

# I Am Malik





## **You're going through a lot right now.**

Things might feel really confusing. You might have a lot of questions and different feelings about what's going on.

This book is here to help you figure some of that out.

You'll find stuff about:

- Who all the people you might see or talk to are
- What could happen next
- How to deal with your feelings and ways to feel better

This is Malik's story. His experience might be different than what you're going through, but it might help you understand what's going on.

No matter what happens, you should know that you're not alone. These kinds of things happen to other kids, too.

There are lots of ways to get help and support. Don't be afraid to ask for it.

This book is yours to keep. Read it, write on it, draw on it, or do whatever you want with it. We hope it helps.





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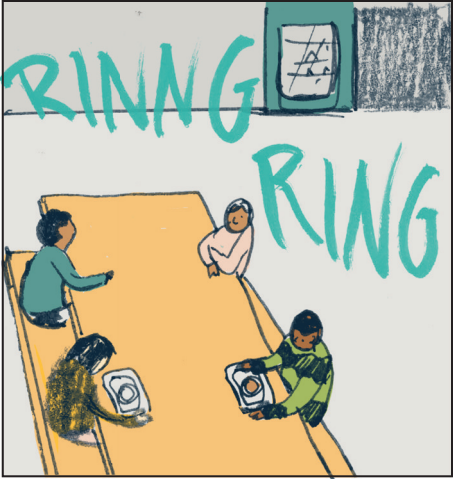
**Part 1.**

# **Something Happened**

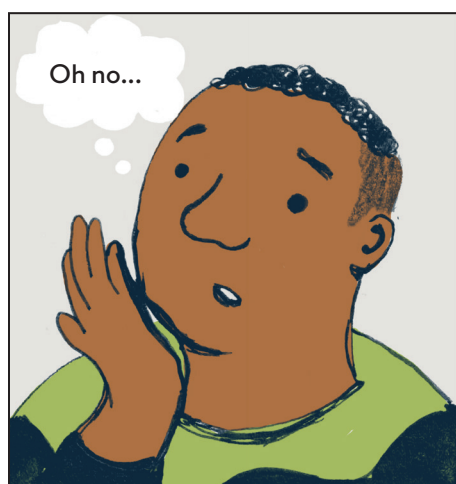
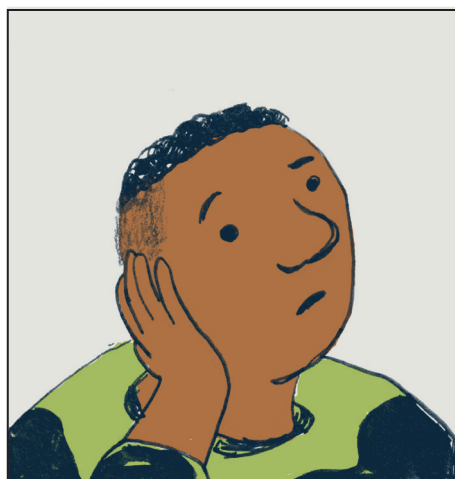




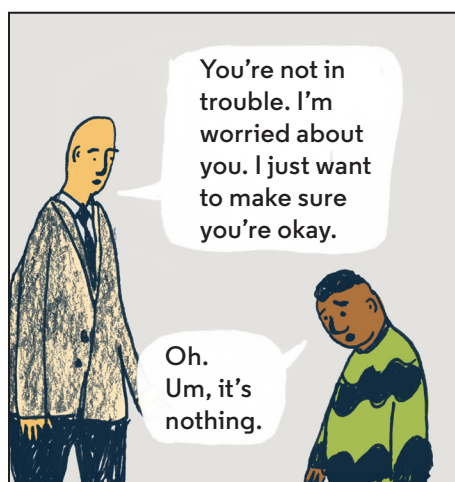


















A few hours later, at the therapist, Ms. Priya's, office...

You like to draw?



Yeah...a little.



It's actually a really great way to deal with stress.

You're welcome to draw or color while we talk, if you want.



I know coloring sounds like it's for little kids, but I have one of these adult coloring books if you want to check it out.



I like using them, too!



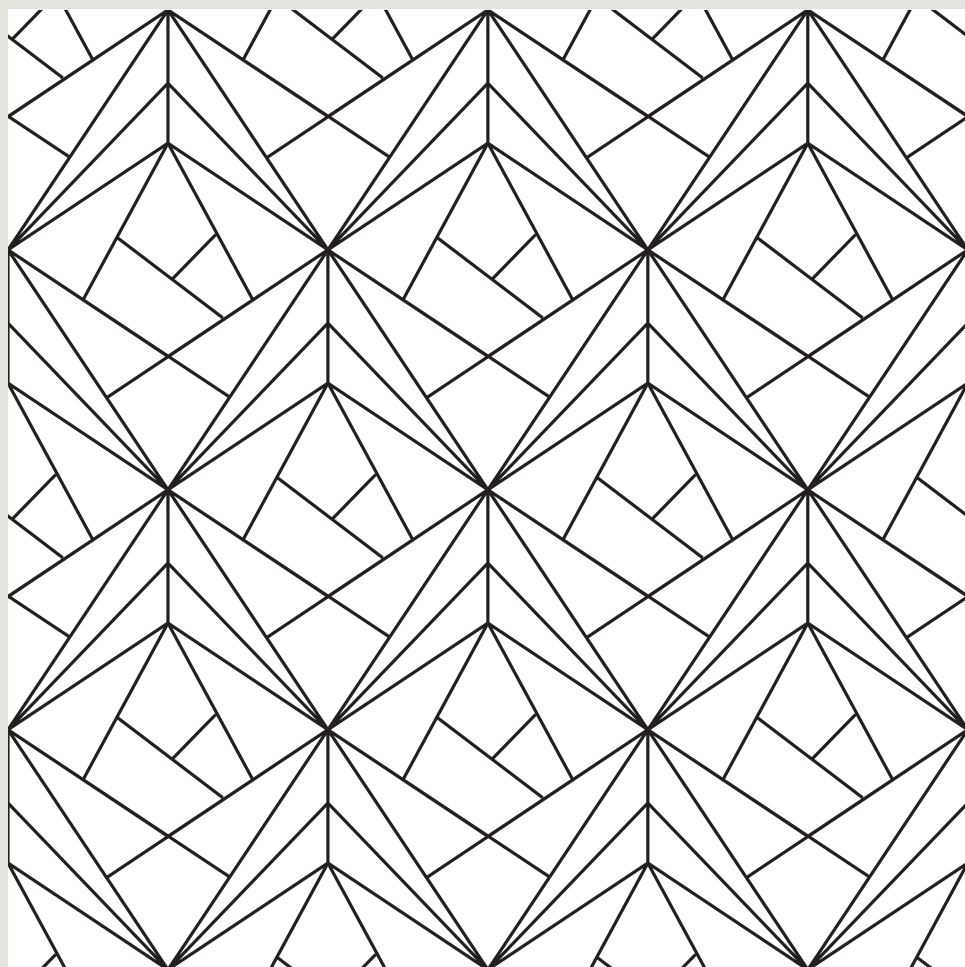


# Something to Color

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Ms. Priya told Malik that drawing and coloring could help him feel more relaxed.

You can try it and see if it helps you, too. Use this coloring page just like Malik did. Or try drawing in your own notebook.





It kind of did feel better to be doing something with my hands while we talked.



Do you want to talk a little more about how you're feeling?

I guess...



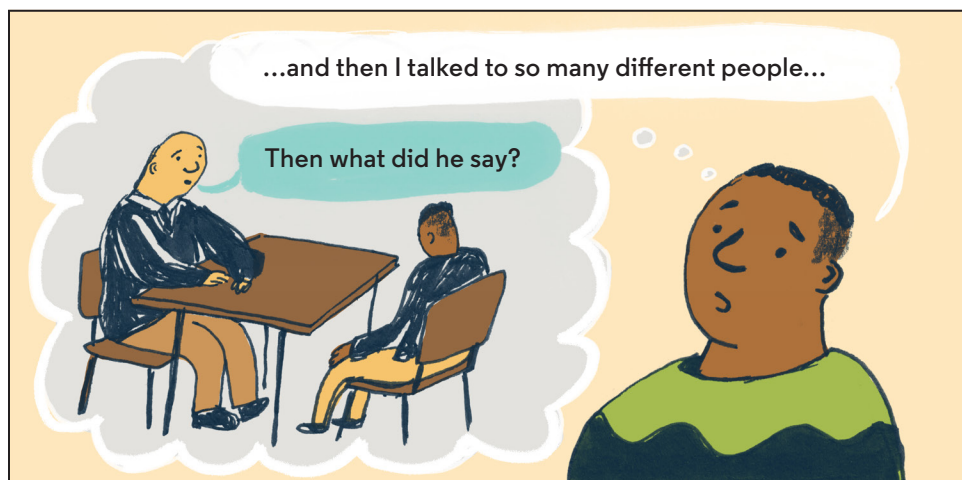
But the coloring thing worked, so...



It's just...



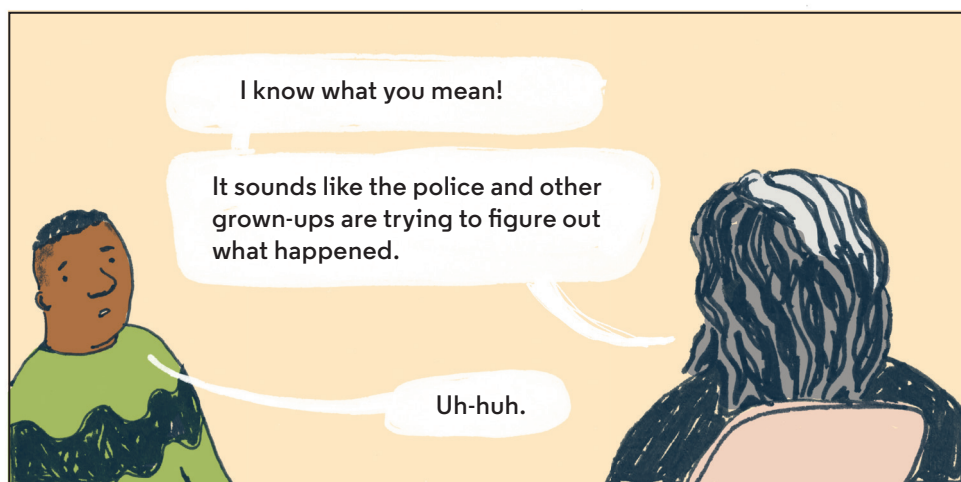








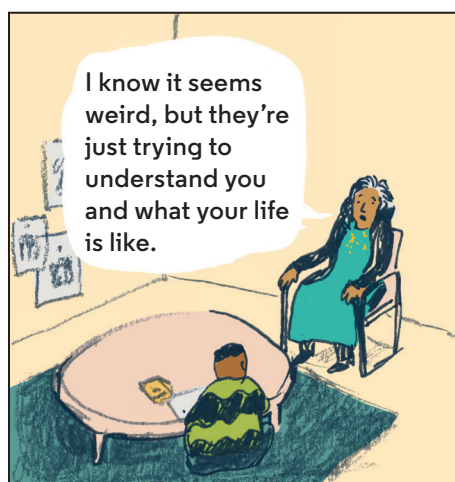




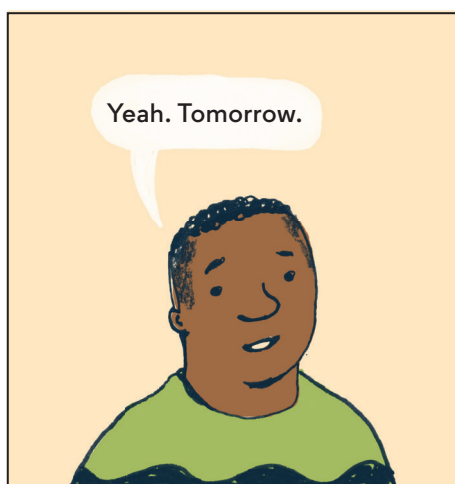
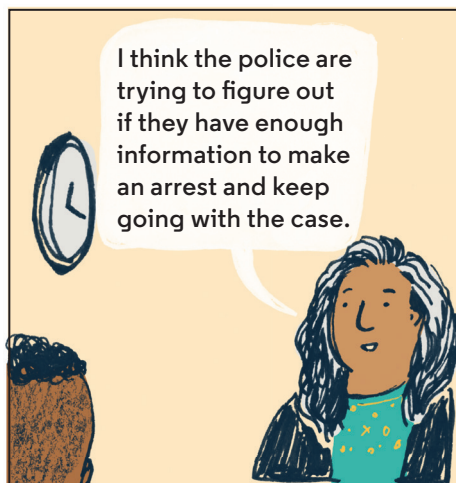


















# What Are You Feeling?

Malik talked with Ms. Priya about his different feelings.  
What do you think Malik felt? How do you feel?

**Happy**



**Sad**



**Angry**



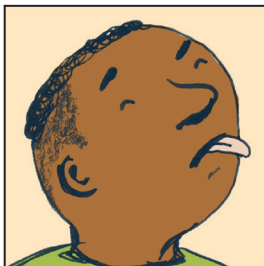
**Calm**



**Surprised**



**Yucky**



**Worried**





## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

If someone might have broken a law or hurt another person, the police start a case and try to figure out what happened. That's called an investigation.

In Malik's story, he was a "witness" because he saw what happened and a "victim" because he was hurt. He met different adults working on the case, and they asked him questions about what happened.

The adults will talk to different people to find out more information. Information about what happened is called evidence.

At the end of this, if the police can't find enough evidence, the case is over. But that doesn't mean the thing didn't happen.

If they do find enough evidence, the case will go on to the next step.





## Part 2.

# The Advocate









Chantelle was really nice.



She knew what was going on with the case, too.



Malik, I don't know if anyone told you yet, but the police arrested your neighbor.



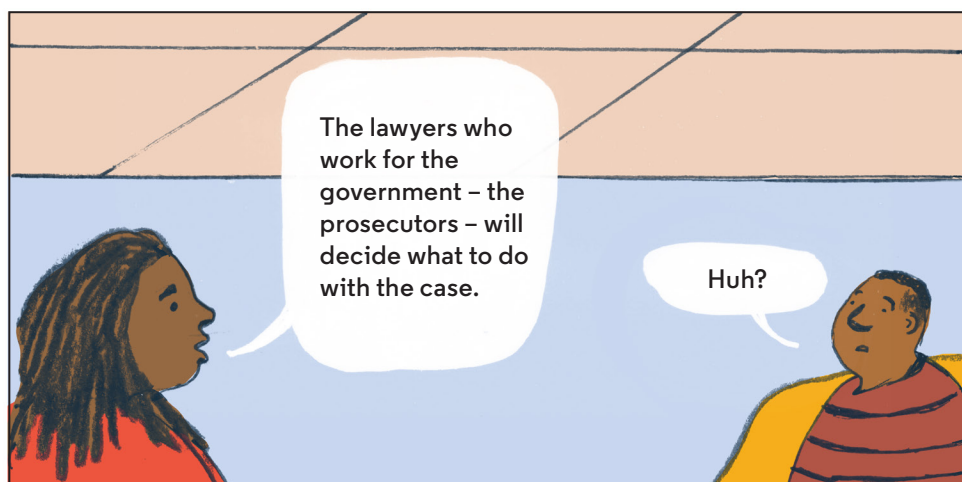
Oh.



How do you feel about that?





















# The Breathing Trick

Chantelle showed Malik how to use breathing to feel calmer. You can try this when you're feeling stressed or upset.

Put your hands on your stomach.  
Take a big breath in for a count of three, letting your belly fill up with air.

Hold your breath for a count of two.



Then breathe out slowly and let out all the air in your stomach.

Repeat this three times.



You can also close your eyes while you breathe.







## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The police arrested Malik's neighbor after they found the evidence they needed.

Next the prosecutor, who is a lawyer that works for the government, will investigate some more.

Then the prosecutor will think about whether they found enough evidence and decide whether or not the case should go to the next step.

Even if the case is closed, it doesn't mean the thing didn't happen.





## Part 3.

# Talking It Out

I'm trying to keep my life normal.  
It's mostly working.





I go see Ms. Priya a lot.



It's not bad.  
We talk about other stuff.



Not just this case.



Like my friends.



And stuff on TV. Or school.





And sometimes we talk about what happened.



I understand why you feel that way, but what happened is not your fault, Malik.



When I talked to the other grown-ups, I sometimes felt like I was saying the wrong thing.



But Ms. Priya just lets me talk.



I see Chantelle, too.





She knows a lot about  
what's going on.



So, I talked  
to Nadia.

Nadia?



Sorry, the  
prosecutor.



Oh. Yeah.



Nadia and her team  
think there's enough  
evidence and are  
bringing a case  
against him.



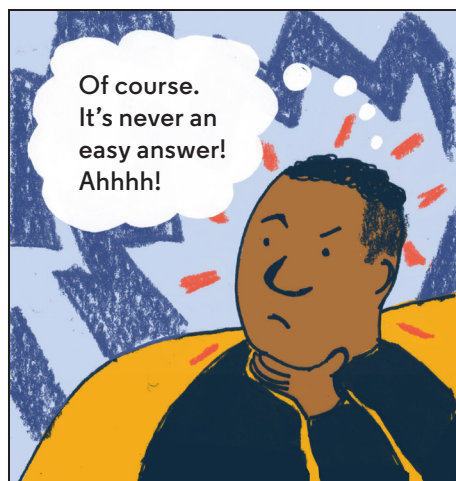




Like a court  
case? Like  
on TV?

Well, the case  
might go to trial,  
or it might not.











She was right. We really didn't know for a while.



I hated all the waiting.



But then we found out.



The case was going to trial.  
Lucky me.



I wish I could tell Alex.



Would she still be my friend?





## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

After a prosecutor decides to continue a case, different things can happen.

Often, the person accused of a crime and their lawyer will negotiate with the prosecutor. If they agree, the accused person might plead guilty to certain charges and agree to a certain punishment. This is called a “plea deal.”

If they don’t agree to do that, the case goes to trial.

At trial, the prosecutor will try to show that the person broke the law, and the accused person’s lawyer will try to show that the person didn’t break the law.





## Part 4.

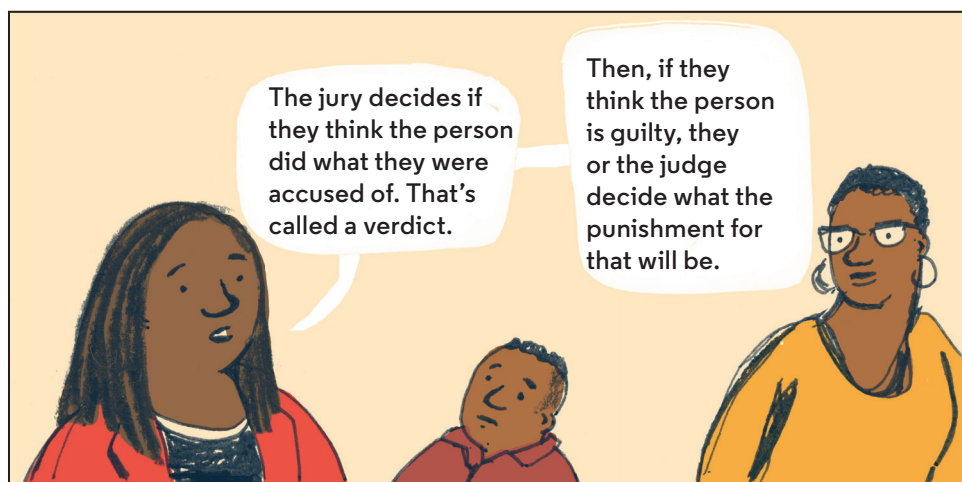
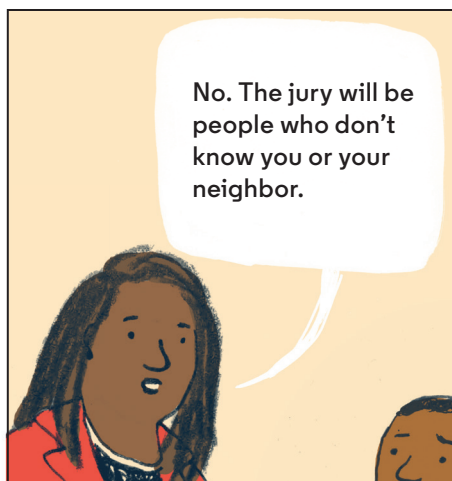
# Getting Ready



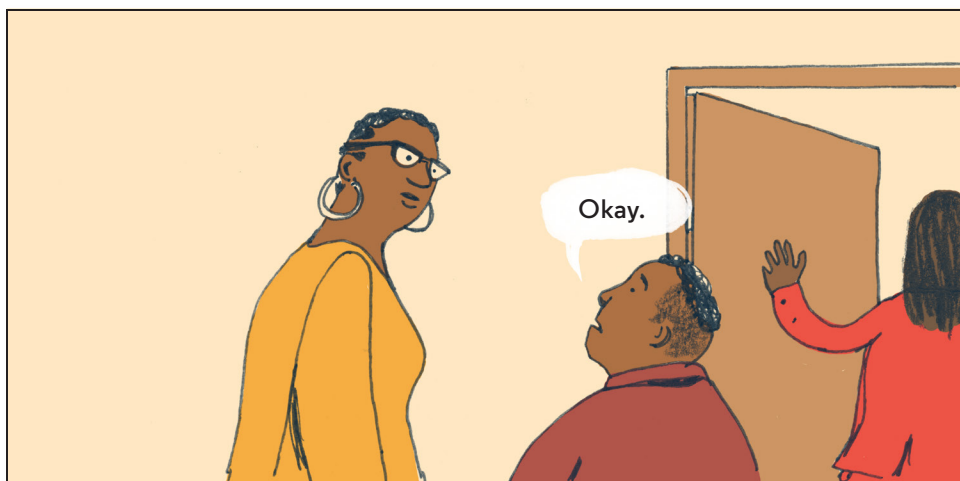




















## Keep It Moving

Chantelle helped Malik when he was feeling overwhelmed by suggesting they take a walk.

Moving your body can help with stress. It can be as simple as taking a walk, running up stairs, stretching, jumping rope, exercising, or even dancing.

What kind of movement do you think would help you feel less stressed?



It felt really good to get out of that room. But it was time to go back now.



I tried my breathing trick. And we started talking again.



If I testify, will I have to see him?



Yes, he'll be in the courtroom, too. But you won't have to talk to him, and he isn't supposed to talk to you.



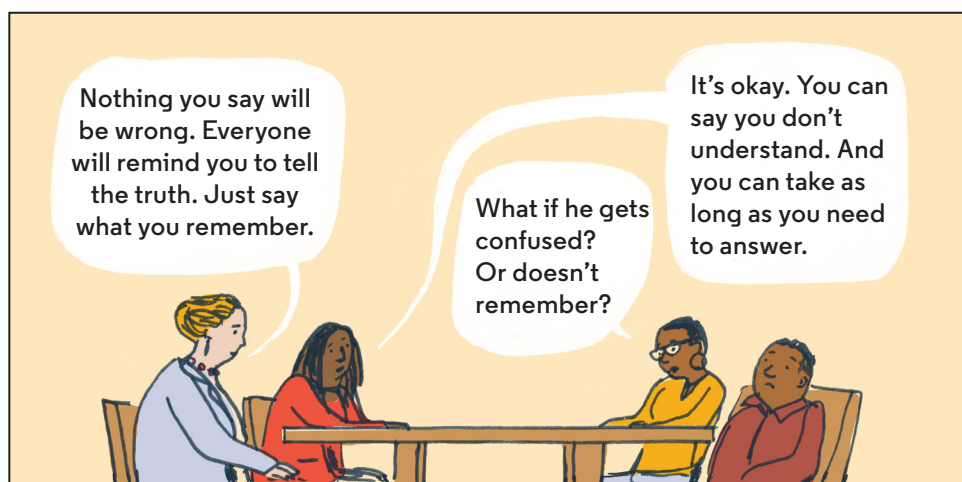
And you don't even have to look at him. You can look at me or someone else you trust.



What does Malik have to do? What will it be like?

















I thought it would be big and scary and filled with people like on TV.



But it's the size of my classroom!



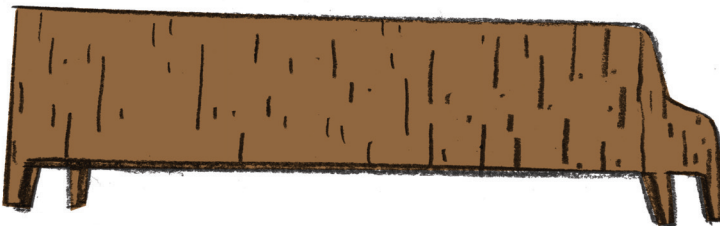
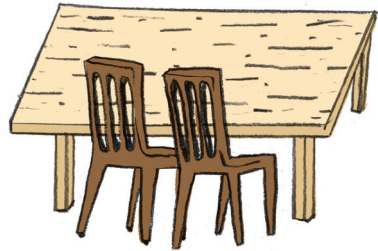
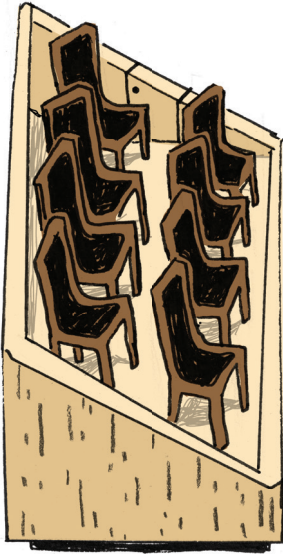


# The Courtroom

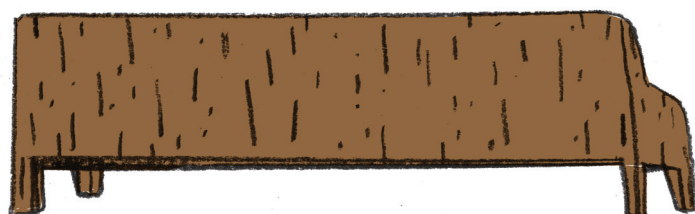
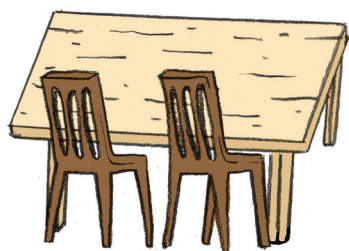
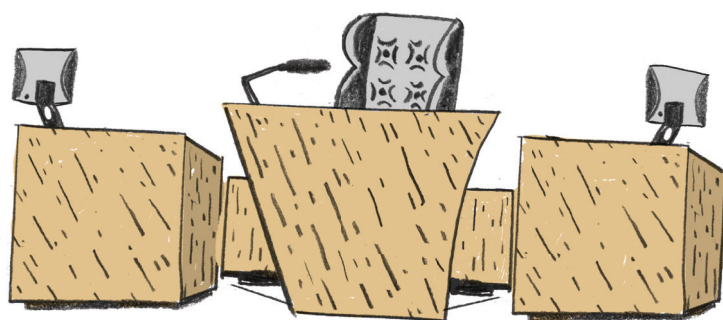
Chantelle took Malik and his mom to see the courtroom, and told him who all the people there would be and what their jobs are in court.

If you have to go to court, your courtroom might look a little different, but will probably have some of the same people.

You can use this drawing to talk with one of the grown-ups on your case about who everyone is and what they do.







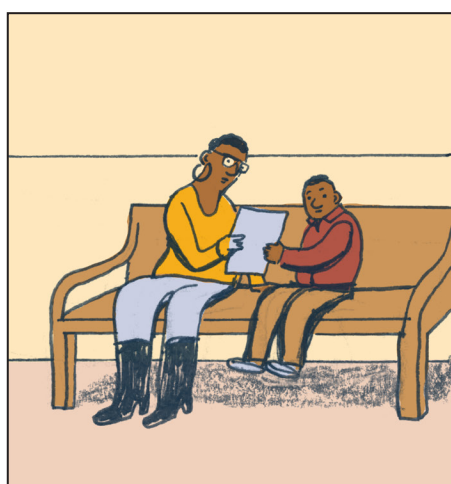














# Getting Ready To Go To Court

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Chantelle showed Malik different things he could do to feel less nervous, and some things he could do to get ready for court.

Here are some of the ones she told him about.

## Getting ready

- Try to get lots of sleep the night before.
- Try to eat something before you go to court. It will help you feel better and have the energy to get through it.
- You don't have to dress up, but wear something a little nicer than usual if you can. You should wear something that makes you feel good.
- You'll probably spend a lot of time waiting, so bring something to read, play, or do while you wait.
- If you have a special object that helps you feel calm, bring it with you.

## Getting nervous

If you feel nervous, try one of these things:

- Try to picture how you want to react if different things happen. It may sound silly, but picturing things can help you feel calmer.
- Try taking deep breaths in and out a few times. It really helps!
- Tighten your muscles and then relax them. Do this a few times.
- If you can, take a walk or move your body to get rid of some of your extra energy. You can also try walking really fast for a few seconds, then taking a deep breath and walking really slowly for a few seconds, then going fast then slow, fast then slow a few more times.
- If you have a special prayer or song that is important to you, try saying or singing it, either out loud, or in your head.



## Getting support

- Think about who can help you figure out how you're feeling and who can help you in court.
- Is there an advocate, friend, or family member who can come with you to court? If so, you can look at them if you get nervous.

## Getting through it

- It can feel good to do something you like when it's over, like watch a movie, eat a favorite meal, or spend time with a friend. Think of something you can look forward to.

# My Court Day Plan

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Malik used Chantelle's list to come up with a plan for his court day. If you want, you can use this page to make your own plan.

Things I will do to get ready:

If I get nervous, I will:

I will talk about how I feel with:

After court, I will do something I like:



I looked at Chantelle's handout with Mom and we made a plan for my court day.

What about this part, "Who can help you work out how you're feeling?"

Well, I can talk to Ms. Priya.

Sure. And what about Alex? You two used to be together all the time. How come you're not spending time with her?

I'm too embarrassed to tell her.

It's okay if you don't want to tell her. But I think it's good to keep talking to your friends. That's a part of your life that can feel normal, right?

I guess so.





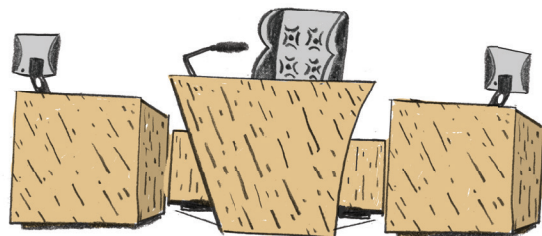
## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Malik's case was going to trial.

The prosecutor asked Malik to come to court to talk about what happened. This is called testifying.

Most kids don't have to testify, but some do. If they do, their job is to talk about what happened and answer questions from the lawyers.

The jury will listen to everyone who talks in court and decide if they think the person is guilty or not.



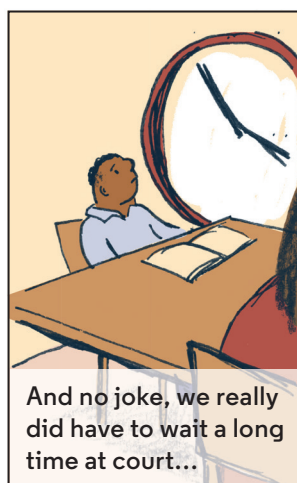
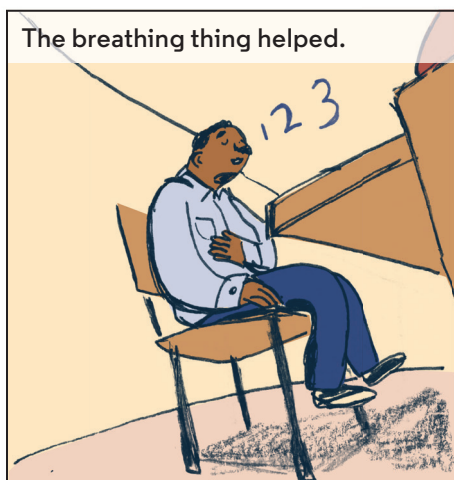
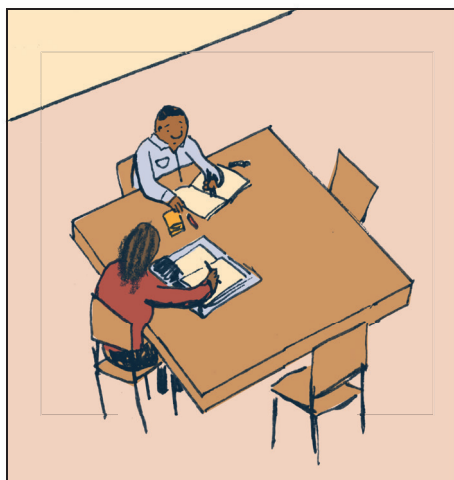


## Part 5.

# Court







And no joke, we really did have to wait a long time at court...







But it was just like Chantelle said.



The court officer came to get me.



And we went to the courtroom.



I sat near the judge.



My heart was pounding so fast.



What happened that day?

But I remembered to keep breathing.







They asked me questions.



I got confused one time.



But I saw Chantelle...



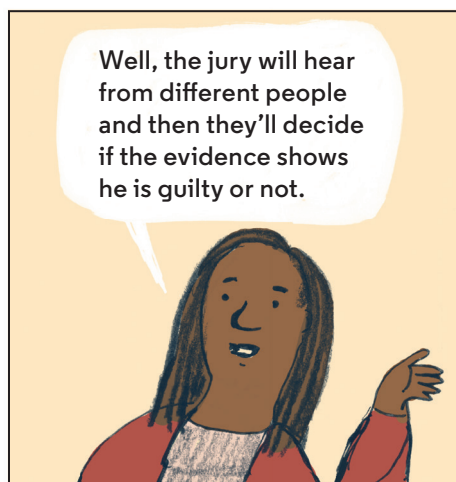
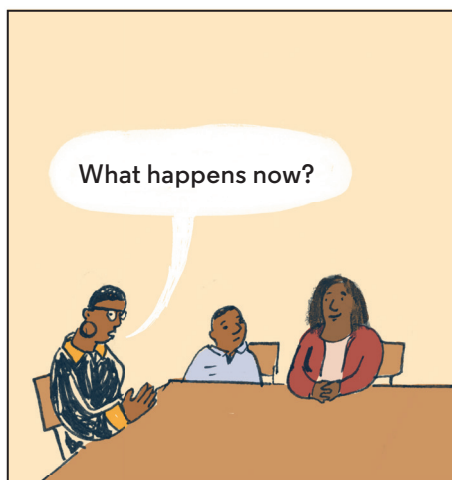
...and remembered my rights.



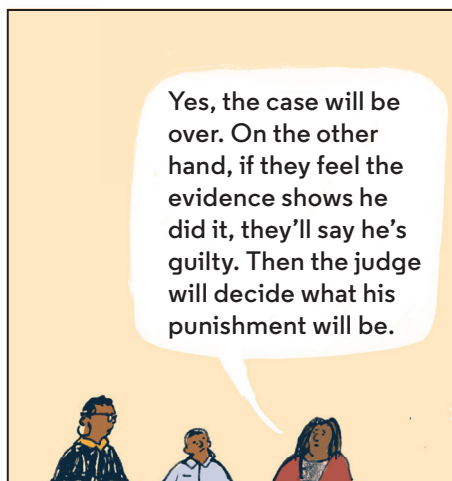
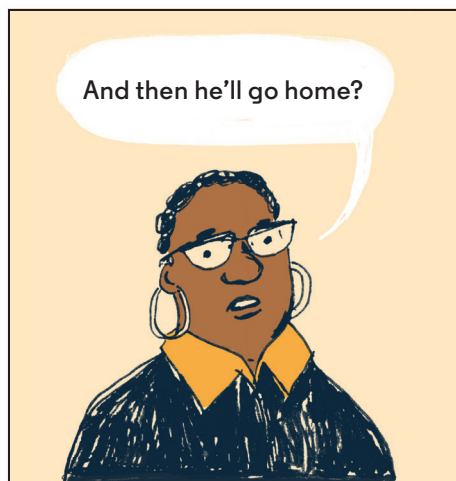
And then it was over.





















I finally talked to Alex again. She said she missed hanging out and was glad I was okay.



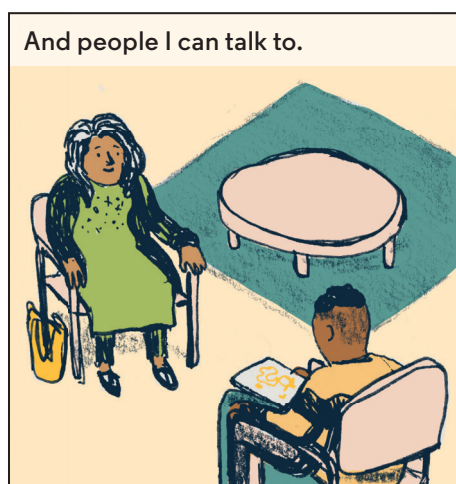
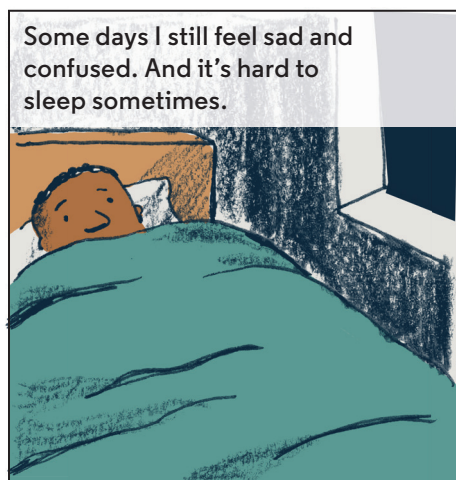
It feels good to talk to a friend instead of a grown-up for a change.

Alex even knows someone else who had to go to court. I guess it's not just me.



I thought everything would change because of what happened.







Maybe it sounds dumb, but Chantelle is right...



... No matter how it ends, this case isn't my whole life. I'm still Malik.



# Circle of Support

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Malik was stressed and confused, but he was able to talk to his therapist, Ms. Priya; his advocate, Chantelle; his mom; and his best friend, Alex, about what he was going through. Who can you go to for support when you are going through something difficult? What do they do to help you?

It can be helpful to remind yourself of the people in your life who you can ask for help.

Write their names or draw them in your circle of support below (you can even include a pet).



**Friends & Other Adults**

**Family**

**You**



## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Malik went to court and testified. Other people did, too.

The jury listened to everyone in court. All of the evidence in the case, including what people say in court, are like pieces of a puzzle. If there are pieces missing or that don't fit together, the jury has to decide the person is "not guilty," and the case is over. This doesn't mean the jury doesn't believe you, just that the puzzle isn't complete.

If all the pieces of the puzzle fit together, the jury decides the person is "guilty." Then the judge will decide what that person has to do next.

They might go to jail or prison, or they might be able to go home but have to follow other rules or go to programs.





## **Afterword.**

Your experience might be different than Malik's. But the more you know about what happens, the more ready you'll be and the more you'll be able to ask for things you want or need.

You can have a voice in what happens. Don't be afraid to ask for help, to ask questions, and to find out what rights you have in court.



The Center for Court Innovation's Child Witness Materials Project is a collaborative effort between the Center for Court Innovation and the Center for Urban Pedagogy, and is supported by cooperative agreement #2016-VF-GX-K011, awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Center for Court Innovation works to create a more effective and humane justice system by performing original research and helping launch reforms around the world.

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The Center for Urban Pedagogy is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, in partnership with historically marginalized communities.

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NCJ 300645

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Office for Victims of Crime  
**OVC**



