

# Supporting Children and Young People Through Bereavement and Loss



**TESS**

(Targeted Education Support Service)

**June 2020**

## How to support children & young people through bereavement and loss

### How is loss experienced?

Loss is experienced in a variety of different ways. It can be through the loss of a family member, normal timetable or routine, school environment, family pet, regular contact with friends; to name a few. This can have a significant impact on a young person and how they process this. They may encounter emotions such as:


- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Guilt
- Sadness

*'Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end or change in a familiar pattern of behaviour.'* - Grief Recovery UK



During this time of pandemic, children and young people are more isolated than usual; this can intensify emotions, making it harder to grieve. The usual practical and emotional support is not necessarily available in the same way and when parents and carers are experiencing their own loss it can be difficult to support children and young people process their loss. When a family are isolated together through grief, it can create an intensified environment due to the close living environment that they are in; this can make it stressful to support each other and grief may be suppressed. For a young person, they may experience loss with a heightened level of anxiety, due to feeling overwhelmed during the pandemic lockdown; this may also have an impact on the family they are living with. This can then create a sense of worry about people around them who are ill and what will happen to them, as well as a wider concern for the wellbeing of people they are close to.

Steps to support:

- Always be honest
  - Acknowledge and empathise with how they are feeling and their worries (use their words)
  - Provide reassurance and regular 'check ins'
  - Find answers to questions, you may not know, together
- 
- Discuss coronavirus and what it is, answer questions honestly
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPsY-jLqaXM> Primary focused clip
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9tTi-CDjDU> Animated clip aimed at young people
  - Take your own needs into account and look after yourself
  - Create a safe space where they can go
  - Share memories, even create a memory jar or box

Useful websites for supporting young people through grief and loss:

Winston's Wish:

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

Childhood Bereavement Network:

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

Cruse Bereavement Care:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk>

Grief Encounter:

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

Children's Bereavement Centre UK:

<http://www.childrensbereavementcentre.co.uk/>

Hope Again (Youth Website of Cruse):

<https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>

Child Bereavement UK:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org>



## Memory Jars

### You will need:

- Glass or clear plastic jar with a lid
- Salt
- Pastels or coloured chalks at least five colours
- Cotton wool
- A4 paper
- Memory jar label
- Coloured pencils or felt tip pens

### What to do:

1. Look at the jar containing coloured layers. Each layer represents a memory.
2. Pour a small pile of salt on to a piece of scrap paper (estimate amount for making five layers in the jar).
3. Think about a memory you have and choose a coloured pastel/chalk to represent that memory.
4. Colour the pile of salt by rubbing the chalk backwards and forwards into the salt.
5. Once it is the shade you want pour into the jar until you feel you have the amount you want for that memory.
6. You can tilt the jar as you pour the salt or allow the salt to settle into flat layers.
7. Use a felt tip pen or pencil of the same colour to colour in the box on your memory jar label.
8. Write next to it the memory connected to that colour.
9. Continue up to five memories until full to the top.
10. Place a piece of cotton wool in the top of the jar and secure the lid tightly.
11. Place the finished memory sheet in a frame to stand near your jar or put it in your memory box or book.

MEMORY JAR	
In memory of	
Five memories I have	

## Memory Boxes

### What goes into a memory box?



Before you decide what to include, you may find it helpful to think about different types of memories, e.g.

- a special time
- something you enjoyed or laughed about
- a memory that offers you some comfort
- something you especially love about that special thing that you have lost

You can include anything that is important or that helps to remind you of a specific memory. It is sometimes difficult to know where to start. Here are some suggestions:

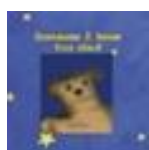
- You can have a photograph, colour or fabric of significance relate to your memory on the lid. This gives a visual reminder of the connection and can lead you into the box.
- You can use scents that trigger memories. It can be sprayed onto a favourite fabric object or on themselves. Our sense of smell is a powerful way to stimulate memories.
- Write a letter or short stories about things you enjoyed.
- Videos or messages about the things that are missed. Most smartphones have a video camera, or you could use a camcorder. You may want to create a collection of short videos using your phone's editing tools or a programme on your computer. Videos can be saved to a USB memory stick or DVD to be put into your memory box.
- You can transfer sound recordings, such as messages or favourite music, onto a CD or save them to a USB memory stick.
- You can add anything that has a personal story attached to it to the box. Such as jewellery, cards, pictures, or tickets that hold special memories. It can help to attach a small note to the object as a reminder.

### How is it used?

Finding ways to remember the things we have lost, and take memories forward, this can be a helpful part of the grieving process. Some of the memories may make you laugh or cry.

## Books to support children and young people through loss and bereavement

### Aged 5 & Under



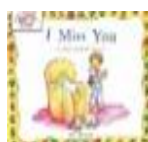
**Someone I know has died**  
Trish Phillips.

Activity book with interactive features.



**Missing Mummy**  
Rebecca Cobb

Minimal text covering some of the worries and fears that a young child may have after a death of a parent, offering reassurance and hope.



**I Miss You: A First Look at Death**  
Pat Thomas

Helps children understand that death is natural; grief & loss are normal feelings.



**When Dinosaurs Die—A guide to understanding death**

Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

Guide for dealing with loss, helps children understand what death means, and how to cope with their feelings.



**What Does Dead Mean?**

Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas, OBE

Explains death by looking at questions such as why 'Why can't doctors and nurses make people better?' and offers practical help for children.



**Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute?**

Elke Barber & Alex Barber

Explains sudden death using words and illustrations to tell a story they will understand.



**Goodbye Mousie**

Robie H Harris

Story of a boy dealing with the death of his pet mouse and explores children's emotions. A matter of fact tone with humour, he recounts his reactions to the death of his pet mouse.



**What Happened to Daddy's Body?**

Elke Barber & Alex Barber

Sequel to "Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute?" explains what happens after death. Helps understanding of cremation and burial.



**Tough Boris**

Mem Fox

Boris von der Borch is a mean, greedy old pirate – tough as nails, through and through, like all pirates. Or is he?



**Suzie Goes to a Funeral**

Charlotte Olson

Explains to a child about going to a funeral. Shows what they might experience on this day.

## Aged 5-11 years old



### **Remembering** Dianne Leutner

It's part book, part scrapbook and was created to help keep a child's memories alive after the loss of someone



### **When a Grandparent has died**

#### **My Grandma Died: A Child's Story about Grief and Loss**

Lory Britain

Explores the emotions felt after Grandma's death. Includes "Things I can do when someone I love dies.



### **Badger's Parting Gifts**

Susan Varley

Badger knows he will die & prepares friends; they are grief-stricken. Remembering the things Badger taught them, he lives on in their memories.



### **Always and Forever**

Alan Durant

When Fox dies the rest of his 'family' are distraught. How will they go on without their friend? Months later, Squirrel reminds them & realised that Fox is still their hearts & memories.



### **The Memory Tree**

Britta Teckentrup

Fox's friends gather to tell stories of moments that they shared with Fox. As they share memories, a tree begins to grow, becoming bigger and stronger, sheltering and protecting all the animals in the forest.



### **Benny's Hat**

Juliet Clare Bell

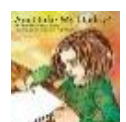
Explores the death of a sibling, from the viewpoint of a sister. It shows how you might deal with serious illness & death.



### **Ben's Flying Flowers**

Inger Maier

Emily loses her brother after a long illness, she feels alone, angry, and sad. She learns that it helps when she talks about her feelings and asks questions.



### **Am I Like My Daddy?**

Marcy Blesy

Grace is coping with the loss of her father & learning about the ways that people grieve a loss.



### **Goodbye Mog**

Judith Kerr

Mog thought, 'I want to sleep forever.' A part of her stayed awake to see what would happen next. Mog keeps watch over the family, who are able to begin moving forward in their lives.



### **Rabbityness**

Jo Empson

When Rabbit suddenly disappears, no one knows where he has gone. It turns out, Rabbit left behind some very special gifts for them, to help them discover their own un-rabbit talents!



### **Mum's Jumper**

Jayde Perkin

If Mum has gone, how do you carry on? Missing her feels like a dark cloud. Memories are like a jumper that you can cuddle and wear.



### **Saying Goodbye to Hare**

Carol Lee

The story explores some of the emotional and physical feelings, as well as the questions during this time. Written to give a positive, thoughtful message about death and dying.



### **Isaac and the Red Jumper**

Amanda Seyderhelm

Isaac is heartbroken when his best friend dies. His house freezes and his jumper turns grey with grief.



### **I Miss My Sister**

Sarah Courtauld

Guides the child through the different emotions they may encounter following the death of a sibling, as well as the different categories of grief over a period of time.



### **The Boy Who Built a Wall Around Himself**

Ali Redford

Boy built a wall and felt strong and protected. Someone comes along who played, sang and painted on the other side. He began to wonder if life on the other side is better.



**The Tenth Good Thing about Barney**  
Judith Viorst

From the perspective of a child, dealing with the death of a pet, it helps children deal with the reality of death, including why we have funerals.



**The Scar**  
Charlotte Moundlic

Overwhelmed by sadness, anger, & fear after mother's death that he will forget her-his grandmother shows him how to feel his mum's love.



**Love Will Never Die**  
Clare Shaw

This rhyming book addresses the mixed feelings a bereaved child might go through; includes interactive areas where the child can express themselves.



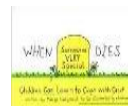
**The Lonely Tree**  
Nicholas Halliday

Winter arrives all the oak trees must go to sleep, but evergreens never sleep. After a long & lonely winter, spring brings sadness & joy to the tree.



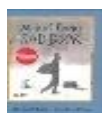
**The Invisible String**  
Patricia Karst

This book illustrates a new way to cope with a child's fear of loneliness and separation. Teaches that we aren't ever really alone.



**When Someone Very Special Dies**  
M Heegaard

Teaches concepts of death to help children understand and express the feelings they have when someone dies. Skills are developed as they illustrate their books with their personal story.



**Michael Rosen's Sad Book**

Michael Rosen

The book describes feeling sad after death of the writer's son & what he does to try to cope with it



**Stewart's Tree**

Cathy Campbell

Explains sibling loss shortly after birth.



**Muddles, Puddles & Sunshine**

Winston's Wish

Practical activities and exercises. Helps children make sense of their experience.

## Young people



### A Teenage Guide to Coping when someone dies

Child Bereavement UK

(download)

Practical advice & guidance for managing emotions when someone in their life dies.



### What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?

Trevor Romaine &

Elizabeth Verdick

Suggests ways of coping with grief and offers answers to questions such as ‘Why?’ and ‘How can I say Goodbye?’



### Grief Encounter

Shelley Gilbert

The focus is on the death of a

parent, but suitable for the loss of a sibling, grandparent, friend.



### Still Here with Me: Teenagers & Children on Losing a Parent

Suzanne Sjoqvist

Anthology of 30 students who have lost a parent. Describes feelings of pain, loss and anger, the importance of talk and remembering.



### From a Clear Blue Sky

Timothy Knatchbull

A powerful survivor's

account of the IRA bomb that killed the author's 14-year-old twin brother, his grandparents and a family friend.



### Sometimes Life Sucks: When

### Someone You Love Dies

Molly Carlile

*Sometimes Life Sucks* helps teens to navigate their personal experience of grief.



### We Get It

Heather L.

Servaty-Seib and

David C.

Fajgenbaum

This book aims to help young people who are grieving and provide guidance for those who seek to support them.



### Teenage Guide to Coping with Life after Death:

Grief Encounter-

Download

Aims to help young people feel less alone, acknowledge what they are going through, and to help them feel back in control.



### Grief Encounter

Shelley Gilbert

Promotes

conversations

about death.

Has activities with the focus is on the death of a parent, but suitable for the loss of a sibling, grandparent, friend.



### Everything's Changing: the young person's guide to grief and loss

Ann Atkin

‘Everything’s Changing’ is a catalyst for conversations with young people, and a useful record

for the young person to refer back to in the future.



### Rory's Story

Anna Jacobs

Explores loss & bereavement. Can be used in conjunction with the practical workbook 'Supporting Teenagers through Grief & Loss'.



## Six films to help young people understand death and grief



### My Girl (1991)

Thomas spends his summer

having adventures and falling in love with his best friend, the Undertaker's daughter Vada. Vada has a complicated relationship with death, having lost her mum at a young age and grown up around her dad's work.



### Coco (2017)

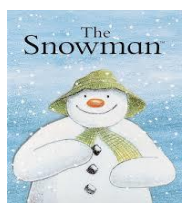
"We may have our differences,

but nothing's more important than family," says Miguel. Miguel is a rebellious 12-year-old boy with a talent for music and a desire to perform but he is from a large Mexican family who have banned music. He finds himself in the Land of the Dead, a place where he can explore his musical ability, and sets out to find out the truth about his family's mysterious musical ban.



### Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001)

The first film in the Harry Potter series where Harry and his friends get their places at Hogwarts. We learn that Harry is an orphan grieving for his parents and has been mistreated by his aunt and uncle. The Harry Potter books, and films all have grief at their core.



### The Snowman (1982)

A short, festive film follows a young boy

called James who builds a snowman on Christmas Eve and it comes to life. James and his snowman fly to the North Pole to meet Father Christmas. A strong bond forms between them, but snow tends to melt.



### The Lion King (2019)

Set in Africa the heir to the lion throne is born,

Simba. When his father dies unexpectedly, the blame is placed on Simba and he is exiled from his kingdom until two new friends convince him to return home and reclaim his crown.



### A Monster Calls (2016)

Based on Patrick Ness' book, *A Monster Calls*

tells the story of Conor, a boy who summons an ancient pagan tree spirit to help him cope with his mother's terminal illness. Connor is being bullied at school and feeling angry about what is happening to his mum, Conor's monster helps him process his feelings and come to terms with his grief.

**“What we have once enjoyed  
we can never lose.**

**All that we love deeply becomes  
a part of us.”**

**-Helen Keller**

