

The Role of Cultures and Beliefs in Mourning

Erica Brown

Care starts from the understanding that each human being is a person, a single bodily and spiritual whole, and the proper response to a person is respect. Respect means being open to each man, woman and child, not as an isolated individual, but as someone with a story and a culture, with beliefs and relationships, that we give them the value that is uniquely theirs.

(Cicely Saunders)

Personal Identity - ethnicity

Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with other people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core of what it means to be human.



In order to enhance the quality of care we offer the families we support, we should think about, learn about and understand the significance of events in their lives. This means looking beyond recorded statements with respect to their culture or faith to an active understanding of how this is expressed and incorporated into their identity.

The Philosophy and Belief of the Family

It is vital that the views of the family and their experience of life and death are taken into account. This will include:

- How individual family members express their grief.
- The past experience of loss, change and death in the family.
- Religious and cultural perspectives regarding what happens at death and beyond.



I've always thought you should try and keep a lid on your emotions. I can't ever remember seeing my own parents cry, and that has had a huge influence on the way I behave.'

The experiences of twelve Asian mothers

Emotional Responses

- Sadness
- Shock
- Fear
- Anger
- Disbelief

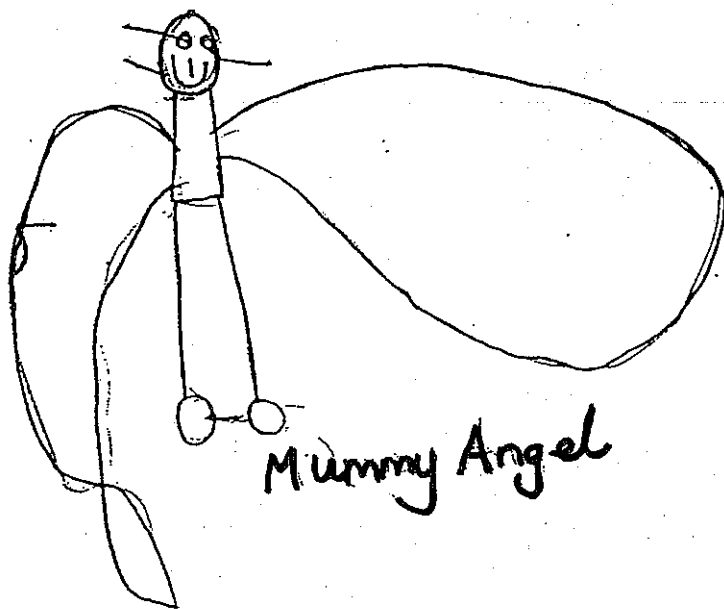
What the children say...

Is there really after life

?

What happens when somebody dies?

1. They go up to heaven.
2. Their body goes away.
3. They get a new body.
4. They go in a box and their body gets fired.



Mummy Angel



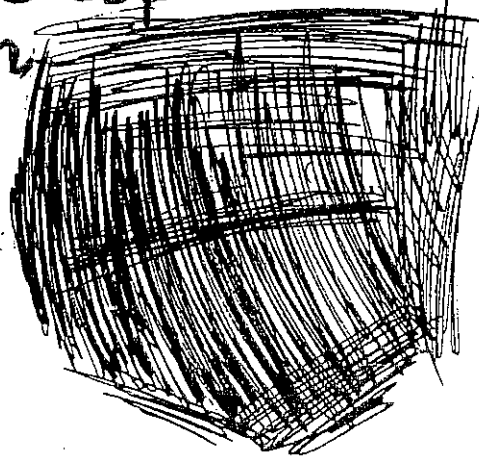
Baby Angel

Mary Aged 4

Mary aged 4

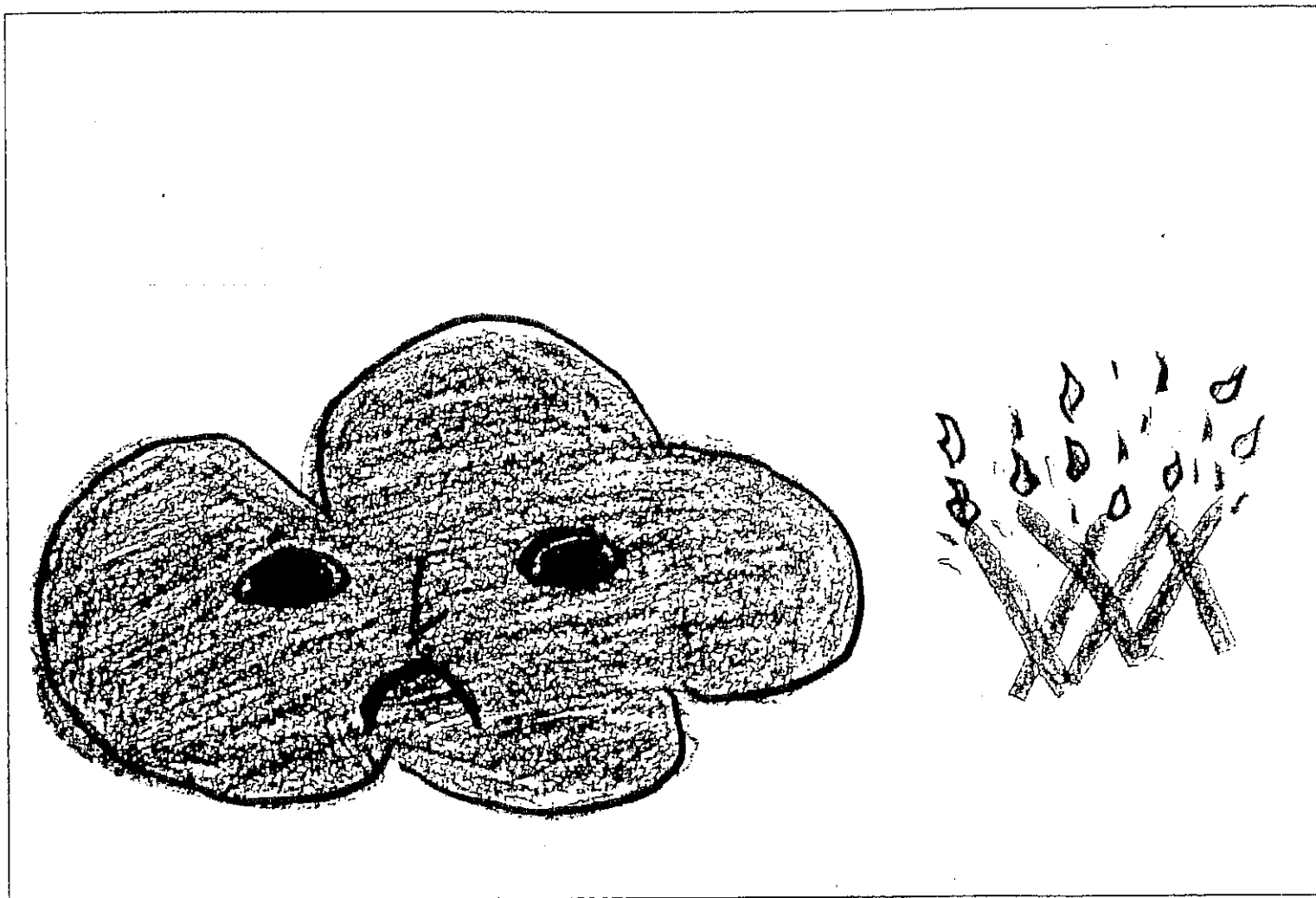
My mummy will be an angel too. She will come to
heaven and look after me.

After I Die
I think my holy
Spirit goes into Space
and there are 2 holes
one at the bottom and
one at the top the
bottom one leads to hell
and the top one leads to
heaven.

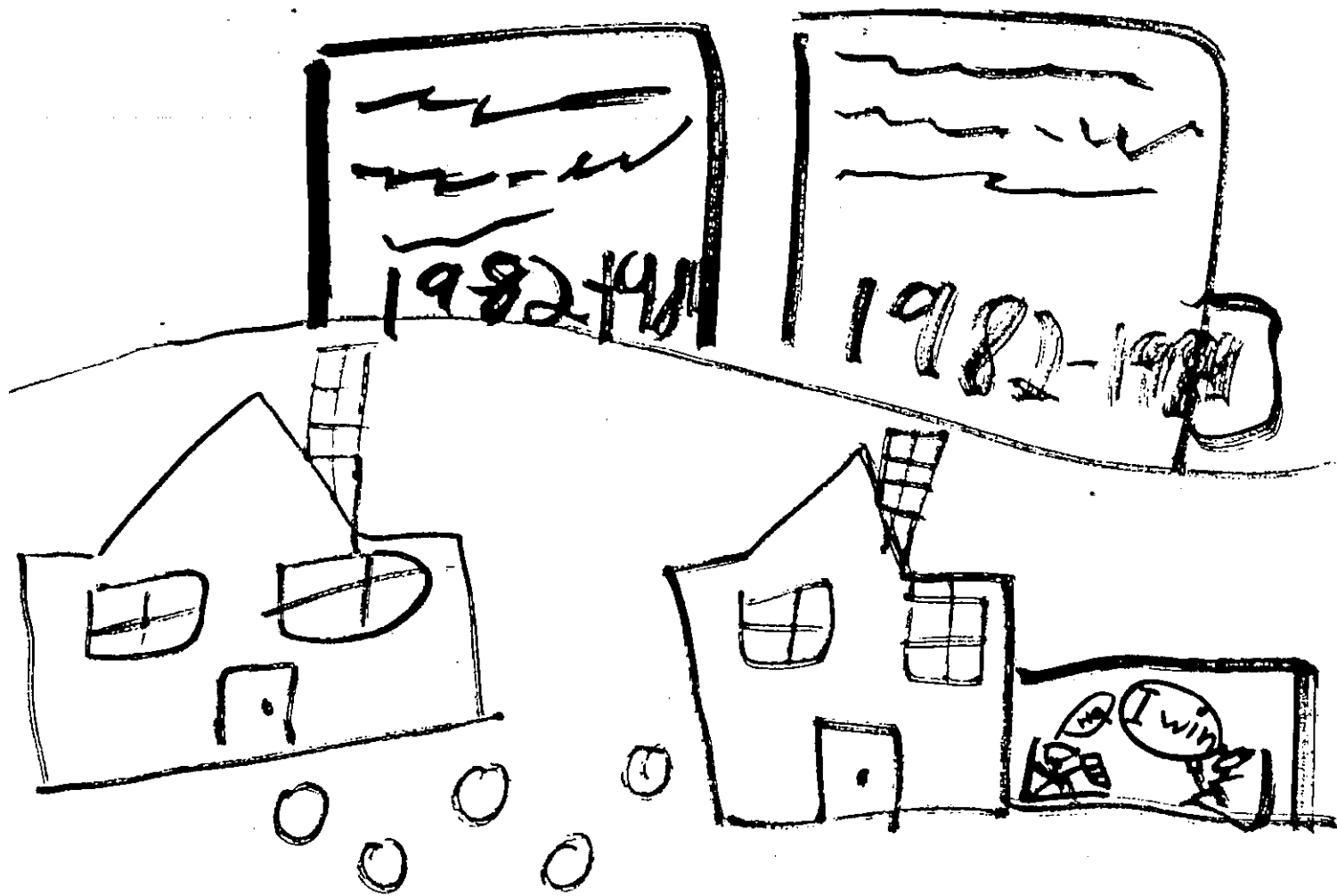


Year 2

Harry 7 1/2



When your body is fired the bit that is you goes
somewhere else. I think that bit is called the sole



Sometimes people go back up again - most of the time they stay under doing things.

How can professionals help?

- Be familiar with the family's home background, including faith and culture.
- Allow each person time to understand what has happened and to express what they feel.
- Accept people's individual responses.
- Keep routines as normal as possible and encourage normal activities.
- Encourage people to participate in ceremonies and rituals (if appropriate).
- Help people to organise positive memories.

'We sometimes say, why, why us?
Why did this happen to us?'

(Gordon Brown speaking about his daughter Jennifer Jane)

'On the first anniversary of his death I was standing ironing in the kitchen. A feather floated through the window and I remembered how an identical feather had floated onto his coffin before the funeral. I just know he sends signs to show he is in some sense still here.'

'Our child's life has taught us important lessons'.