

Magic Caring Box

By [Hannah Moshtael](#)

In this post, Early Years educator Hannah Moshtael uses the children's picture book '[Mog's Mumps](#)' written by Helen Nicoll and illustrated by [Jan Pienkowski](#) as a starting point to encourage children to think about feelings and how we care for others when they are feeling unwell. Children use their imaginations to make items for a 'Magic Caring Box', using recycled cardboard. As well as helping children consider the needs of other people, this activity also engages them with the simple principles of creating a design.



The activity is suitable for children aged 3-5 (although older primary school aged children may also enjoy it) and took us about 2.5 hours in total, broken up into three sessions. In the first hour, we read and discussed *Mog's Mumps* and painted the rainbow box covering. After a break, we took about 30 minutes to cover the box. In a final session, we made items for the Magic Caring Box and filled it.

To extend the learning we took the Magic Caring Box with us to visit a family member and talked

about how we made it. This is something that children could do at a later time, if they take their box home with an accompanying note to their parent or carer.

Materials needed:

- A copy of the picture book *Mog's Mumps* (Helen Nicoll & Jan Pienkowski) to read with the children. You might want some extra copies of the book for reference, or photocopies of pages 5, 9-10, 13-14, depending on the number of participants
- White A3 sheets of paper or wide paper roll
- A selection of coloured tissue paper sheets
- Crayons or felt tip pens
- Poster paints
- Small sponges
- Old cardboard packaging
- Glue spreaders and PVA glue
- Child-friendly scissors

To begin:

When sickness strikes, for a humorous take on being ill and the idea of caring for each other, we like reading *Mog's Mumps* at home. Mog the cat does not feel very well, so his witch owner Meg, and friend Owl, look after him. Using plants, things she finds in the woods and a bit of magic, Meg makes a healing medicine.

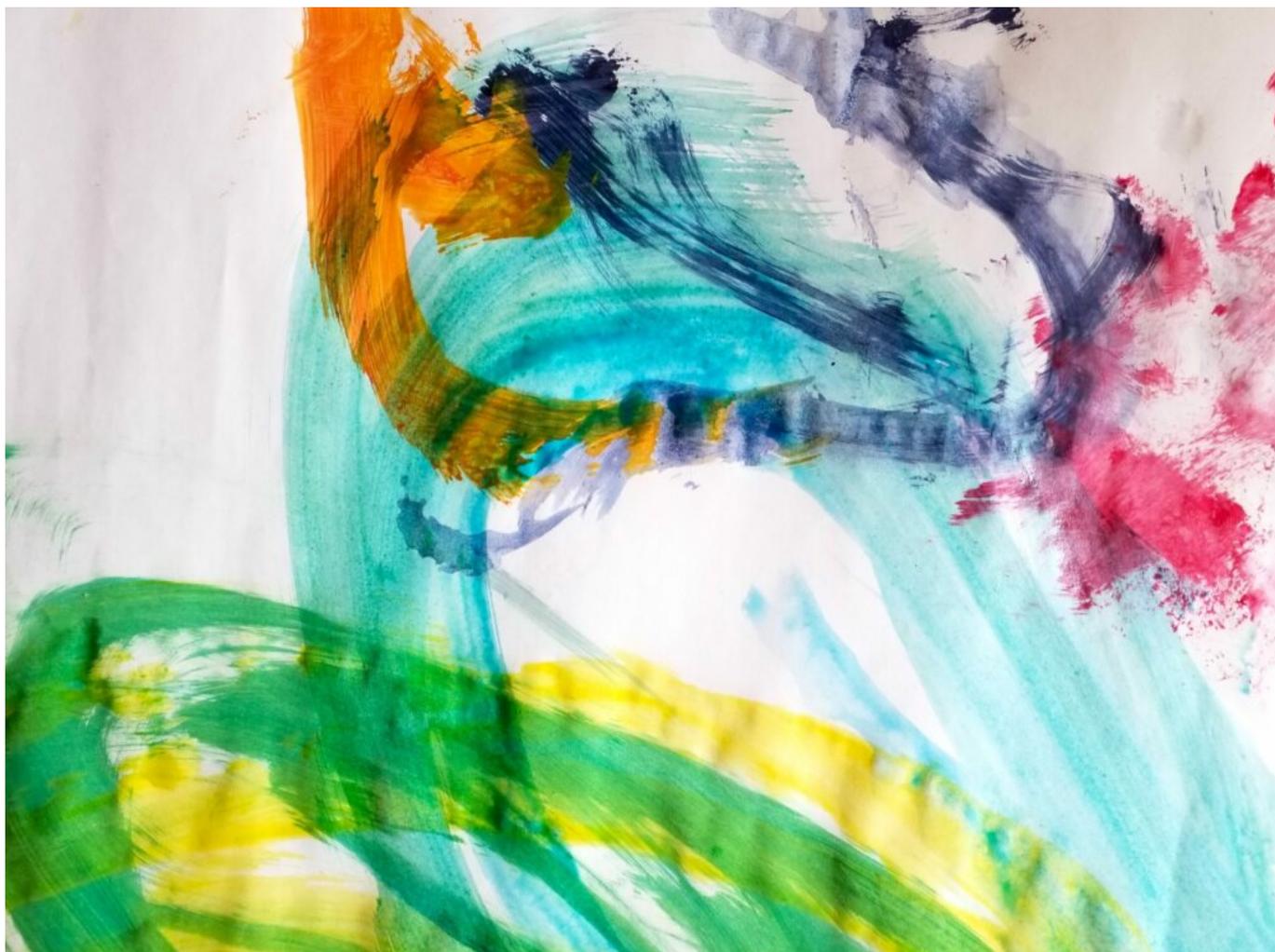
My three year old and I began the workshop by reading *Mog's Mumps* and talking about Pienkowski's illustrations. We paused at the pictures of a hot water bottle and cup of mint tea that Meg gives to Mog (page 5). My daughter exclaimed 'Wow!' at the rainbow coloured pages, which show Meg making the magic spell (pages 9-10, 13-14).

We took time to talk about the story. I asked, 'What does Meg give Mog to help him feel better?', 'What helps you to feel better when you're sick?' and 'Is there anyone we know who is not feeling well?'

We decided to make a Magic Caring Box for a family member who is unwell. Inspired by the colourful magic medicine spell illustration, we created a rainbow box covering by using watered-down poster paints and thick sponges on a large white sheet of paper. Using two colours at a time, we mixed the paints and discovered the different colours that can be made, as if by magic.







After a break, we tore up and glued the dried rainbow paper onto the outside of the box. A point of learning for my daughter was remembering to press the paper firmly onto the box and smooth down the edges.







Later, we looked through the recycled cardboard packaging. We thought about what the different shapes and sizes reminded us of, and decided what to make for the Magic Caring Box contents.

My daughter enjoyed cutting, ripping up and sticking together pieces of cardboard, imagining that they were cups of tea, toothpaste and a hot water bottle. It was tricky for her to cut the cardboard up in the way she wanted, so I scaffolded her work by cutting as she directed and by making suggestions. I focussed on the

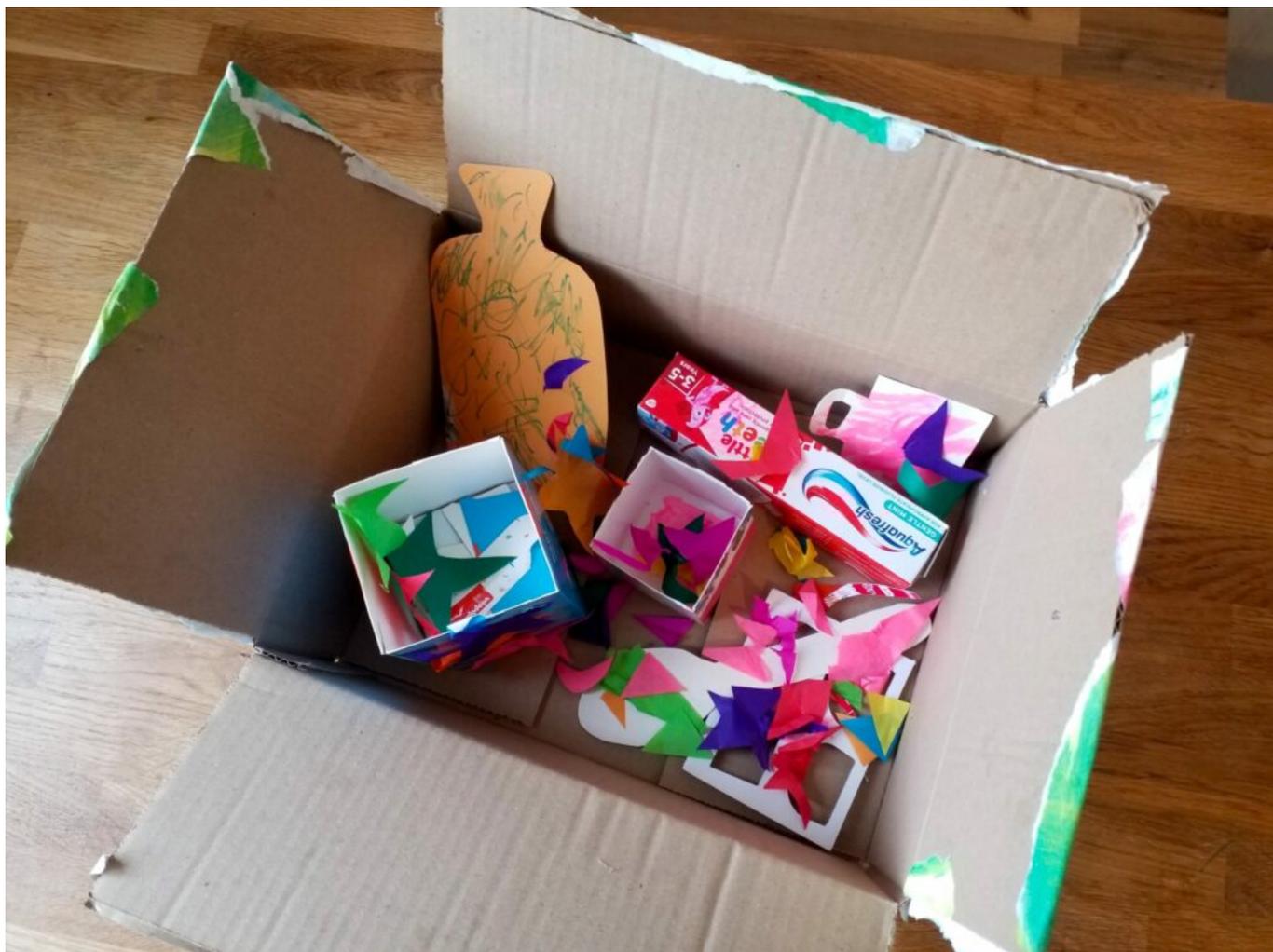
imaginative aspect of the process, playing with the cardboard and showing that it didn't need to look realistic in order for us to enjoy making the items. For example, we cut out a thin wavy string of card to represent a bowl of spaghetti.





We decorated some of the items by drawing on them. We then cut up coloured tissue paper into small shapes to add some more magic to the box. We filled it with the cardboard items and the tissue paper shapes.





As an extension to this activity, we visited the family member for whom we'd made the box, and brought the box along. We told the story of Mog's Mumps, and talked about how we made each item as we took it out of the box. This helped my daughter start to develop the skill of describing a creative process. It also brought some fun and lightness to the visit and our host felt moved by the activity.





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Angry Cat, Calm Cat