THERE'S MORE TO ME
You might have a lot going on right now. And it might be pretty confusing.

This book has some stuff to help you understand what’s going on. There’s information about:

• things that could happen next

• people you might see or talk to

• ways to figure out what you’re feeling and how to feel better

This graphic novel has stories about Alex, Jamal, Jesse, Amy, and Ari—teens who’ve been through some things. Some of their experiences will be different than what you go through, but some might help.

There are lots of ways to ask for help and support.

You can keep this. Write in it, read it, whatever. Hopefully it helps.

No matter what, you should know you’re not alone.
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PART 1

Alex
What's going on with you, Alex? You seem kinda down. You ok?

Should I tell her?

I know you, Alex.

Something's up. Spill it.

Remember how I told you my aunt has a new boyfriend?

The aunt that lives with you now?

Yeah, my aunt Grace. Well, they had a fight last night and it got really bad...

...The cops came.

To your house? Were you there?
Yeah, with my mom.

Are you okay????

I guess.

Just some bruises.

WHAT?!

No, I mean I just got in the way and they knocked me over.

It's really not a big thing.

Huh? If you say so...

Anyway, the cops asked me and my mom a ton of questions.

Oh wow, that's intense.
Yeah. Mom said not to tell anyone.

She's embarrassed because our neighbors saw.

But I'm kind of scared. It feels weird to have the cops around our house, in our business. You know?

You know you can always talk to me about anything, though, right?

Yeah. I know.

But tomorrow I have to go talk to some other people about it. My stomach hurts just thinking about it.

Ugh, that sucks.
You wanna text me after that? We can hang out? I'll do your nails. It'll cheer you up.

Yeah. Sure.

I gotta run to class.

Mari, promise me you won’t tell anyone?

Of course not. See you later!

The next day...

Alex, are you ready to go?!!
Yeah!!! Gimme a sec!!!

You were there when it happened.

The police talked to Mom and now someone who works with kids is going to ask you questions, too.

I know you don't really want to talk about it, but we have to, for Auntie Grace, okay?

They're just trying to figure out what happened.

I thought this was supposed to be about Auntie Grace. I didn’t do anything wrong!
How is this even gonna help her? I don’t even understand what’s happening!

Hi, are you Alex?

Huh? Yeah, that’s me.
Hi, I’m Tia. I’m an advocate...

...which is a fancy way of saying that I work with kids like you to help you with all this stuff that’s going on.

Want to come with me and we can talk more?

Yeah. I took a class and everything, but it turns out it’s really, really hard to draw all those little pictures! I got pretty tired of it. Ha!

You won’t believe it, but I used to want to be a comic book artist when I was a kid.

Really?

Huh? Oh, yeah
So, Alex, the police told me a little bit about what happened.

My job is to help you through this process and to answer your questions.

Does that make sense?

Yeah.

How are you feeling now about all of this?

I'm fine. It's over.
Okay. I know it can be a lot to process.

I have a few questions to ask you. Okay?

What grade are you in at school?

I just started sophomore year.

Do you have a favorite subject?

Art?

Why do grown-ups always ask that?
You've been through a lot, Alex. Do you want to take a break?

I don’t know if you want to try this, but there’s this breathing exercise that a lot of the kids I work with find really helpful when they’re feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

Okay.

Tia asked me other questions, too, about school and home...

...about Auntie Grace and her boyfriend...

...and about what happened the other night.

Tia was nice, but it was so awkward to talk about...

It’s so embarrassing...

I don’t know if you want to try this, but there’s this breathing exercise that a lot of the kids I work with find really helpful when they’re feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

Want to give it a try?
TAKING A BREATHER

Taking deep breaths can help you feel more calm.
You can do this anywhere. Try it the next time you’re feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

Slowly take a big breath in, counting 1 – 2 – 3 as you fill your stomach with air.

Then hold your breath while you count 1 – 2.

Then breathe out slowly and let out all the air, feeling your stomach empty out.
Repeat this three times.

If it helps, you can try closing your eyes while you breathe, or put your hand on your stomach to feel the breaths go in and out.
Alex, do you have any questions for me about what’s going on?

Yeah. Why does my family have to keep talking to the police? Why are there so many questions for all of us?

The police have to investigate what happened the other night. They’ll talk to anyone who saw or heard anything.

But they arrested my aunt and her boyfriend, and then they let them go. Isn’t it done now?

They’re trying to figure out what happened as part of their investigation.

Well, they still need more information to figure out if they think your aunt or her boyfriend broke the law and if they’re going to file charges.

Wait! Could something I say get her in trouble?!
You haven’t done anything wrong. None of this is your fault, okay?

Okay.

After the investigation, if the police don’t find enough evidence, the case will be closed.

But if they do find enough evidence, they might arrest the person and then the case will move forward.

But what’s going to happen to my aunt? Will she be okay?

I’m not sure, but part of my job is to keep you updated when anything changes, okay?

I’ll let you know as soon as I hear anything. And if you need anything in the meantime, you can call me.

Sounds like you’re hungry. We’ve been here a while.

Let’s set up a time to talk again next week.
I’ll see you next week, Alex. And don’t forget to reach out with any questions you have, okay?

Okay.

Even if they seem silly. That’s what I’m here for.

Thanks, Tia.

Can we just leave and go get lunch? I don’t want to be here anymore.

How did it go, Alex?

How did it go, Alex?

Mari: How did it go? Are you okay?

Alex: It was okay. Let’s talk about it later.

Mari: OK. See you soon. Got a new nail polish to cheer you up! GLITTER!!!
WHAT’S GOING ON?

If someone might have broken a law or hurt another person, the police have to try to figure out what happened. It’s called an investigation.

They’ll talk to different people to find out more, and might ask you questions about what you know.

In Alex’s story, the police started an investigation to find information about what happened with Alex’s aunt and her boyfriend. Alex was both a witness because she saw what happened and a victim because she was hurt. She met different adults working on the case and answered questions about what happened.

If the police don’t find enough evidence, then the case is closed. If the case ends, that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen, though.

If the police do find enough evidence, they may arrest the person (if they haven’t already), and the case will continue.

Have you ever had to talk to the police? How did you feel about that?

Alex talked to Tia and Mari about what happened. Who helps you when you’re going through something hard?
PART 2

Jamal
Oh, you’re here!

Are you serious?  Another one?

Mom: Appointment for Friday 3 pm.

Mom: Put it on your calendar, please.

Yeah. I got your text. Who are we meeting with now?

With the prosecutor who’s working on the case.

Who’s that?

Have we met them before?
He said the prosecutor is the one who decides if they have enough evidence to go to trial.

So this person will decide what happens to Nasim?

No. They decide if he will go to court, I think. You should ask Omar. I don’t understand all of this.

Wait. What if I don’t want him to go to court?

Oh, Jamal. I know this thing with your brother is hard. It’s not easy for me, either. He’s my son, no matter what he did.

Let’s talk to the prosecutor about it, okay?

Okay.
Ali: Hey babe, you still wanna meet up?

Jamal: Yeah be there in 20. Talking to mom about court stuff.


Hi, Anna, I'm Mrs. Awad and this is my son, Jamal.

Hey, Jamal. Good to see you again, Mrs. Awad.

On Friday...

Hi. Hi, Anna, I'm Mrs. Awad and this is my son, Jamal.

It's nice to meet you both. Can I get you anything?

Okay, Jamal. Don't be back late.

I gotta go, Mom.

No thank you.
Thank you for coming in. I wanted to sit down with you today to talk about the case involving Nasim Awad.

Anna, maybe it would be helpful if you tell the Awads a little bit about your office and what you do?

Yes, that would be nice.

Sure. I work for the government.

It’s my job to review the evidence on a case, speak with everyone involved...

... and decide if our office will prosecute the person accused of the crime. In this case, that’s Mr. Awad.

Sure. Sometimes we think there isn’t enough evidence, or we find evidence that makes us think they didn’t do it, or there could be other reasons.

What does that mean, to “prosecute” him?

That means we would bring a legal case against Mr. Awad.

Do you ever decide not to prosecute?

Yes.

If that happens, Nasim can come home?
But if you prosecute, does that mean Nasim will go to court?

That depends—

Of course it does.

Jamal is onto you.

Lawyers always say, “It depends.”

It’s true. Anyway, most cases don’t actually go to trial.

Really?

Yes. Usually when we bring a case, we meet with the defendant and their lawyer to discuss other options.

Like what?

Well, sometimes we come to an agreement that the defendant will agree to plead guilty to less serious charges... ... and accept a particular punishment for that, instead of going to trial. It’s called a plea deal.
But if there is no “deal,” then Nasim goes to trial?

Yes, then there would be a trial.

There would be a group of people called a jury...

...who listen to what everyone in court says, including Anna and Mr. Awad's lawyer...

...and decide if they believe he is guilty or not.

Then what?

Well, if they believe he is guilty, the judge will decide what that person has to do next.

If they think he is not guilty or there isn't enough information to tell, then the case will end.

And that’s it?

Yes.
But if they find him guilty, he could go to prison, right?

Yes. It’s a possibility. Mr. Awad could go to prison.

But that’s a pretty long way off. A lot of different things could still hap—

I’m sorry, Jamal. You’re right. I’ll call him Nasim going forward.

Could you stop calling him Mr. Awad?!

You’re treating him like a stranger.

He’s my brother!

And what if I don’t want you to prosecute him? What if I don’t want that?

You do, I definitely want to hear what you and your mom want to happen. But, unfortunately, I can’t promise that our decision will be what you want.

I’m the victim, right? Do I have a say?
But how is that even fair? You’re taking information from us, but we don’t have any say in the end...you weren’t even there when everything happened... so how can you be the one to decide?

Jamal!

It’s okay. You’ve been through a lot, Jamal. I’m sorry this is all so stressful.

Hey, Jamal, let’s take a break. We can come back and finish this conversation in a minute, okay?
Moving your body can be a good way to relieve stress.

Omar and Jamal took a short walk.

You can also do stuff like jump, jog, exercise, or even dance to get rid of extra energy and help your body calm down.
How are you feeling, Jamal?

Okay.

Thanks for getting me out of there.

Sure. My job is to help you out, man.

I’m just confused about all of this.

I keep thinking about what happened... It wasn’t fair.

That night was so scary – I had never seen him like that.

But I don’t know if he should go to prison for this.

It’s pretty normal to have a lot of different feelings.

It’s really complicated.

It’s going to take some time for you to sort it all out.

But Anna is going to make a decision.

That’s her job. She has to do that no matter how you feel.

I know it’s hard to hear that.

But I think it’s important for you to keep sharing how you feel, with me and with her.
Yeah. I will.

You feel ready to go back in?
I think so.

Okay. Thank you, Anna.

Oh? Ok, I'll wait outside.

It's okay.

I'm sorry about earlier, Jamal.
I know you have really complicated feelings about what's going on and what happened with Mr. A—I mean with Nasim.

I'm sorry about earlier, Jamal.
It's okay.

We've already talked a lot. Why don't we call it a day? I can reach out if I have any other questions. And you can call me or Omar if you have any questions, okay?

Okay. Thank you, Anna.

No, thank you both. You've been through enough and I hope it will be less stressful and confusing going forward.

Mrs. Awad, do you mind if I speak to Jamal alone for a bit about some next steps?

Oh? Ok, I'll wait outside.
Am I in trouble?
No, Jamal, not at all. I just wanted to bring something up.

I noticed that you and your mom may have different opinions on the case and what happens to Nasim.
That’s normal, you know? Every relationship is different.

But... it’s not okay for anyone to try to get you to say, or not say, certain things in court, or pressure you to not talk to the police or to me.
Not your uncle, or your neighbor, not even your mom.

If you feel like people are scaring you or telling you to say something different, let Omar or me know right away, okay?

Okay... I don’t think my mom has tried to do anything like that but I’ll let you know.
And I know you don’t want to hear this, but you should know that people might be talking about the case on social media.
Yeah, unfortunately, it’s pretty common. But you don’t have to engage.

You might want to avoid social media if that happens.

The important thing is that you don’t have to talk about this with anyone you don’t want to, online or in real life. Make sense?

Yeah.

Ok that’s it. Thanks again for coming in today, Jamal.

Let’s go back to your mom. Okay?

Yeah.
What did they say to you?

Oh... just like things to look out for. Be careful on social media, that kind of stuff.

Okay.

What did you think about Anna? I saw you were getting a little upset earlier.

I don’t understand, Mom!

I thought that Anna would be more on our side.

Why doesn’t she care what we want?

But... I don’t think that’s her job. She’s not our lawyer. She represents the government. So it’s not really about what we want...

I’m glad you talked with Omar, though. You need someone to talk to.

You’re still going to see him again on Monday?

Yeah.

Anyway. Are you hungry?
Okay, Jamal. Stay out of trouble...

Rough, man. We lost a big game this week.

Okay... I'm still having trouble sleeping. I can't really fall asleep. I just lie there and think. Or if I do go to sleep, it's for like 20 minutes.

I'll see you later, Mom.

Hey, Jamal!

Hey, Omar.

Hey, Jamal!

Three months later...

Sorry to hear that. Is your knee feeling better?

It's alright...

How's basketball going?

Yeah, but I'm meeting up with Ali and don't want to be late.

And how are things at home?

Okay... I'm still having trouble sleeping.

I can't really fall asleep. I just lie there and think.
I hear my mom moving around the house all night, too.

You talk to her about it?

No... I don’t really wanna add to my mom’s stuff. She has a lot to deal with cause of all this stuff with Nasim.

If you keep waking up, there are some things you can try to help you get back to sleep.

Yeah?

You can try that deep breathing thing we did last time. You remember?

Yeah?

Two beats in, three beats out, right?

Yeah. You can also try writing or sketching for a little while.

Yeah, just something that helps you get your thoughts out. It can help you release some of what’s keeping you up.

Or just put on your headphones and listen to some music you find relaxing. All that stuff can help.
Writing or drawing can be a way to process your thoughts and feelings and get them out so you can feel calmer.

If there are things that are too hard to say out loud or there are too many things going through your mind, try writing them down, or just letting yourself draw what comes to mind. Set a timer for five or ten minutes, and just write or draw.

If you keep a journal, you can write or draw there. Or you can even write it as a letter. You don’t have to share the letter with anyone. Just getting it all out can help you figure out how you feel.

Or you can write or draw in this space, if you want to.
Hey, listen, I have some news for you.

What?

Your brother made a plea deal with the prosecutor. The case isn't going to trial.

Oh. Wow. Okay.

So what happens to Nasim, then?

Well, the terms of the deal have him serving time for 3 years.

He's going to prison?!

I don't know.

Yeah.

How do you feel about that?

My mom's gonna be so upset.
What about you?

I’m not sure. I...don’t know.

And I know you haven’t really wanted to go.

But I think it could be really helpful to have a neutral person that’s not part of the case or part of your family to help you with some of this, you know?

If you want, I can also connect you to a support group so you can talk to other people who have gone through similar things?

Will I have to say everything that happened?

Not if you don’t want to.

But they might understand what you’re going through.
And then you won't have to feel like you're only talking to old people like me.

Yeah. Alright. I'll check it out.

Later that night...
After a police investigation, the case goes to the prosecutor. The prosecutor is a lawyer who works for the government. They investigate the case more.

Then they figure out whether or not they have enough evidence to continue the case. If they do, they will bring charges against the person and the case will continue. If they don’t, the case will be closed. But even if the case is closed, it doesn’t mean the crime didn’t happen.

If a case continues, different things can happen.

Often the defendant and their lawyer will negotiate with the prosecutor. The defendant might plead guilty to certain charges and agree to a certain punishment. It’s called a “plea bargain,” or a “plea deal.”

If they don’t agree to do that, the case goes to trial.

How would you feel if you were in Jamal’s place?

Omar taught Jamal some ways to cope when he was stressed and having trouble sleeping. What can you do when you feel stressed to help yourself feel better?
PART 3

Jesse
Hey, J, you ready for court tomorrow?

Ughhhhh. I don’t know, Steven.

You’ll be fine. You got this.

Yeah, I’m just nervous about it. It’s been so stressful...

...And what if people call me the wrong name in court?

I feel so weird when that happens.
Can you ask your advocate about that? Or the prosecutor?

Liz has been good about it. I just won’t know all the other people there...

But you’re right... I’ll talk to her.

I mean, if the court date doesn’t change again. I’m so over getting all ready and then nothing. More waiting.

You know how much I hate seeing Uncle Mike. It’s the last thing I want to do.

Yeah, I get that. I’m sorry bro.

So to get myself ready to see him in court, and then it doesn’t happen? I’m stressed all the time for nothing.
Does this work?

Hey, Liz. I was just going to call you about something.

Yeah. I mean at least hang it in the bathroom while you shower to get all those wrinkles out.

Iron it.

Really?

Hey, Liz. I was just going to call you about something.
Hey, Jesse, how are you?

I’m good. Just getting my clothes ready for tomorrow.

Thanks for sharing that, Jesse. You’ll have to say your legal name at the beginning of your testimony, but you can let everyone know you go by “Jesse,” and I’ll remind them, too.

Actually, I sort of wanted to ask you about tomorrow. I’m worried they’ll call me the wrong name in court.

But…that’s actually why I was calling…the trial has been postponed again.

What?? Again??

I’m already so nervous about seeing my uncle and…it would be cool to not worry about that, too.

How can they cancel again?
How is that allowed?

I’m sorry. This happens a lot in court.

They wanted to push it to August... Are you free on August 5th?

What! August 5th?!? That’s like another month from now!

It’s so frustrating.

I’m sorry scheduling has been so difficult.

We couldn’t find a date that worked for everyone before that.

Does this mean me and my brother might see him?

At home? Or like on the street?
Well, the Order of Protection means he’s not allowed to contact either of you. But, yes, you might still see him.

But he’s not allowed to give you any looks or try to scare you. He’s not supposed to talk to you through social media or other people, either.

If any of that happens, call the police right away or let me know, because he’s violating your Order of Protection and it could be witness intimidation, too.

Yeah. Okay.

You okay?

Yeah. I’m alright.

I have another question.
Will there be a sign language interpreter for Steven?

I want to make sure he's comfortable.

Sure. What is it?

Right! Thanks for reminding me. I'll check on that.

Hey, Jesse. I want you to remember that none of this is your fault. And it's not Steven's fault either.

Hey, Jesse. I want you to remember that none of this is your fault. And it’s not Steven’s fault either.

I know...

Do you still want to meet on Wednesday?

Yeah.

Okay. Thanks for all of this, Jesse.


Yeah.
Cases don’t go to court right away. There are lots of steps between the police investigation and when a trial starts, and it can seem like nothing is going on for a long time.

Jesse was supposed to testify, but the trial date got delayed. Court processes are complicated and can take a long time. It’s not uncommon for court dates to be rescheduled.

In some situations, accommodations can be made at court to help witnesses feel more comfortable when testifying. The court may also issue an Order of Protection like the one Jesse had, to make sure that witnesses are not harassed or intimidated by defendants.

How would you feel if your court case kept getting cancelled, like Jesse’s?

Jesse and Liz talked about accommodations that can be made in court to help Jesse and Steven feel more comfortable. Is there anything you would need to feel more comfortable in court?
PART 4

Amy & Ari
I just don’t want to have to go to court.

I’m really scared that I’ll cry or that I’ll have to see her again.

Was it scary?
Did the lawyer come at you, like on TV?

Really?

I did it.
I testified in court.

Will my dad be there when I go in?

No, it was scary, but not like that.

Serena, the lady that works here at the center, really helped me.

Was it scary?
Did the lawyer come at you, like on TV?

Really?

I did it.
I testified in court.

I was scared. But it’s weird.
I kind of felt better after.

I was scared. But it’s weird.
I kind of felt better after.

Like I got to say my side of what happened...

Serena, the lady that works here at the center, really helped me.

He’s going to kill me.
I can’t.

Will my dad be there when I go in?

Yeah. He’ll be sitting with his lawyer.
I know it's hard, but what you have to say is important for the jury and judge to hear.

I'm worried.

He was yelling when he left our house that night. What if he yells at me again?

Your dad isn't supposed to say anything to you in the courtroom.

There are lots of people looking out for you in court, though, including the court officer.

What if my dad gives me a look?

My grandma hasn't treated me the same since...

...I haven't seen anyone from his side...but I know they're all upset...

Listen, I'll be in the courtroom too. If you get scared or nervous, just look at me or someone else you trust.

Do you want to walk through what's going to happen again?

Okay.
I’m going to walk into the courtroom with the Court Officer.

I’m going to sit down at the front of the room next to the Judge.

And what happens if you have to use the bathroom?

I hold it in till I explode?

No!

I ask for a break.

She showed me how to do these things with my breathing that helped me calm down when I was stressed out.

Now, breath in from your stomach and hold your breath for three seconds...

HA HA HA

HA HA HA

She really helped me.
And then I went in to court.

So you were home that night?

I don’t understand your question.

So, are you saying he was there?

And then I went in to court.

...first the prosecutor...

...and then his lawyer.

I sat down and the lawyers asked me questions...

I just looked at Serena and told the truth.

One time the other lawyer tried to confuse me or something.

But I remembered my rights.

I was so scared. Like, what if I said the wrong thing? I felt sick...

I just looked at Serena and told the truth.

So you were home that night?

I was so scared. Like, what if I said the wrong thing? I felt sick...

I don’t understand your question.

But I remembered my rights.

I was so scared. Like, what if I said the wrong thing? I felt sick...

I left.
You did great. How do you feel?

I don’t know. It’s weird. I still feel a little stressed, but it felt good to say it out loud, in front of everybody.

Yeah?

Yeah. Like everyone was listening and they heard what I had to say.

But what happens now?

We don’t know yet, but let’s talk about the things that could happen.

Really? You felt better?

Yeah, I mean it was really hard to do it. I was really worried at first but I was glad I did.

Derek?

Hello, I’m Serena.

Hi, Amy. Good to see you again! You doing okay?

Yeah. I’m good!
Serena took Amy to see the court room before she had to testify and told her who all the people in the room would be and where they would sit.

Your court room might look different than Amy’s, but you can use the drawing below to familiarize yourself with who will be where if you have to go to court.
I didn’t have to testify. But hearing you say that stuff makes me kinda wish I did.

No…no I know. I didn’t mean it like that.

You just…you talked about getting to share your feelings and people listening to you.

I had something happen with my neighbor, Taylor. I told someone and then…

But one day, I met with my advocate and he said that the case was suddenly over.

They decided not to prosecute.

What?? Testifying wasn’t fun at all. I didn’t want to do it.

What?? What do you mean it’s over?
Hey, Moses.

See ya.

But...then why is it done?

Sometimes they don’t think they have enough evidence to make the case.

But...then why is it done?

But I can connect you with some people who can support you going forward.

And you can keep going to the therapist if that’s still helping you. Okay?

Yeah....but like it’s okay now. Today is my last meeting with Moses, but I still see my therapist, and... it’s getting a little better.

Before I thought going to court was the only option and the only way I’d feel better about things....

But meeting with Moses showed me that there are other ways, too. To feel better about things and...to get some closure, I guess.

Yeah.. huh... I guess so.

Or there could be other things we don’t know about that they found in the investigation.

Wow. That’s really hard.

I know that’s hard to hear, Ari. But that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen or that the prosecutor doesn’t believe you.

Sometimes they don’t think they have enough evidence to make the case.

So we’re not going to court?

Before I thought going to court was the only option and the only way I’d feel better about things....

Yeah.. huh... I guess so.

Hey, Ari. How are you today?

See ya.

Yeah. See ya.

Hey, Moses.
Serena showed Amy different things she could do to feel less nervous, and some things she could do to get ready for court.

Serena also encouraged Amy to make a plan for her day at court. If you have to testify, you can use this page to plan for your day in court. It can help you feel calmer and more confident.

Getting ready

- Try to get lots of sleep the night before.
- Try to eat something before you go to court. It will help you feel better and have the energy to get through it.
- You don’t have to dress up, but wear something a little nicer than usual if you can. Wear something that makes you feel good.
- You’ll probably spend a lot of time waiting, so bring something to read, play, or do while you wait.
- If you have a special object that helps you feel calm, bring it with you.

Getting nervous

If you feel nervous, try one of these things:

- Try to picture how you want to react if different things happen. It may sound silly, but picturing things can help you feel calmer.
- Try taking deep breaths in and out a few times. It really helps!
- Tighten your muscles and then relax them. Do this a few times.
- If you can, take a walk or move your body to get rid of some of your extra energy. You can also try walking really fast for a few seconds, then taking a deep breath and walking really slowly for a few seconds, then going fast then slow, fast then slow a few more times.
- If you have a special prayer or song that is important to you, try saying or singing it, either out loud, or in your head.
Getting support

• Think about who can help you work out how you’re feeling and who can help you in court.

• Is there an advocate, friend, or family member who can come to court? If so, you can look at them if you get nervous.

Getting through it

• It can feel good to do something you like when it’s over, like watch a movie, eat a favorite meal, or spend time with a friend. Think of something you can look forward to.

If you want, you can use the list above to help you make your own plan for your day in court.

Things I will do to get ready:

If I get nervous, I will:

I will talk about how I feel with:

After, I will do something like:
Amy had to testify, or go to court to talk about what happened. If your case goes to trial, you might have to testify, too. If that happens, the prosecutor and your advocate can help you to understand what it will be like and get ready.

Ari’s case, on the other hand, didn’t go to trial. The prosecutor decided not to pursue the case. If that happens, it doesn’t mean that the person accused of the crime didn’t do it, or that people don’t believe you. You can still ask for support from your advocate.

How would you feel if you had to testify?

How would you feel if your case didn’t go to trial, like Ari’s?
PART 5

Jesse (Again)
How did it feel to finally testify?

I mean it was hard but it's OVER. I got to say what happened. I felt heard a little bit.

That's great. But, Ms. Park, they might want me to do it again, though!

Is this finally going to be over? It's been two whole years!

What do you mean?

I don't know. They said something about a victim impact statement?

I don't know. They said something about a victim impact statement?

Guilty/not guilty, right?

I know you're tired of it, Jesse. Do you want to go over the possible outcomes again?

Well, if the jury decides there's enough evidence to make them feel sure he did it, they will find him guilty.

If there isn't enough evidence, they will find him "not guilty."

And if he's not guilty, he goes home?

Last week, when we were talking about the verdict...

We expect the jury to make a decision soon.

I mean it was hard but it's OVER. I got to say what happened. I felt heard a little bit.

That's great.
Prison, right?

But that’s not gonna happen, right? I mean, what are the chances he won’t go to prison?

And either way, if he’s found not guilty, it doesn’t mean that it didn’t happen, okay?

Well, if he’s found guilty, there will be another hearing, called the sentencing hearing, where the judge will hear from different people and decide what the punishment will be.

If that happens, we can talk about your options and what would be helpful.

We believe you. I want you to know that.

But that’s not gonna happen, right? I mean, what are the chances he won’t go to prison?

Well, if he’s found guilty, there will be another hearing, called the sentencing hearing, where the judge will hear from different people and decide what the punishment will be.

It could be time in prison, or it could be other things. Like he could go home but have to follow certain rules or go to programs. And he might have to meet with a Probation Officer.

Even if he goes home, we can get another Order of Protection, which means he still can’t talk to you or be around you.

So it’s not like things will just go back to how they were. We can talk about what you want to do and what you need to feel safe.
Jesse, one of the things the judge will consider in the sentencing is how this has affected you. I mean, that’s why I testified right?

Yeah, but there’s a thing called a victim impact statement, where you can tell the judge how this affected you and what you think the punishment should be.

You write it as a letter and you can read it at the sentencing hearing—

Oh, no way! I am done with hearings!

Or I can read it for you.

No pressure. You should only do it if you want to, but some people find it helpful...

How did that make you feel?

I don’t know how I feel! I’m so glad it’s gonna finally be over. But it’s only really hitting me now what that means.

And what does it mean to you?

Well, what happened to me wasn’t fair. But is going to prison the best thing? I feel like I’m doing this to him, sending him to prison...

This is not your fault, Jesse.

I know and I also don’t want him to walk away free like nothing happened.

It’s hard to hold all those feelings. Especially when they’re at odds with each other. I’m glad you told me.

I guess it’s been there all along, but talking about the decisions got really real. You know?
Of course. There's a lot going on right now and it feels like things are changing in your life.

Once this is over, whatever happens, you're still you. This doesn't define you.

It's just a lot.

Do you mind if I take a break and just walk for a few minutes?

Not at all. I'll be here when you're ready.
We find the defendant....

Guilty

Not guilty
A few weeks later...

I didn’t realize how weird it would feel to have this all be over.

I’ve put so much of my energy into this. Into being worried, mad, scared, sad. I know it’s gonna be a long time before I’m over it.

But Ms. Park is right…this doesn’t define me.

I’m not just a victim or a witness...

Wow.

Feel better?

Hmm? Oh. Yeah.
...I’m Jesse

...I’m Alex
...I’m Jamal

...I’m Ari

...I’m Amy
Alex, Jamal, Jesse, Amy, and Ari had people in their lives who supported them. Their friends, family members, advocates, therapists, and others helped them in different ways.

It can be helpful to remind yourself of the people in your life who you can ask for help.

Who is in your circle of support?
AFTERWORD

You might have mixed feelings about what’s happening. That’s normal.

Even when the case is over, it doesn’t mean you’ll stop thinking or having feelings about what happened.

But nothing that happened is your fault. And you’re not alone. This experience doesn’t have to define your whole life. Keep talking with your advocate or therapist, with supportive friends or family members, and others in your circle of support.
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