



School planning  
document to support  
psychological wellbeing

# Bereavement Support



**ISL** Integrated  
Services for  
Learning  
*working together locally*



Hertfordshire Educational  
Psychology Service

NHS HBLICT

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## Purpose

### Who is this document for?

This document is designed to help school leaders to support members of the school community who have been bereaved.

### Why has it been developed?

All schools will have members of their community who have been bereaved of a close relative or friend during their time at the school. For example, 1 in 20 children and young people will have experienced the death of one or both of their parents by the age of 16 and 78% of 11-16 years olds have reported being bereaved of a close relative or friend<sup>1</sup>. The checklist, information and activities in this resource are based on information about what helps people to grieve. It is also useful for other experiences of loss such as changing schools, teachers or being separated from loved ones through divorce or moving away.

### How can it be used?

This resource is not intended to put school staff in the role of bereavement counsellors, although it will include signposting to support where that is required for individual members of the school community. However, there are a number of steps that schools can put in place to support positive outcomes for bereaved children, young people and staff. This document provides a checklist to outline the steps that can be considered at a whole school and individual level. It refers to resources that can be shared with staff, pupils and parents and outlines the support available through HCC to support schools in responding to bereavements.

### How has this document been developed?

This document has been put together by members of the Educational Psychology Service<sup>2</sup> and incorporates information from a review and resources commissioned by the Integrated Health and Care Commissioning Team in HCC<sup>3</sup>. It was created by reviewing the current guidance, psychology and research around bereavement support in schools.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/research/key-statistics.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Katy Cole (Senior EP), Katie Paxton (EP), Nicky Odgers (EP), Nicole Salisbury (EP), Saffron Steele (EP), Sophie Fanshawe (EP), Catherine Milne (Trainee EP), Katie DuGard (Psychology Assistant) and Melissa Sherif (Psychology Assistant).

<sup>3</sup> Patricia Taylor

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## How can schools help bereaved individuals and families?

The checklist and accompanying information and resources have been designed to enable schools to provide support in the following areas.

### Whole school approaches

Whole school approaches include attention to the ethos of the school, the general nurture and well-being support already available to staff and students, staff understanding of grief and loss, communication systems and the curriculum.

### Emotional support for staff

Schools should be able to provide a nurturing environment, general well-being support and reasonable adjustments for staff who have been bereaved. They should also be able to signpost to where staff can access further information, advice or psychological support.

### Support for bereaved families

Schools are uniquely placed to offer support to bereaved children and families due to the relationships and daily contact they already have. Families may require assistance with accessing information and resources around practical and emotional needs or with understanding the needs of their children.

### Emotional support for bereaved children and young people

Although it is recognised that timely and appropriate support for children and young people after a bereavement can help prevent some of the negative consequences of grief, this does not mean that they automatically require bereavement counselling to do this. Children can, and do, manage their grief if they have the sensitive support of all adults around them, especially major caregivers such as parents and immediate family and people involved with them frequently. Children also need to have their grief reactions recognised and time to process these in ways that are appropriate to them. There is therefore a role for all staff to respond in sensitive and nurturing ways towards children. There may also be additional support that can be offered by key adults to support the needs of bereaved children.

Some children will prefer to talk to a trusted and known adult and this may very well be someone who already provides nurture support to them. The availability of a trusting relationship in school enables a safe space for the child or young person to ask questions, express their emotions and work through their grief in a natural and age-appropriate manner. In no sense is the staff member taking on the role of a counsellor, but they will most certainly have copious opportunities to work with the child during the natural course of the school day or through small group or individual activities. It is therefore helpful to provide the adult with

some key tools, strategies and ideas that have been tried and tested and offer a safe means of exploring loss and bereavement. This exploration should be child-led; they should guide the conversation and identify where they want to go with any interaction/conversation.

The activities and checklist actions shared in this document are focused on the needs of bereaved children and young people, as shown in *Figure 1*. These needs will be referred to throughout the document.





*Figure 1: The needs of bereaved children and young people*

## Checklist for senior leaders





This checklist summarises the good-practice guidance about how to support members of the school community who have been bereaved. It is organised around outcomes identified as being important for young people who have been bereaved.

### Proactive Whole School Approaches

- There is a bereavement policy in place (For further guidance see [http://sabp.lgfl.org.uk/section\\_C1.html](http://sabp.lgfl.org.uk/section_C1.html), <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools/school-bereavement-policy> and <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/developing-a-bereavement-policy>). Part of this policy may include an approach such as 'Contact-Me' run by 'stand-by-me bereavement support' charity in Hertfordshire.
- There is a whole school approach to mental health demonstrated through working towards the [Healthy Young Minds in Herts School Accreditation and Suicide Aware School Status](#) and the nomination of a Mental Health Lead.
- The school curriculum includes opportunities to think about grief, death and bereavement in a safe and nurturing way ([http://sabp.lgfl.org.uk/section\\_D1.html](http://sabp.lgfl.org.uk/section_D1.html))
- All students and staff have a trusted adult whom they can speak to if they are feeling emotionally overwhelmed and they know how they can access them.
- Information about general wellbeing support services is available to staff and students (e.g. displayed through posters and in staff and student updates). This includes information on [Just Talk](#) and [Childline](#).
- Staff are aware of the type of support that is helpful for children or young people who have been bereaved. This can be made available through [Hertfordshire bereavement guides](#), [Understanding Grief](#), or general training for staff (for more information or signposting speak to the EPS or Strategic Leads for Mental Health).
- Staff members who have been bereaved are aware of any adjustments or support available in the workplace (including leave, safe spaces, people to talk to) and have access to information and resources that may support them.
- Children and families who have been bereaved have a contact person and are aware of adjustments and support available in school.
- School leaders are available to signpost families to services or information offering practical and emotional support, including for bereavement.
- Senior leaders are aware of the local support that is available for [critical incidents or sad events](#).
- In the event of a death or traumatic event affecting a member of the school community, senior leaders have a plan that considers communication, support for emotional needs, additional services required and longer term support that may need to be considered (see 'Crisis Support [Action Plan](#)' and <http://sabp.lgfl.org.uk/>)

Meeting the Needs of CYP who have been bereaved <sup>4</sup>		
Need	School Actions	Resources
<b>Continued routines and structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In collaboration with the parent/s and child, seek to re-establish routine as much as possible whilst also looking at where adjustments might need to be made.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share information with families about the value of routine.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide a positive experience – a place to meet new people and have fun.</li> </ul>	 < Click for resources and further information
<b>Emotional support from parents, adults and peers</b>	<p>For all pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide information for all staff about how to work sensitively with students.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Build in opportunities for thinking about loss within the school curriculum.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Set up an assembly or form tutor/classroom conversations for all students to be aware of different coping skills associated with change and loss. (<a href="#">See Appendix E: Psychological First Aid</a>)</li> </ul> <p>For bereaved pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor which pupils may need more support (those who have been bereaved or those more emotionally vulnerable) and provide opportunities for them to think about this at an individual or small group level.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make contact with the parent to check in about how the child and family are doing and review what support they might need.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Set up home-school communication systems for affected pupils.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nominate a teacher or staff member for affected individuals to link in with.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide an allocated staff member (e.g. check ins) and/or time with an adult to explore emotions (e.g. Emotional Literacy Support Assistant – ELSA or mentor) for CYP who have been bereaved.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide a link to bereavement support groups in the area or provide a space for bereaved children or young people to meet together in a relaxed, nurturing setting.</li> </ul> <p>Support for the supporters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide staff with supervision ideas and ways to support each other.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide information to parents about how to support themselves and their child: leaflet, websites for helplines.</li> </ul>	 < Click for resources and further information

<sup>4</sup> From 'Charter for bereaved children' (Winston's Wish) and Child bereavement services outcomes framework

<p><b>Help to recognise their emotions and express them well</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide information to parents, staff and pupils about how bereavement can affect people (see <a href="#">‘Understanding grief’</a>)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor emotional reactions and whether there is a need for additional in-school support to recognise, express or regulate emotions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The SENCo or Mental Health Lead is aware of when it would be appropriate to request help from outside agencies.</li> </ul>	 < Click for resources and further information
<p><b>Help to strengthen memories of their loved ones</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create opportunities to remember as a whole school any members of the community who have died (memorials, assemblies around loss)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for individual children or young people to remember the person who has died</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share information with parents about how they can help their child remember</li> </ul>	 < Click for resources and further information
<p><b>Opportunities to process what has happened and to talk about difficult memories</b>  Education and information about what has happened, why it happened and what will be happening in the future.   Support to tell an accurate, coherent story of what has happened and to understand that they are not responsible for the death.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide age appropriate resources to enable parents/staff to support the CYP to process what has happened.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Signpost to resources and information that older children can access themselves (e.g. <a href="#">Bereavement guide for CYP</a>)</li> </ul>	 < Click for resources and further information
<p><b>Renewed hope and plans for the future</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create systems for getting the voice of pupils in decisions that affect them</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide a place for pupils to explore and make choices</li> </ul>	 < Click for resources and further information



# Information to Help Understand Grief

## Understanding grief

Some of the information in this section is available in the [Hertfordshire bereavement guides](#) which can be shared directly with parents, staff and children.

### What is grief?

Grief is a natural and normal response after the death of someone close to us as we try to understand what has happened, manage the changes it causes and try to adjust to life without them. It involves powerful, and often confusing emotions, thoughts and physical reactions.

Mourning is what we do to mark the death of our loved one by rituals such as preparing the body, burials, cremations, memorials and wakes that help our grieving process. Mourning rituals are both private and public, can be an essential part of religious and spiritual beliefs and are often shared with family, friends and our community. In contrast, western traditions often involve grief being expressed privately.

The grieving process can begin before someone dies if they are very seriously ill and the likelihood is that they will die. As we begin to understand this, we can experience anticipatory grief. This can happen to children and young people too.

Grief is often very intense and hard to manage in the early days after someone dies. Later, in the months and years afterwards, it can become less intense and more manageable as we adjust to life without the deceased. This does not mean that we no longer care about them but that 'life grows around our grief'.

Strong emotions can, and often do come back at unexpected times, and anniversaries. Children and young people are often very confused by this and adults around them can be unaware of their need for extra support when this happens.

Although grief is a normal and natural process after someone close to us has died, this does not mean that extra help might not be needed or be useful sometimes. This is especially so if the bereavement was traumatic, the circumstances around the death or family were complex, the grief reaction is prolonged or complicated by other factors such as lack of social support or multiple deaths. There is a list of [Organisations offering bereavement support](#) at the end of this document.

For information on general theories around grief, see the '[Theories around grief](#)' section of the document. School leaders may want to share these theories with staff or parents to help them understand grief. Some could also be presented as part of a whole school or class assembly.

## How do children and young people grieve?

In the past, people thought that children were not affected by grief. All children grieve and react to changes in the family around them, even babies, but how they express their grief is different from adults.

Children and young people's grief will depend on a number of factors so do not expect all children to respond in similar ways. These factors include their age and level of understanding, their own resilience, their relationship with the person who died, the cause and nature of the death, religious beliefs and their prior experiences of death or trauma. In particular, children and young people's understanding of death develops as they mature: they do not fully develop their understanding that death is final until around 9 years of age, if not older. More detailed information regarding the developmental stages of understanding can be found in the [Navigating Children's Grief](#) section of the document.

Children's grief is expressed in many ways. Younger children especially may show this through their behaviour because they do not have words to express their thoughts and emotions. Even teenagers can struggle to do this without help to develop a vocabulary of loss.

Children and young people do not yet have the emotional skills and experience to grieve on their own, so they need the support of adults around them (both at home and in their educational setting). When they have this, they can go on to enjoy a full and happy life without lasting negative effects; however, this is not the same as asking them not to care about or forget the person who died.

Children's grief does not have a definite timescale, a beginning or end and often comes in 'waves'. They can have periods when their grief is not active and they are engaging well with life. They will re-engage with their grief and they may need to revisit it such as at key anniversaries, as they get older and their understanding of the bereavement changes.

During periods when their grief is not active, children and young people can appear to have forgotten about things or not be affected by it. This is normal and healthy but can sometimes be hard for them, their families and professionals to understand and to manage the different cycles or waves of grief.

## Children's grief in the early days after a death

The feelings and reactions that we all have when we are first told that someone has died can be very different from what we feel later, especially if we did not expect them to die. Many adults are shocked by how they react and what happens to them. This is also the case for children and young people, especially because the adults around them are distracted by having to make funeral and financial arrangements, experiencing shock and other strong emotions themselves, and are less emotionally available.

Children and young people can become very scared by these early reactions and it can be reassuring for them to know that what they and others are experiencing is 'nasty but normal'. and that it will gradually change over the first few days and weeks. During this time the support from family, friends and school or college is important to help manage these intense reactions.

Common reactions that all children and young people are likely to have early on

- Feelings of shock, panic or disbelief
- Racing heart, feeling faint or breathless
- Feeling numb and emotionless
- Wanting to cry a lot and feeling overwhelmed by their emotions, especially fear, panic and guilt
- Disturbed sleep – not being able to get to sleep
- Finding it hard to return to usual routines or unable to concentrate
- Feeling anxious and fearful, and wanting to stay close to family and home
- Being quiet at a particular time or having big reactions to things that appear insignificant.

They may also stop engaging in activities that they used to enjoy or want to do something that the deceased person used to do.

Common reactions for children under 11 years

Young children don't always have the words to tell us how they are feeling and can show their sadness and distress through their behaviours. They may regress to earlier developmental behaviours such as:



- Being more anxious when away from parents
- Becoming more fearful and needing lots of reassurance
- Experiencing nightmares and fears of the dark, not wanting to sleep on their own
- Regressive behaviours such as bedwetting and toileting issues
- Having fears about the future, worries about their health and the safety of others
- Having angry or aggressive behaviour when frustrated or overwhelmed
- Finding it hard to concentrate at school for a while
- Delayed grief - not showing any reactions, appearing numb or unaware.

Common reactions in teenagers

Teenagers can be affected in many of the same ways as younger children but may experience additional reactions. They are also going through huge amounts of changes because of

puberty affecting their brains, bodies and emotional wellbeing. It can be very helpful for parents and carers to be aware of this to help this. They can find out more about the changes that teenagers will be going through at this time here: [Teen Brain - advice for parent and carers](#).

Teenagers are more likely to experience:

- Feelings of shame and isolation because of what has happened. Feeling self-conscious and not knowing how to speak to or ask for help from friends or teachers about this.
- Intense emotions such as anger, guilt, regret and sadness with poor coping strategies.
- Confusion about their thoughts and fears of what has happened to their loved one after death.
- Greater fears about their safety and the safety of others and fears of illness and dying.
- Difficulties concentrating at school, panic about meeting deadlines.
- Low mood, feeling numb and a sense of hopelessness.



### Bereavement related post-trauma reactions

The nature of some deaths can increase the likelihood of children or young people experiencing difficulties in their grieving because of their traumatic nature such as suicide, homicide, sudden death such as heart attack or road traffic accident, or because the children have witnessed the death or invasive treatment at the end of life.

Potentially this can lead to prolonged or complicated grief reactions, including bereavement related post-trauma reactions or what is often referred to as traumatic grief.

Bereavement related post-trauma reactions are not the same as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is a clinical condition assessed and diagnosed by psychologists and psychiatrists in a CAMHS setting. However, traumatic grief reactions can share features where children and young people can experience intrusions and flashbacks, extreme emotional outbursts causing violent outbursts (new-onset), high levels of fearfulness and anxiety, and depression.

Despite not being a formal disorder, bereavement related post-trauma reactions such as above that do not improve in the first 6-12 weeks after the death or suddenly occur later on (late-onset) require specialist help and a referral should be made via the Single Point of Access for a mental health assessment and appropriate treatment.



# Support for Staff

## Supporting bereaved members of staff



When members of the school staff have been personally bereaved, it is important to offer condolences to them as soon as you can and make sure that they know that their emotional wellbeing comes before anything else. Talk to them about how they would like to share information with the rest of the staff (i.e. themselves, or through you) and what they are happy to share, as well as how they would like to be supported (e.g. checking in with them, time off). When they are at work, flexibility may be necessary, e.g. if they are struggling to concentrate or need breaks; make their work realistic and achievable.

It is important to remember that you cannot know exactly how anyone is feeling after a bereavement, even if you have gone through the same situation yourself. Some helpful phrases might be:

- I don't know what to say but I am so sorry to hear this news.
- I am so sorry for your loss – you are in my thoughts.
- I'm so sad to hear this and I'm here if you need to talk.
- He/she was such a wonderful person/so selfless – full of positivity/kindness [whatever feels appropriate] – they will be hugely missed.
- He/she will be missed so much – they were so special. You are in my thoughts
- I am so very sorry to hear this sad news. I cannot imagine how you might be feeling.
- I cannot imagine the hole that she/he will have left. If you need anything, let me know.
- So very shocked and saddened by this sad news. Hard to believe [name] has gone. I am here when you need me.
- This is so heartbreaking. I can't imagine how you must be feeling.

## Supporting staff to look after themselves

It is important that staff allow themselves time to grieve. This will help them be in a better position to support students. Staff can do this in the following ways:

- Share feelings – use friends and colleagues to talk about how you are feeling and to share experiences. Just knowing that others are affected can help you to feel less alone and better able to cope. Informal peer support in the staffroom can be a welcome opportunity to talk through your grief and discuss strategies to help.
- Take extra care and take your time – accidents, e.g. when driving, are more likely to occur when you are under stress.
- Try to drink and eat something regularly, even if you don't feel like it.
- Try and establish a normal routine as soon as possible and take breaks when needed. Do not demand too much of yourself, seek help and support when you need it and

delegate where appropriate: try not to do everything yourself and tell people what you need.

- Develop coping strategies based on what has been helpful in the past or general strategies known to be helpful. Research tells us that the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#). Write down the things that you've found work well to make you feel happier / boost your mood in the following areas<sup>5</sup>:
  - **KEEP LEARNING:** Try something new. Try a new hobby, learn about something just because it interests you.
  - **TAKE NOTICE:** Take a break and take notice of how you are feeling. Relax and look around you or listen to music. Take a few deep breaths or try an online meditation.
  - **BE ACTIVE:** Physical activity not only makes you physically healthy, it also makes you feel good.
  - **CONNECT:** Try to connect with family and friends. Speak to them on the phone or try Skype or Facetime if you can't meet them face to face.
  - **GIVE:** Do something for a friend, teacher or family member. As well as making them feel good, it will make you feel good too.
- Spoil yourself and make time to enjoy yourself, do something just for you or give yourself a treat. Give yourself permission to relax.
- Don't withdraw from activities or people, use alcohol/drugs, work too many hours, over/under-eat, do risky or dangerous things or watch too much TV/play too many computer games.
- Recognise that fatigue, especially at work, may set in when adrenaline raised by the bereavement starts to drop. Don't try to fight it – take a break.
- Visit your GP for additional advice, if needed.



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<sup>5</sup> For more information, visit [www.justtalkherts.org](http://www.justtalkherts.org)

## When there has been a death in the school community

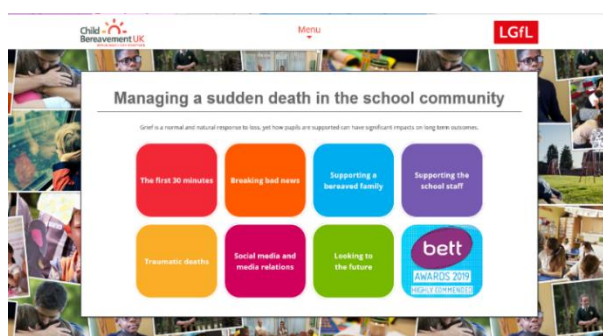
Additional support needs to be thought about when a member of the school community has died. Key steps are outlined in the [Crisis Support Action Plan](#) and Educational Psychologists can support staff in thinking about communication and emotional support, as required (see '[Support for critical incidents](#)').

Members of the senior leadership will experience their own feelings of grief, as well as be able to support the other members of staff. Often the support and nurture arrangements already available in the school are a good and natural starting point for how to offer emotional support.

Communication is important to ensure consistent messages are shared which have been agreed with the bereaved family members. You may feel it is more appropriate to speak to the staff members who were particularly close to that person separately (either individually or as a small group). It will be important to give the school staff some time to process the news before expecting them to share any news with the children. Staff may need support with what to say to pupils and will need a space to have their questions answered. Tell the staff before, so that they can digest the news and prepare themselves to tell the children.

- It will be easier for children to be told by someone they trust and in small groups in a familiar environment. For particularly vulnerable children, it may be appropriate to tell them separately in a smaller group.
- Staff should be given a script to say to children, so that a consistent message is given and to make it easier for staff to manage. Important things to remember are:
  - Be honest, while respecting the family's wishes and not overwhelming them with too much information. You may need to repeat information too.
  - Use clear language like 'dead' or 'died' rather than euphemisms (e.g. 'gone to sleep'). You may decide on different scripts for different ages.
  - Don't be afraid to show your own emotions and show that grief is normal.
  - Give them an opportunity to ask questions. It's OK to say, 'I don't know'.
- Staff should ensure that children know they can speak to someone if they need to and monitor the reactions to see which children may need additional support.

It will also be necessary for parents to be informed (e.g. by letter for all and a phone call for those children identified as vulnerable) what their children have been told and signpost them to places for support if needed.



As well as resources from the Educational Psychology Service, information and advice is also available from organisations such as [Winston's Wish](#) and [Child Bereavement UK](#).

## Supporting staff who are supporting bereaved children and young people

### Taking care of the professional

Supporting bereaved children, young people and their families can be rewarding but challenging and demanding. To provide emotional support to the bereaved draws on your emotional and psychological resources, so being aware of the need for good self-care practices are important. Remember that you cannot carry the child's grief for them, but you can support the child to express their grief. It is perfectly normal and OK to be emotionally affected, but it is important to recognise that in order to be of help to the child, you need to take care of yourself and feel reasonably strong. Below are some further tips and things to consider:

- Firstly, it is important to remember that you do not need to be an expert to provide effective help. Many people feel inadequate and out of their depth when faced with children, young people or adults experiencing deep sadness or trauma. Most school staff are caring individuals who naturally have the characteristics to support bereaved individuals. It is more about being there for them whilst in school and building a nurturing relationship, rather than being a bereavement professional.
- When working in a school environment, it is easy to let the carer in us take over and forget our professional boundaries, especially after a bereavement. Don't get over-involved but support the child or young person by being there for them.
- It does not help to offer something that you cannot deliver. No matter how well-meant or how strong the desire to take the child or young person's pain away is, always try to be realistic with the amount of support you can give. It is much better to offer something small rather than something big which is going to be difficult and unrealistic to offer in a busy school environment.
- It may be necessary to find someone else to support the child for a while if you are too upset or need a break. Don't try to do everything yourself – delegate where appropriate. Use informal peer support in the staffroom to talk through issues or concerns by jointly talking through strategies to help both the bereaved individual and for you to effectively support them.

Restorative supervision and line-management can help you monitor this and find ways to build your resources and prevent compassion fatigue.

## Supervision

Supervision is a helping relationship where one person (or a group of people in peer supervision) facilitates the development of the other in the role that they take in their work. It can be:

- Developmental: developing the skills, understanding and capacities of the supervisee
- Resourcing: allowing the supervisee to reflect on the emotional experience of the role *and/or*
- Qualitative: providing a quality control function.

It is different from informal conversations with colleagues, which are valuable and important but do not have the same protection of time, space and processes prioritised in supervision.

Supervision is seen as a necessary part of practice in many clinical professions, including social work, counselling and psychology. Due to the nature of emotional content and workload pressures that school staff deal with, supervision would also be a valuable tool in school contexts.

Some schools may have coaching relationships set up, which is a specific type of supervision. Other school staff may have experienced different forms of group or peer supervision. One example of a peer supervision model is a [solution circle](#) which has clear steps to follow over a 24 minute period for each problem presented.

A funded evidence based model of peer supervision is also available as part of the [Level 2 MHL training](#) provided by the Strategic Leads for Mental Health in School.

Further information about how to establish individual or peer supervision in schools is available from the Educational Psychology Service. This includes information on the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant training and group supervision taking place in 2021.





# Support for Families

## Support and guidance for bereaved families



### Breaking the news

Parents may ask schools for guidance on how to talk to their children about a bereavement in the family. Family members will be in the best position to tell children that someone they love has died, as it is best to hear the news from those that they trust the most. Here are some important tips that can be shared with parents to help them with breaking the news to their children:

- When telling a child that someone has died, children need the reassurance of clear age-appropriate information and explanations given about what has happened<sup>6</sup>. You do not need to give them all the details, but they need to know the facts as much as is appropriate without overwhelming them. If children or young people are not given enough information by the adults around them, they may fill in the gaps themselves, sometimes inaccurately. Young people sometimes think they know or understand more than they actually do, which can lead to misunderstandings. They need to know what will happen next for themselves and the family, to help them cope with their fears and worries.
- It is important to be honest. If you tell them something else, they may find out the truth in other ways (e.g. overhearing conversations, the media), or they may find it more difficult to cope if you tell them the truth when they are older. Sometimes with traumatic death especially, it may help to provide information in stages.
- It is natural for children and young people to feel frightened following a death. They may particularly fear that another person in their family will die, or that they may die themselves. Sometimes a lack of understanding about a particular death may increase fears. Clear, accurate information helps. It is important to reassure whenever possible but equally it is important to be truthful.
- It is also important to use clear and direct language about death, such as 'died' and 'dead', rather than euphemisms which they would find difficult to understand (e.g. 'we've lost your mother', 'she passed away in her sleep').
- Only give the amount of information that is necessary at the time, as children will only be able to assimilate a limited amount of information at one time, especially at a time of heightened emotions. You may need to give them the information gradually and/or repeat any information they ask for in a clear and calm way.
- You should check the child's understanding by watching for their reactions and asking questions. You may need to repeat or modify your explanation. Young children especially will likely need to be told the same information over a period of days or weeks. It may be helpful to ask, 'what do you think?' and build on their answers to aid their understanding.
- Children may ask questions, and you should answer them as honestly and simply as you can; they don't need long explanations and it is OK to say 'I don't know' if that is the truth. They may ask the same question repeatedly and this is OK, it is to help them process what

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<sup>6</sup> See [Childhood Bereavement Network](#)

has happened. Other times, children may sometimes believe they shouldn't need to ask questions, or perhaps may fear the reaction they will get if they talk about what has happened. You may need to be explicit about saying that they can come and talk to you.

- For those children who don't have the verbal skills to talk about what has happened, they will require alternative methods to help their understanding and expression of emotion. This may be through play, art or stories.
- Don't be afraid to refer to the dead person by their name.
- Also, don't be afraid as the adult to show your own emotions. It is important that children see that grief reactions are normal. However, it is important that you model good coping/containing of your emotions, as seeing someone who is crying uncontrollably can make a child feel uncontained and unsafe themselves.
- It is important to reassure children and young people that they are not to blame. Sometimes they may feel they could have done something differently that could have prevented a death, which can intensify negative feelings such as guilt. It is also not unusual for children or young people to feel angry at the person who has died or their family.
- Allow for individual differences both in feelings and in the expressions of feelings. There is not one way to grieve. They may feel destructive, confused, fearful, relieved, anxious or withdrawn. It is important to let a bereaved person know that these feelings are normal and that the death, however painful, is something they can talk about, both at school and home. They need to feel like they are not alone. However, it is not helpful to make comments like "I know how you feel", "You've got to be brave", "You should try and forget it" or "At least you have still got...". These deny the reality of the loss. Sometimes, validating a feeling, helps us to move through these feelings, at least temporarily. When we believe it is not okay to feel something, our feelings can get locked away inside us and make it harder to deal with. Reassure them it is okay to not be okay and that you are there to support them through it.



### How parents/carers can support their child

Just as when they were younger, all children benefit from calm reassurance, emotional warmth and appropriate boundaries to help them feel safe.



Adults around the child or young person need to be able to **respond to their emotional needs and provide support when they are upset**. This prevents them from feeling overwhelmed and then acting out or internalising their distress that can lead to mental health difficulties and anti-social behaviour. Family members can be temporarily unable to provide this in the early days of the bereavement. Children and young people may need reassurance that people still love and care for them, and about their future (e.g. who will pick them up from school).

The early days after a death can be a very confusing and painful time. It is normal for adults to want to protect children and try to change things to help with this, however keeping appropriate **familiar routines and structure** where possible including bedtime routines and having time for fun activities is the best way to do this. It is especially important following a traumatic loss to provide as much stability, security and continuity as possible to help children

and young people realise that though life may never be the same, there are still many things that remain constant. Therefore, it is good to warn children about any changes to routine.

Time for fun or **restoration-oriented activities** should also be considered as important for children and young people. It can be hard for parents to see children wanting to carry on with things (e.g. going to a school club with friends) so soon after a death and appear to forget that something awful has happened or at least forget about it for a while. However, as [‘the Dual Process model’](#) of coping with bereavement explains, it is natural and healthy to dip in and out of grief and partake in restoration-orientated activities to help protect from difficult or painful feelings and “switch off” for a while.

At the same time as this, it is important to provide children with an **environment that encourages confidence to deal with difficult emotions**. Some children and young people may find it helpful to engage in a sport or another activity where they can let off some steam or tire themselves out. Time with friends may also provide relaxation and a time to regain some ‘normality’. For some children and young people, times of separation e.g. going to school, going on a trip etc., may increase their fears. It is important to have a balance of acknowledging these feelings and also encouraging children and young people to carry on with important and enjoyable aspects of life.

Children and young people need to be able to **talk about and remember the person who has died**, to think about their emotional reactions and to have their questions answered about this. The child should take the lead in these conversations. Reminders of the loved one should still be available (e.g. keeping photos around the house).



## Funerals

It is important that children and young people feel involved and included in the grieving process. They should be provided with informed choices about their roles in rituals and activities which surround a death. This should take into account cultural or religious beliefs and practices (*for more information on this see <https://www.everplans.com/articles/funeral-traditions-of-different-religions>*).

It is important to involve children in acknowledging and commemorating a death if they feel comfortable to do so. This may include visiting a sick person before death, seeing the body after death, their involvement in the funeral and their opinions and ideas about what to include in memorials. Seeing how the death affects their family and friends will help them to feel less alone. Even where families have clearly defined choices or traditions around death, a child may still be able to contribute something to a funeral or memorial.

School staff could support with this by preparing children or young people for what to expect from a funeral, especially if they have not attended one before or support them with creating a letter, poem or picture to include in a coffin. This can help children and young people feel useful, needed and valued. If the child is attending the funeral, it may be helpful to identify another caring adult (not a parent) to look after them, so that the parent doesn’t feel like they have that additional responsibility to manage at a time that will be difficult for them too.

Even if a child is not attending the funeral, it may be helpful for them to visit the grave, help to scatter the ashes or visit a special place. They may want to plant a tree to commemorate that person and have somewhere they can go to feel more connected to them.

## Identifying the emotional and practical needs of families

The table below may be useful in raising staff awareness of the emotional and practical needs of bereaved families.

What support do they require in being able to grieve?
<input type="checkbox"/> Having continued familiar routine and structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding/ knowing how to explain what has happened
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding and expressing emotions appropriately – having effective coping strategies and support
<input type="checkbox"/> Having someone close to talk to and offer emotional support and understanding
<input type="checkbox"/> Having opportunities to talk about and process difficult memories of what has happened
<input type="checkbox"/> Being able to create meaningful memories
<input type="checkbox"/> Being able to find ways to feel connected to the deceased after death
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding their bereavement within their wider life-story
<input type="checkbox"/> Being able to make plans for their future
What other difficulties have been caused by the bereavement?
<input type="checkbox"/> Funeral and legal arrangements
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic
<input type="checkbox"/> Family
<input type="checkbox"/> Social
<input type="checkbox"/> Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety or safeguarding

## Where to access further support and advice

There are a number of voluntary organisations that can offer families support at this difficult time. A directory of local and national children’s bereavement support providers and referral details can be found in the section on [Organisations offering bereavement support](#). National services that offer parents and carers helplines and advice are also included. These bereavement support providers offer Tier 1 and 2 support, and most do not offer support where there are emerging or established mental health difficulties but may accept referrals where CAMHS service are also working with them.

It may be helpful to encourage bereaved individuals (older children and parents) to make contact with other bereaved families with similar experiences, as this can help them feel less isolated/alone and give them renewed hope for the future, as well as providing them with an opportunity to share their experiences, exchange advice (e.g. on how to cope with grief) and make new friendships. Several of the organisations listed in the links below have opportunities to do this.

Bereaved children and young people may feel more connected to others by reading ‘[Lost for Words](#)’ - a resource filled with supportive words, quotes, advice and emojis directly from children and young people who have also been bereaved and know how it can feel.



# Support for Children and Young People

## Whole-school approach to supporting bereaved children and young people at school

The following are general tips to consider when offering support for children and young people in your school who are affected by a bereavement.

### Supporting the family

- It is important for someone at the school, either a member of the senior leadership team or someone who knew the family well, to make contact with the family to offer their condolences and be a point of contact with the family and maintain that link.
- They should ask the family what they would like to be shared with the school community and what the child has been told, so that information is consistent. If necessary, it may be appropriate to say that it is important that people know the facts, otherwise rumours can start. Staff will also need to find out what involvement school will have with things such as funerals, if appropriate. For example, you may want to find out (sensitively):
  - What happened?
  - When did it happen?
  - Was it expected or unexpected?
  - Was anyone else involved/hurt or saw what happened (e.g. who was in the car when it crashed or saw the accident)?
- Let them know what support is being put in place for their child.
- Some families have spiritual or religious beliefs about death. If talking about these matters, it is important to respect both the child or young person's and their family's views, recognising that these could be different, e.g. saying 'some people believe...'.

### Supporting a child or young person to return to school

Returning back to school may be difficult for some children and young people after a bereavement. Some may want to get back to their usual routine and seeing their friends, whereas others may want to hide away.

After the loss of a family member, a child is likely to take time off school, particularly during the early stages of active grief. This is appropriate and the exact time for each child or young person needs to be different with every individual. However, returning to school can help a child for many reasons. The stability, routine and consistency of a place where life goes on may be of value, especially as home life is likely to be full of change and upheaval. However, there are factors that may prevent a child or young person from returning to school:

- The child or young person may feel 'different' from their peers, feel a fear of teasing or of being treated as 'special'.

- After the bereavement, poor concentration may affect their ability to work.
- They may feel they will behave unpredictably and lose control.
- They may be worried about being behind with the work and unable to catch up.
- If the bereaved child or young person was having problems beforehand, these are likely to be exacerbated.
- They just may not be ready yet.

Being aware of the concerns of the child or young person will help the school to put in place steps to address these barriers.

In some cases, absence from school can make the fear of returning grow stronger. Every child will be different in their needs, but individual consideration of the following factors can help:

- Ensure someone keeps in regular contact with the family. Checking to see how things are and asking what the school can do to help sends a powerful message of support and ensures that you are consistent and working together. This will help inform you of how the loss is affecting the child.
- Communication should not focus only on the loss; you can inquire about other aspects of a child's life, send news from school and so on.
- Talk with the family and child about what they would like and what would help them with the child returning to school. Being able to make choices will help them feel involved in the process.
- Avoid continual persuasion. The child may not be ready, and open communication will help rather than too much encouragement before it can be accepted.
- Keep the child in the minds of the rest of the class. They can express sympathy, write letters, poems or send pictures. This helps to sensitise them to the absent child's needs.
- Encourage any contact with the school. A graded approach to a return to school can help a child overcome any fears they have about returning. Short visits can be followed by working in a quiet room, followed by returning for favourite lessons or attending one or two days a week. A part-time timetable with a clear time scale to achieve goals for full attendance can be helpful.
- If the child has fears about missed schoolwork, remember this can be very daunting. Try and work out ways of making this more manageable. Do not give too much work at first as the concentration may be difficult. The child may even slip behind in some areas, so try to be sensitive in achieving the balance between allowing for difficulties and helping the child achieve.
- If the child fears being treated as 'different', take these fears seriously. Giving the opportunity to talk about the worries enables the child to consider how he/she might solve problems. A sympathetic listener helps the child feel confident he/she will be taken seriously. Do not let the child become too singled out and help to keep things as normal as possible.
- Bear in mind there may be other difficulties independent of the bereavement that may have been triggered.

## Supporting the child or young person when they return to school



- When a child or young person returns to school, it is important to acknowledge what has happened, rather than pretending everything is normal. You should say that you are sorry about what happened and about their pain.
- Don't avoid the child or young person because you feel uncomfortable, as this will add to the painful experience. Don't avoid mentioning their loss out of fear of reminding them about it; they won't have forgotten.
- Try to keep things as predictable as possible by maintaining the routine. Flexibility may be required, e.g. with breaks scheduled into the child's timetable.
- Schools can help children feel safe and supported by providing them with a consistent, sensitive, trusted name staff member for children who can be available to provide temporary emotional support. Bereaved children will value people who are also there for longer than the first few weeks. Make sure the child knows who that person is and how they can find them to talk to them. This should be somewhere that is calm and quiet, and it may be helpful to ask the child where they would feel most comfortable. Sometimes, a child may just need someone there to sit with them and listen, or just to be close to them.
- Qualities of a supportive adult include<sup>7</sup>:
  - **Empathy:** being able to see the world through the bereaved child's eyes and validate how they are feeling, without saying you know how they feel or that 'everything will be alright'
  - **Unconditional positive regard:** that the adult cares for the child regardless of what they do and will not judge them
  - **Confidentiality and trust:** while maintaining safeguarding and being truthful and answering questions honestly
  - **Protection:** providing a protective environment for the child to show their emotions with the support from those around them.
- Use active listening skills appropriate to the age or developmental abilities of the child or young person. The child should be reassured that they are allowed to express their thoughts and feelings. It may be necessary for the adults to check back that you have heard the child correctly, by summarising the main points.
- Children and young people may find it easier to talk while you are doing something else, like drawing or completing some of the activities suggested in this document. This may make them feel less self-conscious.
- When you ask questions to find out how they are, try not to use closed questions such as 'Are you ok?' but instead ask "How are things going for you?" or "Tell me how are you getting on" – and take time to listen to the reply and follow up with "Do you know what might help you with that?" before offering suggestions of what could help.
- Follow the child's lead – if they want to talk about the person who has died, then let them. It is important that children know that they can talk about the person and relive happy memories.

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<sup>7</sup> From: <https://www.nurtureuk.org/what-we-do/news/news/bereavement-support-children-and-young-people>

- Help children and young people develop supportive coping strategies to manage intense emotions or unhelpful thoughts. This may include comfort items from home (e.g. pillows or cuddly toys, depending on their age), creative outlets or sensory items to hold/watch etc. (e.g. a hot water bottle or comforting scents).
- Ensure you carefully monitor the bereaved child and any other students you have highlighted as being vulnerable who know about the death.
- Let the child or young person know when parts of the curriculum may be difficult for them and give them options to work out of class on this topic, i.e. parts of Science, PHSE, English lessons that focus on disease, death and dying (NB: graphic war poems in English literature can need special staff sensitivity). Also, be aware of particular occasions which may be difficult for the child or young person, e.g. Mother's/Father's Day, Christmas etc.
- Academic tasks may need additional differentiation to what the child would normally have, including shorter tasks and additional adult support.
- Don't be afraid to show your emotions, as it is important to know that these reactions are normal. You should show ways of coping so that the child still feels safe.
- While allowances for behaviour may be required, it will be important for the child to know that there are still clear boundaries at school. Therefore, staff should follow the school behaviour and emotional wellbeing policy when the behaviour meets the criteria for action.
- It may be helpful to discreetly praise children who make an effort to support the bereaved child, letting them know that these are important social skills to use throughout their lives.
- There are a number of activities that staff can work through with children and young people, to understand their emotions, process their grief and remember the person who died. These are found in the section on [Activities to support bereaved children and young people in school](#).

### Supporting bereaved children with additional needs

Bereavement and grief can be especially challenging and distressing for children with a particular condition, difficulty or disability that would be included in the umbrella term of 'special educational needs or disabilities'. This includes children with physical disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments.

There are a growing number of resources available to help you support bereaved children with additional needs. Many tools and strategies that you already use to help them with issues such as emotional regulation, cognitive processing, memory recall and social expectations will also be helpful.

If there are a number of agencies involved with the child, staff may need to liaise with them to ensure accuracy and continuity of information. It will be particularly important to know what information the family have shared with the child and ensure that everyone is using consistent language to support the child's understanding. It will also be important to think about how new information is normally given to the child (e.g. verbally using signs or pictures) and use this format to talk about illness and death.

Children and young people with additional learning needs may require time to process information, so the speed and amount of information should be considered. They often need new information being repeated to them in order to support them to remember it. It may be helpful to build on the information given to them gradually in small 'bites' to make it easier for them to absorb it.

Further advice to support children and young people with additional needs can be found at:

- [Winston's Wish- supporting children with special educational needs](#)
- [Mencap – dealing with a bereavement](#): written for adults but very useful advice and resources
- [Child Bereavement UK- supporting a child with autism spectrum disorder](#)
- [Bereavement](#)

### Supporting with changes

Changes can be hard for anyone, especially children and those with SEND. School staff can help children and young people cope more easily with changes in several ways. These may include:

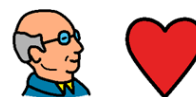
- Completing worksheets and lists about things that will change now, later or what things will stay the same. This can make children and young people feel more secure at a time when life can seem unpredictable.
- Ensuring the child has a key adult to discuss any changes that are worrying them.
- Creating social stories to understand what has happened and to cope with changes.

### Social stories about grief

Some children may find it difficult to understand a situation or event and how to respond when it is simply explained to them. It may be that they have social communication difficulties and can't process the words and the information being given to them. Using a Social Story to explain what has happened is a great way of providing the necessary information in way that is easier for the child to understand. Social Stories were introduced by Carol Gray as a method of helping children to understand a situation or event by using a visual explanation in a form they are familiar with and can access. Social Stories give you the opportunity to teach children the appropriate responses to these situations/events.

You can find a guide on the use of social stories [here](#).

My parents told me that my grandfather died. This is very sad because he was so special to me. It is sad to lose someone you love.



I have a lot of great memories of my grandfather. I will always remember celebrating holidays with him and enjoying fun times with him. Thinking of all of my great memories is a very good thing.



I will miss my grandfather a lot. I might feel like crying. That is OK. Tears let out my sad feelings. It is OK if I need to cry.





'Widgit' is an online tool that provides a 28-day free trial which you can utilise to create your own social stories. It uses pictorial symbols as either an alternative to text or alongside it.

For free social stories that cover topics such as: illness, death and funerals, as well as tips on how to write your own social story, see:

<https://www.andnextcomesl.com/2018/09/free-social-stories-about-death-and-funerals.html>

### If you are worried about the mental health of bereaved children

Bereavement in itself is not a mental illness to be treated and referring to a specialist mental health service for bereavement support may give a message to children and young people that grief is not normal or healthy. Most children and young people can be supported in the ways outlined in this document or with further advice and support from bereavement charities.

However, close family bereavement can cause an increased risk of mental ill-health and suicide to young people and their caregiver, especially if the death was by suicide. If you are concerned about the mental health of a child or young person you should seek advice and make a CAMHS referral for assessment via the Single Point of Access as usual. When making such a referral, it is important to outline clearly the presenting issues, frequency, severity and impact on day to day functioning, rather than simply describe the nature of the bereavement, to assist clinicians in preliminary assessments of the threshold of need.

Taking part in additional [Spot the Signs](#) suicide prevention training and [MindEd](#) children's mental health training is also recommended.

### Longer-term support

After a bereavement, it is normal and natural for there to be a period, often of several months when we feel anxious and uncertain about the future. Adults and children alike can become reluctant to plan for the future, especially after a sudden death. Life can feel very unpredictable.

When the time is right, you can help children and young people to identify what is important to them, what their strengths are, and who or what can support them to achieve their goals. This needs to be handled sensitively in secondary school, where the additional pressure to achieve in exams can become difficult to manage for bereaved young people.

You can also help them by recognising key anniversaries and understanding that, in sudden death, the second year of grief can be harder than the first and the death becomes more real. Staff should be sensitive to delayed grief responses, remembering that there is no set timescale for coming to terms with a loss.

# Activities to Support Bereaved Children and Young People in School

## Activities to support bereaved children and young people in school

Listed below are a few suggested activities to complete that may help children and young people in the longer term to: make sense of their loss, strengthen their memories of loved ones, recognise and express their emotions, and receive support from others.

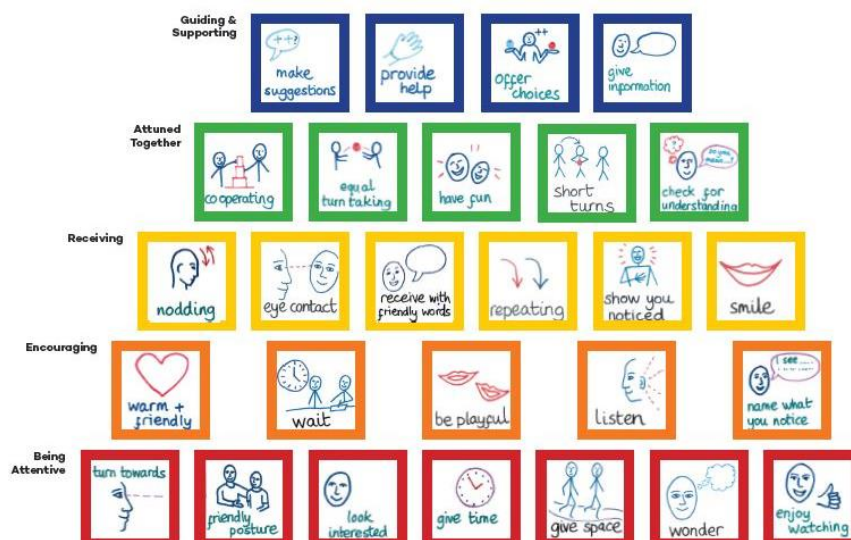
### How can these activities be used?

These activities can be completed by children and young people with a trusted adult, in private, or in a group situation (as appropriate to their needs). It is important when working with children and young people that you ensure a safe space and discuss confidentiality with all involved. This will allow the child to feel comfortable to communicate. To ensure a safe space, the environment you choose to work in should be calm, non-threatening and comfortable.



When choosing an appropriate activity, it is a good idea to give children and young people a choice of ideas and let them decide which activities they feel ready and comfortable to do and at what time. As much as possible, these activities should be child-led, completed at their own pace, and be based on their own ideas of what may help them with their individual grief, but of course there may be some other suggestions offered by the supporting adult.

It is important for supporting adults to be attuned to the bereaved child or young person. Attunement describes how reactive a person is to another's emotional needs and moods. A person who is well attuned to a child or young person will respond with appropriate language and behaviours based on another person's emotional state. This will involve providing time, actively listening and providing undivided attention, free from non-judgemental or intrusive questions. Attunement and having secure relationships are not just crucial at home. Young people spend a lot of their time with school staff and it is important that they feel understood, 'tuned in' to and able to effectively articulate and make sense of their feelings, thoughts, hopes and beliefs with a few key adults within the safety of the school walls. The diagram below displays key principles of attunement involving both verbal and nonverbal interactions. Small things can make a big difference when it concerns attunement.





## Providing emotional support

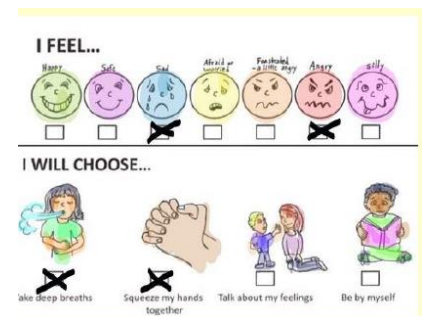
These suggested activities and resources are to help bereaved children and young people feel especially safe and secure at school during this vulnerable time and to ensure they know they have a wide support network around them to help them with their grief.

### Chill-out zone

If your school does not already have one, it may be good to designate a small area to be a 'chill-out zone' or to specifically create one for the bereaved child or young person as well as other students. You could call this area something else such as a 'calm corner' or 'mindful area' or let the children decide what they would like to call it. They should be able to go here with a chosen peer or adult they feel comfortable talking to when they feel they need a short break from the classroom. There could be a list of activities they could do on the wall or within a box, within the chill-out zone. This will help them to develop their ability to independently self-regulate through strategies they have personally chosen. These mindful, self-regulation activities may include:



- ❖ Reading
- ❖ Drawing or colouring
- ❖ Doing a jigsaw or board game
- ❖ Word searches
- ❖ Breathing exercises (*See [here](#)*)
- ❖ Grounding exercises (*see [Appendix A](#)*)
- ❖ Playing with Lego or playdough
- ❖ Playing games on a school iPad
- ❖ Using sensory toys or items in a 'calm down box'
- ❖ Sorting activities e.g. beads/buttons into different colours
- ❖ Talking to a trusted adult or peer



### Calendar of memories

It may be helpful for school staff to recognise and take note of important dates e.g. the birthday of the person who has died, the day they died, possibly Mother's/Father's Day, Easter, Christmas and so on. Be aware of these especially difficult dates for the child or young person and ensure you check in with them more frequently on these days. You could complete an activity with them on these particular days, such as:

- Planting a memory tree or plant,
- Writing a message in a bottle,
- Creating and writing a card,
- Making a bracelet or another mindful, creative activity,
- Drawing or painting things that the person who died loved, for example, their favourite flower, colour, food or place.

**JULY 2019**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

### ***Helping hand (or supportive 5)***

This activity aims to help children and young people reflect on their support network and ensure they know they have a supportive school environment around them. It is also good activity for children and young people to recognise the importance of having more than one key adult they can talk to, in case that person is not available. It involves drawing around their hand and writing on (or above) the fingers the names of 5 adults or peers in school they feel they trust, can approach about any worries they may have, or who can help to cheer them up. They may also want to do one for home (including family at home, wider family members, friends or neighbours they believe can give them a helping hand). They can draw a picture of themselves in the palm of the hand and even pictures of their trusted adults or peers above the fingers. This could be laminated and kept with the child to remind them of who they can talk to.



### ***Family tree***

School staff could help children and young people explore their family relationships. It may help the child or young person to see their network of support they still have around them after being bereaved and they could highlight the most supportive family members or ones they may like to reach out to. The family tree can be imaginatively designed or can be mapped out using photos, stones, shells or buttons and with the help of adults at home.



### ***Attuned drawing***

Attuned drawing would involve a supporting adult sitting alongside the child or young person and talking to them about any worries, thoughts or beliefs they may have whilst they engage in some drawing of their choice. The supporting adult should be attuned by being interested in the child and what they are doing and possibly asking some non-intrusive questions about their drawings. The adult should be non-judgmental of what the child or young person draws or communicates to them and should be especially vigilant of any safeguarding issues that may arise in the drawings. Some children and young people find it easier to discuss their thoughts and feelings whilst they are doing something comfortable and familiar like drawing, as well as not having to provide as much eye contact.



School staff can request further information on Attuned Drawing by the EPS if they feel this would be helpful.

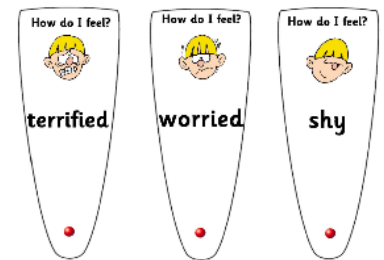


## Help to recognise their emotions and express them well

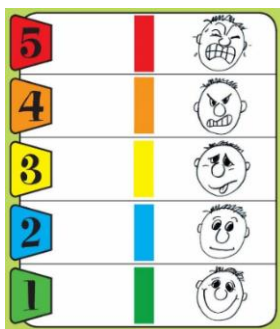
When we are grieving, we all experience intense and confusing emotions. Children and young people can have difficulty recognising their emotions, lack the words to describe them or lack the skills to be able to express them appropriately. This is especially the case for children with additional needs. You can help children and young people by encouraging them to talk about their emotions and ways to manage them. The resources that you already use in your role to help them manage emotional expression will be very helpful and a few additional suggestions are provided below.

### Emotion visuals or fans

It may be helpful, especially for younger children who have been bereaved, to create some visuals to help them express their emotions non-verbally. This may include having a laminated 'emotion fan', with pictures of cartoon or real-life faces and emotions words of how they may be feeling e.g. happy, mad, sad, worried, scared, shy etc.



### Emotion scales



Emotion scales are used as a method of measuring emotions and encouraging self-regulation by supporting the child to recognise how they are feeling (where they are on the scale), what that feels like to them (I am going to explode, irritated etc.), what it looks like (crying, screaming etc.), as well as what triggers those emotions. You should then discuss with the child what they can do or what would help them to try to move lower down the scale and back to feeling calm.

There are various types of emotion scales, such as: 5-point scale, 10-point scale, or simply making your own that can be personalised to the child's interests. It is important to explain to the child that it is normal to experience these emotions as part of the grieving process, to not feel ashamed, and that you are there to support them whenever they need it.

	What does it feel like	What does it look like
5	<b>Out of Control</b> Feels like you're a volcano and you're going to explode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Screaming</li><li>Crying</li><li>Clenching Teeth</li><li>Shouting Things</li><li>Breaking Things</li><li>Swearing Things</li></ul>
4	<b>Starting to Lose It</b> Starting angry like a zombie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Head Starts Beat It uncontrollably</li><li>Can't do any more or handle things</li><li>Yells things away from people</li><li>Waking Up</li><li>Little bit more help you to do things that will get you in trouble</li></ul>
3	<b>Anxious/Worried/Excited</b> Feels like an earthquake and you want to get away or jump right out of your skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Shaking</li><li>Can't seem to talk about it</li><li>A little more</li><li>Turning heads to face</li><li>Shouting things</li><li>Open about something</li><li>Repeating Words</li></ul>
2	<b>A Whisker &amp; Glance Situation</b> Feels like when you have to work hard to succeed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Shaking</li><li>Can't seem to talk about it</li><li>A little more</li><li>Turning heads to face</li><li>Shouting things</li><li>Open about something</li><li>Repeating Words</li></ul>
1	<b>Just Right</b> Like a fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Happy</li><li>Can't</li><li>Shouting things</li><li>Repeating something</li></ul>

### Feelings jar (See Appendix B)

For this activity you will ideally need some different coloured sand, a jar or test tube (with a cork) and possibly a small filter, which helps it to be a little less messy! If you can't use sand, you can use salt and colour it with chalk or glitter. If you can't buy or find any test tubes or jars, you can use coloured beads on a string, different coloured marbles in a small bag or even use coloured paper and be a little creative.



Children or young people can associate the coloured sand or beads etc. to feelings they are experiencing during their grief. For example, red for anger, yellow for happiness, purple for jealousy, black for sad and so on. They should make a note of what feeling they have assigned

for each colour as this will be individual – they can choose whatever colour they want or think feels appropriate. Some emotions, e.g. sadness, may be larger than other emotions so the child can put more of this colour sand in the jar (or more of this coloured bead on a string) than other colours. It may be a good idea to use this activity as a creative form of a ‘check in’. For example, create a new one every few weeks and have a discussion around how their emotions have changed (if at all) and how it is normal to experience a wide range of emotions during grief. This can also normalise the fact that emotions may be worse one day after a certain trigger, even several months or years after the bereavement.

### **First Aid Kit** ([See Appendix C](#))

*For this activity, you will need paper and pens and a box to keep some favourite things in.*

This is a kit to help children, young people (and adults) cope with those days they feel low. It could be a box that holds or represents some things that can make them feel a bit better, for example, music, a favourite film, a chocolate bar, a game or the telephone number of the friend they may like to call. This can tap into the restoration-orientated part of the [dual processing model](#), as it may contain things that give individuals time to not think about their pain. However, it can also be used to store objects that remind them of happy memories of the person they have lost e.g. some photos or these could be kept in a separate memory box.

### **Biscuit feeling faces**

*For this activity you will need some ready-made biscuits or ingredients for the child or young person to make their own biscuits of choice from scratch, some icing and some edible decorations to make different facial expressions (e.g. smarties, jellies, sprinkles, strawberry laces).*

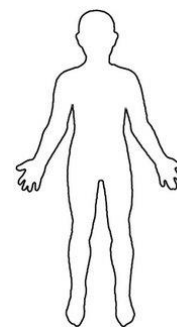


Children, young people (and adults) can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the range and strength of feelings they experience when someone has died. This simple and fun activity helps them to describe their feelings through baking and decorating and understand that all emotions are natural expressions of grief. It may also help them to start processing their emotions about what has happened. By doing this activity with a supportive adult, it can start a conversation about who the child or young person can speak to and what they can try doing when they are feeling certain emotions.

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-t-12551-expression-biscuits-recipe-sheet>

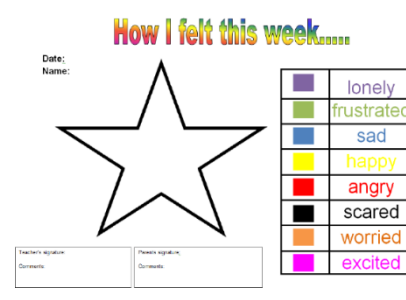
## Body map

This activity may help children and young people to understand that we can feel lots of different emotions at once, in different parts of our body. The supporting adult can either draw around the child or young person's body outline on to a large piece of paper, or print off a basic outline of a body on a smaller scale. The supporting adult can facilitate a conversation with the child or young person about how they may be feeling in their body and normalise both physiological feelings and emotions. This may include them feeling worried, causing their heart to beat quickly, or feeling angry, causing their fists and teeth to clench etc. The child will need some colouring pencils and assign a different emotion to each of the colours, drawing in their body outline, where and what they are currently experiencing.



## How I felt this week worksheet (See Appendix D)

This worksheet involves children and young people colouring in a star (or an alternative shape or picture of their choice) with how they have been feeling that week. The colours would be assigned to different emotions and they can use as many or as few colours as they want (depending on what emotions they have been experiencing). The key aspect of this activity is that both school staff and parents monitor this, by signing it each week, to ensure they are especially aware of the child or young person's wellbeing during this vulnerable time.



## Calm down or sensory box

A calm down or sensory box can include anything the child or young person would like to be in there (from a choice of what schools and/or home can offer) that may help them feel happier and calmer. It may include something they can touch (e.g. a fidget spinner, some playdough or cuddly toy), something they can smell (e.g. a lavender bag or fruit tea-bag), something they can taste (e.g. a piece of fruit or crisps), something they can hear (e.g. a musical instrument or CD) and something they can look at (e.g. bubbles, a liquid timer etc.)



## Calm down burger

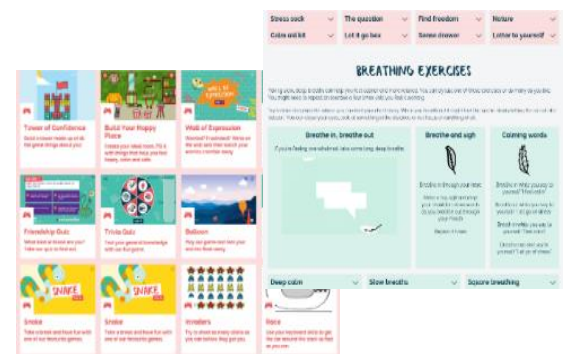
This activity involves being a little creative and creating a burger (or other layered object) which has suggestions identified by a child or young person (and/or supporting adult) to help them calm down, self-regulate, cheer themselves up or remember a loved one. It could be used for many purposes and be called anything the child or young person feels appropriate e.g. "idea burger", especially if its prime use is not to help them 'calm down'. This can be made from coloured paper or made using images off the internet and printing these off. All the different layers of paper (to make a burger) can then be hole punched and kept together using string or a treasury tag. It is a good idea to laminate this so they can keep it with them in their bag or pocket, without it getting ruined so easily.



## Childline Toolbox

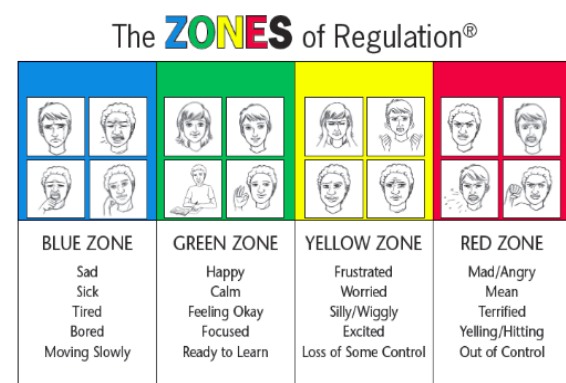
<https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/>

This website provides interactive games and activities to help children to express themselves and their feelings. There are also plenty to help take their mind off things if they want a little reprieve. As well as games and activities, this website has a section called the 'calm zone', that provides calming activities to help let go of worries when feeling overwhelmed or anxious.



## The Zones of Regulation

This book is a helpful resource that can be used with individuals or as a whole school approach. It is a curriculum designed to help foster self-regulation and emotional control in children and young people. Using a cognitive behavioral approach, the learning activities are designed to help students recognise when they are in different emotional states called 'zones' with each of the four zones represented by a different colour. In the various activities, students also learn how to use strategies or tools to either stay in a zone or move from one zone to another and to self-regulate.



For more information, see <http://www.zonesofregulation.com/book.html>



## Help to strengthen memories of loved ones

Grief can temporarily affect the way that we store and recall memories, especially in children. Fears about not being able to remember their loved one are very common. The memories of children and young people need frequent rehearsal, to strengthen them and make recalling them easier.

If it is appropriate to your role and the child is comfortable to do so, it will be helpful to ask them to share memories of the deceased or ask them to show some things they may have created at home or photos and special items associated with the person who has died.

Below are some activity ideas you could do together with children or young people to help strengthen their memories of their loved one. These tap into task four of [Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning model](#): to find an enduring connection with the deceased whilst embarking on a new life.

### **Memory jar** ([See Appendix B](#))

*For this activity you will ideally need some different coloured sand, a jar or test tube (with a cork) and possibly a small filter, which helps it to be a little less messy! If you can't use sand, you can use salt and colour it with chalk or glitter. If you can't buy or find any test tubes or jars, you can use coloured beads on a string, different coloured marbles in a small bag or even use coloured paper and be a little creative.*



This activity is similar to the 'feelings jar' but instead each colour of sand (or alternative resource) will represent a memory of the person the child or young person has lost. They can be both happy and sad but should be important memories to the individual. It is important to process and acknowledge bad times as well as the good, which are normal in every relationship. You can then link the colours to the memory, for example yellow for the beach they visited every summer with their loved one, green to represent their loved one singing whilst gardening and growing the prettiest flowers, red for them sometimes losing their temper, and pink representing their favourite colour and so on. Encourage the child or young person to think of five memories and assign a colour to each memory. It's a good idea to write these down using one of the worksheets provided. They can then either carry the sand filled jar (or beads etc.) around with them in their school bag or keep them safe at home and have a nice, colourful, creative representation of some important memories.

### **Forever Journal** <https://www.griefcounter.org.uk/shop/>

A Forever Journal is a book to capture vivid and vibrant memories of a loved one with stickers (different headings) to build up a story and capture, record and retain stories of a special person's life. This book aims to prompt thoughts and memories such as the person who has died's favourite book, meal, music, special birthdays, as well as happy times, not so happy times, best three days, ten words to describe the person etc. If you do not want to buy the



Forever Journal which comes with the stickers, you could simple create your own book from plain paper and write different headings instead of the stickers.

### **Memory box**

This activity involves decorating a box, e.g. a shoe box, and suggesting to the bereaved child or young person to fill up the box with items that remind them of the person who has died. This may include photos, perfume or aftershave scents on items of clothing, letters, tickets to events, jewellery, cards, shells and objects. The box itself could be covered in photos, drawings, the person who has died's favourite colour or even some stars to represent the loved one (magical, special and constantly shining through the darkest of nights).



### **Word clouds**

This activity involves writing characteristics or one-word memories about a loved one who has died, for example, what was unique about them, what they loved about them, where they met and so on. This can be handwritten or done on a free online website. When this is done electronically, if the word has more frequent responses, it appears bigger on the cloud. This activity could be sent around to as many people as the child or young person wants and could build up a rich picture of the loved one from many people's perspectives. It can then be printed off and presented in a frame. A few free websites to create these are listed below:



- <https://worditout.com/word-cloud/create>
- <https://www.jasondavies.com/wordcloud/>.

### **Lighting a memory candle**

This activity involves lighting a candle in a quiet area and encouraging the bereaved child or young person to think about the person they have lost if they feel comfortable, to do so. This should be supervised. They can place photos around the candle, play some music and think of the memories if they want to. The child or young person may want to decorate a jar to put a candle in beforehand. When they feel ready, they can blow the candle out.





## Opportunities to talk about difficult memories

After a bereavement, children and young people may find it difficult to discuss and process some painful memories. If it is appropriate to your role and training, it is helpful to allow children to talk about these difficult memories as well as happy ones, in order to help them process these. This taps into task two of [Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning](#) model, whereby you should have opportunities to communicate feelings, receive support from others and understand it is normal to grieve in different ways.

### **Memory stones**

*For this activity you will ideally need three types of stones; an ordinary smooth stone and a rough stone (both of which you may be able to find outside) and then a special gemstone which you may need to buy. You will also need a small bag or clear box to keep them all in.*



In all relationships there are often ordinary, difficult and special moments. For example, ordinary memories could be that someone liked two sugars in their tea, or they always cooked a lovely Sunday roast dinner. This would be represented by a smooth stone. More special moments could be a trip to Disneyland or another family holiday or occasion. This would be represented by a gemstone. There will also be difficult memories which cause some pain to think about, such as a particularly bad argument, possibly before they died. This would be represented by a rough stone. It's important to recognise the good as well as the bad times and process these together. Children or young people may want to put all 3 in a bag and carry them around or just keep the precious stone with them so they can hold it and think about their special memories.

### **Writing about painful memories and dreams**

Children and young people may find it easier to write down some memories at school (or at home) rather than speaking about them out loud. They may want to write about good and bad memories, which can help them to process and work through the pain associated with these. School staff could create simple worksheets to allow them to write these down.

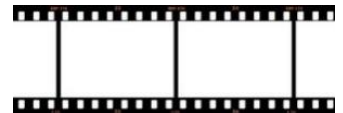
Fears are often worse at night, especially at bedtime. Bereaved children or young people may express to school staff that they are not sleeping well at home or having bad dreams. It is important for them to know that it is normal to dream about their loved one, especially after they have died. They may find it useful to write down some happy and sad dreams they have had, if they remember them. School staff can then provide the child or young person with some strategies to help them to sleep and self-regulate after having bad dreams, such as doing some deep belly breathing, clenching and releasing all their muscles, reading a book, listening to an audiobook or calming music, avoiding technology at nighttime, speaking honestly to their adults at home and so on.



## Understand how this fits in their wider life story

Later in the grieving process, children and young people will benefit from being told that they can, and will be able to, overcome future life challenges and receive help to learn the skills needed to build emotional resilience. Recognising what is happening to them now is very important for them but helping them to come to see it as a part of their wider life story can help them face the future more confidently. Families and professional can all encourage them to think about what they learned from their loved one, what kind of personal qualities they admired and to see this as a legacy which can help build resilience and a supportive connection to the deceased throughout their life.

### ***Telling your story***



Telling your story involves drawing or writing about what has happened in the family on to a 'film strip' (or into some boxes on a word document, for example). This can be a creative way to understand the child's or young person's world, find out what they already know before telling them more information, life before death, what happened before and after the person died (using pictures, words or photos) and what the future may be. This can help children and young people to process their thoughts and understand it was out of their control, and not their fault it happened. It can also display the legacy of the deceased person's life.

### ***Life record***

This activity can present in many different ways; it could involve recording the loved one's life through a poem, moviemaker, photo album or a book. Other people who knew and loved the person who has died can contribute or the child or young person may decide to keep it private. It could be filled with as many or as little memories as they want.

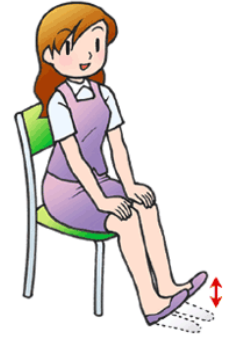


## Appendix A: Grounding Exercises

When your mind is racing, grounding brings you back to the moment, bringing your focus back to what is happening to you physically, either in your body or in your surroundings. Grounding is very helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or anxiety.

### 1. The grounding chair

Sit down in a comfortable chair, with your feet on the floor. Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Breathe in slowly for the count, then out slowly. Bring your mind's focus to your body – How does your body feel sitting in that chair? Touch the material on the seat, how does it feel? Next push your feet into the ground, imagine the energy draining down from your mind, down through your body and out through your feet into the ground.



### 2. Hold something and focus on it

Hold an object in your hand and really bring your full focus to it. Feel how heavy or light it is in your hand and what the surface texture feels like under your fingers.

### 3. Draw around your foot in your mind

Place your feet on the ground and in your imagination pick your favourite colour to draw an outline around each foot. Start at the heel and using your imaginary pencil slowly go up the side of your foot to your pinky toe and then make sure you draw around each toe and then go back towards the heel.

### 4. Get your energy out

Run up and down the stairs, dance around and do star jumps.



### 5. Take 10 slow breaths

### 6. Stop and listen

Notice the sounds you hear nearby – more your awareness of sound outwards and notice sounds in the distance.

### 7. Room search

Pick one broad category and search the room. For example, name everything in the room that's green.

### 8. Listen to soothing music

### 9. Hold/squeeze a pillow, stuffed animal or ball



### 10. Name 5 things you can see in the room

**11. Name animals alphabetically**

**12. Write it out and then throw it out**

**13. Push against a wall**

**14. Savour a scent**

**15. Clench and release your fists**

**16. Think of the things that you are looking forward to in the next week**

**17. Hold your shoulders right up to the ears and let them drop**

Repeat as many times as it takes to release tension.

**18. Practice belly breathing**

**19. Observe your thoughts**

**20. Walk barefoot**

**21. Walk slowly**

Notice each step.

**22. Do some yoga poses**

**23. Heartbeat exercise**

Stand up and do jumping jacks, place your hand on your heart and notice your heartbeat and how your breathing feels.



Appendix B: Memory and Feeling Jar Templates

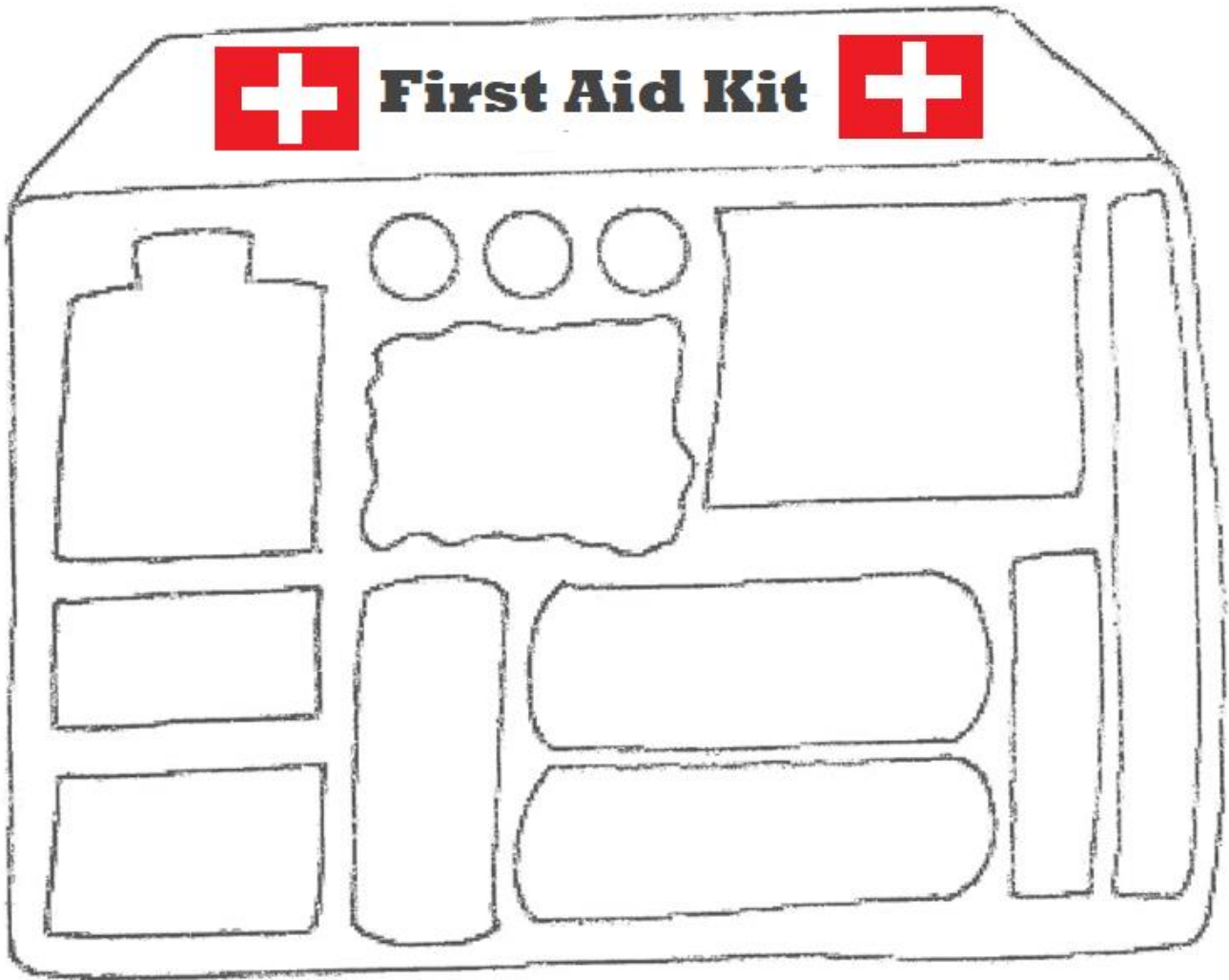
The image shows two templates for a jar activity. The first is titled "Memory Jar" and the second is titled "Feelings Jar". Both templates have a dashed border and a rounded top. At the top of each is a rounded rectangle for writing a name, with an arrow pointing to it and the text "write your name here". Below the name field is a grid with 5 rows. The "Memory Jar" grid has three columns labeled "Colour", "Feeling", and "Memory". The "Feelings Jar" grid has two columns labeled "Colour" and "Feeling". Each row in the grid is numbered 1 to 5 on the left side. An arrow points to the left side of the grid with the text "colour the square".

<b>Memory Jar</b>		
write your name here		
Colour	Feeling	Memory
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

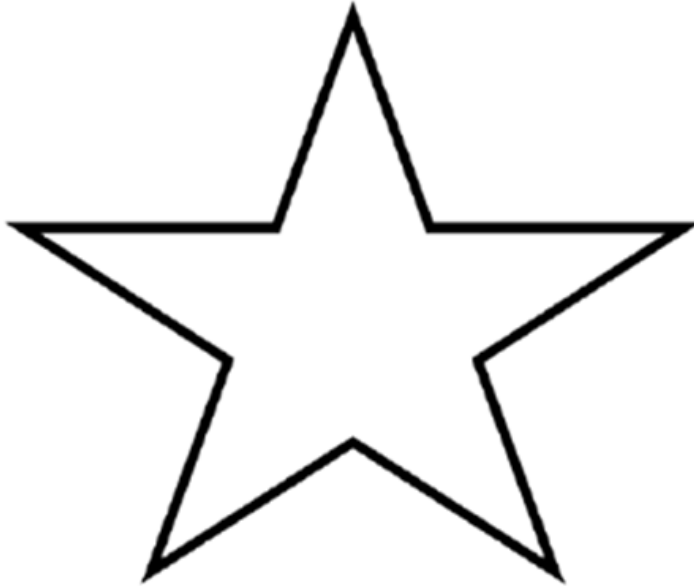
<b>Feelings Jar</b>	
write your name here	
Colour	Feeling
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Appendix C: First Aid Kit Template



# How I felt this week.....

Date  
Name



	lonely
	frustrated
	sad
	happy
	angry
	scared
	worried
	excited

Teacher signature:
Comment:

Parent Signature:
Comment:

Appendix E: Psychological First Aid

<p><b>Increase sense of safety</b></p>	<p>Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.            Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.            Properly dispose of used tissues.            Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, arm, or elbow if you don't have a tissue.            Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.            Stay at home if you are sick.            Avoid contact with those who are sick.            Clean and disinfect objects or surfaces that may have come into contact with germs.</p>
<p><b>Stay connected</b></p>	<p>Seek support from family, friends, mentors, clergy, and those who are in similar circumstances.            Be flexible and creative in accessing support via phone, email, text messaging, and video calls.</p>
<p><b>Cultivate calmness</b></p>	<p>Realise that it is understandable to feel anxious and worried about what may happen, especially when many aspects of life are being affected.            If you find that you are getting more stressed by watching the news, reduce your exposure, particularly prior to sleep.            While circumstances may be stressful and beyond your control, you can try to offset them with positive calming activities. Practice slow, steady breathing and muscle relaxation, as well as any other actions that are calming for you (yoga, exercise, music, keeping the mind occupied).</p>
<p><b>Improve your sense of control</b></p>	<p>Accept circumstances that cannot be changed and focus on what you can alter.            Modify your definition of a "good day" to meet the current reality of the situation.            Problem-solve and set achievable goals within the new circumstances in your life.</p>
<p><b>Remain hopeful</b></p>	<p>Look for opportunities to practise being more patient or kind with yourself, or to see the situation as an opportunity to learn or build strengths.            Celebrate successes, find things to be grateful about, and take satisfaction in completing tasks, even small ones.            Give yourself small breaks from the stress of the situation by doing something you enjoy.            Draw upon your spirituality, those who inspire you, or your personal beliefs and values.</p>

<https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/psychological-first-aid-and-skills-for-psychological-recovery/about-pfa>



# Additional Support for Schools



## What support is available to school leaders?

### Support for sad events

All schools have a **contact Educational Psychologist** who is available for queries and advice around sad events affecting members of the school community. They will be able to help with sharing resources or signposting to further information and support for bereavement.

The **Strategic Leads for Mental Health in Schools** ([SchoolMHTraining@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:SchoolMHTraining@hertfordshire.gov.uk)) continue to be available to school Mental Health Leads for queries and advice, which may include how to support children, young people and staff who have been bereaved. They are running [90-minute staff wellbeing remote group sessions](#) for school professionals. In addition, schools are encouraged to work towards the Healthy Young Minds in Herts Self review and Kite Mark for EWB and Mental Health and webinars support is currently provided, booking via [SchoolMHTraining@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:SchoolMHTraining@hertfordshire.gov.uk)

### Support for critical incidents

A critical incident is defined as a sudden and unexpected event that has the potential to overwhelm the coping mechanisms of a whole school or members of the school community. It is likely to be outside the range of normal human experience and would be markedly distressing to anyone in or directly involved with the school community. It may be the result of an accident, criminal act, illness or natural disaster that affects members of the school community, school property or both. An act of suicide or attempted suicide by a member of the school community may also constitute a critical incident.

The **Educational Psychology Service** can provide support for critical incidents which can be accessed by calling the local area number for the Educational Psychology Service:

- East Herts, Broxbourne, Welwyn and Hatfield: 01992 556998
- North Herts and Stevenage: 01438 843379
- St Albans and Dacorum: 01442 453904
- Watford, Three Rivers & Hertsmere: 01442 453043

Support will always begin with an initial phone call with a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Crisis Team at the school. The aim of the phone call is to establish facts and any additional support the school may need to enable them to cope with the particular situation. As part of this, EPs may share resources such as letter templates, general guidance, or other [organisations that offer support](#).

Sometimes the phone conversation may be sufficient to enable the school to feel confident in knowing how to proceed. If further support is required, this will be agreed during the phone call and may lead to one or more of the following:

- Support to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in planning how to meet the practical and emotional needs of the school community. This can include creating an [action plan](#) to meet the specific needs of the school and its members.
- Support to staff members to promote calming, sense of self-efficacy, connectedness and hope.
- Psychoeducation and information on anxiety management techniques to schools, families or community members to help people understand reactions to bereavement or trauma, have ways for staff and young people to manage these, and to know when additional help may be required.
- Collaborative work with school staff to enable them to provide direct support to students, e.g. through psychoeducation interventions.
- Discussing whether additional counselling support may be required for certain individuals. This can be accessed through **Safe Space**. Counselling support will not usually be provided in the immediate aftermath of an event but a few weeks later after initial emotional reactions have settled and where a need for additional support remains.

See <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/healthandsafety/critical-incident.shtml> for other HCC services and resources relevant to this.



## Crisis Support Action Plan

**Educational  
Psychology  
Service**

### Communication

<b>Task</b>	<b>Notes/Actions</b>
Contact the Family <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Who will contact?</li><li>- What are the facts?</li><li>- What do they want to be shared?</li><li>- Who are they happy to share info with?</li><li>- Religious beliefs</li></ul>	
Contact Other Key Professionals, e.g. police, social service, other professionals involved	
Share News With Staff	
Share News With Pupils <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Who needs to know?</li><li>- How should they be told?</li><li>- Script for sharing</li><li>- Guidelines for sharing/answering questions</li></ul>	
Share News With Parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Who needs to know?</li><li>- What information is to be shared?</li><li>- See letter templates</li></ul>	

Task	Notes/Actions	
Identify Pupils Requiring Additional Support (physical proximity, relationships, similar situations, SEN, EAL, religious beliefs)	Students requiring support:	Support arrangements:
Identify Staff Requiring Additional Support (vulnerable) - GP, Cruse, Carewell, Samaritans	Staff requiring support:	Support arrangements:
Practical Support Arrangements (Who, What, Where) - Safe place for children to talk to someone		
Support Strategies (coping and resilience), sharing feelings) and role for EP and other staff		
Signposting	Winston's Wish, Samaritans, Carewell, Cruse	
Long-Term Considerations, e.g. memorial, funeral attendance, memory book etc.		

Handouts with  
Further  
Information

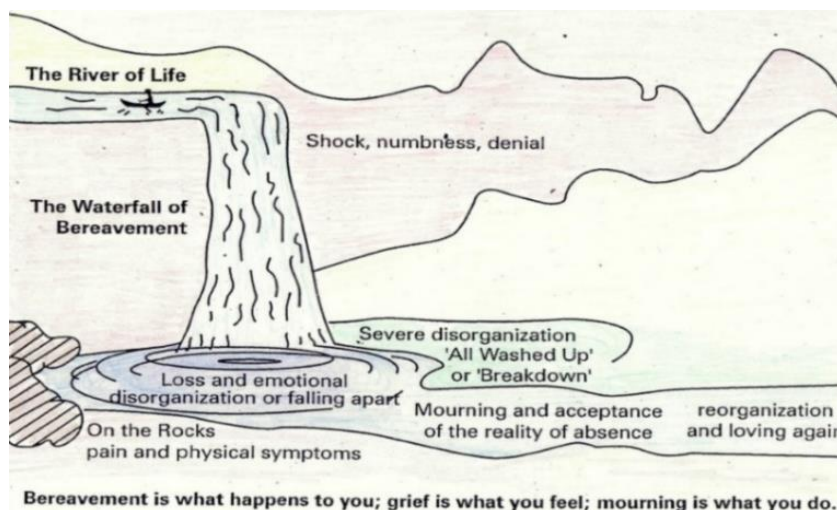
## Theories around grief

Below are some overviews of theories and analogies that may help adults and children to understand grief a little better. These can be adapted and simplified to explain to children about what they may be feeling and experiencing, but it is important to recognise that everyone's experience of grief is individual, and it doesn't follow a straightforward, linear pattern. In grief there is a disorganisation of life and thoughts, but most people are then able to reorganise their life in a new way. School leaders may want to share these theories with staff or parents to help them understand grief. Some could also be presented as part of a whole school or class assembly.

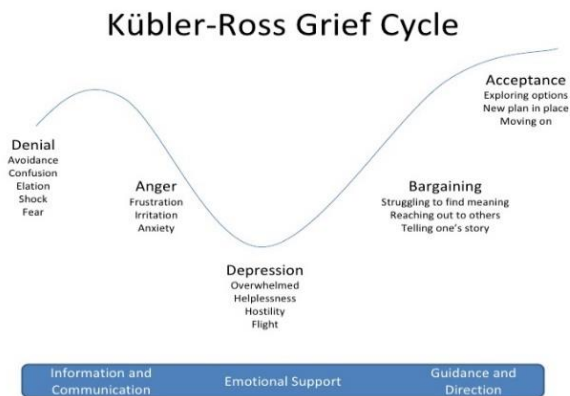
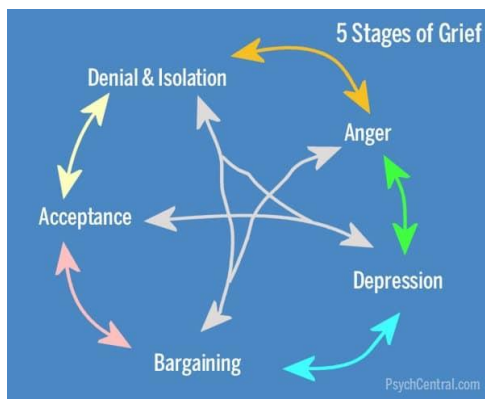
### 'The Whirlpool of Grief' (Dr Richard Wilson)

This is a metaphor that may explain some of the different emotions experienced in the grieving process.

- ❖ The River of Life represents life before bereavement. For some people, the waters prior to the death of a loved one are choppy, whereas for others they are smooth.
- ❖ The Waterfall of Bereavement is the shocking experience of loss, where powerful emotions hit alongside an overwhelming sense of sadness.
- ❖ The whirlpool at the bottom of the waterfall illustrates the emotional upheaval and disorganisation that follows, including emotions and reactions such as pain, anxiety, despair, guilt, poor sleep patterns and physical symptoms. It can feel just like being battered against the rocks.
- ❖ Being 'All Washed Up' represents being stuck in grief and finding it difficult to move forward. Some people don't allow themselves to grieve, while others are overwhelmed by their emotion and struggle with daily tasks.
- ❖ Eventually in the bereavement journey there will be a point of accepting the reality of absence; this is different for every individual and will happen at a time that is right for them.
- ❖ Finally, people reorganise and love again - embarking on a new way of life without someone is perhaps the most difficult task of all, often feeling like a betrayal. It is a way of reinvesting in life again, while holding on to the memories of that person.



## 'The Five Stages of Grief' (Kübler-Ross)



The Five Stages of Grief suggests that stages of grief and mourning are universal and are experienced by people from all walks of life, across many cultures. However, people who are grieving do not necessarily go through the stages in the same order or experience all of them.

**1. Denial & Isolation:** A normal reaction to learning about terminal illness or death of a cherished loved one is to deny the reality of the situation. People often think "This isn't happening". Denial is a common defense mechanism that buffers the immediate shock of the loss, numbing the emotions. For most people, this is a temporary response that carries them through the first wave of pain.

**2. Anger:** As the masking effects of denial begin to wear, reality and its pain re-emerge. The intense emotion is redirected and expressed instead as anger. The anger may be aimed at inanimate objects, complete strangers, medical professionals, friends or family. Anger may be directed at the person who is dying or deceased even if the rational self knows this person is not to blame. People may feel guilty for being angry, which could lead to more anger.

**3. Bargaining:** The normal reaction to feelings of helplessness is often a need to regain control through a series of "If only" statements, such as: "If only we had sought medical attention sooner..." or "If only we had tried to be a better person towards them...". This can be a defense to protect from the painful reality. Guilt often accompanies bargaining as it is based on the idea there was something that could have been done differently to help save a loved one.

**4. Depression:** One type of depression may be a reaction to practical implications relating to the loss. People may worry about the costs and burial or that in their grief, they have spent less time with others that depend on them. This phase may be eased by clarification, reassurance, some helpful cooperation and kind words. A second type of depression is more subtle and perhaps more private. It is the quiet preparation to bid our loved one farewell.

**5. Acceptance:** This phase is marked by withdrawal and calm but may not necessarily be a period of happiness. Coping with loss is ultimately a deeply personal experience; nobody can understand all the emotions that a person going is through but they can be there to help comfort. With help and time, people can begin to accept the different journey that we are on.

## 'Four Tasks of Mourning' (Worden)

Developed by William Worden, the Four Tasks of Mourning is a tool which gives a map for the journey of mourning - an understanding of what needs to happen to process bereavement. It gives some guidance on what people can do to help themselves and prevent themselves from getting "stuck" in grief. Worden is clear that these tasks will not necessarily be completed in this order as everyone's grief journey is unique.

# Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning



### ❖ To accept the reality of loss

Having information about what has happened, what is happening and having opportunities to say goodbye.

### ❖ To work through the pain of grief

Having opportunities to communicate feelings, receiving support from others and understanding it is normal to grieve in different ways.

### ❖ To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing

Recognising that grieving in some way may never finish but will become less painful and frequent; and the importance of having support during special times and having mementoes to remember the person.

### ❖ To find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life.

Having opportunities to remember and talk about the person, acknowledging new relationships and feeling like they are not replacing the person who has died.

Worden himself warns that grief does not fit into neat boxes. Bereaved people will move back and forth from one task to another during their grief.

## 'The Dual Process Model' (Stroebe and Schut)

This bereavement theory suggests that grief operates in two main ways (Loss-orientated and Restoration-orientated) and people switch back and forth between these processes as they cope with a loss. Some other grief models tend to focus on “working through” or “facing grief head-on” as the best method for “getting over grief”. However, as anyone who has ever lost someone they love knows, facing grief head on can be exhausting, and switching between this and more restoration-oriented thoughts and activities can help process information and emotions in a manageable way.



### ❖ Loss – orientated:

As people begin to recognise the reality of the loss and confront our emotions, they face “loss-orientated stressors” including thoughts, feelings and memories that cause them to focus on the loss e.g. looking at old photos and express powerful grief-related emotions including sadness, anger and loneliness. This is a natural response to loss and it is how people begin to process the reality of the loss.

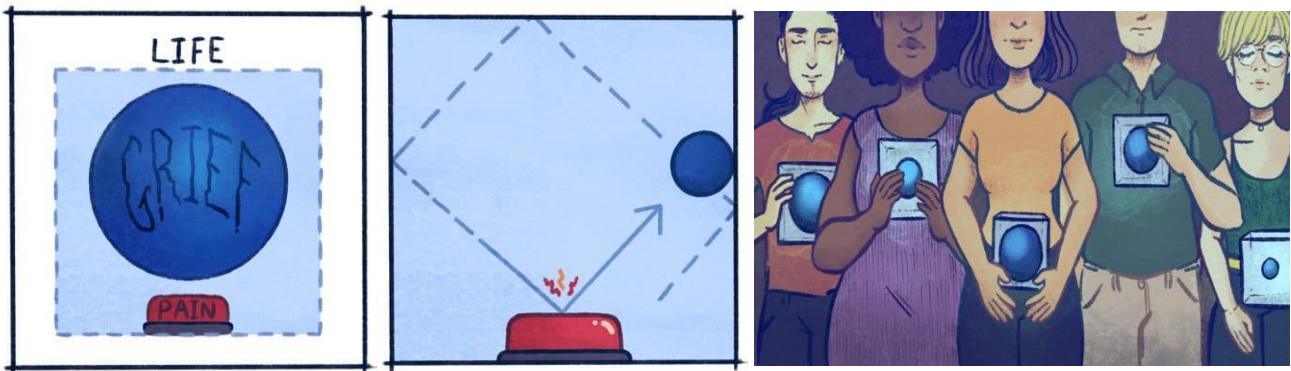
### ❖ Restoration – orientated:

During the restoration-orientated process individuals are able to focus on day-to-day tasks, learn new roles and responsibilities and engage in thoughts and activities that allow a small break from focusing on personal pain; for example, watching a funny film, cleaning the house, cooking, playing a game or going out with friends. Everyone needs this temporary relief from the emotional drain of the loss.

### ❖ Oscillation:

This is a dynamic model of grief because it recognises that individuals won't ever fully “get over” a loss. At one moment they might be focusing on new roles (restoration-orientated) but even a few hours later they might be processing the grief and emotion from the loss again (loss-orientated). With children, they may be crying one minute, and then be running around laughing in the playground with their friends the next minute. This oscillation is natural and healthy for both children and adults and should be embraced. Too much focus on one process can be harmful, especially if it means avoiding confronting the emotions of loss altogether, so there should be a balance between the two. Both children and adults alike should have opportunities to experience both loss-orientated and restoration-orientated activities.

## 'The Ball and the Box Analogy' of coping with grief



- ❖ Grief strikes each person in a different way. When we lose someone we love, that loss can hit us hard, all at once or it might not hit us until weeks, or even months have passed. The grief of the loss never leaves a person completely, the loss stays with most of us forever. However, it changes over time. It may start off as huge and overwhelming but becomes smaller as time goes on.
- ❖ Imagine your life is a box and the grief you feel is a ball inside of the box. A pain button is also inside the box. In the beginning, when the loss is so raw and new, the grief that many people feel is overwhelming and large. It's so large, in fact, that every time you move the box – moving through your everyday life – the grief ball can't help but hit the pain button. The ball rattles around the box at random, hitting the pain button every time. This is how many people initially experience loss. You can't control it and you can't stop it. The pain just keeps coming regularly, no matter what you do or how much others try and comfort you. The pain a person experiences may feel unrelenting and never-ending.
- ❖ Over time, however, the ball starts to shrink on its own. You still go through life and the grief ball still rattles around inside the box, and because the ball is smaller, it hits the pain button a little less often. You almost feel like you can go through most days without experiencing any pain. But when it does hit, it can be completely random and unexpected. For example, when you're staring at the person's name in your friends list or come across their favourite video or TV show. The pain button still delivers the same amount of pain no matter how large or small the ball is. As time passes, the ball continues to shrink, and with it, our grief for the loss experienced.
- ❖ Most people never forget the loss they experienced. But over time, the ball becomes so small that it rarely hits the pain button. When it does, it is still as painful and hard to understand as it was the very first time; we felt it, but the frequency of the hits decreases significantly. This gives a person more time in-between each hit, time used to recover and feel "normal" again. Time also allows our hearts to heal and to begin to remember the person as they were in life.
- ❖ Grief is never experienced the same way for any two people. However, it helps to know that grief impacts most of us in a way where the pain is intense at the beginning, but the frequency (if not the intensity) of the pain lessens over time.



Navigating children's grief

## Navigating Children's Grief: How to Help Following a Death

Age	Concepts and Beliefs	Difficult Emotions	Possible Behaviors	How to Help
Birth–2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No understanding of death</li> <li>Child does not have words for feelings</li> <li>Aware of the absence of loved one</li> <li>Notices changes in routine</li> <li>Notices changes in family emotions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Longing</li> <li>Misses contact, sounds, smell and sight of loved one</li> <li>Fears of being abandoned</li> <li>Anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crying</li> <li>Sickliness</li> <li>Indigestion</li> <li>Thrashing</li> <li>Rocking</li> <li>Throwing</li> <li>Sucking, biting</li> <li>Sleeplessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical contact, cuddling and reassurance</li> <li>Maintain routines</li> <li>Meet immediate physical needs</li> <li>Include the child in the mourning process when possible</li> <li>Be gentle &amp; patient</li> </ul>
3-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No understanding of permanence of death</li> <li>To be dead is to be sleeping or on a trip</li> <li>May wonder what deceased is doing</li> <li>Can understand that biological processes have stopped, but sees this as temporary and reversible</li> <li>May wonder what will happen if the other parent dies</li> <li>Magical thinking and fantasies, often worse than realities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear</li> <li>Sadness</li> <li>Insecurity</li> <li>Confusion</li> <li>Anger</li> <li>Irritable</li> <li>Agitated</li> <li>Worried</li> <li>Guilty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regressive behaviors</li> <li>Repetitive questions</li> <li>Withdrawn</li> <li>Plays out scenes of death, change &amp; feelings</li> <li>Interested in dead things</li> <li>Acts as if death never happened</li> <li>Intense dreams</li> <li>Physical complaints</li> <li>Crying</li> <li>Fighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow the child to regress</li> <li>Give physical contact</li> <li>Encourage children to play &amp; have fun</li> <li>Allow safe ways to express feeling</li> <li>Give simple &amp; truthful answers to questions</li> <li>Maintain structure and routines</li> <li>Answer repetitive questions</li> <li>Let the child cry</li> <li>Talk (reflective listening)</li> <li>Include child in family rituals &amp; mourning</li> </ul>
6-9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands that death is final</li> <li>Interested in the biology of death</li> <li>Death associated with bodily harm, mutilation &amp; decay</li> <li>His or her thoughts, actions or words caused the death</li> <li>Death is punishment</li> <li>Forming spiritual concepts</li> <li>Who will care for me if my caregiver dies</li> <li>Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sad</li> <li>Anger</li> <li>Lonely</li> <li>Withdrawn</li> <li>Worried</li> <li>Anxious</li> <li>Irritable</li> <li>Confusion</li> <li>Guilty</li> <li>Fear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regressive behaviors</li> <li>Specific questioning – looking for details</li> <li>Acts as if the death never happened</li> <li>Hides feelings</li> <li>Withdrawal</li> <li>Nightmares / sleep disturbances</li> <li>Concentration difficulties</li> <li>Declining or greatly improved grades</li> <li>Aggressive acting out</li> <li>Protective of surviving loved ones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow need to regress</li> <li>Give physical contact</li> <li>Have intentional times together</li> <li>Answer questions truthfully</li> <li>Watch for confusion</li> <li>Allow expression of feelings through verbal &amp; physical outlets</li> <li>Encourage drawing, reading, playing, art, music, dance, acting, sports</li> <li>Let child choose how to be involved in the death &amp; mourning</li> <li>Find peer support for the child</li> <li>Work with school to tailor workload</li> </ul>

Age	Concepts and Beliefs	Difficult Emotions	Behaviors	How to Help
9-12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the finality of death</li> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• His/her words, thoughts or actions caused the death</li> <li>• Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.)</li> <li>• High death awareness (death may happen again)</li> <li>• What if my caregiver dies?</li> <li>• Formulating spiritual concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional turmoil heightened by physical changes</li> <li>• Shock</li> <li>• Sad</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Confused</li> <li>• Lonely</li> <li>• Vulnerable</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Worried</li> <li>• Guilty</li> <li>• Isolated</li> <li>• Abandoned</li> <li>• Anxious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regressive behavior &amp; fluctuating moods</li> <li>• Hides feelings</li> <li>• Acts like death never happened</li> <li>• Aggressive acting out</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Nightmares &amp; sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Concentration difficulties</li> <li>• Changes in grades</li> <li>• Talks about physical aspects of illness or death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow regressive behavior &amp; offer comfort</li> <li>• Expect &amp; accept mood swings</li> <li>• Encourage expression of feelings through writing, art, music, sports, etc.</li> <li>• Find peer support groups</li> <li>• Be available to listen and talk</li> <li>• Answer questions truthfully</li> <li>• Offer physical contact</li> <li>• Give choices about involvement in death &amp; mourning</li> </ul>
12 years and up (teenagers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the finality &amp; universality of death</li> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• His/her words, thoughts or actions caused the death</li> <li>• Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.)</li> <li>• High death awareness (death may happen again)</li> <li>• May sense own impending death</li> <li>• I need to be in control of feelings</li> <li>• If I show my feelings, I will be weak</li> <li>• Internal conflict about dependence &amp; desiring independence</li> <li>• May utilize spiritual concepts to cope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly self-conscious about being different due to grief</li> <li>• Shock</li> <li>• Sad</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Confused</li> <li>• Lonely</li> <li>• Vulnerable</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Worried</li> <li>• Guilty</li> <li>• Isolated</li> <li>• Abandoned</li> <li>• Anxious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasional regressive behavior</li> <li>• Mood swings</li> <li>• Hides feelings</li> <li>• Acts like death never happened</li> <li>• Acts out role confusion</li> <li>• Aggressive acting out</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Nightmares &amp; sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Concentration difficulties</li> <li>• Changes in grades</li> <li>• Impulsive &amp; high risk behavior</li> <li>• Changes in peer groups</li> <li>• Fighting, screaming, arguing</li> <li>• Changes in eating patterns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow regressive behavior &amp; offer comfort</li> <li>• Expect &amp; accept mood swings</li> <li>• Allow hidden feelings unless there is risk of harm</li> <li>• Encourage expression of feelings through writing, art, music, sports, etc.</li> <li>• Support relationships with understanding adults</li> <li>• Be available to listen and talk</li> <li>• Answer questions truthfully</li> <li>• Share your grief</li> <li>• Watch for high risk behavior</li> <li>• Find peer support groups</li> <li>• Offer physical contact</li> <li>• Allow choices about involvement in death &amp; mourning</li> </ul>

# Additional Resources and Signposting

## Additional resources

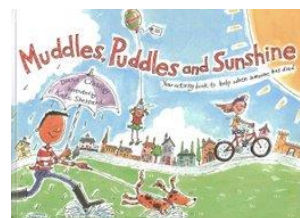
### Books

Reading books is a good way of introducing children and young people to the topic of death and loss. Below are a few suggested books for children and young people to read to help them understand and process their own grief. There are also some suggested books for teenagers and adults who have been bereaved, as well as books for adults who are helping support bereaved children and young people. This is not an exhaustive list by any means, but it includes some story books, information books and activity books for school staff and the young person to decide what will be most useful and appropriate. **For a full list of books for different ages, please can contact the Educational Psychology Service.**

Books for primary aged children:

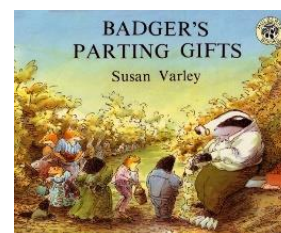
#### *Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine (Diana Crossley)*

This practical and sensitive activity book offers a structure and an outlet for the many difficult feelings which inevitably follow when someone dies. It aims to help children make sense of their experience by reflecting on the different aspects of their grief whilst finding a balance between remembering and having fun and will become a keepsake in the future. It reinforces the fact that even though someone has died it is still okay to have fun. Activities include: answering questions about the person that has died e.g. when their birthday was, what were they good at, what was their favourite food etc, a recipe for biscuit feeling faces, instructions to make a feelings volcano etc.



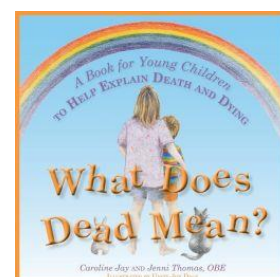
#### *Badger's Parting Gifts (Susan Varley)*

A story book about old badger dying and his friends thinking they will be sad forever. But gradually they are able to remember Badger with joy and to treasure the gifts he left behind for every one of his friends such as teaching frog how to ice-skate and mole how to cut a chain of moles out from a piece of folded paper. This sensitive book can help children come to terms with deaths of those they love.



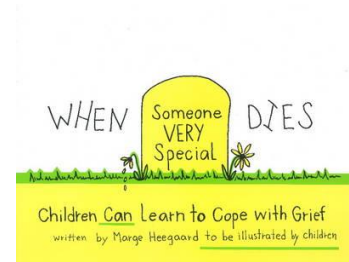
#### *What Does Dead Mean? (Caroline Jay and Jenny Thomas)*

This illustrated book guides children gently through 17 of the 'big' questions they often ask about death and dying. Questions such as 'Is being dead like sleeping?', 'Why do people have to die?' and 'Where do dead people go?' are answered simply, truthfully and clearly to help adults explain to children what happens when someone dies.



*When someone very special dies. Children can learn to cope with grief (Marge Heegaard)*

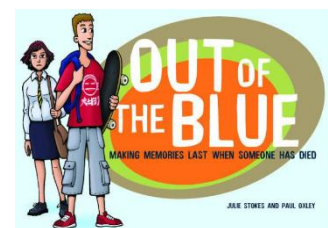
This book was designed to teach basic concepts of death and help children understand and express the many feelings they have when someone special dies. Communication and coping skills are developed as they illustrate their books with their personal story. Activities include drawing on a body map where you feel certain feelings, drawing a picture of the person that has died and drawing or writing a favourite memory etc.



Books for secondary aged children

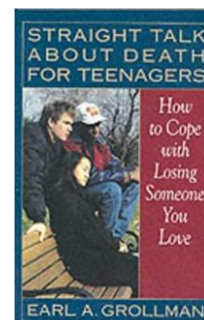
*Out of the blue: Making Memories Last When Someone Has Died (Julie Stokes and Paul Oxley)*

This book has been written and designed specifically for teenagers with aim of supporting them through their bereavement using a range of activities. Narrated throughout by teenagers' words and stories, the book talks openly about the real feelings they may struggle with when someone important in their life dies. The activities in the book allow those feelings to be worked through and safely explored. Each character in the book reinforces the message that "I'm not alone". Out of the Blue can be completed by a teenager on their own or with the help of a family member or appropriate professional.



*Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love (Earl A. Grollman)*

This book was written after the author spoke to thousands of teenagers and found they often felt forgotten after someone has died. Written in short, clear sentences that are easy to read, it covers feelings, different types of death and the future. This book gives the reader many options of what can happen, how s/he may feel, giving advice and reassuring readers grief is normal.



Books for adults who have been bereaved

*Living with Bereavement (Alex James)*

This help book is easy to read and has a nice balance of examples woven into the chapters. Bereavement is so unique and the many case studies and examples discussed here help you to understand bereavement and your own feelings better.

*On Grief and Grieving - Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*  
(Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler)

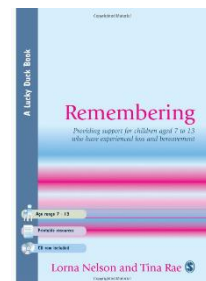
Stemming from their many years working in the hospice and bereavement environments and follows on from a number of other books including 'On Death and Dying' in which Elisabeth identified the five stages of bereavement.

*Living with Grief* (Tony Lake)

A sympathetic book describing all the different aspects of grief following bereavement and how people can work their way through and come to terms with it.

Books for adults who are supporting bereaved children and young people

- Remembering: Providing Support for Children Aged 7 to 13 Who Have Experienced Loss and Bereavement (Lorna Patricia Nelson and Tina Rae)
- Talking About Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child (Earl A. Grollman)
- Then, Now and Always: Supporting Children as They Journey Through Grief: A Guide for Practitioners ([Winston's Wish](#))
- A child's grief: Supporting a child when someone in their family has died (Winston's Wish)
- Beyond the rough rock: Supporting a child who has been bereaved through suicide (Winston's Wish)
- You just don't understand: Supporting bereaved teenagers (Winston's Wish)

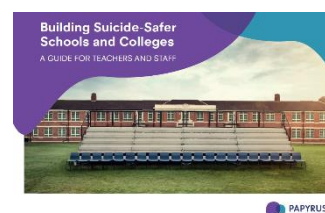


Resources to help talk with children about death

- [Sudden](#) – an organisation that provides support after a sudden death has a free resource for children that can help provide clear, accurate and age appropriate information.
- [Good Grief: What will we tell the kids?](#) Online PDF guide

School Guides for suicide prevention and postvention

**Papyrus** [Building Suicide Safer Schools and Colleges](https://papyrus-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/400734-Schools-guide-PAPYRUS.pdf) and <https://papyrus-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/400734-Schools-guide-PAPYRUS.pdf>

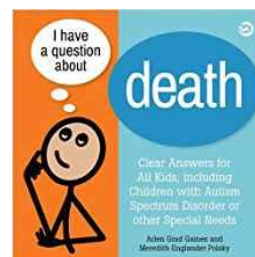


**Samaritans:** [Help When We Needed It Most](#) - how to prepare for and respond to a suspected suicide in schools

SEND resources

*I have a question about death (Arlen Grad Gaines and Meredith Englander Polsky)*

This book includes lots of questions about death in an Autism friendly manner with widget style pictures to support the text. One half of the book has longer text and the other half uses pictures along with shorter, more direct text. Questions include “What happens to people when they die?” “When someone dies what does it feel like for the people who are still alive?”.



Websites with resources

- <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx>
- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-library/bereavement-and-grief-resources>
- <http://www.apictureofhealth.southwest.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/mental-health/feelings/SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES COPING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS.pdf>

Other resources you can access

The Educational Psychology Service has a bank of resources for specific situations. Please contact the EP linked to your school for further information or to request advice or support for a specific situation.

## Organisations offering bereavement support



### Pre-bereavement

- Macmillan cancer support: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)
- Rip rap (when a parent has cancer): [www.riprap.org.uk](http://www.riprap.org.uk)
- Marie Curie for those with a terminal illness: <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support>

### Post-bereavement

- Cruse Bereavement Care: resources and advice for families and professionals
  - Website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
  - Helpline: 0808 808 1677.
- Winston's Wish: resources and advice for families and professionals
  - Website: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)
  - Helpline: 08088 020 021.
- The Childhood Bereavement Network: resources and advice for families and professionals
  - Website: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>
- Child Bereavement UK:
  - Website: [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)
  - Helpline: 0800 02 888 40.
- Child Death Helpline: for anyone affected by the death of a child of any age (pre-birth to adult)
  - Website: <http://childdeathhelpline.org.uk/>
  - Helpline: 0800 282 986.
- Grief Encounter (North West London): information and support for families
  - Website: [www.griefencounter.org.uk](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk)
  - Helpline: 0808 802 0111.
- Grief Recovery: support for families and information for professionals
  - Website: <https://www.griefrecoverymethod.co.uk/>
  - Helpline: 01234 862218.
- Supporting Children After Sudden Death: support for families and information for professionals
  - Website: <http://www.suddendeath.org/>
  - Helpline for families: 0800 121 6510.
- SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide): support for those affected by deaths by suicide and advice for professionals
  - Website: <https://uksobs.org/>
  - Helpline: 0300 111 5065.
- Marie Curie: support for families and advice

- Website: <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/>
- Helpline: 0800 090 2309
- Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service: for Jewish people
  - Website: <https://jbcs.org.uk/>
  - Helpline: 020 8951 3881.
- Quaker Social Action Down to Earth: support for families to afford funerals and practical advice for after a death
  - Website: <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/helping-funerals/down-earth>
  - Helpline: 020 8983 5055.

For children and young people specifically

- Hope Again: <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/> Website run by Cruse, for peer support and with a free and confidential telephone line (0808 808 1677) available Monday to Friday, 9:30-5pm
- For teens: [www.hope2makesense.org.uk](http://www.hope2makesense.org.uk)
- [Project Eileen](#) – a project to help young people tackle the topic of death
- The Compassionate Friends <https://www.tcf.org.uk/> Support for children of any age

## Local support

These services offer **targeted** bereavement support for children. Other local counselling services may offer support as part of their generic service.

- Cruse Bereavement Care Hertfordshire (<https://www.cruse-hertfordshire.org.uk/>): No charge for services
  - 1:1 support post-bereavement in any circumstances- subject to capacity; group workshops
    - Adult helpline: 01707278389
    - Child and young people's helpline: 01707264293.
- Garden House Hospice Care (North Herts and Stevenage): No charge for services
  - Family support, pre- and post-bereavement support for patients' families
  - 1:1 support post bereavement for wider community.
- Isabel Hospice (East Herts): No charge for services
  - Family support pre- and post-bereavement support for patients' families
  - Post bereavement support for wider community, 1:1 and groups.
- Hospice of St Francis (West/South Herts): No charge for services
  - Pre- and post-bereavement support for patients' families
  - Post bereavement support for wider community, 1:1 and groups.
- Keetch Hospice Care (County wide): No charge for services
  - Family support for siblings of children connected to hospice.

- Rennie Grove Hospice Care (St Albans, West Herts and Bucks): No charge for services
  - Family pre- and post-bereavement support for patients' families.
- Peace Hospice Care (Watford and South Herts): No charge for services
  - Family support pre-bereavement for patients' families
  - Open group workshops post bereavement.
- St Albans Bereavement Network (St Albans area): Charges apply
  - Post-bereavement support for children.
- Stand-by-me Children's Bereavement Service (North Herts and Stevenage):
  - Post bereavement group programmes: No charge for services
  - School consultation and support programme: Some charges apply.
- Step2 NHS Early Intervention CAMHS (county-wide)
  - Professional referral; limited intervention for persistent mental health difficulties linked to bereavement.