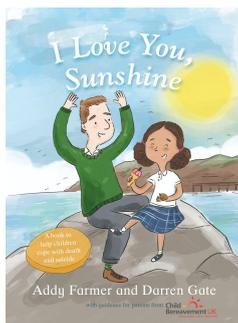


I LOVE YOU SUNSHINE

An Arts Resource Pack for Children and their families



Introduction

Who are we:

Rhubarb Theatre delivers creative and original theatrical experiences. Our work is mostly based in areas with the greatest need for access to the arts. Offering a diverse community programme, we deliver high quality family touring performances, street theatre, workshops, online projects, training, storytelling and bespoke arts projects.

Children's author, Addy Farmer, has written a sensitive book about love and bereavement for children. It addresses the subject of parental suicide. It is called, *I Love you, Sunshine*.

Addy Farmer is a children's writer, creative workshop leader, coordinator for the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators and trustee for the North Lincolnshire Children's Literacy Trust. She is published with poetry and also young fiction with Walker and Random House. She won a Northern Writers Award and has been shortlisted for awards including Hachette Debut Novel. She is represented by Darley Anderson.

Using the story, *I Love you, Sunshine*, as inspiration, Rhubarb Theatre has created a short stop-motion film to accompany the book.

Together with Addy, we have compiled a resource pack that allows you and your child to discuss and explore the subject of losing someone and finding ways to cope.

Who we have collaborated with to create this pack:

We have been working in collaboration with mental health professionals from

- Child Bereavement UK
- Parents and bereavement counsellors at the Edward's Trust, Birmingham
- Green Synergy
- Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: Healthy Minds

Along with The Disrupt Festival, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Lincolnshire Community Net Fund and Gofundme supporters to produce:

- A children's book
- A short stop-motion film
- A free online resource pack for schools

Who is the pack for:

Our resource pack is focussed on children aged 8 years + who have experienced loss through parental or family suicide.

Why we have created this pack:

The ideas for the *I Love you, Sunshine* resources are based on offering children a story to enable an understanding of their own world. With careful support, Milly's story can be repeated and interpreted as the listener or reader wishes, putting them in charge.

Dr Ann Rowland of Child Bereavement UK supplied the parental guidance notes for the book. She says:

“Children have active minds and vivid imaginations. Stories can help children identify with characters and explore experiences in a safe and supportive way. *I Love you Sunshine* provides children with an opportunity to begin to understand grief, and the impact of the death of someone important to them by suicide, encouraging open conversation and the sharing of emotions. Being able to make sense of a death by suicide is very difficult, however, if a child is able to build their own story around the death, this can help them to fit what happened into their own understanding of the world; reading a book, watching a film or working through activities about a child experiencing a similar situation can help in this process.

Bereaved children value, and need, the time that a trusted adult can give. However, before reading this book to, or with a child, it is suggested that you read it to prepare yourself for any pages that might be particularly difficult; to anticipate any questions the child may ask; how you will respond; and what similarities or differences there are with their own situation.”

At some point in our lives we will experience loss. Whether it is a parent, grandparent, friend or family pet, this can be a traumatic event. It is highly likely you will lose someone dear to you, as a child. Discussions at home can be challenging, and are often avoided in order to 'protect' a child. But children need to process emotions. By creating this resource, we aim to approach this difficult subject in a practical way. Allowing the children to explore the themes of the chapters, thereby giving them 'thinking time' to process the situations.

The *I Love You, Sunshine* resource aims to address the subject of bereavement by 'suicide', 'loss' and promote a broader understanding of 'mental health' using the arts as a tool. There are many other resources available to children and families, which we have sign-posted and included in the pack. However, as artists, we are using our area of expertise to approach the subject from a different angle.

Although a difficult subject, this is a story that needs to be told. Over the last 10 years Lincolnshire has experienced a sharp increase in suicide, particularly in adult men. Those left behind to deal with the loss are often families and children.

About the story:

“I Love You, Sunshine” tells the story of eight-year-old Milly. Her world is shattered when her dad takes his own life leaving her confused and feeling guilty. It takes a growing understanding, time and lots of support for Milly to find ways to pick up the pieces of life without Dad and to remember him with happiness.

Ultimately, it is a message of hope and love.

Content and using the pack:

This arts activity pack has been designed for children aged 8-11 years. If the child you are working with is younger than 8 (or older than 11) you are welcome to adapt the activities as you see fit.

The activities follow themes from each chapter of the book and ideally should take place after each chapter has been read. We understand that you know your child best. Therefore, we encourage you to take a flexible approach and take whatever aspect of the pack is helpful.

If you have any difficulty understanding how an activity should run, drop Rhubarb Theatre a quick email on info@rhubarbtheatre.co.uk and we'll chat you through it. You do not require any previous experience of drama, dance, music and art – this is a support resource, to be used in whatever way you feel suits the needs of your young people.

Read Chapter 1

Setting up the story

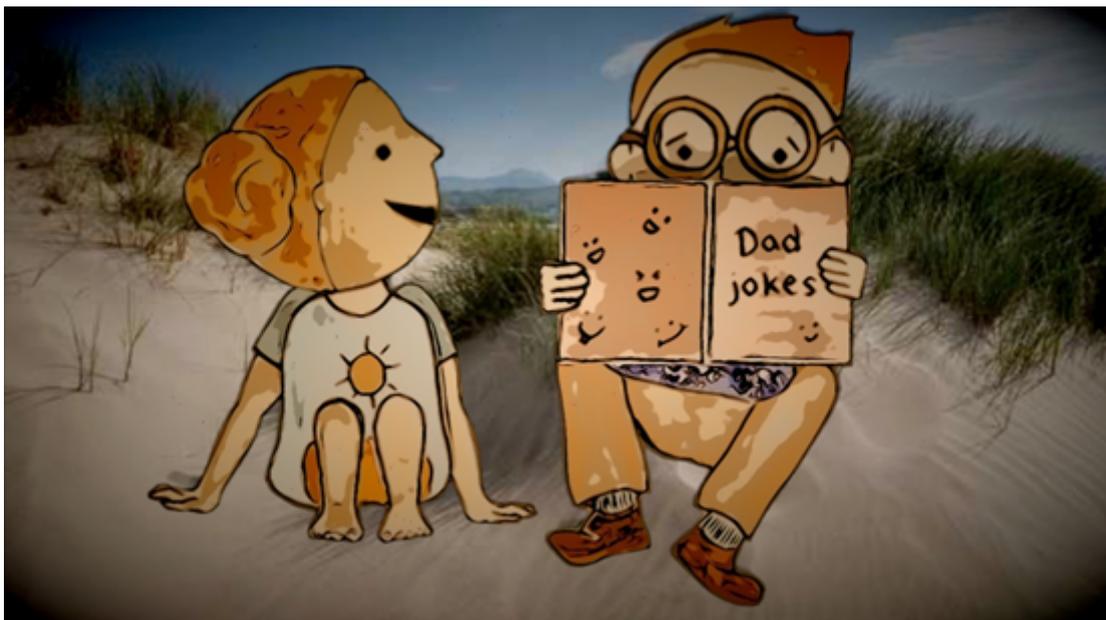
Can you remember all the things that Milly does with her Dad – make a list. Choose one thing on the list and draw a picture of it.

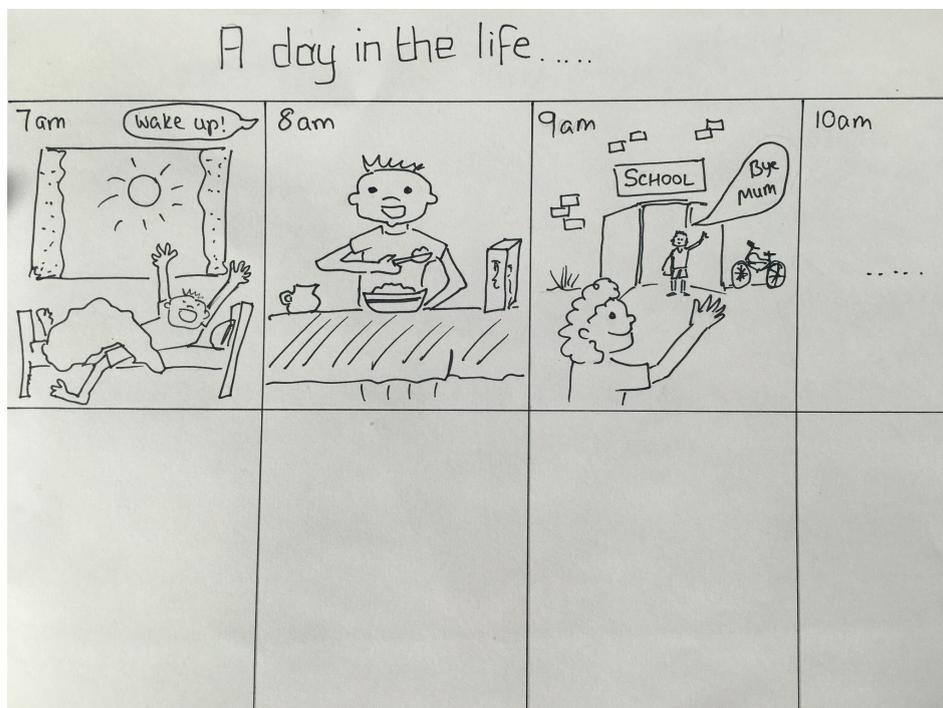
Read Chapter 2

Is this a joke?

Milly's father tells lots of jokes in this chapter. Can you think of a joke? Tell your joke to your adult and get them to tell one in return. Did it make you laugh?

Try telling each other jokes and your adult (or you) must try not to laugh. Now try anything you can to make your adult laugh – you can tickle, make silly faces, whatever it takes.





At the start of Milly's story, she shows us a day in her life. Can you write or draw a day in your life. Think about your family and how it was before the person in it died. You could use a timeline if you wanted or think of it as a film and draw it in scenes.

It could also be a diary entry with your own drawings - make it as big or little, as open or as secret as you like.

Read Chapter 3

Creating the 'where'

This chapter has three different scenes – places where action takes place, can you name them (breakfast in the kitchen / sports day at school / ice-cream at the beach).

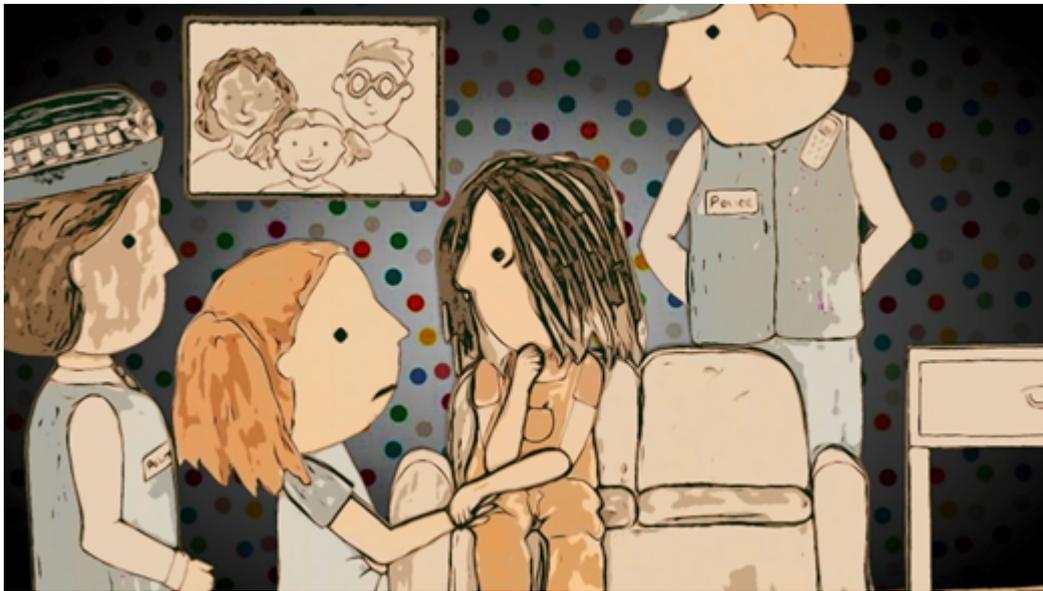
These are all safe and happy places for Milly. Can you think of a place (a where), that makes you feel happy. Close your eyes and imagine yourself there feeling warm and content. See the details in your mind, what is around you, what sounds, smells, colours are in your favourite place. Why is it a happy place for you?

Read Chapter 4

The day it happened

Milly's mum tells her that her dad died. Then later on Milly sits down with her mum and gran to hear how he died. Her feelings are confused and it takes time to sort them out.

It's important to tell your story of what happened to the person who died. You can draw it as a cartoon strip and show the scenes you want to show. Use the words you want to use in speech bubbles. Think about the person who died; who told you they died; how did that person die; how did you feel.



Read Chapter 5

Putting yourself in the shoes

When granny arrives, there are times in the chapter when Milly wants to ask things, but she does not. Even granny starts to speak 'Oh Milly' then stops from saying more.

Can you put yourself 'in the shoes' of Milly, Granny or Mum. What might each character be thinking? Can you come up with a sentence or a word, e.g. "I want to talk to her, but I can't find the words".

If you feel brave, you could act out the different characters. They are very different ages, do they stand or move differently from one another, how does their voice sound, can you make your voice sound like an adult or an old lady? Now say the sentence or word you think each of the characters might say.

Now step back into your own shoes and say a word or sentence that shows how you feel.

Of course, you don't have to act this out. Sometimes that can feel quite a difficult or scary thing to do. Instead, you could try drawing your characters as cartoons and give their thoughts as speech bubbles?

Perhaps you want to choose from a few suggestions like those below:

Milly might be thinking -

'Why has granny come to the house?' 'What happened to Dad?' 'Why can't anyone tell me?' 'Is it my fault?' 'Did he die on purpose?' 'I don't know what to do.' 'I want Dad back.'

Mum might be thinking.

'I can't cope with my feelings.' 'I don't know what to do next.' 'I love Milly.' 'How do I help Milly?' 'How will we cope without him?' 'I don't understand.' 'I want him home.'

Granny might be thinking

'I have to be strong for them both but I feel so sad.' 'I just don't understand it.' 'I just want to hug them both.'

Read Chapter 6

All the emotions

Can you give 5 examples of emotions (think about emojis). Can you act them out, e.g. grumpy, surprised, scared.

Using a pencil, can you circle all the different 'feelings or emotions' that Milly is going through. E.g. Shy, quiet, confused.



unhappy



angry



don't know what to feel



I can't speak about it



sad



confused



surprised



scared

Why do you think Milly thinks it's her fault?

Chapter 6



At Dad's funeral, there were lots of people Milly hardly knew. They crowded above her blocking out the sun. She felt shy and quiet and stayed close to Mum and Granny.

Granny stood on one side of her and Mum on the other. They held her hands the whole time.

Outside, Uncle William talked to Mum. Then he ruffled Milly's hair.

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"You have to be brave for your mum now Milly," he said.

Mum bent down and kissed Milly.

"It's alright, Milly," she said. "You don't have to be brave for me or Granny or anyone."

Milly nodded. She did not feel brave. She felt as sad as ever. She could not stop thinking about Dad and wondering why he had done it.

Granny made a big tea at home for everyone. Milly was not hungry.

She went slowly upstairs to her bedroom. She pulled Dad's sweat shirt out from under the bed and tipped the stones out onto the floor.

It was wrong, the stones were too bright and happy. She snatched her black paint and painted over the yellow suns. When she had finished wi

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Milly's scary thoughts

In Milly's story, the painted stones are a lovely memory but they are also a painful memory. Milly forgets to give Dad the special heart stone she painted for him. That very same day, he takes his own life. Milly thinks that because of this, it is in some way, her fault. It is only after time and talking to Mum that she comes to understand that Dad was too sad to carry on living and it had nothing to do with her, or her forgetting to give him his stone.

Perhaps you could explore the scary things you think about? Write them down, draw them. Talk about them with someone you trust.

Read Chapter 7

Music making a difference

At the end of chapter 7 the ice-cream van drives by playing happy music. Why do you think Milly doesn't want to hear the ice-cream van?

Music can make a huge difference to a scene in a play or film. It can also affect your own mood. Try putting on different music and seeing how it can change how you feel. Do you have a track that makes you remember the person who died?

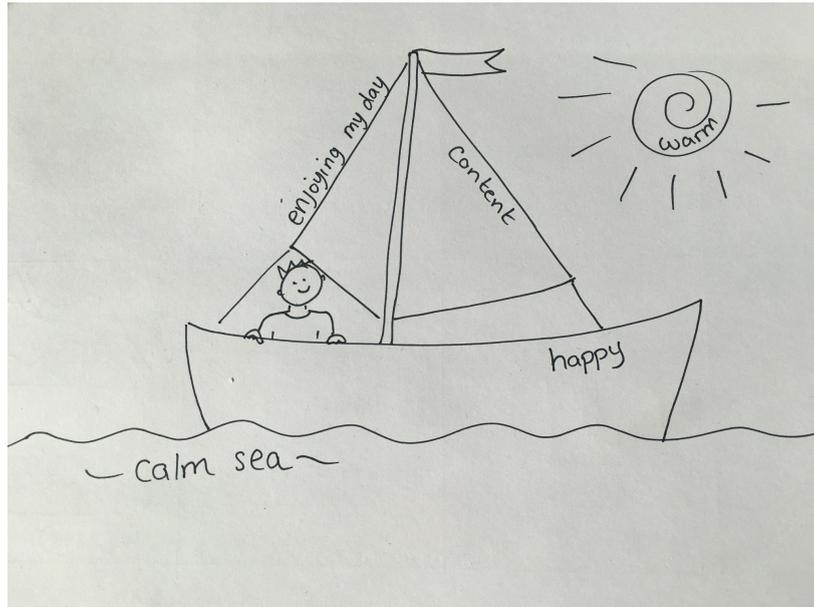
Feelings all at sea

Milly is very confused when her dad takes his own life. She is sad he is not there anymore, she doesn't understand why he chose to die when they were happy together as a family; she is confused because he said he loved her but he chose to take his own life; she feels guilty because she thinks that maybe just maybe she could have stopped him doing it. It's a lot of feelings to cope with.

Like Milly, you may feel all sorts of things when someone dies. It's good to show your feelings. You could try to express your feelings in some sea drawings.

- draw a calm sea with a boat; put feeling words for when you are happy in the boat

- draw a rough sea, a boat with words bouncing around for when you are feeling sad
- draw a boat in a storm at sea with your feeling words flying in the wind for when you are feeling angry

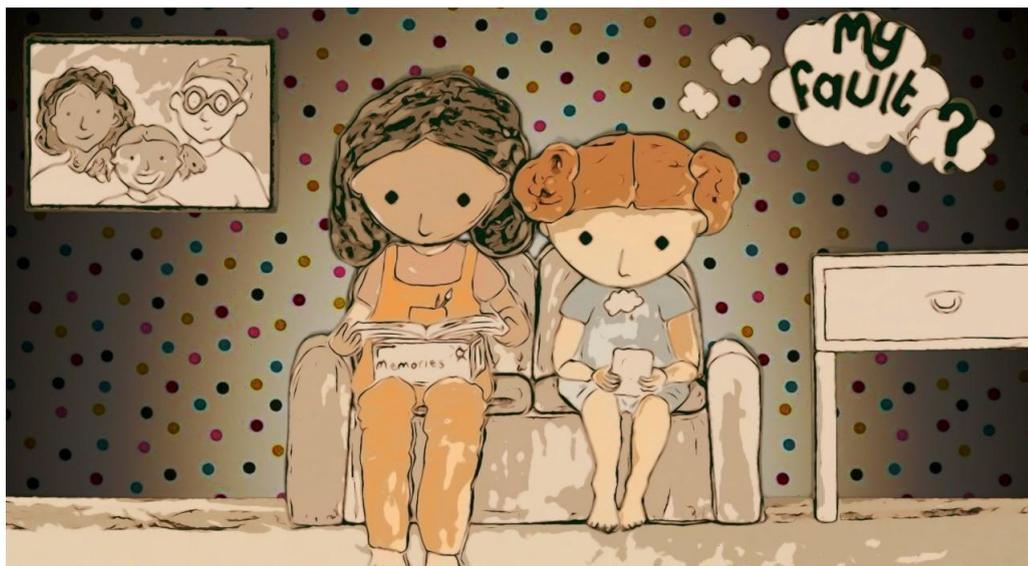


You can make your all at sea words and pictures into a soundscape. Use instruments from wherever you can find them, a cardboard tube makes a great wind sound, bang pots and pans, crinkle paper, shake a sheet, use your voice. In a class, different groups can try different feelings and then come together in a soundscape story.

Read Chapter 8

Share the memories

When you have lost someone, memories of happy times can help. Can you think of some happy memories? It could be a day out with friends, a birthday, an exciting event.



Milly's memory box

Milly used a shoe box to gather memories of her dad. She decorated the box with paint and shells. She put things inside which would help her remember her dad - a tie, a joke, a painted stone. Milly and her dad loved to go to the beach and collect stones. They would

paint them at home. Doing this gave Milly very special memories. You can do that as well with your own memories.

Read Chapter 9

Best of friends

Having friends you can talk to and share your feelings with is really important. And so is being a good friend.

Can you think of a time when you were a good friend to someone? Can you think of a time someone was a good friend to you?

Message in a bottle

It's good to feel and to remember. Sometimes you want to tell the person who isn't there anymore, something. It doesn't have to be big and important. It's often the small things which mean the most. The sort of things you say every day; like with Milly's dad and his jokes. What's your everyday thing you want to share?

Or it could be on a special occasion like a birthday or Christmas when you really want to speak to the person who's died.

Sometimes it's when you think of something you are going to do in the future when your loved one will not be there.

Find a plastic bottle with a lid. use paper you can curl up. Write down as many notes as you wish and pop them inside. You could ask yourself:

- I wish I could tell you ...
- one thing I want to do ...
- I will miss you when ...

Pop them in the bottle and tighten the lid. Keep it by you or set it adrift in your room.

Read Chapter 10

In the Hotseat

"It's not your fault". Mum tells Milly that she cannot blame herself and at last everything comes out in the open.

Hotseat – your adult is going to pretend to be Milly's mum. You are Milly. You can ask 'mum' questions and 'mum' must answer them. Think about what questions Milly might ask.

Do you have your own questions for your adult?

In the hotseat can be a good way to think about people and situations in a different way. We understand that some people might feel awkward or anxious about doing this activity. An alternative might be to write those questions down or perhaps even choose from the following:

Was it my fault?

Did they love me?

Why did it happen?

Why did they die like that?

Will I ever stop being sad?

You are my Sunshine!

Milly's dad sang a special song to her. It's a sad song and a happy song. It's called, 'You are my Sunshine'. Milly's dad changed the words for Milly.



*'You are my sunshine, my only sunshine
You make me happy, when skies are grey.
You'll never know, Milly, how much I love you,
Please don't take my sunshine away.'*

Perhaps the person who died had a special song? Or a tune they hummed? Maybe you can use a tune they liked and put your words to it. Or use the tune to You are my Sunshine, and put in that person's name?

Read Chapter 11

My Favourite things poem

Find some favourite things you remember or have from the person who died e.g.

Painting stones
Dancing
Whirling
Singing and
Silly jokes

Write a simple poem that includes all those favourite things.

The shape of them

Take a photograph of the person who died and make a list of words around them which say something about them e.g. tall, freckly, big laugh, hates spiders, loves me

Or look at the photograph and tell yourself the story of that moment e.g.

I see Dad at the beach
With his funny smile and fluffy hair
I see Dad.
I hear Dad and his silly joke
Me saying, 'Da-ad!'
I hear Dad.
I remember Dad at the beach
and I feel happy

Read Chapter 12

The End?

How did the final chapter make you feel? Was it a happy or sad ending? If you could change the ending, how would you have the book end?

Poems to help

Songs are like poetry put to music. Poetry can say what you are feeling. It doesn't need to rhyme and it can come in all sorts of shapes and sizes.

You might know the Acrostic where you take the initials of a name and put words or lines to them e.g.

Dancing and singing

At silly times

Did us good

Or how about a Mesostic. This is when you incorporate a name into a poem in any way you like e.g. David

We loveD to sing

And dance at home,

Eat icecreams, while watching waVes

From the bIg rock until

The sun went Down

If you are experiencing bereavement, mental health or loss, you are not alone.

There is support for you:

Child Bereavement UK

www.childbereavementuk.org or 0800 02 888 40

Childline

Helpline 0800 1111

Samaritans UK

Helpline 116 123

SHINE

lincsshine.co.uk/information-support

Lincolnshire Mental Health Helpline

0800 001 4331

Lincolnshire Suicide SAFE

left.nhs.uk/contact-us/need-help-now



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