



Loss, Grief & Bereavement

A Guide for Parents/carers



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 They may become withdrawn with increased crying.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.

The 'Give Us a Break!' loss and grief programme for schools:

- ◊ Aimed at school aged children who are struggling with loss and/or grief
- ◊ An 8 week programme designed by educational psychologists with support from Macmillan Cancer support
- ◊ Utilises group work, discussion and reflection amongst peer groups supported by trained facilitators
- ◊ Supports children in managing the emotional consequences of loss and/or grief
- ◊ Flexible, solution-focused theoretical framework
- ◊ Helps build resilience and supports children in identifying and practising coping strategies
- ◊ Promotes healthy, shared discussion about loss and grief and the uniqueness of each experience

Contact your child's school for more information



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.

Useful Support Material

Grief in The Family DVD/
Video Narrated by Michael
Rosen
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
ISBN 13: 978-0953912360

Death: What's Happening?
Karen-Bryant Molee
Amazon
ISBN 13: 978-0750213790

Where To Find Help

winstonswish.org.uk supports chil-
dren, young people and their families
after the death of a parent or sibling
Helpline:08088 020 021

hopeagain.org.uk is the youth web-
site of CRUSE Bereavement Care.
Helpline: 0808 808 1677

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

Other Useful Websites

www.crusescotland.org.uk
www.littlewebsite.org
www.childbereavementuk.org
www.petalsupport.com
<http://uk-sobs.org.uk>
www.childbereavementuk.org
www.brighteststar.org.uk/
<http://mbss.org.uk/>
<https://slcpsych.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