

Lancashire Educational Psychology Team

Loss and bereavement – resources to support children and young people

Many children and young people will experience bereavement, through the loss of a parent, carer, sibling, grandparent or friend. Loss and bereavement can affect children and young people in many different ways. During a bereavement, children may experience a range of different emotions such as sadness, anger, anxiety, fear and guilt. Most children will not require professional or 'expert' help during the bereavement process. However, they will benefit from having support and the understanding of familiar and trusted adults.

A note on bereavement during the COVID-19 pandemic

At the current time, when people are more isolated than usual, this may make feelings of loneliness and grief more intense. Isolation may make it harder to process grief, and family and friends who might have provided practical or emotional support may not be available at this time. Activities which would usually be available to help children and young people relax and cope with stress are not necessarily available. This will be difficult for children and young people, as well as for parents/carers, who will be dealing with their own emotions and fears. A bereaved family might be isolated together, and whilst this at times may be a support, the intensity of being around each other in close quarters all the time may be stressful, making it difficult for them to help each other. The impact of dealing with a bereavement, compounded with feelings of worry about external situations, can mean that feelings of grief are not fully expressed.

All children will have questions about the effects of the coronavirus but for children who have had someone important die or have a member of their family who is ill, this anxiety is likely to be heightened. Children and young people may become worried that others close to them might die and will also pick up on worries that parents and carers may have.

The steps below are recommended to help bereaved children and young people who are worried about the effect of the coronavirus on their family:

- Acknowledge their worries
- Reassure them
- Talk to them about coronavirus
- Share memories
- Look after yourself

Please see Winston's Wish at the following link for more information: <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people/> The Winston's Wish website also provides contact details should you need advice.

The purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to support adults so that they feel more confident and equipped when helping a child or young person who is going through a period of bereavement. Please see below for a list of resources that might be useful for supporting children and young people through this time.

Although there are a number of resources available, it is important that adults select resources carefully and explain to children what is happening in such a way that is appropriate for their age or stage of development. Children and young people with special educational needs may need resources to be adapted or simplified to support their understanding. Some of the websites include resources to support children with special educational needs.

Websites:

Winston's Wish:

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk>

Child Bereavement UK:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org>

Childhood Bereavement Network:

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

Grief Encounter:

<http://www.griefencounter.org.uk>

Books:

'Badger's Parting Gifts' (2013): S. Varley.

This book provides young children with a means to understand grief through a story about a badger and the special items he gave his friends during his lifetime.

'Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children' (2004): D. Stickney.

This book uses the analogy of a water bug and their emergence as dragonflies to explain death to children.

'Always and Forever' (2013): A. Durant.

This book explains death gently through a story about animals, for children aged 3 to 5.

'It's OK to be Sad' (2005): M. Collins.

This book contains activities to help children aged 4 to 9 to manage loss, grief or bereavement. Stories about different life events are used to illustrate the range of feelings,

give permission for the expression of feelings, encourage empathy towards others and demonstrate that loss is a common experience for us all.

'Goodbye Mousie' (2004): R.H. Harris.

A book that teaches young children about death through the loss of a beloved pet mouse. This story is suitable for children aged 4 to 8 years.

'The Dragonfly Story: Explaining the death of a loved one to children and families' (2018): K. Owen.

This book tells the author's experiences of grief and child loss through the adaptation of the fable of the transformation of the dragonfly.

'Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your activity book to help when someone has died' (2000): D. Crossley.

This book offers practical and sensitive support for bereaved children through a series of activities and exercises for children aged 5 to 7.

'The heart and the bottle' (2010): O. Jeffers.

This book explores themes of love and loss through a story for children aged 5 to 8.

'What on earth do you do when someone dies?' (1999): T. Romain.

This book offers practical strategies for dealing with grief and the overwhelming emotions involved, such as sadness, fear, anger, guilt, and helps answer all the questions children have about death. It is suitable for children aged 5 to 10.

'I miss you' (2009): P. Thomas.

This reassuring picture book explores the difficult issue of death of a loved one for young children. It is suitable for children aged 6 to 11.

'Rudi's Pond' (2000): E. Bunting.

A story that explores the death of a classmate: his friends remember him by building a schoolyard pond in his memory.

'The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back' (2003): M. Sunderland.

This book is a story about a sand dragon and is for children who have lost someone they love, suitable for children ages 4 to 12.

'When someone very special dies' (1988): M. Heegaard.

This book involves drawing and colouring to help children work out their feelings about death, for children aged 9 to 12.

'Remembering: Providing support for children aged 7-13 who have experienced loss and bereavement' (2004): L. Nelson and T. Rae.

This book provides a range of sensitive, positive and emotionally literate activities that can be used in whole class, small group or individual settings for children aged 7 to 13.

'Grief encounter' (2004): S. Gilbert.

This book encourages conversations about loss between children and adults and is suitable for primary and early secondary school pupils.

'Michael Rosen's Sad Book' (2011): M. Rosen.

This book chronicles the author's grief at the death of his son from meningitis at the age of 19.

'Supporting young people coping with grief, loss and death' (2006): D. Weymont and T. Rae.

This book's aims include the following: to provide pupils aged 11 to 18 with an opportunity to understand about grief, loss and death and recognise, and manage and express the range of feelings associated with grief, loss and death.

'Straight talk about death for teenagers' (1993): E. A. Grollman.

This book is aimed at teenagers and explains what to expect when you lose someone you love.

'Grief in children: A Handbook for Adults' (1991): A. Dyregrov.

This book explains children's understanding of death at different ages and outlines how adults can best help them to cope with the death of friends and relatives.

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