Carnegie Primary School



Supporting Children Through a Period of Change or Loss Toolkit



**What is in this toolkit?**

This toolkit provides a range of suggested supports to help children with Change and Loss

The toolkit can be used for reference to support at home.

If you have any further questions, please get in touch with our school Support for Learning team.

**What do we mean by Change and Loss?**

We all experience change and loss throughout our lives. These can be significant changes such as the separation of our parents or the death of someone close to us. The can also be smaller changes which can have a big impact on us such as changing school or moving home.

We all deal with change and loss differently. For some children dealing with change or loss is relatively easy, for others it is more challenging. This can be particularly challenging for children who have other additional support needs.

‘Underestimating the vulnerability of the grieving child actually prolongs the child’s pain and increases the possibility that the effects of the loss will persist’ *Bruce Perry, Early Childhood Today.*

**What practical supports can I give my child?**

* Reassure your child and provide comfort to them, allow them to ask questions and answer them as honestly as you can.
* Validate their emotions, name the emotion if your child is younger and explain it is ok to feel the way they feel. Explain that the feelings might be big just now but will get better.
* Try to stick to as normal a routine as possible, give your child a chance to adjust by explaining any changes before they happen.
* Give your child an avenue to express themselves, this might be through conversation but could also be through drawings or art work.
* Take time to talk about positive memories around the change or loss, write these down, draw pictures or make something that will help remind your child of happy experiences.
* Talk with your child about things they can do to look after themselves, listening to music, playing a favourite game, reading a book, taking a walk, caring for a pet or talking to someone who is important.
* Spend time together doing something enjoyable, take pictures and uses these to illustrate that even after the change or loss there will be good times.

**How can I speak to my child about death and help them deal with this change?**

* Be honest about what has happened, use language such as death or died and try to avoid more ambiguous terms (passed away, slipped away, gone to sleep) as this can add to confusion.
* Using simple biological explanation can help; they have stopped breathing, their heart stop etc.
* Explain and validate your child’s emotions, share how it makes you feel so they know they are not alone.
* Answer their questions if you can
* Practical things can help; make something for the person who has been lost or draw a picture for them that can be used to say goodbye.
* Have something made such as a teddy out of clothing belonging to the person.
* Create a poster of pictures with the person which shows happy memories of times together
* Make plans for the future and keep routines going.
* Talk about the person and the things you remember about them.
* Make a worry pet or buy a worry doll that can take your child’s worries from them when they tell it their worries.

**What other support is available?**

* Speak to your child’s teacher it can be helpful for your child teacher to speak with them.
* Ask to speak to the support for learning team as there are a range of supports available in school such as emotion works, 5 ways to wellbeing, kitbag, Seasons for Growth and Art resilience.
* Call the Child Bereavement UK helpline 0800 02 888 40 or access support from their website [Explaining death and dying to children | Child Bereavement UK](https://www.childbereavementuk.org/explaining-death-and-dying-to-children#sec1)
* Access resources on [Seasons for Growth Scotland](http://www.seasonsforgrowth.org.uk/) about the seasons programme