

Books and Resources

For Families Supporting Children of All Ages

A Child's Grief. Supporting a child when someone in their family has died.

Stubbs and Stokes

Fiction for Preschool and Primary Children

Missing Mummy

Rebecca Cobb

Badger's Parting Gifts

Susan Varley

Fiction for Older Children

Ways to Live Forever

Sally Nichols

For Families Supporting Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

How People with Autism Grieve and How to Help: An Insider Handbook

Deborah Lipsky

Where To Find Help

winstonswish.org.uk supports children, young people and their families after the death of a parent or sibling
08088 020 021

hopeagain.org.uk is the youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care and provides support, advice and information
0808 808 1677

theprinceandprincessofwaleshospice.org.uk provides support and advice to people who have a life-limiting illness and their families through the Butterfly Service
0141 429 5599

childbereavementuk.org provides bereavement information and support including a Child Bereavement App
0800 028 8840

Other Useful Websites

www.richmondshope.org.uk
www.childbereavementnetwork.org.uk
www.petalsupport.com
http://uk-sobs.org.uk
www.brighteststar.org.uk/
www.childline.org.uk
http://mbss.org.uk/



HEALTHIER MINDS
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Bereavement, Loss and Grief

A Guide for Parents and Carers



The Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice

East Renfrewshire
COUNCIL

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 They may become withdrawn with increased crying.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 but allow them to be part of funerals and memorials.
- ◊ Let children know it is okay to laugh and have fun as well as to grieve.
- ◊ Find ways to remember the person by talking or creative means—art, photography, songs, writing letters, memory books or boxes, planting trees or flowers

