



There's Something in the Air

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This book is dedicated to all beings affected by
the COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction

There's Something in the Air is a psychologically informed story book that explores an element of the COVID-19 crisis that is particularly difficult to address: fear. It presents ways of coping with the widespread agitation and having to stay at home indefinitely, by encouraging mindfulness, gratefulness, and understanding of behaviour that comes from a place of uncertainty. It also acknowledges the possibility of grief, offering an outlook of self-compassion and acceptance of the range of difficult emotions that can come with loss.



Honeycomb Hive, high up in a tree,
Is home to a bubbly bumblebee.

Busy, buzzing Honeycomb!

Bombini has a happy home.

Today the hive is full of singing:
The first Spring flowers of Spring are springing!
Bombini wakes her sister, Mellie,
Who smacks her lips and rubs her belly.
They know there's nothing quite so yummy
As the first fresh taste of fresh Spring honey.



This time on her wander, there
Is a strangeness in the air.

The London Eye has lost its spin;
No Rattle-Tubes with Flesh-Bugs in?
No-one seems to scoot or scurry...
The stillness makes Bombini worry.

Bombini loves but one thing more:

Going outside to explore

Big Ben, St Paul's and the London Eye;

And on her way, she likes to spy

On funny fleshy Two-Leg Bugs,

Sometimes lugging Four-Leg Slugs.



Here and there and there and here,
She buzzes, puzzled, far and near.

At the grocer's, in the end,
She spots a funny Fleshy Friend.
There's another! But, how weird:
Their faces wear a paper beard.

Two more exit from the shop:
They stomp! They shout! They karate chop!
Bombini stares at these two trolls:
They're fighting over... toilet rolls?
Confused, perplexed, Bombini flies
Straight back home to Honeycomb Hive.





Once again Bombini's shocked;
The singing has completely stopped.
Honeycomb Hive is spookily still.
Blinking over each windowsill:
Bumblebee eyes, in their rooms, alone.
Scared, Bombini rushes home.



“The sickness that is this way heading
Makes it harder for your lungs.
The only way to stop it spreading
Is to stay at home,” he hums.
“Never, never share your snot!
Be sure to wash your legs a lot.

“You’re back!” exclaims Bombini’s Mum.
She hugs her tight. Her eyes look glum.
“Sit here, my dear, you must be drained.
The doctor’s called us to explain.”
Huddled ‘round, they watch on Boop,
Dr Bumble’s moustache droop.

“As Mellie’s lungs already struggle,
This could bring her bigger trouble.
Till we find a medicine,
We really, really must stay in.”
Mellie nods and hugs her Dad.
Mellie’s almost never sad.

But Bombini's stomach falls;
Her wandering spirit can't stand walls.
She tries a hundred different things.
She taps her feet and twiddles her wings.
Still, the days keep stretching on,
Seeming oh-so very long.



Tick-tock.
Tick-tock.
Tick-tock.
Tick-tock.
All she hears
is the ticking clock.



“How much longer, Mum?!” she cries,

Tears of boredom in her eyes.

“Shh, Bombini, Mum is working!”

Dad says in his Serious Voice.

“She always is!” she grumbles, sulking.

“We don’t have any other choice...”

Bombini, feeling sad and small,

Pulls the head off Mellie’s doll.

Bombini hates to fight with Mellie.

Sad and guilty in her belly,

Bombini sneaks away to see

Grandma Ida, the Queen Bee.

Bombini’s Grandma always knew

Just what to say and what to do.



Bombini in her window flies.

Grandma Ida looks surprised.

"Bombini, how did you get here?
You shouldn't be outside, my dear!"

"Can I sit here by the door?
For a minute? I'm so bored!

"And I'm sad," she whispers faintly.

Grandma smiles and fills a dainty
China teacup with warm honey,
Gives it to the sad Bombini,
And says to her, "You're not alone;
Lots of us feel stuck at home.



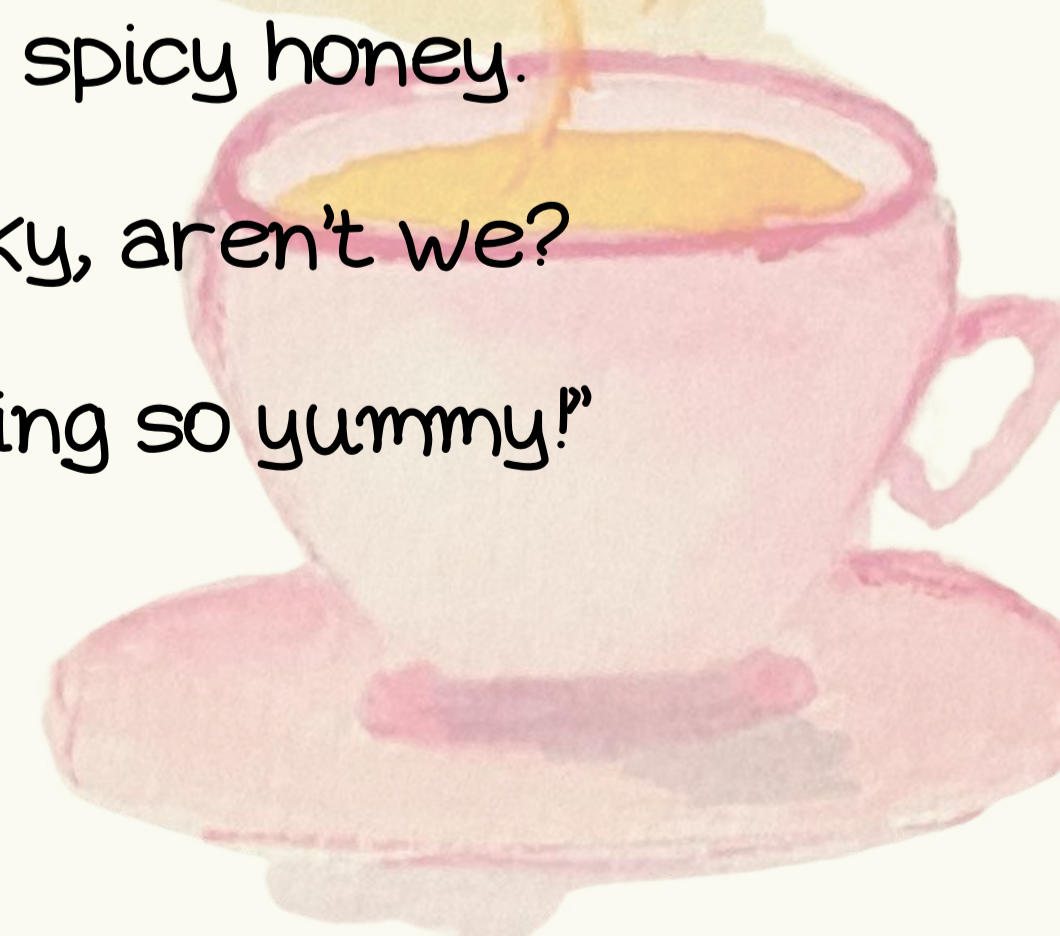
"We're used to being busy bees!"
Grandma sits down with a wheeze.
"What would make you happy now?"
Bombini says, with furrowed brow,
"If only I could still explore!
Explore the world, just like before!"

"Oh, but yes you can, my girl!"
"I can?"
"Of course! There's so much world
Right below your very nose."
Grandma's smiling eyelids close.
She takes a breath and sips a sip.
Mmmm... honeydew and apple pip!

"Your turn!" she says and fills her cup.
Bombini slowly lifts it up.
"Try to taste, really *taste*
The honey you are drinking.
And then once you have tasted it,
Tell me what you're thinking."

Bombini's senses fill right up.
Mmmm... lavender and buttercup!
Bombini's guilty heart untwists.

Presently, all that exists
Is soothing, spicy honey.
"We are lucky, aren't we?
To have a thing so yummy!"



“We really are,” agrees the Queen.
Her laughing eyes are wise and green.

“Now, try to see, to really see
The stars out there above the tree.”

At first the stars are nothing new:
Little specks of white and blue.

But as she looks, she finds that lots
Of shapes appear between the dots.

“Grandma, look, a dragon, look!

And there’s a pirate with a hook!”

“Yes! And there’s a mushroom there...

It’s sitting on a rocking chair!”



Bombini laughs out loud with glee,
But then, at once, quite suddenly,
She thinks of what she had forgot:
That she and Mellie had just fought.

“Oh, but, Grandma, if I only
Didn't also feel so lonely!”



“Something strange is in the air...
There's angry people everywhere.

What it is I have no clue.

Mum and Dad are angry too.”

“You're absolutely right, my dear.
That thing that's in the air is *fear*.”

“Fear? But, Grandma, they're both big!”

Grandma laughs and takes a swig.

“Adults are scared quite often too,

When we don't know what to do.

Fear can sometimes make us brave,

Or it can change how we behave.

“Now, we’re facing this new flu.
None of us know what to do.
It’s something that we’ve never seen.
We’re scared-er than we’ve ever been.
Your Mum and Dad are scared as well.
They’re scared for you and scared for Mel.”

“But I don’t want them to be scared!”
“Well, maybe you could help them there.”
“I want to help them, Grandma, yes!”
“When you feel safe, what do you do?”
“I don’t know... I smile, I guess?”
“Well, then, I have a game for you.”

“A game?” she asks, excitedly.
Bombini loves a game, or three.
“Can you find a hundred ways
To put a smile on someone’s face?”
Bombini flies straight home to try,
Across the magic, starry sky.





The world outside I can't much change,
It still is ill and still is strange.
But I see now, what's up to me
Is how I do and how I see.



The peaceful days are plodding on,
Until, one day, the smiles are gone.

Dad says with a weary sigh,

“Darlings, I should tell you, I

Got a call from Grandma’s nurse;

Her lungs are getting worse and worse.”

“Is Grandma Ida going to die?!”

Little Mellie starts to cry.

“Yes, my darling. Yes, She might.”

Mummy hugs them very tight.

“Would you like to say goodbye?”

Bombini nods and wipes her eye.

“We’ll have to call her on the phone.”

“Can’t we visit her at home?!”

“We can’t, it won’t be safe for Mellie.”

Bombini’s tummy feels like jelly.

As they call up Dr Bumble,

With the phone her forelegs fumble.



“Grandma please don’t die!” she cries.

Grandma slowly, softly sighs,

“You might be scared, you might be sad,

That’s fine, it’s normal to.

You might even feel quite angry,

Angry that I’m leaving you.

That’s okay as well, my bee.

That’s okay, because, you see,

Every feeling that you feel

Is the rightest feeling.

You feel them all so much because

Your heart is slowly healing.

“I promise it will be easier,

After a little while.

You’ll remember our happy memories,

With a happy smile.”

Bombini and her parents cry,

As Grandma says her last goodbye.





When it is announced that there
Is no more sickness in the air,
All the bees of Honeycomb
Come out celebrate their Queen,
Who made their home the safest home,
That it has ever been.

They take her to the River Thames,
Wrapped up inside a Spring bouquet.

They think of what she means to them

And watch her float away.

From every eye of every bee,

Tears begin to flow.

But in their hearts they also feel

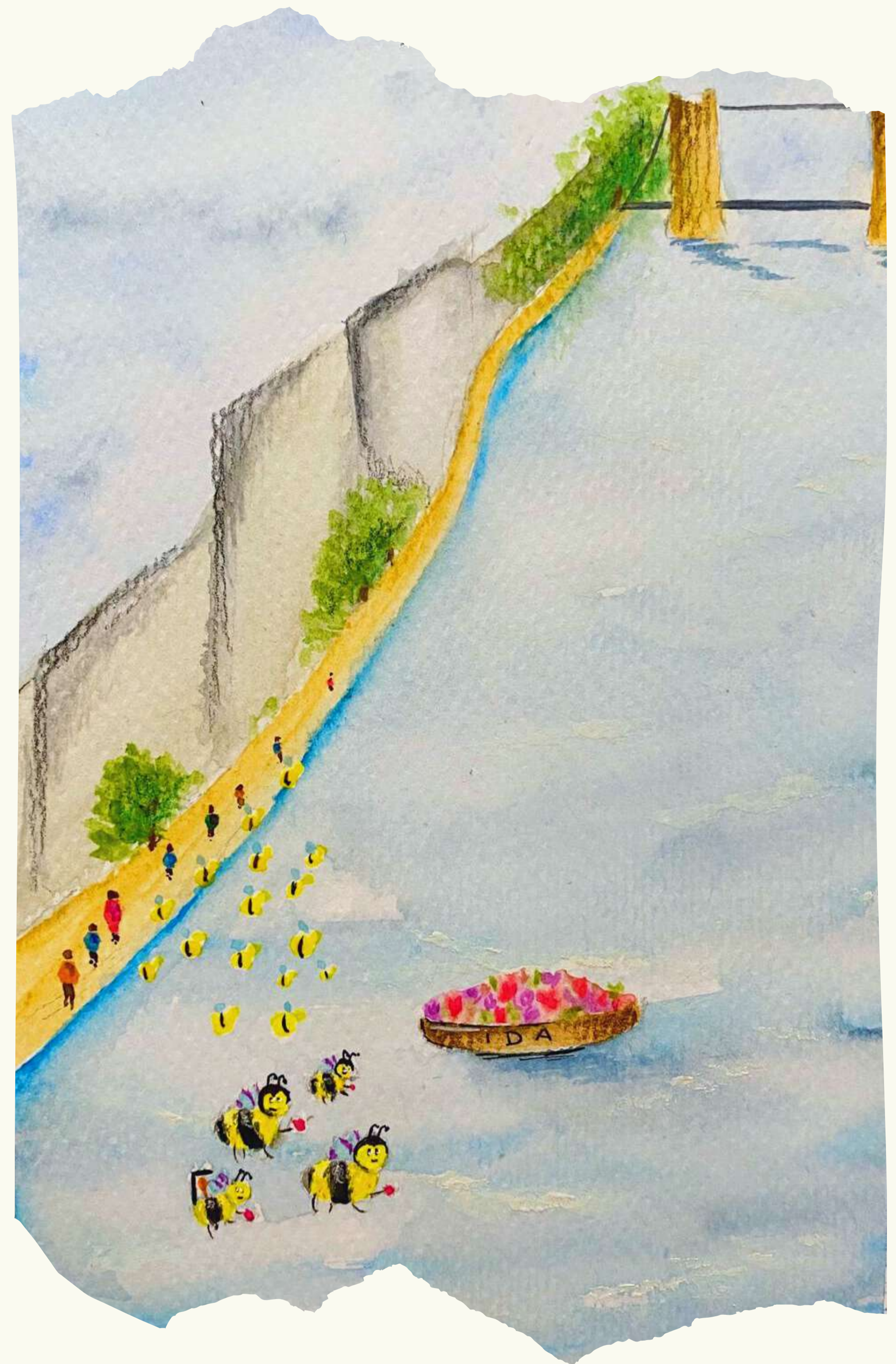
A warm and peaceful glow.

For Ida loved her life, they knew,

And never, ever wasted it.

They toasted her with honeydew,

And really, really *tasted* it.



Additional Resources

Helpful information for children

1. Coronavirus: A book for children by Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson & Nia Roberts:

www.millfields.hackney.sch.uk/uploads/2019/Corona%20Virus%20Info%20for%20Young%20Children.pdf.pdf

2. Hello! My name is Coronavirus by Manuela Molina:

www.nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-A-Book-for-Children.pdf

Helpful information for parents

1. If you want to access information on keeping your family safe and navigating this health crisis, UNICEF features helpful information for parents about COVID-19:

www.unicef.org/parenting/coronavirus-covid-19-guide-parents

2. World Health Organisation published a resource to help parents with their children during the time of confinement, there are six one-page tips for parents covering different themes like planning one-on-one time, staying positive, creating a daily routine, managing stress:

www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/healthy-parenting

Accessing mindfulness

If you are looking to practice mindfulness the way that Bombini and her grandmother did with the yummy honey, you can use the Headspace app which has meditation clips for both children and adults:

www.headspace.com

www.headspace.com/meditation/kids

Accessing resources on grief

If you are looking for useful information and resources related to supporting children and young people struggling with bereavement or loss during the coronavirus outbreak, you may want to take a look at:

www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus

www.bombinithebee.co.uk