

How can I support my child through their grief?

Encourage your child to find ways of expressing their feelings

This can help them to process and make sense of a loss. This could be things like:

- writing a letter to the person they have lost telling them all the things they want to say to them
- writing a letter to you or someone else who is supporting them, so you or they know what they are going through
- keeping a diary or journal of how they feel
- painting or drawing pictures creating a memory box full of pictures and items, such as films, clothes and perfume, which remind them of good times they had with the person they have lost

Support your child to say goodbye

Include them in family gatherings and activities such as the funeral or celebrations of life in an age-appropriate way. Prepare them for these events so they know what to expect.

Talk with them about other ways they can celebrate the person

This could be lighting a candle, saying a prayer or poem, writing a letter, planting a flower or tree, or visiting the grave or another special place.

Spend quality time with your child doing things they enjoy

This can help them feel safe and relaxed, giving them a break from the grief, even if just for a little while. It might be things like drawing, making something, listening to music, playing sport, cooking or watching a favourite film.

Encourage them to keep doing their activities and hobbies

Your child may feel worried that it's wrong to have a good time. Reassure them that it's okay to feel happy and to enjoy something, and that this does not take away from how much they care about the person they've lost.

Give older children and teenagers space to be alone or chat to their friends

Alongside offering time together and opportunities to talk, it's okay if your child also needs time and space to figure out how they want to process what's happened.

Talk about the person who has died or been lost and share your memories together

This could include acknowledging upcoming anniversaries or important occasions such as birthdays, and talking with your child about ways they might like to mark these.

Reach out to us at school to let us know what's happened

If we know what your child is going through then we can put in some extra support or reassure them to talk to us when and if they need.

Resources that might help

<https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/childrens-books-death->



[grief_I_5fa38deec5b660630aee43fd](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/childrens-books-death-)

<https://sudden.org/children/nsppc-childline-supporting-children-grief-and-loss/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/grief-and-loss/>

GRIEF AND LOSS

What is loss, how we can help a child understand loss and some coping strategies.



We will always seek to work alongside parents to ensure the best outcomes for our pupils and families. If you have any concerns or questions at any time, please contact us

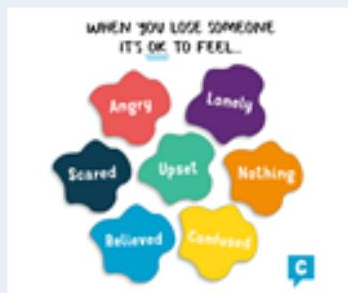
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What is loss?

Losing someone or something we love and feel close to is extremely difficult and painful. Grief is our natural emotional response to this loss, and it is a process rather than an event.

Your child, as well as you and other family members, may be grieving because of:

- the death of someone in the family, like a parent, grandparent or sibling
- the death of a friend, or someone they knew at school
- the death of someone by suicide
- an illness, such as cancer or dementia, of someone they are close to
- the loss of a relationship, like someone moving away or no longer being a regular part of their life



How do young people respond to grief and loss?

Every child will react to, feel and express loss differently, and this will change over time. There is no right or wrong way for a child to grieve.

Children who have gone through a significant loss can feel:

- anxious or worried, including about their own health or the health of people close to them
- frightened about losing other people they love
- sad, low or withdrawn
- isolated or lonely
- angry or irritable
- guilty
- numb
- physically unwell
- unable to concentrate
- unable to sleep
- that their moods change quickly
- that they cannot accept the situation that they are struggling to cope

It's helpful to remember that it is **normal** for your child to feel and experience these things after a loss, particularly if they have lost someone they were close to.

How can I talk to my child about grief and loss?

Explain what's happened and discuss what it means

Explain to your child in an age-appropriate way what's happened, and offer opportunities to think together about what it means.

Use clear language

Use clear language if you're talking about death. We can find it difficult to say the words 'died' or 'dead' and might want to use softer expressions such as 'gone to sleep' or 'passed on'. These expressions can be confusing for younger children, as they may believe the person will come back or become fearful of falling asleep themselves.

It's okay not to have all the answers

Remember that it's okay not to have all the answers and to say you don't know. Be guided by your child's questions – these will let you know what they are curious or uncertain about.

Validate their feelings

Let them know that it's okay to feel however they feel, whether that's sad, overwhelmed, angry, worried or something else – and that there's no right or wrong way to grieve. Whatever their emotional response, try not to take it personally.

Listen to how they're feeling

Be curious, empathetic and non-judgmental about how they're feeling, focusing on listening and providing emotional support. You won't be able to make it all better, but being there makes a huge difference.

Reassure them that you love them

Reassure them that you love them, they're not alone and they can talk to you whenever they need to.

Make sure they don't blame themselves

If your child lets you know that they're blaming themselves, or you're worried they might be, reassure them that guilt is a common thing to feel after a loss – but that it is in no way their fault or responsibility.