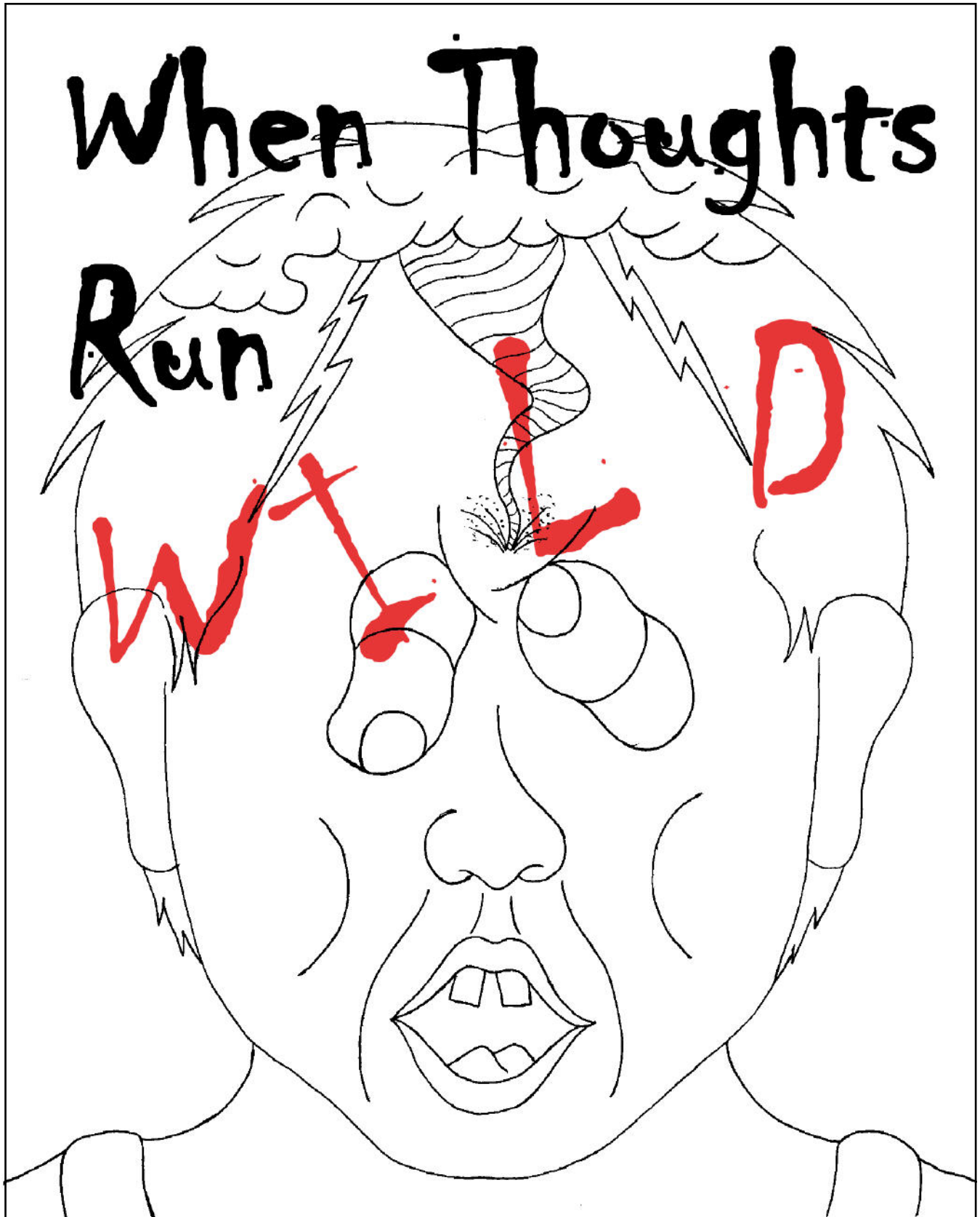
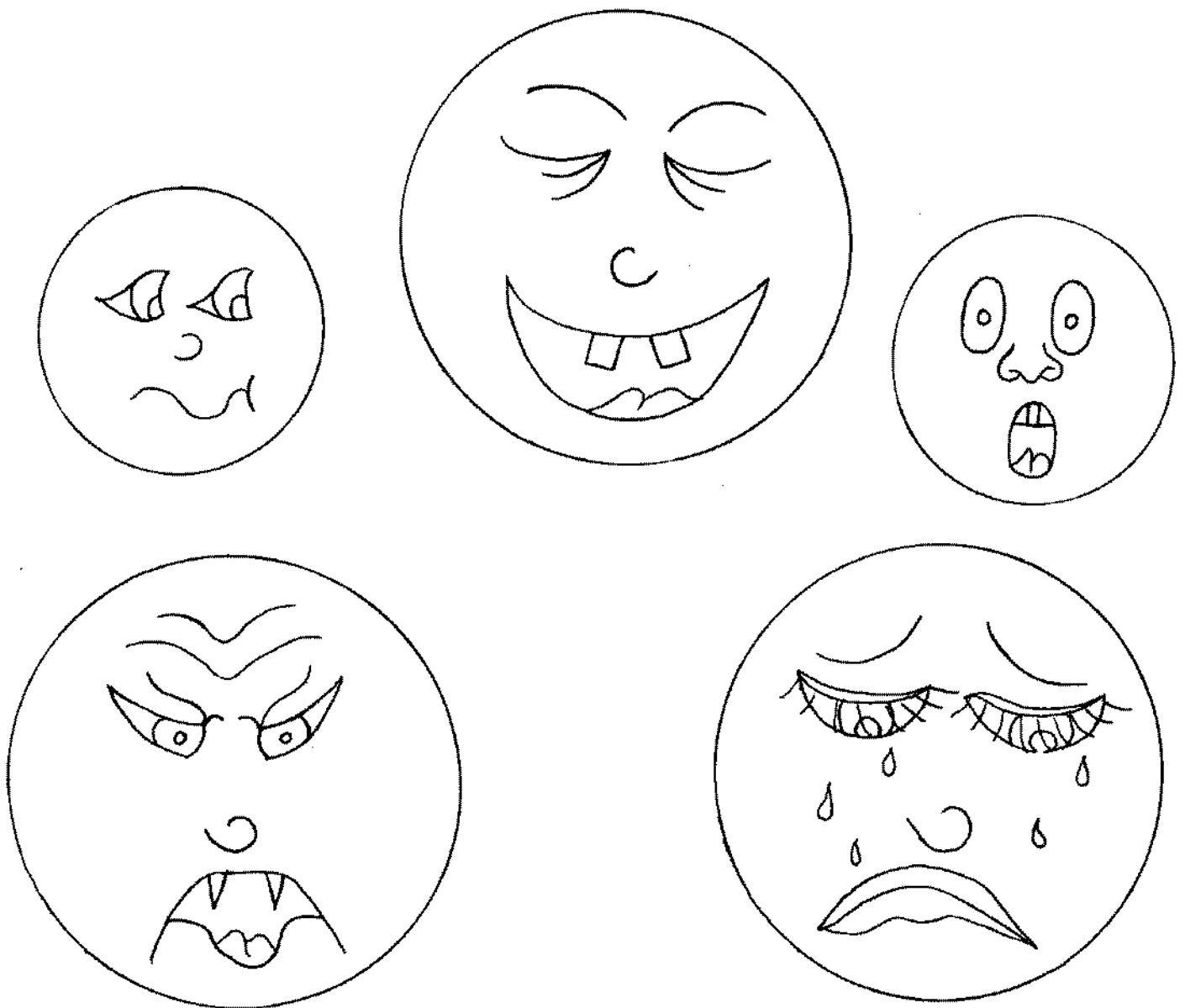


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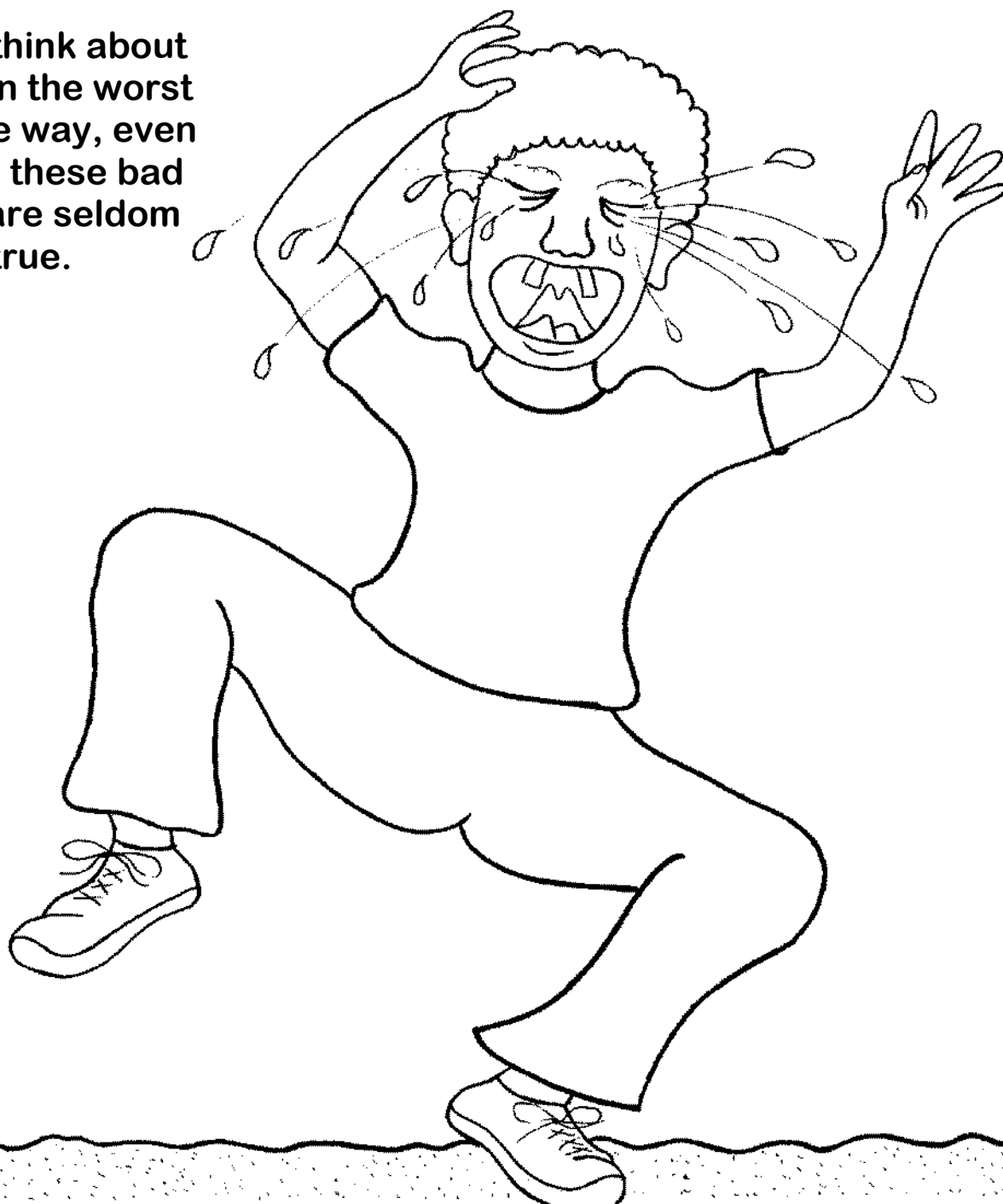
Things will happen from time to time that will make you sad or angry for a little while. We can't always control it when things don't go our way. But we CAN control how we think about these situations. Often times, the reason we feel bad isn't because something so terrible has happened – the reason we feel crummy is *because we keep telling ourselves bad thoughts* about what happened. It's our negative thinking that makes us miserable. Since most of the bad thoughts we think aren't very true, and since there's always many ways to look at things, this means we can get rid of bad feelings simply by learning how our thoughts lead us astray.



One of the biggest problems is that we catastrophize - which is a big word that basically means we exaggerate the bad about things. We imagine something as worse than it really is.

Think about a time when you've gotten really upset, only to discover that whatever it is you were upset about turned out to be not that bad after all. This happens because when we're worried or upset about something, our brain imagines all the ways things can go horribly wrong, but it doesn't focus on how things might turn out alright.

So we think about things in the worst possible way, even though these bad ideas are seldom true.



**In the space below, think of 3 times you were worried about something, and then write about how things turned out better than you expected.**

**1.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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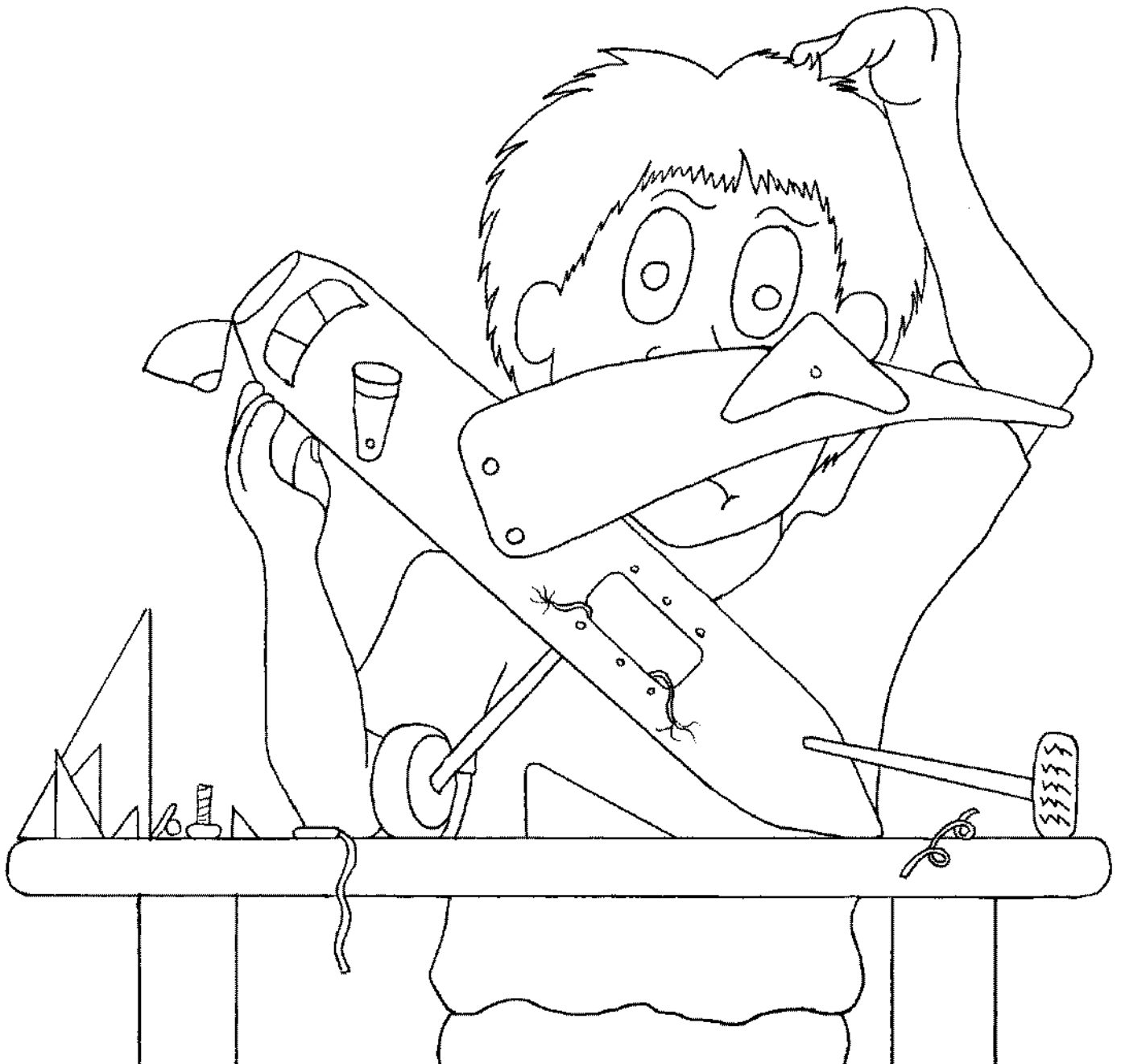
**2.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**3.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Pretend for a moment that your Mom and Dad just told you that you were moving to a new house. Write down all the ways you might imagine this to be a bad thing:**

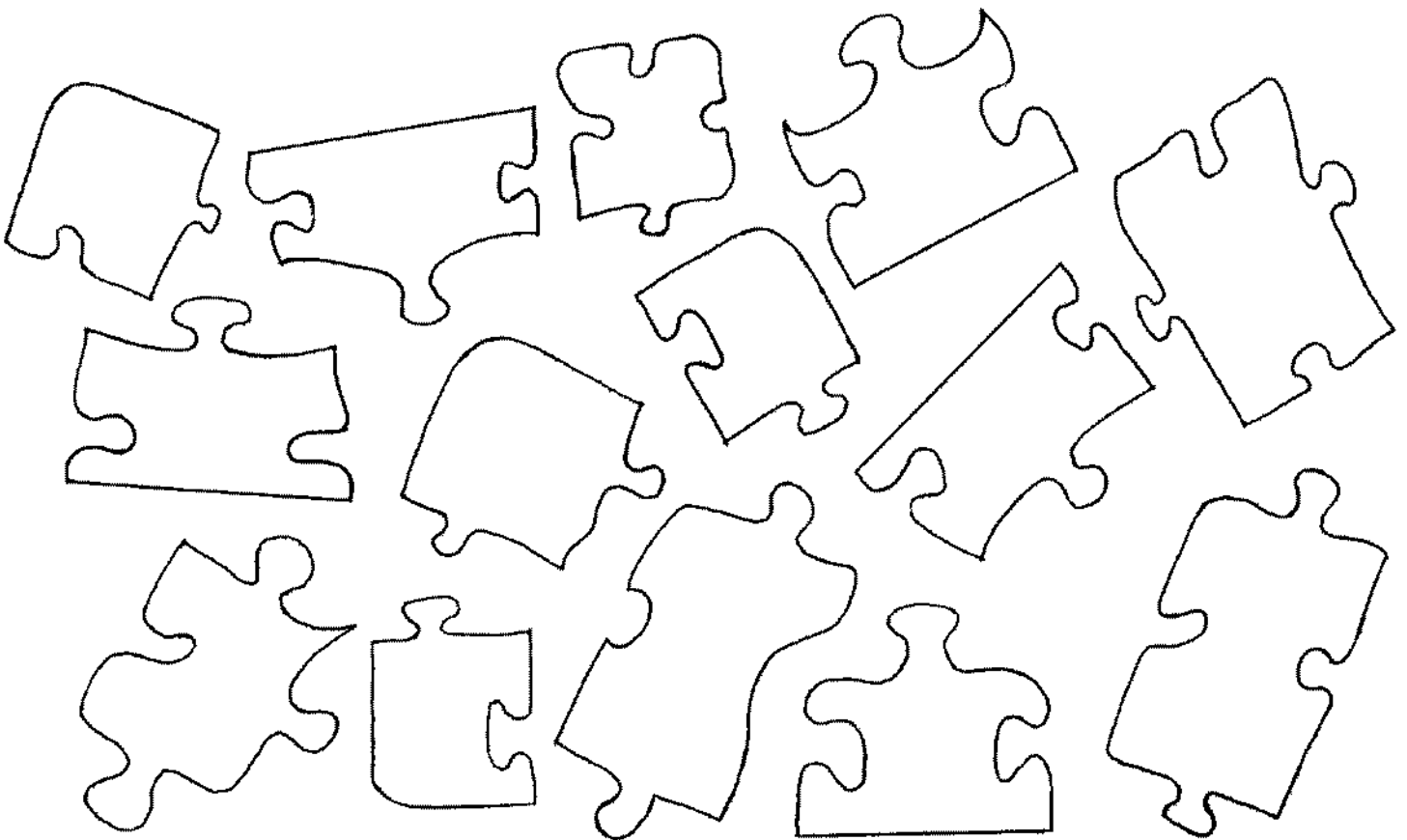
**Now write down different ways it might be a blessing in disguise, or why it might turn out a lot better than you think:**

In our thinking, we make errors because we don't have all the information. Say I gave you a model airplane kit to put together. It had 100 pieces, many of which looked very similar. The problem is you only had directions for 10 pieces, and didn't have instructions on what to do with the other 90. How well would you do? You'd probably get a lot of things wrong when you tried to put it all together, because you didn't have all the information you needed to do the job correctly.

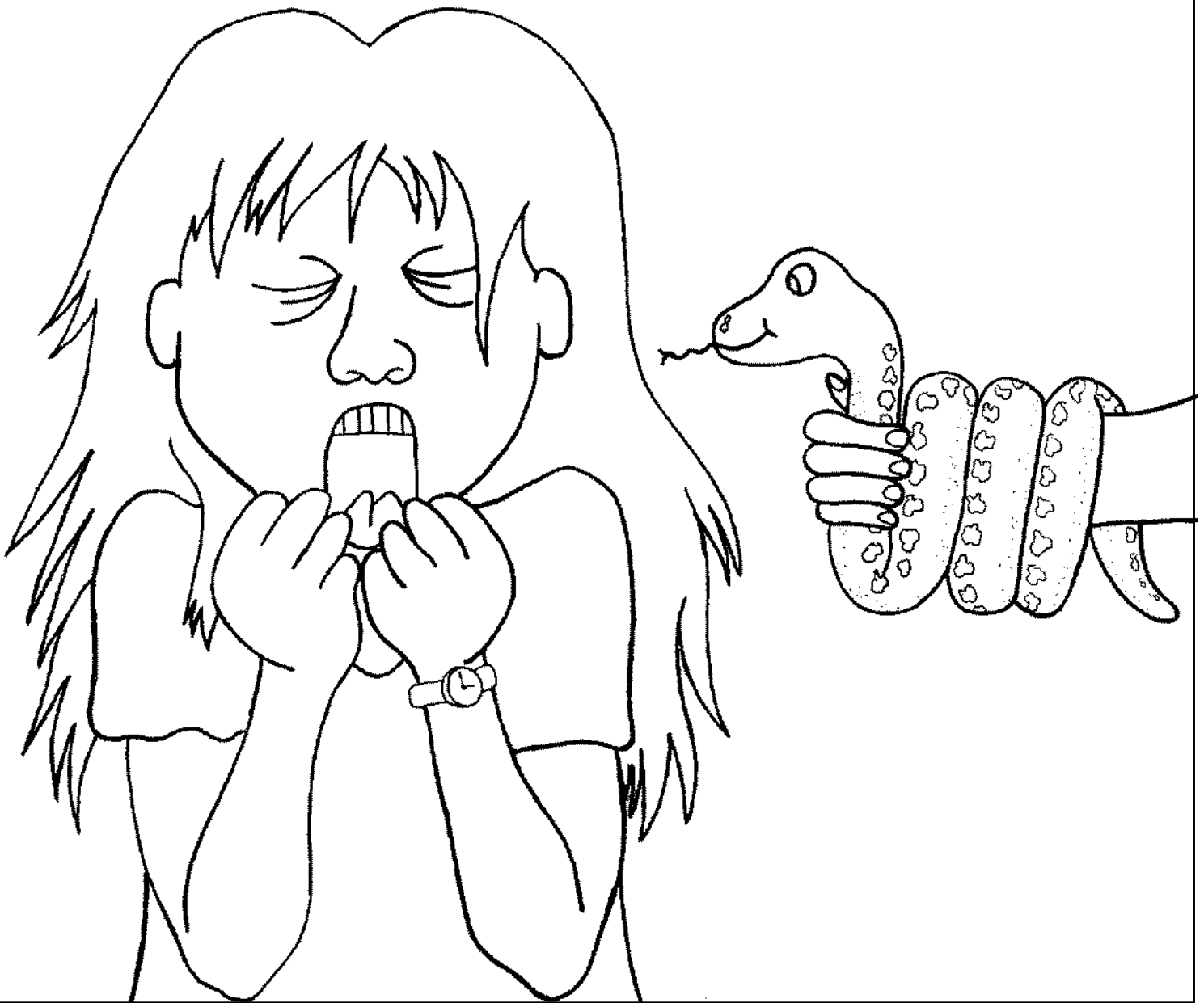


When it comes to the experiences in our lives, our brains have the same sort of problem. We NEVER have all of the information, or anything close to it. So we're always left trying to put the puzzle together without all the pieces. For example:

- A) We can't read minds to know what others are thinking or feeling. So our brain *imagines* what they might be thinking, and the things we imagine often aren't true.
- B) We don't have the experiences that others do, which might teach us a different way of looking at things.
- C) We can't see into the future to know how something will turn out. So we often assume things will work out differently than they do.
- D) We don't know everything there is to know about the world, which means that some things we assume to be bad may actually turn out to be good, or at least not as bad as they seem.



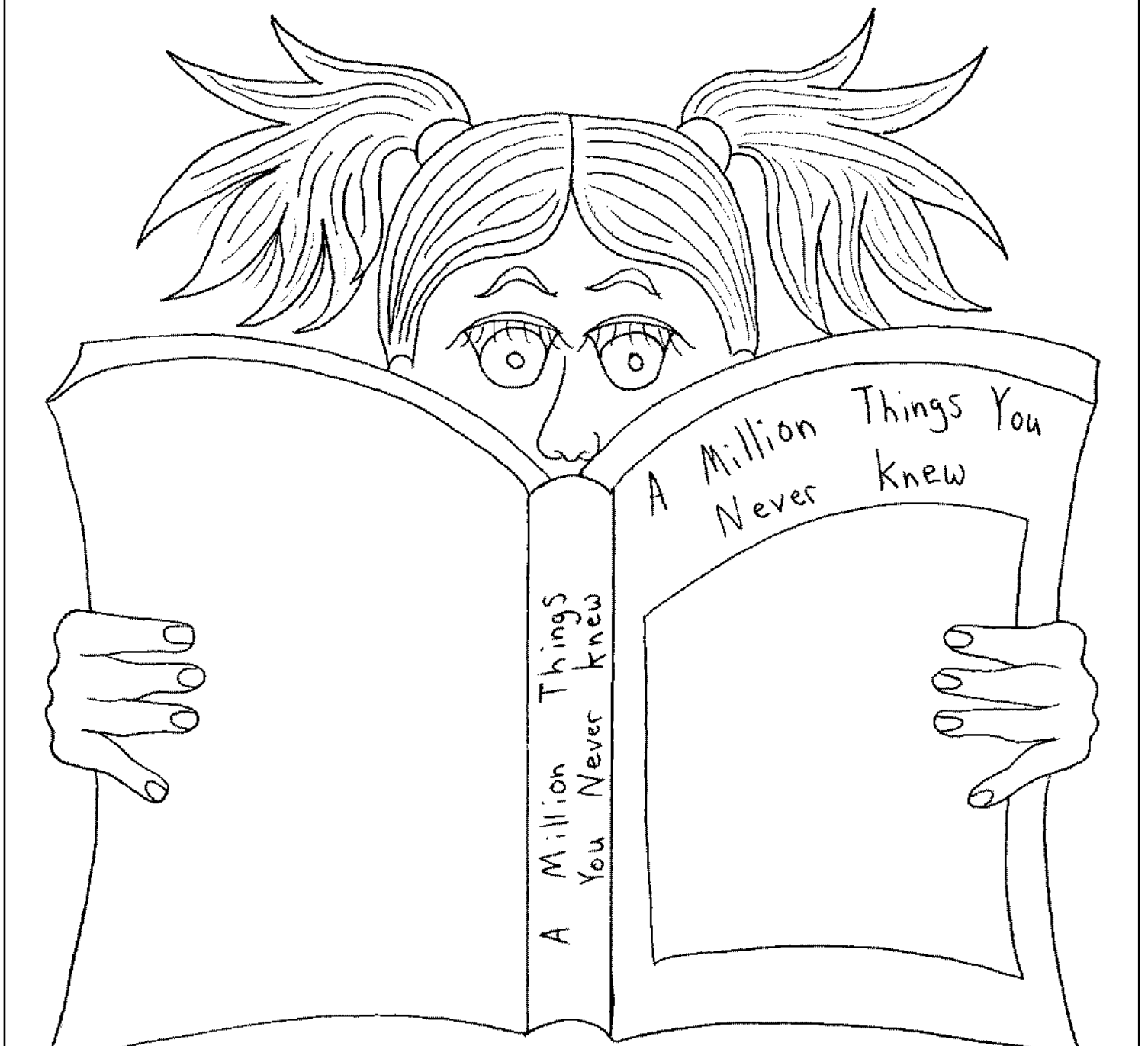
For example, if I said, “Here, hold this python,” you might be scared. You might even be absolutely terrified. The information in your head might say to you: Snakes are dangerous and they bite. But let’s say I then gave you more information. Perhaps I said: “Pythons aren’t poisonous, and this one’s a pet. He never bites. He’s called a ball python, because when he gets scared or upset, instead of getting angry, he curls up into a ball like a slithering scaredy-cat. In fact, this type of snake is more mellow and friendly than most hamsters.” When you learned this new information, it would probably change the way you feel. After you’ve had fond experiences playing with snakes, this will also change your perspective.





So even though your feelings at first were very real and very intense, they still weren't very accurate.

And one of the main reasons they weren't very accurate is that you didn't have all the information. This is a problem in every part of our life. Since we **NEVER** know anything close to all there is to know, our ideas and feelings are always changing once we discover new things.





**Read the following scenarios, and for each one write down 1 thing you might not know that could change your feelings about things.**

**1. When you try to give a classmate a hug, she backs away and screams, “No, don’t touch me!”**

**2. You’re traveling in a boat to an undiscovered island. You meet the natives, who don’t speak your language, and introduce yourself. But when you hold out your arm to shake a man’s hand, he doesn’t grab it. Instead, he smiles and licks your face.**

**3. You’re talking with your friend Sarah. Each of you are having a good time. But as soon as you mention your pet dog – a German Shepherd named Rocky – she starts crying and runs away.**

**4. You give all your friends invitations to your party. When the big day arrives, a lot of your classmates are there. But Mark never shows up. He is one of your best friends, and promised he would come to your party.**

**5. When you say “Hi” to Rebecca, she rushes on by without saying a word. This hurts your feelings.**

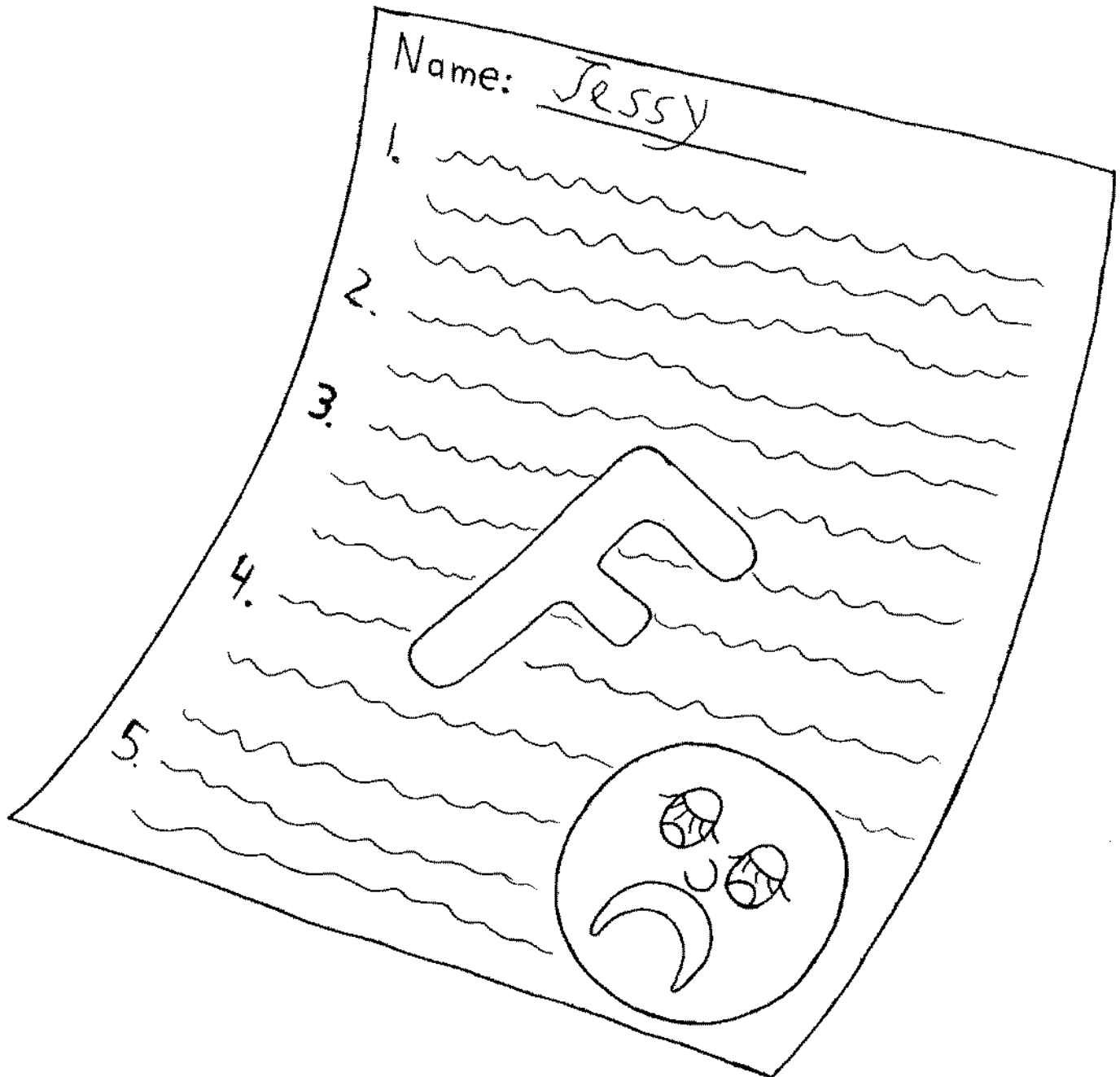
Another problem is that we *personalize* the things that happen to us. This means we explain events in a way that makes us feel bad about ourselves.

When something bad happens, you might think, “This happened because I’m a bad person who deserves to be punished.” If we make a mistake, we often say to ourselves, “Only a real idiot would do such a foolish thing.” When others are mean, you might assume that you did something to deserve to be treated this way. You might take it as a sign that you’re an unlikable person. Not only will thinking like this make you feel bad, but it’s not even remotely true.



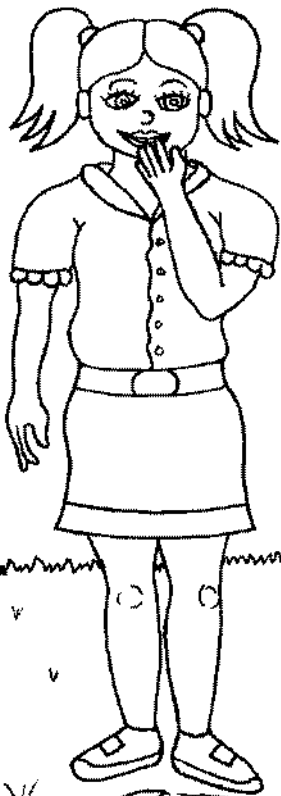
For example, if I get a bad grade on a test, I may assume it's because I'm stupid. This is a personal explanation. It makes me think I failed because I'm bad, or incapable of doing better.

In reality, there are many other more likely explanations that don't involve me being a flawed person. Perhaps I didn't study hard enough. Maybe this isn't my best subject. Maybe the teacher misunderstood my answers. Perhaps a lot of the other kids struggled just like I did. Whatever the case, assuming I failed because I'm a defective person won't help me do better next time.

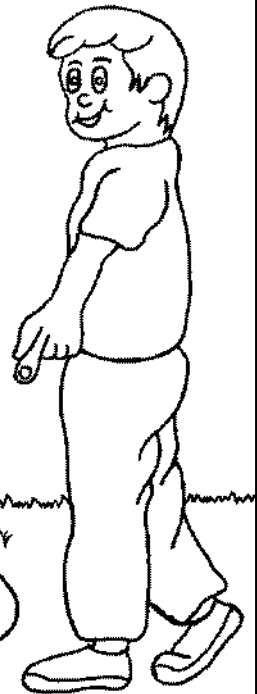


Or let's say you have a really bad day at school. You trip and fall in the mud and people start laughing. At recess, a friend of yours seems cranky and doesn't want to talk to you. Then as you're getting ready to go home you knock over your supply box and it spills pencils all over the floor. After such a day you may feel like a complete loser who can't do anything right.

You feel this way because you see these events as a personal judgment against your self-worth. You hear people laughing and assume they are judging you. But even though it's not nice to laugh in such a situation, the truth is they would also laugh if **ANYONE ELSE** fell in the mud. So if they would laugh at anyone, it means they're laughing because they think it's funny to see someone fall in the mud, not because they think it's funny that bad things happen to you.



When a friend is standoffish, you feel rejected. Yet your friend could be cranky for all sorts of reasons that have nothing to do with you. And even though you may feel like a klutz after knocking something over, the truth is that everyone has such moments from time to time. It's a mistake to believe that you're not as good as others because of a few clumsy moments.



Read the following scenarios, and replace the personal explanation with a better, non-personal explanation:

**Event:** When I said “hello” to John today, he shouted “Leave me alone!” and walked away.

**Personal explanation:** John doesn’t like me anymore. What did I do? I thought we were friends!

**Better explanation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Event:** I spilled my juice at the lunch table today, and Rebecca was mad because some of it got on her dress.

**Personal explanation:** Gosh, I’m such a klutz. Why cant I do anything right?

**Better explanation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Event:** As soon as I got home today, my Dad started yelling at me because my room’s a mess and I left the milk out ...again.

**Personal explanation:** I guess he’s right, I must be a really bad kid. Parents are supposed to love you, and all I seem to do is make Dad angry!

**Better explanation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Of course, whenever you're feeling bad, it's hard to remember these things. The good news is you don't have to. You just have to remember that your thoughts are never 100% accurate and true. In fact, bad feelings usually aren't even 50% true. This means that when something about life has you feeling bad, these bad emotions are not "facts" that can't be changed. Simply by learning better ways of thinking, we can paint a brighter picture for ourselves!

