

THE STORY OF HOPE

Helping Kids Express Feelings
of Grief and Loss

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and Melinda Gordon

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DEDICATION

To Abby and Simon, with all the love our hearts can hold.





DEAR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS,

As you know, personalities differ with each child and each handles difficult situations in his or her own unique way. Grief is no different. Death is a hard reality for children to process, oftentimes more so when they see their parents and loved ones in pain.

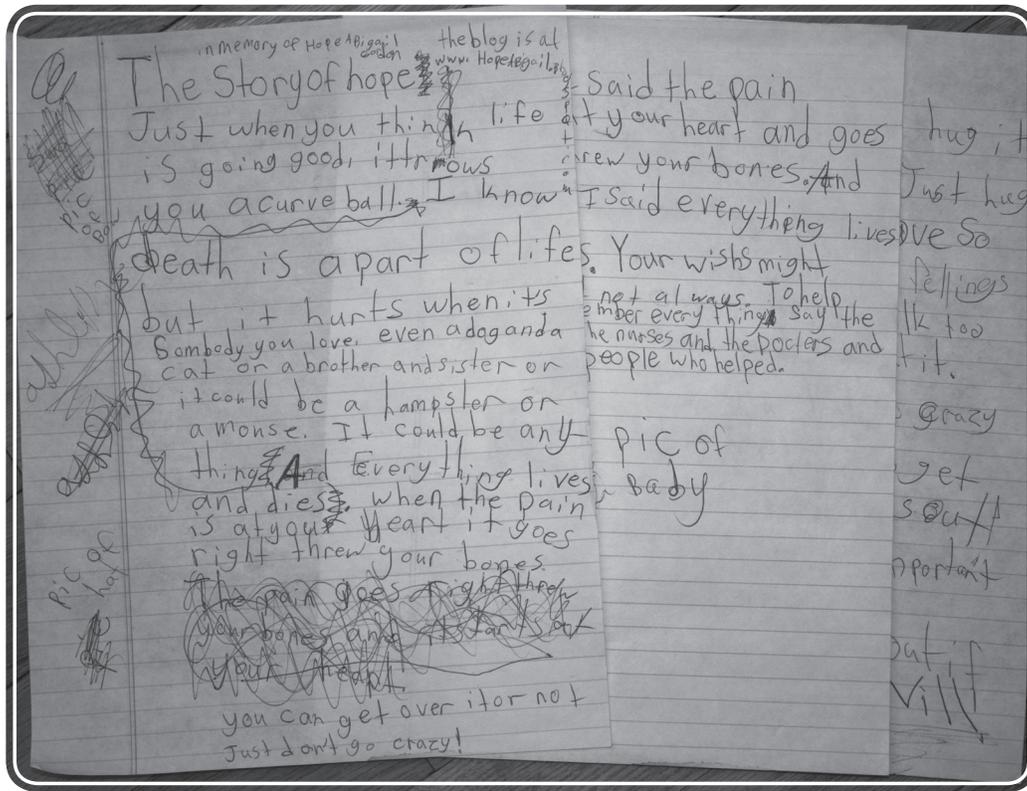
My daughter Ashlin is a quiet, reflective, and observant child who does not always speak her feelings or show her emotions freely. As my husband and I grieved the loss of our youngest daughter, we were intentional in keeping a close eye on Ashlin as she, too, grieved. One morning, a few weeks after Abby died, I asked Ashlin how she was doing. She gave me a quick shrug of her shoulder, as if to brush me off. So I grabbed a legal pad, drew a few facial expressions, and asked her to circle the picture that matched how she felt. She did. The next morning, I did the same. Within no time, Ashlin no longer needed pictures or drawings or promptings to express her emotions. This method became a turning point in Ashlin's healing because she learned to express how she felt, not simply with a shrug of the shoulder, but through pictures.

Grief support is often focused on the parents, offering little to siblings. We want to change this by giving brothers and sisters a safe outlet to express their feelings in their own way, without pressure, and know there is *HOPE* after a loss. Inside this book you will find resources to: 1) help gauge the feelings of children, 2) help children, as they move forward with day-to-day life,

express their emotions with coloring, writing, talking, playing, praying, and loving interactions with you.

Months after Abby died, Ashlin scribbled this story onto the same legal pad we had used months before to circle her feelings. She expressed beautifully, in the simple words of an 8-year-old, how to help other kids through their grief. And so, *The Story of Hope* was born.

Melinda



My name is Ashlin and I am 8 years old. My little sister, Hope Abigail “Abby,” was born with Trisomy 18. She was very sick and only lived 12 days. I loved my sister so much and miss her every day.

