



# Picking up the Pieces

A Guide for Supporting  
Children in Grief



**good grief**

blue sky tomorrow

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Good Grief Ltd is an Australian owned, not-for-profit organisation committed to relieving suffering and bringing hope to those affected by grief. It is a ministry of the Sisters of St Joseph.

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## Who is Picking up the Pieces for?

Children may experience grief in relation to bereavement, family break-up or other significant change or loss.

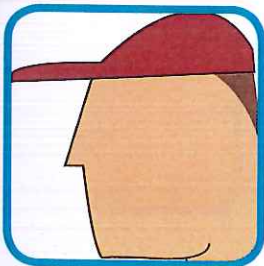
This booklet is directed towards:

1. A grieving parent who is supporting their grieving child.
2. Parents who may be in a situation where their child is experiencing grief that the parent does not feel as acutely, eg death within the school community.
3. Adults who are in a caring or leadership role, eg: teachers, carers, sport coaches, health care professionals, and others.

This information will help explain any behavioural changes and give strategies for you to support the child within your role, responding to them in a way that rebuilds resilience.

We hope that this knowledge will strengthen you to be supportive and compassionate in your care and understanding of the child, helping them deal with their loss and the challenges it brings.

If you, as an adult, feel you need further support in dealing with your own grief and loss experiences, please contact Good Grief Ltd. to inquire about the Seasons for Growth program for Adults.



## What does Picking up the Pieces offer?

- An outline of child developmental stages, particularly as they relate to grieving a death, or the divorce or separation of parents
- An outline of behavioural expressions common to each stage and age
- Practical ideas on how you might accompany a child through a difficult time
- An additional section on helping adolescents who have experienced the suicide or tragic death of a peer

## What are the Guiding Principles for Working with Children in Grief?

- Change is inevitable.
- Grief is a natural response to a loss.
- Grieving is unique to each individual.
- Loss and grief are a normal and valuable part of life.
- Social support is important in dealing with grief in a healthy, life-promoting way.
- Skills can be learnt to build resilience and enhance coping strategies.



## What are Grief and Resilience?

At different stages of development, we respond to grief and loss in different ways. This is due to changes that occur in the way we think and understand our world.

If children are to become resilient to experiences of loss they need three things:

- Truthful but factual information.
- Inclusion in important aspects of the dying or grieving process and in rites of passage.
- Loving support.

In many ways children are more vulnerable in times of grief and loss than adults because, while they have the same sadness, fear, anger, guilt and other emotions as adults, they have less understanding of what is happening. Children are also at risk of blaming themselves in some way and they may not always have the language to deal with their feelings.

For this reason adults need to understand that a child acting out or being “naughty” is a normal way of protesting against their loss of security, be it the loss of a loved one or their parents’ relationship.

It is important to remember that for most of the time children are busy with the normal activities of their lives and that they process grief intermittently.<sup>1</sup>



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## Categories of Loss

Just about any change can bring a sense of loss, even if it also brings excitement and positive experiences.

The sense of loss can be felt in response to:

Moving house	Leaving school
Changing schools	Changing class
Parents splitting up	Loss of a special possession
Death of a pet	Injury or illness
Losing a job	Friends fighting
Being left off the team or not invited	Death of a family member or friend
Family members leaving the country or town	Other changes



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# How Do Children Respond to Grief?

They may feel a mix of different emotions...

## Common Grief Reactions

Numb	Hurt	Disappointed
Anxious	Dejected	Jealous
Afraid	Powerless	Delighted
Annoyed	Guilty	Frustrated
Hopeful	Betrayed	Relieved
Dismayed	Unloved	Defiant
Ashamed	Lonely	Thrilled
Determined	Upset	Proud
Unwanted	Unappreciated	Joyful
Excited	Amazed	Peaceful
Angry	Surprised	Sad
Abandoned	Dis-empowered	Rejected

There may also be physical reactions or bodily sensations...

## Sensations

Giddiness	Sweaty Palms	Tension
Nausea	Headaches	Headaches
Butterflies	Breathlessness	Weakness
Dry Mouth	Racing Heart	And others





They may behave differently or do things they haven't done since they were younger...

### Behaviours

Waking in the night	Difficulty getting off to sleep
Not eating	Wanting to cling to things
Wanting to eat all the time	Avoiding people
Being scared of being left alone	Day dreaming happy endings
Trying to be helpful all the time	Giving up favourite activities
Telling lies	Yelling or fighting
Wanting to hide the truth	Crying
Being grumpy or mean	Needing reassurance
Being scared of the dark	Nightmares
Complaining	Acting up
And others	

### Thoughts

It must be my fault	Nobody wants me
I am not important	Nobody understands me
I am not loved	I did the wrong thing
If only I hadn't done or said...	I am different from everyone else
And others	

Underlying thoughts may only come to the surface where there is a trusting relationship between child and listener.

## Developmental Stages

The following section describes the characteristics of grieving children at each stage of their development and outlines possible responses that they may exhibit to the loss.

These characteristics are listed as:

- **Developmental Tasks** - the necessary learnings for that age.
- **Developmental Needs** - the child's requirements for wellbeing and further development.

There are also accompanying resilience builders provided for each response.



## Birth to Two Years

Children are able to distinguish between strangers and 'connected' adults at an early stage. They show an awareness of the absence of a loved adult.

### Developmental Tasks

- Developing trust in and a secure relationship with one or more caregivers
- Towards the end of this stage, developing a healthy sense of independence and the ability to "stand on their own feet"

### Developmental Needs

- Quality and consistent care by loving adults.
- Trust that their basic needs will be met.

This will instil a sense of hope. A healthy attachment to one or more adults is the basis for all future relationships. By allowing young children to make simple choices and to explore and experiment in a safe and stimulating environment, they develop a sense of self-control and self-confidence. This leads to a lasting "sense of good will and pride".<sup>2</sup>





Possible Responses To Loss	Resilience Builders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failure to thrive i.e feeding, sleeping and digestive disturbances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A consistent and loving caregiver who responds promptly to crying and recognises the needs of the child, who soothes the child frequently, makes eye contact and talks and sings to reassure</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of responsiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a consistent, secure and predictable routine of feeding and settling to sleep</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excessive crying, irritability, nightmares</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above</li> <li>Respond and reassure promptly</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extreme reaction to change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide familiar objects in a new situation such as a blanket, a cuddly and/or a favourite toy, a pacifier</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stranger anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide reassurance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fearful reaction to non-residential parent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where possible this parent to make regular contact.</li> <li>PLEASE NOTE: Be alert to any child protection issues, which override the above principle. Abuse may take the form of physical, sexual, financial, psychological or emotional abuse. Children's expressed concerns and their safety must be taken seriously.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Searching for missing loved one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide reassurance, security and simple explanation of loss and the change that is now the new reality</li> </ul>

## Three to Five Years

### Developmental Tasks:

- Establishing a sense of initiative

This is described as “the quality of undertaking, planning and attacking a task for the sake of being active and on the move.”<sup>3</sup>

Children of this age have great curiosity about their world. They are becoming independent in routine tasks and they have a concept of past, present and future. A sense of humour is developing, along with language skills and they enjoy pretend and dress-up play. Children identify themselves with the same-sex parent. They are learning to share and co-operate.

Death is not seen as permanent or as something that will happen to everyone, although children feel loss and sadness.

### Developmental Needs:

- To be cared for in an environment that enables the development of a healthy sense of initiative by encouraging independence and joint activities with other children.
- To ideally have contact with the same-sex parent or other trusted same-sex adult.
- To be reassured that they are loved.



**Possible Responses To Loss****Resilience Builders**

- Regression to an earlier stage eg wanting to be fed, bed wetting, tantrums
- Refusing food
- Waking at night, fear of the dark

- Provide a consistent routine
- Accept with understanding the difficulties the child is experiencing
- Special foods, outings
- Have a night light, play soothing music

- Irritability or confusion

- Talk about the loved one. Answer questions honestly. Find out what the child understands
- Have photographs of the absent person

- Not always able to express and explore their feelings of loss

- Provide paint, play dough and other materials to express their feelings symbolically

- May become preoccupied with play involving being dead, or burial rituals

- Allow the child opportunities for this kind of play, which can be constructive and helpful
- Explain to the child that, with death, life stops, the dead person cannot return, that the physical body no longer works
- Explain rituals of mourning and loss to the child and give them a choice in being involved

- Being too good, over compliant

- Talk about their feelings
- Reassure them of your unconditional love

- May become aggressive towards other children, or passive and withdrawn

- Talk about feelings
- Use appropriate children's stories that give good role models
- Provide regular contact with other children in a stimulating play environment

- May become fearful of losing the other parent

- Reassure
- Help the child to develop relationships with other supportive adults
- Encourage the non-residential parent to maintain close contact



## Five to Eight Years

### Developmental Tasks:

- Learning to be in control of their behaviour
- Developing peer relationships
- Continuing to identify with same-sex parent or caregiver

Towards the end of this stage children become absorbed in refining skills such as ball games, school work and playing with and producing things. They need to be involved in many activities which will develop their sense of initiative and industry.

There is still a possibility of 'magical thinking', for example, that parents will get back together or that the dead parent will return. Children of this age may have fears that life for them may not continue. Death may be conceived as 'a bogeyman, a ghost or an angel who comes to take people away'.<sup>4</sup>

### Developmental Needs:

- To feel competent, to be given challenges and tasks that they are capable of achieving both at school and at home. Failure to develop this leads to a sense of inferiority and low self-esteem.

There is a great need to be honest with children so that the reality of the situation becomes clear, eg that daddy and mummy still love them but they will not live together again or that the dead parent will live on only in the family's memories.

Communication and honesty are essential to help children deal with their loss and grief.



Possible Responses To Loss	Resilience Builders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Denial, sadness, episodic crying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comfort the child, acknowledge the reality of the situation</li> <li>Reassure that it is OK to cry</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased anxiety, restlessness or over-activity, school problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform the school and other groups of the family situation. Teachers can help maintain success in learning and thus avoid loss of self esteem</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of rejection, low self esteem, depression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist the child to communicate and express these feelings</li> <li>Ensure inclusion</li> <li>Affirm and recognise their gifts</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking on the role of the 'little man/woman'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware not to place too much responsibility on the child</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical illness, more accident prone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take steps to avoid the increased risk of accidents</li> <li>Discuss home situation with the doctor and check that appropriate medical intervention is accessible</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yearning for absent parent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be a good listener</li> <li>If grief is mutual, share these yearnings – but take care not to overburden the child</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Acting out', being 'naughty', being angry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet child's need for attention</li> <li>Set limits for acceptable behaviour</li> <li>Provide opportunities for artwork, making music, drama, writing stories</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Magical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be respectful of their imagination, without denying the present reality</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guilt feelings – that somehow it was the child's fault</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reassure the child</li> <li>Use appropriate children's stories on the theme of guilt and blame</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of uncertainty and insecurity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of their feelings. Take their fears seriously. Explain that everyone needs someone to talk to</li> </ul>



## Nine to Twelve Years

### Developmental Tasks:

- Gaining competence at school and in a range of activities
- Developing stronger friendships with peers

Children are developing the ability to think logically and with that comes a sense of justice. There is a tendency to see things in 'black and white'. If separation or divorce has occurred, children in this age group will understand, in part, what is happening and the consequences for their lives and may take sides. They may become ashamed or angry at one or both parents for separating. Children at this stage have a greater understanding of the rituals and practical requirements associated with death.

### Developmental Needs:

- Opportunities to succeed at school and in other activities and in forming friendships with other children.
- As with the younger stages, children still need stability and consistency in their lives.

In the case of divorce, children should be included in decision-making about having time with each parent. They need reassurance and honest responses to their questions and comments. The frankness of their comments may shock some adults. In the case of the death of a loved one they also need adults who will answer their questions in simple, real terms, giving appropriate information but not more than what is required. They should be invited to share in the grieving and rituals associated with death.





Possible Responses To Loss	Resilience Builders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsolable mourning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be a good listener</li> <li>Talk about the death or loss</li> <li>Provide “alone time” and space</li> <li>Encourage the child to make memorials of the person who has died eg photos with candles/flowers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eating, sleeping difficulties, nightmares</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide comfort</li> <li>Reassure that these are normal responses</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be very angry with both parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be honest and reassuring</li> <li>Acknowledge the child’s thoughts and feelings, but do not take sides</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical illness in response to stress such as asthma, head and stomach aches and infections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss the home situation with the doctor. If necessary check that appropriate medical intervention is accessed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May ask detailed questions about everything that has occurred</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be patient, giving simple honest answers</li> <li>Emphasise that the deceased can live on in their memory</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in social behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge the child’s feelings and set clear boundaries</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of fear and helplessness</li> <li>Concerns that the other parent might die or leave the child. (Often hidden)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide opportunities to verbalise these feelings of helplessness and confusion</li> <li>Help the child to be aware of people in whom he/she may safely confide</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulties at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reassure the child that the ability to concentrate will return in time</li> <li>Provide physical activities to relieve tension</li> <li>Drama provides a creative opportunity for exploring feelings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May take on unrealistic responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware and relieve the child of these</li> </ul>

# Adolescents

## Developmental Tasks:

- This is a critical period of development in terms of social and emotional wellbeing.
- There is a normal preoccupation with the meaning of life and in trying to discover who they are in a time of rapid physical and hormonal change.
- There is a tendency to separate from parents and form more intense relationships with peers.
- Adolescence is a particularly vulnerable time, increasing the impact of a loss or death of a parent, sibling or friend.
- Despite having an understanding of death as permanent, adolescents often see themselves as invincible and may indulge in risk-taking behaviour.

## Developmental Needs:

- To be supported in coping with all the changes occurring during this period of psychological and physical upheaval.
- To be in an environment where their intense feelings are acknowledged in order to develop a healthy sense of their identity.
- To be in a healthy social context where they are able to learn about relationships and interpersonal skills.
- To begin to “find a place in the world by establishing career direction and economic independence”<sup>5</sup>.





Possible Response To Loss	Resilience Builders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawal from the family or peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be available to listen</li> <li>• Provide time and privacy for grieving</li> <li>• Encourage involvement in a grief support network</li> <li>• Establish reasonable limits</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impulsive behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish reasonable limits</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disillusionment about life and marriage</li> <li>• Uncertainty about their role in the family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If appropriate and possible, provide access to both parents (in divorce). Allow relationships to develop and exist independently of the other parent</li> <li>• Discuss and emphasise good role models for positive relationships</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School problems, increased absenteeism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek support from school staff</li> <li>• Teachers may need to provide safe and acceptable behaviour boundaries</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pseudo-maturity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid expectations that are too great</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social behaviour eg risk-taking, substance abuse, expressions of anger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiate limits and expectations</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for the appropriate release of aggressive energy such as sport and drama</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide time for outward grieving</li> <li>• Sensitively reinforce the reality of the situation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of being unlovable</li> <li>• Feelings of guilt or resentment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassure that they are loved</li> <li>• Model forgiveness so that they can learn self-forgiveness, if needed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promiscuity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage supportive friendships</li> <li>• Discuss consequences of unwise sex</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grieving secretly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role model open expression and be available and supportive</li> <li>• Recognise and respect the pain felt</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of abandonment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassure that feelings of loss are normal and may recur during significant events for a long time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mood swings</li> <li>• Confusion about their own identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassure that confusion, emotional highs and lows and frustrations are normal during adolescence and especially during difficult times</li> </ul>



## The Suicide or Tragic Death of a Peer

Sadly, adolescents and young people are more likely to encounter death for the first time through the death of a peer, either through suicide or in tragic circumstances like car accidents or misadventure.

In the case of suicide, in particular, the following information may be helpful in understanding and supporting a young person through their grief.



Possible Responses To Loss	Resilience Builders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger aimed at the deceased</li> <li>• Wishing to punish the person who has died</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassurance that these feelings are normal</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to express their emotions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear that other friends or they themselves may commit suicide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the communication of fears</li> <li>• Offer reassurance and support</li> <li>• Identify adults they can turn to</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruptive behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow time to express overwhelming feelings</li> <li>• Negotiate reasonable limits and expectations, define boundaries</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guilt that they did not support the friend and stop them from suiciding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help them to perceive guilt realistically</li> <li>• Talk about the person and event</li> <li>• Assist in piecing the facts together</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having suicidal thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer reassurance and support</li> <li>• Seek professional help for the adolescent if you have concerns for their safety</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate humour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss more appropriate and acceptable ways of expressing feelings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncontrollable grief</li> <li>• Shock, a feeling of numbness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give them permission to express their feelings</li> <li>• Talk about the dead person</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to honour the dead peer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities to celebrate the life of the adolescent without glorifying the death</li> <li>• Encourage involvement in voluntary work to benefit the living</li> </ul>

## Viewing the Body

- Viewing the body can provide an opportunity to say goodbye and confirm the person is no longer living.
- Everyone, young or old, needs to be free to make their own decision after gentle preparation.
- It provides evidence for information that your brain may be trying to reject; it may aid acceptance and for younger children may prevent “searching” behaviour.
- Children should be prepared for what they will see. Explain to them that the body will be very still and probably cold.
- It may be appropriate to place a favourite toy, flowers or a letter in the coffin.





## The Funeral

- Funerals are special family occasions.
- Children should be prepared in advance for what to expect: explain what a funeral is and what will happen.
- Allow the child to choose whether to attend, and perhaps an opportunity to participate – they may want to help choose music or flowers, read a letter or poem, or add some other personal touch. Of course, no pressure should be put on them to participate in this way.
- Not allowing children to attend a funeral may cause feelings of exclusion and isolation. It can take away the important opportunity to participate in a public and social farewell ritual.
- If the child chooses not to attend, a familiar and trusted adult should stay with them while the funeral takes place. It may be valuable to help them enact a farewell ritual of their own.



## Book List

### A River Dreaming – Elizabeth Pike

Pub. Melbourne, Australia: Aboriginal Catholic Ministry. 2007

This is a story closely linked to the Aboriginal author's story of dislocation from culture and loss of identity – an inspiring story about hope in the midst of adversity told through the creation or Dreaming story of the platypus.

### The Huge Bag of Worries – Virginia Ironside

Pub. London: Hodder Children's Books. 2004

Wherever Jenny goes, her worries follow her – in a big blue bag. They are there when she goes swimming, when she is watching TV and even when she is in the lavatory. Jenny decides they will have to go, but who can she get to help her? This funny and reassuring story will appeal to all children who have occasional worries of their own.

### The Naming of Tishkin Silk – Glenda Millard

Pub. Sydney: ABC Books. 2003

Griffin Silk has a secret in his heart that nobody else knows – until he meets Layla, a princess with a daisy-chain crown and he shares his inner thoughts with her. Together they find a way to deal with Griffin's secret. Just like the mythical beast whose name he bears, Griffin has uncommon courage and the heart of a lion.

### Nim's Island – Wendy Orr

Pub. Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd. 1999

Nim lives on an island in the middle of the wide blue sea with her father Jack, a marine iguana called Fred, a sea lion called Selkie, a turtle called Chica and a satellite dish for her email. No one else in the world lives quite like Nim and she wouldn't swap places with anyone. But when Jack disappears in his sailing boat and disaster threatens her home Nim must be braver than she's ever been before. And she needs help from her friends, old and new.



### One Night at Lottie's House – Max Dann

Pub. Camberwell, Vic: Puffin Books 2004

When Arthur stays at Lottie's house he makes sure he's prepared for anything. But the night turns out to be so scary that he is forced to use his ghost-fighting kit – with unexpected results.

### Mudlark – Michael Stevens

Pub. Australia: Angus and Robertson 2000

Jim Liddell is different from other boys his age. He lives in the world of his imagination. At home things are different too. His mother is confined to her bed and there are empty pizza boxes stacked up beside the kitchen sink. On the last weekend before the end of term Jim gets to take home the class pet, a rescued mudlark, named Mudlark. Jim's life is about to change forever.

### The Butterfly Lion – Michael Morpurgo

Pub. UK: Collins 1996

Bertie rescues an orphaned white lion cub from the African veld. They are inseparable until Bertie is sent to boarding school far away in England and the lion is sold to a circus. Bertie swears that one day they will see each another again, but it is the butterfly lion which ensures that their friendship will never be forgotten.

### “When I Feel...” Books - Cornelia Maude Spelman

Pub. Albert, Whitman & Co. Illinois

Comforting and informative stories for young readers (4-8yrs) looking at feelings - what causes feelings, what feelings feel like and how to feel better. Stories are told through personified animal characters and promote social and emotional growth and well-being.

Titles include:

- “When I Feel Jealous”
- “When I Feel Sad”
- “When I Feel Angry”
- “When I Miss You”
- “When I Feel Scared”
- “After Charlotte's Mom Died”
- “Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce”



## Film List

- Happy Feet

(2006 Kingdom Feature Productions)

This is the story of a penguin named Mumble who has a terrible singing voice and no Heartsong. However, he possesses the unusual talent of tap dancing. Though Mumble's mom, thinks this habit is cute, his dad, says it "just ain't penguin." As fate would have it, his one friend, Gloria, happens to be the best singer around but she struggles with his strange "hippity- hoppity" ways. Mumble is just too different especially for Noah the Elder, who ultimately casts him out of the community. Mumble sets out across vast landscapes and, after some epic encounters, proves that by being true to yourself, you can make all the difference in the world.

- Finding Nemo

(2003 Walt Disney Pictures)

Marlin is a more-than-slightly paranoid Clown Fish who is extremely devoted to his young son, Nemo, the only survivor after an undersea predator swallowed up Nemo's mother and her other offspring. It's not Marlin's nature to explore unfamiliar waters, but when he and Nemo are accidentally separated near the Great Barrier Reef en route to Nemo's first day of fish school, Marlin gathers his courage and sets out to find his son. On the way he meets many unusual friends who help. Nemo and Marlin both show courage, resilience and tenacity, never giving up the quest to be reunited.

- The Kite Runner

(2007 DreamWorks SKG)

Major themes explored in the novel are war, loyalty, forgiveness, friendship, redemption, sacrifice, race, class, fear and the relationships between father and son. The four main themes shown to us by the author are strength of character, sin and redemption, relationship between parent and child, as well as loyalty and friendship between two people.

- The Black Balloon

(2008 Black Balloon Productions)

When Thomas and his family move to a new home and he has to start at a new school, all he wants is to fit in. When his pregnant Mother has to take it easy, he is put in charge of his autistic older brother Charlie. Thomas with the help of his new girlfriend Jackie faces his biggest challenge yet. Charlie's unusual antics take Thomas on an emotional journey that cause his pent-up frustrations about his brother to pour out.

- The Pursuit of Happiness

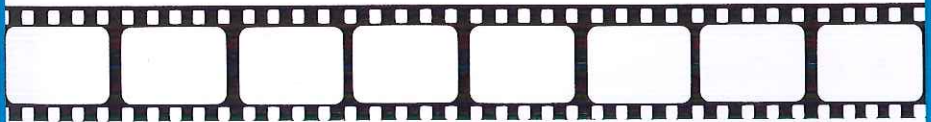
(2006 Columbia Pictures Corporation)

This film is about the deep love and commitment a father has for his son. It portrays all the aspects of resilience; hard work, optimism and perseverance, in working through the struggles that keep facing them: separation from wife/mother, unemployment, poverty, homelessness and racial discrimination. Eventually a breakthrough is made and the love that the father and son share can be freely and happily celebrated.

- Billy Elliot

(2000 Arts Council of England)

Billy Elliot is the coming-of-age story of a young boy, Billy, who through his unexpected love of dance, embarks on a journey of self-discovery in the world of picket lines, cultural stereotypes, a family in crisis and a headstrong ballet teacher.



## Helpful Web Sites

### For Adults

#### **The Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Families**

[www.dougy.org.au](http://www.dougy.org.au) especially articles:

- “How to Help a Grieving Child”
- “How to Help a Grieving Teen
- “When Death Impacts Your School”

#### **National Centre for Childhood Grief**

[www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au)

#### **Cornelia Maude Spelman**

[www.corneliaspelman.com](http://www.corneliaspelman.com)

### For Children and Young People

#### **Headroom, Mental Health for Young People**

[www.headroom.net.au](http://www.headroom.net.au)

#### **Kids Helpline**

[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

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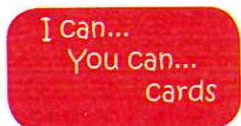






Good Grief Ltd is committed to relieving suffering and bringing hope to those affected by grief. Based in North Sydney, Good Grief delivers programs and resources through-out Australia and internationally.

All our programs and materials have been developed in collaboration with education, health care and welfare professionals. This resource has been developed with the assistance of the Department of Health and Ageing.



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