

Quilly's Sideways Grief

A Story-Based Curriculum About Love And Loss

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This story is dedicated to the bond
I continue to share with Grandma Doreen.
I talk to her still as I search the stars in the night sky or dance along
on a blue-sky day with the delicate flight of the Monarch butterfly.

Thank you, Jeff, for giving me solitude in my sandbox.
And my sweet Allie Lou, thank you for showing me how to love.



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A look down the sidewalk made him bristle. As Quilly spied his porcupine friends walking toward his house, a chill began sliding down his back. His quills slowly lifted, making a prickly pathway from his head to his toes.

“I don’t get it,” he said to the others. “Quilly has been acting weird since his grandpa died. One minute, we’re playing basketball. The next minute, he wants to go home!”



"I know what it's like to feel sad, then glad,
then mad. And, well, all sorts of ways!" Barby said.

"Yeah, that is kind of what happens to me,"
Quilly said in a tired tone. "But mostly, I drag
around these heavy, drooping quills."



"I'm all mixed up," Quilly said as he wiped his tears and blew his nose.

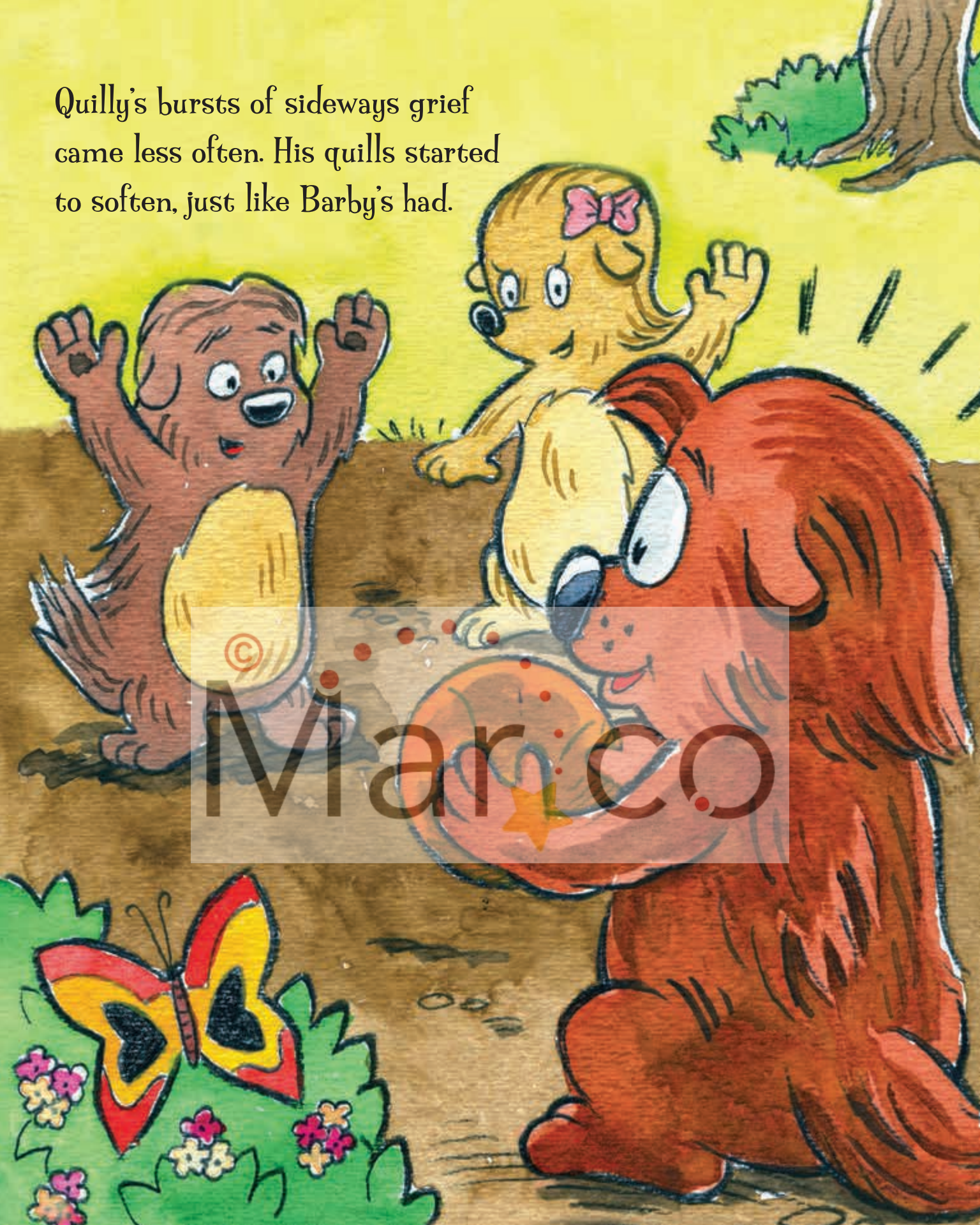
"It sounds like you miss your grandpa very much," said Barby. "I know getting used to life without him isn't easy."





“It was hard to talk about my grandma at first, because I missed her so much. But after a while, I noticed that my quills got lighter and softer when I shared my feelings,” Barby explained.

Quilly's bursts of sideways grief
came less often. His quills started
to soften, just like Barby's had.





Suggestions For Using This Book

Children's Concerns About Death And Grief

Children's concerns about death and grief take three forms:

1. Fear of being abandoned: "Who will take care of me if my parent dies?" This fear is strongest if one parent has already died.
2. Fear of their own mortality: "Will I die, too?"
3. Assuming responsibility for the death: "Did I cause it? Was it my fault?"

Children need to feel safe, secure, and confident that despite the death and subsequent feelings of grief, the family will be OK. They need to know that life does go on and that the pain will subside.

Teachers often have a unique vantage point for close, daily observation of a grieving child. They may notice grief-related behavioral nuances that grieving parents overlook or misinterpret. Teachers' recognition and validation of a child's loss is an important part of the healing process.

Developmental stage and chronological age influence how a child may conceptualize death and, ultimately, move through the grieving process.

- Preschoolers usually see death as reversible and temporary, as something that happens to other people.
- Between the ages of six and eight, children begin to realize that death is permanent, but not necessarily something that can happen to them. During this stage, children may associate death with a monster or some other frightening personification and may have death-related nightmares.
- From the age of eight through adolescence, children begin to comprehend that death is irreversible and that, like all living things, they will die some day. Teenagers develop their own philosophy about death.

Using *Quilly's Sideways Grief* With Grieving Children

Story:

The story illustrates how sharing feelings can help us heal when someone we love has died. Quilly and Barby illustrate the way that friendship helps us cope with grief and promotes healing. Following the sudden death of Quilly's grandfather, the two porcupine friends learn that bottling up feelings can lead to the "sideways" expression of emotions that is unhealthy and can be hurt-