

MARVELOUS
MITCH



You're probably going through a lot right now. Things might feel really confusing. It's normal to have a lot of questions and different feelings about what's going on.



This book is here to help you figure some of that out. These things happen to other kids, too.



In this book you'll find some information about:

- What could happen
- People you might see or talk to
- How to notice your feelings and practice ways to feel better



You can keep this book. Read it, write in it, or do whatever you want with it. Hopefully it helps.



This is Mitch's story.



Mitch is a witness in a criminal case. This means she saw or heard what happened when an adult broke the law (which is called committing a crime).



Mitch meets new adults who ask her questions about what happened, and teach her about how the legal system works. Mitch learns about her feelings and things she can do to feel better.

Some of Mitch's experiences might be different from what you're going through. Mitch might not look like you, she might not come from the same tribe as you, and she might live somewhere different than you.

But some of Mitch's experiences and feelings might be similar to yours.

We hope this book can help you better understand what's going on and remind you that you are not alone.

DEEP WITHIN A
MIDWESTERN TOWN...

"HI THERE!
MY NAME IS
MITCH."

"MY PARENTS
NAMED ME
MICHELLE, BUT I
GO BY 'MITCH.'"

"MITCH FITS
ME BETTER."



BRRRING!

OK,
THAT'S IT,
EVERYONE!

BE SURE
TO READ THE
ASSIGNMENT
BEFORE
MONDAY...

...AND HAVE
A GREAT
WEEKEND!



LATER,
MR. IT!



"THAT'S
MY FRIEND,
KATIE."

"I'VE KNOWN
HER SINCE
KINDERGARTEN.
WE GO WAY
BACK."



"AND THERE'S
MOM, RIGHT
ON TIME, AS
ALWAYS.."

HI
MOM!

HI, MITCH.
HOW WAS
SCHOOL
TODAY?





"...THEY ALSO HELP PEOPLE WHEN THEY'RE HAVING A HARD TIME."

"AND ALL OF US HAVE OUR OWN SUPER POWERS AND ABILITIES, TOO. BUT SOMETIMES WE DON'T KNOW IT."



"HOW DO I KNOW THIS? I LEARNED LAST YEAR..."

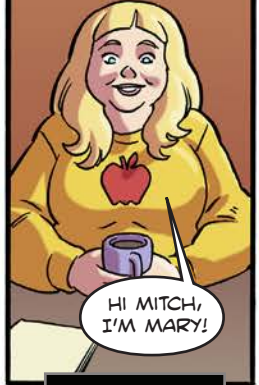
"...WHEN I HAD TO PREPARE FOR A VERY IMPORTANT ASSIGNMENT."



"SOME BAD THINGS HAPPENED TO MOM AND ME..."

"...THAT'S WHEN I LEARNED HOW IMPORTANT MOM'S JOB WAS..."

"...WHEN WE WERE ASSIGNED OUR OWN VICTIM ADVOCATE."



HI MITCH, I'M MARY!

LAST YEAR...

I'M A VICTIM ADVOCATE, JUST LIKE YOUR MOM.

THAT MEANS I'M HERE FOR YOU, TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON.

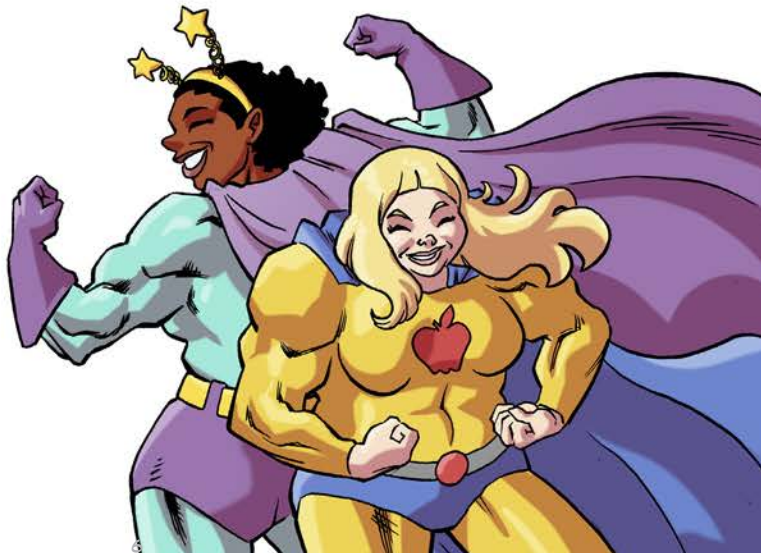


"MARY WAS NICE. SHE MADE ME FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE WHOLE THING."

"SHE TOLD ME THAT WHAT HAPPENED WAS NOT MY FAULT - THAT MADE ME FEEL BETTER."

"PLUS, SINCE SHE AND MOM WERE BOTH ADVOCATES, I GOT TO SEE MOM'S JOB IN A WHOLE NEW LIGHT."

"AND SHE TAUGHT ME A FUN WAY TO HELP FOCUS MY MIND IF I NEED TO CALM DOWN..."



Relax

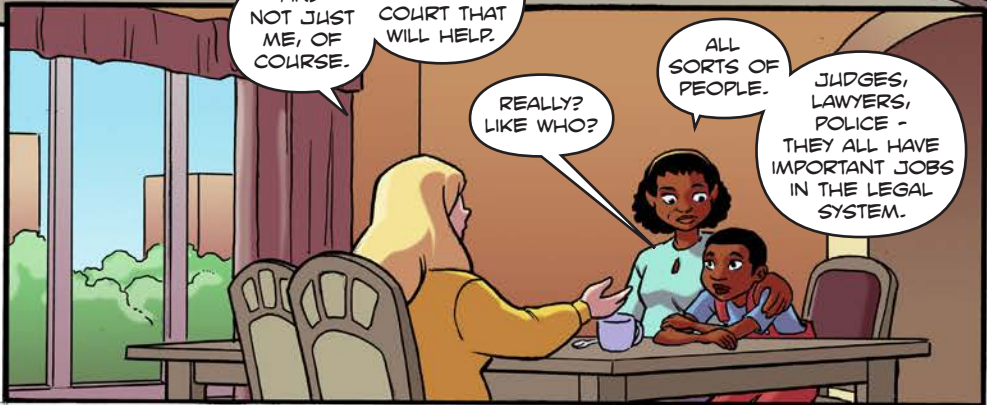
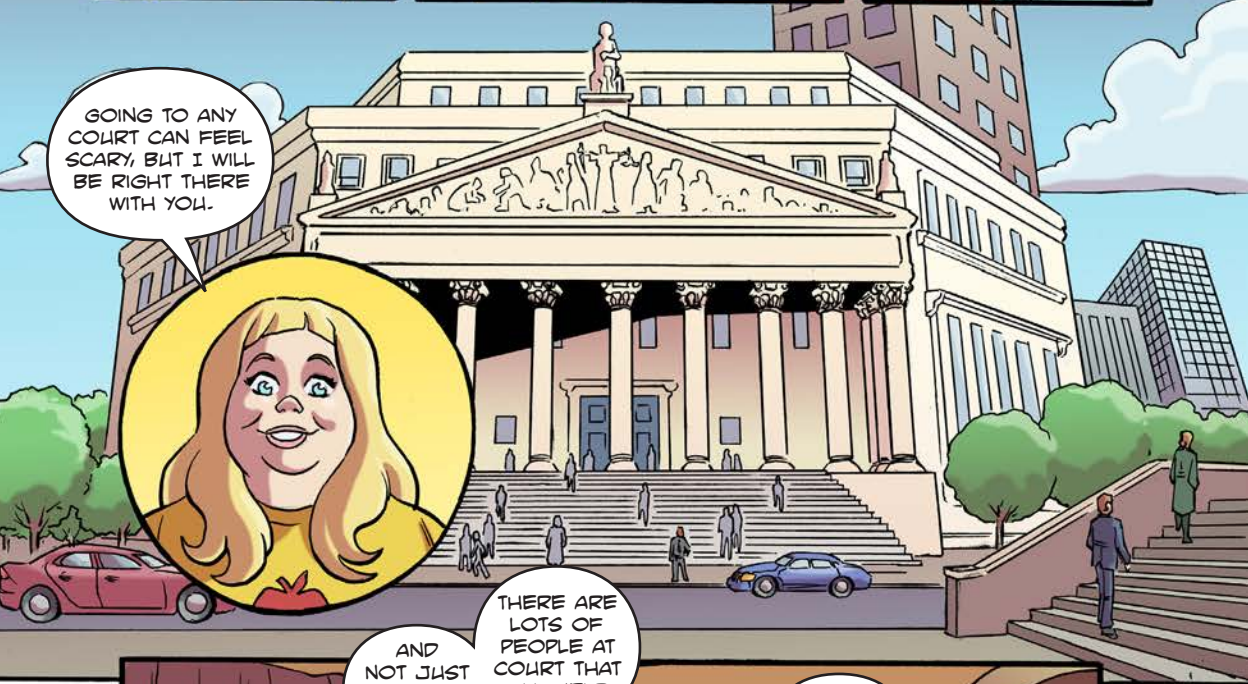
MUSCLE SQUEEZE

When people are stressed, their muscles can feel really tight! Try this 4-step exercise to relax your body when feeling anxious.

- 1 Curl up and squeeze just your toes, and hold for two seconds. Then relax your toes and shake them out!
- 2 Squeeze your entire foot (both feet!) for two seconds. Then relax your feet.
- 3 Squeeze your legs for two seconds, and then relax and shake them out.
- 4 For two seconds squeeze your whole body - including your shoulders, arms, hands, stomach, legs, feet and toes! Then release and relax.

You can repeat steps 1-2-3-4 until you start to feel better.



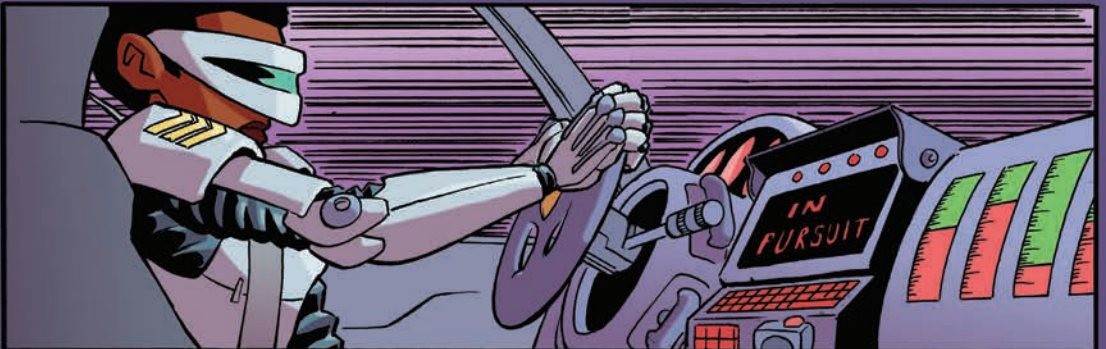


"I LIKE TO PUT MYSELF IN THE SHOES OF ALL SORTS OF SUPERHEROES."

"BEING A POLICE OFFICER WOULD BE EXCITING. I'D BE A ROBOT COP."

I'D HAVE THE LATEST TECH TO HELP ME CATCH ALL THE BAD GUYS.

AND I'D ALWAYS PROTECT THOSE IN NEED.





YOU REALLY LOVE THAT ROBOT-COP MOVIE, MITCH!

BUT JUST REMEMBER THAT REAL LIFE AND THE **REAL** POLICE AREN'T LIKE WHAT WE SEE IN THE MOVIES.



YES, **HUMAN** POLICE OFFICERS TRY TO KEEP US SAFE.

THEIR JOB IS TO PROTECT THE COMMUNITY AND ENFORCE THE LAW.

THEY ALSO INVESTIGATE CRIMES BY ASKING QUESTIONS AND GATHERING INFORMATION.



MITCH, DO YOU REMEMBER YOU SPOKE WITH A POLICE OFFICER, AFTER WHAT HAPPENED?

OH YEAH!

I WAS WORRIED AND SCARED THAT I WOULD BE IN TROUBLE.

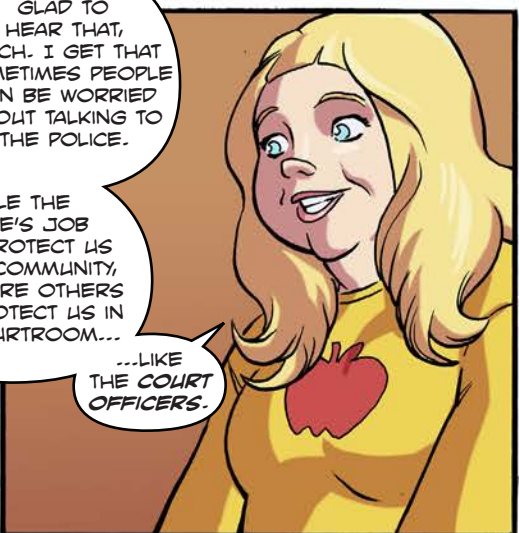
BUT THE POLICE OFFICER WAS REALLY NICE AND JUST ASKED ME QUESTIONS.

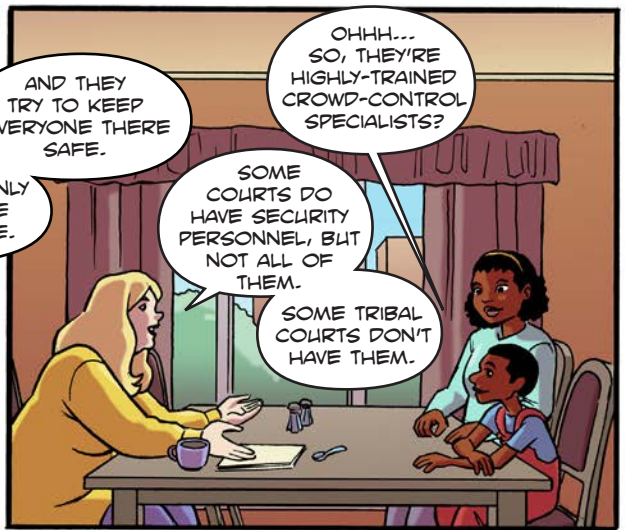
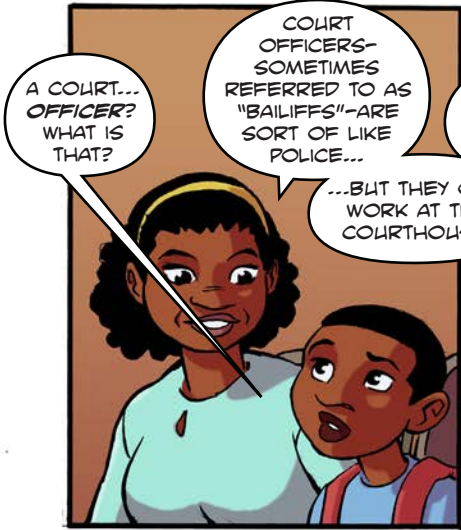


I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT, MITCH. I GET THAT SOMETIMES PEOPLE CAN BE WORRIED ABOUT TALKING TO THE POLICE.

WHILE THE POLICE'S JOB IS TO PROTECT US IN THE COMMUNITY, THERE ARE OTHERS WHO PROTECT US IN THE COURTROOM...

...LIKE THE COURT OFFICERS.

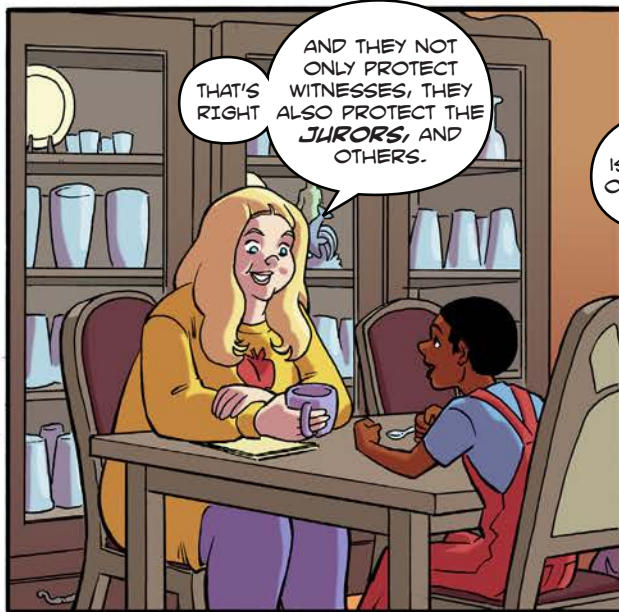






BUT THEY'RE NOT 'ASSIGNED' TO INDIVIDUALS.

THEY ALSO CALL EVERYONE INTO THE COURTROOM WHEN THE JUDGE IS READY.



THAT'S RIGHT

AND THEY NOT ONLY PROTECT WITNESSES, THEY ALSO PROTECT THE JURORS, AND OTHERS.



OH, I KNOW THAT ONE!

A JUROR IS SOMEONE ON THE JURY, RIGHT?

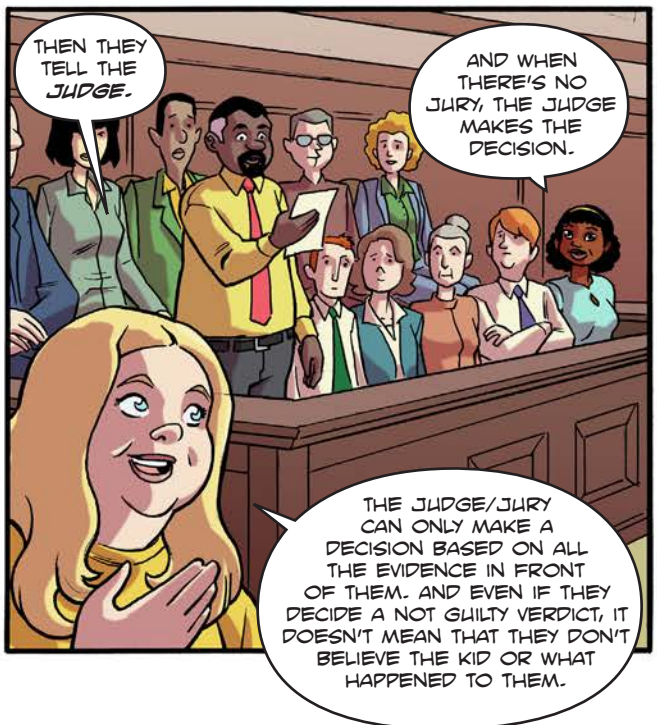
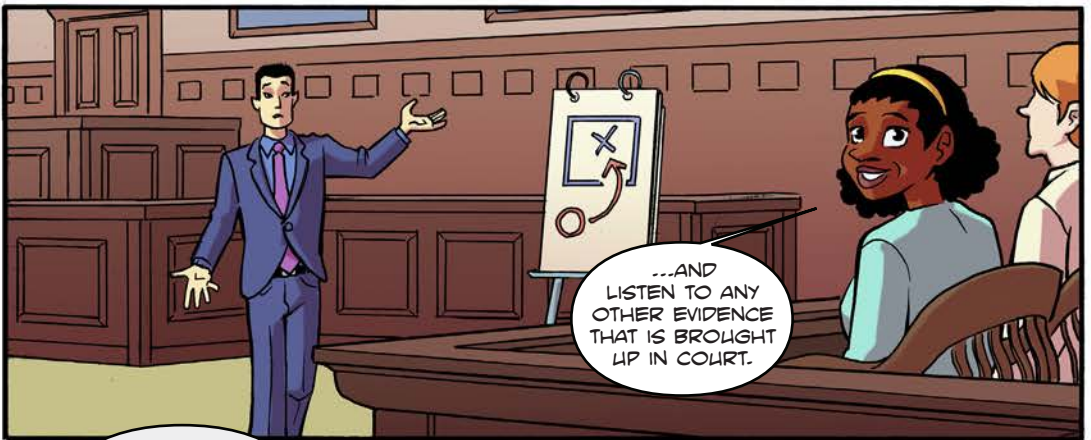
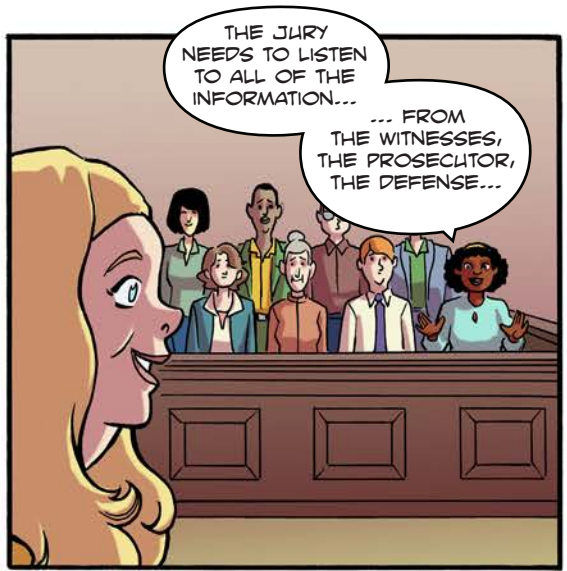


THAT'S RIGHT. THEY DECIDE IF SOMEONE'S 'GUILTY,' WHICH MEANS THE EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT THEY COMMITTED A CRIME...

...OR 'NOT GUILTY,' WHICH MEANS THERE WASN'T ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO PROVE IT.



THEY MAKE THEIR DECISION BASED ON EVERYTHING THEY HEAR IN COURT.





BUT THE JURY DOESN'T DO THE 'SENTENCING.' THAT'S USUALLY DONE BY THE JUDGE.

IT'S EASY TO PUT MYSELF IN THE SHOES OF A JUDGE. I KNOW HOW TO BE IN CHARGE.

BUT WHAT'S SENTENCING?



SENTENCING IS WHAT THE JUDGE WILL DECIDE THE PERSON HAS TO DO, ONCE THEY'RE FOUND GUILTY.

IT COULD BE GOING TO JAIL OR PRISON, OR DOING A PROGRAM.



THAT'S RIGHT. AND JUDGES HAVE OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES, LIKE MAKING SURE EVERYONE IN COURT FOLLOWS THE RULES.

THE JUDGE MUST HAVE THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB!

THEY'RE LIKE A POWERFUL SUPER-HERO!




WELL, THEY'RE NOT LIKE THE SUPERHEROES IN YOUR COMIC BOOKS, BUT THAT'S A NICE WAY TO LOOK AT IT!

...ALL WORKING TOGETHER TO GET TO THE TRUTH AND KEEP EVERYONE SAFE.

ALL OF THESE PEOPLE SEEM LIKE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SUPER HEROES...

ALSO, THERE'S A LOT TO KEEP TRACK OF IN COURT.





IN FACT, THERE'S SO MUCH GOING ON DURING A COURT CASE THAT SPECIAL COURT REPORTERS TAKE NOTES AND RECORD ALL OF THE INFORMATION.



"OK NOW WE'RE TALKING!"

"I KNOW EXACTLY HOW TO PUT MYSELF IN A REPORTER'S SHOES."

"I BET THERE'S A LOT OF TYPING INVOLVED, AND I'M NOT VERY FAST..."

"...BUT MAYBE I CAN LOOK FOR VIDEOS ON HOW TO SPEED TYPE?"



"WITH SO MANY PEOPLE TALKING IN COURT, I BET IT WOULD TAKE SUPER-HUMAN ABILITY TO STAY CALM..."

"...I COULD USE MY TUMMY-BREATHING TRICK TO SLOW DOWN AND BE A BETTER LISTENER..."

Relax

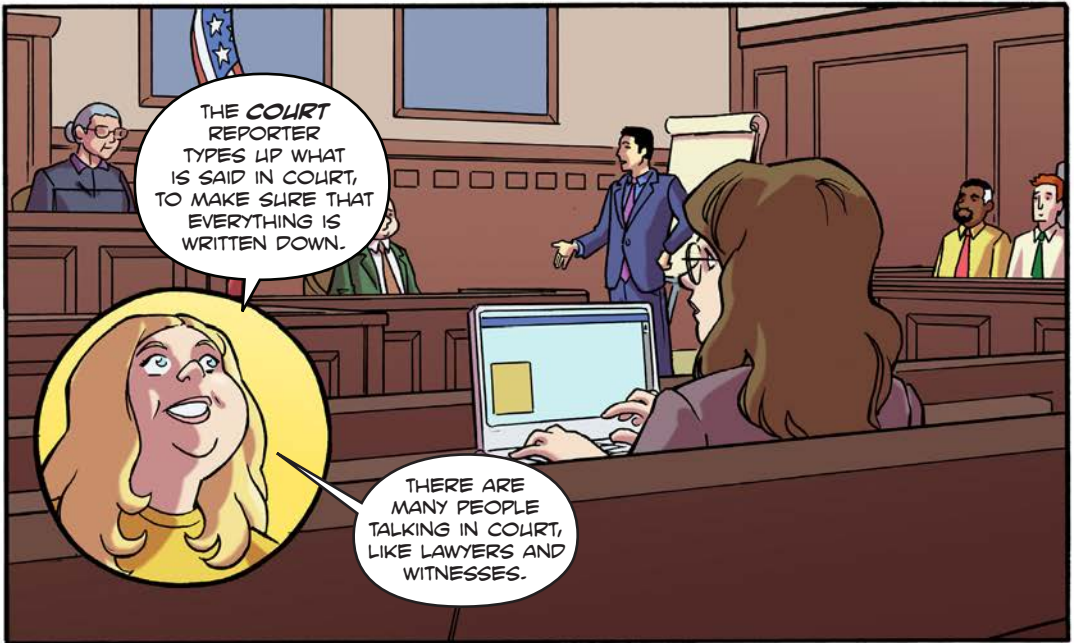
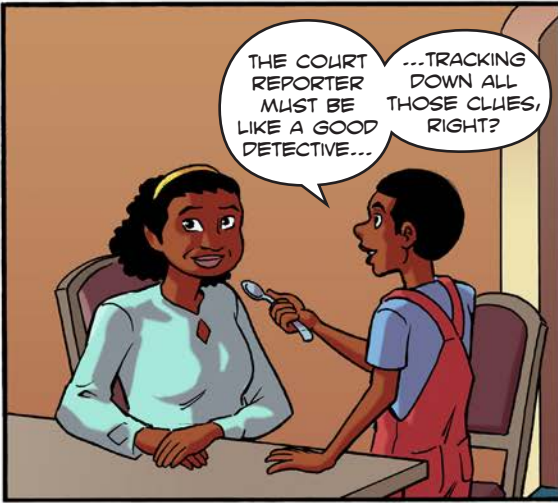
BREATHING TRICK

Some kids use this trick to feel calmer when they're stressed or upset. Try this either standing, sitting or lying down.

- 1** Put your hands on your stomach. Take a deep breath, slowly, counting 1-2-3 and feel your stomach rise.
- 2** Hold your breath for a count of 1-2.
- 3** Now breathe out, slowly, counting 1-2-3. Feel your stomach go down.

Try doing this a few times in a row. You can also close your eyes, if you like.

How do you feel afterward?





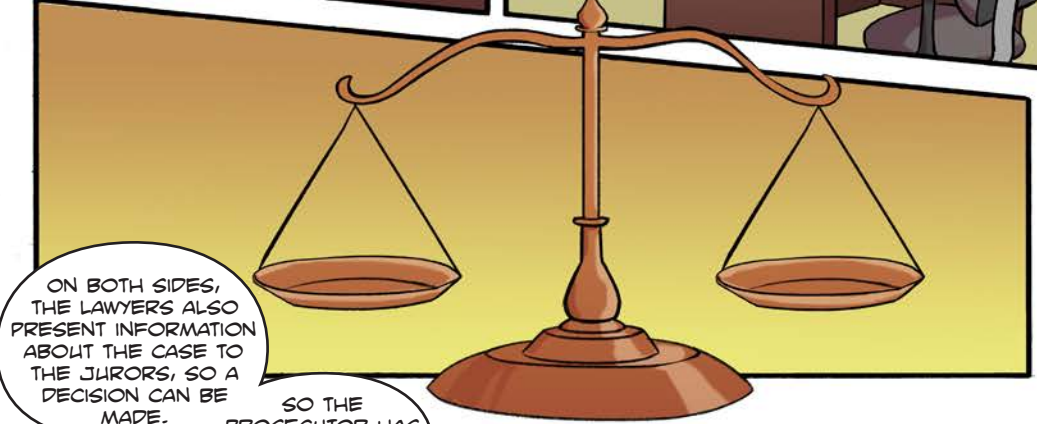
...A PROSECUTOR'S JOB IS TO UPHOLD THE LAWS AND RULES OF THE COMMUNITY.



IN COURT, THEY ASK A LOT OF QUESTIONS OF WITNESSES...



...TRYING TO GET TO THE TRUTH OF THINGS.



ON BOTH SIDES, THE LAWYERS ALSO PRESENT INFORMATION ABOUT THE CASE TO THE JURORS, SO A DECISION CAN BE MADE.

SO THE PROSECUTOR HAS A VERY IMPORTANT JOB IN COURT CASES.



DOES ALL THAT MAKE SENSE, MITCH?



SO, THE PROSECUTOR MUST HAVE THE **MOST** IMPORTANT JOB IN COURT, RIGHT?

WELL, THE JOB OF PROSECUTOR IS DEFINITELY IMPORTANT.



ALSO, THE **DEFENSE ATTORNEY** IS THE DEFENDANT'S LAWYER.

THE **DEFENDANT** IS THE PERSON WHO HAS BEEN **ACCUSED** OF A CRIME.

THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY TRIES TO SHOW THAT THE DEFENDANT DID NOT COMMIT THE CRIME THAT THEY ARE ACCUSED OF.

THEY ASK THE WITNESSES QUESTIONS AND MAY SAY THINGS THAT SOUND LIKE THEY'RE MAD AT YOU, BUT THEY'RE NOT.

THEY ARE DOING THEIR JOB, WHICH IS TO HELP THE DEFENDANT.

HOWEVER, THERE'S ANOTHER ROLE THAT, I THINK, IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT.



THERE IS?

WE'VE ALREADY TALKED ABOUT SO MANY ROLES ALREADY!

SO WHICH ONE IS THE **MOST** IMPORTANT?

WELL, FIRST, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US ABOUT EACH OF THE ONES WE DISCUSSED?



"OK, HERE GOES..."

THE JUDGE IS IN CHARGE OF THE ENTIRE COURTROOM AND DECIDES THE VERDICT, IF THERE'S NO JURY, AND THE SENTENCING.

THE COURT REPORTER MAKES SURE THAT EVERYTHING SAID IN COURT IS RECORDED.

THE JURORS LISTEN TO ALL THE INFORMATION, THEN DECIDE WHETHER SOMEONE IS GUILTY OR NOT.

AND THE PROSECUTOR ASKS THE WITNESSES QUESTIONS, TRYING TO GET THE FULL STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED.

POLICE AND COURT OFFICERS KEEP US SAFE AND MAKE SURE PEOPLE FOLLOW THE RULES.



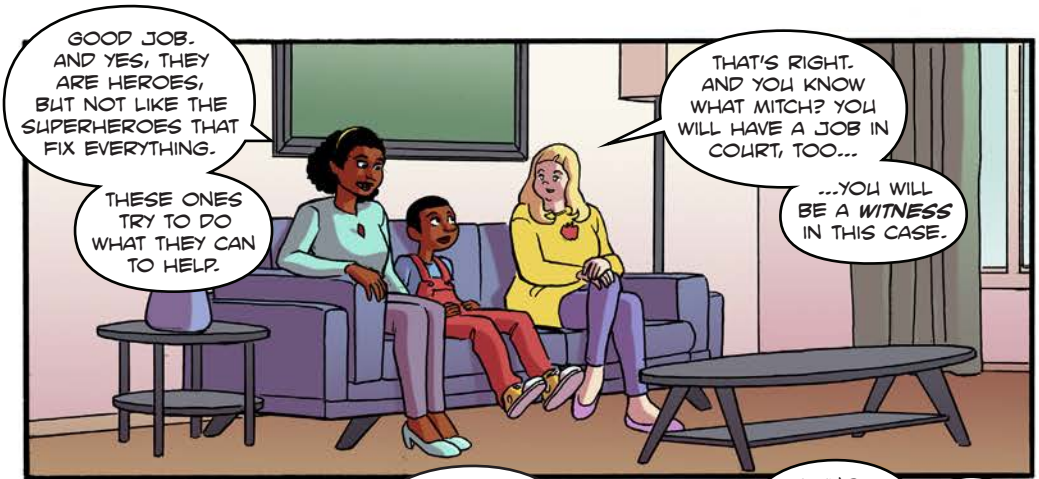
WOW, ALL OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE SUCH IMPORTANT JOBS. THEY'RE ALL DIFFERENT KINDS OF HEROES WITH A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY.

NAME THAT JOB!

Here are five people whose jobs Mitch has learned about today.

Flip back through the story and see if you can find the name of the job each person has in court!



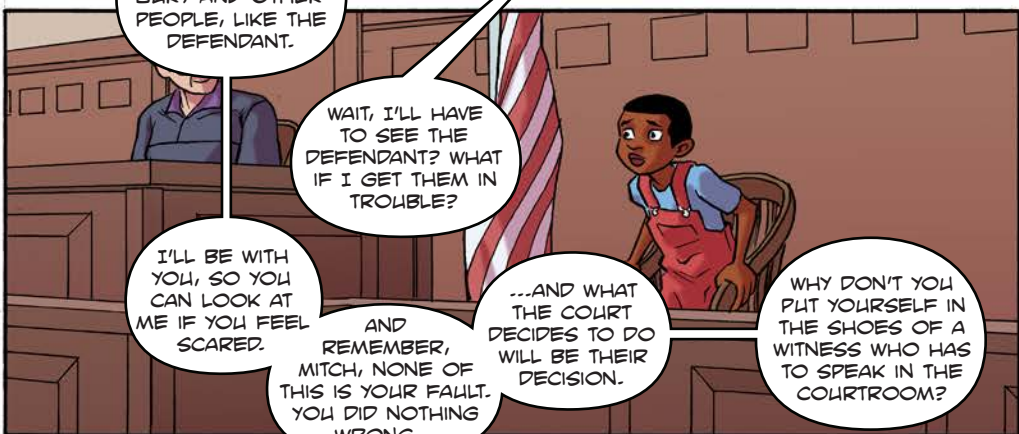




YES, BEING A WITNESS IS AN IMPORTANT JOB THAT CAN BE DONE IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

SOME WITNESSES SPEAK ALONE TO THE PROSECUTOR, AND SOME SPEAK IN THE COURTROOM...

...IN FRONT OF THE JUDGE, JURY AND OTHER PEOPLE, LIKE THE DEFENDANT.



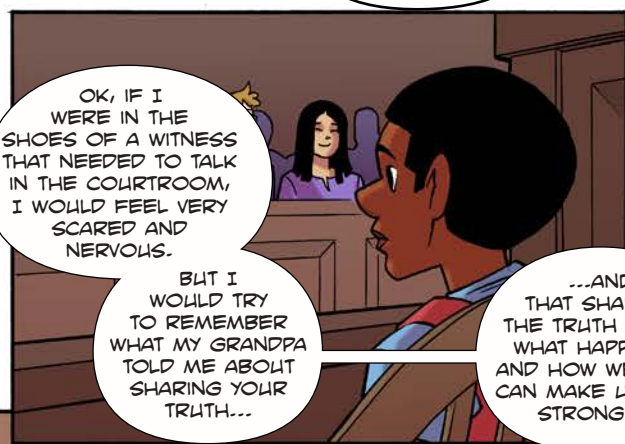
WAIT, I'LL HAVE TO SEE THE DEFENDANT? WHAT IF I GET THEM IN TROUBLE?

I'LL BE WITH YOU, SO YOU CAN LOOK AT ME IF YOU FEEL SCARED.

AND REMEMBER, MITCH, NONE OF THIS IS YOUR FAULT. YOU DID NOTHING WRONG...

...AND WHAT THE COURT DECIDES TO DO WILL BE THEIR DECISION.

WHY DON'T YOU PUT YOURSELF IN THE SHOES OF A WITNESS WHO HAS TO SPEAK IN THE COURTROOM?



OK, IF I WERE IN THE SHOES OF A WITNESS THAT NEEDED TO TALK IN THE COURTROOM, I WOULD FEEL VERY SCARED AND NERVOUS.

BUT I WOULD TRY TO REMEMBER WHAT MY GRANDPA TOLD ME ABOUT SHARING YOUR TRUTH...

...AND THAT SHARING THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AND HOW WE FEEL, CAN MAKE US FEEL STRONGER.



I WOULD LISTEN TO THE QUESTIONS THAT THE PROSECUTOR AND DEFENSE ATTORNEY ASK ME AND TRY TO ANSWER THEM AS BEST AS I CAN.

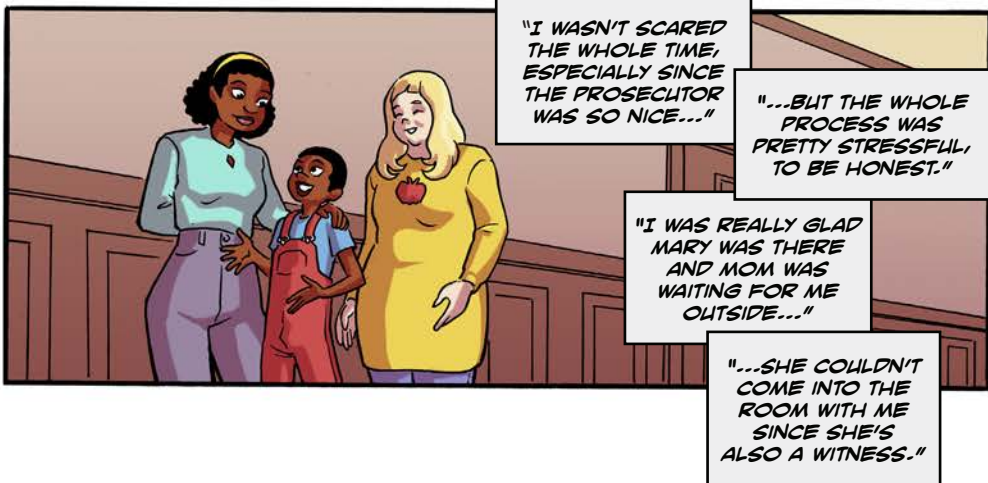
AND IF I STARTED TO FEEL NERVOUS AGAIN, I WOULD LOOK AT YOU, MARY, AND THAT WOULD MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.

AND THEN WHEN IT WAS ALL OVER, I WOULD REALIZE HOW STRONG AND POWERFUL I AM!





LATER, MITCH MEETS WITH THE PROSECUTOR...



Relax

4-3-2-1

GROUNDING

This calming exercise helped Mitch when she was feeling anxious. You can try this exercise to help you feel more calm, by focusing on four of your senses.

What are **4** things you can see?

Look for **3** things you can touch.

Listen for **2** different sounds.

What's **1** thing you can smell?

Repeat this 4-3-2-1 exercise until you feel grounded and calm.



DID YOU KNOW?

The number four is also important in many Indigenous communities as it represents the four directions (North, South, East & West) and the four seasons.

The medicine wheel, which has four quadrants, is traditionally used in some tribes as a guide for balance, grounding, finding your way and sometimes for healing. There are even colors associated with each of the four quadrants.

Does your tribe or community have a teaching about the medicine wheel?

PRESENT DAY AT MITCH'S HOME...

"ALL OF THAT SEEMS LIKE IT HAPPENED FOREVER AGO..."

"...BUT IT WAS ONLY LAST YEAR."

"I'M NOT SURE HOW I FEEL ABOUT ALL OF IT, OR WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT."



"REAL LIFE ISN'T LIKE A SUPERHERO MOVIE, WHERE THERE'S ALWAYS A HAPPY ENDING."

"BUT WHAT I DO KNOW IS, BEFORE THIS, I NEVER REALIZED HOW POWERFUL I AM..."

"...JUST BY BEING ME!"

"AND I'M SO GLAD I HAVE PEOPLE AROUND ME TO HELP, LIKE MY MOM..."



"... AND ALL THE PEOPLE WHO WORK IN THE COURT SYSTEM - THEY'RE EVERYDAY SUPERHEROES!"

"AND THEY ALL TRY TO USE THEIR STRENGTHS, POWERS AND ABILITIES FOR GOOD."



"...WHICH I'M GOING TO DO, TOO!"

In Mitch's story, she was supported by her victim advocate Mary who helped her learn about people's jobs in the legal system and how it all works. Mitch found out that there are a lot of regular people who use their powers and abilities to help others. Mitch then talked about what happened with the prosecutor, and she realized that by sharing her experience, she has her own power, too.



Things like this happen to other kids and families, but every situation is different. Some kids talk in the courtroom about what happened, which is what Mitch originally thought she would have to do. This is called testifying. Some kids don't go to a courtroom and instead talk with the police or a doctor, or a prosecutor about what happened, like Mitch did. And some kids go to a tribal court or a state court, instead of a federal court.

No matter what, please remember that what happened is not your fault and you are not in trouble. Also, you are not alone. Like Mitch, you can ask for help from the adults working with you and from your family, friends and community.

Sharing OUR FEELINGS

How do you think Mitch felt throughout her story? Did she show or talk about any feelings that you have, too? Do you have other feelings that Mitch didn't have? If so, that's ok. You're allowed to feel any way that you do.

Storytelling is an important part of Indigenous communities across North America. The sharing of stories helps people stay connected with their past, preserve their cultures and helps build a positive future.

Mitch shared her feelings and was able to get help from the people around her, which made her feel better.

So if you're ready, talking about your feelings with people that you trust can be a positive thing!



There are other things you can do to feel better, too.

Check out the checklist of coping skills on the next page!

Checklist

COPING SKILLS

When you feel angry, worried, sad or even unfocused you can...

- Read a book (like this one!) or look at some happy pictures
- Think of a happy memory or a peaceful place
- Build something or do a puzzle
- Help someone or do a chore
- Get a drink of water or eat a healthy snack
- Draw or color
- Ask for a hug
- Go outside or be in nature
- Say a prayer or do a spiritual activity
- Hang out with friends & family
- Ask for help



What other activities make you feel good?
Is there someone in your community you can ask about other kinds of traditional coping skills?

This book is just one in a series produced by the Center for Court Innovation.



AIYANA'S JOURNEY

Aiyana is a little girl whose story is an example of a child welfare case. She meets some new grown-ups, goes to some new places and learns about things she can do to feel better.



MARVIS & ROCKEE

Marvis is a little boy who is a witness in a criminal court case. He meets with different grown-ups who ask him questions about what happened, and help him to do things to feel better.



EDGAR'S JOURNEY

Edgar is a school-age kid whose story is an example of a child welfare case. He meets some new adults, goes to new places, learns about asking for help, and things he can do to feel better.



BRANDON'S PATH

Brandon is a teen whose story is an example of a child welfare case. His story follows a 'choose your own adventure' style where he meets new adults, learns to ask for help and things he can do to feel better.



MAGGIE MERCURY: TEENAGE EXTRAORDINAIRE

Maggie is a teen who was a witness in a criminal court case. She hosts an online blog where she and her friends talk about what can happen when a young person is the victim or witness in a criminal case, which can be complicated for Native teens.

We recognize that Native children and families have diverse experiences with the child welfare and criminal legal systems, and some of these may not be positive.

While we unfortunately cannot guarantee that you will have the same experience as the characters in this story, it can be helpful to remember that you always have the right to request what you need, and that there are people working to make these systems better, who will listen and take the time to understand your situation.

MARVELOUS MITCH

WRITTEN BY

Michael Sheyahshe

Tribal Community | Caddo Nation of Oklahoma

About

As an author and creator, Michael created the popular comic book character Dark Owl for INC, and he has authored work for *What the Stars Must Think of Us*; *Illusions*; *Trauma Magazine*; *Native Peoples Magazine*; *New Plains Review*; *First American Art Magazine*; written for *MOONSHOT: The Indigenous Comics Collection Volumes 1-3* and co-edited *Volume 3*, and served as a cultural consultant for Darkhorse Comics.

His book, *Native Americans in Comic Books: A Critical Study*, takes an in-depth look at the world of comic books through the eyes of a Native American reader and offers frank commentary on the medium's cultural representation of Indigenous people.

ILLUSTRATED BY

David Cutler

Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation

About

David is a Newfoundland-born artist based in Toronto, Canada. He studied Illustration for The Sequential Arts, and has been working in comics for over a decade. He is a frequent special guest artist at comic book shows and events.

His comic book work has appeared in various publications, magazines, and commercial titles including *Wonderland*; *Robyn Hood vs Red Riding Hood*; *Snow White vs Snow White*; *The Secret World of Glacier Thorne*; *Hacktivist*; *Northern Guard*; *MOONSHOT: The Indigenous Comics Collection Volumes 1-3*; and the popular North American youth series, *Adventure Time*.



The Center for Court Innovation's Child Witness Materials Project is a collaborative effort between the Center for Court Innovation and Alternate History Comics, Inc. and is supported by cooperative agreement #2018-V3-CX-K069, awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The characters, names, events, and likenesses thereof are fictitious. Any relation to real events, people, or locations is unintentional and used in a fictitious manner.

The Center for Court Innovation works to create a more effective and humane justice system by performing original research and helping launch reforms around the world. www.courtinnovation.org

Alternate History Comics is a multiple award-winning publishing company that creates original graphic novels and cultural comic collections. <http://ahcomics.com>

The Center for Court Innovation is grateful to the project partners and stakeholders; justice system practitioners; and young survivors from all over the country who contributed to the development of this product.

NCJ 305309

The Office for Victims of Crime is committed to enhancing the Nation's capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and healing for all victims of crime.

www.ovc.ojp.gov

The Office of Justice Programs is a federal agency that provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources to improve the Nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims, and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Its six program offices—the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office for Victims of Crime, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking—support state and local crime-fighting efforts, fund thousands of victim service programs, help communities manage sex offenders, address the needs of youth in the system and children in danger, and provide vital research and data.



Office for Victims of Crime
OVC