

## Useful Support Material

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Grief in The Family DVD/  
Video Narrated by Michael  
Rosen  
[www.leedsanimation.org.uk](http://www.leedsanimation.org.uk)

Small Creature Storybook,  
Audio CD and Activity Pack  
Free to order from the  
British Heart Foundation  
online shop [https://  
www.bhf.org.uk/  
publications/children-and-  
young-people/the-small-  
creature---for-bereaved-  
children](https://www.bhf.org.uk/publications/children-and-young-people/the-small-creature---for-bereaved-children)

A Child's Grief; Supporting A  
Child When Someone In  
Their Family Has Died  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)  
ISBN 13: 978-0953912360

## Where To Find Help

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[winstonswish.org.uk](http://winstonswish.org.uk) supports children,  
young people and their families after the  
death of a parent or sibling  
Helpline: 08088 020 021

[hopeagain.org.uk](http://hopeagain.org.uk) is the youth website of  
CRUSE Bereavement Care.  
Helpline: 0808 808 1677

The Butterfly Service  
[theprinceandprincessofwaleshos-  
pice.org.uk](http://theprinceandprincessofwaleshospice.org.uk)  
0141 429 5599

### Other Useful Websites

[www.crusescotland.org.uk](http://www.crusescotland.org.uk)  
[www.littlewebsite.org](http://www.littlewebsite.org)  
[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)  
[www.petalsupport.com](http://www.petalsupport.com)  
<http://uk-sobs.org.uk>  
[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)  
[www.brighteststar.org.uk/](http://www.brighteststar.org.uk/)  
<http://mbss.org.uk/>

**If you are concerned about how your child is  
coping with a bereavement please contact your  
child's GP or speak to someone at school or  
nursery**



## Loss, Grief & Bereavement

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### A Guide for Parents/carers



The Prince & Princess  
of Wales Hospice



## When Children Are Bereaved

Children vary markedly in their reactions. Many can show obvious outward distress, some hardly appear to react to all, at least on the surface. Sometimes children don't know how to react because they don't fully understand what has happened.



This information is to help you, as a parent, understand and support your child in coping with a stressful event.

Although children of varying ages do have differences in their reactions, there are some common factors.

You should:

- ◇ Share information at children's level of understanding
- ◇ Give time, attention and listen
- ◇ Allow children to participate in rituals

## Emotional Reactions

*Fear Anger Anxiety Guilt Sadness*  
*Withdrawal Denial Regression*

The above can all be normal reactions. The way in which children make sense of death and grief is related to their stage of development.



**0-2 years:** infants are not able to understand about death but will experience the loss as a separation. They may become withdrawn with increased crying. The emotional state of people around them can impact, so normality and routine are very important at this stage.

**2-5 years:** Death is seen as reversible by children of this age. They may also think that something they said or did caused the person to die. At this stage, children are greatly affected by the sadness of family members. Reactions can include nightmares, sleeping and/or eating disturbances, violent play.

**6-12 years:** Children want to see death as reversible but are beginning to understand it as final. Behaviour may include immature reactions or outwardly difficult behaviour. Physical manifestations of emotional pain may also develop eg headaches, sore tummy.

**13-18 years:** Young people at this age usually have an adult concept of death. Reactions may include anger, depression and non-compliance. The loss may cause them to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life, or they may not want to reflect, and hide their feelings.

## Ways To Help

As a role model, how you react as a parent can make a difference to how your child reacts.

- ◇ Maintain usual routine as far as possible.
- ◇ Be honest. Answer questions as truthfully as you can and try to find brief and simple answers that they can understand.
- ◇ Listen. Try to understand what children are saying and, just as importantly, what they are not saying.
- ◇ Don't wait until children start to cry before giving a hug. Physical contact is extremely important at this time and sometimes says a lot more than words.
- ◇ Talk in language they can understand. Avoid terms like 'gone to sleep', 'resting', 'gone away' to explain death. This can cause further confusion and anxiety.
- ◇ Allow children to be silent, but don't discourage expressions of emotion. Let them know it is okay to cry.
- ◇ Don't force children to take part in anything they don't want to.
- ◇ Let children know it is okay to laugh and have fun as well as to grieve.
- ◇ Remember :Talk about the person who has died.