

## Loss, Change and Bereavement Guidance in light of COVID-19

The current restrictions are having an ever increasing impact on our lives and feelings of loss and grief are likely to be heightened at this time. In the coming months, more children and young people are likely to have experienced bereavement through the effects of the coronavirus and along with individual experiences of personal loss and resulting losses in terms of rituals such as funerals, in addition people may also experience symbolic losses such as loss of job, income, loss of role, daily routine, freedom, physical connection, loss of coping skills, safety, normality, hope and opportunities. The response from any service should be measured and at times of loss and change good support from family/extended family and those who know the child/young person well is most appropriate and supports healthy outcomes for children/young people (Perry, 2014). Parents/carers/key adults who are attuned to the child will ultimately help support them through the situation. Being bereaved can be an extremely lonely time and talking with those we rely on and trust is one of the most helpful ways to cope. At this current time, physical isolation may make feelings of loss even more intense however it is important to remember while we are physically distant this does not mean we can't be still be emotionally connected. At these times and in fact at all times, social support is essential for our wellbeing (Waldinger, 2015) so while it is important that we engage in physical distancing we should also maintain social connectedness. Whether related to COVID-19 or not, a bereavement during this time will create new challenges and it is important to find alternative ways to grieve and be with those closest to us that allow our social connectedness to be maintained.

The GCC/GGC NHS [‘A Whole School Approach to Loss and Bereavement’](#) resource contains relevant information that can continue to be helpful at this time. However, as a result of the nature of the current health situation it has been identified that some of the resources we would usually share with establishments, agencies and families may not provide specific enough advice in relation to deaths from COVID-19. In particular there are issues around:

- [Staying connected when someone is seriously ill](#)
- [Not being able to attend a funeral of a loved one](#)
- [Increased anxiety about the virus and coping with talk of death and dying](#)
- [Talking to children about illness](#)
- [Self care and wellbeing during times of uncertainty](#)
- [Living with worry amidst global anxiety and uncertainty](#)

Grief is not a linear process and reaching a place of acceptance takes time. If we think of grief as cyclic like the seasons then there's no definite end and some days will feel better than others. The seasons metaphor can be a way of connecting all of us during these confusing and difficult times right now. This metaphor is linked to the Seasons for Growth Programme (grief education programme) and William Worden's work on coping with loss/change.

GPS fully supports the training and delivery of this targeted grief education programme and will be offering virtual re-connectors to trained companions in the city during this period.

<http://www.seasonsforgrowth.org.uk/>

## Further helpful sources of information are listed below.

### Child Bereavement Network

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>

Many bereaved children are left #LostForWords by death, others simply haven't enough words to express themselves. This resource from CBN shares supportive words and emojis from children who know how it feels.

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/media/97729/Lost-For-Words-Benjamin-Brooks-Dutton.pdf>

**Child Bereavement UK** – they have made a short video about supporting bereaved children through difficult times. Their helpline continues on 0800 02 888 40 and they continue to respond to emails on [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org). You can also use live chat functions via their website <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children>

**Winston's Wish** – information, advice and guidance on supporting bereaved children. Their Freephone national helpline (08088 020 021), along with ASK email ([ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org)), Crisis Messenger and online chat services remain available. <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

**Cruse Bereavement Care** – lots of resources on how bereavement and grief may be affected by this pandemic. It covers some of the different situations and emotions bereaved people may have to deal with. The Scottish branch helpline remains open (calls cost 5p per minute) 0845 6002227 <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

**Nelsons Journey** – specific guidance for families around funerals <http://www.nelsonsjourney.org.uk/covid-19-funeralguidance/>

**Young Scot** – advice to young people written in partnership with St Columba's Hospice Care <https://young.scot/get-informed/national/grief-bereavement-and-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

**The Invisible String** by Patrice Karst is a children's book that describes the connections between people, even at a distance. Below is a reading of the book <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cO2LBbBtAI>

**Beyond Words**: when someone dies from corona virus: a guide for families and carers. <https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/downloads-shop/when-someone-dies-from-coronavirus>

**When People Die**: Stories from Young People is a comic that tells numerous stories about death and resilience from a group of young people. <https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/publications/when-people-die-stories-from-young-people>

**How to be Harry's Friend**: read by Gavin Mitchell of Still Game. This is a story made by the BBC and read by Gavin Mitchell of Still Game about a young boy called Isaac can help his friend Harry when his mum dies <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0824x6v>