

Walking Grandma Home

A story of grief, hope, and healing

Written by Nancy Bo Flood

Illustrated by Ellen Shi



INFORMATION FOR

Parents, Caregivers, and Counselors

Every child grieves differently. The mood of a child coping with loss may quickly shift, and then behaviors may switch from withdrawn to angry acting-out or being silly. And inside, children often worry, "Who will die next?" Every feeling is real and needs to be listened to, and honored.

Children often don't want to talk about death, but when they do, be ready to listen. Encourage their comments without inserting your own needs. Grief is not a straight line. It's normal for birthdays, family gatherings, holidays, even seasons to stir up feelings that seemed to be "done."

Time together can be an opportunity for sharing and healing. Creating ways to honor the person's memory can be a positive way of grieving. Here are some suggestions:

1. We honor those we love who have died by "talking story." Sometimes we cry when we share our story; sometimes we laugh. Two ways to explore this with a child are:

- Share a favorite memory. Begin together with "I remember when ..." followed by funny moments or special traditions.
- Create a "memory book" together. Follow the child's lead. Draw pictures. Add photographs. Invite the child to write (or dictate) a few sentences.

2. Make a list of the person's favorites: ice cream, doughnuts, a pet, a song, a baseball

team. The child might enjoy creating a poem from this list.

3. Write a letter to the person who has died: Start with "Dear___," and let the child continue. Be a quiet scribe. One sentence can be enough: "I love you. I miss you."

4. When you are aware of the emotion fueling a behavior, help the child name it: fear, anger, sadness, even guilt. We feel all of these at different times. Talk about what might help when feeling this way. Share what you do.

5. A child might like a special keepsake that helps them feel close and connected to their loved one. When my grandmother died, my father gave me her favorite shawl.

6. Be honest if the child comes to you with questions. Respect their ability to understand, to want to know, and their readiness to talk. Many times we simply need to answer with, "I don't know ... what do you think?"

Throughout, be gentle with yourself. You are giving your child the words and the permission to express their feelings. Not an easy task when you are also grieving.



HONORING YOUR MEMORY

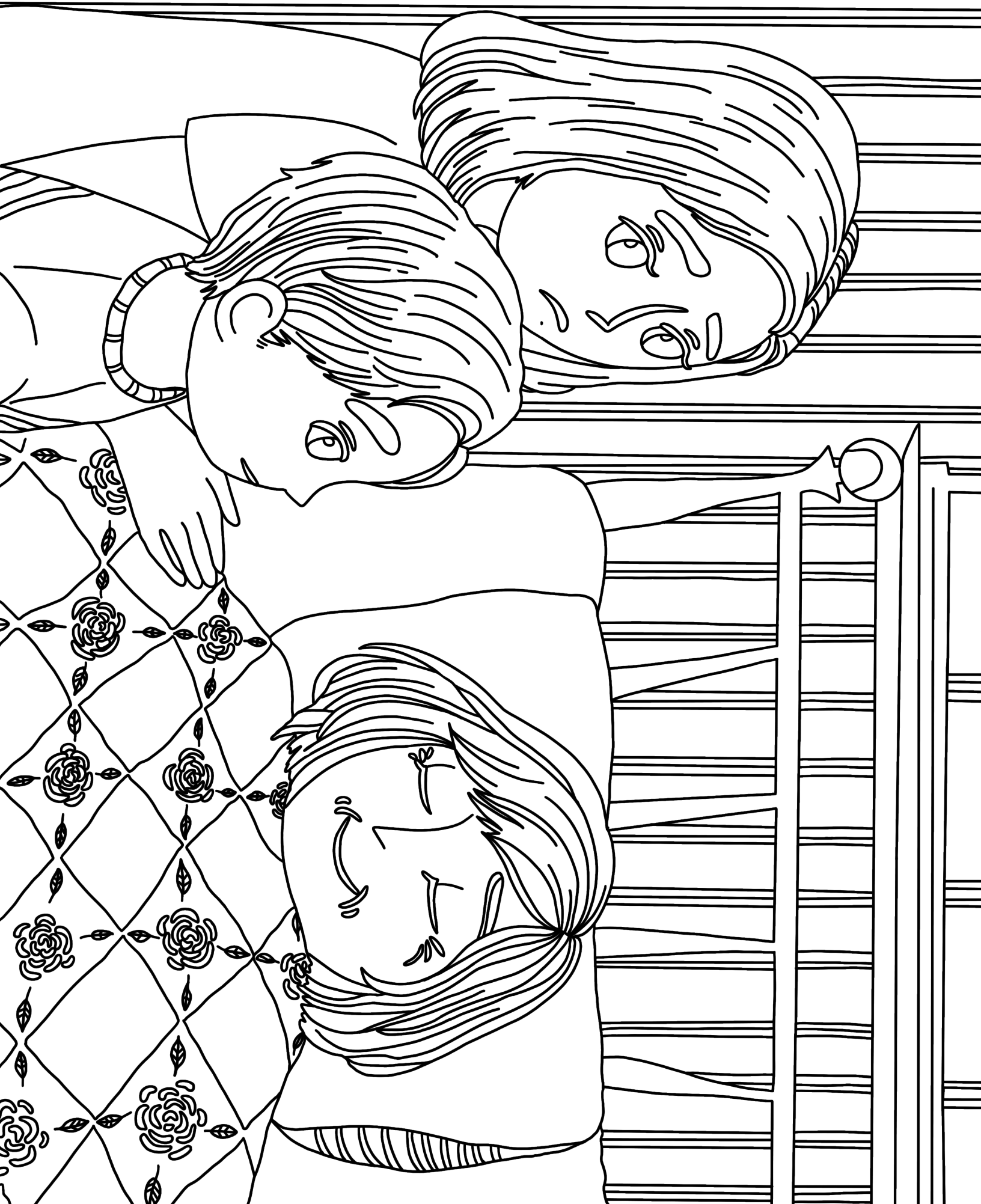
We honor those we love who have died by "talking story." Share a favorite memory.

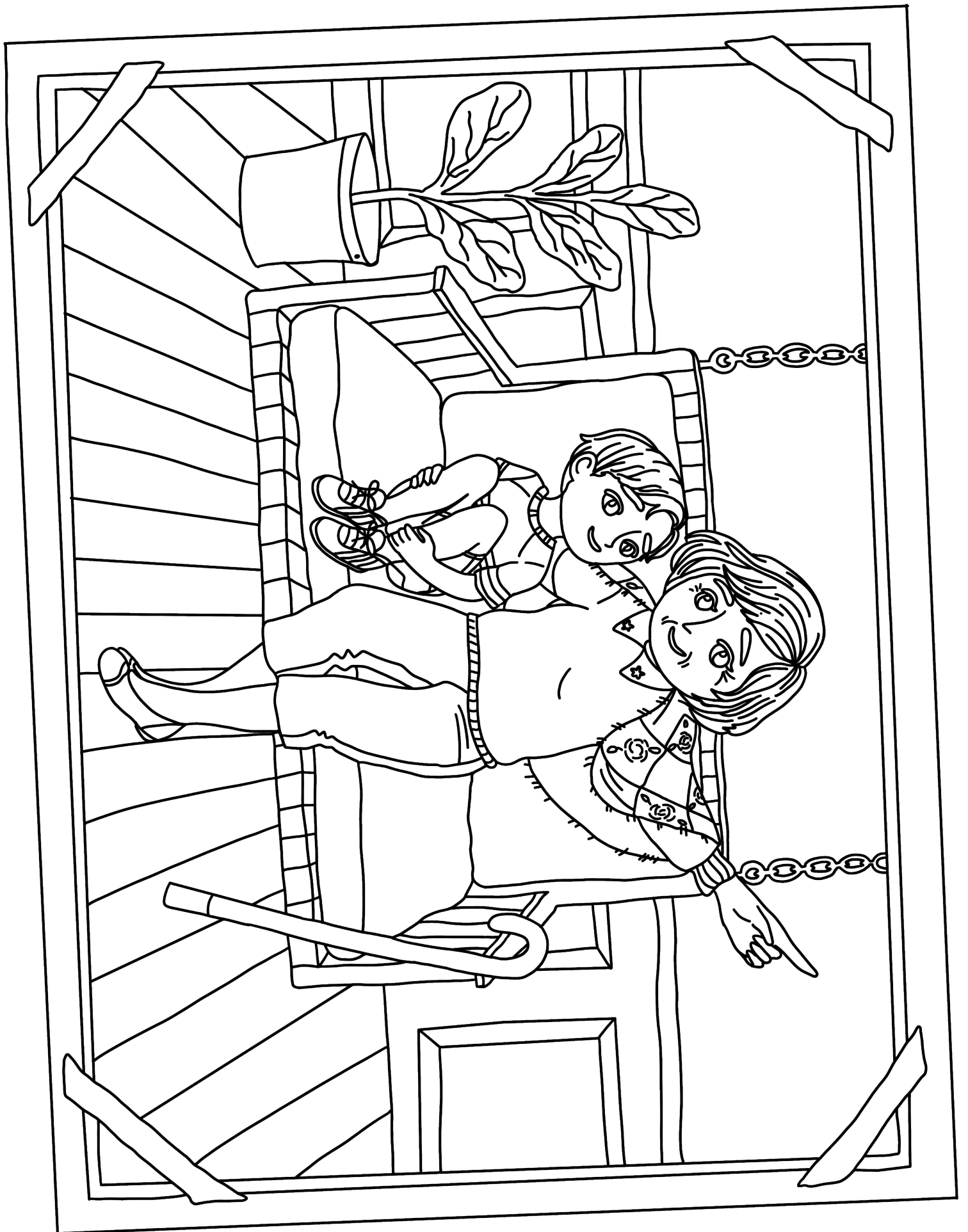
I remember... _____

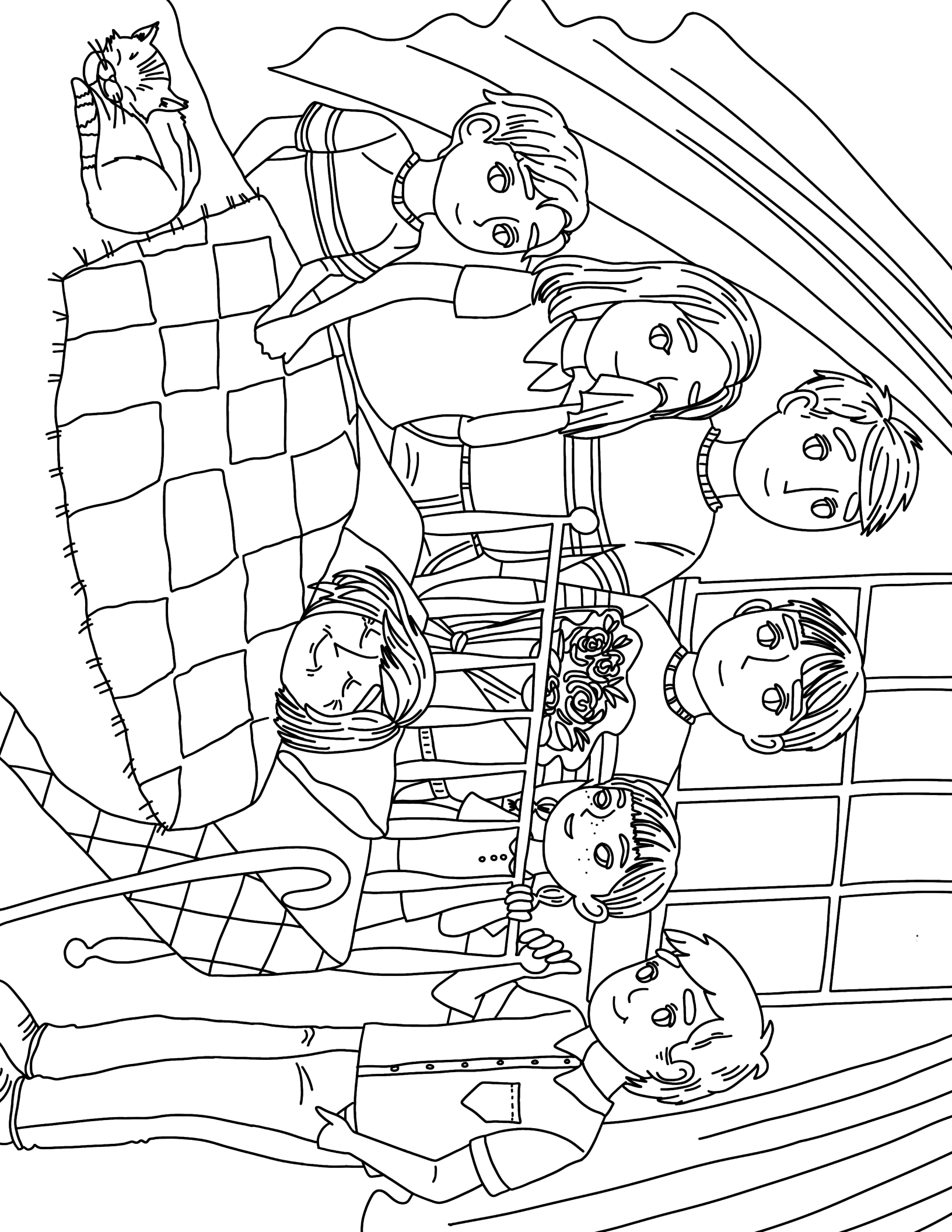
Create a "memory book" with pictures, photos or words.

HONORING YOUR MEMORY

We honor those we love who have died by remembering their picture.
Draw a portrait of your special loved one.









ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NANCY BO FLOOD

Nancy Bo Flood earned her PhD in Experimental Psychology and Child Development at the University of Minnesota and has authored a variety of award-winning books, including a handbook for counseling children and *I Will Dance*, a story based on a real girl named Eva who was born with cerebral palsy. Nancy has

lived on the Pacific island of Saipan, where she worked with teachers and parents to create resources and programs for students with disabilities, and for the past twenty years she has taught on the Navajo Nation and co-founded an early-literacy nonprofit Read at Home, which encourages parents to read regularly with their children. Her books have been recognized with a variety of national and international honors, but always Nancy states, "The best reward is when a child glances at me while reading one of my books and proudly says, 'I am in this book.'"

[Learn More about Nancy at nancyboflood.com.](http://nancyboflood.com)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ELLEN SHI

As a child, Ellen Shi was often found with her nose in between the pages of a book. She was raised in the suburbs of New Jersey and spent many weekends at the library. She went on to get her BFA in Illustration from RISD and works as a designer in California and a freelance children's book illustrator. She thinks children's books are her calling since the excitement of slapping down

a color and the response when sharing illustration makes her feel like she's on top of the world. Ellen is inspired by everyday life, nature, and color, and you can find her listening to audiobooks, binge-watching movies, or enjoying nature.