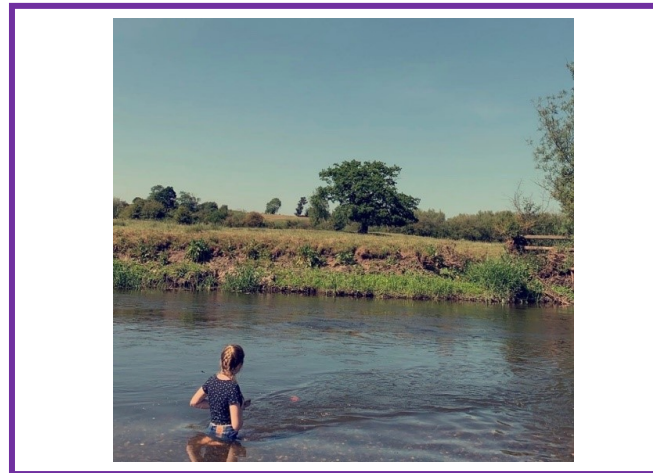


Bereavement and Loss in the context of Covid-19



Guidance and Resources for Schools

Published: September 2020

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Introduction



Some children will find it hard to return to life as normal when the current lockdown ends. This will particularly be the case for children who have suffered from bereavement, loss and trauma. However, schools can help them to adjust.

Following the tragic amount of deaths we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic it is likely that there will be children and young people in your school community affected by bereavement and the loss of an important person. It is also likely that many will have experienced loss in other ways including the loss of routine, structure, friendship opportunity and freedom. These 5 losses can trigger the emergence emotionally of anxiety, trauma and bereavement in any child. (*Professor Barry Carpenter - Professor of mental health in education, Oxford Brookes University, 2020*).

The good news is that the potential of schools to help children and young people recover after experiencing trauma, bereavement and loss is huge. Moreover, it does not require the transformation of classrooms into CAMHS clinics or teachers into psychotherapists. The main treatment is the school community itself immersing children in the warmth of a relational culture and offering routine, familiarity, safety, security and understanding. Karen Treisman, clinical psychologist refers to schools containing and stabilising children by being “the brick parent, the secure base, the safe haven.”

Place relationships front and centre

It is encouraging for us to know that even the small things we say and do can be potentially healing. Teachers and adults who listen with empathy perform an important therapeutic function without being therapists. Teachers are uniquely placed to be able to build positive relationships with those children who need it most. The more severely children are traumatised, the more repetition, the more positive relational experiences are needed for healing to occur. “Every interaction is an intervention” (Karen Treisman).

Aims

This Booklet aims to:

- Provide key messages about how to support those who have experienced grief. Provide evidence and experience-based direction in a clear and concise way.

- Give some theory and age-specific information about bereavement and loss, both in general and in the context of COVID-19.

- Offer some practical activities and strategies to use with children and young people according to their age, culture, previous experience and additional needs.

- Provide a comprehensive resource and references list to direct you to many of the excellent existing resources which are available.

- Signpost further opportunities for training and support which can be provided by the Educational Psychology Service.

Key Messages

Supporting children and young people coping with bereavement and loss

Recommendations for Teachers

Common grief reactions

Be understanding and tolerant of common grief reactions including: numbness; denial; decreased appetite; difficulty sleeping; decreased ability to concentrate; increased pain or sadness; social withdrawal; anger toward the deceased or in general and guilt. Nervous laughter may also be observed in some students.

- Some children may focus on the death by talking and re-enacting through play, whereas others may use play as a break from strong emotions. Both are acceptable and children may demonstrate both interchangeably in the course of their grief.
- A variety of feelings are normal. Be sensitive to each student's experience, as there is no one right way to respond to a loss. Feelings and behaviours vary across students and change throughout the bereavement process.

Discussing death

Be simple and straightforward. Discuss death in developmentally appropriate terms.

- Provide only facts without minimising, sensationalising, or speculating. Limit details that children did not request.
- Use words such as "death," "die," or "dying" and avoid euphemisms such as "they went away," "they are sleeping," "departed," and "passed away." Euphemisms are abstract and confusing.
- Let students know that although all human beings will die at some point, it is unusual for children to die.
- Children may need help understanding that death is permanent, not a choice, result of the body ceasing to function, and not the child's fault.

Answering Questions

Be brief and patient. You may need to answer some questions multiple times and repeat key information to ensure understanding or provide reassurance.

- Staff should decide as a group how to answer common questions in advance to provide consistency. Answer children honestly, and remember it is okay to say you are unsure or suggest children talk to their parents about particularly sensitive questions.

Opportunities to Express Emotions

Provide opportunities to talk and ask questions and use this to guide further discussion. Use this time to dispel rumours. Encourage students to share feelings; however, do not assume that all students want or need to talk.

- Remember that being physically present in a supportive and calm way helps students feel safer and more able to cope.
- Express optimism that with time and talk, most if not all students will feel better. Though they will always remember, distress will lessen.
- Keep in mind that some children may have difficulty expressing their feelings or may not feel comfortable talking at school. Do not pressure these students to talk. Some may prefer writing, drawing, listening to music, or playing a game instead of talking about their feelings. Provide students with a variety of options for expressing grief. See the “Practical Activities” section of this booklet for examples.
- Ensure students feel comfortable talking and know all school staff are there to listen. Check in regularly, even if they may not appear upset.

Listening

Listen, acknowledge feelings, and be non-judgmental.

- Normalise feelings by telling students they are common after loss. However, if expressions include risk to self (e.g. suicidal thoughts) or others, refer immediately to appropriate professionals.
- Avoid making assumptions and imposing your own beliefs.
- Students may feel confused about their changing emotions. It is important they recognise they are still entitled to joy and happiness, despite feeling sad some of the time.

Modelling Grieving

Model effective grieving by expressing your own feelings in an open, calm, and appropriate way that encourages students to share their feelings and grief.

Maintain Routines

Maintain normal routine in class and engage students in previously enjoyed activities. This will help children feel safe and secure.

- It is important to be understanding of children’s emotional and practical limitations. Be tolerant and flexible about homework.
- Be aware of curriculum areas that may bring up thoughts of the death. Consider speaking to particular children or their parents in advance to prepare them for these lessons.

Supporting Further Coping

Describe to students how to address further coping, both in school and in the community.

- Teach relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, relaxation practice, mindfulness, and meditation.
- Encourage students to talk with other people about their crisis reactions and feelings. List who students can talk to (i.e. parents, teachers, counsellors, friends).
- Remind students of mental health resources available in their school.
- Discuss how returning to a normal routine is a positive coping strategy after a crisis and how coming to school helps manage crisis reactions.

Diversity in Grieving

- Be aware of children's typical grieving process and needs at different stages of development. See the section on "Age-related responses to grief and loss" for further information.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences of students and families in expressing grief and honouring the dead. If your school has large groups of certain cultures, be familiar with cultural practices and beliefs to understand how students may be thinking. Remember that within any culture, each family has their own customs and beliefs.
- Consider students' intellectual abilities, behaviour, and conceptual understanding of death. For children with developmental disabilities, limited communication skills do not mean they are unaffected by the death. Behaviours such as increased frustration and compulsivity, somatic complaints, relationship difficulties, and increased self-stimulatory behaviours may be expressions of grief. Resources to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs can be found in the References and Resources Section.

Death Outside School

If students have lost family or close friends outside school, talk to classmates as soon as possible about grief and dispel rumours.

- Emphasise the importance of being understanding and sensitive.
- Speak to the student individually and ask how they would like to be supported. Avoid patronising.
- Consider sending a condolence card to the family and encouraging your students to do the same.
- Help bereaved students find a peer support group. There will likely be other who have also experienced the death of a loved one.

Schoolwide Recommendations

Supporting Teachers

Prepare teachers to support students before they enter school. Distribute copies of this booklet to all school staff.

- Decide how teachers will address the topic of bereavement with classes. Consider providing example scripts. Allow teachers to request additional administrative assistance.
- Discuss as whole staff group common questions children ask and how they will be answered.
- In cases of staff or student death, see section below for tips.
- Plan emotional and practical support for staff once students are back. Establish peer support networks for teachers. Staff should be aware of caring for themselves at this time (i.e. exercise, hobbies, healthy eating, sleep, time to talk with family, friends, or colleagues).

Monitoring

Monitor all students' responses over time with careful attention to those who already experienced death, witnessed death or illness, have emotional or developmental issues, or lack family or social support.

- Be vigilant of symptoms of severe emotional trauma that interfere with daily functioning and are long lasting, including: acute reactions (becoming hysterical or panicking); increased arousal (difficulty sleeping, irritability, anger, distractibility, startling easily); avoidance and lack of emotion (avoiding activities, withdrawal, lack of positive emotions, disassociation); maladaptive or harmful coping (drug or alcohol use, severe aggression; self-harm, suicidal ideation); dysfunctional preoccupation with death or psychotic symptoms.
- Someone at school, such as the safeguarding lead, should maintain list of students to monitor. This could include vulnerable pupils and those observed by teachers to demonstrate more difficulty coping.
- If any children do not make progress towards their usual state of wellbeing or display excessive concerning symptoms listed above, consider referring for specialist support. Consider directly asking the child about their mental health. Contact the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) for advice if unsure about need for specialist support.

Support for Parents

Consider sharing recommendations for parents to support children at home, through letters or information sessions. Topics may include a range of common grief feelings and reactions, guidance on talking to children about death, suggestions to model effective grieving, provide time to talk, and continue normal routines, indicators of need for mental health counselling, and direction on obtaining community resources, as well as any other information in this booklet.

Agencies

Other agencies are available for support, such as:

- EPS - Offers whole school consultation, or support through

- consultation, assessment, or counselling for individual children.
- CAMHS or Malachi- Offers counselling support for individual children.

Schools affected by staff or student death

When staff or students have died, *Coping with a Crisis* procedures should be referred to:

- Obtain accurate information and to relay it to school senior leadership team. Contact the bereaved family to ascertain their wishes.
- Inform support contacts as deemed necessary, such as EPS.
- Senior leadership team meet to plan strategies.
- Start an incident log to record school response.
- Manage communication, including notes for personnel answering phones.
- Consider consulting with District Senior EP, through phone consultation on management of practical and emotional issues, or EP visit to advise on communication, child development, trauma, or action plans.
- Prepare script and contact families with children directly involved by phone or in person. Record parents contacted. Check parents have support. Provide useful phone numbers for more support or information.
- Inform staff as soon as possible, preferably at a meeting. Allow staff opportunity to grieve before working with students. Discuss action plan and address questions or concerns.
- In dealing with press, consider contacting Staffordshire Corporate Communications Department. Do not permit press on school premises or give unsupervised access to staff or children. The privacy of staff, young people, and families must be maintained.
- Pupils should be told simply and clearly what happened, in the smallest groups possible, for example in classes. Avoid announcing this at an assembly. Students' questions should be answered as straightforwardly as possible. Give facts only and never speculate on causes of the crisis or consequences. Prepare a fact sheet and/or scripts for staff to use (see "Example Classroom Meeting Scripts" section). If questions cannot be answered, this should be acknowledged. Provide time for discussion and expression of emotion (see "Practical Activities" section), managed sensitively by staff. Sending selected pupils home should be avoided as schools provide individual and community support at times of crisis.
- Inform all parents of the death on the same day as the students via letter or email. Include facts about the death to dispel rumours, discussion of feelings and reactions during the grief process, guidance on talking to children about death, indicators of need for mental health counselling, and direction on contacting school with questions or for counselling support and obtaining community resources.

Additional Recommendations

- Share factual information with staff (through meetings and bulletins), students (class meetings or announcements), and parents (letters/email). Regularly provide them with relevant updates.

- Maintain normal routine as much as possible.
- Provide teachers with guidelines on how to share information about the death with their students and establish referral procedures for students requiring additional support.
- Consider memorials and anniversaries. It is often helpful to mark the loss of members of the school community with a memorial service or symbol such as the planting of a tree or the purchasing of a special bench. The memorial service could include staff and pupils' writing, poems, art, or favourite hymns. Remember anniversaries by marking them with actions or simply understanding that these may be difficult days for the children.
- In the case of suicide, with consent from the family, staff and students should be provided with the factual information that the individual took their own life. If this information is withheld, the children will likely find out eventually, which may negatively impact their emotional coping and undermine the trust they have in what others say. However, this must be handled sensitively and care should be given to ensure that death by suicide is not glorified.

Supporting children and young people in the context of COVID-19

Complicating factors about deaths related to COVID-19

- **Unpredictability** – Not only very old, frail people are dying. The person they know may have been a little frail before they contracted the virus or may have appeared perfectly well.
- **Suddenness** - People may sicken and die rapidly; children may have little time to adjust to a rapidly changing future.
- **Distance** - Children may not be able to spend time with dying relatives, touch or hug them, or even be in the same room.
- **Fear** - People may react to death with fear rather than comfort.
- **Separation** - Children and young people may be physically distant from those who support them, including friends, teachers, and wider family.
- **Support structures** - Disruption of normal routine may mean children have fewer places to focus on something else (e.g. school, sports club)
- **Anger** - Children may feel angry about things perceived to contribute to this death: people being slow to self-isolate, lack of ventilators etc.
- **Anxiety** - While children may generally worry about other family members dying, at present, such anxiety may be sharper and more difficult to soothe.
- **Lack of 'specialness'** - More people may be affected by a death due to coronavirus. The death of a child's important person may not receive as much attention as before this crisis.
- **Constantly reminded** - It will be hard for children to avoid hearing other stories of people affected by coronavirus.
- **Absence of rituals** - With restrictions on funerals, children and young people may have less chance to 'say goodbye' in a formal sense.

Recommendations

- Balance truth and reassurance. Children are experts at knowing if they are not being told the truth; if there are things that seem too difficult to share, explain that. They will know the difference between genuine and false reassurance. For example, rather than saying "nobody we know is going to die", consider saying: "from all I've heard, it is unlikely that anyone we know will die and we will do everything we can do to keep safe." This response will need to be adjusted in situations where students, staff members, or relatives have already died.
- Consider offering memorial or remembrance events. For instance, students could clap to remember and celebrate lives of those who died.
- Maintain normal routines as possible. When children return to school, routines and boundaries should be reiterated and remain consistent over time and across staff. Also make sure any necessary new rules, routines, or boundaries, including social distancing measures, are clearly communicated and consistent across the school.

Theories, types and models of grief

Grief is the personal response to loss and mourning is the process which occurs after a loss. There are a number of theories which propose stages of grief but it is important to know that grief and mourning can be different for everybody.

That said, there are some common, fundamental reactions based on the work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross (1969/1973) and these can be useful when working with those who have experienced loss because they can help us to provide support in creating meaning and finding new ways of engaging with the world.

Denial - the refusal to accept what has happened

Anger - the random direction of highly charged emotion against others

Bargaining - making agreements with self/others in order to reverse what happened

Depression - the feeling of hopelessness

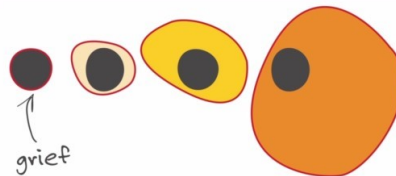
Acceptance - the feeling you can live positively with memories of the past.

It is possible that we may individually, and collectively have experienced some of these stages during the current pandemic and the severity of these may be affected by previous experience of bereavement/trauma, support networks in place, previous mental health needs etc. Equally, time spent in these stages may have been delayed due to not being able to engage in cultural rituals such as funerals.

It is important to remember that dealing with grief is not an achievement or an outcome but a *process*. The stages above are not necessarily linear and they may not all be part of the process. Stroebe and Schut (2008) also note the need for 'dosage grieving' The person may choose to take 'time off', be distracted or give attention to other things, the balance of these may be affected by age, gender and culture and it can be useful to provide the person who has experienced loss to acknowledge and accept that this is ok (see resources and references).

Models of Grief

There are various models of grief but one that we particularly like and which is clearly and easily represented as a visual is Lois Tonkin's idea of 'growing around grief' (1996):



This has been adapted by Barbara Monroe to the visual below using jars. The blob is our grief and the jar is our life. As you can see, in both models, the grief stays the same. This is comforting for those who don't recognise that their grief gradually feels smaller or don't want to think of it diminishing completely so that life moves on unchanged. Tonkin's theory suggests that, over time your grief stays the same but life grows around it. You will have new experiences, meet new people and start to have moments of enjoyment which will increase your capacity to adapt to life without the person and to manage.



The way you grieve is **individual**, a product of all of your experiences, big and small and in the context of culture.

Bereavement is a type of **trauma** although not all bereavements are traumatic. Many experts believe that the symptoms of trauma should be addressed before dealing with grief. Signs of traumatic grief include (Schut, Stroebe and Finkenauer, 2001):

- Disproportionate irritability
- Sudden bouts of bitterness and anger
- Prolonged nightmares/insomnia
- Feelings that death is unfair
- Strong sense of personal accountability or unfinished business
- Problems socialising
- Feelings of futility

Responses last for 2 months after the loss and therapeutic input is the best way of addressing traumatic grief.

Other models of mourning move away from phases and refer to tasks. There are 4 tasks and the end goal is recovery and acceptance:

1. **Acknowledging the reality of the loss.**
2. **Processing the grief and pain** – rather than suppressing the emotions although it can be positive to move in and out of this.
3. **Adapting to life without what has been lost** – this involves external adjustment – dealing with the changes to everyday life, internal adjustment – dealing with the effect on your sense of self and spiritual adjustment – how the loss has affected your assumptions and perspectives about the world.
4. **Establishing a meaningful link and moving on** - Death does not mean that all meaningful links should end or that there is no lasting relationship.

It can be useful to bear these ‘tasks’ in mind when working to support others creatively.

Remember that the experience of mourning and the mourning period is different for children and adults (see page 15 for more information). In *Independent thoughts on Loss* (see resources section) Ian Gilbert describes how his youngest child was told that adults grieve in rivers where they are fully immersed in their grief for an extended period of time following the death. Children, on the other hand, grieve in **puddles**. The child moves in and out of their grief like someone stepping in and out of puddles. Sometimes they are fine, sometimes incredibly sad. Ian Gilbert’s daughter would talk about having “puddy moments” and this can be part of moving on whilst maintaining a link.

What does the theory teach us?

There is a need to help the person who has experienced loss to look for new ways of developing an enduring connection whilst adapting and moving on.

We can think about supporting this for those who have experienced bereavement and ideas for this are included in the practical strategies section.

Theories of grief and mourning can be applied to other experiences of loss related to COVID-19 – the loss of a role, the loss of security, the loss of daily routines/rituals, the loss of control/freedom, the loss of connection, the loss of normality and of things which we may have been looking forward to. What could we do to establish a meaningful link to what existed before whilst supporting planning ahead for a different future?

Change, loss and grief are normal and valuable parts of life. With the right recognition of feelings and the right support these experiences can lead to resilience, growth and personal acceptance of change.

Reactions to bereavement and loss linked to age and level understanding

Each child or young person will react to the loss of a family member or other significant person in their lives in their own way. There are many factors that influence this process. We know that children grieve from an early age but not in the same way as adults. They often grieve in bursts (or 'puddles') and can show their feelings in their behaviour and play. Their age and level of understanding influences their response to bereavement and behaviour, which should be taken into account when we are trying to understand and support children and young people through this process.

From Birth to age 6 months

- There is little or no understanding of death.
- Infants may sense the absence of a parent.
- Infants may miss familiar sounds smells and touches.
- Children may sense feelings of sadness and become aware of any anxiety or distress around them.

From 6 months to 2 years

- There is a developing awareness that something is missing but no understanding of death.
- They miss someone and experience a sense of abandonment.
- They react to upset and changes within the environment.
- They continue to search for the person who has died and need to be told many times that they won't be coming back.

From 2-5 years

- In the second year onwards, the early understanding of grief is apparent. They begin to use the word 'dead' and know it is different from being alive but there is no sense that it is permanent and irreversible. The deceased is expected to return.
- Children may search for the missing person expecting that they will reappear.
- There may be an increase in anger
- There is a growing awareness of non-verbal expressions.
- Some children are illogical in blaming self for what has happened. They believe their actions can control events and this leads to feelings of guilt.
- Some children think that death and sleeping are the same. This promotes fear.

From age 5-8

- In these years there is a complete realisation that someone is missing from the family unit.
- They may understand death is the result of accident or illness.
- There is a tendency to fantasise. They believe they can talk to the dead person or that the bereaved is watching over them. Magical thinking.
- During this age there is a development of conscience so some children can feel guilty.
- Some think that what has happened to their family is a punishment. They blame themselves for what has happened.
- Some believe their actions control the behaviour and destiny of others.
- Children become a little less egocentric and begin to show empathy to others.
- Some still believe it is right to take on an adult role, which can prevent them coming to terms with loss.

From age 8-12

- Children in this age range understand the permanence, irreversibility and consequences of death.
- They may develop a fear of their own mortality.

From age 12+

The concept of death becomes accepted as something totally irreversible. This is a time of great change and grief impacts on moving from dependence to independence. Teenagers do not want to feel different to their friends and peers and so can find death and grieving very isolating.

- At this age, young people begin to think abstractly about death.
- Many tend to think about the justice and injustice of death.
- Many young people begin to contemplate their own mortality.
- Some begin to explore the different beliefs about an after-life.
- There is a consciousness, and sometimes, shame that the family is different.
- Changes in family situations can cause anger, fear, a loss of personal identity, and low self-esteem.
- Some may become withdrawn. Some may act out their distress sometimes through risk taking behaviour.
- Some may feel they should take care of others around them.
- They may seek support from their peers, social media and from others who have been bereaved.
- They should be allowed to be teenagers and not put in a position where they feel that they have to take on adult responsibilities.

Children and young people may 'revisit' grief as their understanding changes as they develop. Therefore, they may have periods when they struggle more with their emotions as they realise the implications of the death on their future.



Grieving children struggle with....

- Re-establishing self-identity
- Fears of abandonment
- A need for reassurance
- Trying to understand what is happening for those around them
- Feeling the need to shelter others from their own reactions
- Needing to know the truth about what happened
- Blaming themselves or others

Insight into grief experienced by young people

- In England, the Childhood Bereavement Network found that 78% of 11 to 16 year olds had experienced the loss of a relative or close friend (National Children's Bureau, 2007). Estimated statistics of children experiencing the death of a close friend are between 10 and 12 percent (Harrison and Harrington, cited in Ribbens McCarthy, 2007, p1). With legislative changes such as Every Child Matters and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Cheminais, 2006), it is a government priority to uncover deeper insights into the experiences of young people, in order to promote healthier and safer options (DfES, 2003).
- Young people are requesting opportunities to talk about their bereavement experiences (Ono and Pumariega, 2008) and indicate that access to talking and listening needs to be available over longer periods of time. This helps them to assimilate their grief with changing understandings of their world (Corr, 1999). Enabling young people to give voice to their experiences would provide professionals with much needed insight into the how adolescents make meaning of their bereavement experiences:
- 'One crucially important issue for individual responses to bereavement concerns the meanings that this experience has for the children and young person themselves, meanings that may themselves reflect all sorts of features of biographical and personal histories, as well as aspects of the death itself, the history of the relationship with the deceased, and the ways in which those around the bereaved make sense (or not) of the death in their overall social and cultural contexts.' (Ribbens McCarthy, p.3, 2007)

Barriers to seeking help

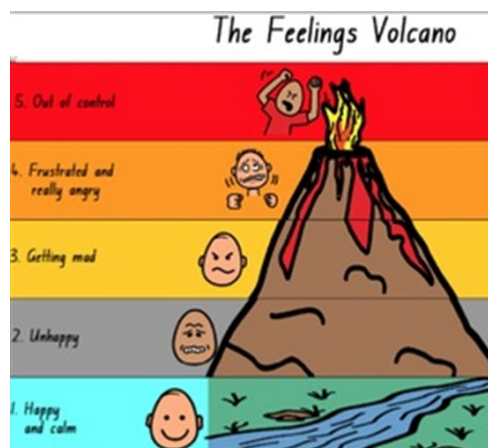
- Lack of trust in others
- Fear of burdening others
- Fear that situations will become worse if known
- Shame
- Embarrassment
- Guilt
- Believing you should cope on your own
- Lack of knowledge about available support services
- Inaccessible services
- Culturally inappropriate services

Practical and creative support ideas

These are some ideas for supporting students to work through their initial bereavement experience, using creative strategies. Ideas are based on research and recommendations from national charities i.e. Winston's Wish, Grief Encounter and Child Bereavement UK.

- Students could be provided with time to share how this bereavement has made them feel.
- Students may wish to use colours to show how they are feeling on small pictures of body shapes. Alternatively, they may wish to support each other in discussing emotions i.e. drawing around wallpaper versions of themselves, and then colouring feelings.
- Colours of feelings/ memories can be used to complete a 'memory jar'. Colours are chosen to represent feelings/ memories. Salt is coloured using chalk and placed in the jar in layers.
- Students may wish to share poems that help them work through their emotions i.e. Christina Rossetti's 'Remember Me'.
- Students may wish to share particular songs that help them work through their emotions i.e. Eric Clapton's 'Tears in Heaven', Lennon's 'Yesterday'.
- Students may want to express themselves by composing song lyrics and poems.
- Students could be provided with time and space to use 'post its' to document memories i.e. their friend's favourite hobbies, interests, trips, holidays, humour, foods, etc.
- Students could produce 'goodbye cards/ letters'.
- Students could spend time collecting/ copying/ sharing photographs.
- Memories and photographs could be transferred onto a large A1 'memory board'. This could include a collage of colours, scenes and phrases from magazines.
- Students could produce a 'memory book'.
- Students may wish to create a memory box of keepsakes.
- The students might remember their friend by decorating stones.
- Students may wish to create a memory space in the school's garden. This could be accompanied by flower display/ tree/ bench.

- Students could write messages on tags, which could be later attached to lanterns.
- Students may wish to provide audio or video memory messages which can be used to create a compilation.
- Students could decorate candle holders, as reminders for them to take 'time out' to think about how they could be feeling and get proper rest.
- Students could decorate cups and saucers to remind them to talk to friends, and that conversations may be needed over the longer term.
- Students could plan a fundraising 'wear your own clothes day'.
- Creative work could be shared with/ given to the bereaved family or used in a memory mass/ celebration of life.
- Scaling exercises can be helpful, so that young people can judge how they are feeling now, and how they are working through grief. Students are likely to feel changing emotions like 'waves'.
- Some students may require additional support similar to emotional manageability work. This may involve talking about the build-up of emotions, using imagery such as volcanos/ kettles. They are also likely to benefit from reviewing calming strategies such as breathing, relaxing and tensing muscles, and visualising a calm place.
- In the longer term school may need further support for more complex grief. Similarly, advice may be required at key times of the year i.e. anniversaries, birthdays, Christmas, graduation.



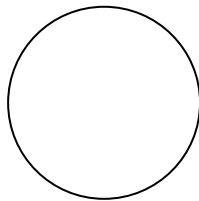
Practical and creative support activities

Grief: Feelings Masks

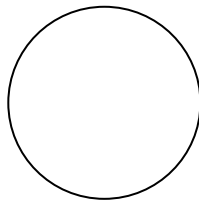
There will be many types of feelings after someone has been bereaved.

Draw some of the feelings people may have on their faces.

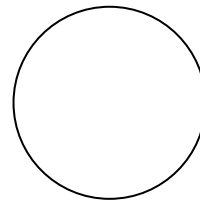
Feeling Faces



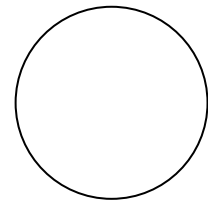
Sad



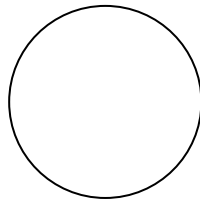
Afraid



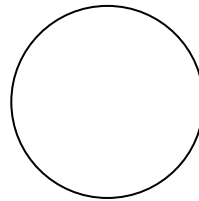
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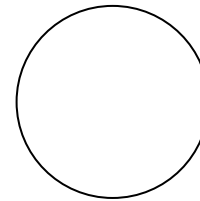
Angry



Shocked



Nervous

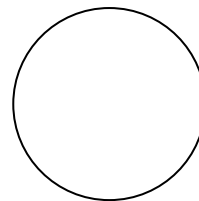
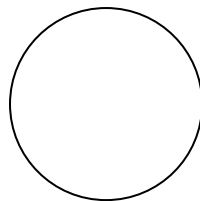


Confused

Feeling Masks

Sometimes people feel that they can't show their emotions.

What emotions do you sometimes have that you would like to hide? How do you hide them? How might this be confusing for the people around you?



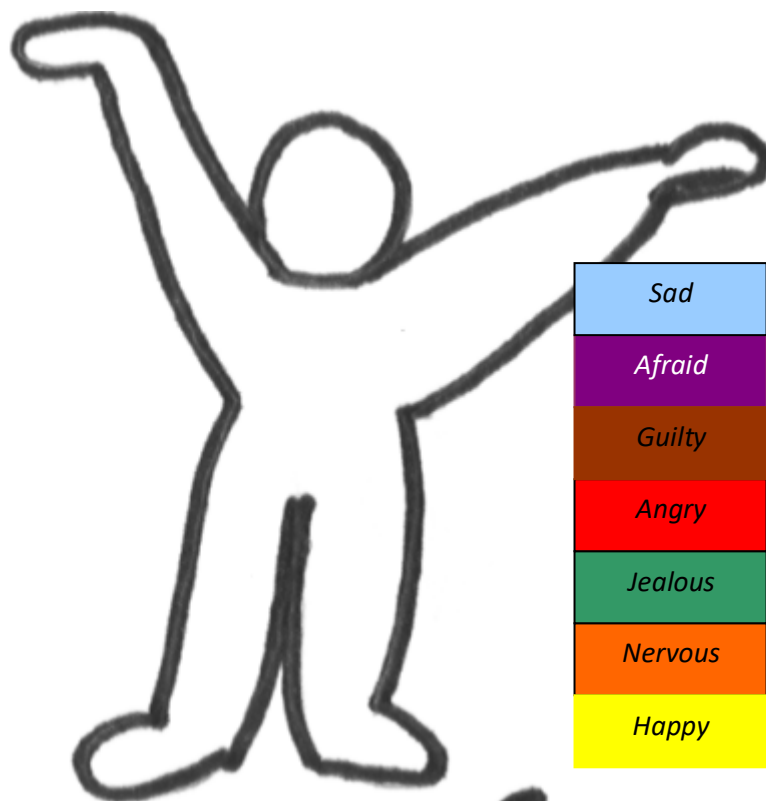
(Idea from Marge Heegaard, 1991)

Grief: Body Feelings

When we feel emotions we sometimes feel them in our bodies. We might feel pressure in our heads, nervousness in our chest, or anger rising up from our tummies to our neck and face.

What emotions do you feel and where do you feel them?

Use the colour key or make your own describing words and pick colours to go with them.



If we can, it is good to release these feelings. We can do this by talking. We can also do it through music, art, sports, writing and play.

(Idea from Marge Heegaard, 1991)

Caring Candles

Bereavement is an emotional process, which can be exhausting. It is important to be aware of the emotions we feel at these times, and the impact they can have on us i.e. shock, anxiety, fear, confusion, anger, guilt, exhaustion.

It is essential that we look after ourselves during these emotional times. We need to ensure that we get sufficient sleep, eat healthily, and engage in gentle exercise. We also need to spend restorative time with loved ones, completing our normal routines and enjoying hobbies.

It may also be helpful to take short amounts of 'peaceful time' to think about our feelings, and how we can help ourselves. During 'peaceful time' it may be useful to focus on our breathing, slowly breathing in and out. Relaxing and tensing muscles in each part of the body can also be calming.

Decorate your 'Caring Candle' holder. During this activity think about how you will make time to care for yourself, over the coming weeks and months.



(Project Ideas from 2014)

My Special Place

We can all find things challenging sometimes. It is important that we have somewhere special to 'go to' at these times. This means that when we are experiencing stress or anxiety, we can help calm ourselves by imagining our 'special place'.

For some people a special place might be somewhere they feel safe and comfortable and peaceful, that they have already been to. This might be a relative's house, being seated at a kitchen table. It might be somewhere in your house or garden. It could be a place you have visited or been to on holiday, or a place you enjoy going to like the park.

If you haven't got a special place yet, the best ones can be the ones that you make yourselves. Imagine a place that you feel safe, comfortable and calm.

Begin drawing your special place. Start with how it looks.

Then talk about all the details about your place.

- What is the weather like? How hot or cold is it? Can you feel anything else on your skin?
- What can you hear in the background? What is making those sounds?
- What can you smell? Why? Where are the smells coming from?
- Can you taste anything? Why?
- When you walk around, what are you touching? How does it feel?



(Idea from NLP training and Marge Heegaard, 1991)

Memory Box

Winston's Wish Foundation is a website that supports young people who have been bereaved. One of the ideas within the website relates to creating a memory box, to remember the person who has died.

1. Begin the conversation by using a set of three stones. You will need a smooth pebble, a sharp rocky stone, and a gemstone.



The smooth pebble is way of starting discussion about the ordinary aspects of life with that person i.e. what kind of socks they wore, what their job was, every-day things.

The sharp stone gives the opportunity for the child to talk about harder times with the person who has died. Often when someone dies, we only talk about the positives of that person. This can make it difficult for the bereaved to talk about their memories of the whole person i.e. arguments.



The gemstone is a way of promoting conversations with children about the 'magic moments'; the times they had that will always make them smile. Examples might include special holidays, birthdays and celebrations.

2. Using the conversations promoted by the stones, begin collecting items that might be reminders of the person who has died. This will be a special memory box for the bereaved child. They may decide to keep it somewhere private, or they may want to share and discuss it. Possible items to include: photographs; song lyrics; event tickets; souvenirs from holidays. The child may also want to write a letter to the person who has died, saying the things they didn't have chance to say.

(Idea from Winston's Wish)

Communication Cards

There may be something you wished you had said to your friend, or a message you wanted to share with them and / or their family. Take time to share your thoughts, through pictures, cards, messages on hearts / stones, photographs.

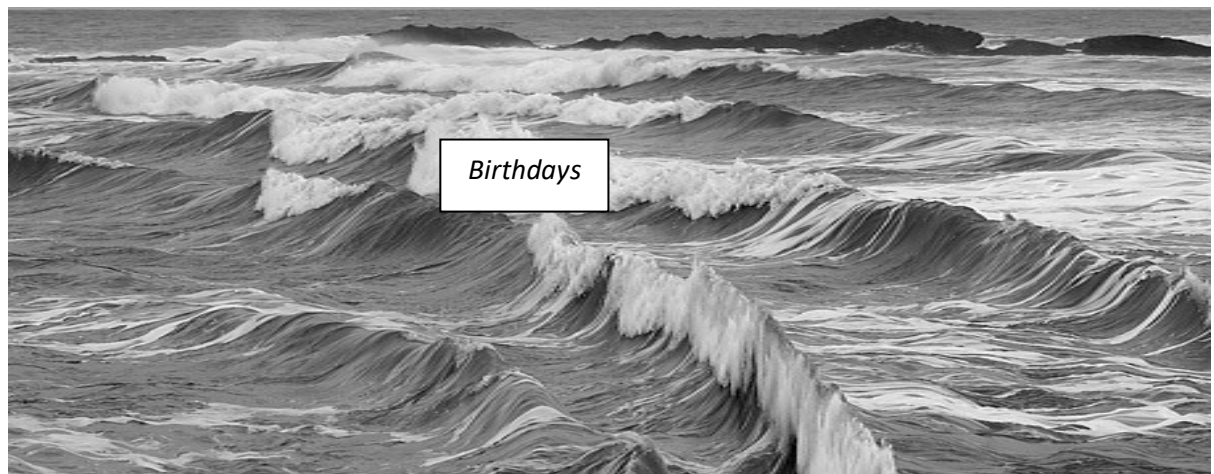


(Project Ideas from 2012)

Waves

Grief is not like an injury. A child is unlikely to experience grief and then steadily get better as time passes. Grief is more likely to happen in waves. Sometimes the waves of grief may be predictable. A child may be more affected at holiday times, annual celebrations, birthdays or anniversaries of the person's death. Sometimes there might be trigger, a reminder that only the child is aware of. It's possible that the origins of the new wave of grief might be unknown, even to the child.

Waves of Grief



Child's Waves

It may be therapeutic for the child to actually draw their version of waves. This will give you an idea of how the waves feel for them. Are the waves big or small? What are the colours of the sea?

Label the waves with the child: When they've occurred; how they have affected the child; when things have felt better.



(Idea from Winston's Wish)

Reflections

Reflect on the feelings you are having. Which feelings do you think might be shared with your peers? What type of emotions might you all be feeling? Which emotions might you all have felt during this process?

Discuss shared emotions with your peers.

Using the provided mirror and permanent markers, write some of the shared emotions on the outskirts of the mirror. When shared emotions have been recorded on the mirror, take turns to look in the mirror. You are not alone with your feelings.

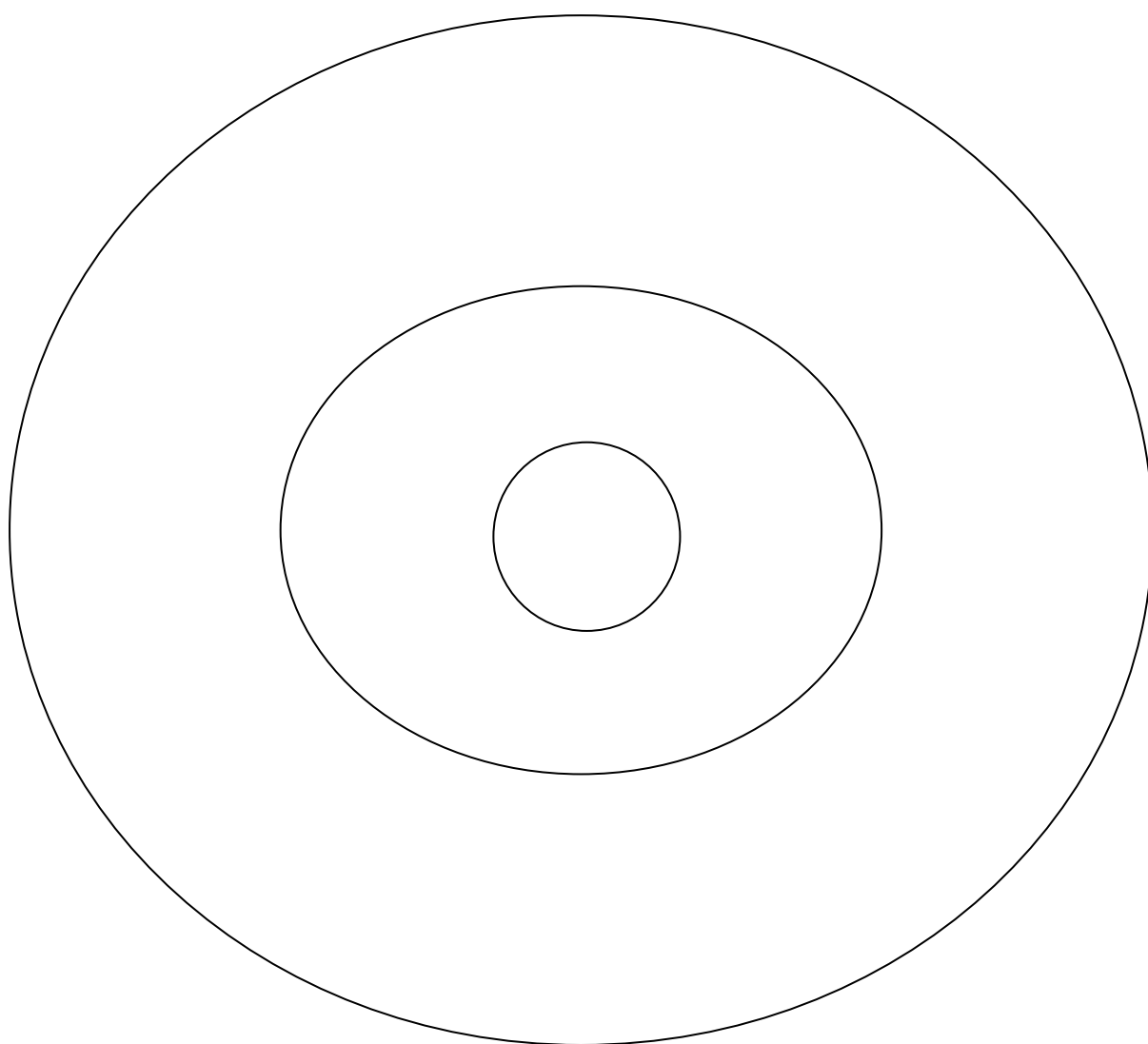


(Project Idea from 2014)

My Circles

There are times in our life when we all need support.

1. Draw yourself in the centre of the circle. Who are the immediate people in your life who you can rely on? i.e. family and close friends.
2. Who else might support/ advise you? i.e. extended family/ friendship circles, work colleagues, neighbours? Draw them in the second layer of the circle.
3. Who do you have contact with in your life, who might also be a source of support? i.e. friends of friends, link professionals, community groups/ voluntary agencies, local businesses/ services/ healthcare. Draw them in the third layer of the circle.



(Idea from PATH/ MAPs).

Helping Hands

There will be times over the coming days, weeks and months when you will need the help of your friends, families and teachers. There will be times when you may be able to support others.

Please take some time to complete a 'Helping Hands' book. This will help you remember some of the support activities completed.

Use a fresh page to record each idea.

1. What emotions might you feel?
2. How might your body react to these emotions?
3. How will you look after yourself during these difficult times?
4. Is there a time limit on your feelings?
5. Might you re-experience some of these feelings at a later date?
6. How might other people, linked to this situation, be feeling?
7. How will you let people around you know how you feel?
8. Who can support you with your feelings?



(Project Idea from 2012)

Follow-up Advice and Support

If you find that you require additional advice, support or training you are welcome to contact the Educational Psychology Service.

We can provide:

- Further advice and clarification
- A training power point with audio which could be watched in groups
- Whole-staff twilight training
- Reflective Circles for staff
- Group support for children and young people
- Staff consultation

Should you require any of the above please speak to your allocated EP.

Bereavement and Loss References and Resources

An overview of references and resources available to support children and young people following bereavement and loss; particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Books for children and young people

Suitable for younger children but can be useful for all ages		
Title	Description	Where from
Always and Forever —Alan Durant (Picture Book)	A story for anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one. When Fox dies, Mole, Hare, and Otter are devastated. They feel they will never get over their great sadness. How can life go on without him? Then one day Squirrel comes to visit. She reminds Fox's family of all the funny things he used to do. And as the friends share dinner and tell stories, they realize at last that in their hearts and memories, Fox is still with them, and he will be-- always and forever.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 978-0152166366 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Harcourt Children's Books <input type="checkbox"/> Age Range: 3+
Badger's Parting Gifts —Susan Varley (Picture Book)	A touching look at death, and how life goes on. Badger's friends are saddened by his passing, but they come to realize that everyone lives on through their gifts of kindness and the happy memories that remain.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 9780688115180 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: HarperCollins 1984 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 4+
Bear's Last Journey —Udo Weingelt (Picture Book)	This gentle picture book succeeds in articulating the sense of loss and confusion that children may feel when a loved one dies. Old Bear is very sick. With his animal friends gathered around him, Bear tells them that that he must say good-bye, for he is going on a special journey. "But...but...you're not	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-10: 0735817995 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: North-South Books- 2003 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 4+

	dying?" asks Rabbit, and Bear admits that he is. All the animals are saddened by the news, but the little fox is especially upset - hurt and angry and confused. He cannot imagine life without Bear. How Fox and the other forest animals.	
Dead Bird —Margaret Brown Wise (Picture Book)	A group of children find a dead bird and bury it in the woods, sing to it, and place flowers on its grave. Without any reference to religious concepts, the author addresses the sensitive issue of death in a non-threatening way that young children can understand. The spare writing style and design help to sustain the serious mood suggested by the subject matter, making the book an excellent mechanism for the sharing of feelings about death. By gently confronting the emotions associated with the experience of death, the author provides a starting point for discussion with young children faced with the loss of a cherished pet or loved one.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 9780060289324 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 4 - 7
Everett Anderson's Goodbye —Lucille Clifton (Picture Book)	A touching portrait of a little boy who is trying to come to grips with his father's death. Lucille Clifton captures Everett's conflicting emotions as he confronts this painful reality. We see him struggle through many stages, from denial and anger to depression and, finally, acceptance. In this spare and moving poem, the last in this acclaimed series, Lucille Clifton brings Everett Anderson's life full circle.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 9780805008005 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Square Fish- 1983 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 5+
Goodbye Mousie —Robie H. Harris (Picture Book)	One morning a boy finds that his pet, Mousie, won't wake up. The truth is Mousie has died. At first the boy doesn't believe it. He gets very mad at Mousie for dying, and then he feels very sad. But talking about Mousie,	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 9780689871344 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Aladdin- 2001 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 4+

	burying Mousie in a special box, and saying good-bye helps this boy begin to feel better about the loss of his beloved pet.	
Jenny is Scared: When sad things happen in the world by Carol Shuman (2003)	A comforting, coping story for children who are aware of the threats of violence in the world. Fears and feelings are explored.	Magination Press 2003 https://www.bookdepository.com/Jenny-is-Scared-Carol-Shuman/9781591470038#
Remembering Crystal —Sebastian Loth (Picture Book)	Crystal and Zelda are best friends. They do many things together (read books, take trips, talk). When Crystal disappears from the garden and it's evident that she has died. As Zelda remembers all that Crystal taught her about the world and the good times they shared, she realizes that her friend will always be in her heart. In this gentle story, children learn, with Zelda, that true friendship is a gift that doesn't die.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 978-0735823006 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: NorthSouth <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 64 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 3+
Rudi's Pond —Eve Bunting (Picture Book)	When a sick boy dies, his friends and classmates remember him by building a schoolyard pond in his memory. Based on a true story, "Rudi's Pond" is a gentle, insightful book to help young readers deal with loss.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 9780618486045 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 1999 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32
Sammy in the Sky —Barbara Walsh (Picture Book)	A tale of love, loss, and remembrance. Sammy, the best hound dog in the whole wide world, loves his girl and she loves him. When illness cuts Sammy's life short, the girl's family keeps his spirit alive by celebrating his love of chasing wind-blown bubbles, keeping loyal guard at night, and offering his velvety fur for endless pats and tummy scratches.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 978-0763649272 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Candlewick <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 4+
Six Is So Much Less Than Seven —Ronald Himler (Picture Book)	A bittersweet story of loss and love. The story follows a farmer's day as he remembers and mourns the loss of one of his seven cats. Though a	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 978-1887734912 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Star Bright Books <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 40 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 5+

	farmer regrets the sad loss of one of his faithful companions, he realizes that life goes on.	
Someone Special Died —Joan Prestine (Picture Book)	An unencumbered, explanation of death for young children. Using language appropriate for younger audience, the book addresses some of the feelings that a young child may have about death. Instilled is the message that while the person is no longer here with them, there are ways in which they can be remembered	ISBN-13: 978-1577686828 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Brighter Child <input type="checkbox"/> Age Range: 3+
The Invisible String —Patrice Karst	Children of all ages (And yes! Adults too!) feel a great sense of peace and joy realizing that we are all connected to the ones that we love... (pets, friends, grandparents, cousins etc... and especially those that have passed on)...through the Invisible String. A string that can never be lost, cut, or torn. A string that can reach all the way to the moon or down to the ocean floor. Strings that anger, time, or bad feelings can ever make go away	
The Purple Balloon - Chris Raschka (Picture Book)	When a child becomes aware of his pending death (children tend to know long before the rest of us even want to consider it), and is given the opportunity to draw his feelings, he will often draw a blue or purple balloon, released and unencumbered, on its way upward. Health-care professionals have discovered that this is true, regardless of a child's cultural or religious background and researchers believe that this is symbolic of the child's innate knowledge that a part of them will live forever. . . .In disarmingly simple and direct language, creates a moving, sensitive book that is also a phenomenally useful tool to talk about death. The message of the book is clear: talking about dying is hard, dying is harder, but there	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-10: 0375841466 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Schwartz & Wade <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 32 <input type="checkbox"/> Age range: 3+

	are many people in your life who can help.	
Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children by Doris Stickney	A way of explaining death to young children in a clear and simple way to help them to understand the permanence of death in a way which is not frightening.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 978-1472973153 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 16 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: OH, Pilgrim Press. <input type="checkbox"/> Age Range: 3+
When Someone Very Special Dies - Marge Heegaard,		This is available through Amazon.
Where Do People Go When They Die —Mindy Avra Portnoy (Picture Book)	The answers to the age-old question may be as varied as the individuals asked. Some thoughtful answers are provided in this book. Suggestions for parents, on providing honest, age and developmentally appropriate answers to this and related questions are also addressed by the author, Portnoy, a rabbi.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 978-1580130813 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 24 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Kar-Ben Publishing <input type="checkbox"/> Age Range: 5+
Where The Tomorrows Go —Manoj S. Abraham (Picture Book)	This picture book reminds children of the importance and support that family pets provide. They are beloved companions, very much a part of daily life. Sometimes those pets, such as the main character's dog, become ill and die, leaving a painful gap in the family. The child in the story is saddened by her pet's death, and wonders how to keep her memories alive. As the author illustrates, writing stories about one's experiences with her dog helps accomplish that task, and gives the little girl hope for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/> ISBN-13: 978-0-9887965-7-7 <input type="checkbox"/> Pages: 21 <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher: Sennin Group LLC <input type="checkbox"/> Age Range: 6+

For older children and young people

Title	Description	Where from
A Terrible Thing Happened – A Story for Children who have witness Violence or Trauma by Margaret Holmes (2000)	A story about Sherman Smith who saw something terrible and is finding it hard to forget until he finds somebody to talk to.	ISBN – 9781557986429 Amer Psychological Association This is available through Amazon.
Bird by Zetta Elliott (2008)	A boy loses his grandfather and struggles to deal with his brother’s drug addiction. Drawing helps him to make sense of his world.	ISBN – 978-1600602412 Lee and Low This is available through Amazon.
Good-bye, Sheepie by Robert Burleigh (2014)	A boy has to say goodbye to his dog and is supported by his parents. No religious content.	ISBN- 978-0761455981 This is available through Amazon
Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by Bryan Mellonie Page (1998)	A book about beginnings and endings for all ages. It tells us that dying is as much a part of living as being born.	ISBN – 9780553344028 This is available through Amazon
Someone Close to you has Died by The Candle Project (2001) St Christopher’s Hospice	Describes feelings experienced by bereaved teenagers around not being understood and unfinished business.	St Christopher’s Hospice www.stchristophers.org.uk/leaflet/candle-someone-close-has-died/
Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers: How to cope with losing someone you love by Earl Grollman (1993)	This award-winning book explains what to expect when you lose someone you love.	Beacon Press This is available through Amazon
The Charlie Barber Treatment by Carole Lloyd (1990)	A teenage boy clams up following the death of a loved one but a stranger helps him to open up.	Walker Books Ltd This is available through Amazon
The Lost Boys’ Appreciation Society by Alan Gibbons (2007)	Two boys lose their mother and one of them feels that it was his fault for getting in with the wrong crowd	Orion Children’s Books This is available through Amazon
The Next Place by Warren Hanson (2002)	A book which has brought healing to many families. A journey of peace, comfort and hope to a place where earthly hurts are left behind.	Waldman Press House This is available through Amazon
Vicky Angel by Jacqueline Wilson (2007)	About the loss of a friend and the feelings you have to deal with following sudden death	Corgi This is available through Amazon

Tips for Using Books to Engage with Children

- Let the characters and the story help the child to understand how to cope. Discuss ways to feel less nervous or anxious about what is happening.
- Be willing to answer your child's questions simply, at their level of understanding – using images, sign or Communicate in Print if necessary.
- Let them know that it is normal to cry, feel scared or want comfort at difficult times. Provide opportunities for emotional connection.
- Show images and symbols of rituals and memorials to teach children how your family or social group remember.
- A quiet, private, comfortable, one-to-one environment is needed to share the story with the child.
- Time will be needed to allow the child to respond. Allocate at least 20-30 minutes. This can't be rushed.
- The child may like to respond by drawing a picture.
- If the child connects themselves to the story that is fine, but it is not the adult's role to do this.
- Questions can be used to help the child think more about the content but the most effective approach is usually to "sit" with the child and see what their response is.
- If the child talks about the story or about their feelings be careful how you listen and respond. Never try to talk the child out of their feelings or be judgemental.
- If the story is offering emotional support the child will ask for it to be read again and again.
- From the age of 3-4 stories can be effective as by this age children start to live in a world of their imaginations.
- Reading a story to a child is one step removed from talking to them directly about their experiences and feelings. To make it 2 steps removed, read the story to a puppet or teddy.

Safe scripts and emphatic phrases

What is life like for.....

Is there anything.....can do about it?

It must be very sad and lonely for.....

.....must have felt very wobbly inside

What's the best thing that happens to...

What's the best thing that happens to...?

Would you change this story?

Is anything important missed out?

Would you change this story?

Books for parents and professionals

CROSSLEY, D., & SHEPPARD, K. (2001). *Muddles, puddles and sunshine*. Hawthorn Press.

CROSSLEY, D., & STOKES, J. A. (2001). *Beyond the rough rock: supporting a child who has been bereaved through suicide*. Gloucester, Winston's Wish

ELSEGOOD, J., & LINDSAY, B. (1996). *Working with children in grief and loss*. London, Baillière Tindall.

GILBERT, I. (2020). *Independent Thinking on Loss: a little book about bereavement for schools*. Carmarthen, Crown House Publishing.

GILBERT, S. (2008). *Grief encounter: a workbook to encourage conversations about loss between children and adults*. London, Grief Encounter Project. BROWN, E. (2016). *Loss, change and grief: an educational perspective*.

MONROE, B., & KRAUS, F. (2010). *Brief interventions with bereaved children*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

NELSON, L. P., & Rae, T. (2004). *Remembering: Providing support for children aged 7 to 13 who have experienced loss and bereavement*. Lucky Duck Books, SAGE Publications Ltd.

WARNER, R. (1992). Loss and grief in the lives of newly arrived bilingual pupils. *Multicultural Teaching*. 10, 10-14.

SMITH, S. C. (1999). *The forgotten mourners: guidelines for working with bereaved children - 2nd*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

STOKES, J. A., & STUBBS, D. (2007). *As big as it gets: supporting a child when a parent is seriously ill*. [Cheltenham], Winston's Wish.

Bereavement and Loss Web Links

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

www.childbereavement.org.uk

www.griefcounter.org.uk

www.nlandeducation.padlet.org/gill_finch2/SupportForChildrenandFamilies

www.rainbowsgb.org/corona-virus-how-rainbows-can-help/

www.seasonsforgrowth.co.uk

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

You Tube links

- Karen Triesman talking about different types of loss <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9a79NeUARo&feature=youtu.be>

Research References

Kübler-Ross, E. K. (1976). *On death and dying*. London: Tavistock Pubs.

Parkes, C. M. (1988). Bereavement as a Psychosocial Transition: Processes of Adaptation to Change. *Journal of Social Issues*, 44(3), 53-65.

Stroebe, M.S., & Schut, H.A.W. (2008). *The Dual Process Model of coping with bereavement : Overview and update*.

Stroebe, M., Schut, H., & Finkenauer, C. (January 01, 2001). The Traumatization of Grief? A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Trauma-Bereavement Interface. *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, 38, 185-201.

Tonkin, L .(1996): Growing around grief—another way of looking at grief and recovery, *Bereavement Care*, 15:1

Information and references also taken from: https://nlandeducation.padlet.org/gill_finch2/SupportForChildrenandFamilies

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