

Tatjana Gjurković & Tea Knežević

# I will calm myself so I can comfort you

Illustrations:  
Jelena Brezovec

EMOTIONAL EMPATHY

+  
Advice for parents  
and caregivers





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## Emotional empathy in a relationship

Empathy is a word that is being mentioned more and more over the last few years as an important factor and precondition for positive changes in our society. We agree that life would be better and nicer for all of us if we only treated ourselves and each other with more understanding and compassion for the things we are going through. Especially because we live in an increasingly complex world and go through serious challenges. Experts mostly describe empathy as a partly inherited trait and partly the result of nurture, upbringing and early life experiences. They also agree that upbringing focused on empathy should start from the earliest age. Children learn from adults, they observe us and react to our direct incentives, so it is of great importance to give empathy an important role in children's upbringing.

This picture book deals with the type of empathy we call – emotional empathy. It refers to our ability to truly feel other people's feelings, even if we do not share the experience that evoked those strong emotions. In this story, children will meet an empathetic boy named Tony who absorbed in all the sadness of his friend Nikki, even though nothing has happened to him personally. Empathetic sorrow was so overwhelming that it took his ability to provide consolation to his dear friend. There is another character in the picture book who represents adults - little bee who is helping Tony to emotionally regulate and calm himself first, so he could give Nikki comfort she needed at that moment of sadness.

At the end of the book, you can find advice for parents and caregivers with guidelines on how to act when child's emotional empathy is too strong or too overwhelming, or when child's emotional empathy is not felt or expressed enough.

Reading itself, your soothing voice, the attention and closeness you establish with the child you read to play a big and important part in developing empathy.

Enjoy those moments together. ♥

”

Hi! I'm Tony.

I want to tell you what happened to me yesterday. My friend Nikki's cat Muffin died and that's why she was very, very sad. When I saw her crying, I got very sad too. I was sad because Nikki was sad. I wanted to help her, but I didn't know how and I just wanted to cry. But a little bee came to me and helped me calm down. When I calmed down, I was able to comfort my friend Nikki!

Make yourself comfortable  
and listen to my story...



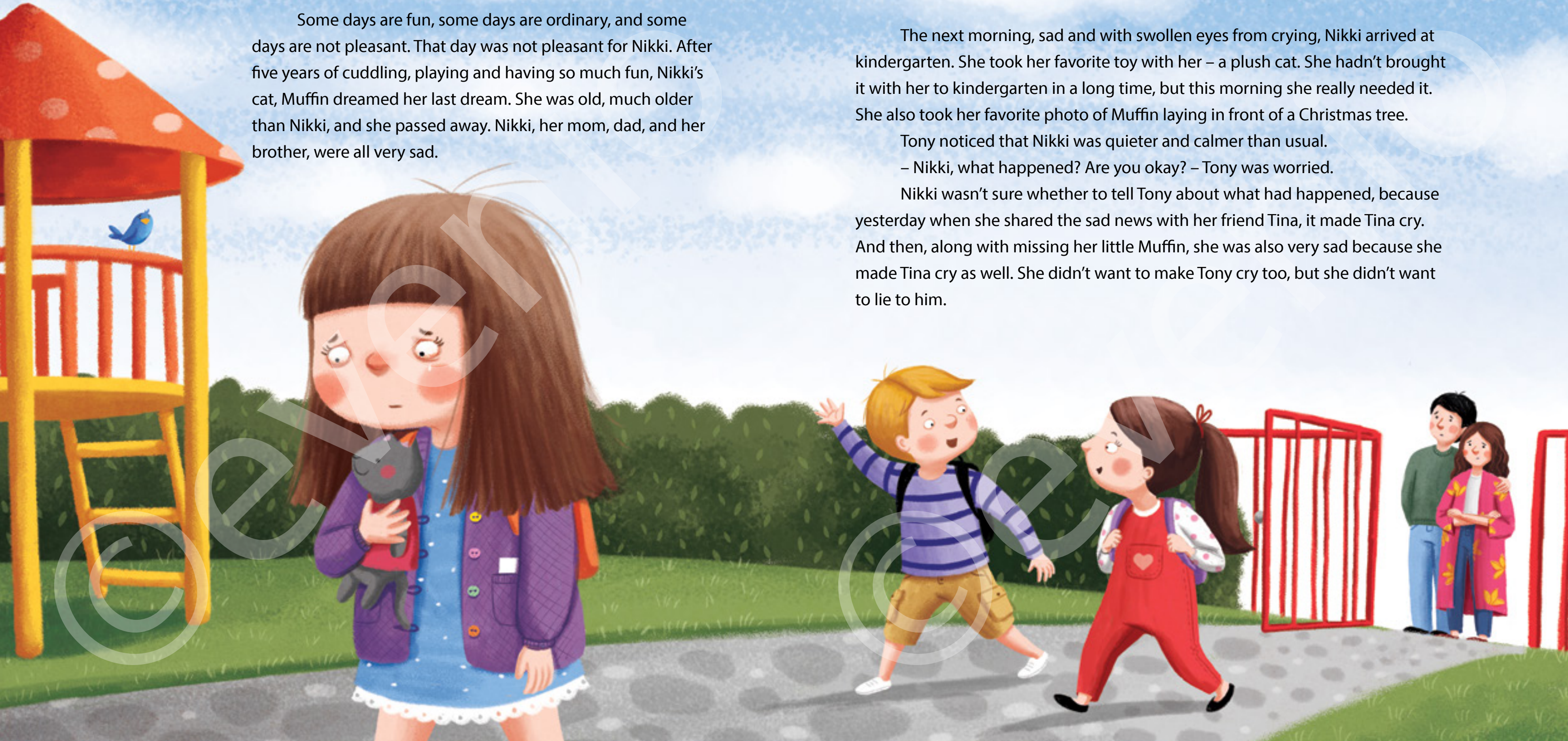


Some days are fun, some days are ordinary, and some days are not pleasant. That day was not pleasant for Nikki. After five years of cuddling, playing and having so much fun, Nikki's cat, Muffin dreamed her last dream. She was old, much older than Nikki, and she passed away. Nikki, her mom, dad, and her brother, were all very sad.

The next morning, sad and with swollen eyes from crying, Nikki arrived at kindergarten. She took her favorite toy with her – a plush cat. She hadn't brought it with her to kindergarten in a long time, but this morning she really needed it. She also took her favorite photo of Muffin laying in front of a Christmas tree.

Tony noticed that Nikki was quieter and calmer than usual.  
– Nikki, what happened? Are you okay? – Tony was worried.

Nikki wasn't sure whether to tell Tony about what had happened, because yesterday when she shared the sad news with her friend Tina, it made Tina cry. And then, along with missing her little Muffin, she was also very sad because she made Tina cry as well. She didn't want to make Tony cry too, but she didn't want to lie to him.





Tony was still standing next to her, waiting for her to say something. He looked at her and noticed a sad expression on her face. Her body was all curled and her lips trembling as if she was going to cry. And while he was observing her, Tony felt that something is changing in his body too.

– My cat Muffin died – Nikki decided to tell him what was wrong.

When Tony heard Nikki's sad voice, he felt sadness in his body too. These feelings confused him because he had never met, nor played with Muffin. He didn't know why he felt like crying because nothing bad had happened to him.

Suddenly, the strong wind blew, opened the window and it hit the wall with the loud noise.

– Nikki, I know this must be hard for you. Could you wait for me to close the window?

– Tony said and turned his back on Nikki.

As he was walking towards the window, Tony felt his eyes tearing up. "Nikki's cat died. Not my cat. Nikki needs my support, and not to worry about me and my tears", Tony was thinking. A few tears slipped down his face, so he leaned against the window, breathing deeply and crying in silence.

But then, something very unusual happened. A little bee landed right in front of his nose and looked straight into little boy's eyes.

