

SAMMY BEAR'S MUMMY IS IN HOSPITAL



A story for children aged 3–6
to be read with an adult



Notes for adults


We hope this rhyming story will be useful for family, carers, social workers and teachers who are supporting young children whose mothers have been admitted to a mental health hospital ward. It is designed for a child to read with the help of a supporting adult.

The key messages for adults to share with children are:

- Sometimes illness can change people's thinking, feelings and/or behaviour;
- Sometimes, when people are ill, they need to be in hospital to get better;
- If mummy was behaving strangely before she went to hospital, it was because she is ill;
- It is never the child's fault that their mummy is ill;
- It's OK to feel scared or worried. Sometimes we all do. It's important they know to speak to an adult when they feel like this;
- Mummy is safe in hospital and she will get better. We don't know how long she will be in hospital. Sometimes getting better takes time;
- Mummy loves them, even when she can't be with them.

SAMMY BEAR'S MUMMY IS IN HOSPITAL

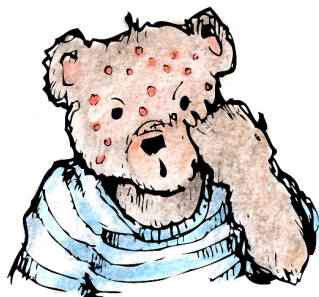
Sammy bear is sad because his Mummy's gone away.
Sammy knows she's gone to hospital, but why? No one will say.

So Sammy asks his uncle, 'When's Mummy coming home? Why can't I go and see her or talk to her on the phone?'.




Uncle bear hugs Sammy when Sammy starts to cry. Then Uncle bear sits down and starts to tell him why...

He says, 'You know everyone is
sick sometimes and needs help
to make them well,
And we can see the things that
hurt us if they...



itch...



or bleed...



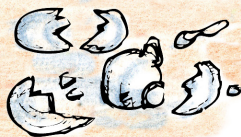
or smell!



But did you know that sometimes
our brilliant brains can get ill too?
And when our brains get ill
it can change what we think or feel or do'.



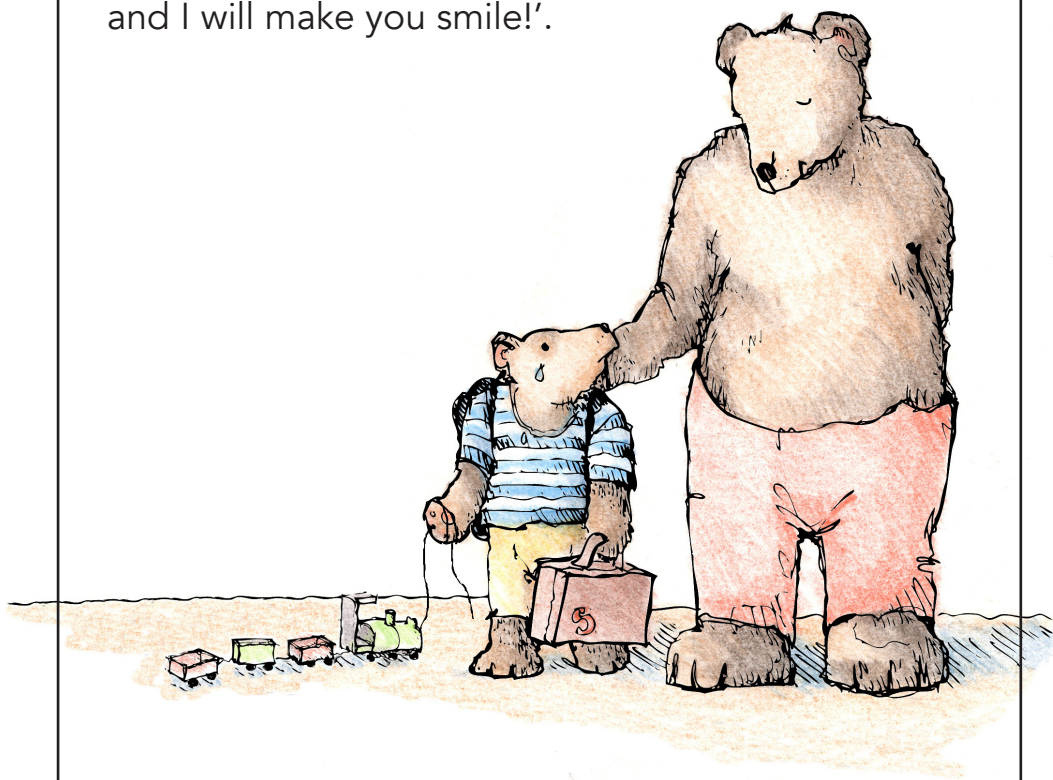
Sammy asks, 'Is that why Mummy said strange things and seemed to get so sad? And why she got so cross with us and said everything was bad?'



'That's right,' said Uncle, 'It's not your fault, it's how the illness made her feel. Mummy's thinking got all mixed up, so she didn't know what was real'.



'Is that why she can't look after me?',
Sammy asks, after thinking for a while.
'Yes,' says Uncle, 'That's why for now
you'll stay with me,
and I will make you smile!'



Sammy laughs at Uncle's tickles, then asks, 'Will Mummy get well again? Will she ever come out of hospital and will everything be the same?'.



Uncle nods, 'Yes, she will get well but it may take some time. When she comes home some things may change but we'll work it out just fine.'

The doctors and nurses know
we can't wait to have Mummy home.
But first she needs to get some rest,
then you can talk to her on the phone.



And when mummy's feeling better,
we'll go and visit her together.
I know she'll want to see you,
because you're her little treasure!'

Sammy says, 'I'll make a get well card
and you can write a letter!'.
Uncle says, 'That's a great idea!
Let's send her lots of love to help her feel much
better'.



At bedtime Uncle reads Sammy's favourite story and then wishes him good night. Then Uncle stops to tell Sammy one more thing before he switches off the light:



'You know your Mummy always loves you,
whether or not you are together.
She loves you more than all the world –
and that love lasts forever'.

For adults seeking more information on mental health,
we recommend the following websites:

www.rethink.org
www.mind.org.uk
www.mentalhealth.org.uk
www.nhs.uk



This is one of four leaflets we have produced for children with a parent in a mental health hospital. Two leaflets are for 3 to 6 year olds: "Sammy Bear's Mummy is in Hospital", and "Sally Bear's Daddy is in Hospital". Two are called "My parent is in hospital" – one is for 7 to 11 year olds and the other is for those aged 11 and over.

Thanks to everyone who gave their time to write, design and comment on our leaflets including staff, patients and young people at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust; Southwark Council's children and families service and the young people and adults at Our Time. Illustrations by Alison Hainey. Words by Nicola Byrne.

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