

OUTSIDE MY WINDOW

UNDERSTANDING
CHILDREN
AND THE
STRESS/TRAUMA
RESPONSE MODEL

WRITTEN BY

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Frankie in Whanganui, where she maintains her clinical practice, focused primarily on the treatment of child, youth and adult trauma. Her other passions are family and travel. Email: vicky@lifeco-psychology.co.nz



Jacqui Gibbs Chamberlain is an artist of figurative subjects. She has travelled widely, to the US for workshops, and to Papua New Guinea, China, India and Samoa. She has also lived in Switzerland and spent time painting in the Outback of Australia. Jacqui is a previous recipient of the Designer's Institute CoCA Award. Her main subject matter is the human figure, but her work

also explores shape, form and composition. She lives on an isolated farm in Port Levy, Banks Peninsula, with her husband and daughter. Email: jgibbschamberlain@xtra.co.nz

*To all the children, young people and adults
who have shared their experiences of trauma
and given a voice to the little person inside
who has been struggling to survive.
You are so brave.*



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Introduction

Children who have adverse life experiences are often judged by their behaviour or may be labelled with diagnoses. They are often in survival mode because of their traumatic experiences. *Outside My Window* helps readers to understand what happens in survival mode, or as one little person said, 'I am not bad ... just sad and mad'.

The purpose of this book is to teach young children primarily aged 5–12, their carers, teachers and therapists about the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on their feelings, body, behaviour and thoughts about themselves.

Vicky's practice is based on the premise that 'we do the best we can with the tools we have at the time'. Children (and later adults) who are dealing with family violence in all its forms, and/or neglect, do not have the skills and resources to cope with such experiences. Survival

mode is the natural strategy, and it may continue to be used well into adult life.

Outside My Window is based on the 'Window Of Tolerance' (WOT) model of autonomic arousal, which was first put forward by Dr Daniel Siegel in 1999. In this stress/trauma response model he proposed that between the extremes of sympathetic hyperarousal and para-sympathetic hypoarousal is a 'window' or range of optimal arousal states in which emotions can be experienced as tolerable and are therefore able to be integrated.

Educating parents, teachers, caregivers, and those who work with children, youth and traumatised adults about the stress model allows for therapeutic, compassionate and helpful conversations that remove blame and shame. There is less judgement, more cooperation, and greater safety for a child who is outside their window.



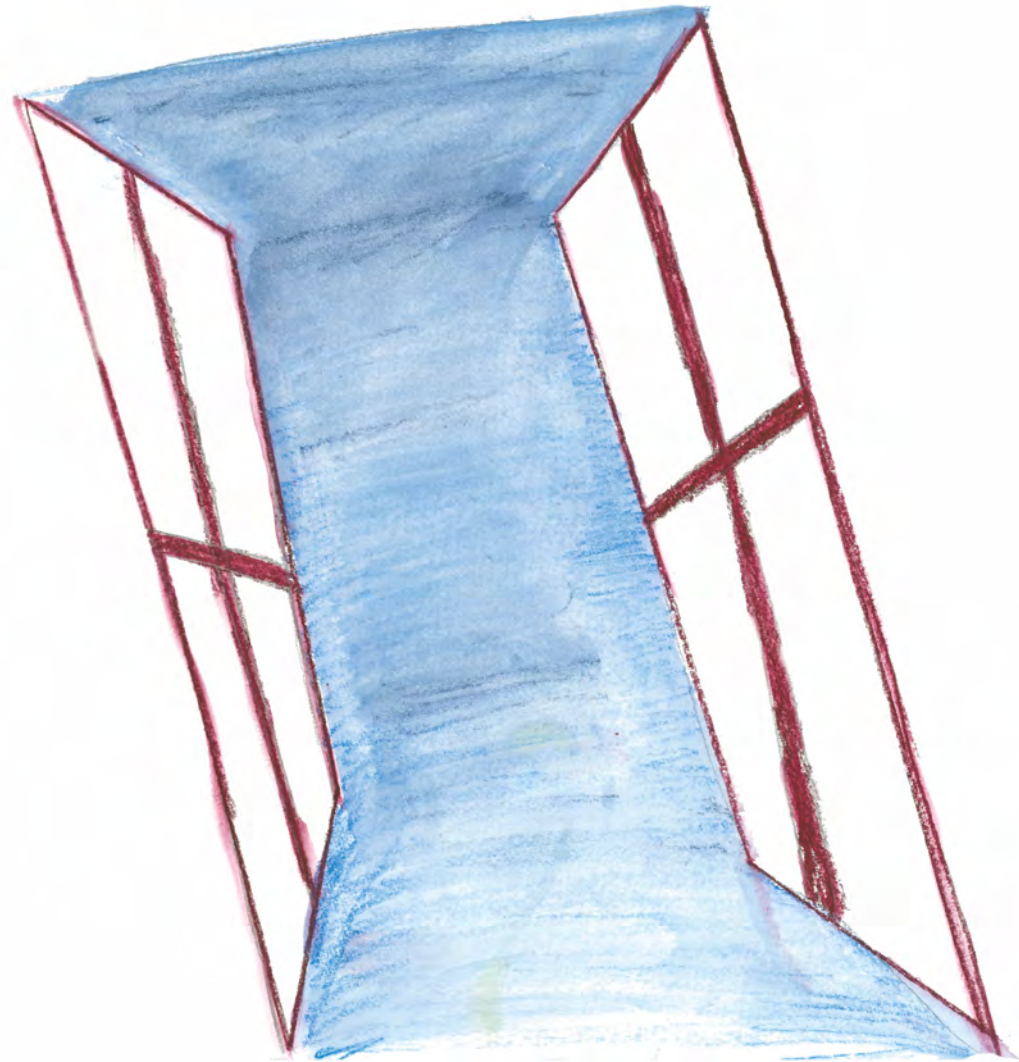
A note for carers, counsellors, parents and teachers

The stress/trauma response model helps to identify risks, enabling the child to recognise their survival response without feeling there is something intrinsically wrong with them. A conversation can take place that gives a child permission to talk about their fears and worries so that support can be implemented.

The model can be used on a whiteboard for therapeutic assessment and psycho-education, enabling information-gathering without the child feeling that they are the sole focus of attention, which could otherwise result in shut-down. Problems are seen within a global human framework, rather than as personal behaviour issues.

As you read *Outside My Window* with children, use it as an opportunity to have a conversation about safety and concerns, and seek support or notify services if at any time a child reports any of the worries dealt with in this book.

Outside My Window is also used with traumatised adults as they often have a hurt child part inside who can relate to and has experienced the trauma/survival response. It has often brought tears and relief.

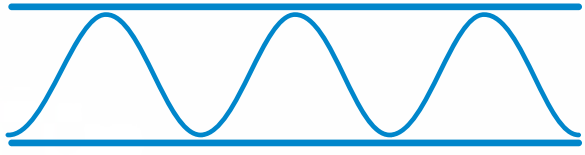


I have a window
you can't really see.



It's inside
my brain and
looks after me.





Inside my window it's a gentle, wavy ride.



My moods come and go,
like riding on a slide.



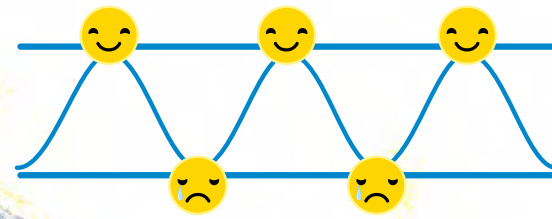
Some
days
are
happy,

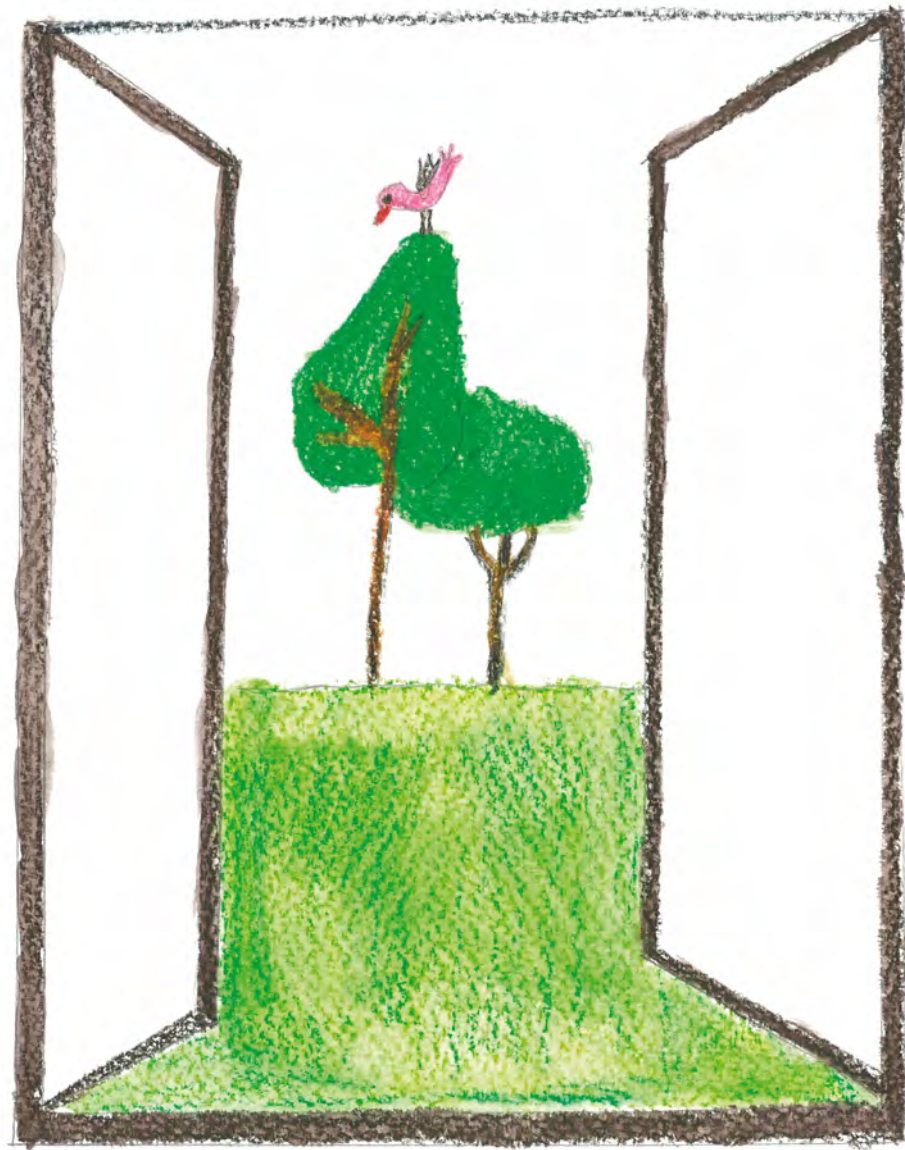


and some
days are
sad.

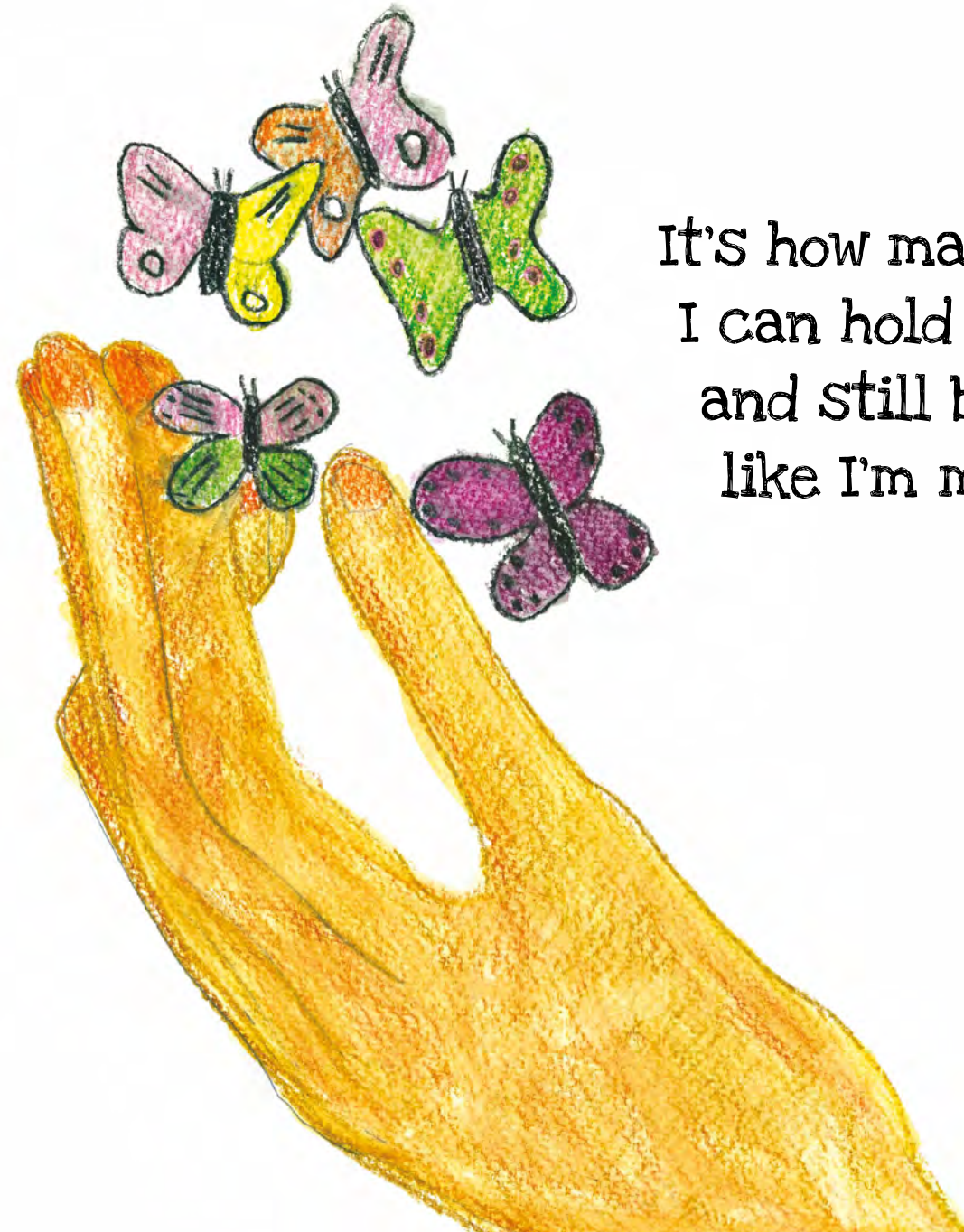


Some days
are good,
and some days
are bad.

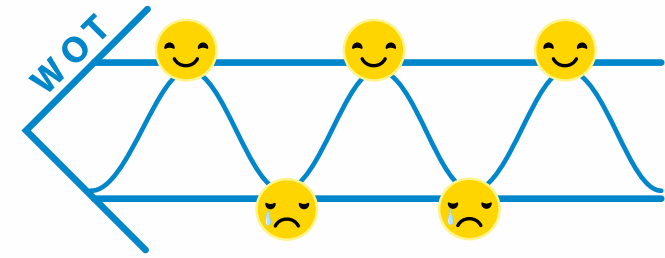


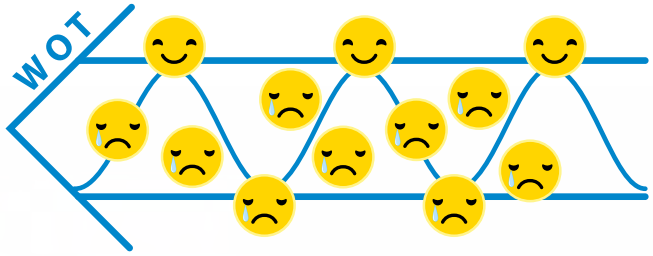


It's called my 'window of tolerance',
or the WOT.

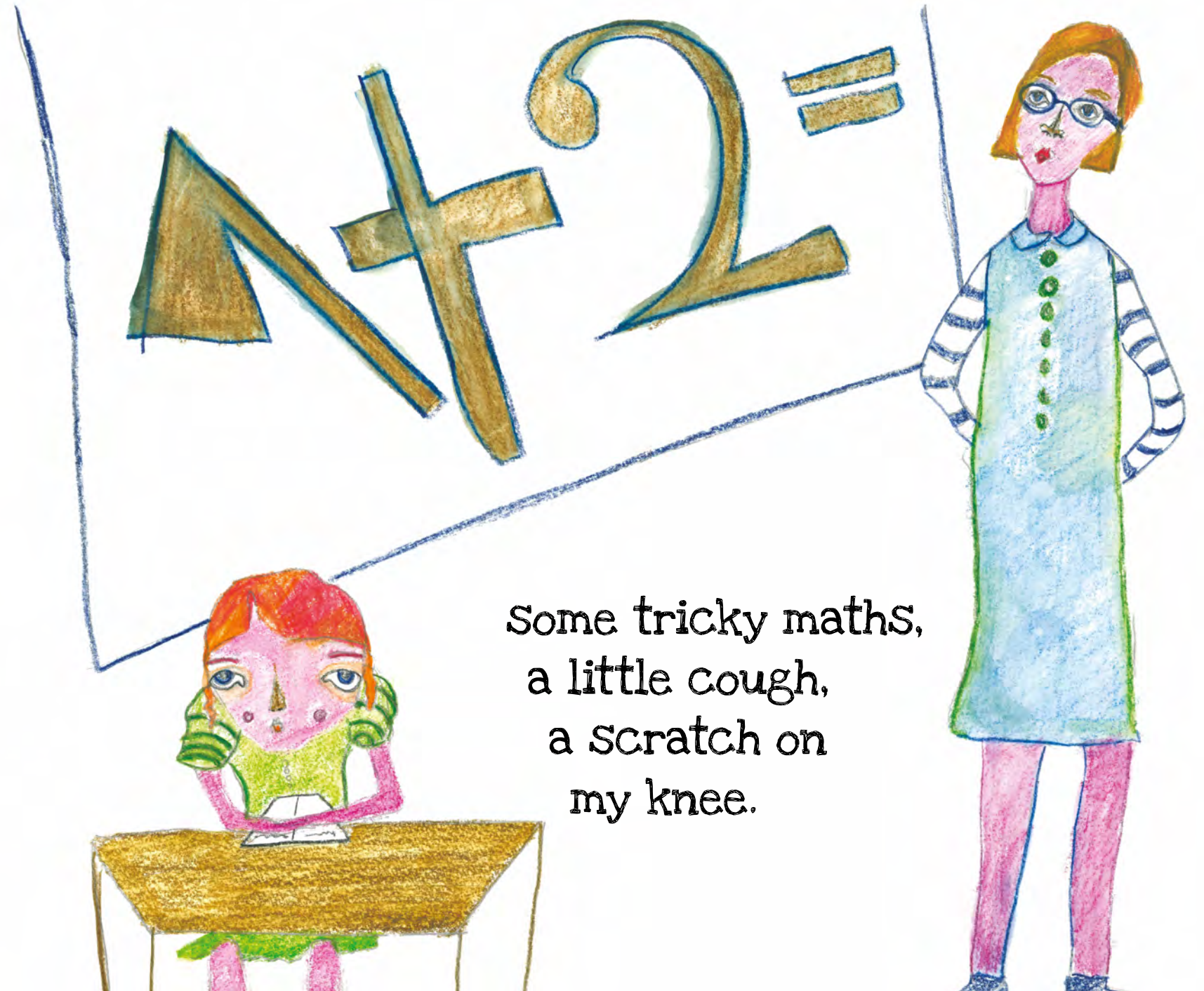


It's how many worries
I can hold
and still behave
like I'm me.



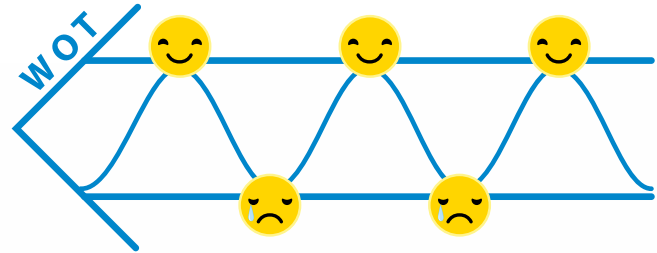


Worries like doing well at school,
or friends liking me,



Some tricky maths,
a little cough,
a scratch on
my knee.

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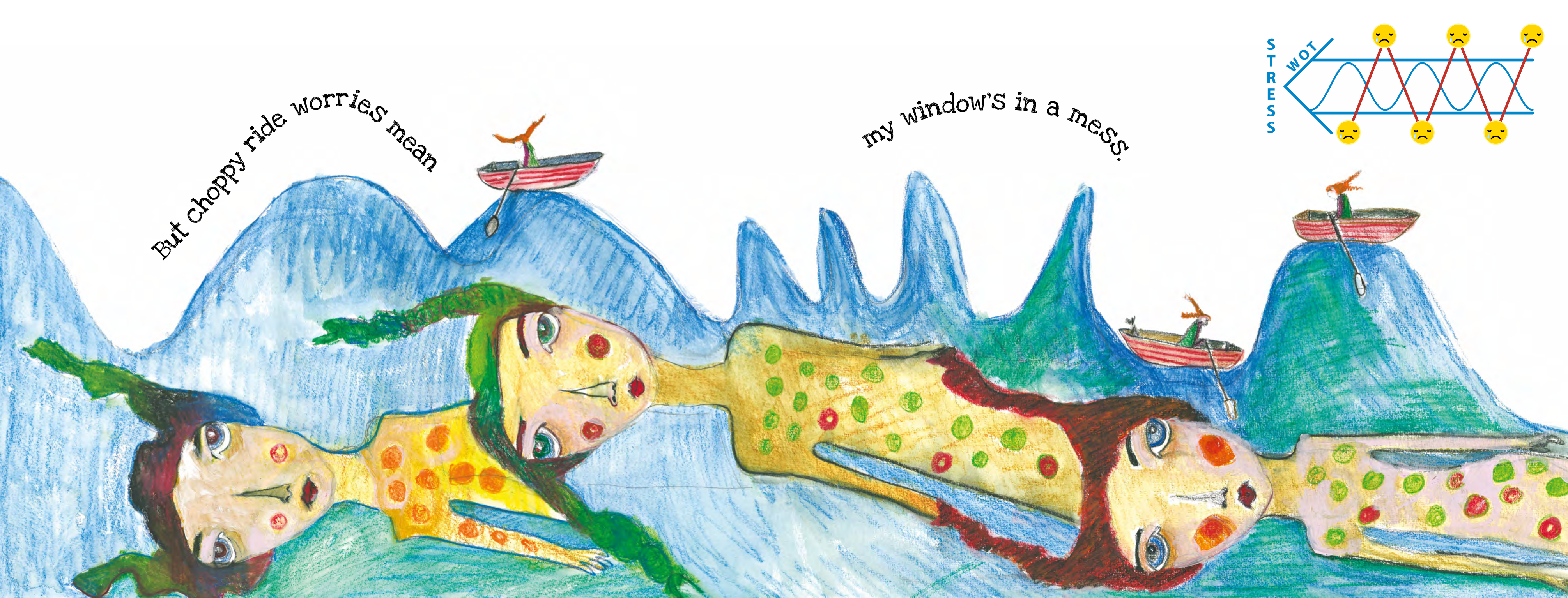
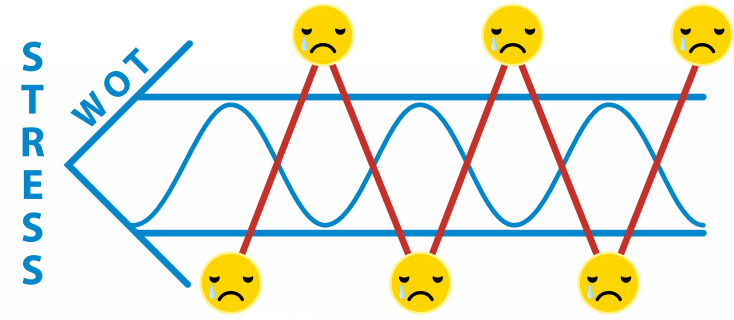


Gentle ride worries -
they're just
everyday stress.



But choppy ride worries mean

my window's in a mess.



This is a book for distressed children, and for their parents, caregivers, therapists and teachers.

It explains the stress/trauma response model in a way that everyone can understand. Without assigning blame, this method allows a safe conversation for a child at risk, enabling them to have a voice about what might be worrying them, and what they are doing to try and cope.

Vicky Scott is a Registered Psychologist who has been working with trauma for over twenty years.

