

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD AFTER BEREAVEMENT OR LOSS

We all find it hard to cope when someone we love dies – it can be a terribly sad and confusing time for everyone. There are lots of practical things you can do to support your child through this difficult time. There is a wealth of information on the internet and amazing support groups that can offer expert advice. We've detailed these on the last page if you need 'expert' advice or wish to find out more. This is a summary of some key points and ideas you can use to help your child begin to understand and manage their feelings and emotions.

Remind yourself and your child that grief is a normal and natural response to death

It is natural for parents and carers to want to protect children from overwhelming emotions. But be open and honest and give as much information as you can in an age appropriate way to prevent your child from feeling confused



Answer questions

It is really important to let your child know that you will listen to their questions and try to answer them as honestly as you can. If you don't know an answer, tell your child that you have listened to them and you will find out the information they need. This reduces anxiety and gives reassurance.

Check your child's level of understanding

Children can take things literally and may not understand the language used to describe illness and death. Use language sensitively but try to use the words 'death' and 'dying' rather than 'lost' or 'gone to sleep'. Explain as many technical terms as you can using simple and clear language.

Stick to family routines

Routines and structure provide security for your child at a confusing time. Feeling that everything going on is unpredictable can leave children feeling out of control and worried, scared or anxious. Give children information about what is happening and what is likely to happen next. Acknowledge that things might not be the same for a while but with care, understanding and resilience there is hope and you and your child will feel happy again.

Keep communicating

Find as much time and space to talk as your child needs. This can be very challenging when you are managing your own feelings of grief and at busy times. There are lots of activities that you can do with your child to encourage them to talk about their strong emotions. There is a list of activities and websites you may find useful below.

Allow anger

Anger and frustration are natural and understandable feelings when someone dies. Let your child know that it is OK to express these emotions in safe and manageable ways. Try going outside and shouting loudly or punch a cushion. Releasing anger in safe ways helps your child release other emotions like sadness and then you can work on them together to start to feel better. **Ensure your child that releasing anger is good, but hurting themselves or others is not OK.**



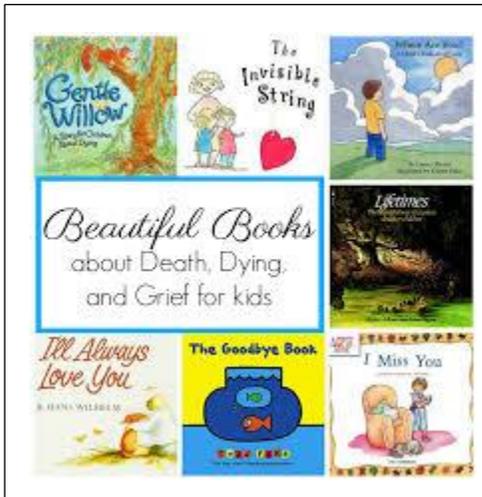
Share feelings

Children learn from adults around them and use their parents and carers as models. They may copy your ways of managing difficult feelings. You may also be feeling overwhelming anger, grief, frustration or sadness and you may want to get support to manage these in appropriate ways. Don't shield children from your own feelings but try to tell them how you feel calmly and carefully and show them how you are learning to manage these and deal with them to start to feel better.

Learn about different stages of grief for children of different age groups (look at the websites below)

Your child's reaction to the death of someone they love may surprise you. Young children may not seem affected at all and not react in the way you expected. Some children jump in and out of grief and look sad and anxious one minute and happy the next. Try to accept your child's various responses and notice the things they say and do. We all need time and space, and expert support to express and tackle strong emotions can be very helpful. **Be patient and kind to yourself and your child.**

Activities to support your child to express their emotions and remember loved ones who have died



Reading stories for all ages...

There are many fantastic stories to read with your child that talk about death and dying in caring and sensitive ways. Sharing stories like these help you talk about your feelings and begin to process big emotions.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/suggested-reading-list/>

Make a memory jar

Whenever you have a memory of your loved one – write it on a piece of paper and keep it in a safe place. Whenever you feel sad or need time to think more happy thoughts – open the jar and remind yourself of the good times.

Write a letter, poem or song- for older children

Telling your loved one how much you cared about them and what they meant to you helps you to keep memories alive and feel positive for the future. Start with 'If you came back for just 5 minutes ... I would tell you ...'

- My favourite memory of you ...
- The thing you did that annoyed me ...
- A sad memory of you ...
- Something you taught me ...
- A happy memory of you ...
- The best moment we had together ...
- The earliest memory I have of you is ...
- How I would describe you to the important



Blow bubbles

Blow some bubbles and make a wish, think of a good memory or thought of hope and send them into the sky.



Make a card

Make a special card for your loved one. Take it to their grave or where the ashes are scattered.



Plant a bulb

Plant a bulb, flower or tree and remember your loved one every year it re-grows. Plant them in a special place that holds good memories.



Talk to family members

Ask friends and family members to donate their favourite memories of your loved one and make a collection. You can create a special digital memory board with photos you've collected. Make a book of their life story. Don't be afraid to talk about your memories, acknowledge how much you miss them and share a smile or joke about the happy times.



Make a scrapbook

Collect together favourite memories with photos and pictures of your loved one. Look at it often, or whenever you feel sad to remember happy times you spent together.

Think of their favourite meal, where they liked to visit, what they looked like. Listen to their favourite music.



**Children's Services and Skills Directorate
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Social, Emotional and Mental Health Team**



More help here.....

www.winstonswish.org



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Dedicated to helping you grieve

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How to get support:

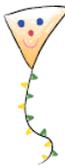
National Freephone Helpline*: 08088 020 021 (open 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday)

ASK email support: ask@winstonswish.org

Crisis Messenger: Text WW to 85258 (available 24/7)

Online chat: [click here](#) (available 12-4pm, Wednesdays and Fridays)

*In order to protect our staff, our Helpline is currently operating a remote service. Please leave a message on our voicemail with your first name and a contact number (with area code) and a Helpline Practitioner will call you



Edward's Trust

Email: admin@edwardstrust.org.uk
Phone : 0121 454 1705

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Child Bereavement UK
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