

Mummy is a hero

by Zoe Robinson



This booklet was written by a long-term user of mental health services provided by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. She had a traumatic childhood, which shaped her personality and affected her mental health. When she became a mother, her mental health struggles worsened. This is an account of how she managed her severe and ongoing emotional distress while also fulfilling her role as a parent. It includes strategies that she put in place to protect her child's well-being.

This booklet is for [parents](#), and aims to inspire them to seek as much therapy as possible so that they can learn to heal themselves and protect their children's future mental health.

The story was deliberately written in a simple style, to appeal to every parent's 'inner child'.

For LJR and for ZR, I love you both x

Three people live in this house: Mummy, her daughter Katy, and Mummy's mental illness.

Mummy can't remember what it is like to not feel stressed. She tries to create fun times to enrich Katy's life, but somehow the mental illness always invites itself along.

She hopes Katy can't feel the presence of her mental illness.

Mummy loves Katy.

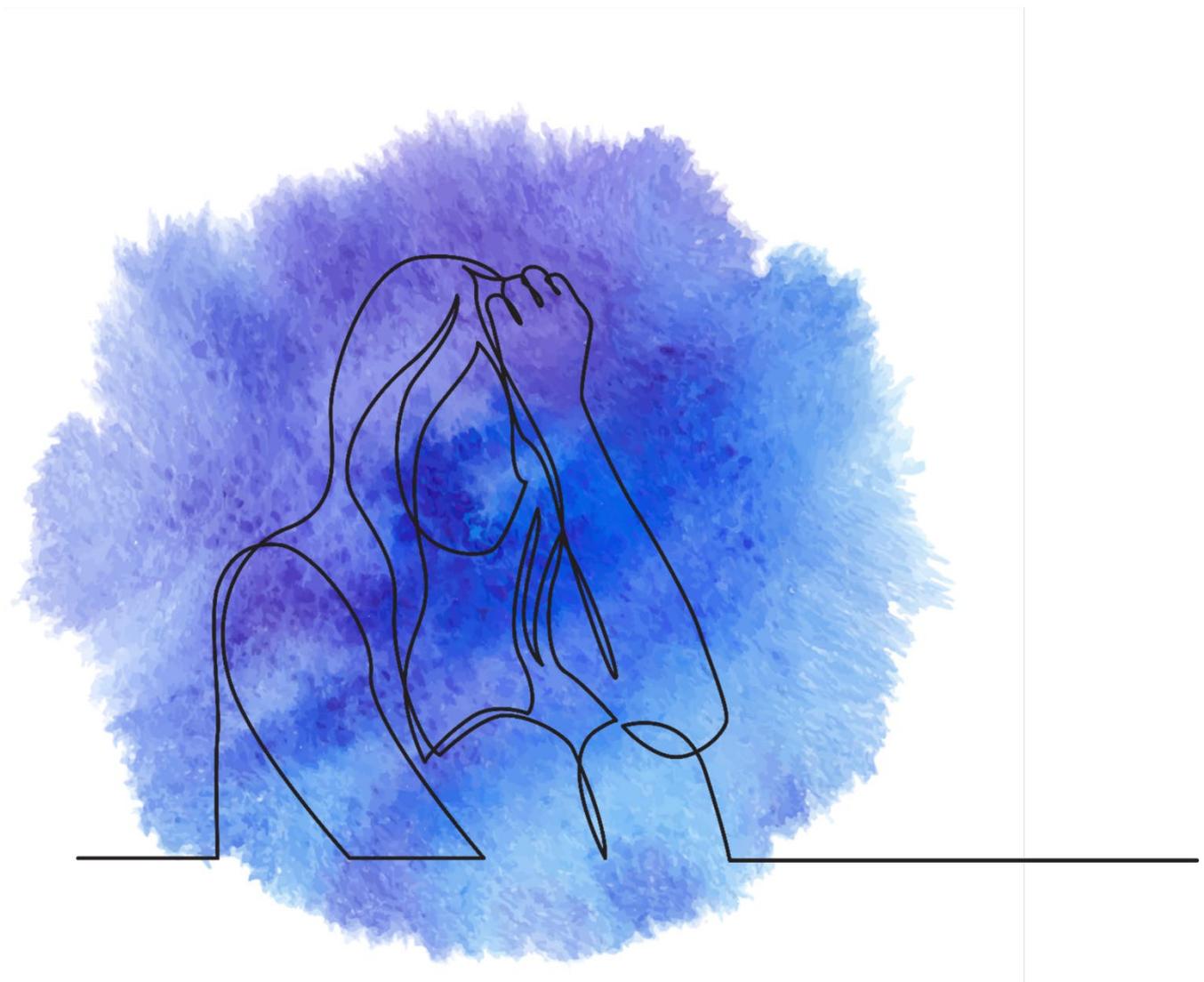
Katy likes skipping, colouring in, singing, and playing with her dolls.



Mummy doesn't have much interest in doing things. She watches TV and eats snacks and passes time until she can go to sleep and forget about her life. Mummy is often too tired to keep the house clean or manage her money or see her friends.

While Mummy is feeling sorry for herself, Katy asks for more juice. Mummy can't cope with this extra demand right now, so she screams and shouts and cries.

Katy starts crying too. Mummy feels guilty. She says, 'I'm sorry I shouted. I have poorly thinking. You did nothing wrong.'



Then Mummy gets a drink for Katy and has a think about what could calm them both down. Mummy remembers that she used to love reading books when she was little, so Mummy reads a book with Katy. For those ten minutes, both Mummy and Katy feel safe.

When they have finished reading the book, Katy says, 'Mummy, tell me about when you were a little girl.' Mummy cannot recall any nice memories from her childhood.

'We could look through old photos,' Mummy says. Mummy finds an old photo of herself when she was the same age as Katy is now. 'Look!' says Mummy, 'That is little me!'

Katy and Little Me have the same nose and the same hair style. Mummy sticks a picture of Katy and the picture of Little Me on the wall, side by side.

'I feel like I have two children that I need to look after,' says Mummy.

Mummy thinks about how Little Me used to be so sad and frightened. Mummy turns to Katy and says, 'Mummy needs to cry right now.

You go and play. Here is my watch. When the minute hand gets to here, Mummy will stop crying.



When Mummy has finished crying, she cooks their tea. Katy decides she doesn't like baked beans today. And she says the toast is burnt.

Mummy feels tired. She doesn't want to be a mum today. Her poorly thinking makes her feel like Katy is the enemy.

Mummy is scared she will hurt Katy. Mummy checks Katy is safe and puts the TV on for her. Then Mummy locks herself in her bedroom and does some angry crying.

After a while, Katy comes and tries to open Mummy's bedroom door. Mummy is still not calm. 'Let me in!' says Katy. 'No!' shouts Mummy.

'Let me in!' Katy repeats. 'No!' says Mummy again, but this time she growls like a tiger. Then she barks 'No!' like a dog. Then she howls 'No!' like a wolf. Then she asks Katy what other animal noises she should make. Katy asks Mummy to say 'No' like a flamingo. Mummy makes chicken noises. After making a few more animal noises together through the door, Mummy is friends with Katy again and feels it is safe for her to unlock the door.



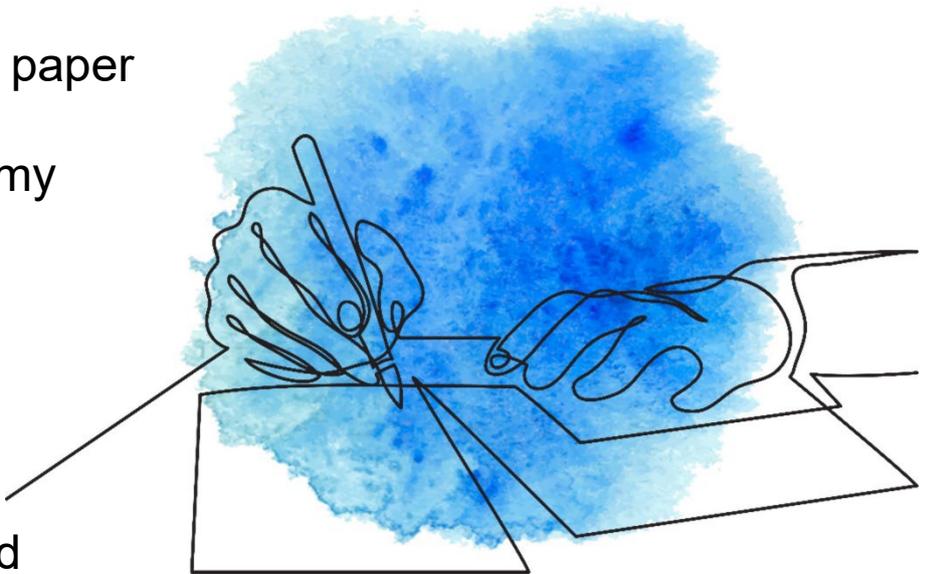
Mummy makes a different plate of food for Katy. Katy says the scrambled eggs taste OK and she eats it all up. She wants chocolate for pudding but agrees to eating an apple first.

Mummy explains that they need some house rules, because Mummy and Katy need to be a strong team. She gets a sheet of paper and a pen. She writes 'Rules for Katy' on the paper. Then she explains that Katy needs to eat all her dinner up every day.

Then she writes 'Rules for Mummy' on the paper and asks Katy what she should put there. Katy says, 'No shouting'.

Katy decorates the paper with her coloured crayons, and Mummy pins it on the wall.

Once Mummy has put Katy to bed, Mummy thinks about how she did not feel safe around Katy today.



She loves Katy but sometimes she really resents her. Mummy decides to write down all the things she truly loves about Katy. She will refer to this list next time she is overwhelmed by parenting. She sticks a baby photo of Katy onto this list to remind her of a time when she associated Katy with thoughts of love and protection.

Mummy wonders why she finds parenting so painful. She remembers how Little Me used to get shouted at.

Mummy loves Katy very much. Mummy does not want Katy to get a mental illness when she is older. Mummy knows she needs to ask for help, now.

Mummy makes an appointment with a mental health professional. She is very scared that she will get told off for being a bad parent. The mental health professional can see that Mummy has a Little Me who is tired and wants to be looked after. He is kind and he listens carefully to Mummy. Mummy decides she will be brave. She tells him what her life is like on a bad day.

Together, Mummy and the mental health professional agree on a plan to help Mummy feel better. It will involve talking therapies and physical exercise and medication. The mental health professional is honest with her. He explains that getting better will take a long time. He also says that because Katy is very young, he needs to involve social services to check she is safe.

Mummy is terrified. She doesn't want social services knowing all about her private life. She doesn't want social services to take Katy away from her.



Mummy wants to shout at the mental health professional, but she can tell that he is kind and that he really wants to help her. He explains that she can get an Advocate to come with her to all her social services meetings. The Advocate will help Mummy understand what the social workers want from her, and he will get social services to keep any promises they make. The Advocate will speak for Mummy during the meetings if she is too angry to speak, herself. He will also help her with making phone calls and filling in forms.

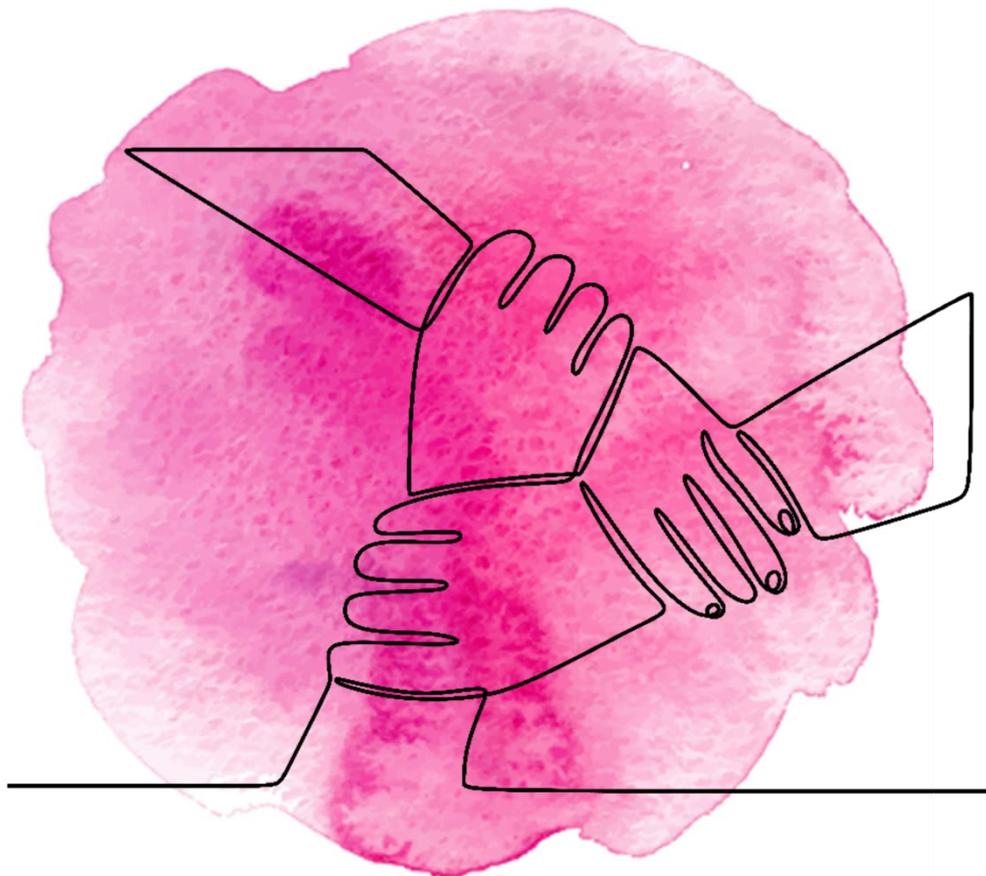
The next few months are very hard for Mummy. Lots of professionals are involved in her care. There are lots of meetings. There is a lot of crying. Mummy doesn't feel like a proper grown up. Mummy is very aware of her Little Me.

Slowly, very slowly, Mummy starts to get stronger. She does activities that nurture both Katy and Little Me.



Every week, Mummy sees the mental health professional and tells him about her suffering. The mental health professional helps her to understand what is happening in her mind. He helps her see her strengths. He also helps her develop new skills, which she practices in between sessions. He gives Mummy the confidence to improve her life. Sometimes he sees Katy as well, to help strengthen the bond between Mummy and Katy.

Eventually, social services are no longer involved with Mummy and Katy. Mummy and Katy are a strong team, and they are both learning lots of skills. They are making good memories together, so that Katy will not have a mental illness when she is an adult.



It is not known whether Mummy will ever be fully free of her mental illness, but nowadays she is functioning much better. She still sees mental health professionals occasionally, but she has learnt to love herself, to stay calm, and to create a life worth living.

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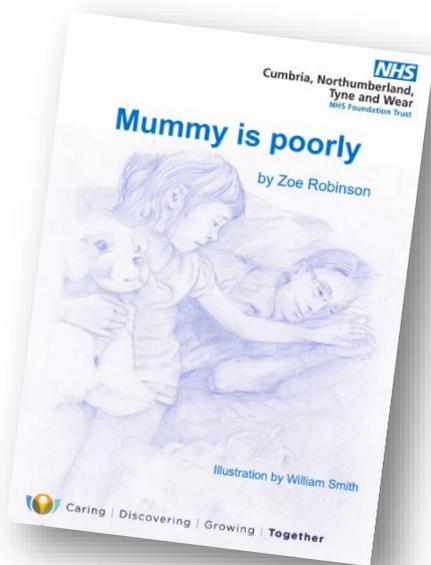
It is Mummy's job to look after them all. Mummy knows she can do it now because Mummy is a hero.



Independent Mental Health Advocate

Sometimes it can be difficult for people to speak up for themselves. An advocate is somebody who can work with you to help you have your say about things.

www.cntw.nhs.uk/resource-library/do-you-need-an-independent-mental-health-advocate/



Also available in this series

Mummy is poorly

www.cntw.nhs.uk/resource-library/mummy-is-poorly/

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