ROAR!

Written and illustrated by

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The project is a partnership with the NSW Government and seven out-of-home care agencies to trial practices that support children to sustain ongoing connections to family, culture and community. Young people, carers and family members with personal experience of out-of-home care have contributed to the project reference group as experts-by-experience. All resources created as part of the project are available from the Research Centre for Children and Families website.

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This book is designed to be read alone or with a trusted adult.

If you are the trusted adult, please check out this adult's guide to get the most out of this book.
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Born in the jungle,
my family's tough

We're fun in the good times
and brave when it's rough
But when I don't really feel safe anymore
Big feelings grow bigger
and soon I feel...
Over time I can learn to love a new place...

(but it's tough when there's roar on your fur and your face)
Over time I can learn to love a new place…

(but it's tough when there's roar on your fur and your face)
I’m glad, sad, and mad
and I’m ready to spring
feel more than one thing
On the surface I’m calm and goofing around
But inside those feelings are still mixing round
Even just one tiny bad feeling more...
Big feelings grow bigger
and soon I feel...
Sometimes even when things seem fine,
I still just don't feel safe inside.
And when I remember something that's sore
Big feelings grow bigger
and soon I feel...
Kids are allowed to make lots of mistakes
And I have some good ways to deal with those aches
Like breathing real slow and counting to ten

5...6...7...
Until my paws can relax again
I tell all the adults as much as I can
About what feels best when I'm with my clan.
Remembering times that were sad or were fun
Big feelings grow bigger
and soon I feel...
My name's Billy Black, and I grew up in care. When I was young, adults told me what to do. They told me when to change schools, who to visit and where, and what to work on.

They told me “don’t yell” a LOT. But they didn’t understand I wasn’t choosing to yell. Yelling just came out of me every time bad things happened, and sometimes when good things happened too, just because my brain was waiting for bad things to happen again.

One time I was on my way to a new home far away, and I was so sad and angry I couldn’t talk. My caseworker told me something very powerful:

If you ever really can’t stand what’s happening, you have to tell your new caseworker “I don’t feel safe”

It's a magic phrase that makes adults drop everything and really listen and try to help you.
That magic phrase changed my life! Yelling only came out of me when my brain wasn’t feeling safe and was waiting for something bad to happen. When I had more say in my life, I could ask to do something different, like find a quiet room, breathe, count, read, and play games, to give my brain time to relax and see that nothing bad was happening.

With less yelling and more talking, adults became surprisingly helpful! The more I asked for what I wanted in my life, the safer my brain felt, and the less I yelled. I hadn’t realised I was supposed to have a say in a LOT of decisions adults had made for me.

If there’s a family member you want to see more, you have the right to ask. If you want a certain school or teacher, or to video chat with your siblings every day, or see a previous carer, you have the right to ask. Adults can’t always make this stuff happen, but if it makes you feel safer, they have to at least try!
If you’re having similar problems to the cub in Roar, I want you to try the following:

Remind your adults, “I’m not choosing to be “bad”, it just happens when my brain gets too many big feelings, and it happens to you, too”

If you really can’t stand what’s happening, tell your adults “I don’t feel safe”. That phrase might sound weird the first time, but it really works, and it works double on caseworkers, teachers, and therapists. Trust me.

When you want to change something in your life, tell your adults. “Something that would make me feel safer is…”, and include big decisions like school, family, and what happens daily. It’s your life, so you definitely get a say!
Photos and other special objects help you keep track of your life and important relationships. You're allowed to fill your room with photos of all your favourite people, so if you don't have enough photos, ask your caseworker for more.

Our adults can't make everything we want happen, but if you ask for something that makes you feel safer, they have to at least try. You'll be surprised how often they come up with a good idea even when we ask for something impossible.

Plus, the more you ask for, the more adults find out what's important to you (so don't worry about asking for too much, they can handle it!)
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