


# Not Another Leaflet.

Written and Illustrated by Vika Tchibor





## Why Should You Trust Me?

What's the point? "With that attitude you'll never be successful". **What makes the teachers think they have the right to judge me?**

"What's the matter with you?" "Why don't your parents want you?" "Is there something wrong with you?" **I wish the kids at school would leave me alone.**

Why can't I be like them? "You shouldn't stare into people's windows". **I wouldn't have to if I had my own.**

"Where have you been?" Why does this feel like prison? Are these CCTV cameras necessary? **I thought they said it wasn't my fault, why do I feel like I'm the one being punished?**

"Why did you choose foster care over me?". **Was it really a choice?**

**Is this it?**

In the eight years that followed I allowed myself to become apart of a foster family. At age 18 I moved to London. I studied Religion, Philosophy and Ethics at one of the best universities in the world.

I travelled and worked across the globe, including Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Russia, Israel, America, Australia, Republic of Ireland, Switzerland, France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey and the Netherlands.

I began making a living, listening to young people and helping them rediscover their potential. That's how I pay for my rent, food, clothes and entertainment.

I have friends, people who like me for who I am. Not who people thought I was.

I was shortlisted for a National Children's Achievement Award, published a personal growth guide, attended meetings and events at the Houses of Parliament and the Royal Palace of Brussels. Now, I am taking the time to write to you.

My past did not determine my future. Neither does yours.

**I hope you can trust me**



## Slow Down, You're Doing Fine

There was a time when you couldn't speak or walk, let alone read or complete basic math sums like  $2+1$ . You have been growing physically and mentally ever since you opened your eyes as a baby.

Take a moment to appreciate everything you have achieved so far, including the extra special skills you have learnt during your time in foster care. For example, patience, resilience, adapting to change.

Now, try to imagine what you could achieve and learn in the next six months, let alone five or even twenty years.

The speed we progress will naturally rise and fall throughout our journey. Mistakes are unavoidable and sometimes necessary to help us reach our goals and become better versions of ourselves.

Thus, sometimes it's okay to take a step back if it means we can move forward again.







## It's Okay to Not Be Okay

Life isn't easy. You are a human being. So, occasionally it's okay to not be okay.

Negative thoughts and feelings are once again unavoidable and sometimes necessary to help us learn more about ourselves.

Whilst foster care might not always seem to be the ideal place to be, it's definitely not the worst when we're not feeling okay.

Our foster parents, social workers and some of the other professionals we come across are there to support us when we're not feeling okay.

Try to remember that the services around you were built by human beings, for human beings, including you.



## Give Others a Hand

Asking for help is not a weakness, neither is receiving it.

In fact, the person you are today is a result of lots of different people helping you understand and learn about the world around you.

For example, you wouldn't be able to communicate your anger or sadness to other people if you weren't taught the right words to express those particular feelings.

On that note, if we think about this logically. We were taught how to ask for help because occasionally everybody naturally needs help, including you.

Indeed, sometimes something can hold us back. For example we may be afraid of judgement or losing someone we care about. These can be perfectly valid reasons.

Still, we cannot expect someone to help us when we can't help them help us in the first place.

You see, no one can force us to help ourselves. Ultimately, we are in control. That is, only we can accept and ask for help from another person.





## Take Care of Your Marbles

Imagine you had a jar for each person in your life, which you gradually filled with marbles as you built a trusting relationship with them.

You might collect a marble each time that person gives you a reason to trust them through small acts or gestures, like remembering to ask how you are or showing interest in your day-to-day life.

Occasionally, the person might break your trust. For example, when your social worker cancels a meeting with you. Now, you may take one or two marbles out their jar.

Sometimes allowing ourselves to trust someone isn't as straight forward as collecting marbles in a jar. Especially, if we've been hurt or disappointed by people who should of cared for us in the past. Over and over again.

Firstly, you should try to remember human beings make mistakes. Including you. Sometimes, we can jump to conclusions or misunderstand what may or may not have happened because we haven't given the person a chance to be listened to. For example, when our foster parents disagree with our behaviour.

Secondly, your brain is pretty good at taking orders. If you tell it to look for something: it will find it. So, if you're looking for just one good reason to let go of all those marbles you've collected each time someone has given you a reason to trust them. Well you may as well have saved your time and never started the jar to begin with.

With this being said, we need people we can trust to support and challenge us through difficult times. These people do exist and when you find them, try not to let go of their marbles.





## Why Won't Anybody Listen?

It's very easy to get into arguments with different people when our point of view is limited by our beliefs and feelings towards a situation.

Imagine you were sat in a room with your foster parents, social workers, teachers and anyone else who is involved in your business right now. For example, your review meeting.

Now visualize a massive multi-coloured beach ball in the middle of the room, touching the ceiling. In fact, the beach ball is so big all the chairs in the meeting are pushed up against the wall.

When you ask the people on the one side of the room what colour the beach ball is they say its blue, green and orange. Meanwhile, the people pushed up against the wall on the other side begin to argue the beach ball is red, yellow and purple.

Now, you know despite looking at the same beach ball, everybody in the room has a slightly different point of view.

In a situation like this, most people don't tend to say "I understand my point of view might be slightly different from yours, can you show me what you're seeing?" Instead, they tend to believe their point of view is the only one in the room.

Here's a trick, **people become less defensive when you listen to their point of view.** You are then in a much stronger position to be listened to.

Why? Well, how often do you listen to people who haven't given you a chance to be heard or understood?

Adults aren't perfect, sometimes we have to remind them how to behave, that means if you want to be heard you may also have to be the first person willing to listen.





## You are in Control

Based on different sources and scientific research we make up to 35,000 choices everyday. Yes, that is thirty-five-thousand choices. Including 226 choices made each day on food alone.

Thus, if you had any concern about your lack of control right now the above numbers should help you put things back into perspective.

Growing up in foster care doesn't always feel like you have much control. You certainly didn't choose to go into foster care and sometimes your choices are limited by the rules set by your social workers, foster parents and other professionals.

Note, some of these choices are made to protect you from harm. Even if it doesn't always look that way from your point of view.

Try to remember the massive beachball again.

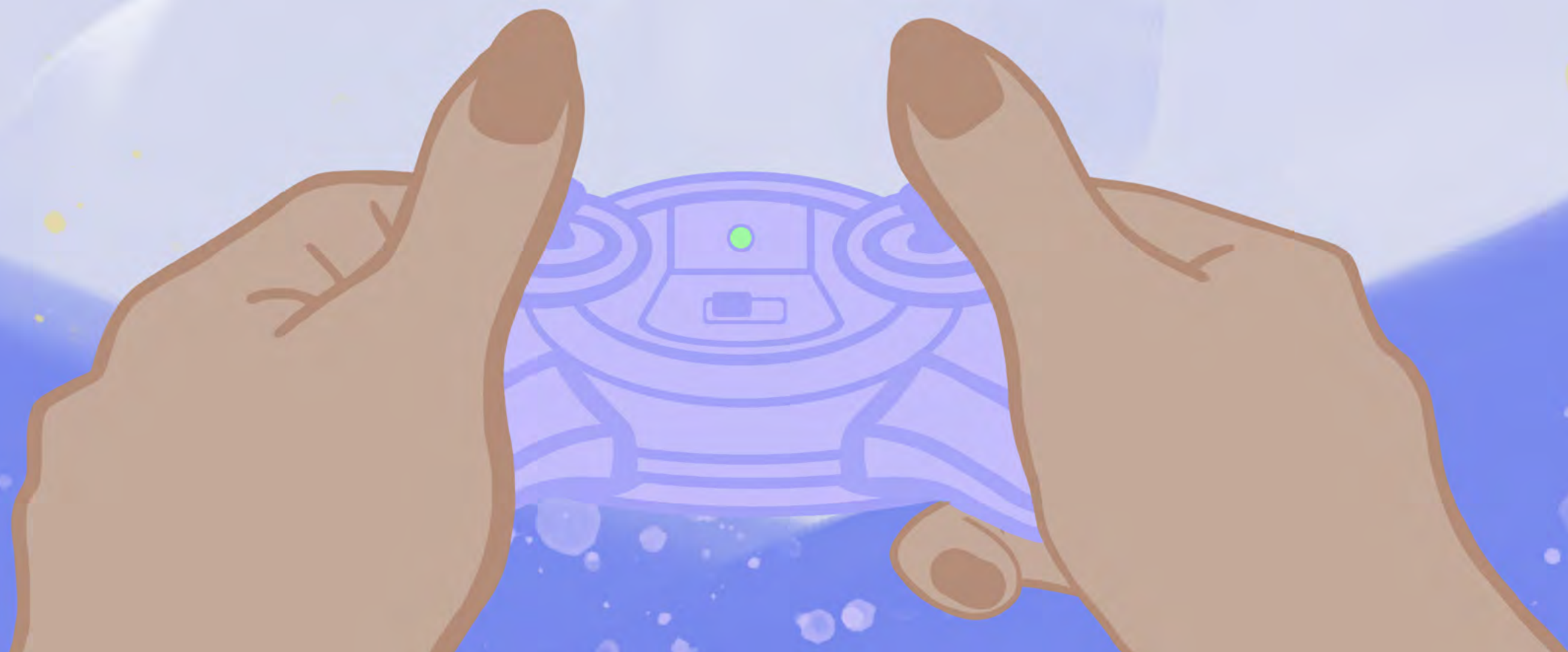
Whilst it can be natural to feel angry or resistant at first, you still have the freedom to choose how you will respond to the choices someone else has made.

In fact, you may even be surprised by how many different options you still have.

For example, if you're not happy with the amount of pocket money you are receiving from your foster parents you could choose to:

- a) give your foster parents a hard time;
- b) take out your anger on anyone who looks at you;
- c) steal from your foster parents, with the potential of getting into serious trouble;
- d) ask your foster parents who could help increase your pocket money, or,
- e) look for a part-time job, which could also give you an opportunity to gain some work experience.

You see, those are just a few choices you could make. There could be even more if you took the time to think about it. What you have to establish is which one will cause the least amount of harm to yourself and anyone else who may be affected by the choice you make.







## You are Not a Looked After Child

Being labelled as a **Looked After Child** can sometimes limit our hopes and dreams for the future. Especially, if we've been misled to believe that our choices and behaviour are due to our Looked After Child status alone.

Your experience in foster care does not have to define you or your future.

In fact, there have been many cases of highly successful people, such as Eddie Murphy, Marilyn Monroe, John Lennon and Muhammad Ali, who had left care and redefined themselves according to who they wanted to be.

With this being said, occasionally the Looked After Child label can also be used to help you achieve your goals.

For example, sharing your 'Care Leaver' status in a University application will inform the University that you are a potential candidate for a Scholarship Award or bursary to help you financially.

You see, Universities recognize the additional obstacles you may have had to overcome during your studies for a place on their course.

What's more, they understand you may not be able to afford the cost of living alone. Hence, they have created these opportunities for with young people like us.





## Life Doesn't Get Easier, You Get Better

Throughout your journey things will go wrong, occasionally you will make mistakes, people will come and go, your finances will dip up and down, someday the weather will be light and sunny, other days it will be cold and dark.

In the words of Jim Rohn, “don’t wish life would be easier, wish you get better; don’t wish for less challenges wish for more wisdom”.

Life will always be difficult, particularly when we transition into independent living.

With this being said, try not to give up, remember these simple antidotes and keeping working towards the things you want to have, be and do.

**You already are more than you think.**



## Where did you get this information?

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