Beyond Words
empowering people through pictures

Beating the Virus

illustrated by Lucy Bergonzi

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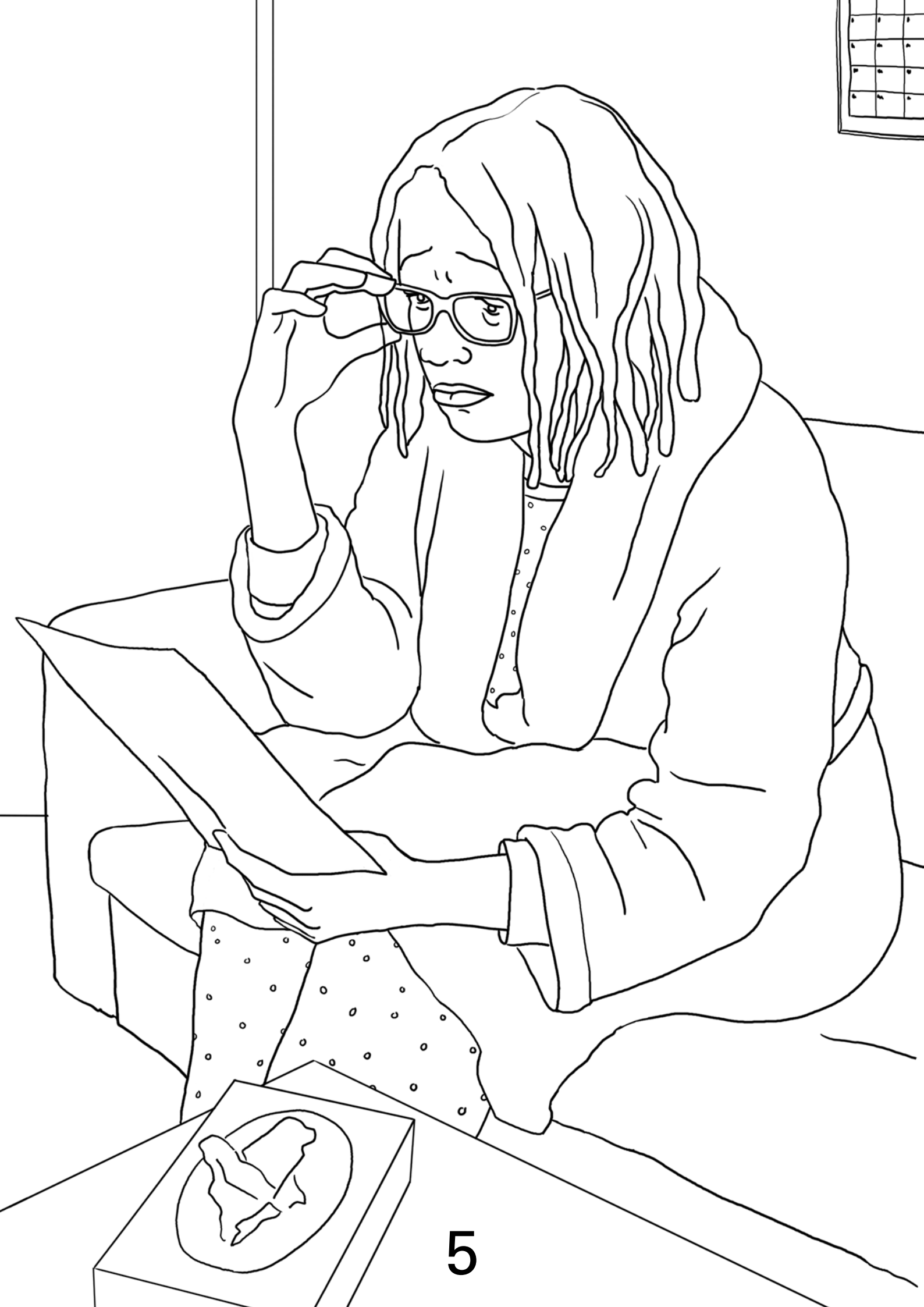

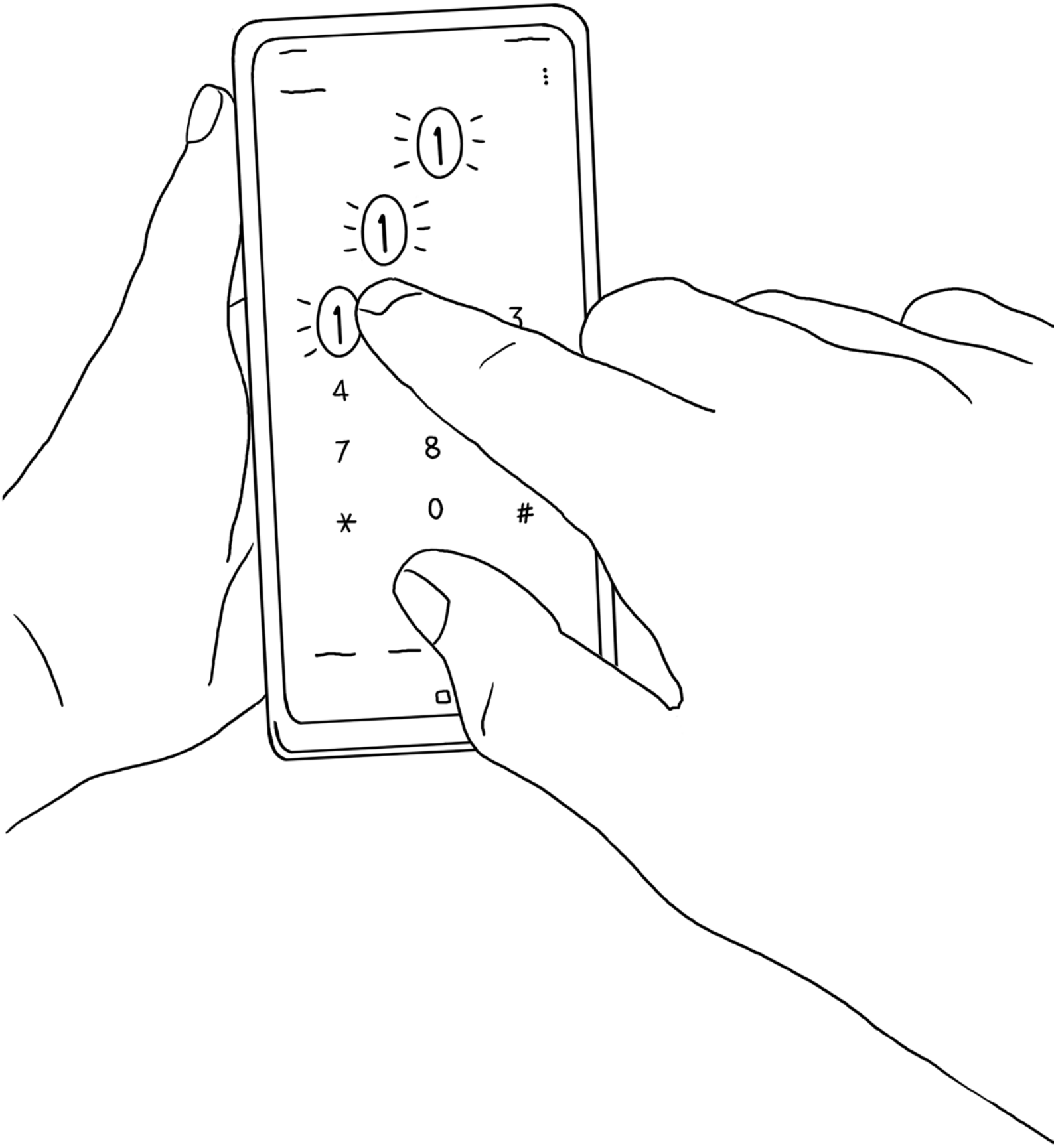
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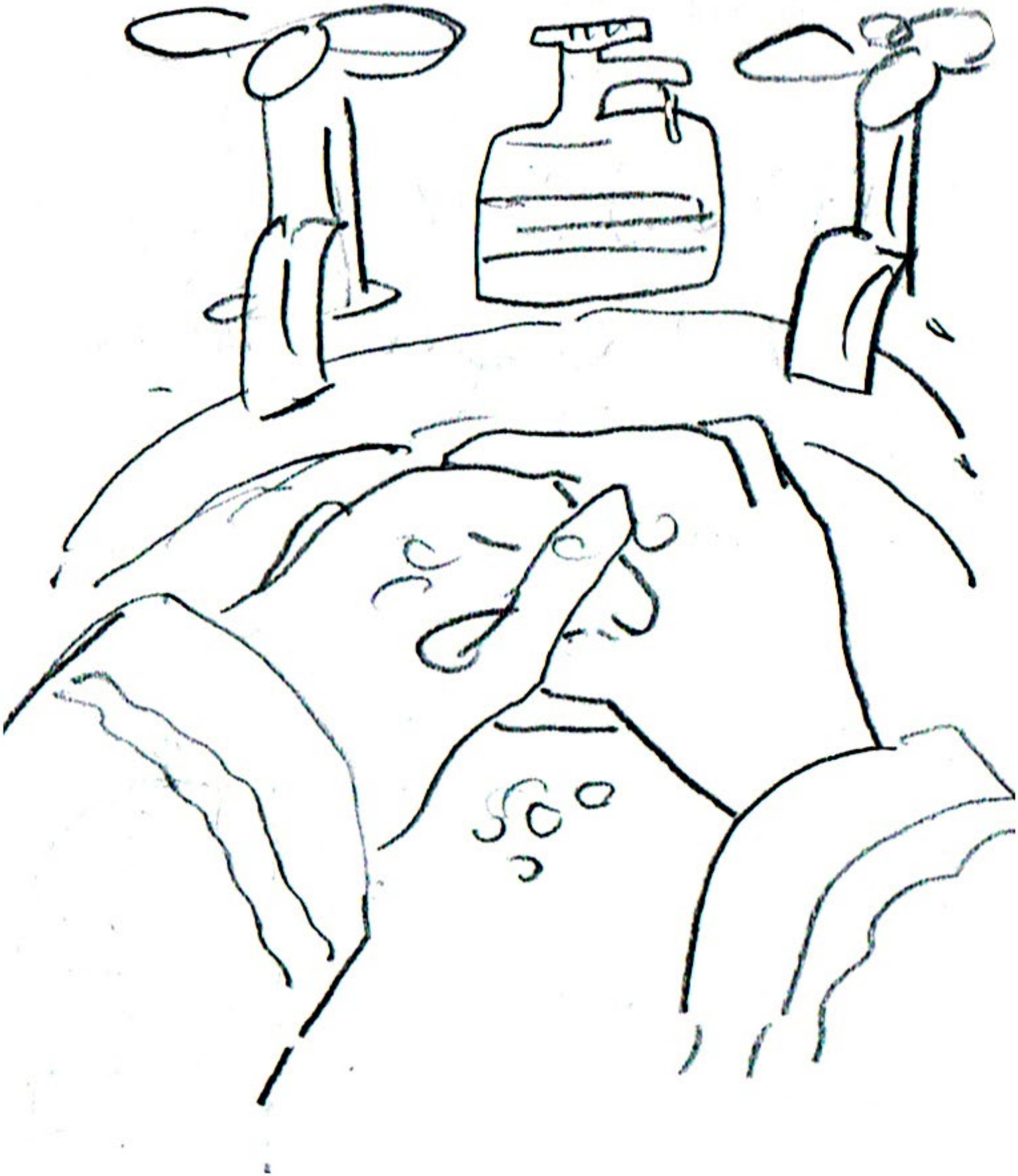

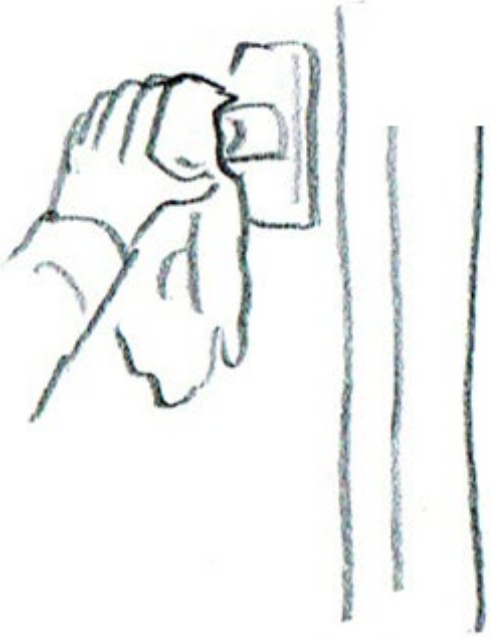

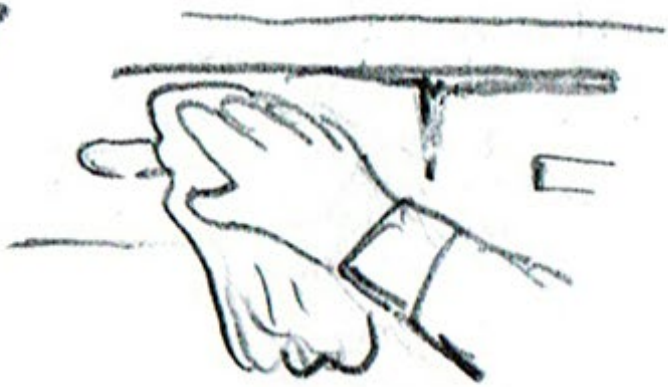

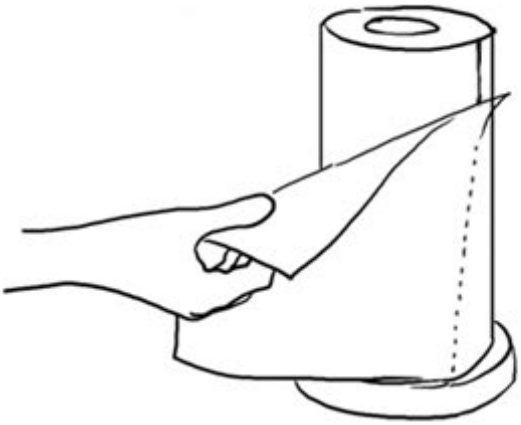

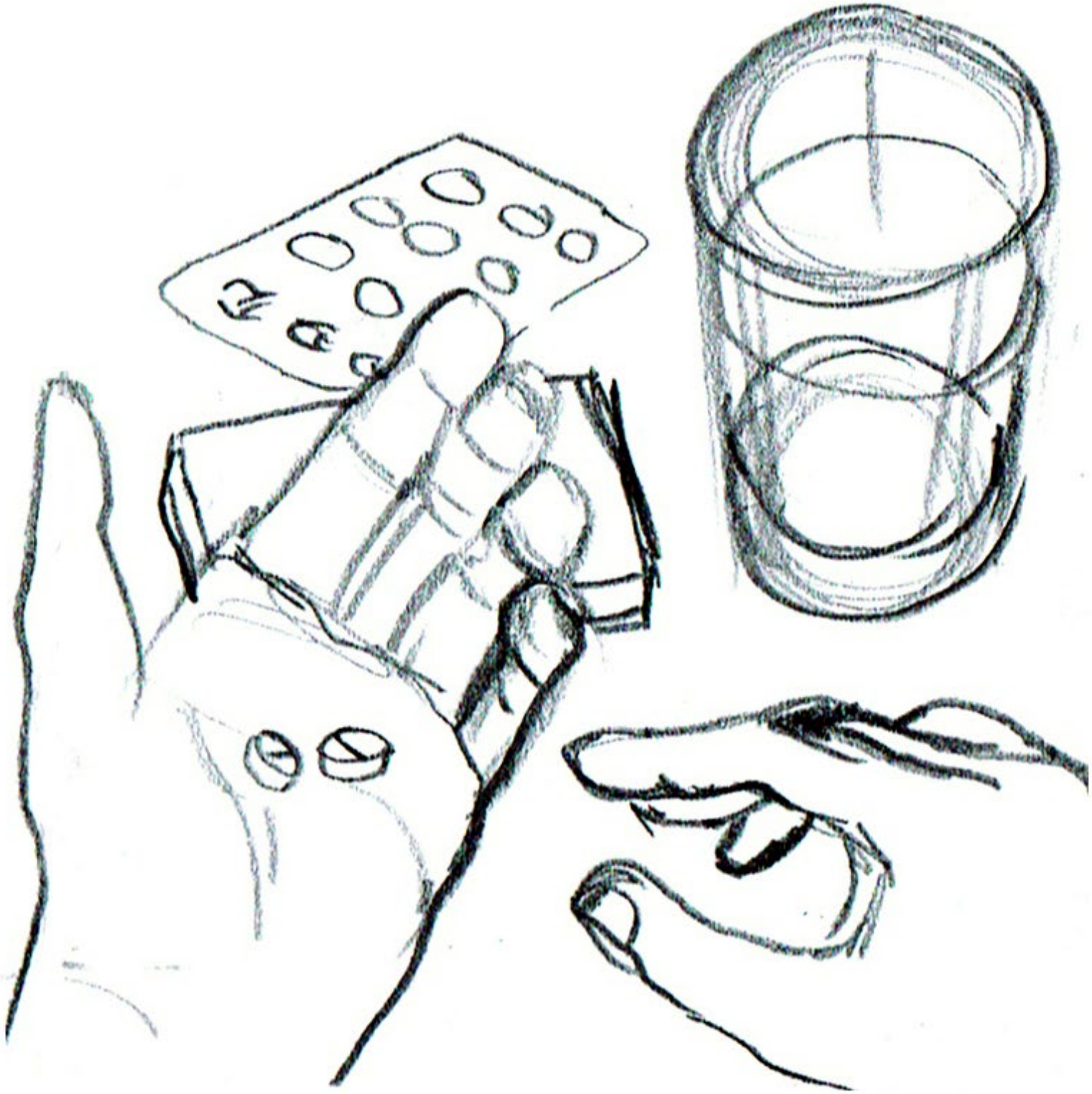

Beating the Virus – a story

This story is about a woman we call Kali and a man we call Stefan who helps her. Kali and Stefan are two much-loved characters from another wordless story, Belonging, but you can choose whatever names you would like to call them. In this story, Stefan could be Kali's friend, but he could be her carer/ support worker or a family member. You can decide.

Kali is living alone and feels scared when she gets ill, especially because of all the things on TV about the virus and about people going to hospital. She looks at the leaflet she was given about the virus, but she doesn't understand it. Just like many other people, she finds it hard to understand the words. She doesn't know what's best to do, and she doesn't know how to get online, but there is a telephone number on the leaflet. The trouble is that it might take a long time for anyone to answer. (Links to easy read leaflets about the Coronavirus can be found under **Useful resources** and will be kept up to date.)

In this story, Kali is the one who is ill, and Stefan is keeping well. The story shows how careful Stefan is being, so he doesn't catch the virus. He keeps several steps away from Kali – it's called social distancing! He washes his hands when he arrives. He puts the shopping away and then he wipes down the kitchen surfaces and the door handles with disinfectant. He washes his hands well for 20 seconds and dries them on kitchen paper and throws it in the bin. Next time he comes he will stay outside and just deliver her shopping.

Kali doesn't need help with her personal care. If she did, then Stefan would need to wear disposable gloves and a face mask.

Getting help if you are unwell

So, what should Kali do? She mustn't go to the doctor's surgery! Her Mum told her that!

But Kali may not know when to call the GP. She may not know how ill she has to be before asking for help. **But it's OK to call 111 if you are not sure and if you can't get online.**

When she calls 111, Kali can tell them that she has a learning disability. Hopefully she has had her annual health check and can explain what her particular health needs are. They will ask Kali if she has underlying health conditions such as diabetes.

Kali probably doesn't have a thermometer, but she can tell them she feels very hot. They will tell her that a carer, family or friend needs to keep an eye on her and make sure she calls 111 again if she is getting worse.

They will advise Kali how to look after herself. They will tell her to drink lots of water and sugary drinks. This is because, if she doesn't drink enough, she may be at risk of getting sepsis. This is a serious infection that can make the body stop working (with organ failure) and always needs urgent hospital treatment.

They will suggest she takes paracetamol. They may check if she is taking any treatment that suppresses her immunity and advise her to talk to her doctor about whether to stop taking it. This is because she needs a strong immune system to fight the infection.

If she takes a turn for the worse or finds it hard to breathe, Kali must call 111 again. They will make sure she gets the help she needs, and if she is really ill, they will arrange for an ambulance to take her to hospital, like in the pictures below.

*These pictures were taken from Going into Hospital. All the pictures from this story can be found in the **BW Story App** (see App Store/ Google Play Store).*

What should the local area response be?

Local service providers may need advice about whether and when to continue or suspend their usual activities, and to rethink how they provide support. They will need to re-focus their staff on checking that the people they support have got everything they need to keep safe. They need to make plans to provide anyone receiving personal care with protective equipment for their carers to wear when it becomes available.

In this story, Kali may be in supported living, or living in an independent tenancy. She still needs someone to keep an eye on her. Understanding how to keep safe may be difficult for Kali and her peers. The government advice is difficult to understand. Their usual support and everyday activities have been stopped, and they don't understand why they can't go out. "What happened to making my own choices?" they might reasonably ask! How can people who care about Kali keep her mentally well as well as physically safe?

Everyone will have heard that some people have died after getting the virus. The estimate is that as many as 1 in 100 people who get ill may die. This means that some people with learning disabilities may die, or some of their family members or carers may die.

It's a good idea to know how to talk about death and dying and to be prepared. Our stories on grief and bereavement can help support these conversations: When Somebody Dies, When Dad Died, When Mum Died and Am I Going to Die?.

About Books Beyond Words

There are 60 wordless (and therefore non-language dependent) stories in the Books Beyond Words series, all co-created with people with learning disabilities and autistic people. All the stories are available as paperbacks and eBooks via the Beyond Words website: www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk.

The stories have also been broken down into 400 shorter, searchable snippets in the **BW Story App** designed for smartphones and tablets. You can download a free version (with a few sample short stories) from the App Store (Apple/iOS devices) or the Google Play Store (Android devices).

If you are new to Books Beyond Words, you can learn how to get the best out of the stories in our hour-long introductory e-learning module or by following our suggestions below. Find out more about e-learning and how to subscribe via our website: www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/elearning/foundation-module.

How to read this book

This is a story for people who find pictures easier to understand than words. It is not necessary to be able to read any words at all.

1. Some people are not used to reading books. Start at the beginning and read the story in each picture. Encourage the reader to turn the pages at their own pace.

2. Whether you are reading the book with one person or even online with a group, encourage them to tell the story in their own words. You will discover what each person thinks are happening, what they already know, and how they feel. You may think something different is happening in the pictures yourself, but that doesn't matter. Wait to see if their ideas change as the story develops. Watch, wait and wonder.

3. It can help to prompt the people you are supporting, gradually going deeper into the meaning, for example:
   - I wonder who that is?
   - I wonder what is happening?
   - What is he or she doing now?
   - I wonder how he or she is feeling?
   - Do you feel like that? Has it happened to you/ your friend/ your family?

4. You don't have to read the whole story in one sitting. Allow people enough time to follow the pictures at their own pace.

5. Some people will not be able to follow the story, but they may be able to understand some of the pictures. Stay a little longer with the pictures that interest them.

A Suggested Storyline

1. Kali lives alone and she is not feeling well.
2. She is feverish and feels really ill.
3. Kali just keeps coughing. It's a horrid dry cough. She coughs into her elbow or a tissue and throws the tissues in the bin.
4. She goes to the toilet and her urine (wee) is very dark.
5. She looks at the leaflet about Coronavirus, but she doesn't understand it.
6. She rings NHS 111.
7. The person she talks to says she must stay at home, drink lots and take paracetamol. But not more than four times a day.
8. She washes her hands well – she watches a fun video to learn how to do it. (You can watch one, here: https://vimeo.com/134952598)
9. She phones her friend, Stefan and says she is not well. She asks him to get some shopping for her including paracetamol if he can buy any – lots of shops have run out.
10. Stefan comes and Kali opens the door. She holds a tissue over her mouth – she doesn't want Stefan to catch her illness.
11. Stefan puts on a face mask (if he has one) and puts everything away: some food, such as grapes, bread and milk, and other useful things, including hand sanitiser, an antibacterial surface spray, paracetamol, kitchen towel and paper tissues. They stand three steps away from each other. It feels very strange!
12. He tells Kali it's important to drink lots, so she has a drink and takes the paracetamol.
13. He puts on some disposable gloves, sprays and wipes the kitchen surfaces and the door handles. He washes his hands well and uses the hand gel.
14. Stefan puts the grapes and some drinks next to Kali, who relaxes on the sofa. Then he says goodbye to Kali and leaves.
15. Kali has a drink and some grapes, but she isn't hungry.

16. She fell asleep on the sofa. Now it's dark, and she wakes up coughing again!

17. She brushes her teeth and gets ready for bed.

18. Kali takes some more paracetamol with water.

19. Now, Kali goes to bed. She has water beside the bed and some tissues.

20. Next morning, she is still feverish.

21. The days pass. Now Kali is looking a bit brighter. She gets a fresh drink of juice.

22. Stefan brings her some microwave meals, tins of soup, milk and fruit – he doesn't come in.

23. Kali is gradually getting better and enjoying her food.

24. Her urine is a better, paler colour as well. That's good – it means she is drinking enough.

25. Kali has been ill for a whole week! Each day she marked it on the calendar. The calendar shows that seven days have been marked off.

26. Then one day Kali rings Stefan to ask if they can go for a walk. She says they can walk a few steps apart – just to be safe!

Useful resources

Help using NHS 111
NHS England has produced a video to help people with a learning disability, autism or both, to use the NHS 111 service: www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/about/resources/help-for-people-with-a-learning-disability-autism-or-both-to-use-nhs-111/

The Hand Washing Rap
A fun video produced by the Purple All Stars demonstrating good handwashing:
https://vimeo.com/134952598

'Hand Washing Tips for People With Sensory Difficulties'
Hand washing is crucial in reducing the risk of contracting the Coronavirus (COVID-19), but people with difficulties with sensory integration or sensory processing can experience aversion to the smells, images, sounds and the tactile sensations of hand washing; have problems with balance, tone or coordinating their hand movements; or not understand the step-by-step process of hand washing.
Any kind of soap is really good at killing the virus. People can use whichever soap they find easiest, and some people may find an alcohol-based hand gel best. This article has more suggestions for encouraging and improving hand washing:
https://sensoryintegration.org.uk/News/8821506

Easy read resources on the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

- **Mencap** has produced an easy read leaflet, available to download from their website:
  www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus
- **Inclusion North** has produced an easy read leaflet, along with an audio copy. Both can be accessed via their website:
  www.inclusionnorth.org/coronavirus-easy-read-information
- **Photosymbols** have created some posters too:
  www.photosymbols.com/blogs/news/coronavirus

Keeping Informed and In Touch during Coronavirus
Learning Disability England has dedicated a space on their website to sharing information and resources about the virus and what you can to do to stay safe and well, and how people are staying connected and finding solutions:
www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk/what-we-do/keeping-informed-and-in-touch-during-coronavirus/

‘Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable adults’
Official guidance produced by Public Health England on limiting social interaction to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults