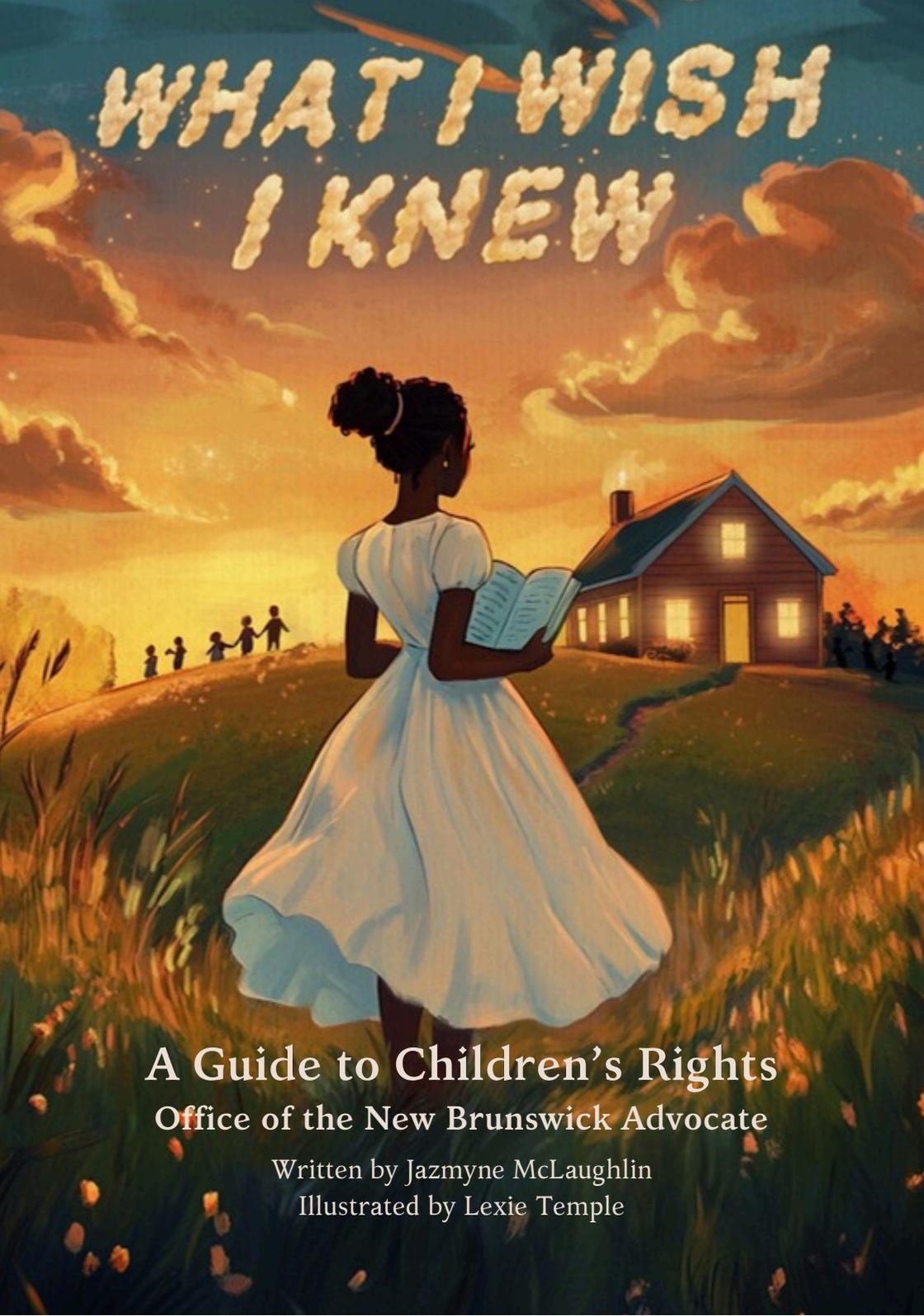


# WHAT I WISH I KNEW

The illustration depicts a young girl with her hair in a bun, wearing a white, short-sleeved, flowing dress. She is seen from behind, holding an open book. She stands in a field of tall grass and wildflowers. In the background, a small wooden house with a chimney and lit windows sits on a hill. To the left, a group of small figures, possibly children, are walking on a path. The sky is a vibrant mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with large, soft clouds and a few stars visible.

## A Guide to Children's Rights Office of the New Brunswick Advocate

Written by Jazmyne McLaughlin  
Illustrated by Lexie Temple



## **Office of the New Brunswick Advocate**

P.O. Box 6000  
Fredericton, NB, E3B 5H1

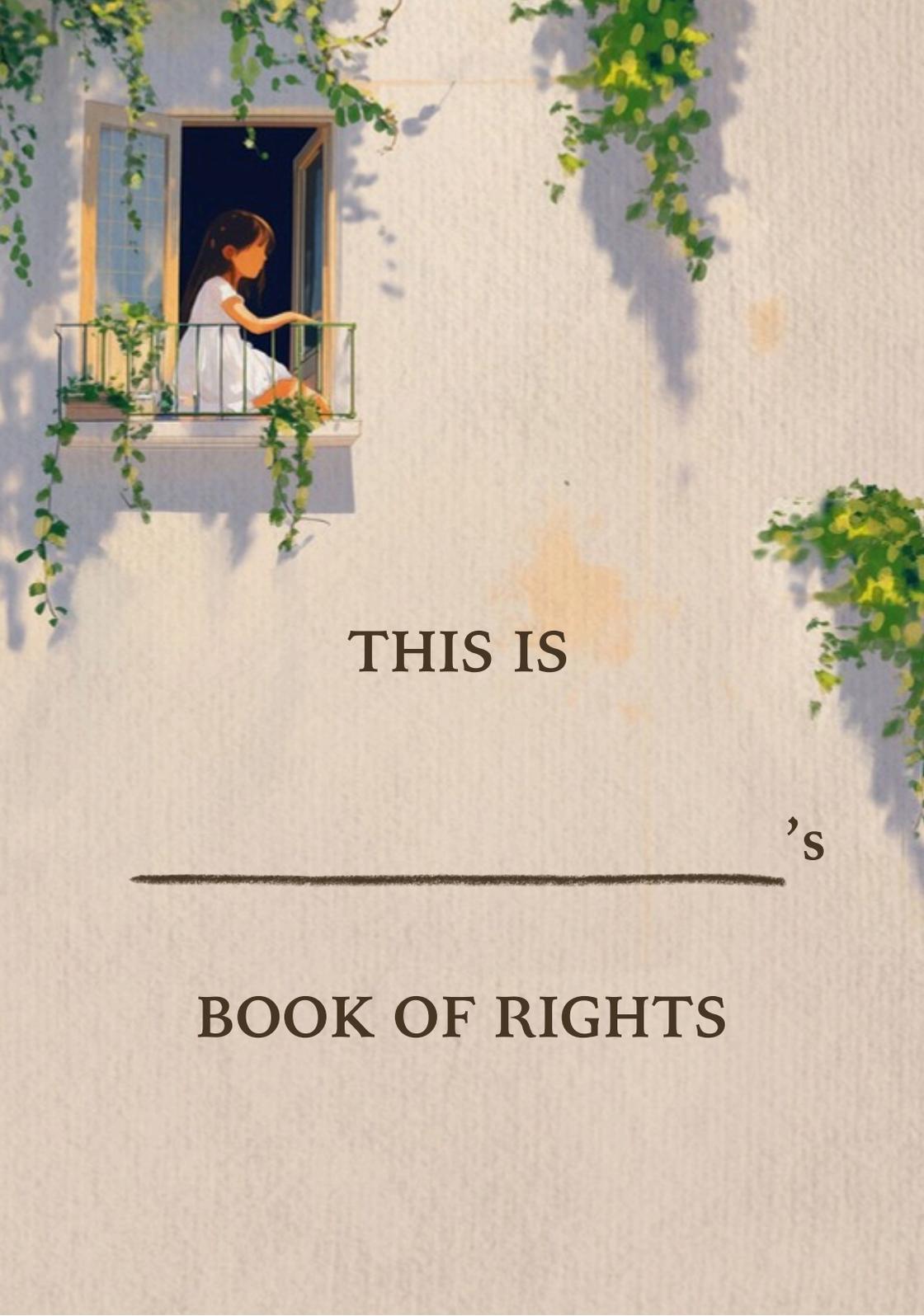
Toll Free: 1.888.453.8653

Local: 1.506.453.8653

Email address: [advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca](mailto:advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca)

[www.defenseur-nb-advocate.ca](http://www.defenseur-nb-advocate.ca)





THIS IS

'S

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BOOK OF RIGHTS

If you're reading this, you might be going through some big changes right now. You might feel scared or confused, or maybe you feel safe and calm. No matter how you're feeling, remember you're not alone.

When I was a kid, I had to leave my home because it wasn't safe. I lived in foster care and was adopted when I was 7 years old. But when I was 15, I had to go back into care. I felt very confused, angry, and lonely.

I want to share some things that I wish I had known back then. I felt like I had no voice, like I was a small piece in a board game that people moved around without asking first. It wasn't until my second year at university that I learned children and youth have special rights. These rights are rules that adults must follow to help you grow up happy and healthy. I didn't know about these rights, so I never spoke up when they were ignored.

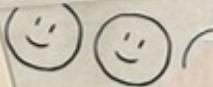
I want every child and youth in care to know how they should be treated and how to stand up for themselves if someone treats them poorly. My hope is for this book to be your guide, something you can keep and use when you need to speak up for yourself.

You deserve love,  
respect,  
and kindness.  
Your voice matters,  
and you are worth  
fighting for.

Please never forget that.



Hi there! My name is Jazmyne,  
but my friends call me Jazz.



# WHAT ARE RIGHTS & WHY DO WE HAVE THEM?

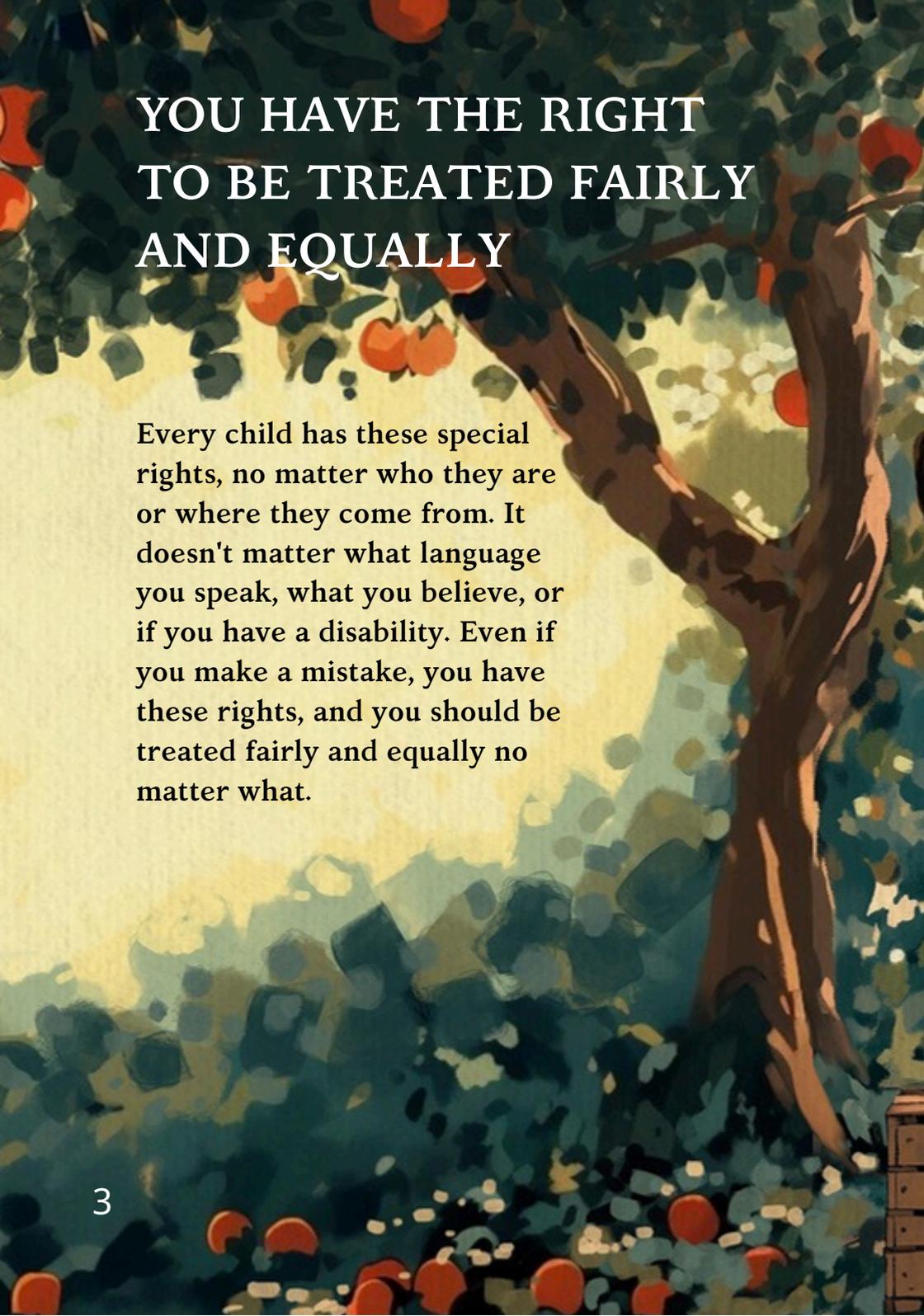
Rights are like superpowers!

Every child and youth in New Brunswick under the age of 19 has special rights to ensure they're treated fairly and kindly, no matter where they're from or what they look like. These superpowers help make sure all children and youth have the chance to grow up happy and healthy.

When these rights are not followed by adults who are supposed to protect you, you have the right to speak up and let people know.

But first, you need to know what these rights are!

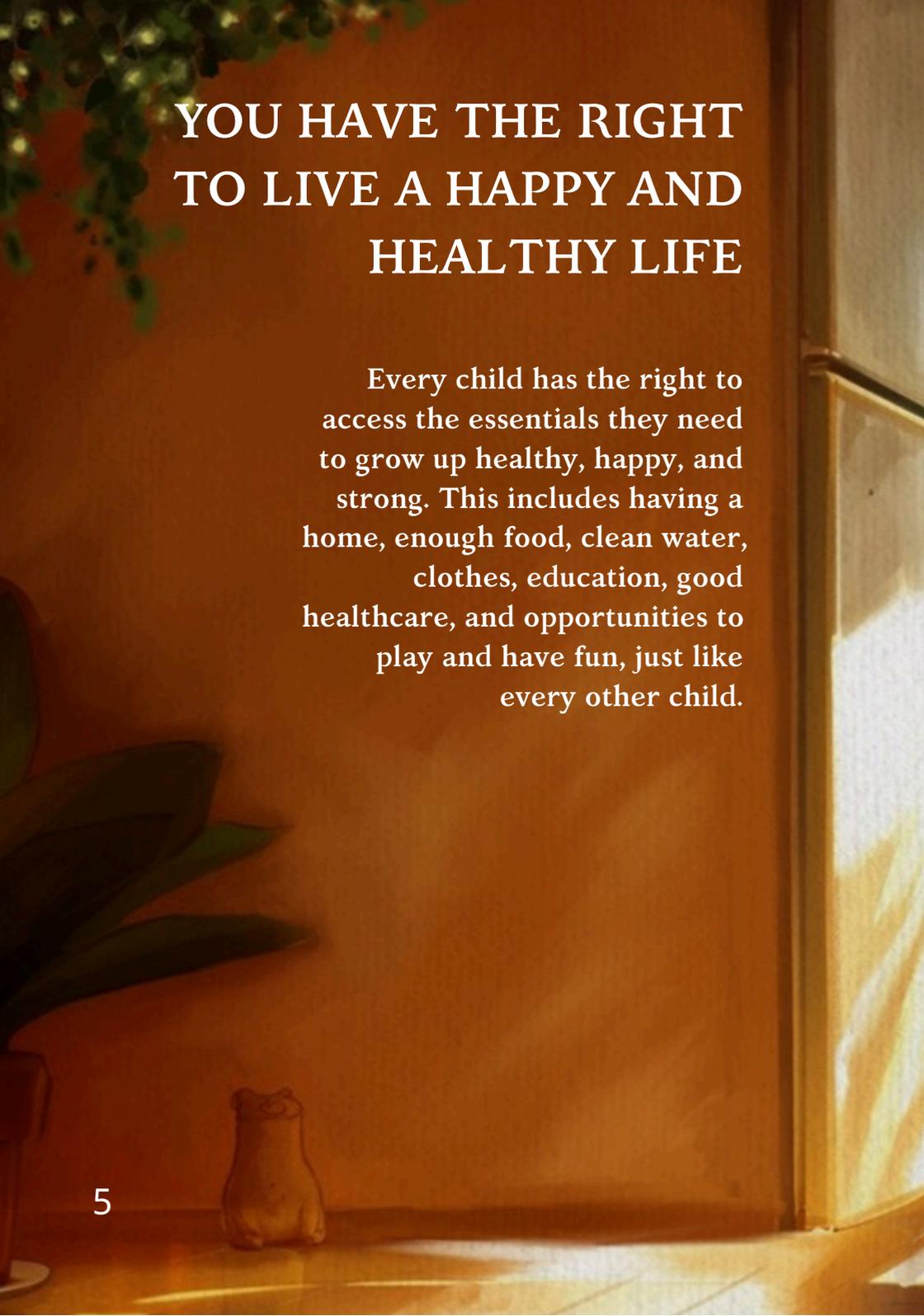




# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED FAIRLY AND EQUALLY

Every child has these special rights, no matter who they are or where they come from. It doesn't matter what language you speak, what you believe, or if you have a disability. Even if you make a mistake, you have these rights, and you should be treated fairly and equally no matter what.





# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY LIFE

Every child has the right to access the essentials they need to grow up healthy, happy, and strong. This includes having a home, enough food, clean water, clothes, education, good healthcare, and opportunities to play and have fun, just like every other child.



# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD! YOUR VOICE HAS POWER

You have the right to share your thoughts and opinions on things that affect you. The most important thing is what is best for you. Adults should listen to you and take your ideas seriously. Whether it's at home, at school, or in your community, what you think is important and should be considered when decisions are made.



Trudi, a youth in care, was placed in a group home in another city due to housing challenges in her hometown. After months away from her family and community, she wanted to move back. She contacted the Advocate's Office, and an Individual Case Specialist met with her. After hearing her concerns, they reached out to the Department of Social Development, who agreed that moving her home was best.

# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO LEARN & GO TO SCHOOL

Every child has the right to go to school and learn new things no matter who they are, where they live, or what their family is like. Schools should be a safe and happy place where you can make friends, ask questions, and reach your full potential.





I CAN DO HARD THINGS

HOW LUCKY ARE WE



CHANGE IS GOOD



IT IS SAFE TO WHO



HOW DO YOU FEEL

PLEASE DON'T BEASTY

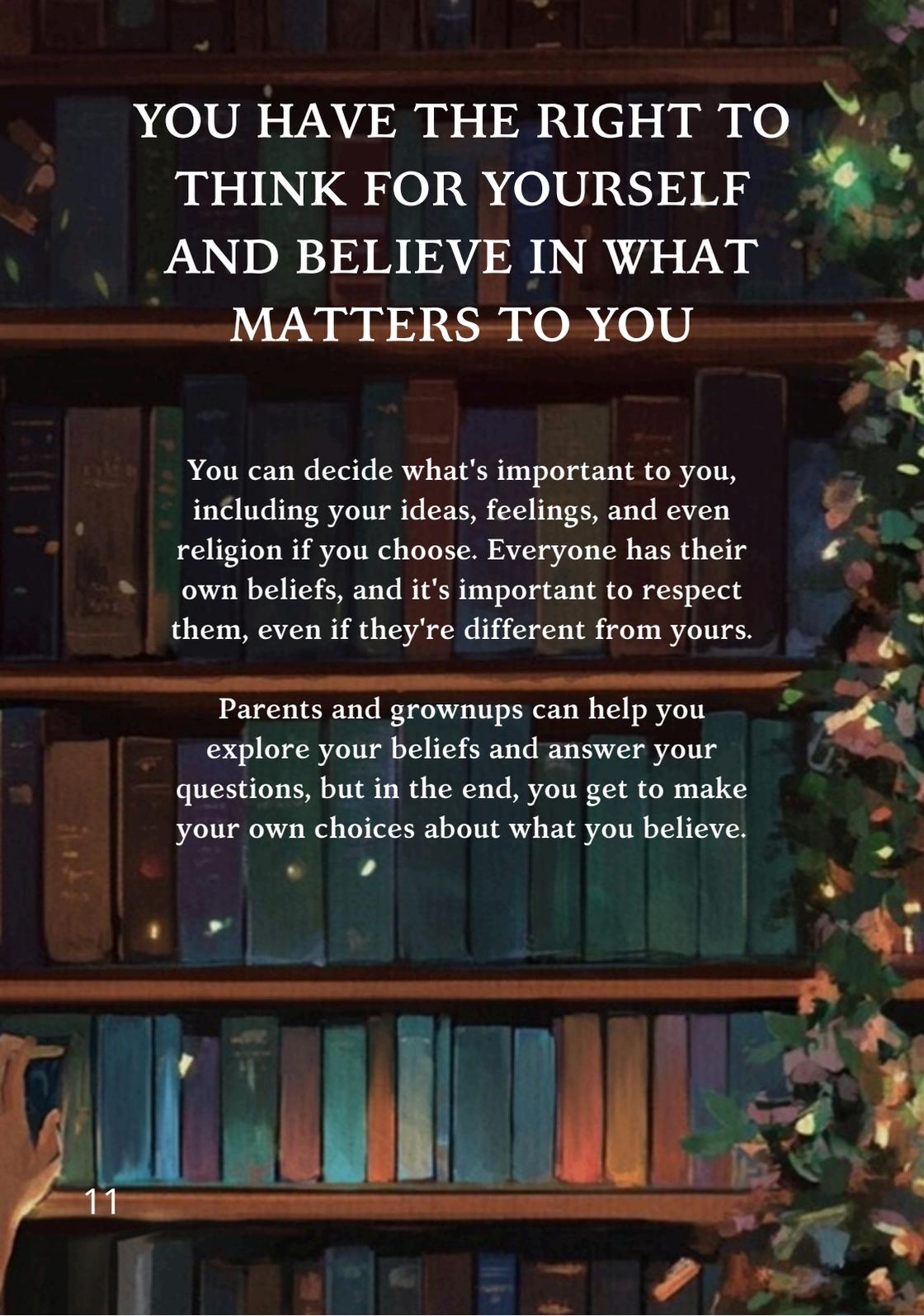
GROW THROUGH WHAT YOU GO THROUGH



IT IS OKAY TO FEEL

YOU ARE IMPORTANT

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE

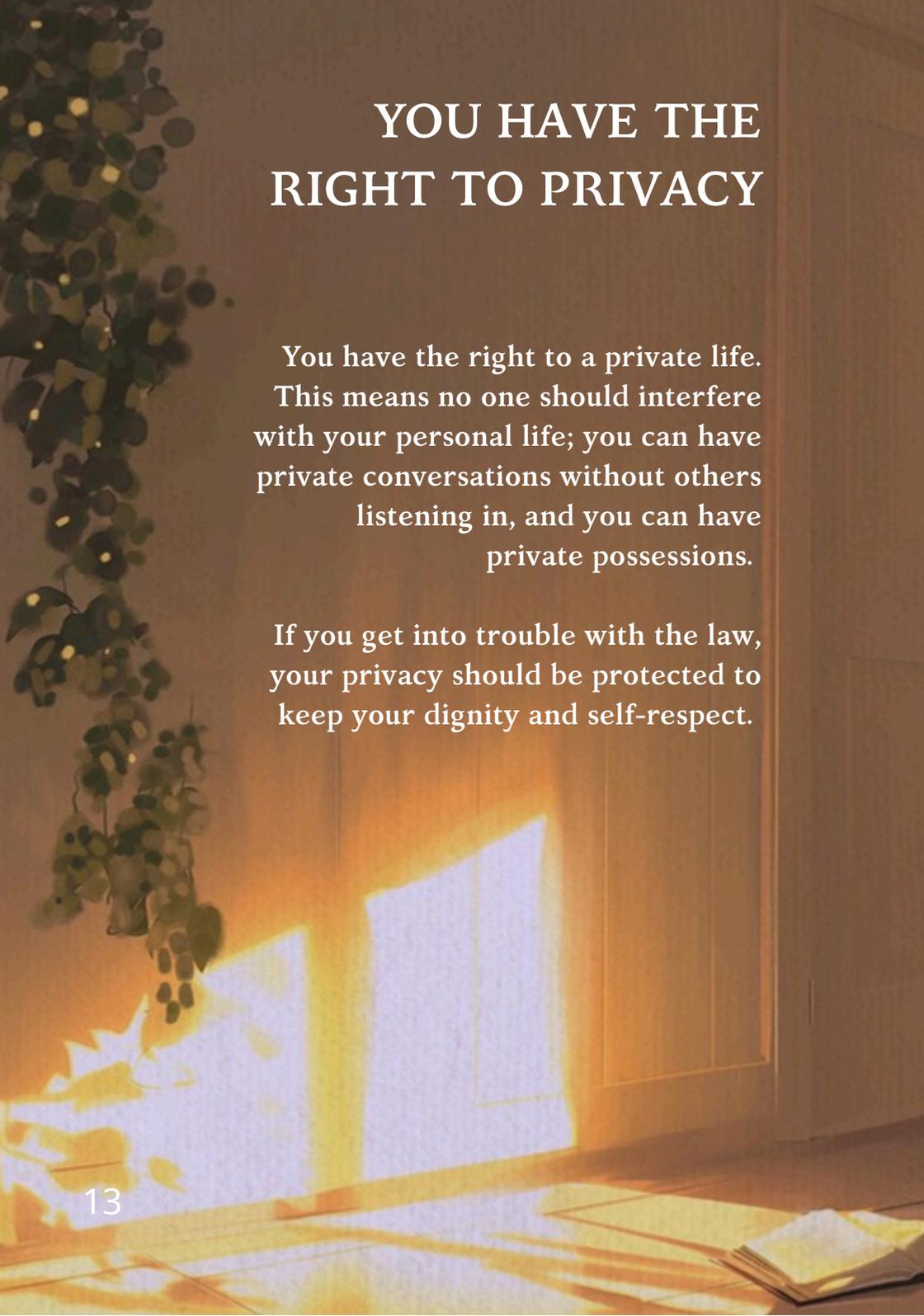


# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO THINK FOR YOURSELF AND BELIEVE IN WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

You can decide what's important to you, including your ideas, feelings, and even religion if you choose. Everyone has their own beliefs, and it's important to respect them, even if they're different from yours.

Parents and grownups can help you explore your beliefs and answer your questions, but in the end, you get to make your own choices about what you believe.

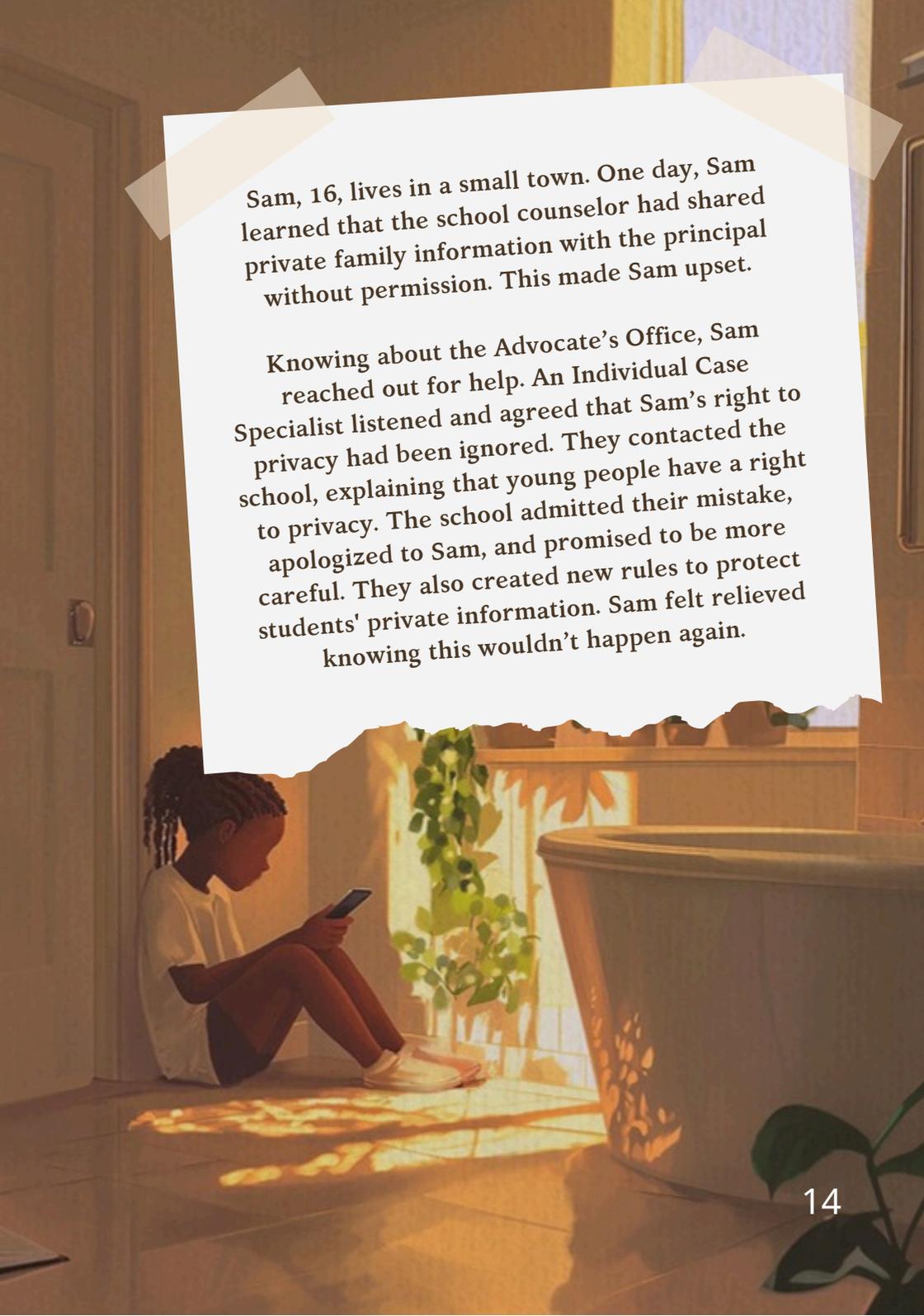




# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

You have the right to a private life. This means no one should interfere with your personal life; you can have private conversations without others listening in, and you can have private possessions.

If you get into trouble with the law, your privacy should be protected to keep your dignity and self-respect.



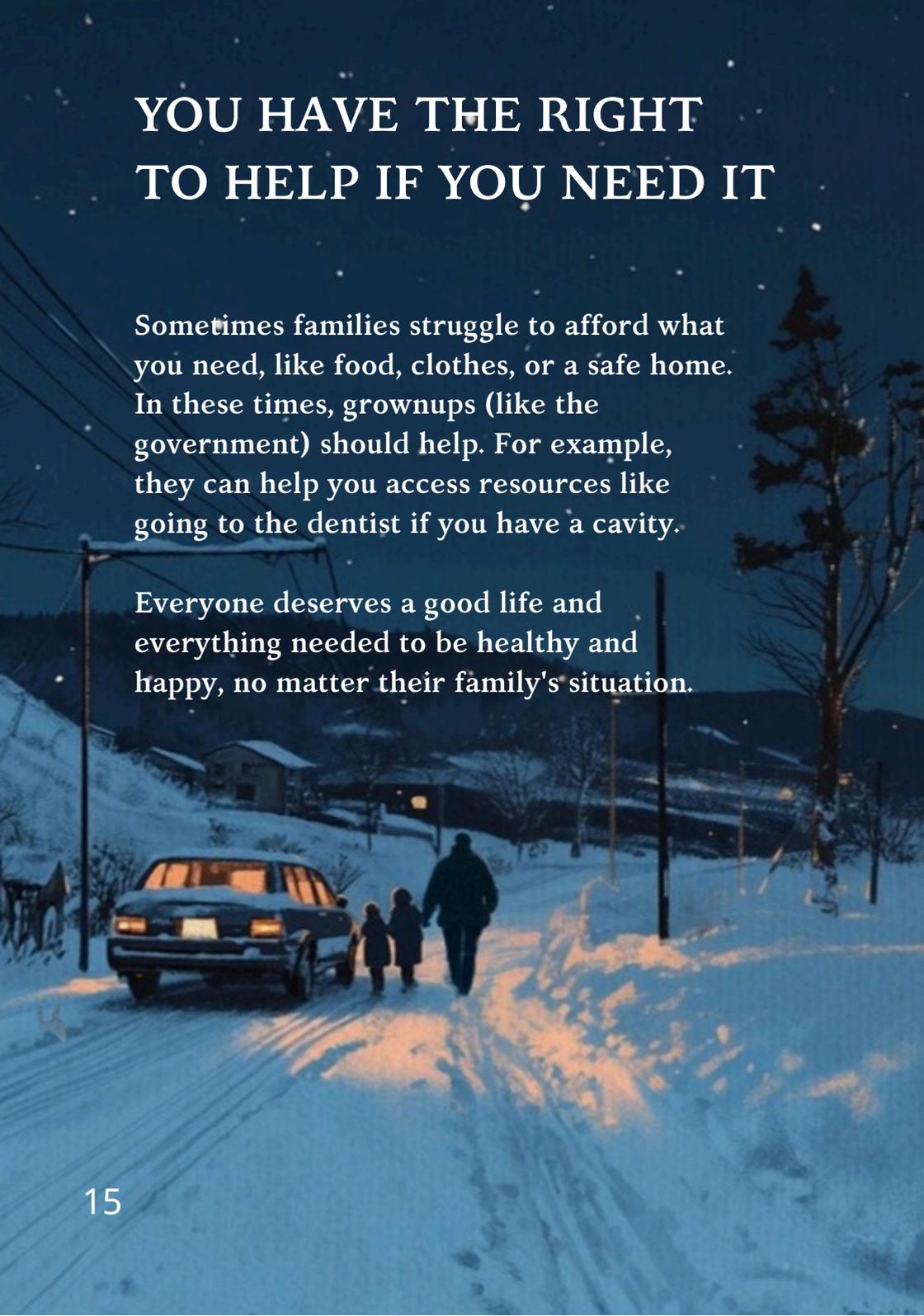
Sam, 16, lives in a small town. One day, Sam learned that the school counselor had shared private family information with the principal without permission. This made Sam upset.

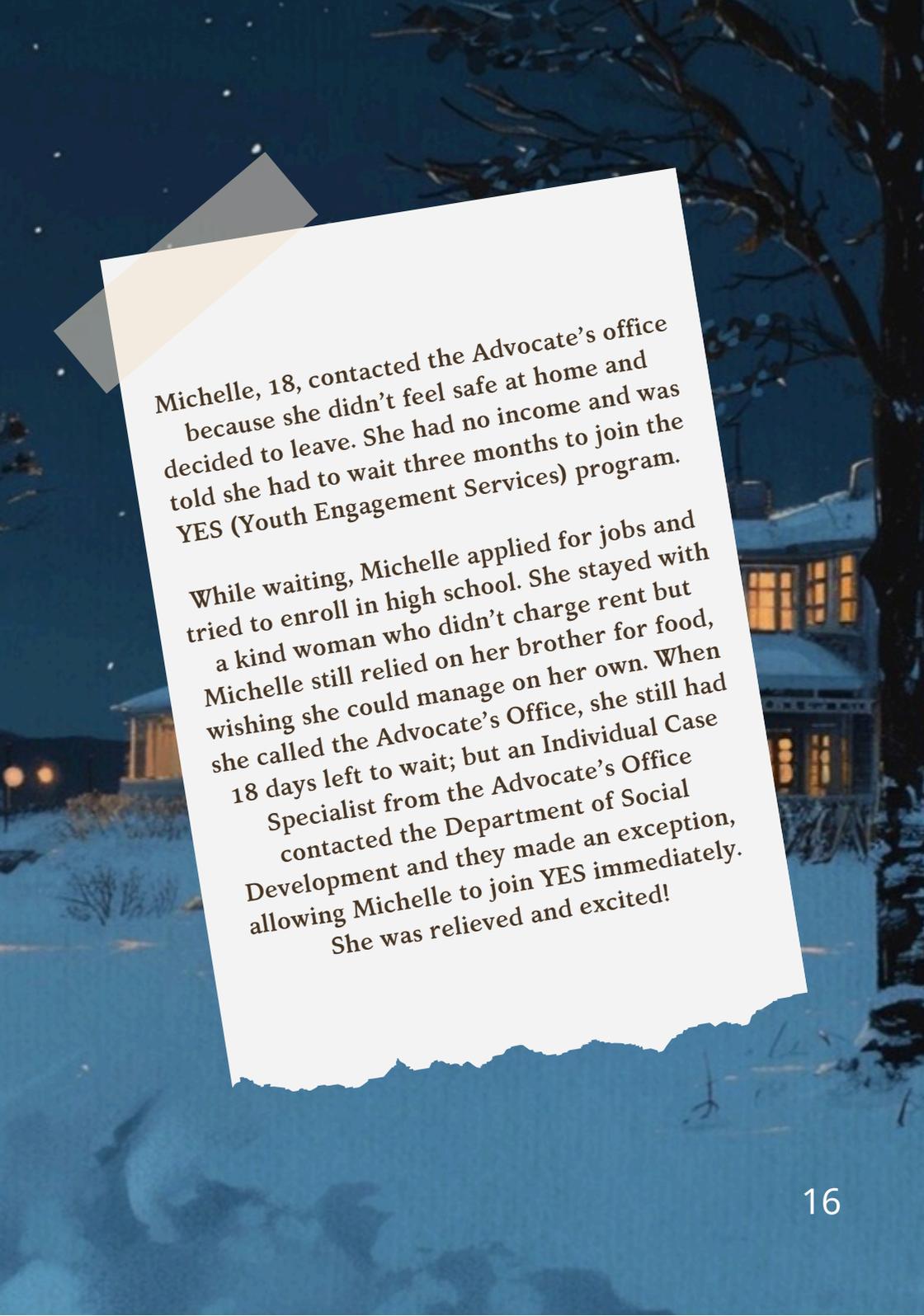
Knowing about the Advocate's Office, Sam reached out for help. An Individual Case Specialist listened and agreed that Sam's right to privacy had been ignored. They contacted the school, explaining that young people have a right to privacy. The school admitted their mistake, apologized to Sam, and promised to be more careful. They also created new rules to protect students' private information. Sam felt relieved knowing this wouldn't happen again.

# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO HELP IF YOU NEED IT

Sometimes families struggle to afford what you need, like food, clothes, or a safe home. In these times, grownups (like the government) should help. For example, they can help you access resources like going to the dentist if you have a cavity.

Everyone deserves a good life and everything needed to be healthy and happy, no matter their family's situation.





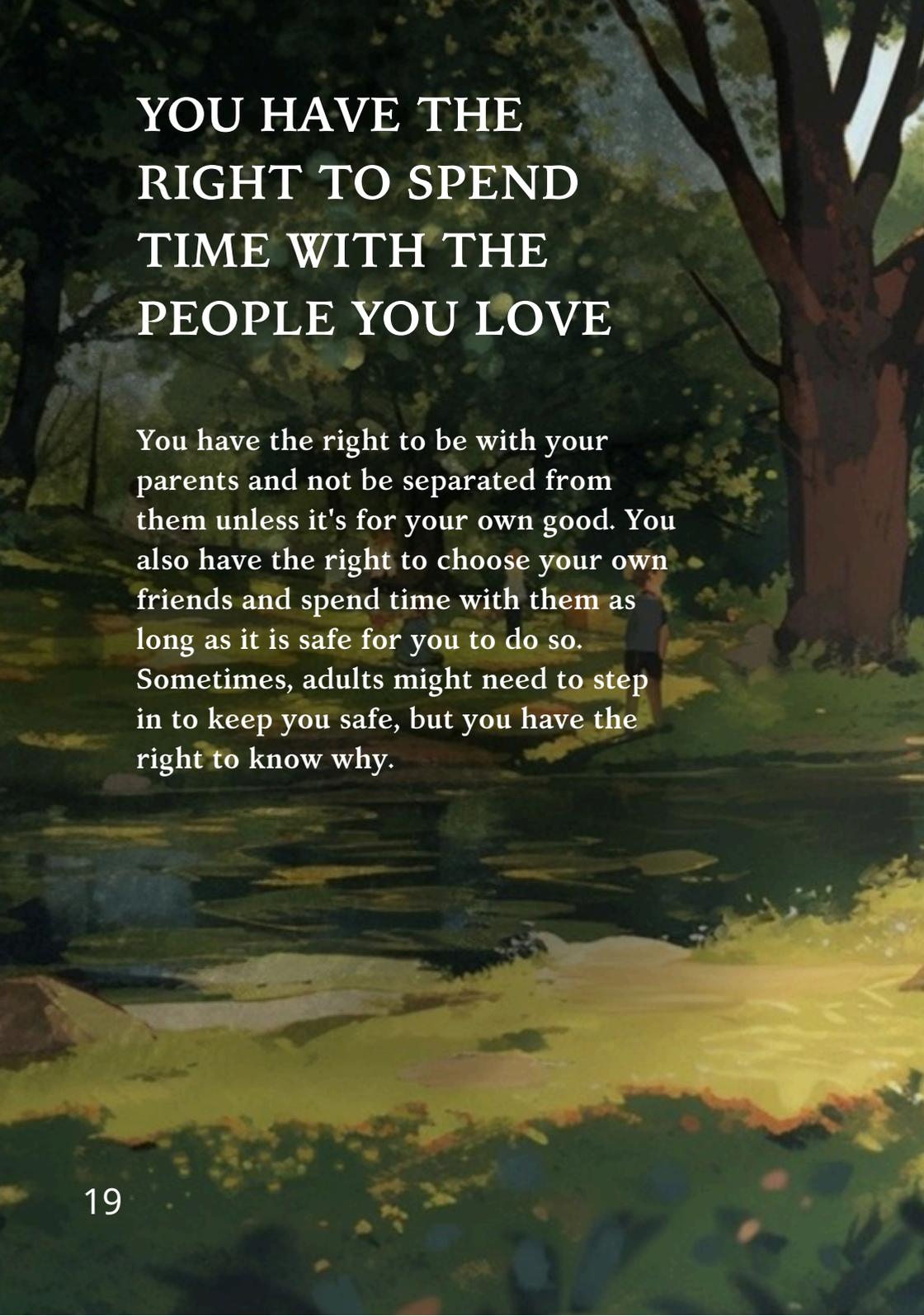
Michelle, 18, contacted the Advocate's office because she didn't feel safe at home and decided to leave. She had no income and was told she had to wait three months to join the YES (Youth Engagement Services) program.

While waiting, Michelle applied for jobs and tried to enroll in high school. She stayed with a kind woman who didn't charge rent but Michelle still relied on her brother for food, she called the Advocate's Office, she still had 18 days left to wait; but an Individual Case Specialist from the Advocate's Office contacted the Department of Social Development and they made an exception, allowing Michelle to join YES immediately. She was relieved and excited!

# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN A SAFE PLACE

Sometimes, you might not be able to live with your family. In these cases, grownups (like the government and social workers) must find you a safe, loving place to stay. The most important thing is that you feel safe, loved, and cared for.



A painting of a forest scene. On the right side, there is a large, detailed tree with a thick trunk and green foliage. In the middle ground, a small figure of a person is visible, standing on a path or clearing. The background is filled with more trees and greenery, creating a sense of depth. The overall style is soft and painterly, with a focus on natural light and color.

# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEND TIME WITH THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE

You have the right to be with your parents and not be separated from them unless it's for your own good. You also have the right to choose your own friends and spend time with them as long as it is safe for you to do so. Sometimes, adults might need to step in to keep you safe, but you have the right to know why.



# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE A REVIEW OF YOUR TREATMENT IN CARE

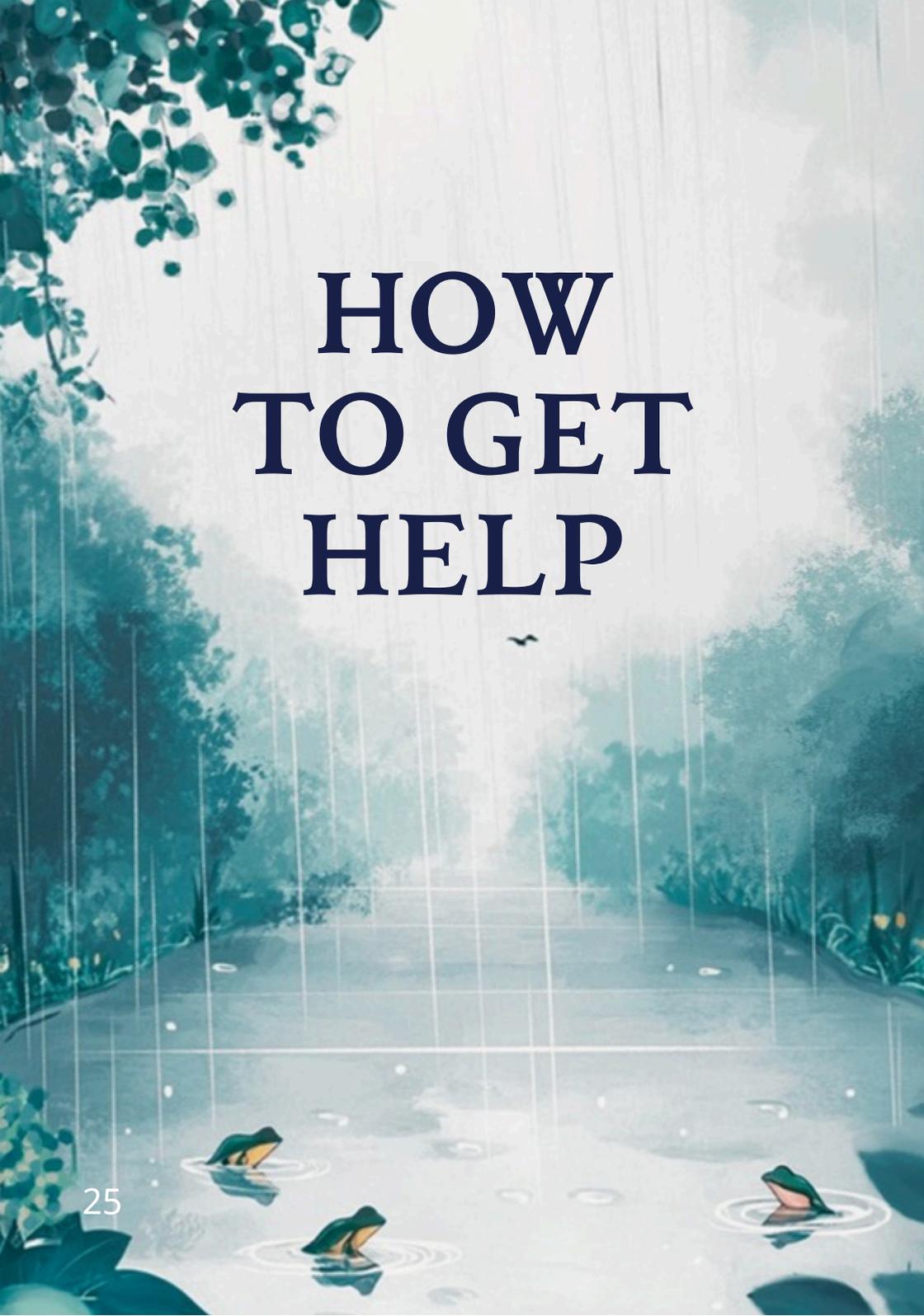
If you are living away from your family, like in a foster home, a hospital, or a youth detention centre, you have the right to know why you are in care and to be well cared for. The people looking after you must check regularly to make sure you are safe, healthy, and happy. They need to listen to how you feel and make sure your care is the best it can be.



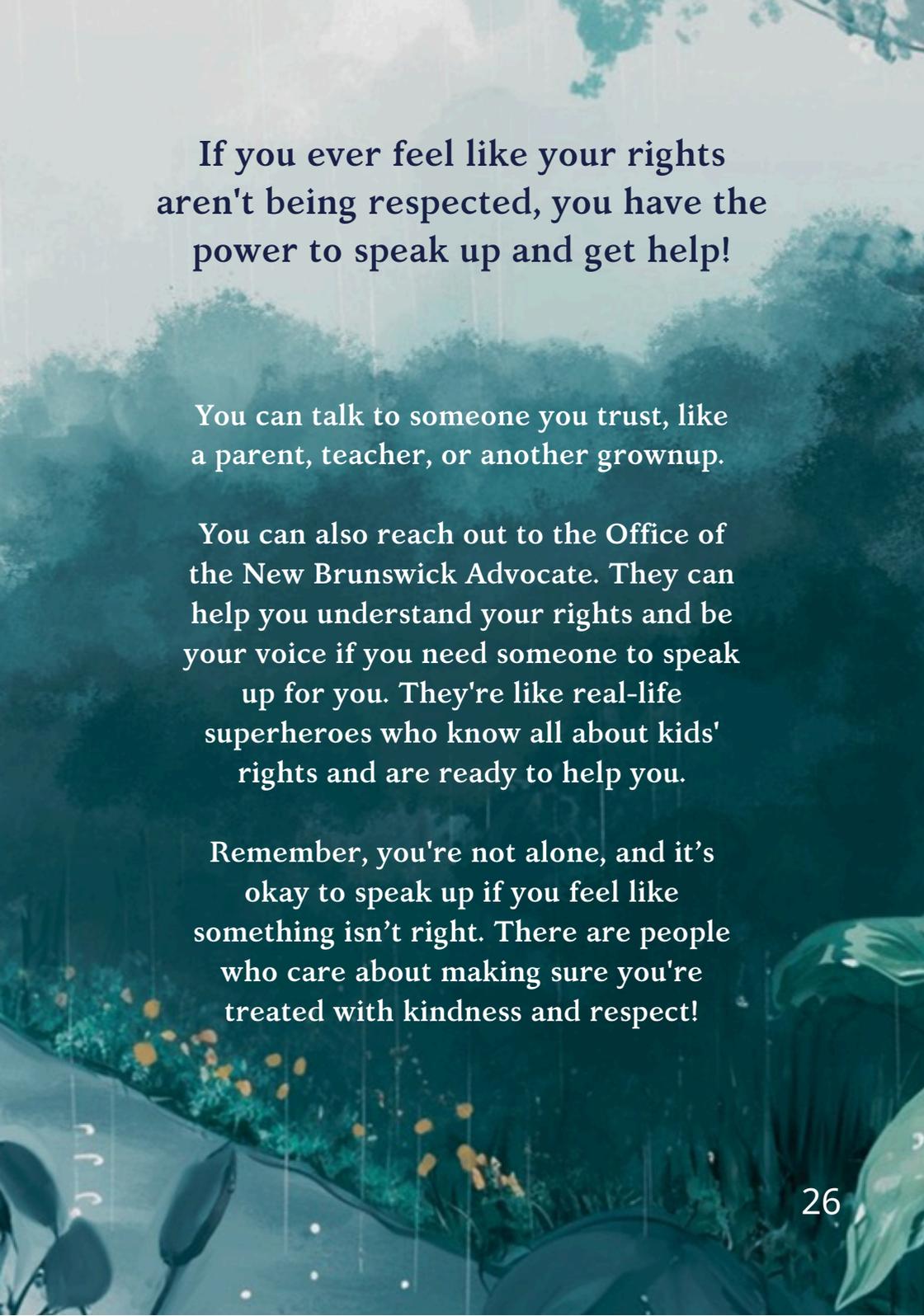
# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE PROTECTED FROM HARM

You have the right to be safe from all forms of harm. This includes protection from physical or emotional harm, doing dangerous work, being involved with drugs, being sexually abused, kidnapped, or trafficked. You have the right to be kept safe and grow up in a healthy environment no matter where you are living.



A vertical illustration of a rainy forest. A path leads through lush green trees and foliage. In the foreground, a small pond is filled with raindrops, and three green frogs with orange bellies are visible. A small bird is flying in the distance. The overall mood is serene and natural.

# HOW TO GET HELP

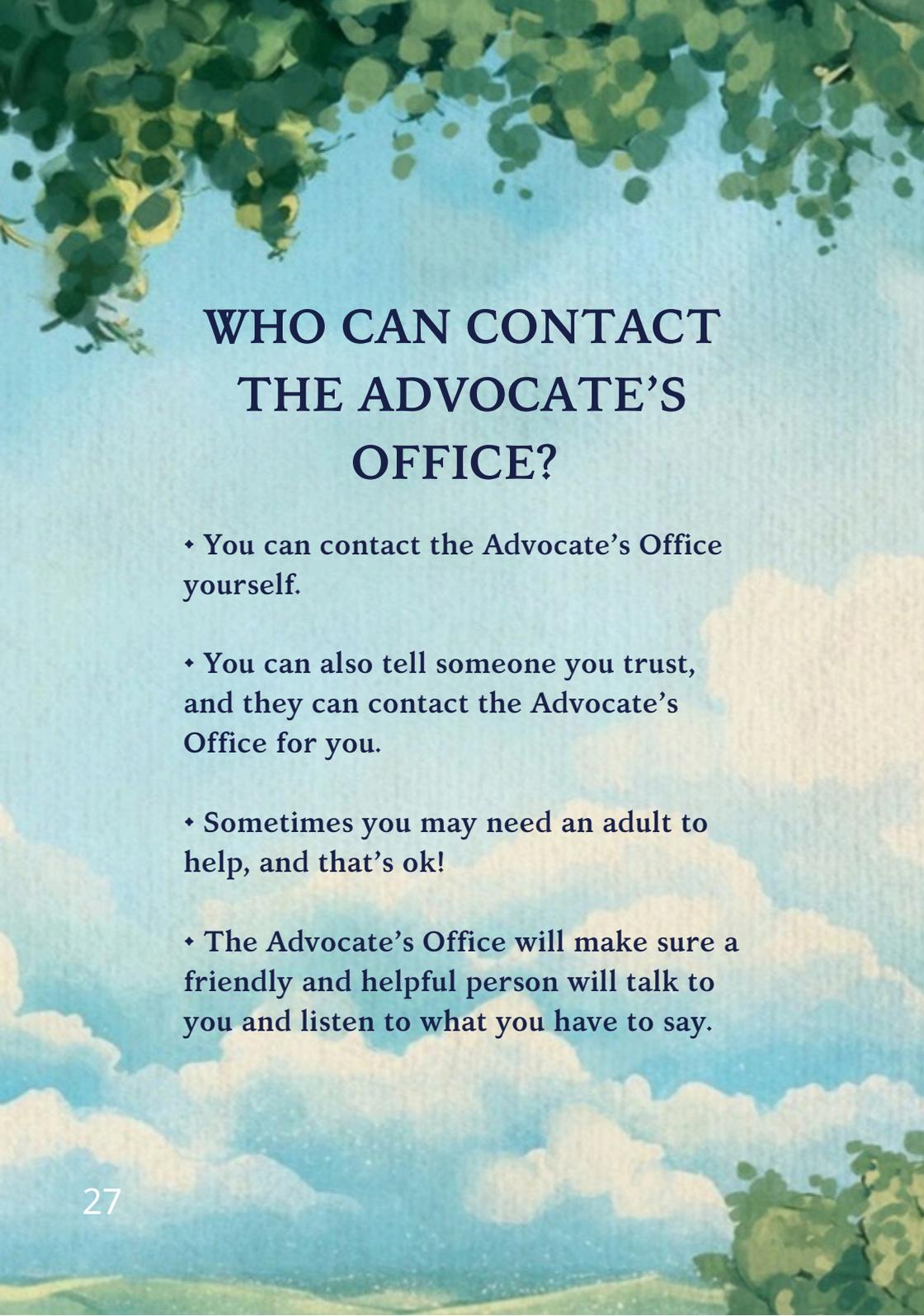


If you ever feel like your rights aren't being respected, you have the power to speak up and get help!

You can talk to someone you trust, like a parent, teacher, or another grownup.

You can also reach out to the Office of the New Brunswick Advocate. They can help you understand your rights and be your voice if you need someone to speak up for you. They're like real-life superheroes who know all about kids' rights and are ready to help you.

Remember, you're not alone, and it's okay to speak up if you feel like something isn't right. There are people who care about making sure you're treated with kindness and respect!



## WHO CAN CONTACT THE ADVOCATE'S OFFICE?

- ♦ You can contact the Advocate's Office yourself.
- ♦ You can also tell someone you trust, and they can contact the Advocate's Office for you.
- ♦ Sometimes you may need an adult to help, and that's ok!
- ♦ The Advocate's Office will make sure a friendly and helpful person will talk to you and listen to what you have to say.

# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CONTACT THE ADVOCATE'S OFFICE?



The Advocate's Office will want to know:

- ♦ Your name and the best way to contact you.
- ♦ What you need help with.
- ♦ What people are involved.
- ♦ How you want them to help.

Depending on the situation, they may:

- ♦ Give you information that will help you solve the situation yourself.
- ♦ Call someone for you, explain your problem, and what you want and need.
- ♦ Meet with everyone involved and try to solve the problem.
- ♦ Investigate and ask that your problem and any similar problems affecting other young people be fixed.

# WAYS TO REACH THE ADVOCATE'S OFFICE

Telephone: 506-453-8653

Toll free: 1-833-453-8653

Email: [advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca](mailto:advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca)

Website: [defenseur-nb-advocate.ca](http://defenseur-nb-advocate.ca)

New message

To **advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca**

Subject **Looking for help**

Hello,

I would like to talk to you about \_\_\_\_\_ (your problem, something you need, or need help with). This is important to me because \_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach me at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone or email).

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

(Your name)

**SAMPLE EMAIL  
YOU CAN USE TO  
CONTACT THE  
ADVOCATE'S  
OFFICE**

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