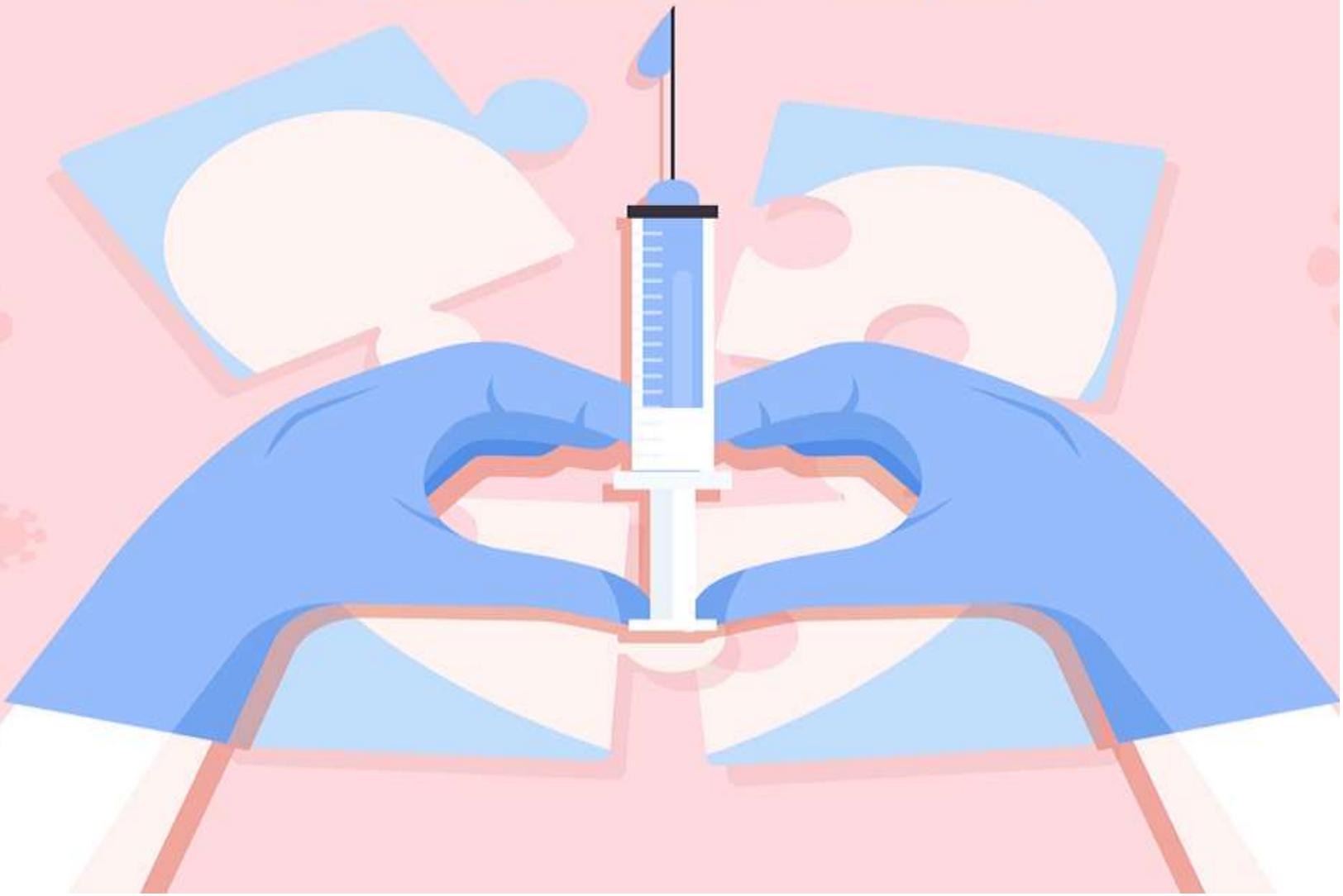


THE KIND NEEDLE





Jack sat in the doctor's waiting room. He squirmed in his chair but, no matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't get comfy.



It was vaccination day and it was Jack's turn to get his jabs.



He wanted nothing more than to run outside, race through the park, and settle in back home where it felt safe.



His mother had promised him everything would be okay but poor Jack couldn't shake off his worry.



He looked across the waiting room and noticed babies snug in their prams, grandfathers wrapped up in their coats, and teenagers chatting to pass the time.



Are they as worried as I am? thought Jack to himself.



He glanced at a noticeboard covered in posters. Something caught his eye.



On a shiny blue poster was a drawing of a needle. It stood proudly with a friendly smile, hands on the hips of its barrel and a bright red cape floating behind it.



Jack inched forward to take a closer look.



“You nervous, kid?”

Jack jumped back into his seat. He shook his head in disbelief. It seemed as if the drawing had moved its mouth and asked a question.

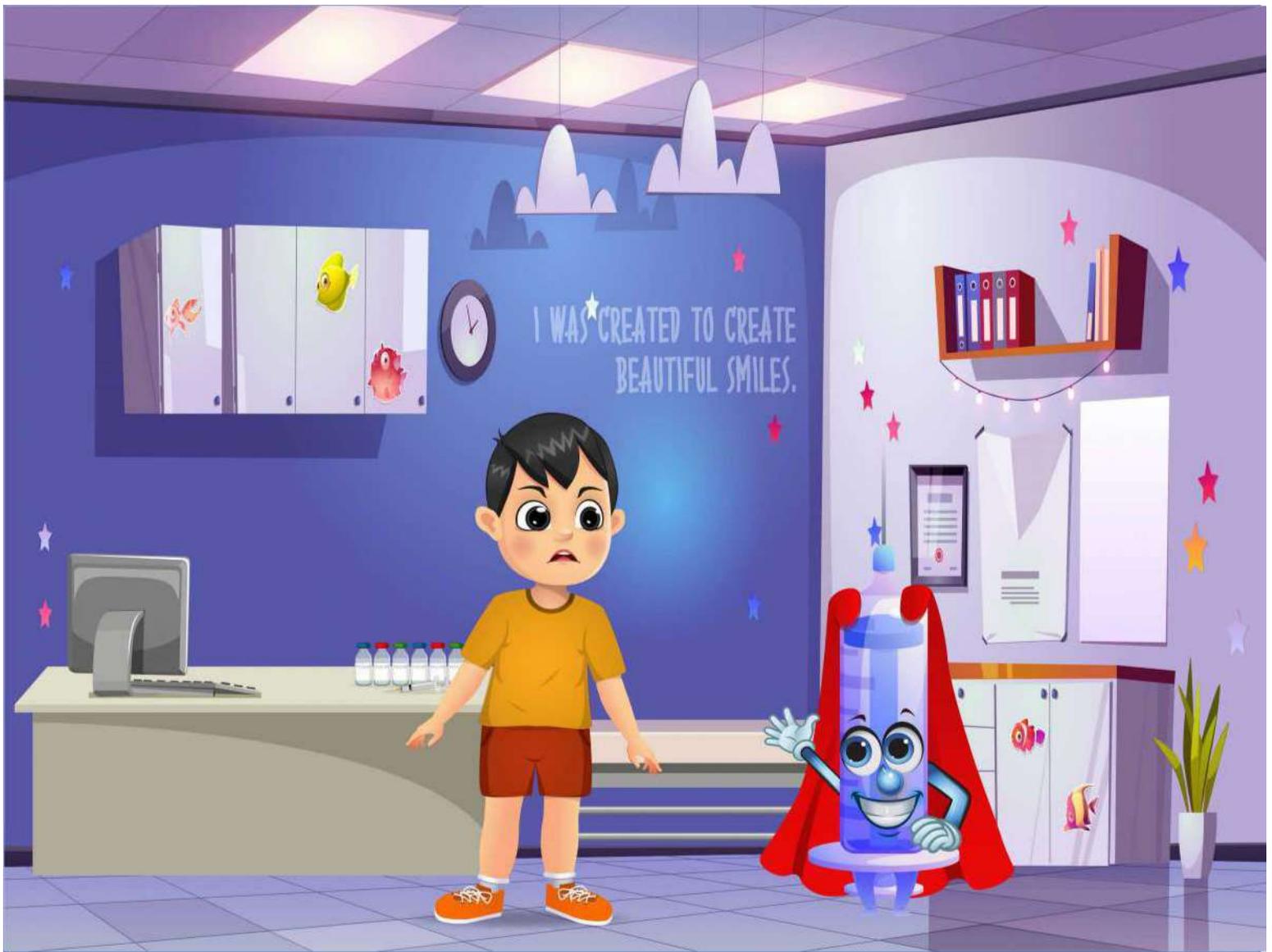


Suddenly, the needle climbed down from the blue poster and sat on the edge of the noticeboard, his legs swinging playfully back and forth.



“I’m Needle Ned,” said the needle.

“Jack,” he replied, still in shock.



“Lovely to meet you, Jack!” Needle Ned said excitedly. “Now, something tells me you’re not looking forward to your vaccine.” “Not one bit,” said Jack.



“I understand.” Needle Ned nodded. “Lots of people feel that way, but I promise you, we needles just want to help!”



Needle Ned pushed out his cape, flew over to Jack and sat gently on the seat next to him.



“What part of it are you worried about, Jack?” asked Needle Ned.

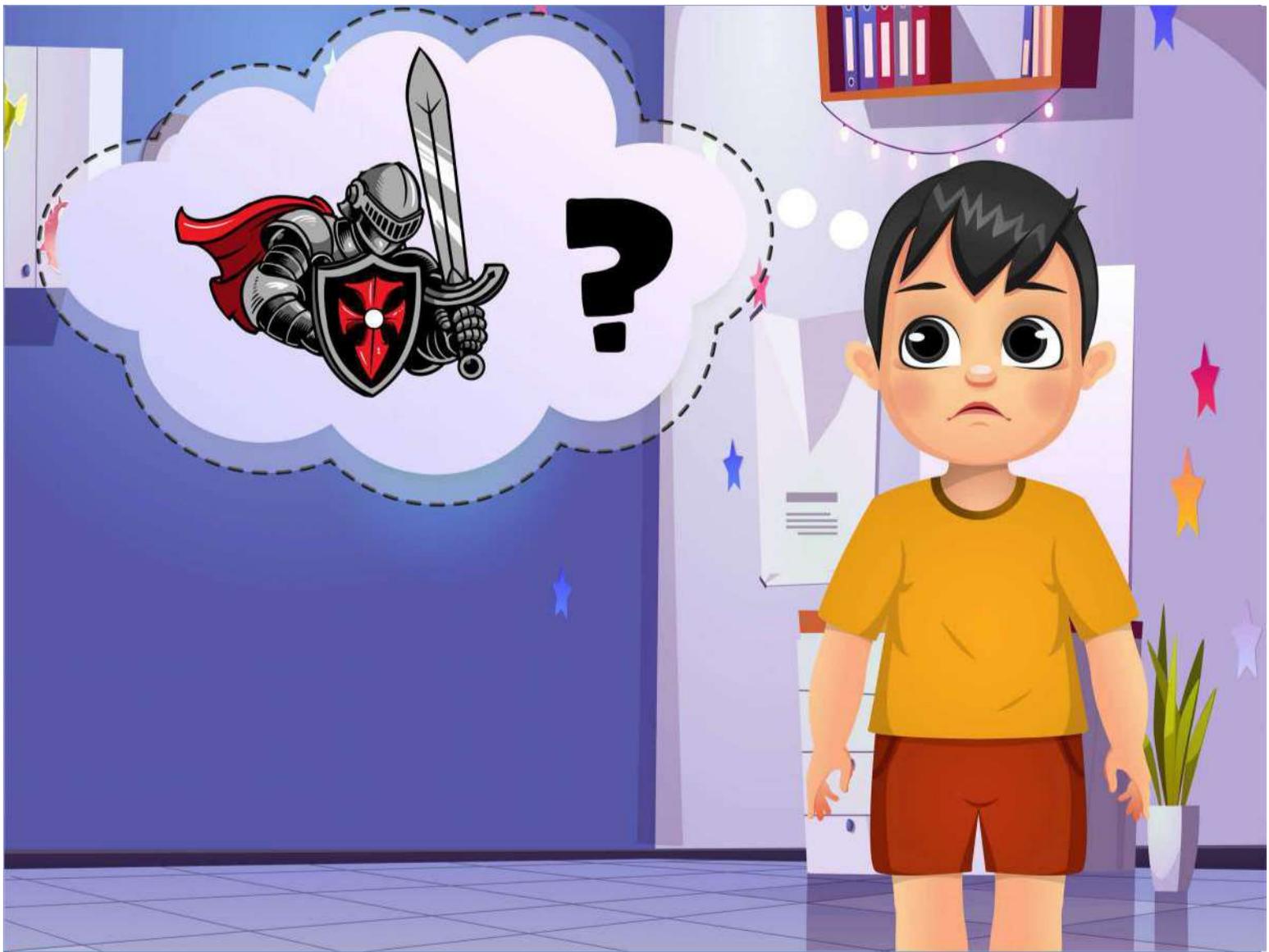
“I’m worried it’ll hurt,” sighed Jack.



“You might feel a tiny pinch but that’s how you know we’re doing a good job!” Needle Ned smiled. “Our job is to protect you from all those nasty illnesses and viruses like COVID-19.”



Jack imagined Needle Ned dressed as a knight, a huge silver shield in one hand and a glistening sword in the other, ready to fight off any monsters that came his way.



A knight wouldn't go into battle without armour, so would Jack say no to Needle Ned's protection?



“When you ride a bike, you wear a helmet,” said Ned. Jack thought about all the fun he had with his friends when they cycled in the park.



“When you go outside, you wear shoes to keep your feet from getting muddy!”

Jack thought about how much he’d giggled while splashing in puddles with his friends.



“When it snows, you wear gloves to keep your hands warm!”
Jack thought how proud he’d been when he had made an amazing snowman with his mother.



“So we needles are no different! We are there to help, just like your helmet, shoes, and gloves – we protect you!” exclaimed Needle Ned. “Having a vaccine means you can carry on riding your bike, splashing in puddles, and building huge snowmen!”



Jack realized Ned was right. It might hurt for a second, but afterwards, he could tackle even the biggest of monsters!



With the help of Needle Ned, the doctor gave Jack his vaccine, and instead of focusing on whether he could feel a pinch, he thought about all the fun things he was going to do later that day.



Needle Ned returned to his poster and waved to Jack as he left. "I'll always protect you," Needle Ned called after him.

Jack smiled. He felt as brave as a knight, knowing he was now covered against Covid-19!



Jack learns that vaccines might not be as scary as he first thought

