

help!

# 21 the story ...



'21 Friends for life' postcard collection available from the website [theblackdogproject.com](http://theblackdogproject.com) Meet more characters on the '21' page of website

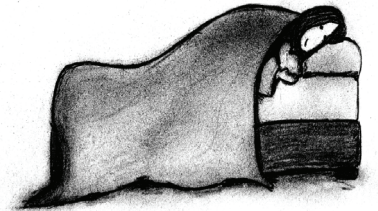


When I saw their faces, read their stories—  
it brought clarity to my own.  
When I offered them encouraging words—  
those words helped me.  
When I had empathy for their pain and vulnerability—  
I felt empathy for my own.

## Where did they come from?

'out of the darkest moments arise opportunity' - a line from a poem I wrote—and it happened. In April 2007 I completed my book in which I revisit and explore in depth my experience of growing up and how I moved forward from those experiences. From the process of revisiting those times I arrived at a painful moment of truth and was struggling to deal with it. As I lay in bed contemplating how I was going to keep going I felt compelled to draw—and draw I did for about 3 weeks until 21 characters and their stories emerged.

Leave the light on



Sometimes I don't like the dark because I can't see where the light is

Loves me, loves me not

## How did they help?



I'll help you find your way out of the darkness.



Sometimes I feel really, really good—  
Sometimes I feel really, really bad

The little girls took me to places my head had forgotten, yet my body felt with intense familiarity. They helped me access, understand and accept the deeper level of truth I'd feared or distanced myself from—and to cease punishing myself for it. When I'm not feeling great they offer insight into why—help me move through and beyond it. They also made me realise that despite going through the cathartic process of writing a book, -I was still stuck, I hadn't reached the place of peace and resolve I sought. This is when the little characters began spilling onto my page. They helped me realise that the freedom and peace I'd always sought came from accepting those experiences, both good and bad, as part of me—not cleansing myself of them. They also helped me bring to a close my life-long search for something to 'fix' my life.



I'll be here for you  
no matter how you feel.

They allowed me to ...

... experience a way forward, not by 'fixing' - by simply understanding.



## How others reacted to the cards ...

Hope you like it



Sometimes I do something really special for someone and they don't like it

I printed off some drafts of the postcards I designed to present the character's stories. I started using them myself and then offered them to others and observed how they responded. Goose bumps, tearful eyes, laughs, knowing groans, stillness, silence.— 'coming home' kind of peaceful sighs. Curiosity about the sense they felt of reuniting with something familiar — something deeply personal. The cards seemed to instantly access private and poignant places within people—and different places, different stories and experiences for different people. I felt an obligation to share the cards, the characters, their stories and their realistic words of encouragement with others.



I think what you've got to offer is really good

coming ready or not



Sometimes no-one can see how much I'm really hurting

## The courage to publish ...

Just weeks after the little girls had helped me emerge from my dark space I attended another weekend youth camp. Again, hearing the stories of these young people and witnessing their extreme level of pain and suffering, I felt again compelled to 'do something' — to offer something. I was also blown away by the courage and determination of these young people and that inspired me. About 10 weeks after the characters had emerged on my page the collection of 21 postcards were rolling off the press. Now I felt I could offer something that may, at the very least, help people talk about how they felt, what was happening for them — others to understand why.



I'll comfort you

## My best friend ...

Fear has always been the greatest barrier to creating positive change in my life and offering insight from my experiences to others. I also feared facing things I'd rather not have to deal with and the places the little girls and their stories took me. To release myself from the prison of my own secrets and share that with others I needed some big time help. The little girl in the goggles has become one of my favourites. She gives me the courage and strength to keep working my way through the hard stuff, to ask for help when I need it, keep exploring who I am—who I can be ...

.... and how that might help others.

In you go!



Sometimes when something's hard or scary—I just don't do it



I'll help you give it go!