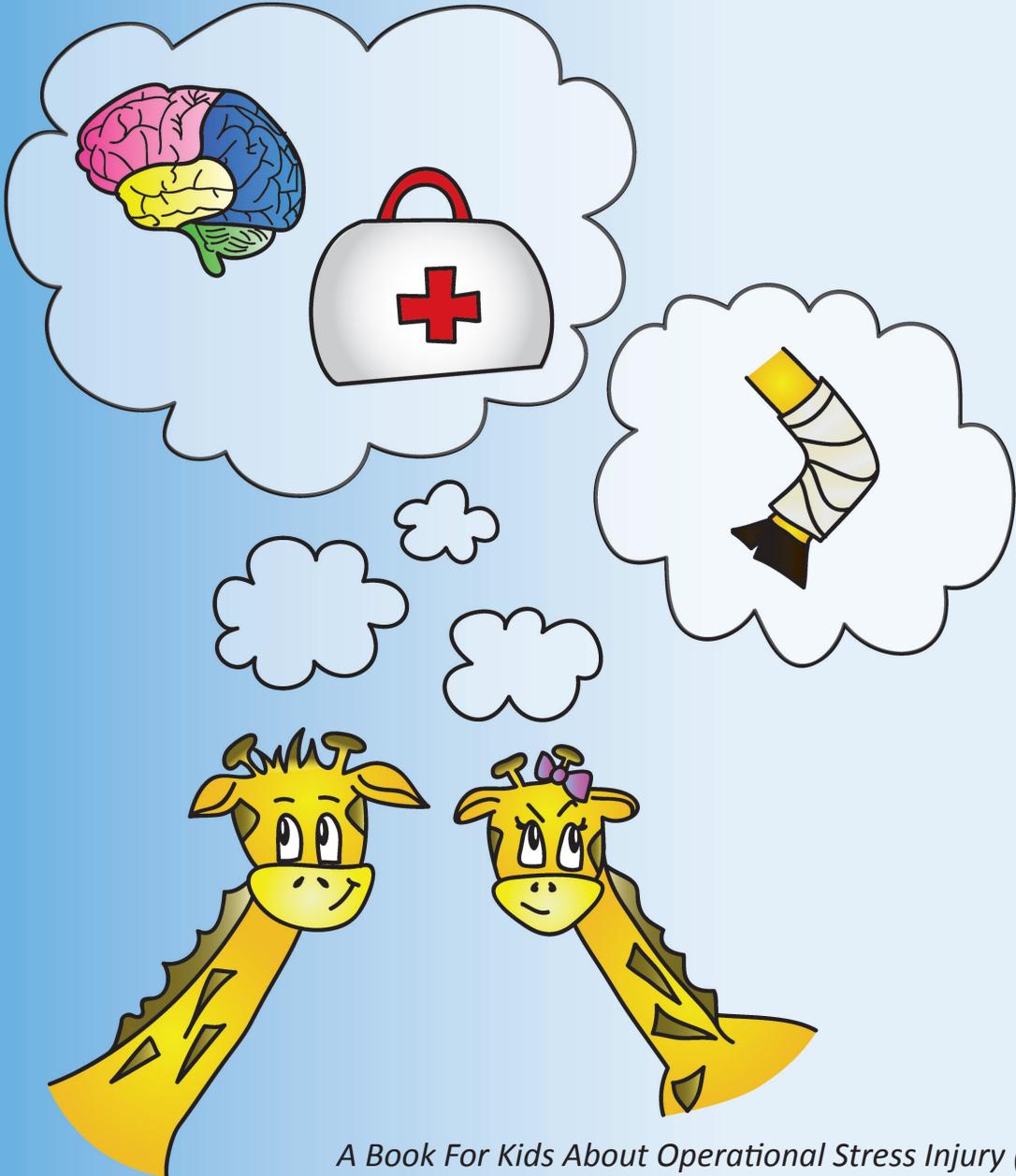


Leo and Lily Don't Understand What Is Wrong With Their Dad!



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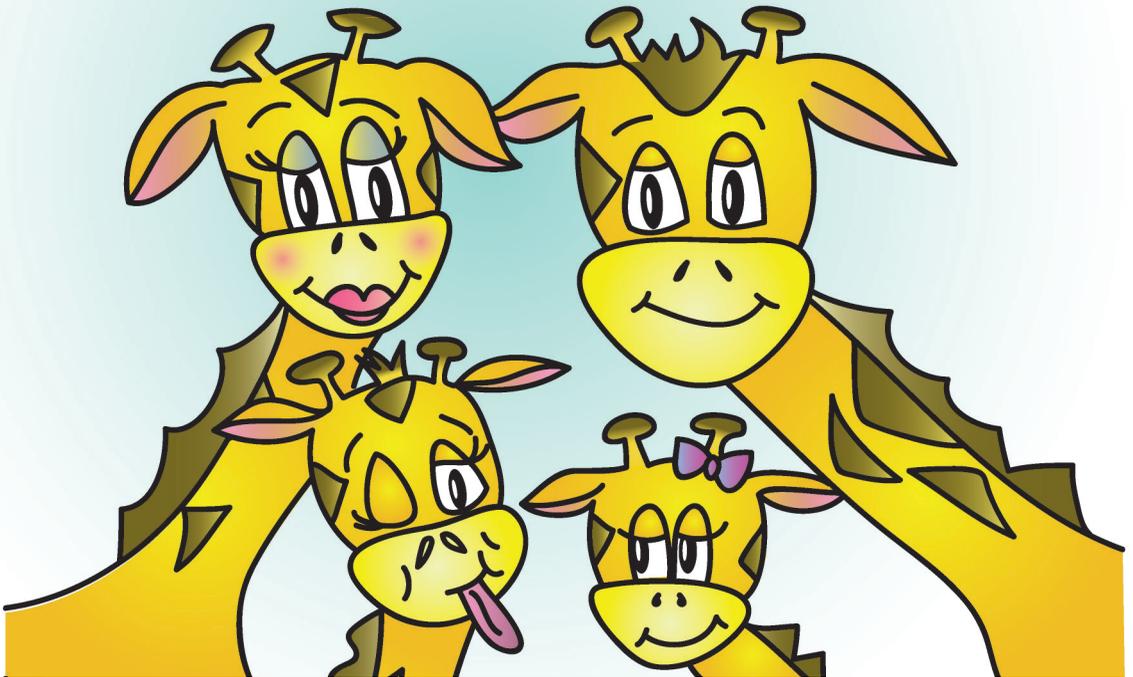
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Preface:

Being a parent means sometimes having to talk about difficult issues with our children.

I hope that this story helps break the silence surrounding OSIs and gives you and your children the chance to spend some quality time.

“Together to Better Understand”



Leo and his sister Lily are just two regular kids.

Sometimes they are very well-behaved,
and sometimes they act like two little monkeys.

DAD and MOM love them a lot.

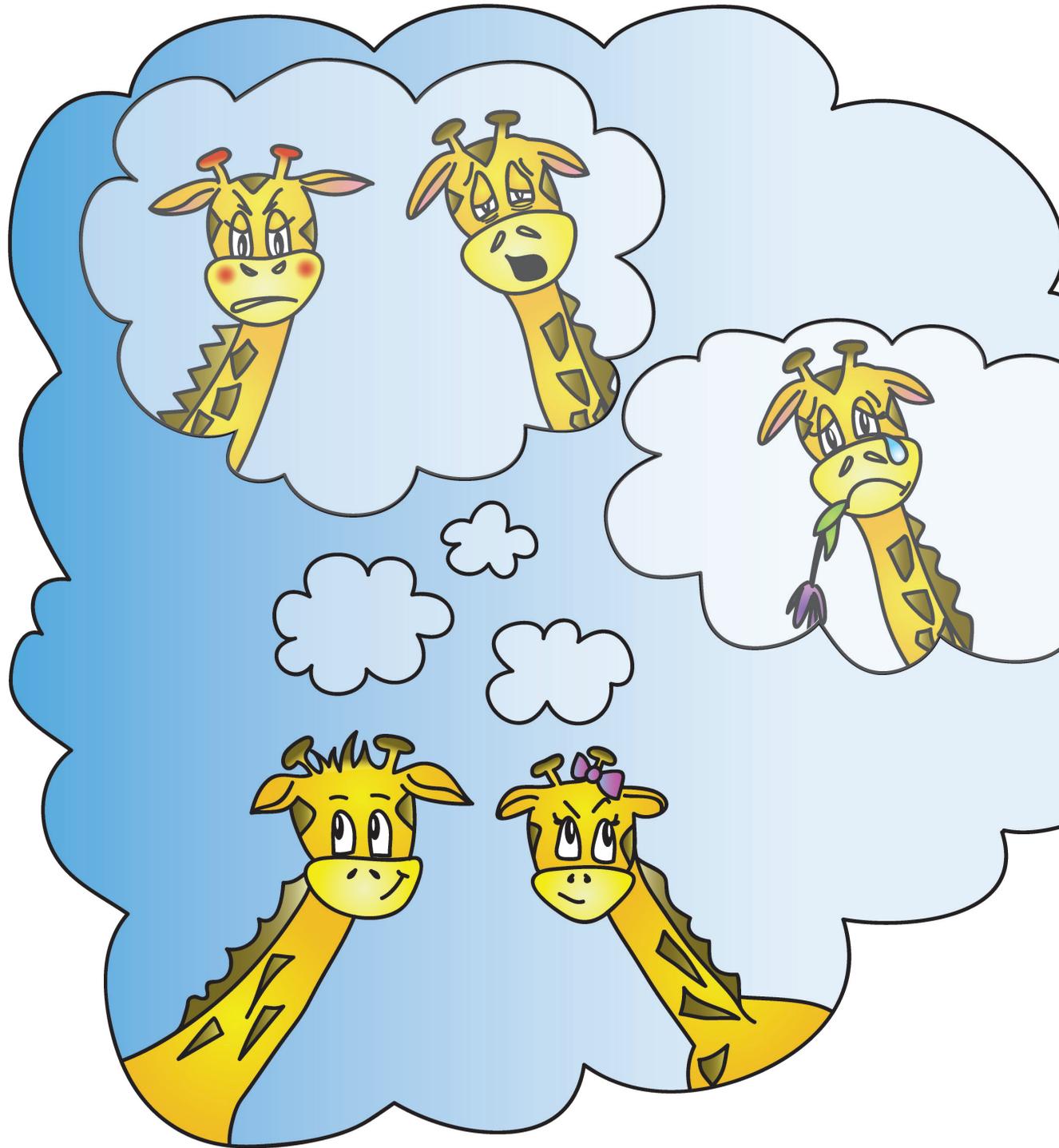


Leo and Lily's dad is a soldier.
His job is to defend and help people.

Sometimes, their dad has to go away
for long periods of time for his job.

Leo and Lily's dad is very brave.

His family is so proud of him.





But Leo and Lily don't always understand why their dad reacts the way he does.

Some days he seems sad. Sometimes he gets tired and sleeps on the couch. Other times he gets mad and yells. There are even some days when he doesn't want to play with them.

Often, when mom asks him to go shopping with them, he says that he just wants to stay home alone.

Sometimes Leo and Lily are sad and angry that their dad doesn't want to play with them. They are worried about him.

Leo and Lily really love their dad.

One summer's day, while out enjoying the sunshine, Leo and Lily sit on a bench in the garden and ask themselves:

"Did we do something wrong?"

"Maybe we're not well-behaved enough?"

"Maybe we make too much noise?"

So Leo and Lily decide to go to Good Manners School to learn how to be well behaved. In a flash, their bags are packed, ready for their long trip. They hop on the school bus, on their way to Good Manners School.





When they arrive, Leo and Lily take their suitcases and go to Marna's office. Marna is the principal of Good Manners School.

He asks them why they are there.

Leo and Lily tell him that they want to learn how to be well behaved and act like big kids. That way, they can help their parents so that their dad won't get angry as much and will smile again.

Principal Marna thinks for a second and tells them:

“Your dad is injured. It’s not your fault if he sometimes gets angry, sad or tired, or doesn’t feel like playing with you.”

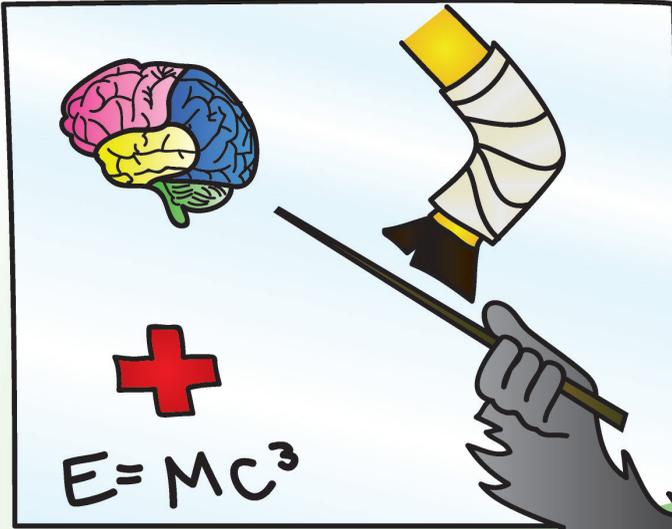
Your dad loves you a lot.

“Injured?” ask Leo and Lily. “But when Leo hurt his leg, he got a cast. And all the kids at daycare drew pictures on it!”

“My dad isn’t hurt.”

“It’s normal that you don’t understand. What’s hard is that we can’t see your dad’s injury with our eyes. His injury is in his brain. It’s called a psychological injury or, as the specialists call it, an operational stress injury or OSI.”

**Leo and Lily’s dad is injured,
but we can’t see the injury with our eyes.**



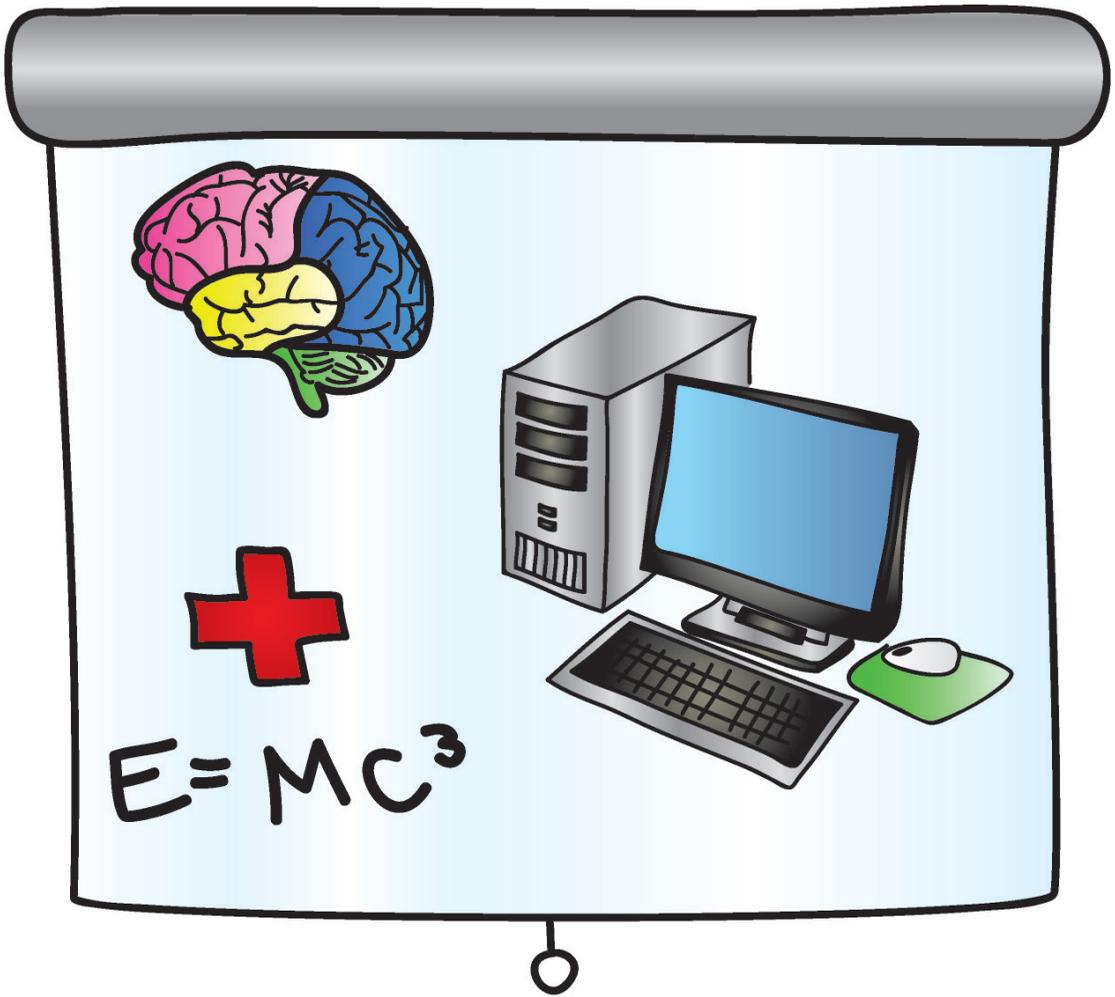
So Leo and Lily ask Principal Marna:

“Where is our brain?”

“Our brain is inside our head. That’s why you wear a helmet when you ride your bike, to protect your brain.”

“What does our brain do?”

“Our brain is the control centre of our body. It’s like a big computer that sends messages to our body telling it to move, speak, eat, breathe, laugh, listen, and lots of other things.”



“Our brain also controls our emotions, like anger, happiness, and sadness. For your dad, the programs in his brain aren’t working very well because of his injury. Sometimes the messages sent to the brain get mixed up. That’s why your dad gets mad or feels sad sometimes.”

“Tell me, Leo, do you sometimes get really mad and can’t calm down?”

“Yes, sometimes, especially when I’m really tired.”



“Well, it’s the same for your dad. When it happens, often the best thing to do is to go somewhere to calm down or relax.”

“And you, Lily, have you ever had a cold?”

“Yes. My nose was running, my head hurt, I couldn’t sleep, and I even had a fever. I was tired and I didn’t want to play with Leo.”



“It’s the same for your dad. For example, when he hasn’t gotten a good night’s sleep and is tired, he can get angry or feel sad. These are signs of his injury.”

**Even if your dad yells sometimes,
it’s not your fault.
Your dad REALLY LOVES YOU.**

Leo, worried, asks Principal Marna:

“Can you catch his injury, like a cold? Is it our fault our dad is hurt?”

Principal Marna answers:

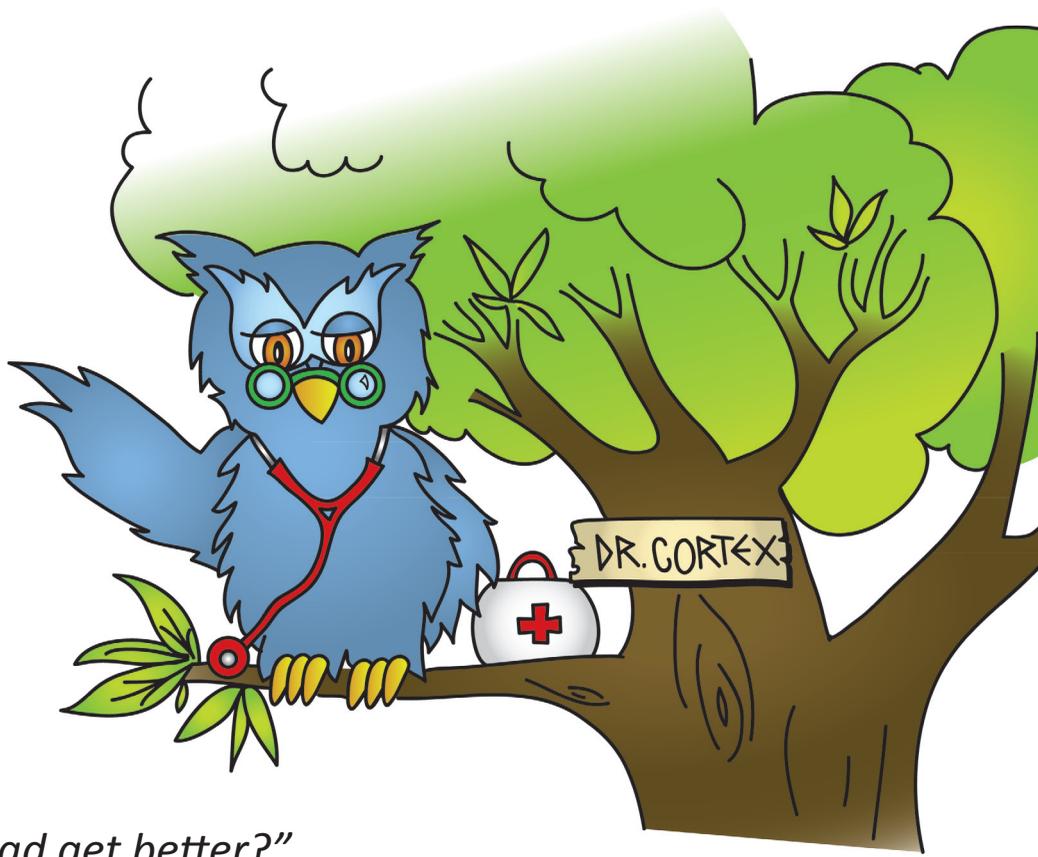
“You can’t catch that type of injury like you do a cold. When you broke your leg, Leo, was it Lily’s fault?”

“No. I fell all by myself, when I was running.”

“And did Lily catch your injury? No, she didn’t break her leg.”

“Your dad is hurt because he saw some tough things on his mission.”

It’s not your fault.



“Will our dad get better?”

“When you broke your leg, you needed time to heal and walk again. Your dad needs time to get better, too, but there are doctors who can help him. Sometimes, the doctors prescribe medicine to help the brain work better.”

**It may take some time
before your dad gets better.
There are adults around to help him.**

Leo's and Lily's stomachs start rumbling. They're hungry. Principal Marna invites them to the kitchen for a delicious meal.

On the menu: French fries, sausage and broccoli, served in a mayonnaise and ketchup sauce. For desert: chocolate cake with vanilla frosting and topped with pink and blue sprinkles.

Yummy!





With their little bellies full, Leo exclaims:

“But, if our dad is injured and it’s not our fault, we can go home! We don’t need to stay at Good Manners School anymore!”

“You’re right!” says Principal Marna. “You can go home and laugh and play and enjoy your vacation.”

**Even though dad is injured,
you can be happy and play.**

Before getting back on the school bus to return home, Lily shyly asks Principal Marna:

“Are we the only children whose dad has a brain injury?”

“No. You’re not alone. Other children have a dad or mom with the same injury. If you have more questions, you can always ask your parents. They are there for you.”

**Your dad and mom love you a lot
and are proud of you.**



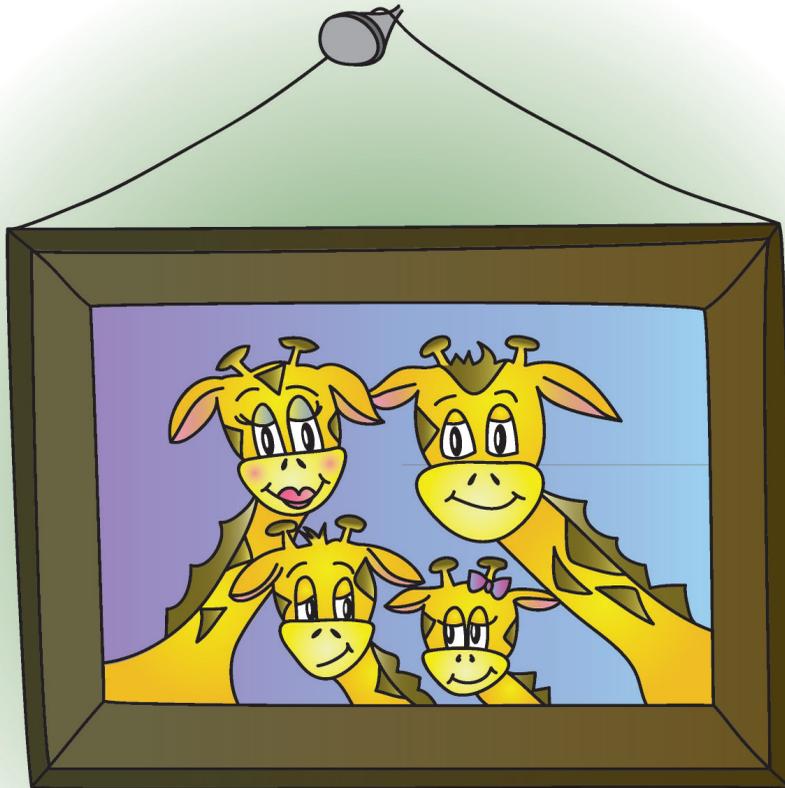
Reassured, Leo and Lily get back on the school bus:

“Thank you, Principal Marna! Now we understand better.”

Back in their garden, Leo and Lily start playing and laughing. Dad and Mom watch them through the window and are very happy to see their two children having so much fun.

The seasons change, and although Dad still has his injury he's getting much better. Now, the family can do things together.

Now, together we understand.



For Parents

Definition:

OSI (operational stress injury): any persistent psychological difficulty resulting from operational duties performed while serving in the Canadian Forces. The term OSI describes a host of problems, including anxiety, major depression, alcohol or substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Source: OSISS

Other terms:

PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)

TSPT (trouble de stress post-traumatique)

ESPT (état de stress post-traumatique)

SSPT (syndrome de stress post-traumatique)

Questions to help start a discussion with your child after reading Leo and Lily Don't Understand What Is Wrong With Their Dad!

What did you understand from the story?

Is there something in the story you didn't understand?

Do you think Leo and Lily are the only ones in that type of situation?

Do you feel like you can sometimes relate to what Leo and Lily are going through?

What do you understand about Leo and Lily's dad's injury? What is the injury called?

Where is the injury located?

Where is the brain? What does the brain do?

What are the signs of their dad's OSI?

And your own dad or mom?

Is it Leo and Lily's fault that their dad is injured?

Is it your fault that your dad or mom has those reactions?

Do you sometimes feel like Leo and Lily (angry, sad, worried)?

How do you feel when your dad or mom gets angry? When they don't want to play with you?

What can you, as a child, do when you're in a situation like the one Leo and Lily are in?

What can your dad or mom do to help you?

Your dad and mom love you.

Do you have any other questions?



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