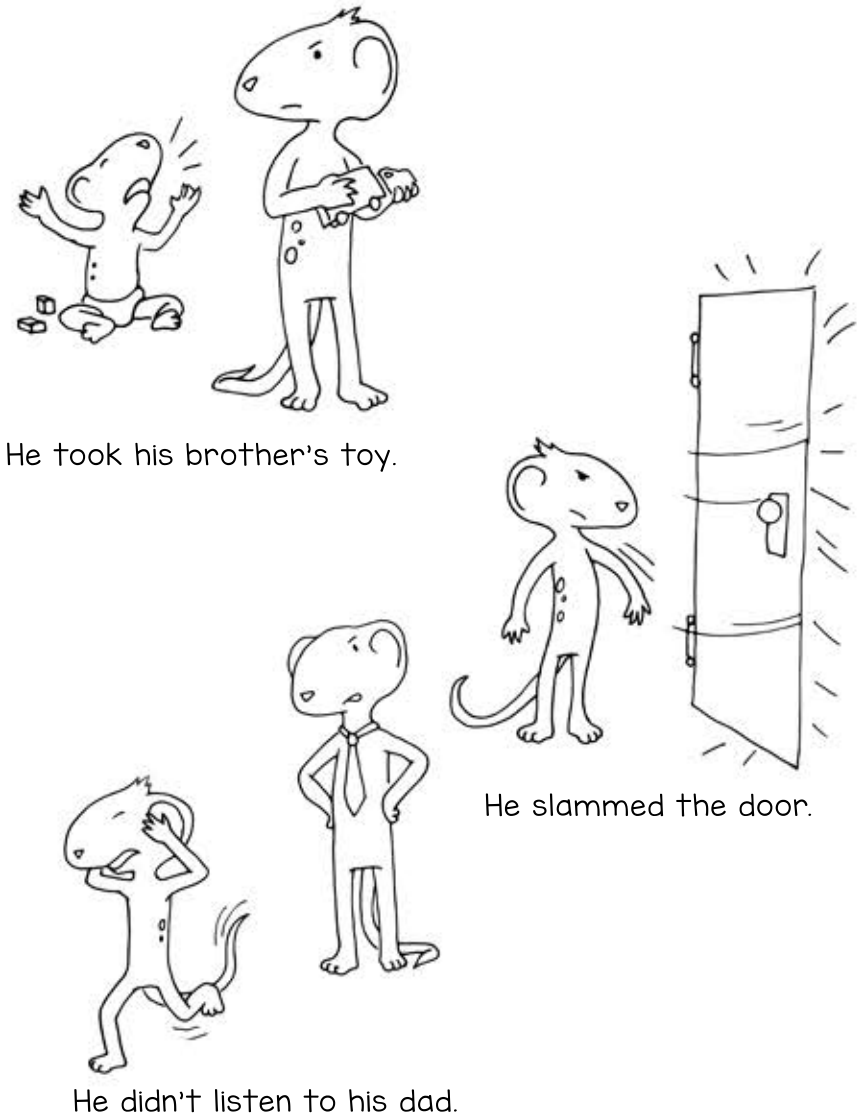
At Sam's house, they were also having problems. There were times when EVERYONE was in a bad mood.



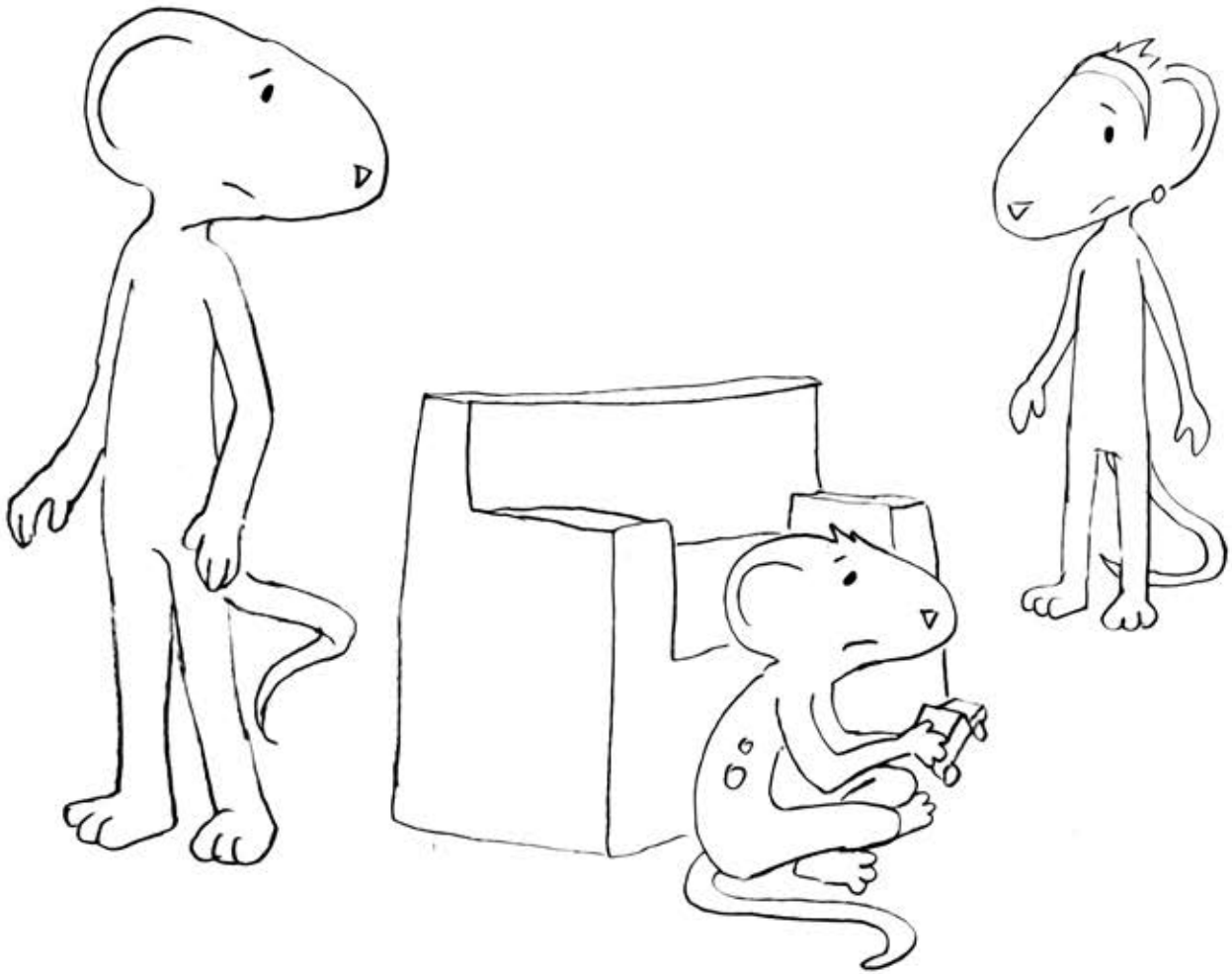
Sometimes the grown-ups were mad at each other. Sam and Cal did NOT like it when this happened. They were worried.



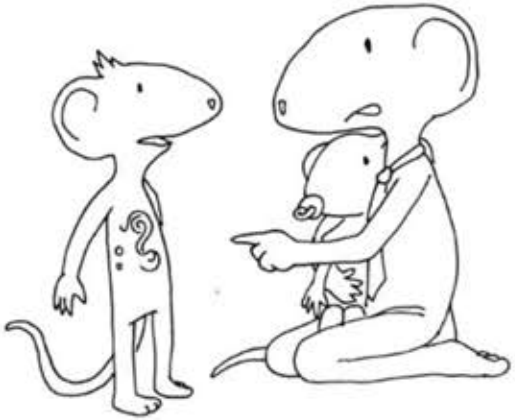
Sam got mad too. It was hard to understand why things were so different.



His parents tried to be patient, but when Sam misbehaved, they sometimes didn't know what to do.

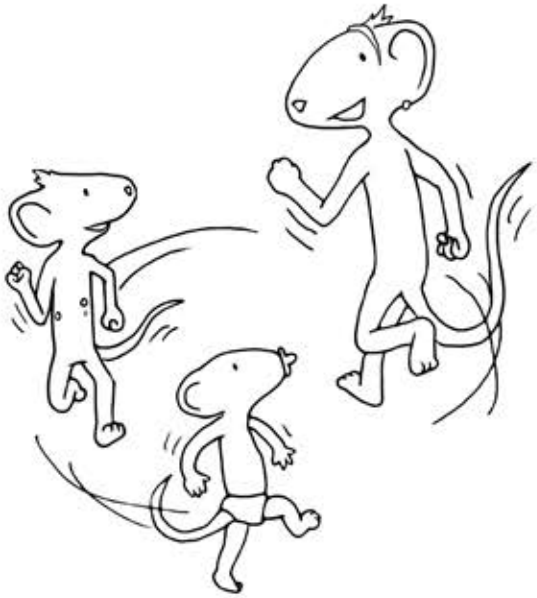


After Sam misbehaved, he felt bad. His parents felt bad too.

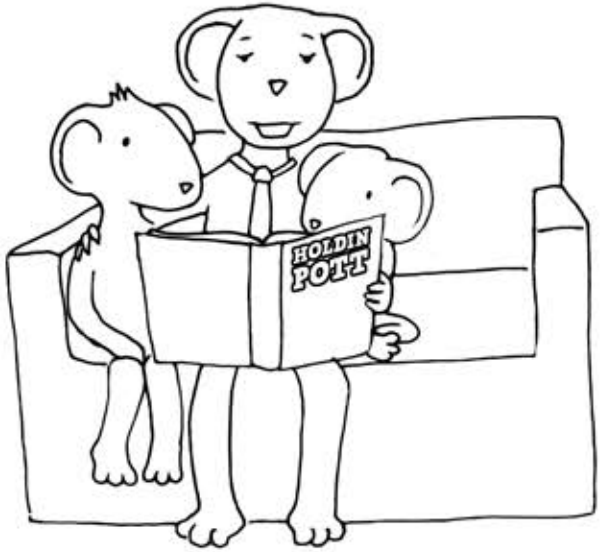


They talked about how they were feeling inside their bodies.

They helped each other get some alone time, so they would have more energy and patience.



They ran around to get the icky out, to have fun, and to help everyone to feel a little better.

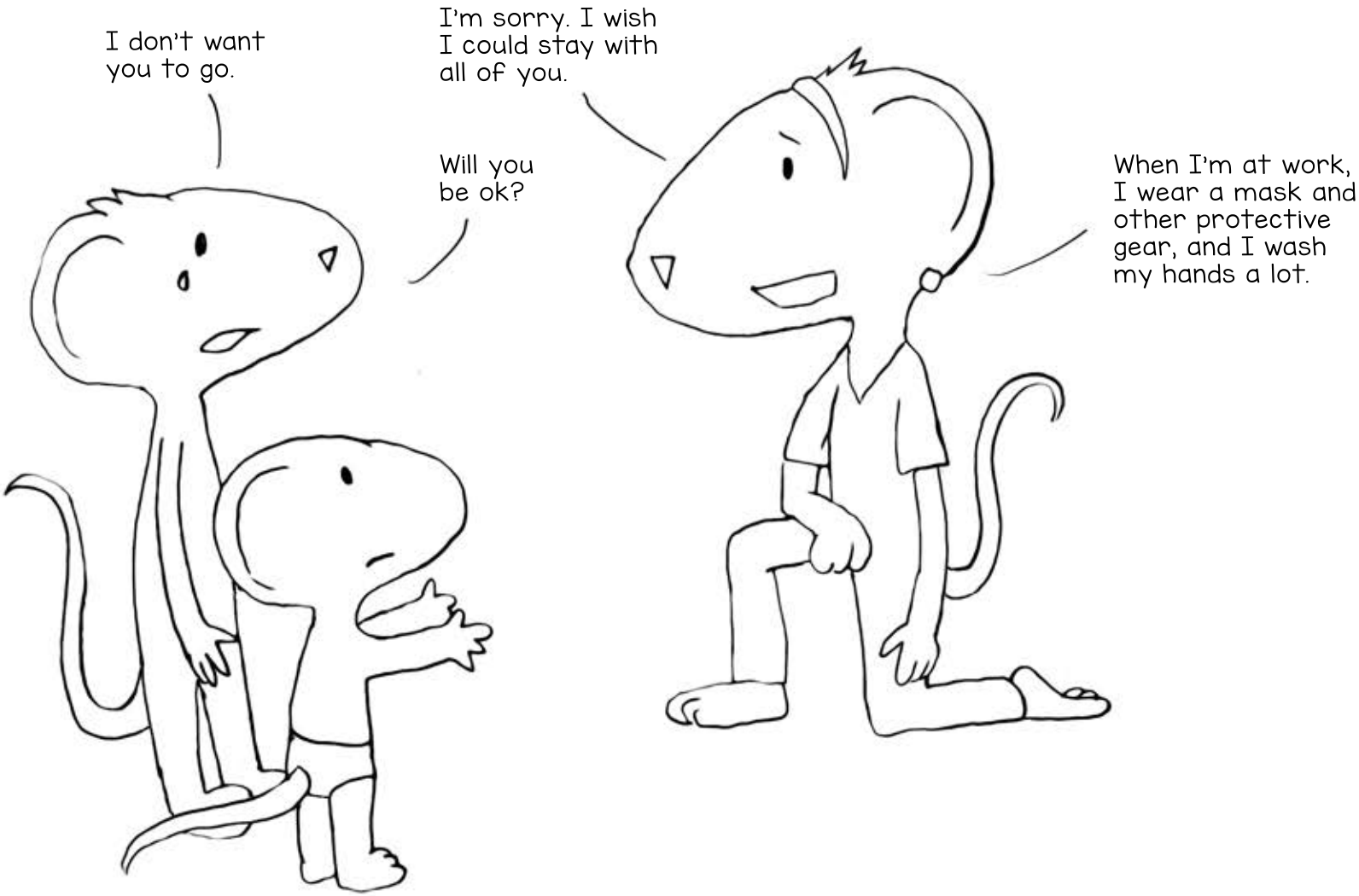


They read books to talk about their feelings.

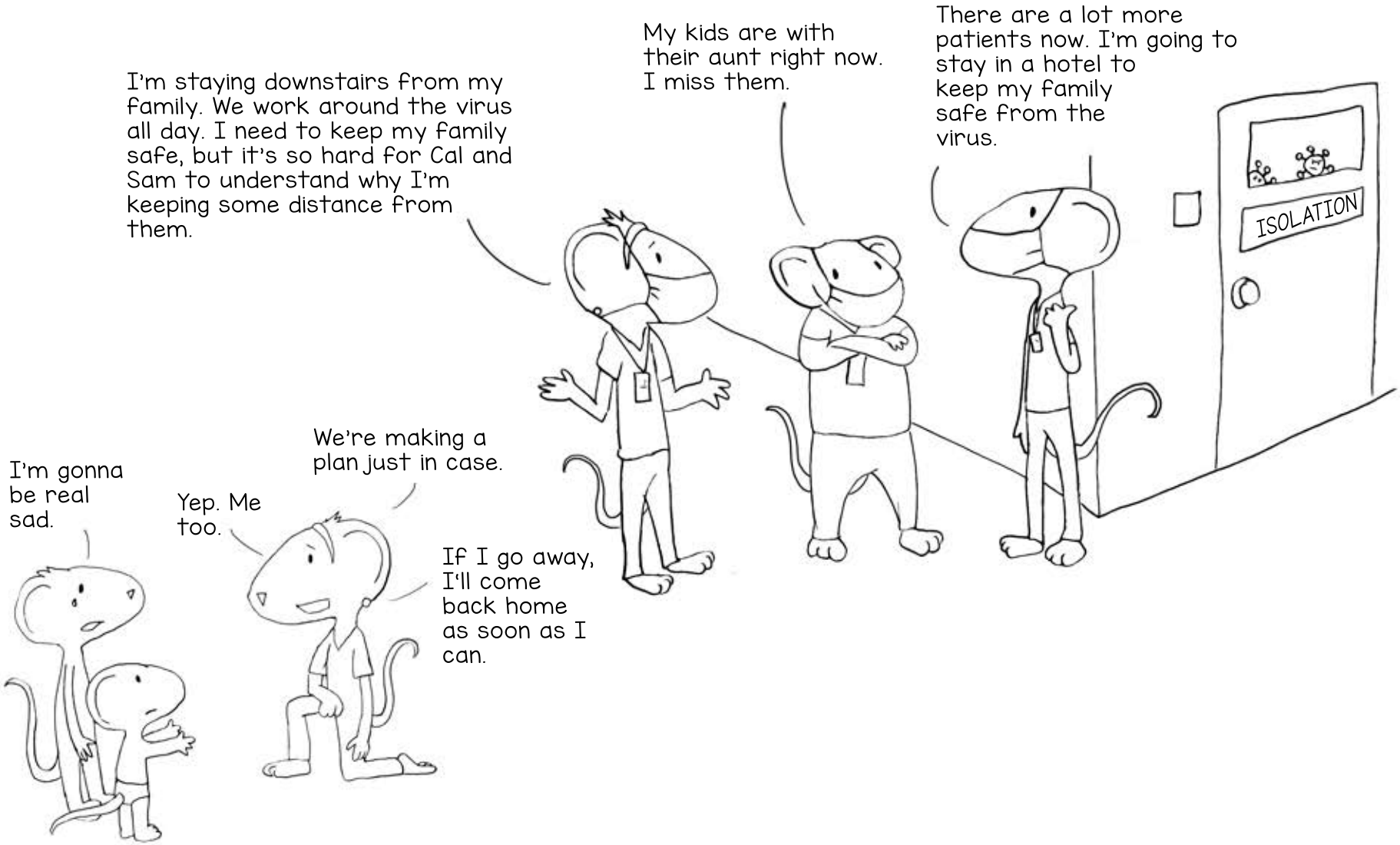
They knew that everyone was under pressure, and they all needed help, so they thought about different things that they could do.

All over Littletown, families were worried for different reasons. Some knew people who were sick. Others worried about jobs because businesses were closing.

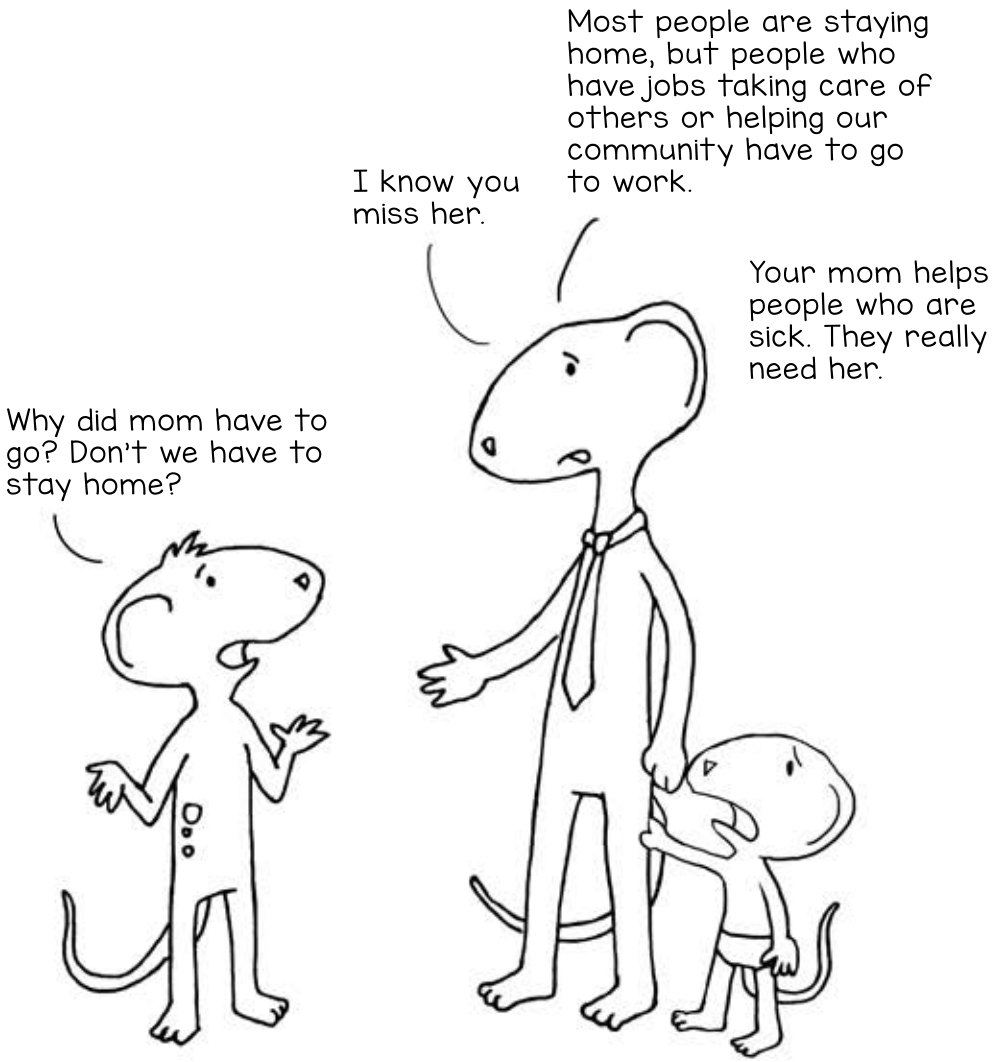
Even though the kids were little, they knew things were happening.



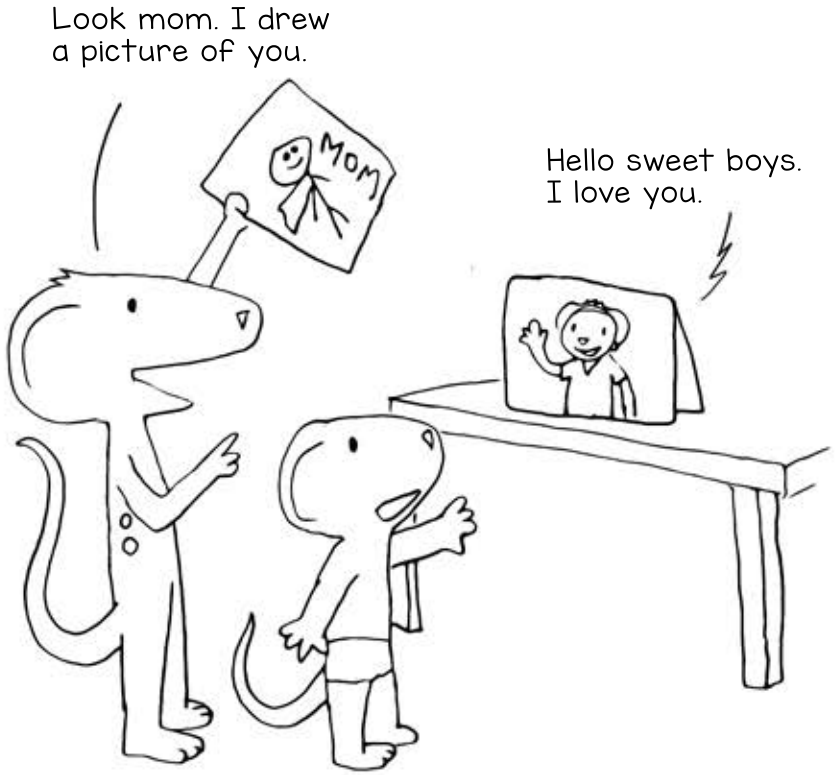
Sam's mom worked in a hospital caring for people who need help. They were proud of the work she did, but they also worried about her. She told them about the different ways that she kept herself safe from the virus.



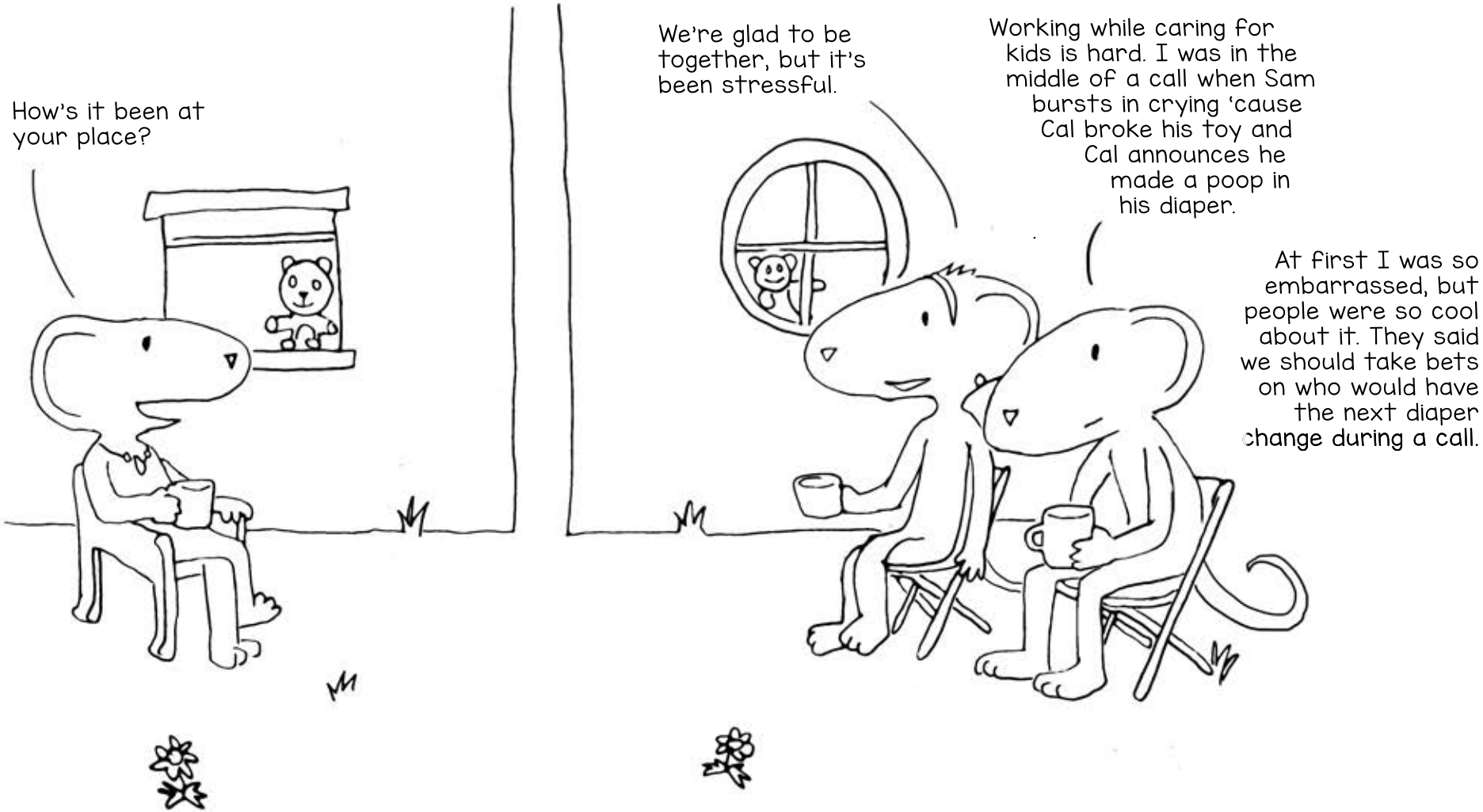
She also told them that if the virus spread more, she might need to stay somewhere else. Because of her job, she was around lots of people who had the virus. She wanted to help people, but she also wanted to keep her family safe. Sam knew that his mommy was very brave, and he wanted to be brave too, but it was hard.



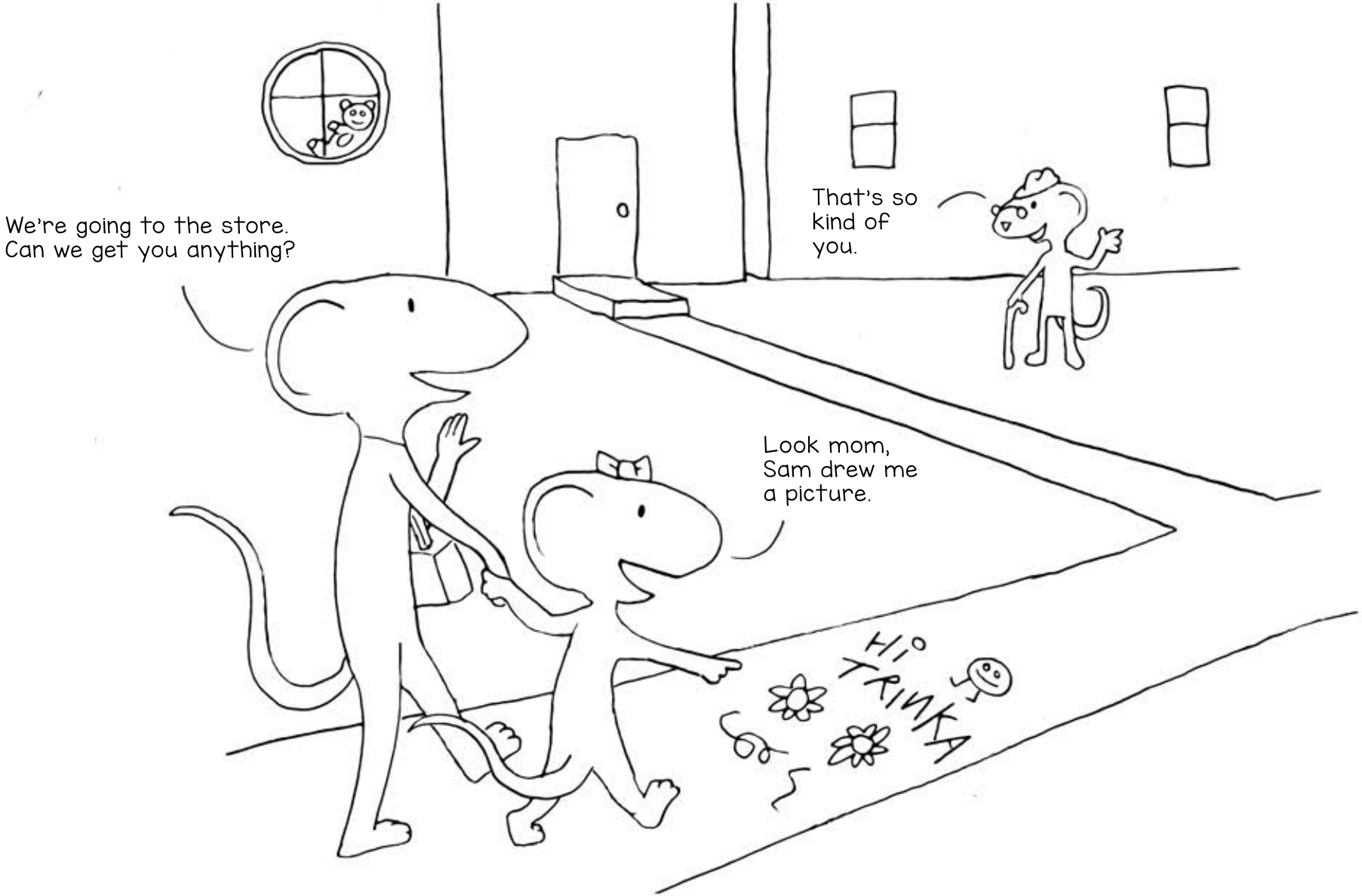
Sam and baby Cal didn't like when their mom went to work, but their dad was there for them.



Their mom called them from the hospital. Even though she wasn't with them, they were always in her heart.

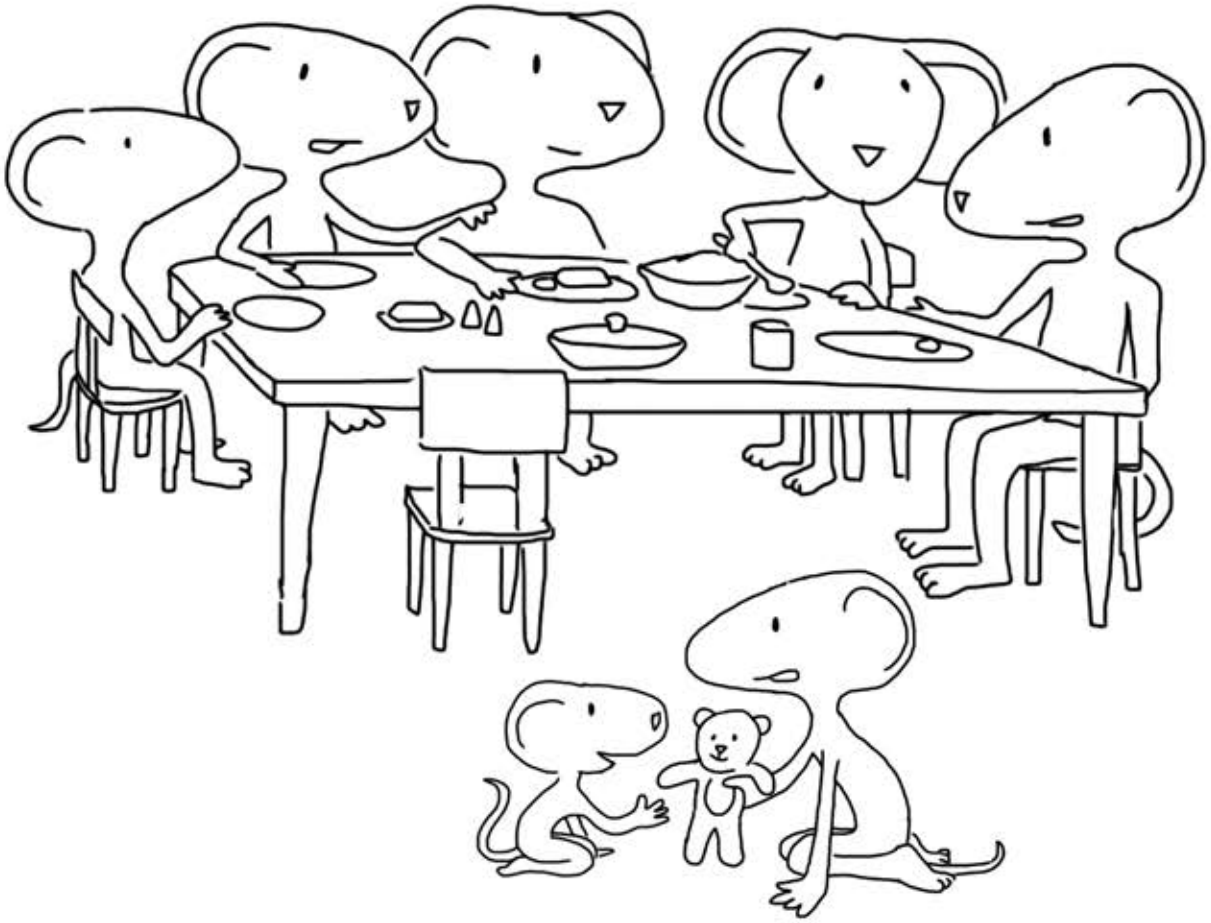


For the parents, it really helped when they could talk to each other and get support. They were all juggling so many things. They talked about hard things, and they shared funny stories that made them laugh and realize they weren't alone. They also shared recipes and good ideas for things to do with kids. They found they could be together even while keeping physical space between them.

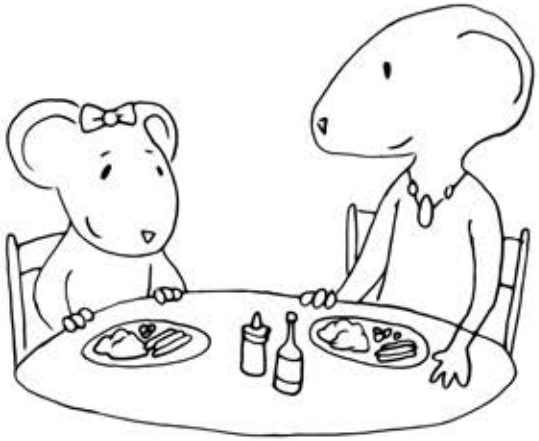


All over Littletown families did things to keep their community safe from the virus. They supported each other and found ways to help the kids.

Big families ate together.

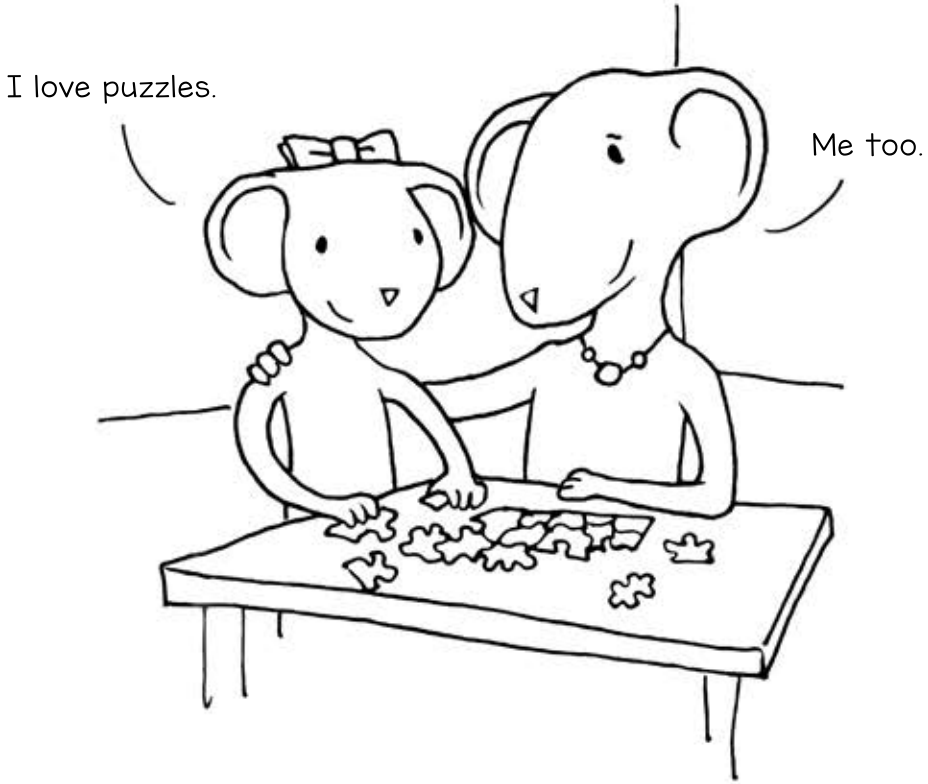


And so did small ones.

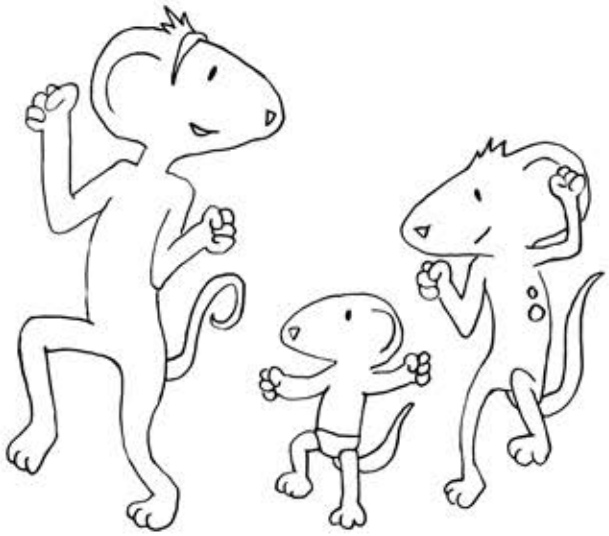


They spent time together and tried to get back to simple routines, like making food and eating together.

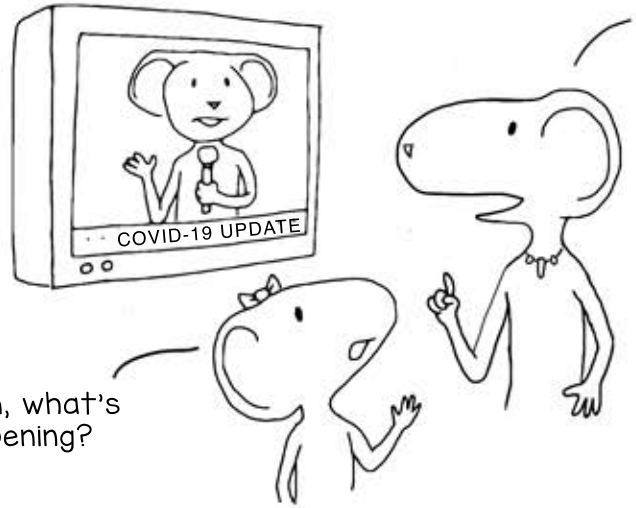
They tried to have regular schedules.



And they found new things that they liked to do together.



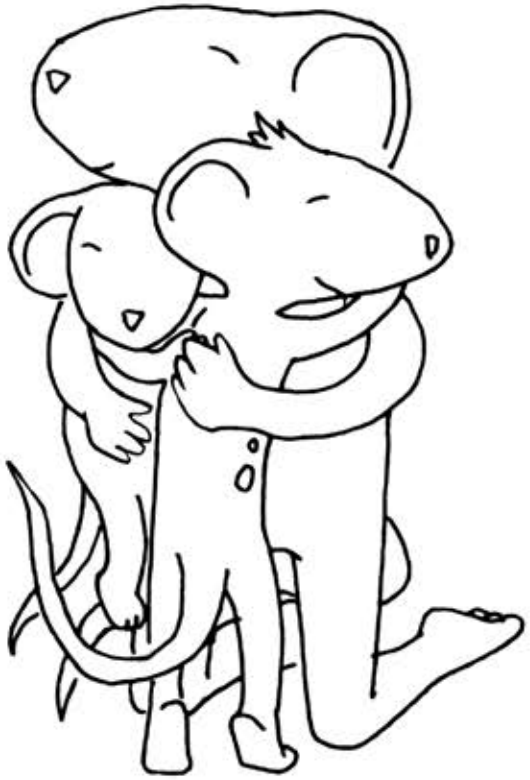
They danced and exercised . . .a lot!



I think we know about this. Let's turn it off.

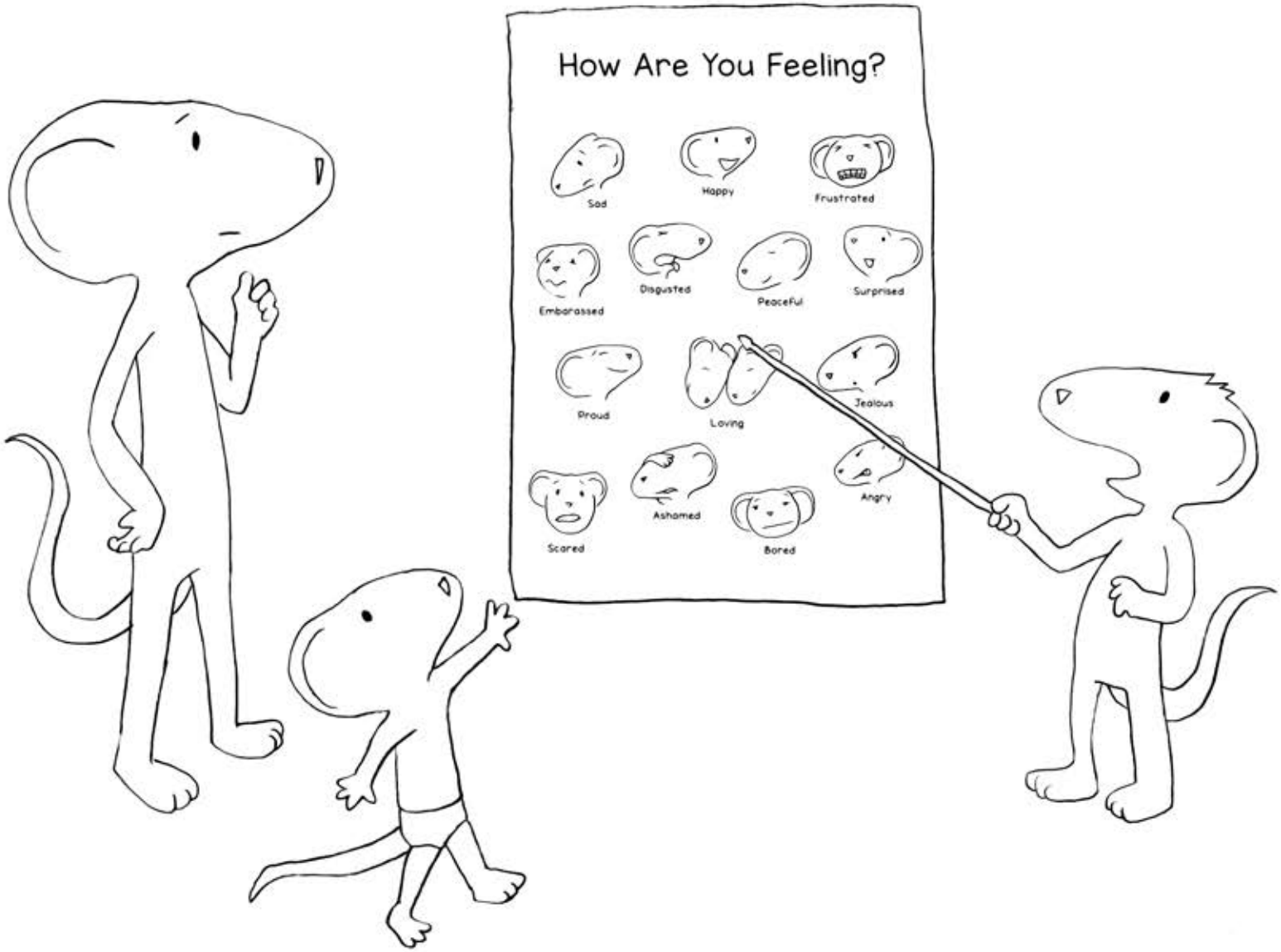
Mom, what's happening?

They thought about when to watch the news and when to turn it off.

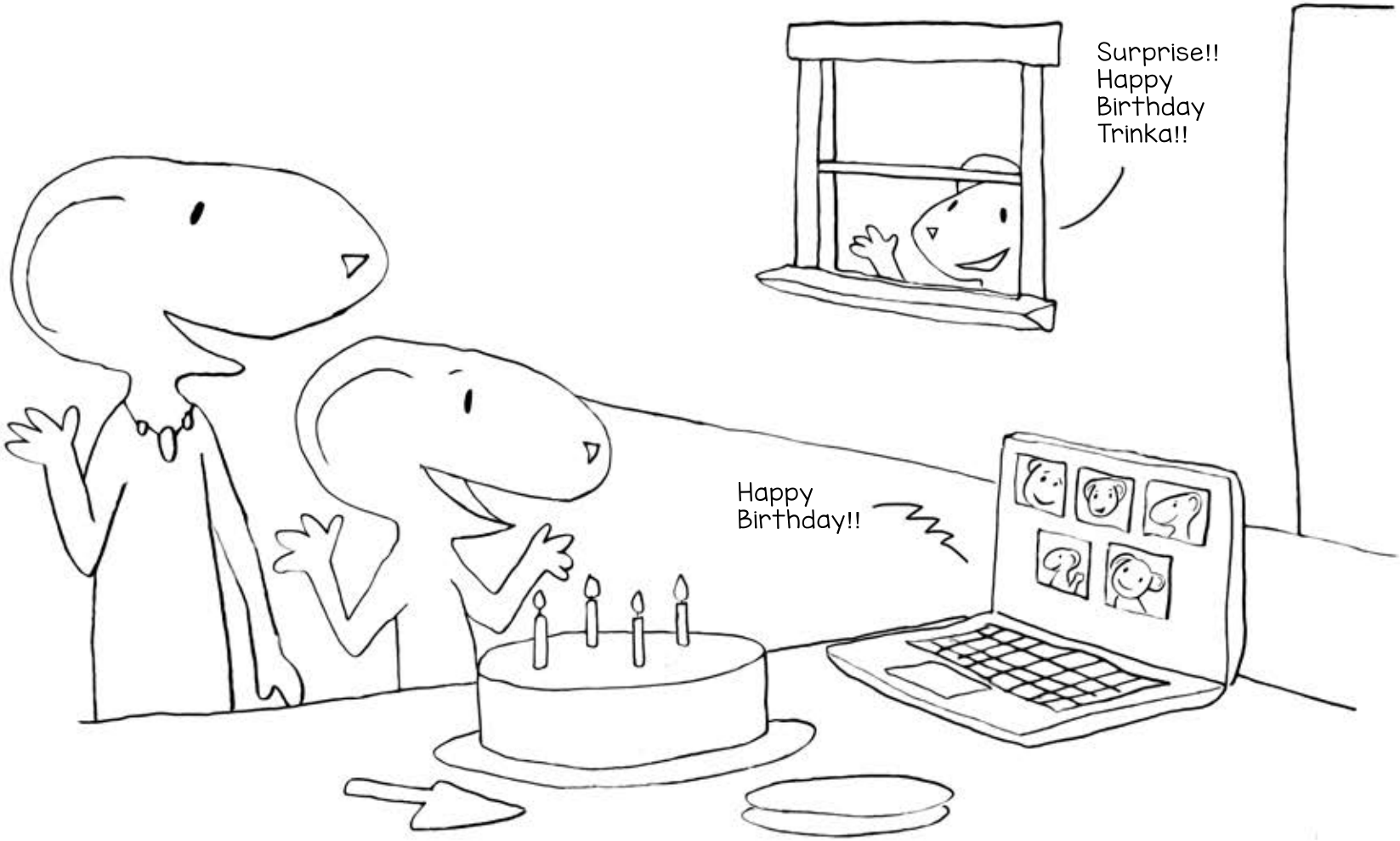


They gave each other big hugs.

They found ways to reduce their stress.

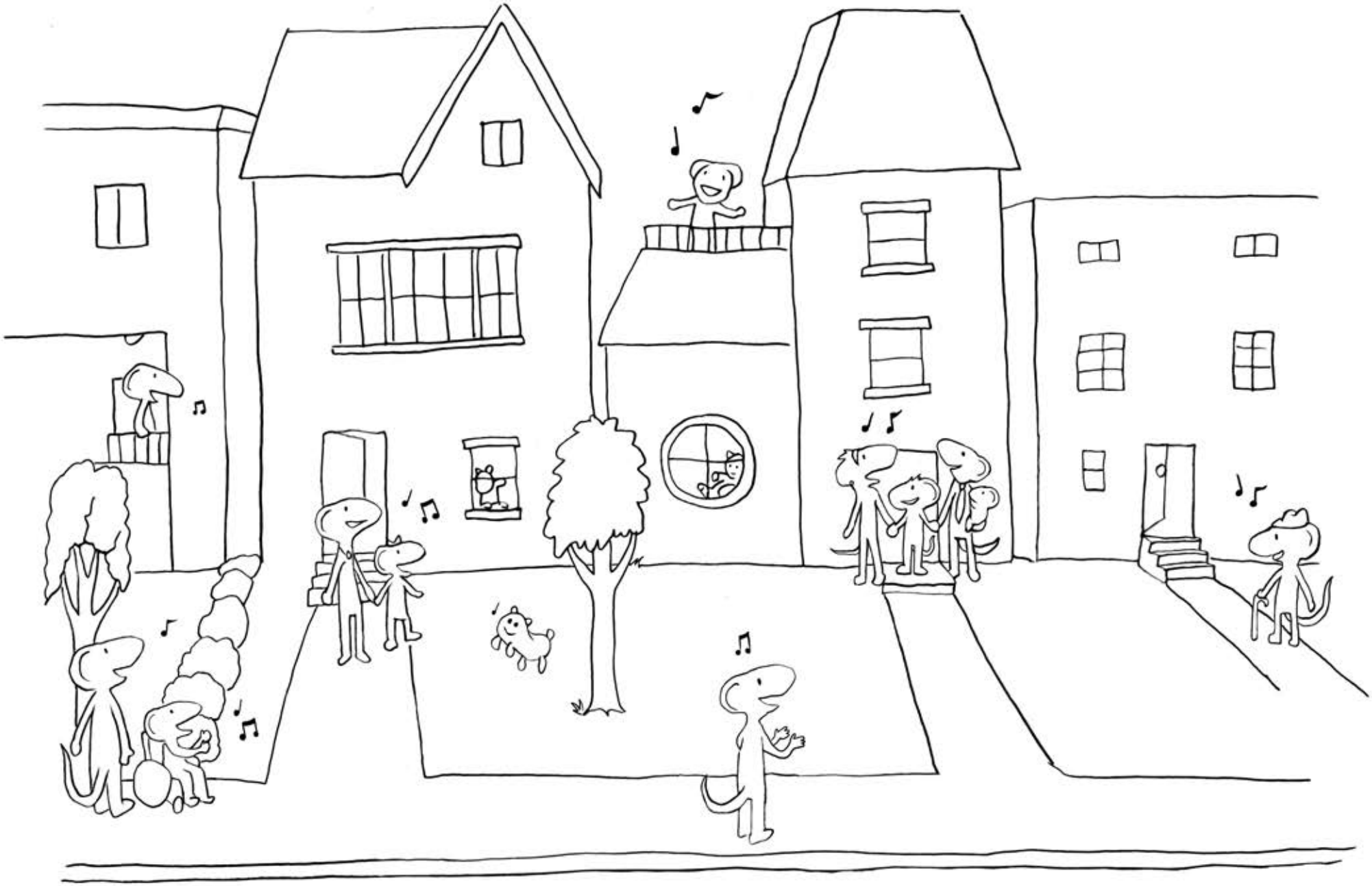


They talked about their feelings and figured out what they could do when they were feeling sad, angry, frustrated, embarassed, or ashamed. They found moments of joy, calm, and victory.

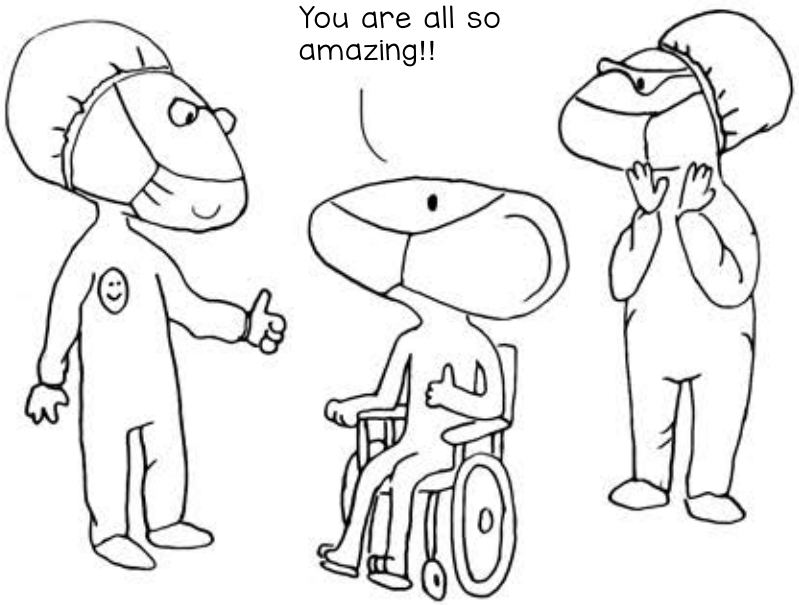


They were sad about missing special events like graduations and family birthdays, and they found new ways to celebrate. It wasn't the same, but it was beautiful and important.

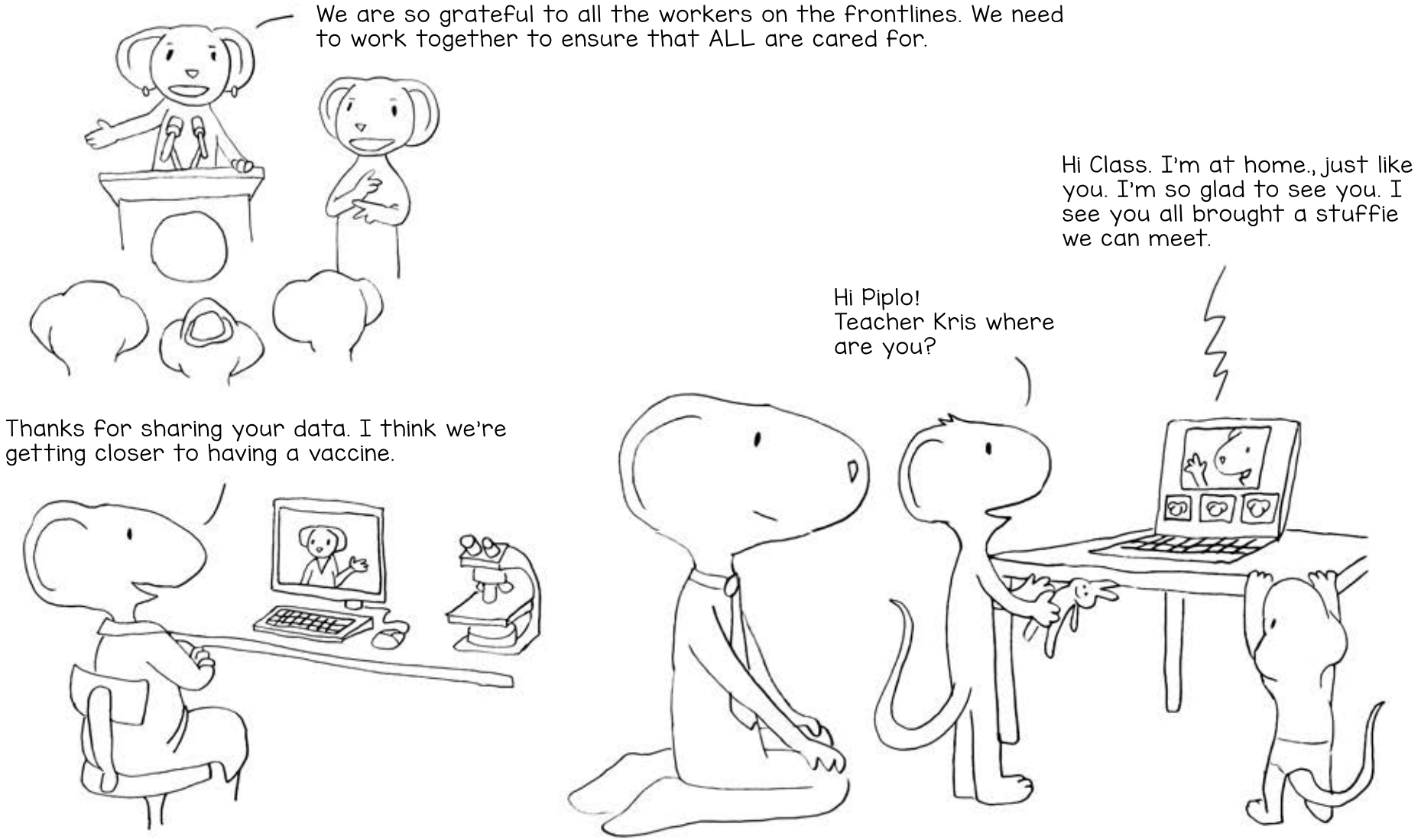
They helped others.



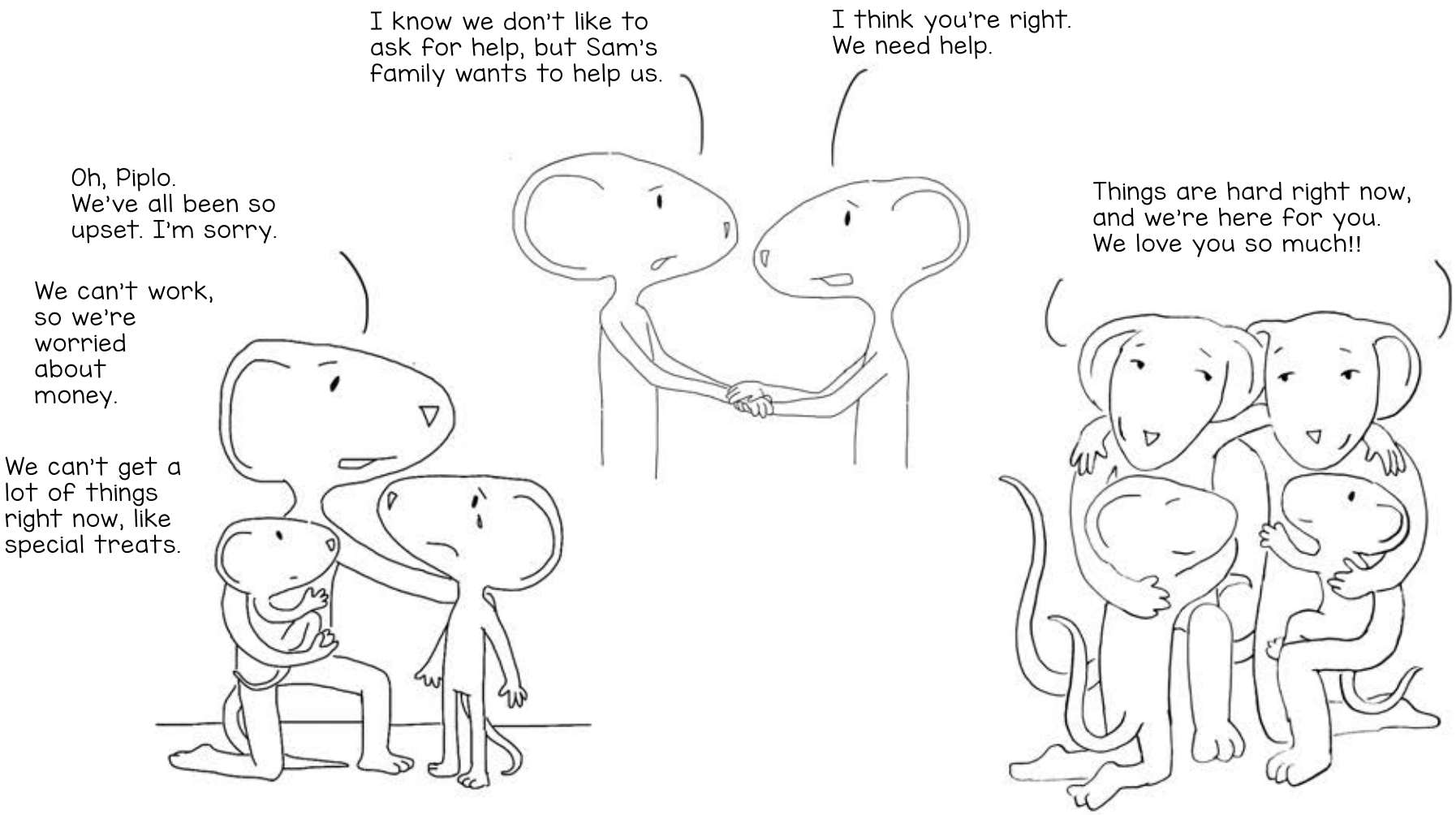
And they clapped and sang.
Even though they were in different places, they were together.



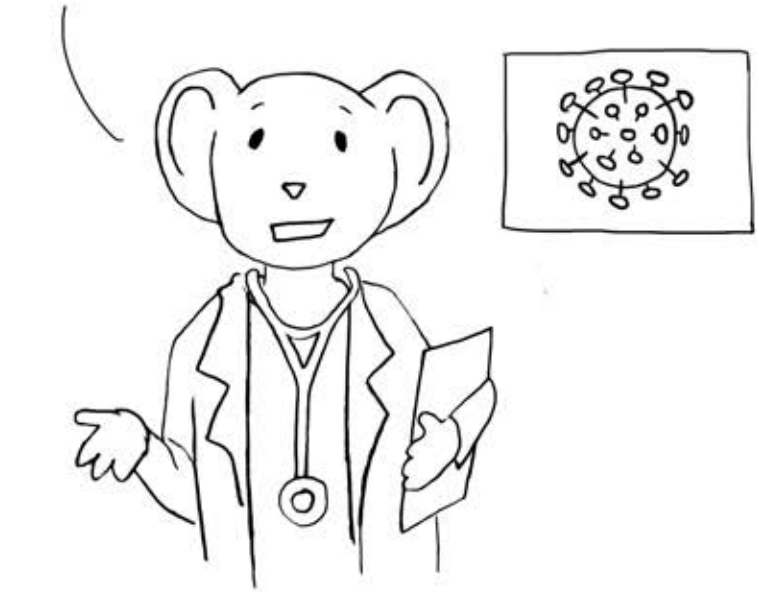
It would take some time. While they waited, they were grateful for everyone who helped those who were sick, for farmers who grew the food, for those who made sure stores had food and packages were delivered . . .



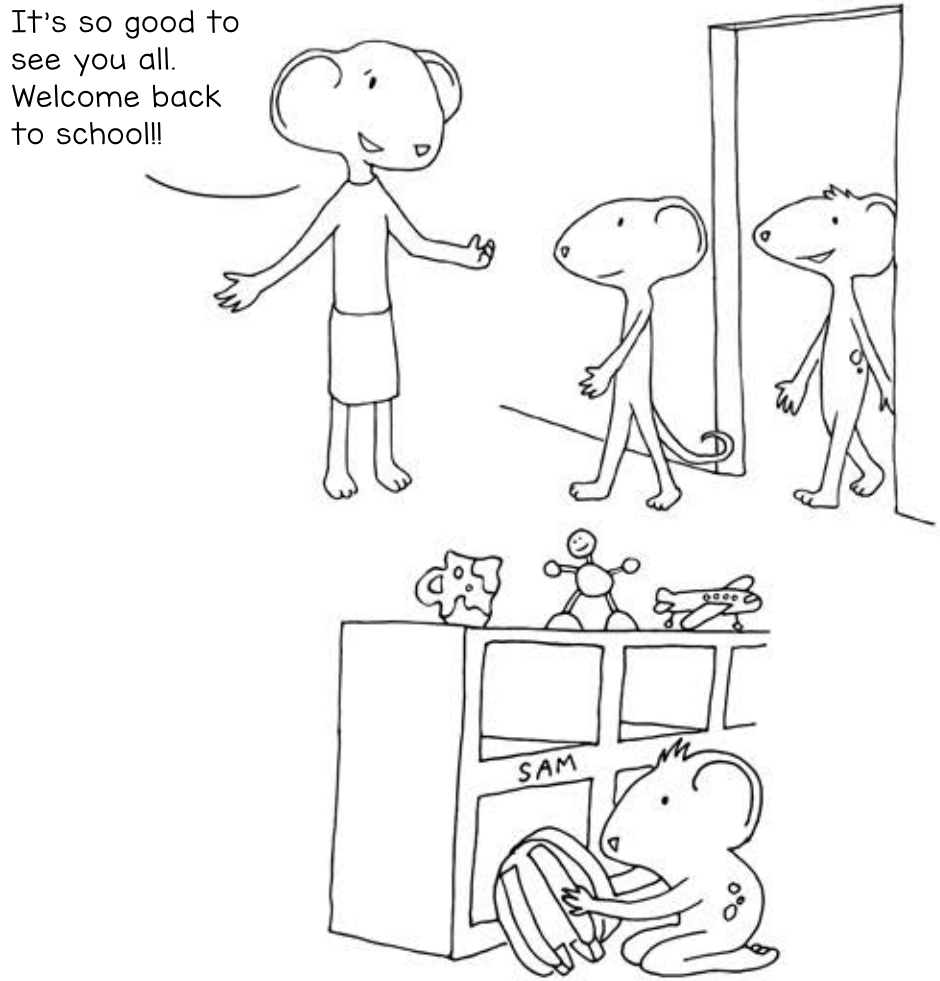
. . . for teachers who helped them learn and scientists who worked hard to stop the spread of the illness, for leaders who tried to make sure that people were taken care of, for the many people who were kind and helpful.



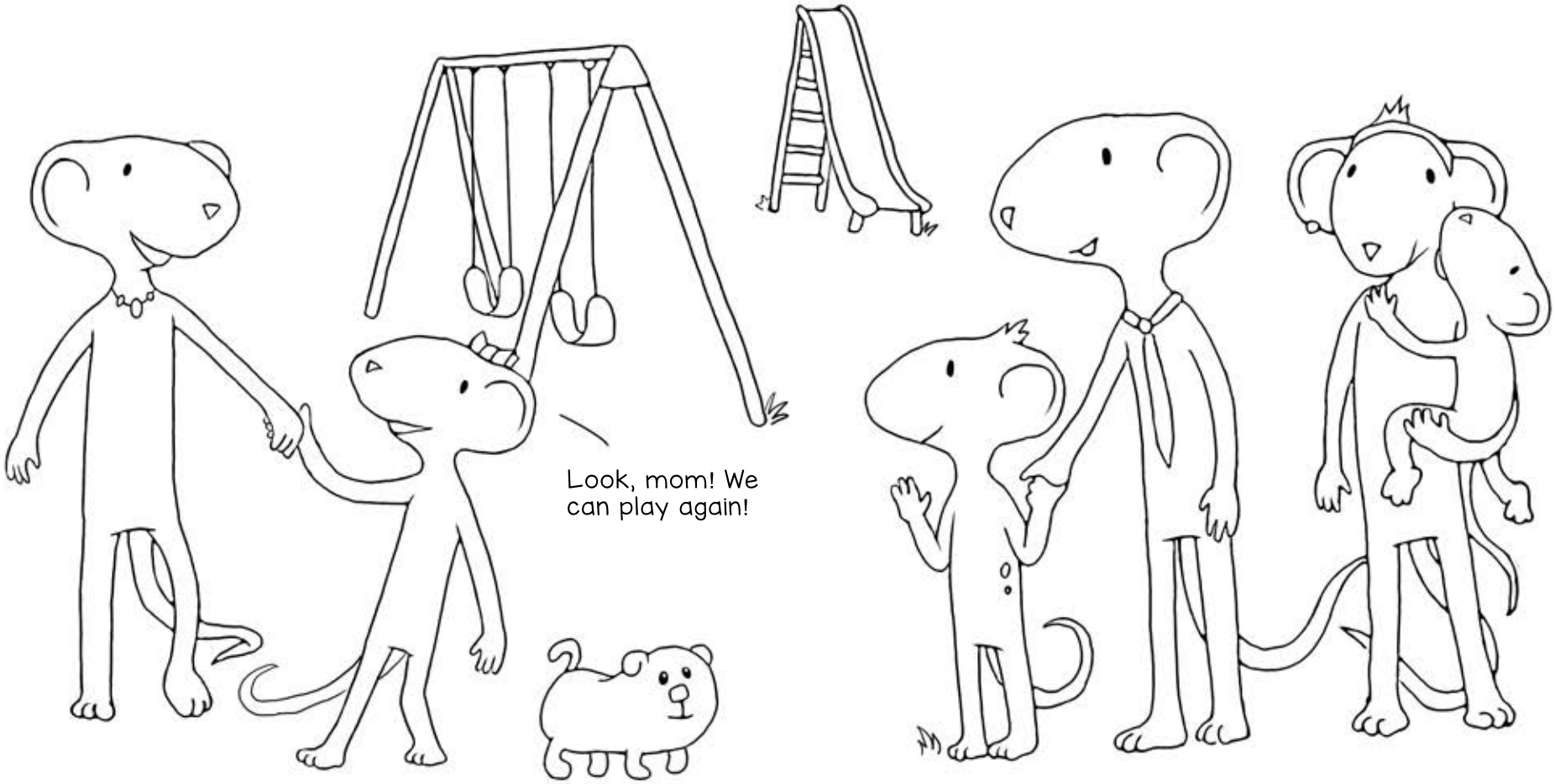
They were also grateful for the many people who stayed at home and couldn't work. Piplo's family was worried about their jobs and having enough money for rent and food, yet, they stayed in to keep Littletown safe, to make sure the hospitals didn't have too many sick people and the virus couldn't spread too fast. They were also heroes.



Little by little things started getting better. Scientists found ways to test for the virus. They developed treatments.

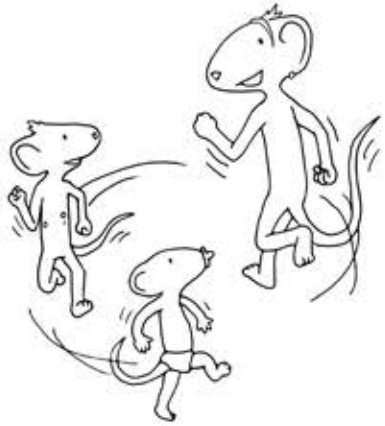


Kids went back to school. Parents went back to work. They followed the new rules for staying safe and worked together to fight the virus.

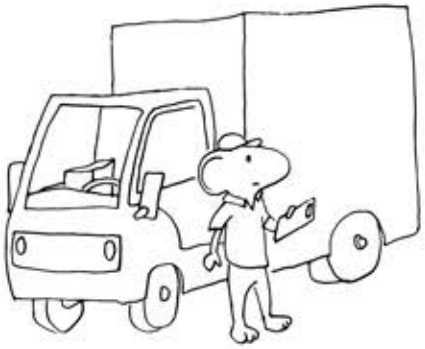


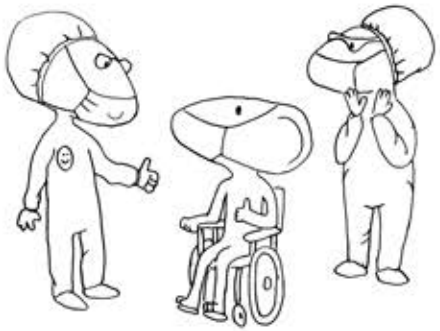
It would take a while. They would have times when they would need to listen carefully and follow the rules to keep everyone safe from the virus. There would be many changes, but eventually, they would all go out to play.

Good Things My Family Is Doing



Helpers We Are Grateful For

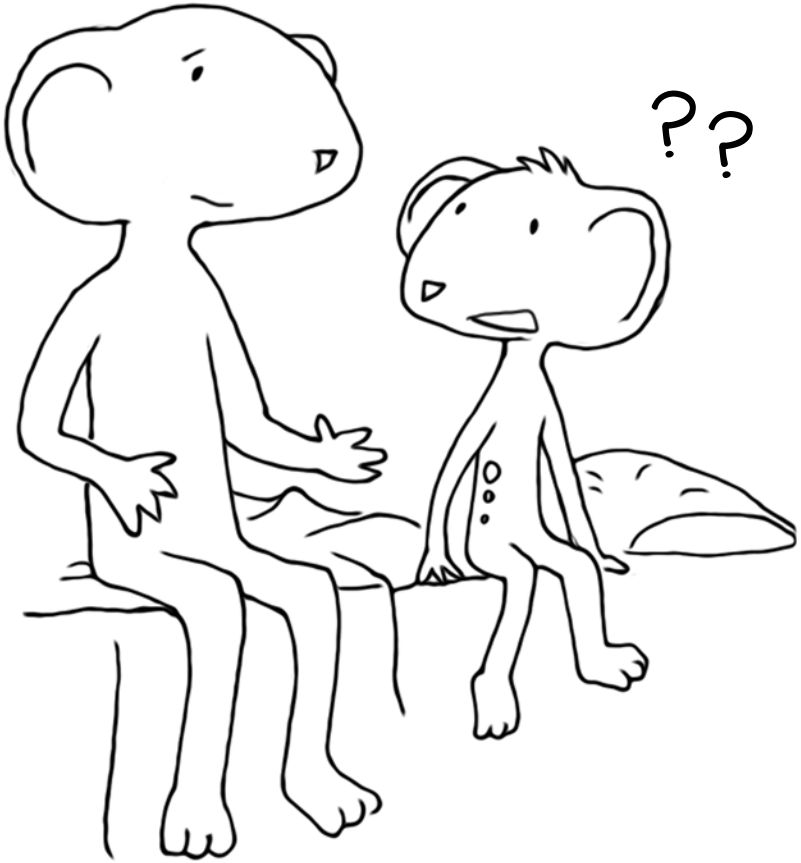




Fighting the Big Virus:

Trinka and Sam's Questions

A companion to the story
Fighting the Big Virus:
Trinka, Sam, and Littletown Work Together



Fighting the Big Virus

Trinka and Sam's Questions

by Chandra Michiko Ghosh Ippen

Illustrated by Erich Ippen, Jr.

Note: This booklet was designed to be used either on its own or as a customizable insert for the story *Fighting the Virus: Trinka, Sam, and Littletown Work Together.*

The story and companion booklet were developed to help young children and their families begin to talk about their experiences and feelings related to the global coronavirus pandemic.

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Version 1.0. Release date April 18, 2020

Please feel free to link to this resource and share it from either https://piploproductions.com or https://nctsn.org.

Piplo productions

Piploproductions.com

More information about the story, the use of the story, and the team who created the story can be found at: https://piploproductions.com. The website also has other stories and resources to help children and families heal after stressful or traumatic experiences.

The development of this booklet was supported in part by a grant made to the Early Trauma Treatment Network (ETTN) at the University of California, San Francisco from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

The ETTN is a site of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. More information about how to help children and families who have experienced stressful and traumatic events can be found at www.nctsn.org.

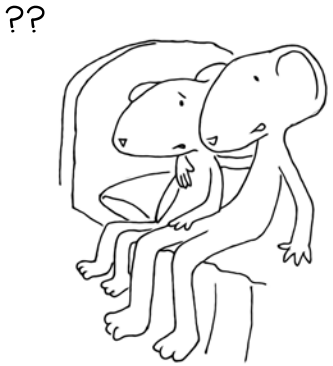
Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Beth Grady, George Grady, Melissa Brymer, Mindy Kronenberg, and Lauren Gourley for their input and feedback on this booklet.

A PARTNER IN NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Trinka and Sam's Questions & Worries

Note for Parents and other Caregivers

- Trinka and Sam had lots of questions.
- Your child may have some of these questions too.
- We tried to include common questions in this booklet.
- You can use individual pages, use the booklet as a story, or include pages from the booklet when you read the story *Fighting the Big Virus: Trinka, Sam, and Littletown Work Together.*
- Look through the pages and decide which ones to use with your child.
- Feel free to leave out pages if you don't think they'll be helpful because of how the virus is affecting your community and family or if your family has already talked about these things.



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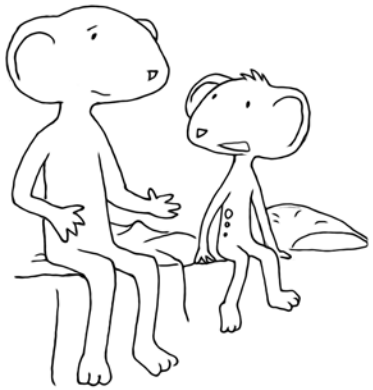
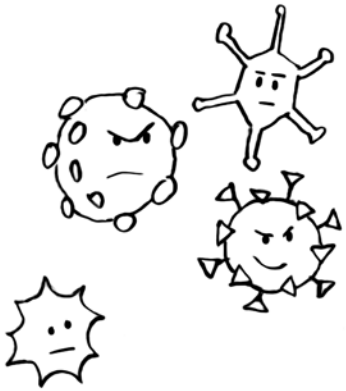
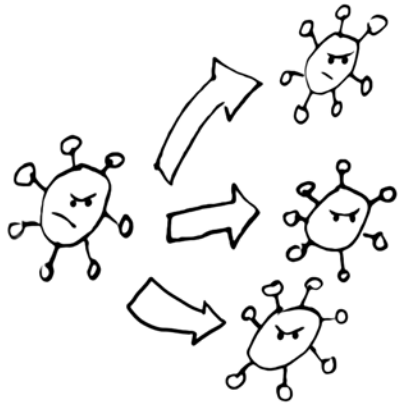


What's a virus?

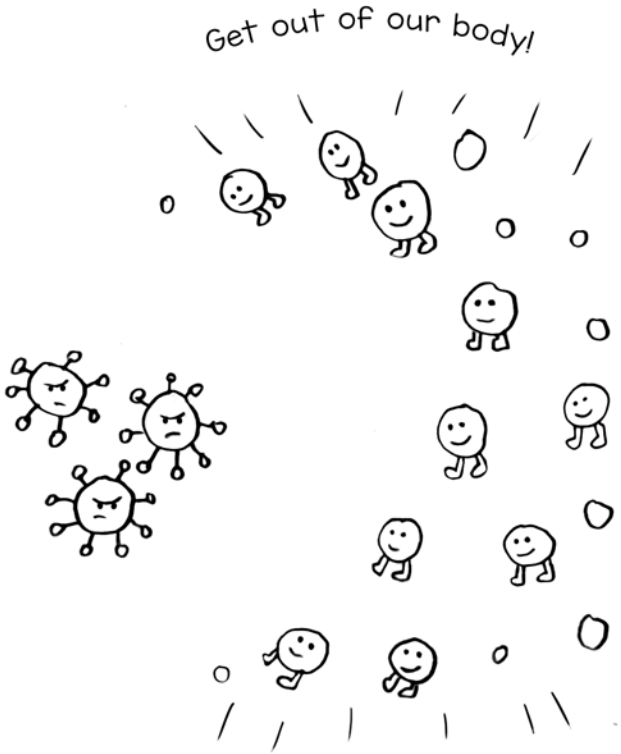
What does it do?



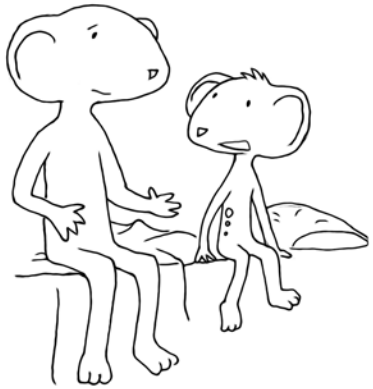


There are lots of different kinds of viruses all over our world. Not all viruses make us sick, but some do.

A virus' #1 mission is to spread.

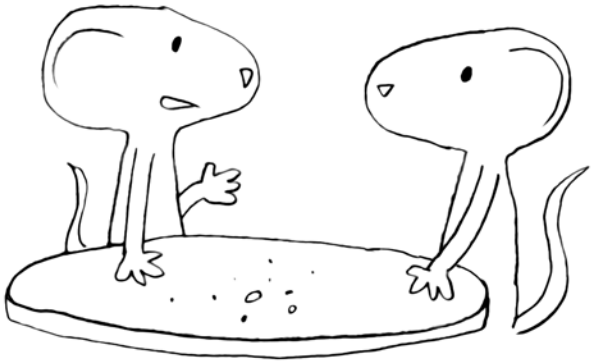


Our bodies have fighters that battle viruses. Sometimes they beat the virus right away. Other times we might get a fever or a runny nose. We might cough or sneeze or feel really tired. These are all signs that our bodies are working hard to fight the virus. We help our bodies fight by getting lots of rest and drinking liquids.



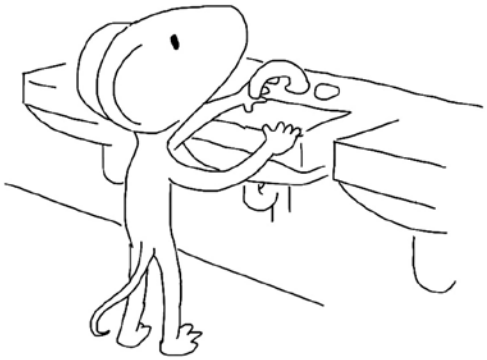
How do viruses spread?

Viruses travel from person to person through tiny drops that escape from our bodies when we're sick, and we cough or sneeze.

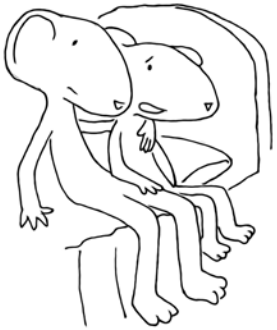


Viruses can land on surfaces where they can live for a little while. If we touch those surfaces while the virus is still active and then we touch our faces, we might get sick.

That's why we try to cough and sneeze into our elbows. When we do this, the virus can't travel to other people.

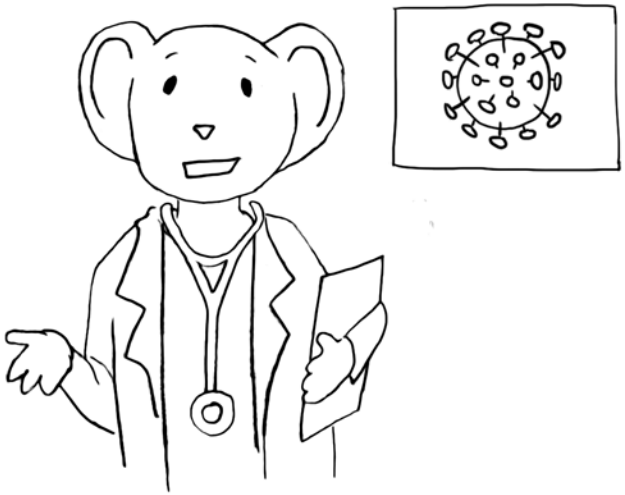


That's why we wash our hands really well when we touch things that might have the virus or other germs on them.



What's coronavirus?

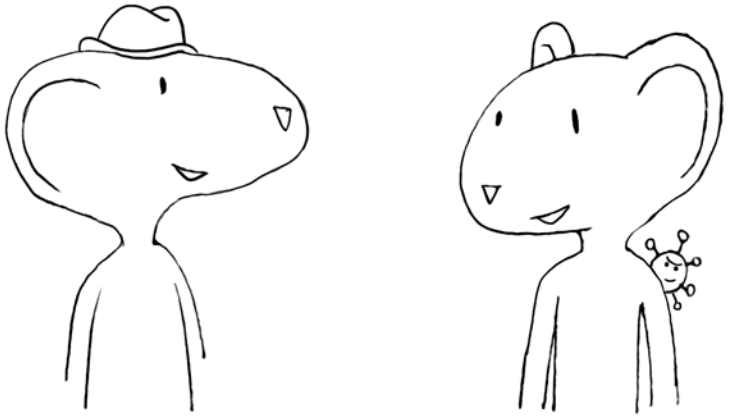
Coronavirus is a new virus. We're still learning about it.



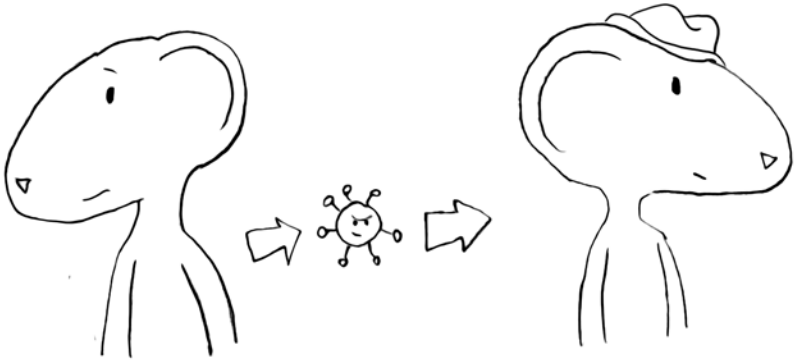
It's important to get good information from doctors and scientists about this new virus. If I learn something new, I'll tell you, so we can do everything we can to stay safe and keep others safe.

People call the virus by different names, Corona, Coronavirus, the Rona. Just so you know, it's the same virus.

People also talk about COVID-19. This is the name of the illness caused by coronavirus.



Scientists have learned that some people who have coronavirus may not look sick. They may not be sneezing and coughing, but they can still spread the virus.



This new coronavirus is very good at traveling and spreading. Right now there is no vaccine for this coronavirus. A vaccine protects people from getting coronavirus. The scientists are working on this, but until they find one, we all need to be very careful.

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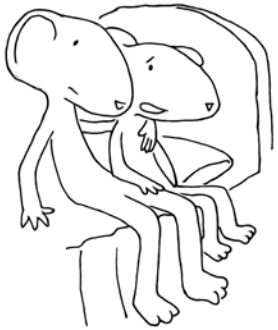
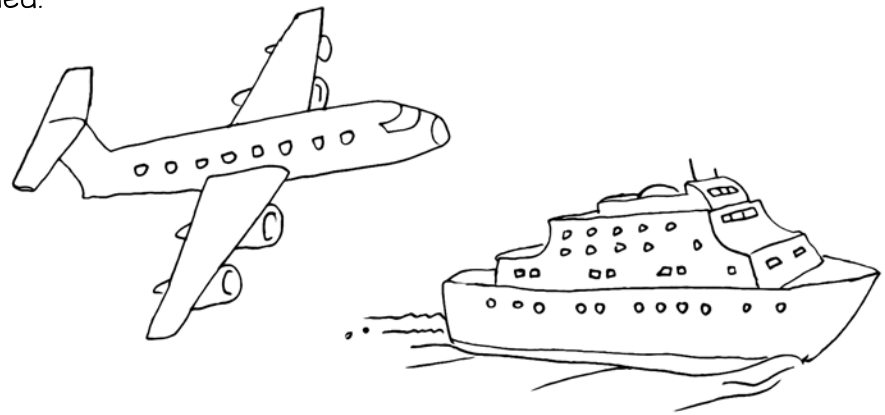


Where did the new virus come from?

No one knows for sure, but this is what scientists and doctors have learned.

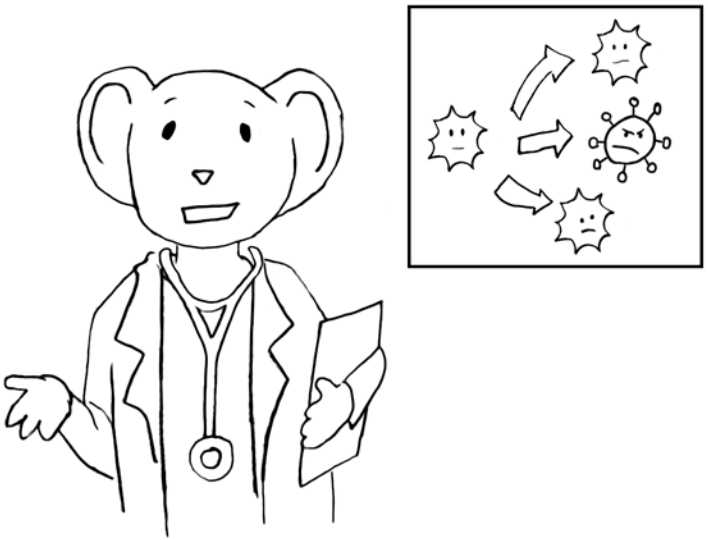


Remember, viruses want to spread, so they make copies of themselves. Sometimes when they do this, they change and become a new virus.

Most new viruses don't harm people. But sometimes, a virus that didn't affect people, changes into one that makes us sick.

This can happen in any place in our world.

We want to know where a virus started, so we can understand how quickly it is spreading. Viruses travel with people and when people travel, the virus can go with them and that's how it gets to new places. This virus seemed to have started in Cheddarville, but it could have started anywhere and with anyone.



When we find a new bad virus, it's important that we work together and share information across countries so that we fight the virus together, keep it from spreading, and keep everyone safe.

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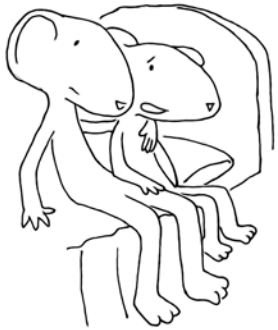


Can I get coronavirus?

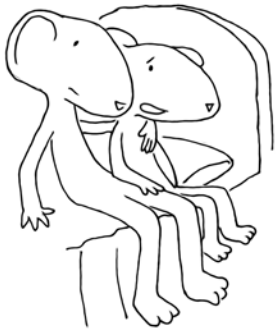
What will happen if I get sick?

If I get it, can I spread it to other people?

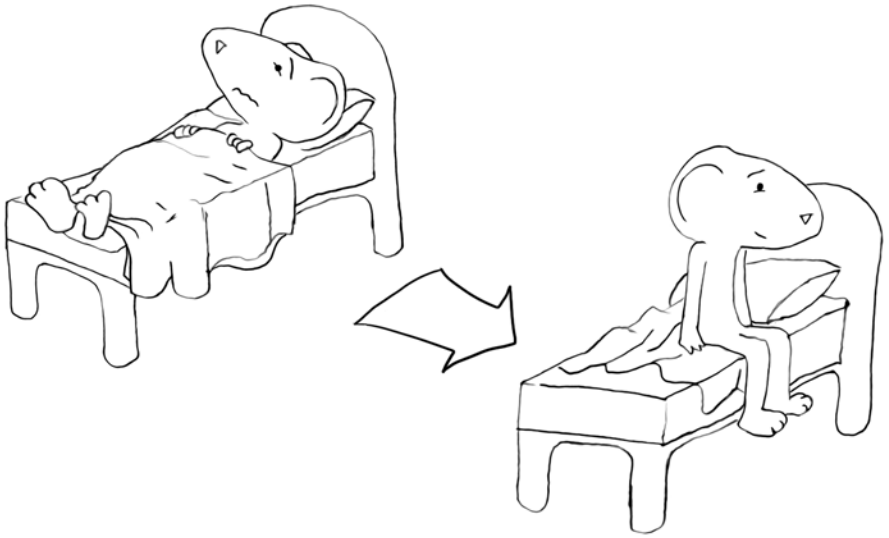
We don't think you have coronavirus. Our family and Littletown have been doing lots of things to keep the virus from spreading.

If you do get sick, we'll take good care of you. We'll take your temperature to check on you, and we'll make you yummy soup. We'll also think about what we can do to try to keep the virus from spreading in our family.

Sometimes when people are sick, people they live with also get sick, but that's not their fault. It's the viruses fault.



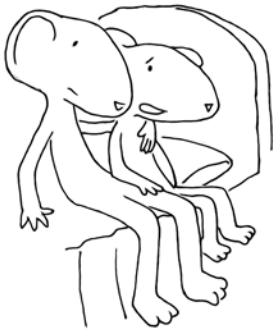
What happens to people who get coronavirus?



Well, most people feel sick for a little while. They might cough or get a fever. They might feel tired and their bodies might hurt, but they usually get better, just like with all other colds and flus.

"Sorry we can't visit."

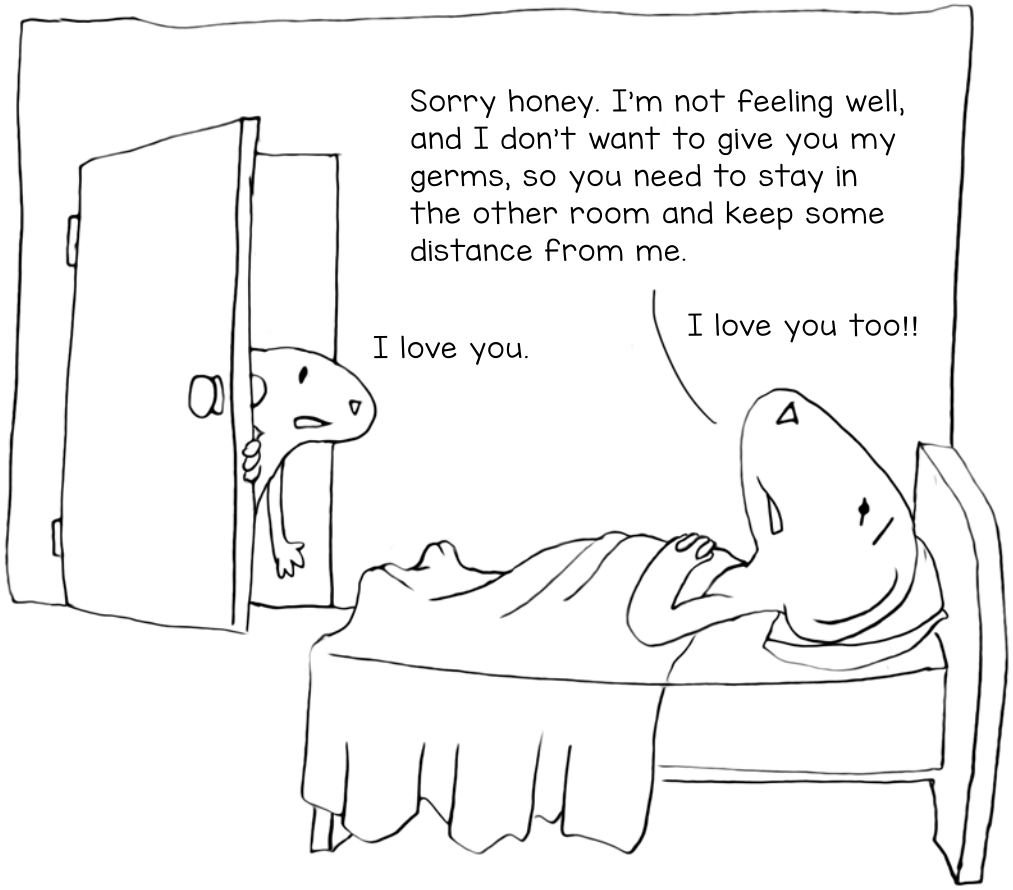
But there are some people who get very sick. Doctors have learned that older people, like Nana and Grandpa and people who have had big illnesses before, seem to get more sick. That's why we called Nana and Grandpa to let them know we couldn't visit for a while. We're doing this to keep them safe.



What do people do if they feel sick?

Well, if anyone is feeling sick, it's important that they stay home and try, as much as possible, to not share the virus with other people.

They have to stay by themselves. We can leave food and drinks at the door, send them messages, and tell them how much we love them.



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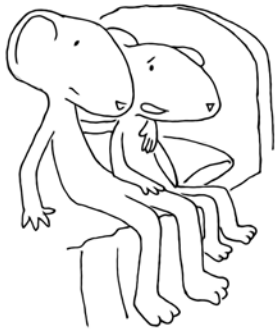
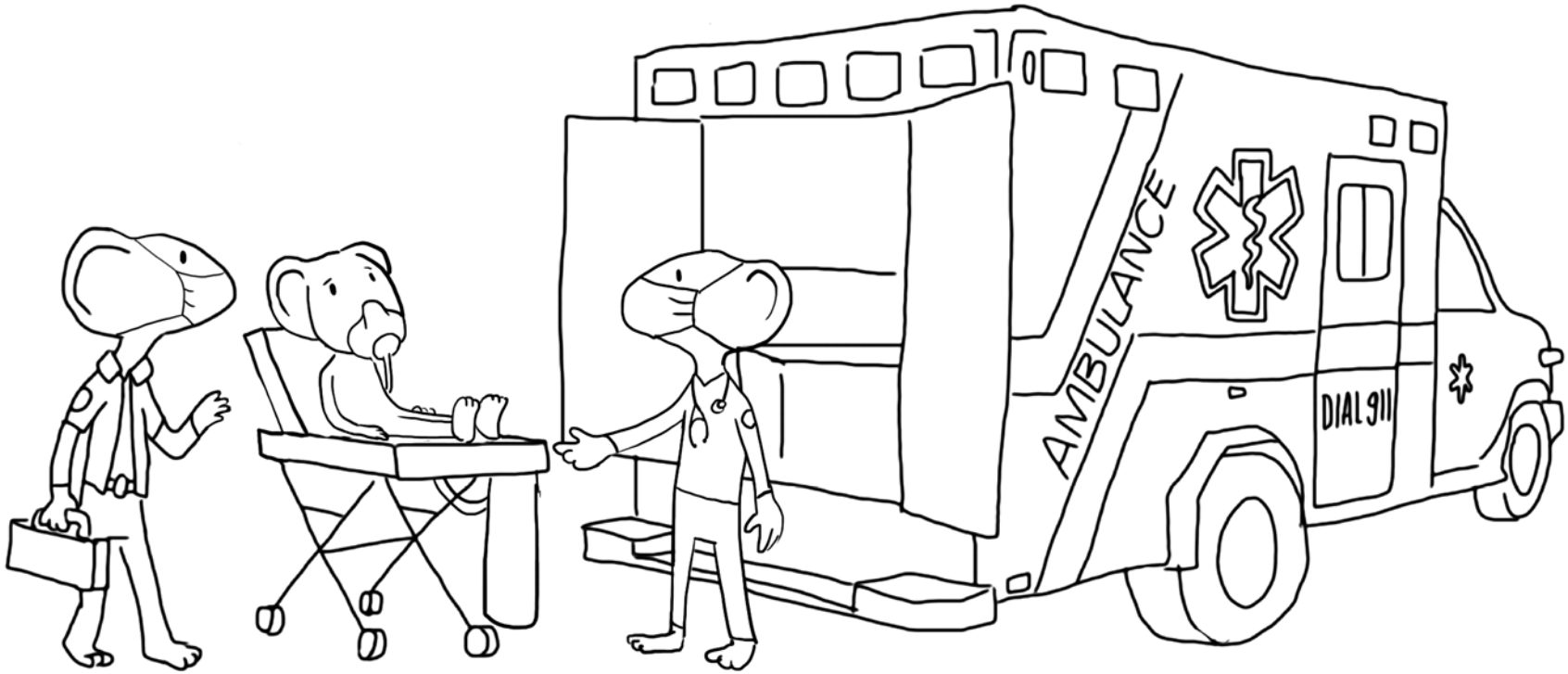
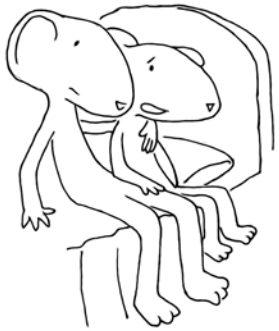


What happens to people who get very sick?



Nurses or doctors talk to them on the phone or come to their houses to see how they're doing. If they need more help, they might tell them to go to the hospital.

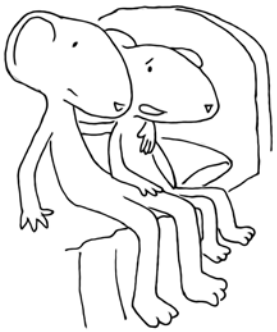
Sometimes when people are very sick, ambulance workers come to help them. They might give them oxygen to help them breathe, and they decide if they need to go to the hospital.



What happens to people who go to the hospital?

In the hospital there are lots of amazing, kind people. They might look strange because they're wearing masks and other things to keep them safe from the virus, but they have very kind eyes and big hearts. They work very hard to help all the people. They give them medicine, help them breathe, and figure out the best ways to help them.

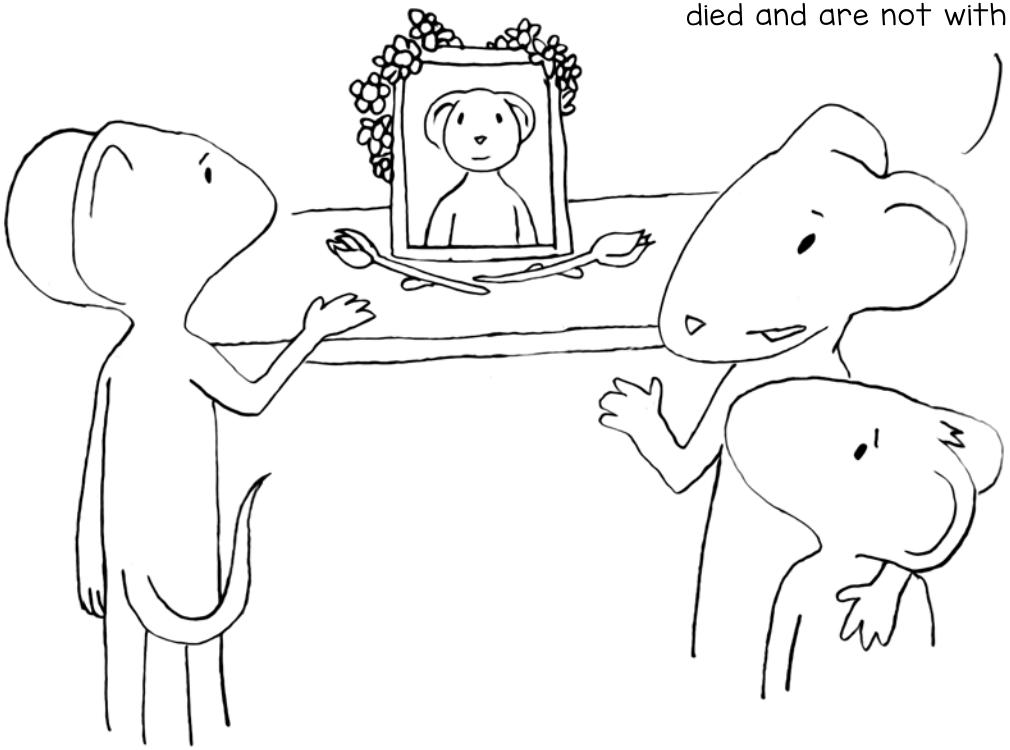
A lot of people who go to the hospital get better and then go back home.



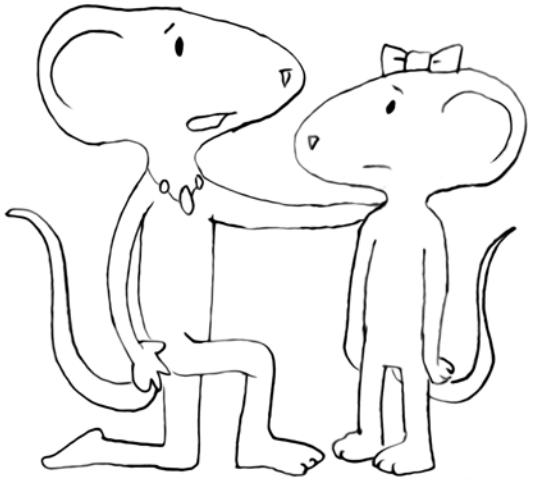
Can people die?

I wonder what you've heard about this?

We'll always be connected through our hearts and our memories, but we are so sad that they died and are not with us.



Most people get better, but, unfortunately, some people have gotten so sick that the doctors and nurses couldn't help them. They tried really hard, but the people were just too sick. Their bodies stopped working, and they died. Their families are really sad, and the doctors and nurses and all the people who cared about them are also sad.



I wonder how you feel knowing about this.

I am glad that you could talk to me about this.

There are some very sad and hard things happening right now.

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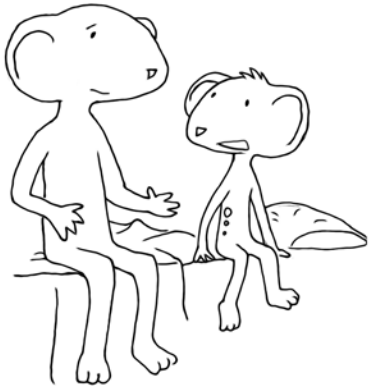
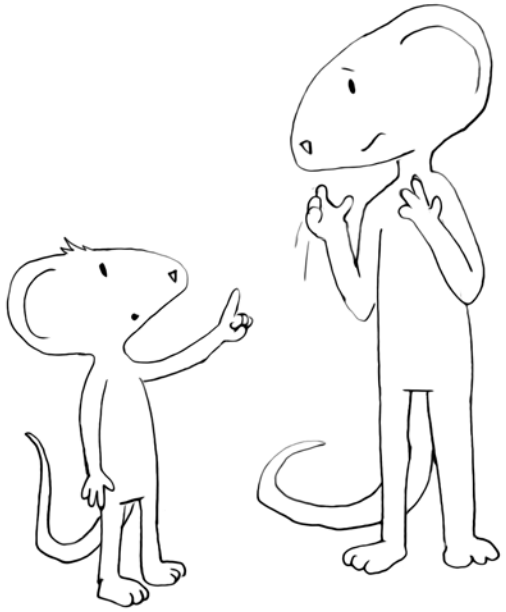


What can we do, so we don't get sick?

There are many things we can do to keep ourselves and others safer.

We can wash our hands while we sing a song. Viruses hate soap, and if we wash our hands for the full time of a song like the ABC's, we'll be virus busters.

Remember, we can cough and sneeze into our elbows and then wash our hands afterwards, so the virus can't spread.



We can also try to keep from touching our faces, especially our nose, eyes, and mouth. This can keep the virus from getting into our bodies. If we need to touch our face, we should wash our hands before and afterwards.

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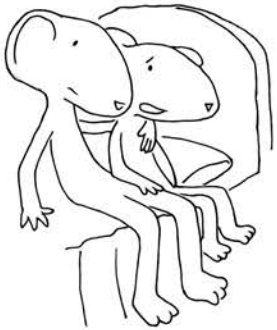
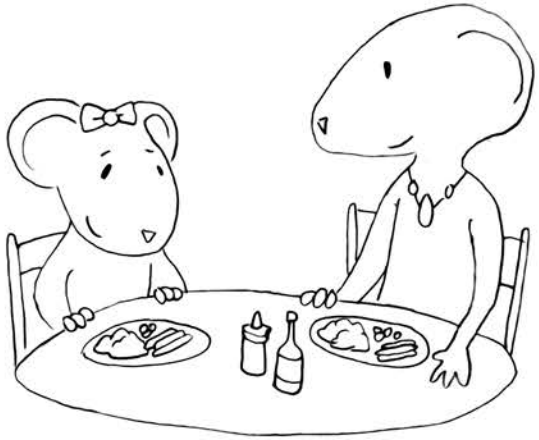
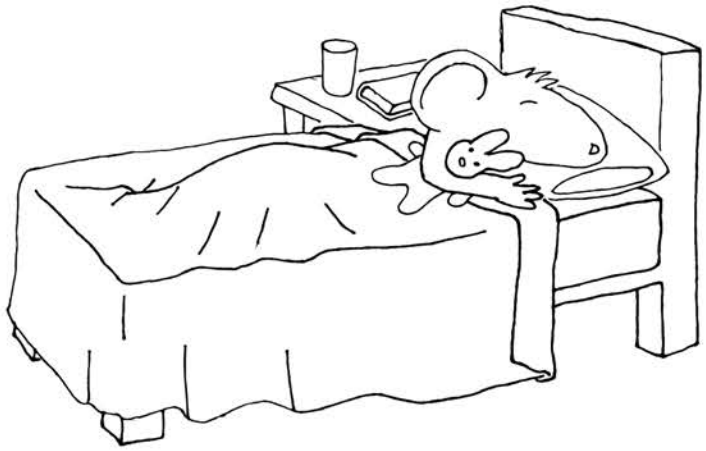


What else can we do, so we don't get sick?

We can also do things to keep our bodies healthy.



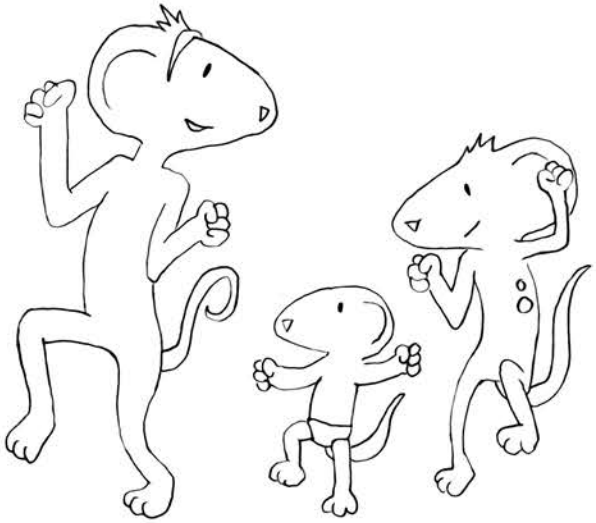
We can eat well.



We can sleep well.

Cuddling is also good for our health. No kidding. It's true.

And we can do things that are good for our bodies, like wiggle and exercise.



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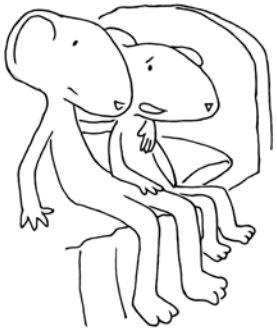

Is there anything else we can do?

We can keep the virus from spreading by staying home and only spending time with people we live with.

When we go outside, we can leave lots of space between us and people we don't live with. This way the virus can't go from one person to the next. This way we help keep each other safe.

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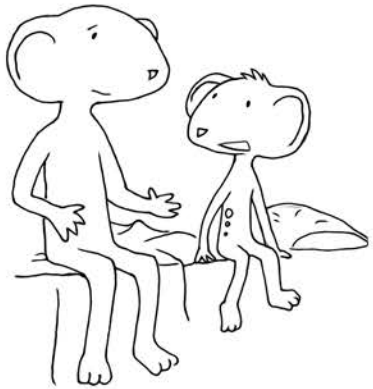
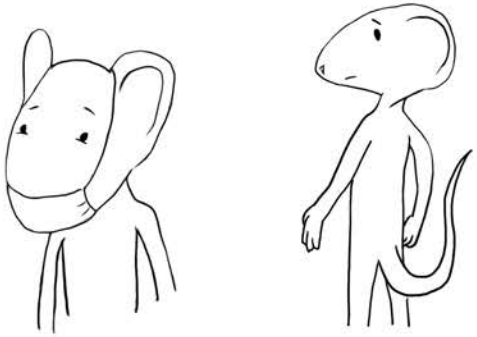
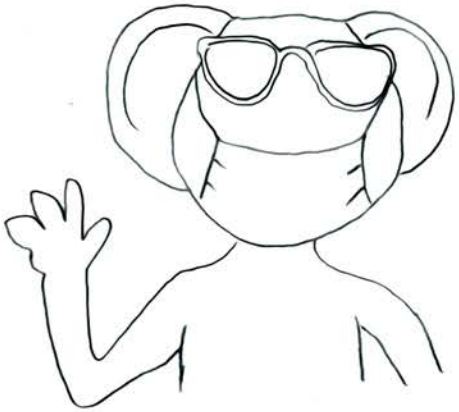


Why are some people wearing masks?

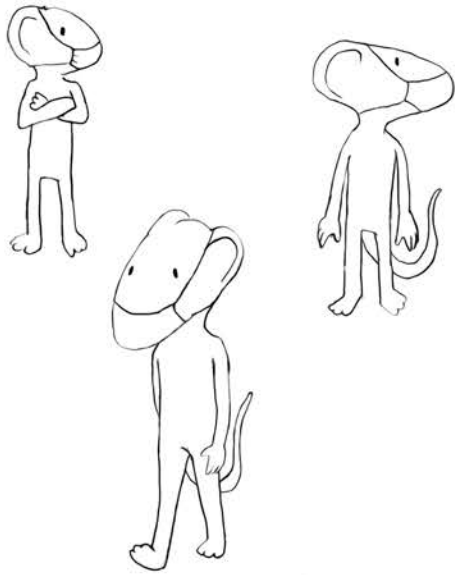
Different people wear masks for different reasons.



Some people wear masks because they're not feeling well, and they don't want to spread any illness they may have. They're trying to keep us all safe.



Some people wear a mask, and even sunglasses, to keep them from touching their mouth, nose and eyes while they're outside. All these things can keep the virus from getting into their bodies.



In some places they're asking everyone to wear masks. People are following rules that help keep us all safe.

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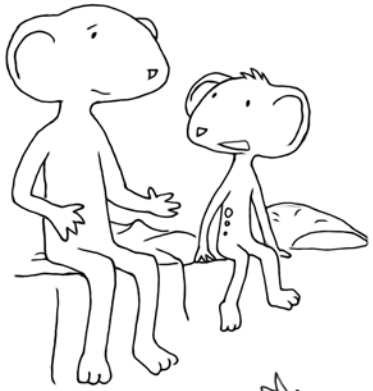
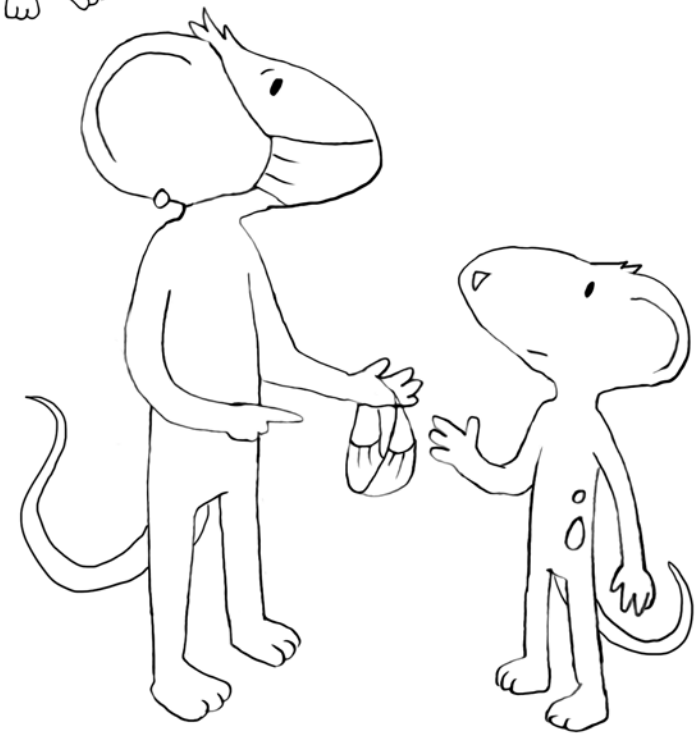
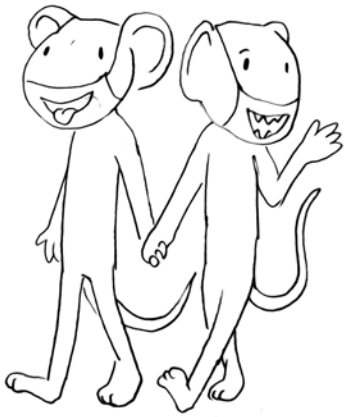
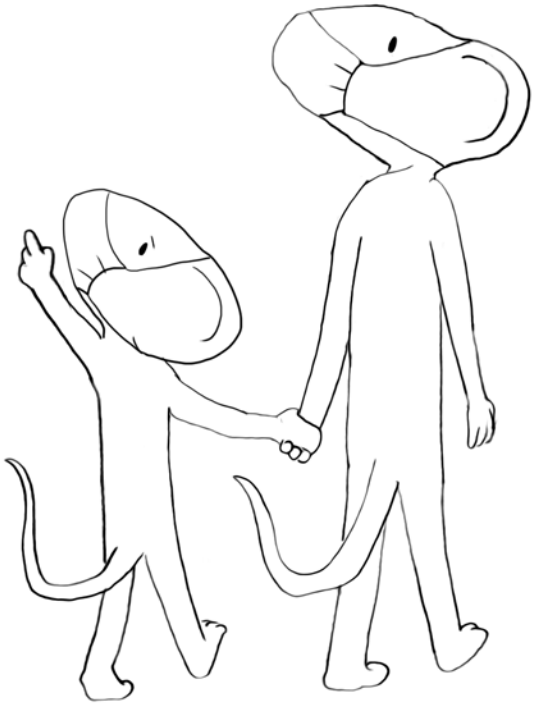


Are we going to wear masks?







They're now telling us that it's a good idea for us all to wear masks whenever we go out. Masks help a lot, but they're not perfect. This is why we're still trying to keep distance from people we don't live with.

Cal won't wear a mask because he's a baby. Doctors say it's not safe for children under age 2 to wear a mask because it might make it too hard for them to breathe easily.

Many people are making masks to keep themselves and others safe. We might see some funny masks when we go outside. Should we make funny masks for our family?

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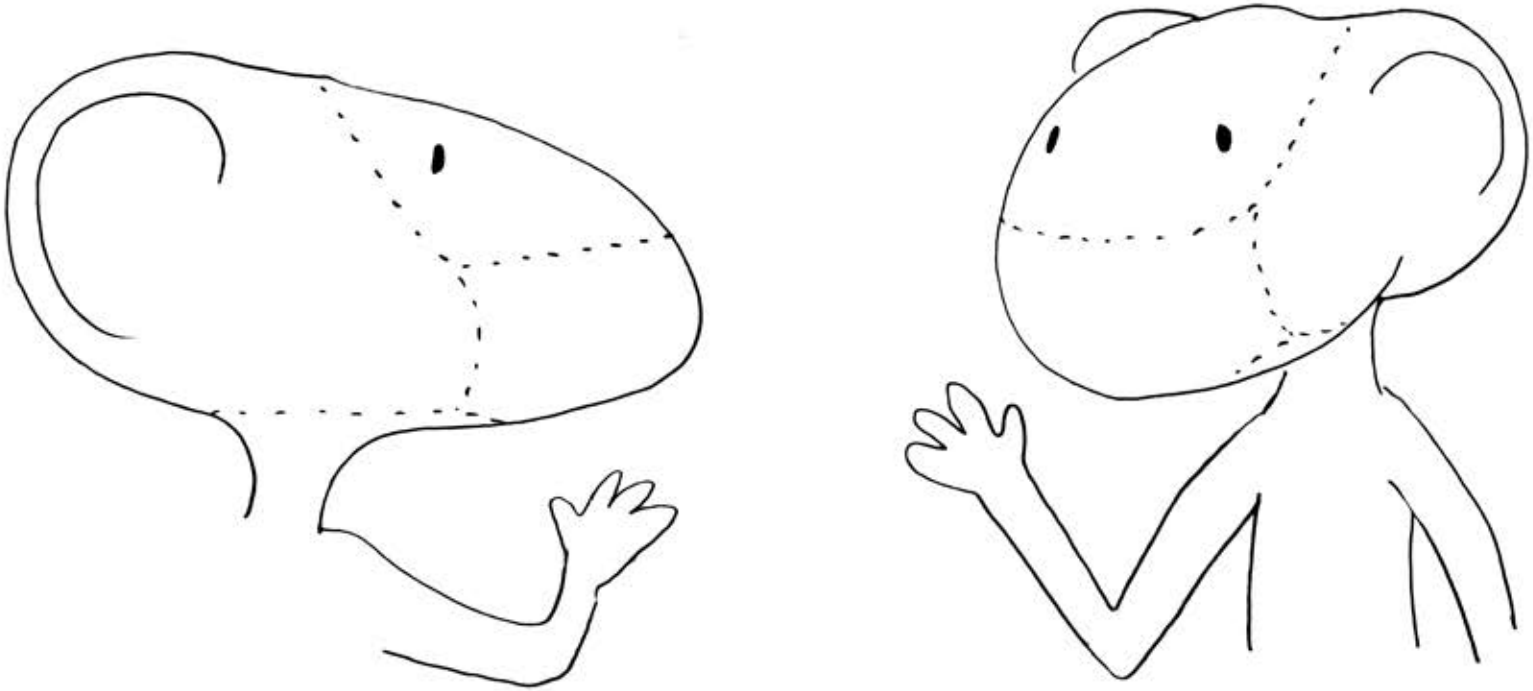
Do the mice need masks?

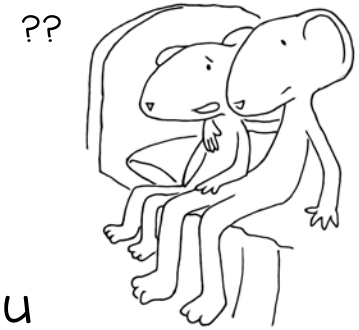
If people in your area are wearing masks, you can draw masks on the mice in the story when they go outside their home. Here's how.



If you want, you can also cut out paper masks and tape them to their faces when they go outside.

Your Questions and Worries

Trinka and Sam had lots of questions and worries. What questions and worries do you have?



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Fighting the Big Virus:
Parent Guide

A companion to the story
Fighting the Big Virus:
Trinka, Sam, and Littletown Work Together

Parents' Guide

The purpose of the story is to help children cope with their fears and worries related to COVID-19. As the story shows, you can help your child by letting your child know they are loved and sharing what is being done to keep the family safe and well.

Ways to Use this Story

1. Review the book yourself so you know the content.
   - Decide if there are any pages you want to leave out.
   - The book describes many different experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on your child's age, you may choose to limit exposure to experiences they are not aware of.
   - However, including all pages may help your child to have empathy for others.
2. Review the companion booklet *Trinka and Sam's Questions*
   - The booklet includes questions your child may have about the virus or changes in your community.
   - Look through the pages and decide the ones to use with your child.
   - You can read this booklet as a stand alone story or include it as part of this story (between page 6 & 7).
3. Read and talk about this book with your child.
   - Follow your child's lead.
   - Some children may want to stop and talk about what's on the page. Let them. This is how they will begin to share their experiences, how they feel, and what they remember.
   - Some children may get worried while reading the book and need to take a break. That's ok. You can say something like "It's good to take a break. We can look at it when you want to."
4. Use it as a coloring book.
   - Coloring is fun and relaxing, it lets children go at their own pace, and it gives them something to do.
   - You can add face masks (see the booklet for instructions).
   - Children can use different colors for different feelings. For example, when Trinka, Sam (or their parents) are angry, they might color the picture red. When they're sad, they might color the picture blue. When they're scared or worried, they might choose a color for fear and color those pages with that color. Doing this will help your child begin to think about different feelings.
   - As children are coloring, they often begin to talk about what they are thinking.
   - Some children may want to scribble on certain pages to show how angry they are or how much they didn't want this to happen. This is a good way to share feelings.
     - They might be mad at the virus and use a page from the booklet *Trinka and Sam's Questions* to show how mad they are at the virus.
     - They might be upset that the playground is closed or that people in the family have been angry and use those pages to share their feelings.
5. Use the story to talk about your family's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.
   - The good things you are doing as a family
   - Good moments you are having as a family
   - Some of the challenges you are having
   - Ways you are supporting your community
   - Ways your community is supporting you
6. Stories are important to young children. They help them understand what is happening.
7. Stories can open doors to difficult but important conversations.
   - When you read the story to your child, they will know it's ok to talk about what is happening and ask questions.
   - As your child asks questions, give answers in simple words.
   - Many families are experiencing a lot of stress related to COVID-19 including economic stress, stress from remaining in close quarters, and from providing round the clock care for children while trying to work. If your child sees you get upset or angry, talk about it once you have had a chance to breathe and feel more calm. It is ok to admit that you were angry, scared, or upset. Help your child to see that you are doing better now, that you are strong, and that you will do all you can to keep your family safe. Also, remember to give yourself breaks during this stressful time.
   - By talking to you, your child may be able to share difficult feelings. When children can talk and don't have to act out

their feelings through their behavior, often their behavior improves.

- To help your child begin to talk, ask them what they are going through or what they remember and whether they ever feel the way that Trinka and Sam feel. Offer that you sometimes worry too and be open to answering questions.
- Sometimes when children are not comfortable or ready to talk about their own feelings, they express themselves by talking about how the characters in the story felt or behaved. If you have noticed similarities between Trinka and Sam's feelings and behaviors and those of your own children, you can direct the conversation to those parts of the story. For example:
    - Sam is mad at his dad because he doesn't understand why he can't go back to school. Young children often get upset with their parents when routines change. They can also misbehave which makes them feel bad about themselves. It is important that his parents understand that Sam misses his friends and teacher and also that the stress of being inside is building up in his body. Just like Sam's parents, it may help to identify ways your child can cope with this disappointment, including labeling feelings, exercising,doing breathing exercises, and being comforted by you.
    - During these challenging times, Trinka is more clingy. It is hard for young children to see so many changes to their home routine and to their community. When young children see adults worry, they worry. Even though Trinka is safe and healthy, she may worry about what could happen in the future, especially after she hears that people in her community are getting sick. Her mother's reassurance, providing a routine that includes special activities, clarifying the rules, and having extra patience helped Trinka feel better.
    - Even Cal, who is a toddler, may be affected by the changes in the family routine or how family members react to different situations. Fear and worry are catching, but fortunately, so are moments of calm and laughter.

8. If your children seem worried, or sad, talking about Sam, Trinka, Cal, or even Juju's feelings may help your children begin to talk about their own feelings.
9. Use the story to begin (or continue) talking to your children about viruses. Remember the booklet, *Trinka and Sam's Questions* can help guide this discussion.

Key Points to Remember

- We will be dealing with changes to our routines and uncertainties for a long time. Try to be patient with yourself and your family.
- Help your family create a new routine during the pandemic. Besides meal time and bedtime, your routine can include learning times as well as play time and time for family activities. Be sure to include calm and quiet time for each member of the family too.
- Young children often cannot tell us their understanding about what is happening. They show their worry through their behavior. Trinka wants to be picked up. Sam takes his brother's toy and slams the door. Some children get stomach aches.
- Children react in different ways. Trinka is worried, and she becomes clingy. Sam is worried, and he acts out.
- Although children may have to be separated from their friends for a time, help them to find connections in different ways. Trinka made a cheesecake for Sam. Sam drew a note on the sidewalk for Trinka.
- Young children can have extra fears over their parents' safety. Sam and Cal needed extra reassurance from their mom that she was protecting herself. Dad needed to clarify additional questions they had about why mom had to leave the home.
- If changes to your schedule occur, make sure you tell your children why and how they can keep in contact with you. Sam and Cal needed to know that their mom might have to stay away from the house, but they could video chat with her.
- In the story, the parents are upset and frustrated by their children's behavior, but they try to understand why their children are behaving this way.
- The parents also got angry with each other, which increased their children's worry. Find ways to give each other space and,

if possible, problem-solve ways to solve conflicts outside of your children's presence.

- Remember, children are always learning, not just their ABC's but about feelings and relationships. When they get upset or when they see us get upset, they are learning about anger. What things make us angry? What do we do when we are angry? How do we repair relationships after moments of anger? Think about what you would like them to learn about anger. Sometimes as parents we help our children to learn things that are different from what we may have learned when we were younger.
- Even when children are scared, angry, or sad, it is not ok for them to behave aggressively – setting limits for your children will help them feel safe.
- Young children ask the same questions over and over. This is not because they forget what you told them but because this is their way of learning about what is happening and how to make sense of it. They need you to answer the same questions over and over as patiently and lovingly as possible.
- Children will miss developmental milestones during these uncertain times (e.g. graduations, incomplete sport seasons, birthday parties canceled). Acknowledge your children's disappointments, problem-solve if there are ways to honor the missed opportunity later or in a different way. For Trinka's birthday, her family wished her happy birthday by video and Sam from his window, but she still had her favorite cake.
- Discuss with your children different ways your community is beginning to reopen. Talk about when schools reopen, when they can play on the playgrounds, or when they can have playdates again. You children may have additional questions about safety during each of these steps. Make sure you help them understand why these activities are now safe to do.
- Help your children know about the helpers in the community and their different roles. Thanking these individuals can inspire children to want to help others in the future. Also thank your children for ways they helped others.

Thinking About Your Child

- Has your child acted differently since the pandemic?
- What makes your child worried?
- How do you know when your child is worried?
- How does your child tend to behave when stressed or worried?
- What can you and your child do together that will help your child feel better?

Ways You Can Help Your Children

- Help your children talk with you about what is happening. Correct any inaccurate information or misunderstandings they may have.
- Help your children identify feelings they may be having, and let them know it's ok to feel that way. The Trinka and Sam poster may help. You can download a free copy from the website: https://piploproductions.com.
- Help your children feel safe. Focus on psychological safety (how your children feel) and actual physical safety (how many people are sick in your community, how do I prevent my family from getting sick). Discuss what your family is doing to keep everyone well (e.g., washing hands, wiping down the groceries, wearing masks, staying home).
- Young children feel safe when you hold them.
- Children feel safe when they have predictable routines (regular meals, schedules, and consistent rules) and know what is going to happen next.
- Limit your children's exposure to COVID-19 media coverage.
- Distract your children with different activities to keep them busy, to help get their energy out, and to help them calm.
- Help them stay connected with extended relatives, friends, teachers, and neighbors.
- If you can, help them do something for someone in need (e.g., send a card, get groceries, bake cookies). Helping others will help them feel better.

Ways You Can Help Yourself

- Adults are dealing with many stressors right now - trying to educate and entertain children, juggling your own jobs, worrying about finances, and keeping everyone safe. You may be scared, and you may feel sad, angry, or guilty about all that is happening.

- Take several slow breaths to calm yourself. Inhale quietly and exhale slowly (twice as long as the inhale).
- Make sure you find ways each day to care for yourself. Practice good rest/sleep, healthy eating, and exercise. What helps you feel calm? Brings you joy? Find one practical activity to do each day.
- Find ways to connect with friends, family, and co-workers. It helps to connect with others in the same situation and learn ways they are addressing problems.
- Allow yourself to feel sadness and grief.
- For large concerns (e.g., unemployment), try to consider small steps to begin to deal with this problem. For example, filing for unemployment, researching community food programs, contacting your boss to determine the feasibility of getting rehired).
- Stay informed but limit COVID-19 media coverage.
- Be patient with yourself as you might not be the best parent right now, the most efficient, or get everything done on your list.

Additional Resources

- NCTSN.org: Information about children, disasters, public health emergencies, and trauma.
- Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) (English/Spanish).
- NCTSN Simple Activities for Families during COVID-19
- Helping Children with Traumatic Separation or Traumatic Grief related to COVID-19
- Coping in Hard Times: Fact Sheet for Parents
- Piploproductions.com: Stories to help families heal including *Once I Was Very Very Scared*, *You Weren't With Me* (for families who have experienced difficult separations, and *Holdin Pott,* to help families talk about feelings.
- Sesame Street: Caring for Each Other and Sesame Street in Communities has tips, activities, and other tools to help the whole family with the uncertainties of health emergencies (English/Spanish).
- Zero to Three: Tips for Families: Coronavirus has information for families with young children.
- Zero to Thrive: COVID-19 resources and information for families and professionals.
- My COVID-19 Time Capsule -an activity book.
- PBS Kids: Has creative fun activities for kids.
- Download a wellness app (e.g., Headspace, Calm, Simple Habit).

Our Team

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Melissa Brymer, Ph.D., Psy.D. is the Director of the Terrorism and Disaster Program for the UCLA/Duke University National Center for Child Traumatic Stress. She supports children, families, and communities impacted by various types of disasters including hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, wildfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Bentley and Bailey also provide lots of support and cuddles.