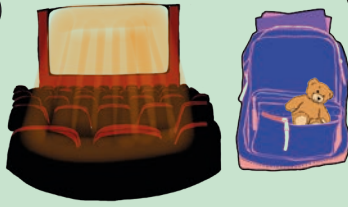


SOMETIMES
IT
HURTS



CHELSEA'S STORY



CHELSEA'S
HOUSE



CHANGING RELATIONS

Foreword

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Growing up, we had heard of what domestic abuse looked like, but we did not know what it felt like. Often, to really understand something, we need stories, not statistics.

We always thought we were experiencing something different, something more complicated – we labelled it ‘family problems’. We thought that the only pain that counted was physical pain and so we ignored the rest. We believed that our emotional pain meant that we were weak kids, rather than that something was wrong in our home. Often, we felt that we should have been able to cope with what was happening at home, and that it wasn’t dramatic enough to bother others with. We needed to hear others’ stories of domestic abuse before we could begin to make sense of our own.

We are confident that **Sometimes It Hurts** will encourage young people to recognise the many forms of hurt that domestic abuse causes. As we have learned, sometimes hearing another’s story is all the validation that’s needed to begin to acknowledge our own experiences. This awareness will certainly spark conversations that help young people connect the dots, see the patterns, and get the help they need and deserve.

Luke and Ryan Hart

Brothers Luke and Ryan Hart are award-winning domestic abuse advocates, authors and international keynote speakers. In their book, **Remembered Forever**, and their work, they share their family’s story of coercive control and domestic homicide. So far, their work has taken them to over 13 countries and they have trained tens of thousands of professionals in identifying, understanding, and ending domestic abuse.

About SOMETIMES IT HURTS

Sometimes It Hurts aims to give a voice to young people and a language to themes that are difficult and sensitive to approach, such as poverty, neglect, divorce, domestic abuse and unhealthy, controlling behaviours, both within families and within young people’s own romantic relationships. With the stories – and the resources we have developed around them – we hope to help both adults and young people to recognise what is healthy and unhealthy, develop empathy for self and others, and seek and offer better ongoing support.

This series of books was produced by arts education company Changing Relations, who commissioned writer Bridget Hamilton to work with a group of young people and tell the stories they felt needed to be told. Here is what Bridget had to say:

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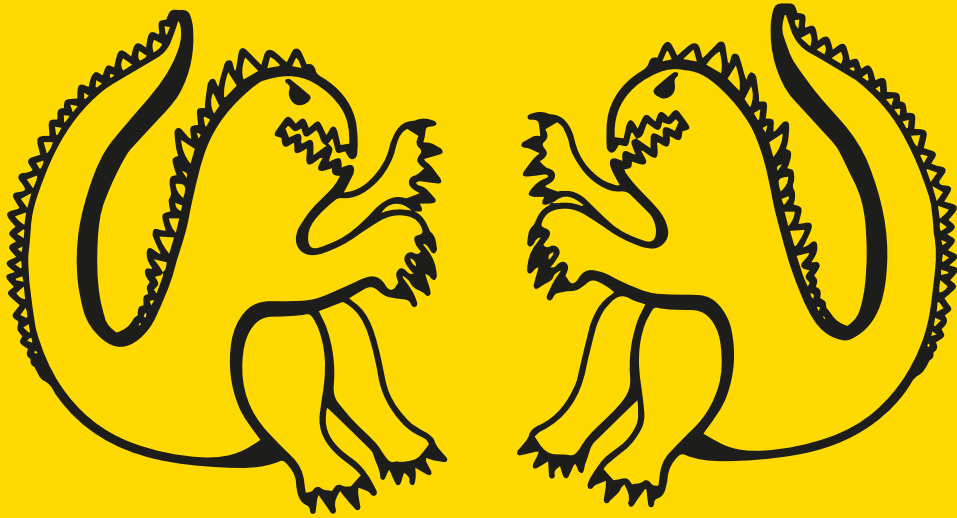
The six stories you are about to read have been written with the help of a group of young writers, some of whom have experienced domestic abuse. The young people decided on the names of the characters, the situations the characters have found themselves in, and how the stories ended. Some of the stories also contain direct quotes and experiences from the young people, which they were comfortable to share with you.

Some of the characters live with their parents and some don’t. Some have older siblings, some have younger siblings, and some don’t have any brothers and sisters at all. They are all different ages, races and sexualities. Every situation is unique, just like in real life – but they are all experiencing something at home that hurts them, and that is what the stories will explore.

Bridget Hamilton

IT FELT LIKE TWO

MONSTERS



SCRATCHING

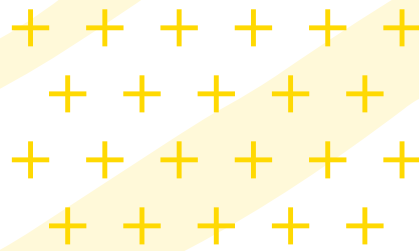
EITHER SIDE OF ME ...

Chelsea's Story

Summary

The character of Chelsea is 13 years old and feels caught in the middle of her parents, who are going through a divorce. Chelsea's mum and dad are trying to score points against each other by spoiling their daughters rotten, by insulting each other in front of them and racing to the school gates to be the first person to pick them up from school. Chelsea is starting to wonder if things would be better if she just wasn't there at all – at least, without her, they wouldn't need a reason to stay in touch with each other.

If this feels like a story that would be interesting or helpful for you to read, read on! If you're not sure, why not have a read of the summaries of the other stories in the **Sometimes it Hurts** series to choose one that feels more relevant for you.



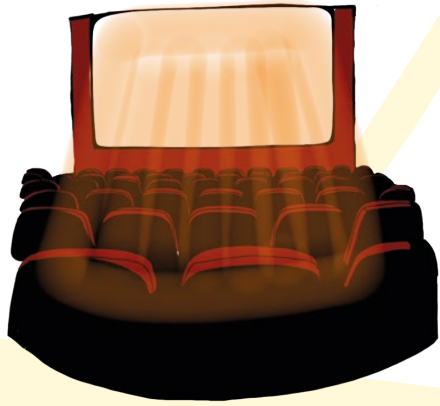
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My name is Chelsea, I'm 13 years old and I think I might be the only person in the world who was actually happy when my parents split up. Mum and Dad were fighting so often that I was totally sick of it. It was worse when they had both been drinking; it would wake my little sister up and she'd force her way into my bed, making me super tired for school the next day.

“

When Dad finally moved out, I don't know how but things managed to get worse, not better. It was as if my parents started treating us like toys they wanted to fight over. They raced each other to the school gates to try and pick us up first. Mum started buying us really expensive toys that we hadn't even asked for, while Dad treated us to McDonalds so much that it didn't really feel like a treat anymore. My little sister Lily loved being pampered and basically felt like a princess the whole time. I was the opposite. Every time Mum and Dad insulted each other, it felt like two monsters were scratching either side of me with their claws, deciding who got to take the first bite.





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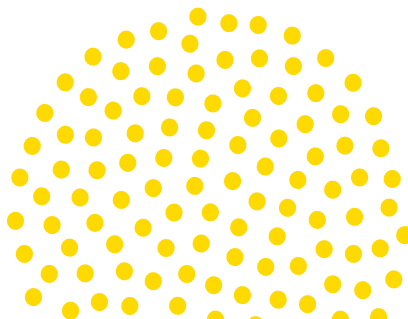
I didn't talk to anyone about what was going on for a really long time. Every time I tried to put the words together, they managed to sound really ungrateful. Who wouldn't want gifts and nice meals and trips to the cinema? My friends at school were acting as if I had won the lottery; I could get whatever I wanted. But all I actually wanted was to be a normal family. And that felt like pretty much the only thing I couldn't have.

I wanted to talk to my family about things that were going on at school, about my GCSE options, and boyfriends - well, girlfriends, actually. I've had a girlfriend called Iqra since September, she's in my class and things are going really well. I was thinking of coming out to my parents just before they said they were splitting up. I wish none of this was going on so I could focus on her and my schoolwork instead.



“

To be honest, I've started to wonder if things would just be easier if my sister and I went away for a while. If we weren't around, Mum and Dad would never have to see or speak to each other again, and the hurt would stop for everyone. If they'd never had us, they would be able to break up easily and get on with their lives. They would stop shouting at each other down the phone or asking us to choose who makes the best pasta sauce or which grandma is the nicest. And if I could be somewhere else, if I could run away from everything, maybe I would stop feeling so anxious and uncertain about everything in my life.



“

One night, I told my little sister to stuff her favourite toys and clothes into her school bag. The next day, I skipped my last lesson, and ran down to the primary building before either Mum or Dad could arrive. But when I got there, my sister was sitting with her teacher and her clothes and teddies were spilled out on the floor. Someone had discovered our secret plan before we had even got out of school.

It turns out that even if your parents would never want to hurt you, sometimes they still can. That's what Mum and Dad said to us when they had to come and pick us up from school, after they sat inside Lily's teacher's office for a long time while we waited outside. It was the longest time they'd been together in months without screaming, but they both came out with blotchy faces and red eyes. I wondered if Lily's teacher had told them off like she does with the little kids.



“

Things have gotten better since that day at school. My parents are definitely not best friends or anything, but they respect each other a bit more now and they don't ask us to choose between them anymore. When I was younger, I used to think that having a parent who lets you do whatever you want would be the best thing ever, but I actually like mine better when they are being normal parents rather than trying to impress us with toys or iPads or fancy trips. When they are just being Mum and Dad, I feel much safer. I can finally relax. And even though Lily misses being treated like a princess, I can tell that she is happier too.



What Support Is Available

Information About Domestic Abuse

If you or someone you know may be experiencing domestic abuse, both **Women's Aid** and **Refuge** have websites with comprehensive advice and can support you to hide your internet search history to cover your tracks.

Together they run the **National Domestic Abuse hotline**, a 24-hour freephone service – **0808 2000 247**.

Emergency

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call the **police** – **999**.

Local

Your local **Onepoint** centre offers advice and practical support across all aspects of family life, helping young people up to the age of 19 with a wide range of issues, including health, bullying and what activities are available in your local area.

Young people

The Mix is the UK's leading support service for young people under 25. They are here to help you take on any challenge you're facing - from mental health to money, from homelessness to finding a job, from break-ups to drugs. Talk to them via their online community, on social, through their free, confidential helpline or counselling service **themix.org.uk** – **0808 808 4994**.

For children experiencing or affected by domestic abuse, including witnessing abuse within the home, there is information on the **Childline** and **NSPCC** websites. There is also a **Freephone Helpline** – **0800 1111**.

Sexual Abuse

There is often an overlap between domestic abuse and sexual violence. The national **Rape Crisis** website has a lot of information, including where to find local support services. They also run a **Freephone Helpline** – **0808 802 9999**.

At School

When you are at school, the school is responsible for keeping you safe from harm and abuse. If you are worried about life at home or have any concerns about someone else, speak to a trusted teacher, tutor or learning manager, or, if you know who they are, ask to speak to your school's **Designated Safeguarding Lead**.

If you are an adult and have a concern about a child or young person's welfare who lives in County Durham, call **First Contact** on **03000 267 979**. First Contact brings together children's services staff with partners such as Durham Constabulary and health services.

Stalking

Stalking can be an aspect of domestic abuse and is sometimes experienced after survivors have left an abusive relationship. The **Suzy Lamplugh** website has information, advice and guidance for victims of stalking. They also run a **Freephone Stalking Helpline** – **0808 802 0300**.

LGBTQIA

For specialist support for those who identify as LGBT+, go to the **Galop** website, or call their **National Helpline** – **0800 999 5428**.

Men

Specific information for male victims of domestic abuse, or to seek more information about supporting men is available on the **Men's Advice Line** website. You can also call their **Freephone Helpline** – **0808 801 0327**. There is information for male victims of sexual violence on the **Safeline** website or you can call the **National Male Survivor's Helpline** – **0808 800 5005**.

Abusers

If you are concerned about your behaviour in a relationship, or that of a friend or family member, the **Respect Phonenumber** website has information and guidance. They also run a **Freephone Perpetrator Helpline** – **0808 802 4040**.

Minority Ethnic Communities

For a comprehensive list of support services by, and for, those from black and minority ethnic communities, go the **Imkaan** website. For those affected by honour-based abuse and / or forced marriage, the **Karma Nirvana** website has information and guidance. They also run a **Freephone Honour-based Abuse Helpline** – **0800 599 9247**.

How We Created SOMETIMES IT HURTS

The original **Sometimes It Hurts** book was created by arts education company, **Changing Relations**, in 2021 through working with our creative associate, **Michelle Harland**, CEO of **Creative Youth Opportunities**. Together with writer, **Bridget Hamilton**, Michelle led a programme of weekly creative workshops with groups of young people, inviting discussion around ideas of family, relationships, hurt, trust and getting support, through a range of participatory creative discussions and activities. These were shaped by physical and digital scrapbooking to collect and log thoughts and ideas which would help our illustrator and animator create a visual landscape for the book and subsequent animation we produced.

Our then Artistic Director, **Pollyanna Turner**, managed the creative team, which additionally included illustrator **Tamsin Rees**, animator **Sheryl Jenkins**, and sound artist **Rupert Philbrick**, fostering the environment of co-production that is a central part of our approach at **Changing Relations**. A project steering group completed the team with individuals from a range of backgrounds, including safeguarding, education, local councillors, together with professionals and individuals who publicly advocate domestic abuse awareness-raising, including **Luke and Ryan Hart** (CoCoAwareness), **Susie Hay** (Safelives), **Cllr Jeanette Stephenson** (Stanley AAP), **Rosa Walling-Weffelmeyer** & **Dr Stephen Burrell** (Durham University).

The book and stories within it were well received by children and young people as well as the adults who work with them. They felt the stories were a great way to talk about difficult issues children and young people might experience at home. Because the book was so popular, we decided to do some work to make sure more people could benefit from the stories in the original six-chapter book.

In this new phase of development, in 2023, we have created six individual books, one for each of the stories, with additional illustrations to make them more interesting and accessible for young people.

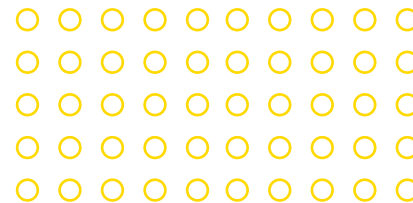
We worked with a creative action group of children and young people from primary and secondary schools in County Durham to develop a brief for our illustrator Tamsin and explore the places and spaces where the stories take place to develop ideas for a map which forms a key part of the new book series.

The creative action group tested out a set of creative activities for teachers and other supporting adults to use to help children and young people explore the themes raised in the stories and have supportive conversations about things which may be affecting them at home. Their feedback helped us understand what young people may enjoy and find useful, relevant and interesting. Young people are the ones who will be using them, so they know best!

We also worked with the creative action group to get ideas for our web developers to create a website to host the stories and resources in multimedia formats. The creative action group was made up of children and young people from **Copeland Road Primary School, Escomb Primary School, Greenfield Community College, King James I Academy** and **St John's Catholic School and Sixth Form**.

The creative action group sessions were delivered by artist and creative producer, **Sarah Stamp**, supported by youth workers from **Learning a New Way C.I.C.** and the delivery team worked closely with **Changing Relations'** Managing Director **Lisa Charlotte Davis** and academics **Dr Nikki Rutter** and **Dr Josie Phillips** at **Durham University** to develop the content for the sessions and ensure we were exploring the themes in the stories in a safe and supportive way.

This new phase of development brought back some of those involved in the initial project, such as graphic designers **Curious 12**, as well as involving new creatives professionals, **Vida Creative** who led on the associated web development.



Acknowledgements

The biggest thank you for making **Sometimes It Hurts** possible goes to the brave, funny and kind young people who entrusted us with their stories and worked so hard with our creative team to help other young people who may find themselves in a similar situation get the recognition and support they need.

We're also hugely grateful to the new group of young people who supported us to develop and test the creative activities and website that will be used as part of that mission to help young people who are experiencing difficult situations at home.

Thanks must go to each and every one of the team behind **Sometimes it Hurts** in both 2021 and 2023.

And of course, we're grateful to the funders who made this project possible.



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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



Thank you all!

Lisa Charlotte Davis

Managing Director & Company Founder

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We're passionate about what we do and we'd love to hear from you.



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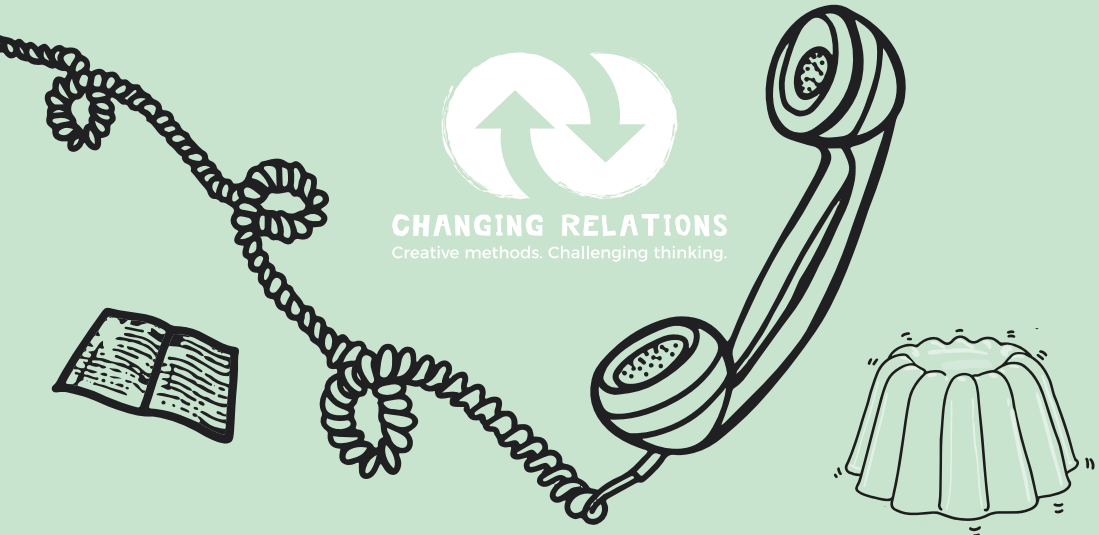


"Being someone that has been that young person, it is spot on."

"It makes you feel like you're not the only one when you go through it."

"It could make a lot of people understand more and be more kind towards friends going through this."

Young people whose insight and experience was gathered to inform the writing of the book, responding to a reading of the first draft.



CHANGING RELATIONS
Creative methods. Challenging thinking.