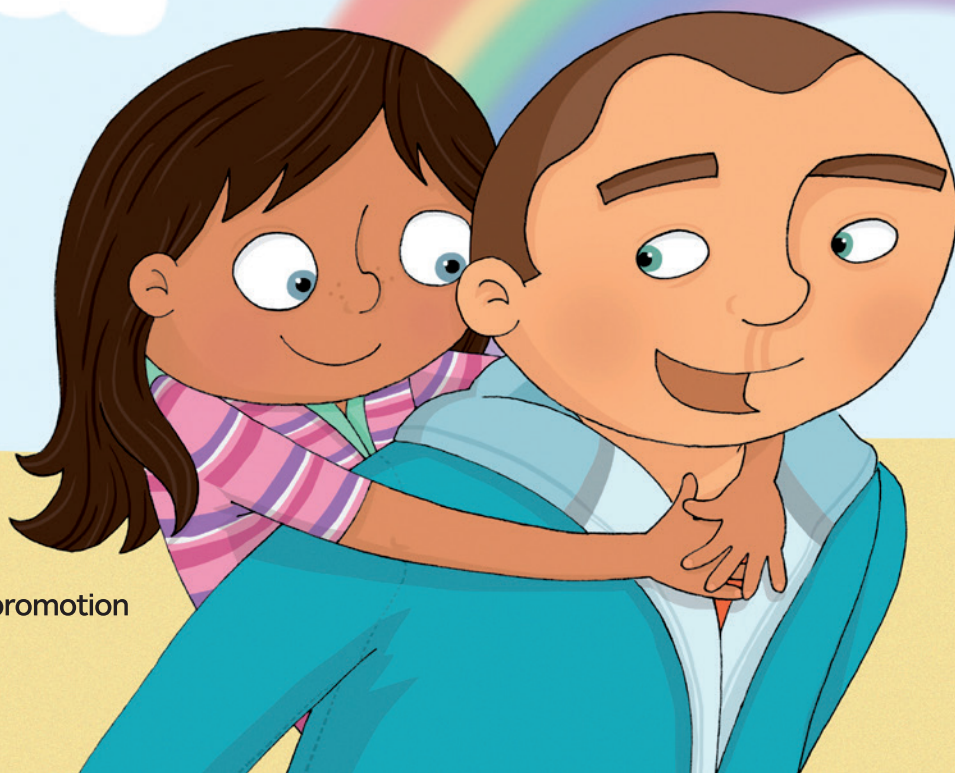


Reading Ruby's Dad with Children:

Tips for parents and carers



This is Ruby's story about living with a parent who is a heavy drinker of alcohol. Her story provides a way to start a conversation with children in a similar situation, so they can talk with you about what it's like for them.

Who is it for?

- Children 6-11 years old. Younger or older children may like to read it as well.
- It will be most useful for children who live with a parent who is a heavy drinker. Parents and carers, and other relatives, might find it helpful too.

When you read it together

- Pick a time when you're not rushed or likely to be disturbed.
- Help the child to feel calm, comfortable and safe.
- Don't read it to a child for the first time just before their bedtime.

Use this story to help start conversations

- Some children may open up and talk easily but others will need more time.
- Respect each child's different personality, and privacy.
- Let the child lead – don't push them.
- Ask a few questions about the story, and how they feel about it, then listen well to their answers. Be prepared to answer any questions the child has, as best you can...

Call the **Alcohol Drug Helpline** for confidential information, advice and support.

0800 787 797

(Seven days a week 10am – 10pm)

Email **Skylight** for support for your family situation at **rs@skylight-trust.org.nz** or phone Skylight on

0800 299 100

(Weekdays)



Additional copies of *Ruby's Dad* can be ordered at **alcohol.org.nz** or by phoning the Health Promotion Agency on

0508 258 258



Ruby's Dad

By Frances Rabone
Illustrations by Ali Teo



Dedication

For Bill

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the **Health Promotion Agency (HPA)** and **Skylight** for making this publication possible.

I wish to especially acknowledge Father Des Britten KNZM and Judge Peter Boshier (Principal Family Court Judge), family, friends and colleagues for their insight and support. I am also very grateful to Ali Teo for the book's design and her gifted illustrations.

Frances Rabone

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Published by Skylight

www.skylight.org.nz

0800 299 100

Printed by Format Print, Petone, Wellington, New Zealand.

ISBN: 978-0-9876540-2-1

HPA code: AL900

For further copies of this book, phone 0508 258 258

www.hpa.org.nz





One windy day, Ruby and
her family went to the beach.

“Look at that rainbow!”
Ruby suddenly called out.

“That’s awesome!” said Dad.

Ruby and all her family had lots of good times together.



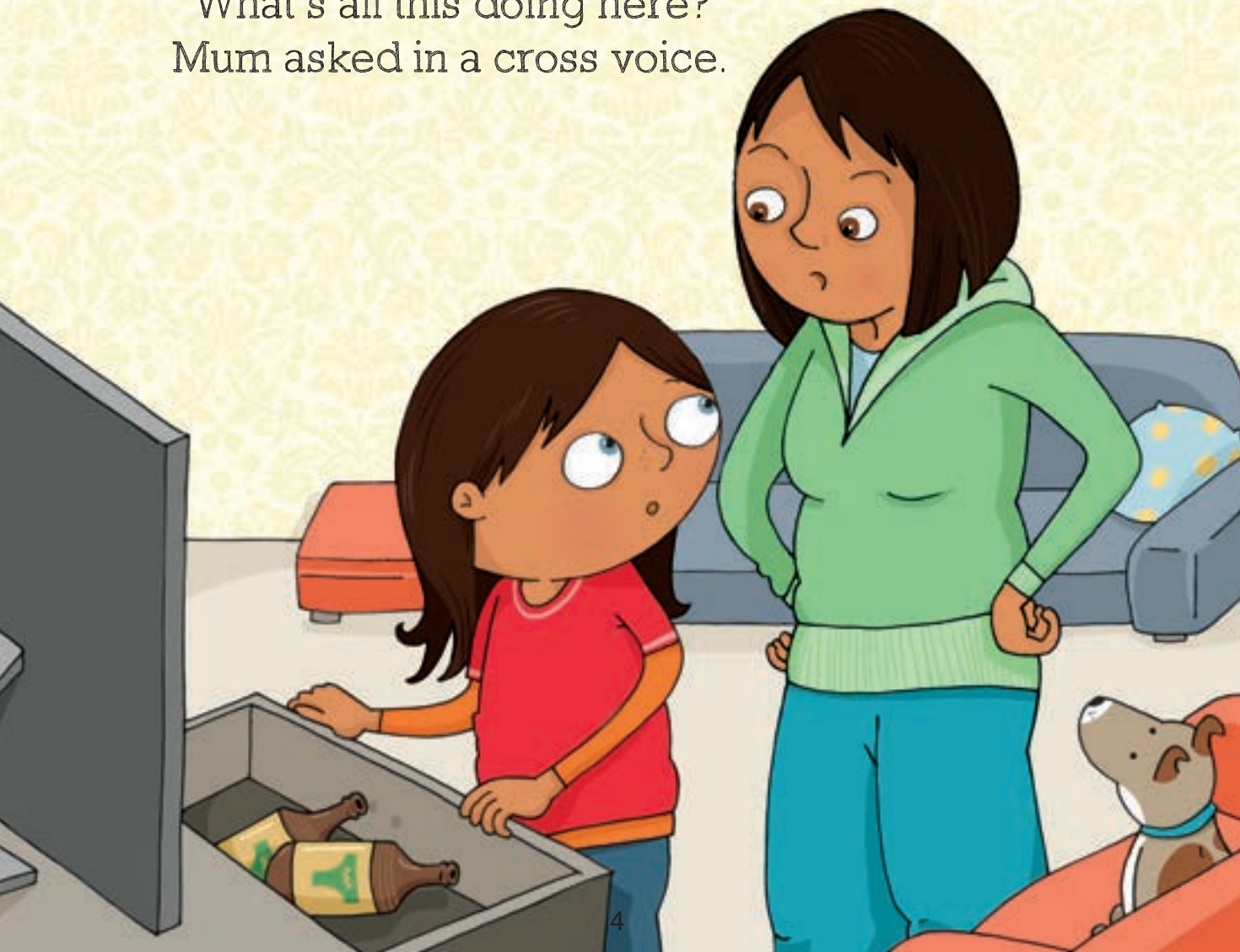
Then slowly things began to change.
Dad started drinking lots of beer and wine.
The house started to feel different.
It started to smell different.



Ruby kept finding empty bottles
in funny places.

She showed Mum.

“What’s all this doing here?”
Mum asked in a cross voice.



Ruby stopped asking her best friend Mia to come round.

She never knew what Dad would be like.

She felt embarrassed when he drank too much.



Some days Dad would be loud and grumpy.

“Go away and leave me alone!”

he’d yell at her.

He smelled awful too.

Ruby felt scared of her Dad sometimes.

She wondered if it was her fault that he got so grumpy.

Other days Dad would come over and hug her.

“How’s my gorgeous girl today? Can you get another beer for me out of the fridge?”
he’d ask.



When Ruby felt all mixed up inside,
she'd go to her bedroom with Tinker,
her dog.





One night Ruby's Mum went out.

Ruby heard Dad coughing loudly.

When she opened the door the room was full of smoke.

"Dad!" she screamed. "There's a fire!"

The couch was in flames.



The kids all ran out of the house and Tinker did too.

Ruby's big sister phoned 111 for help.

Then Dad stumbled out.





The fire-fighters arrived with their sirens roaring.

They quickly put out the fire.

Ruby's big brother was angry.

"Dad!" he shouted. "Our whole house could have burned down!"

"I think my cigarette just burned a hole in the couch," Dad said. "I only had a few drinks. I must have fallen asleep. I guess it's my fault."



When Mum came home she was very angry with Dad.

“You were meant to be looking after the kids!” she shouted.



Later, Mum and Dad started to talk.
They talked for a long time ...



The next day, Dad wasn't there when Ruby got home.

"Where's Dad?" she asked Mum.

"He's gone to stay at a place where people can help him to stop drinking so much. Dad has to learn how to stay sober so he can get well.

Being sober means he'll stop drinking alcohol every day. Like his beer and his wine."



Ruby sat on the front doorstep.

She wondered how her Dad was getting on.

She decided to make a card to send to him.

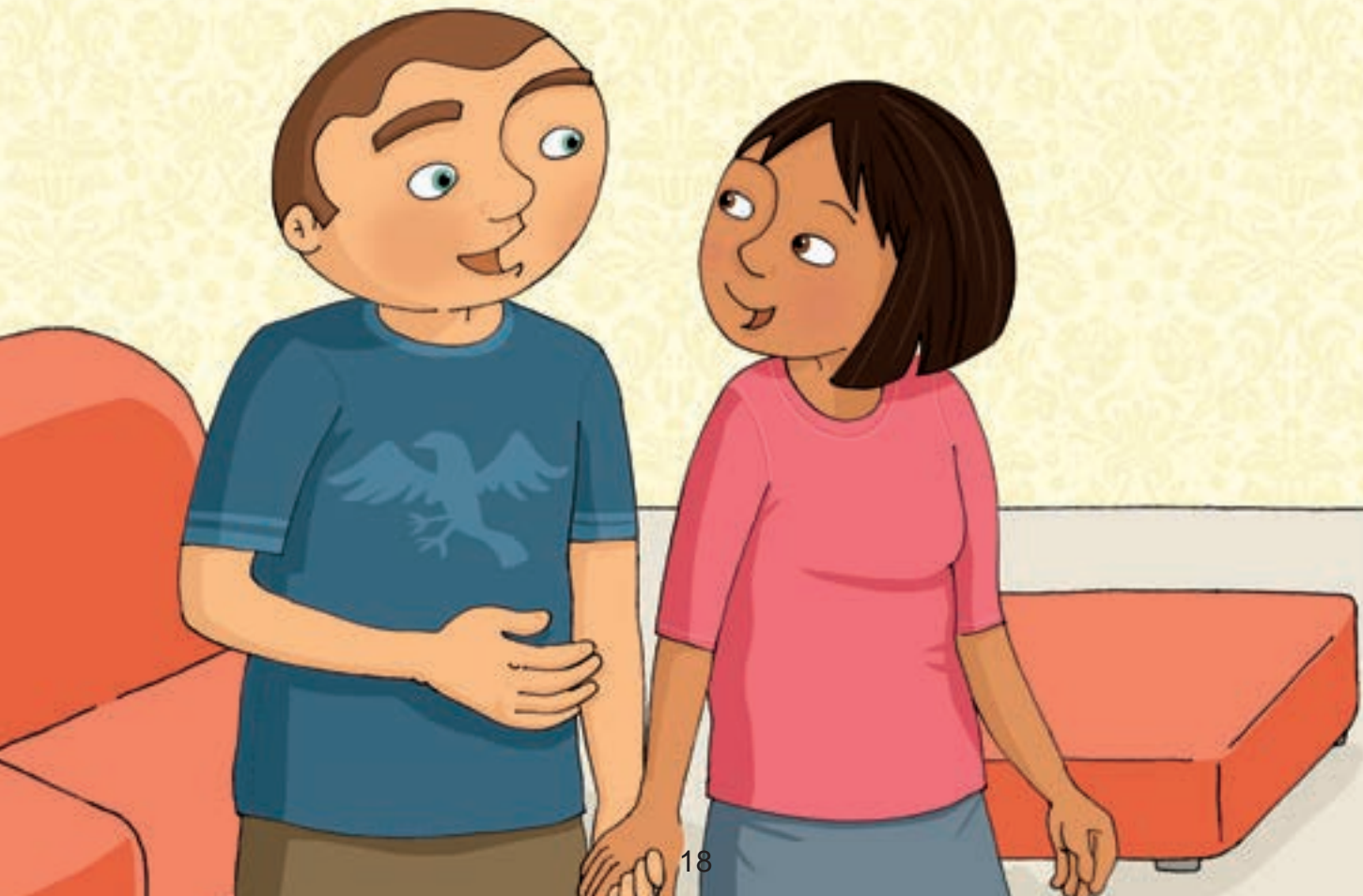


Two months later Dad came home.

“Are you better now?” Ruby’s sister asked.

Dad smiled at them all.

“Well, I’ve found out that I will be OK, as long as I don’t drink any more.”



"You mean no more drinking your beer and wine every day?" asked Ruby.

"No. No more booze for me," said Dad.

"Alcohol is very bad for me. It makes me change into the sort of person I don't like being."



"I'm off to my meeting now," Dad said one night.

Ruby was curious. "What's the meeting for?"

"People come to it if they have a drinking problem, like me."

"We get together to encourage each other to stop drinking and stay sober."

"Do other kids know people who drink too much?" asked Ruby.

"Yes," said Dad. "You're not the only ones. Sometimes kids wonder if it's their fault."

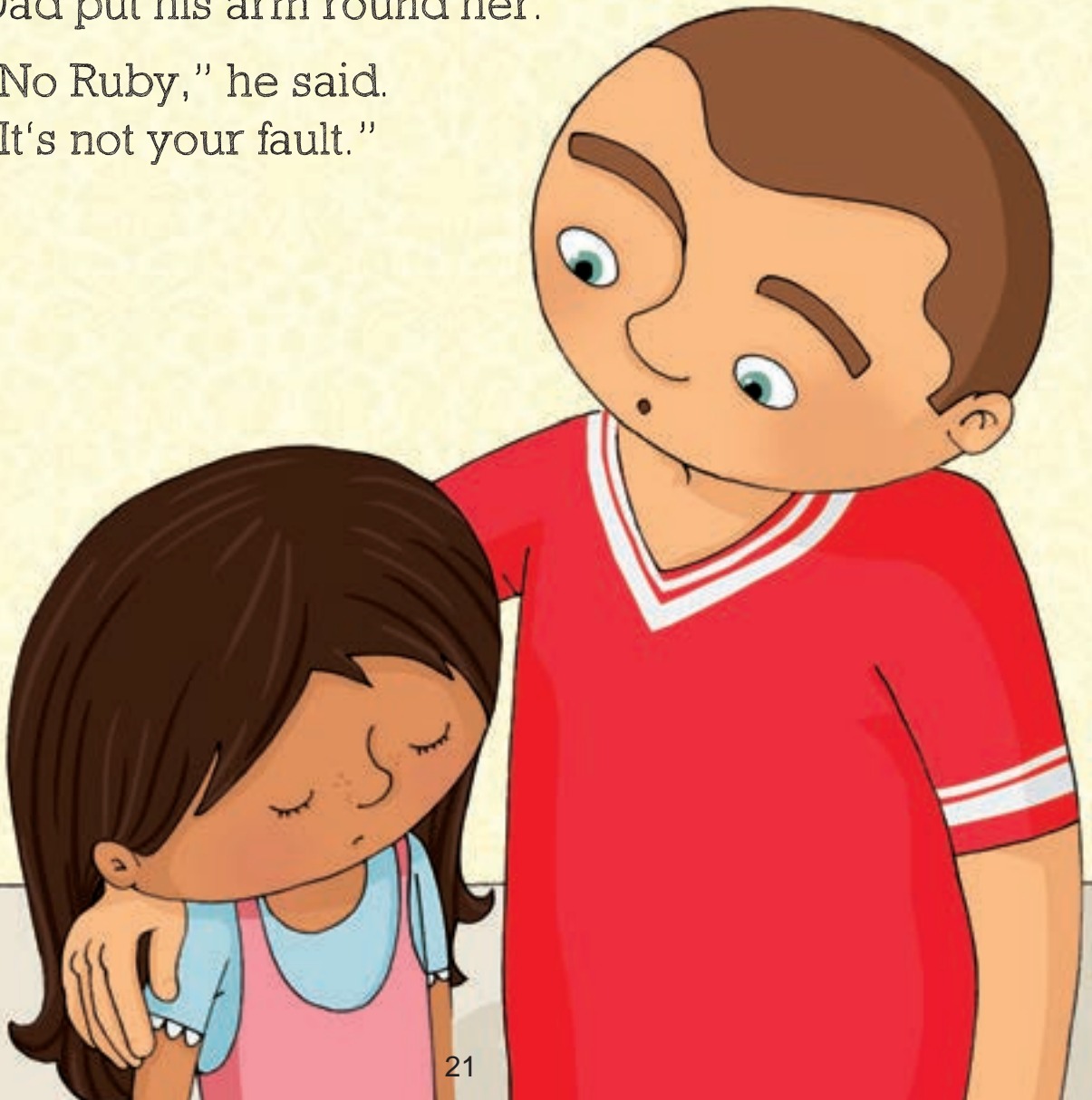


Ruby looked down. "That's what I think sometimes," she said.

Dad put his arm round her.

"No Ruby," he said.

"It's not your fault."



After a while, the house began to feel more like it used to.

“Can Mia come round after school tomorrow?” asked Ruby.

“Yes,” said Mum, smiling.

When Ruby and Mia came home they could hear Dad singing.

“Hi there, girls!” he said.

Ruby liked it when her Dad was happy.



Ruby helped bake a special cake for Dad's birthday.

"Happy Birthday to me!" he sang when he saw the candles.

"Blow them out!" shouted everyone.



“Whooohhhh!” Dad said, as he slipped and held onto a chair. “Good one!”

Dad smelt funny and he was falling around.
Then Ruby’s tummy did a flip.



Ruby went into the kitchen to find Mum.

"I think Dad's been drinking again,"
she told her.

"I think he has too," said Mum.



Everyone hated it when Dad drank.



Dad was really mad with himself.

"I'm so sorry for spoiling everything,"
he said.

"I thought I'd be OK just
having one drink, but
then I couldn't stop."



Ruby looked at him. She didn't know what to say.

"I am going to go back to my meetings again," said Dad. "They help me to remember that I have a drinking problem."





Ruby's family were down at the beach.

"Look at that rainbow!" shouted Ruby.

"It's ages since we saw the last one."

She looked up at her Dad. "I really like it when you're not drinking any more."

"Yeah, me too," said Dad.

"I just have to take one day at a time, because it can be really hard."

"Go for it!" Ruby told him.





Do you, a friend or family member need
help with alcohol?

Call the Alcohol Drug Helpline

0800 787 797

(Open 10am – 10pm)

www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz

This is a story for children aged 6–11 years whose parent or relative has a drinking problem.

Ruby's Dad begins to drink too much and things begin to change in Ruby's family. After some difficult times, Dad gets the help he needs to stop drinking.

An honest, encouraging story to help children and families talk about alcohol and how it can affect family life.

