

Footprints Pre-school Playgroup's Bereavement Pack

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Resources 2: [Footprints Lending Library](#)

This is a list of more than 10 different books we can lend you, covering a range of situations in which children might experience grief. These include bereavement, terminal illness, general loss, and traumatic events.

If you would like to borrow one of these books, please find the copy of the book's cover (in the Bereavement Lending Library box on the waiting room windowsill) and take it to a member of staff. They will then find the book for you and will also ask you to sign and date when you borrow the book and again when you return it.

About Footprints Pre-school Playgroup's Bereavement Pack

This is a collection of information, guidance and stories to help parents, carers and staff to approach the subject of loss, death and grief with children of all ages and stages.

It is important to be aware that children can also experience the grief of bereavement after life events such as the break-up of a family or after suffering child abuse as well as when faced with the death of a loved one.

The guidance in this introduction is based on information from "Winston's Wish," a bereavement charity for children [www.winstonswish.org.uk].

How children and young people experience grief

Children experience grief differently from adults but we should not underestimate the depth of their emotions.

For adults, it feels like having to wade through rivers of grief, and they may get stuck in the middle of a wide sea of grieving. For children, their grieving can seem more like leaping in and out of puddles.

First reactions may range from great distress to seeming not to be interested. One minute, they may be sobbing, the next they are asking: "*What's for tea?*" It does not mean they care any the less about what has happened.

Talking to your children about death

Talking to your child about the death of someone close may be the hardest thing you have ever done or will ever do.

Yet to keep talking about the person who has died - offering information, remembering memories and stories, and sharing feelings - is one of the most important things you can do to help your child as they journey through grief. One of their greatest fears is that they will forget the person who died.

When children ask difficult questions, there is no automatic need to give a long explanation. It is often best to start by asking: '*What do you think?*', and then building on their answer.

Younger children may be confused by some of the everyday expressions that people use when someone dies, such as describing the person as 'lost', 'gone' or 'passed away'. It is best to **keep language simple and direct**. Saying that someone has 'died' or is 'dead' is honest, helps to avoid confusion, and encourages acceptance.

When young children hear comments such as, 'We've lost your mother,' they may feel confused wondering why no one is looking for her. Similarly, 'Granny has gone to sleep or passed away in her sleep,' may prompt a child to worry about going to sleep at night keeping them (and parents) awake.

Even the language we use with the very best intentions of giving appropriate and accurate descriptions can confuse a child. Take a moment to think about it from their point of view.

Here are some examples of misunderstandings that children have shared:

'Someone attacked daddy in his heart but I couldn't see the cuts.'

(His father had a heart attack.)

"They told me my baby sister was born dead. But how could she be both?"

(Her sister was stillborn.)

"If he passed his HIV on, why did he still have it?"

The language surrounding funeral rites can also confuse. Children who are asked if they want to see their mother's body have asked: *"Why not her head too?"*

Similarly, when people talk of burying or cremating someone's body, children can wonder what happens to all the other bits.

"She was beside herself when I suggested she came with me to see the new headstone on her mum's grave. It was only later that she told me she'd thought it would be her mum's head changed into stone. Logical really because we talk of her body being in the grave."

Children who have always been told to avoid fire and flames may be alarmed at the idea that their relative's body is to be burnt.

Families try to tell their children what they believe about life after death. Some families may believe in a heaven or another place beyond this world. Some may believe that the person who has died is a star, or an angel, or is 'all around us'. Some may believe that the dead person will be reborn in some form. Some may believe that death is an ending.

Young children sometimes misunderstand what these ideas mean. Children have told us that if the person who has died has gone to heaven or is watching over them that they worry whether they will be seen when they are being naughty or want to be private. They wonder why their parents don't ring or write from heaven. They struggle to understand how grandad can become a planet.

"Mummy said daddy had gone to heaven. But she won't take me to see him".

"Granny lives in Cornwall so I don't see why we can't go and visit him: you go through heaven to get there."

"Gran says mum can see me all the time. So she must have seen me hide the sweets. She won't love me any more because I said I hadn't."

It may be best to say something like: 'People have all sorts of beliefs about what happens after someone dies. We know that they can't come back and visit us or ring on the phone. Being dead isn't like being in another country. These are some of the things that people believe - and I believe this - I wonder what you believe? You may change what you believe as you grow older'.

The charter for bereaved children

Winston's Wish is the leading childhood bereavement charity and the largest provider of services to bereaved families. This 'charter' is based on our conversations with thousands of children and their families. They have told us what helps them to rebuild their lives and face the future with hope.

B

Bereavement support

Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them.

"It helped to know that other people understood what I was going through."
Rachel (9)

E

Express feelings and thoughts

Bereaved children should be helped to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.

"It's OK to cry and it's OK to be happy as well."
James (12)

R

Remember the person who has died

Bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives; sharing special as well as difficult memories.

"I like to show my memory box to people who didn't know my dad."
Paul (15)

E

Education and information

Bereaved children need and are entitled to receive answers to their questions and information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening.

"Mum died of a heart attack but I don't understand why it attacked her."
Bethany (4)

A

Appropriate response from schools and colleges

Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it.

"My teacher remembers the days that are difficult like Father's Day and his birthday."
Alex (10)

V

Voice in important decisions

Bereaved children should be given the choice about their involvement in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.

"I helped dad choose the flowers for mum's funeral. I felt proud of that."
Tim (7)

E

Enjoyment

Bereaved children have the right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.

"Seeing my son meeting other children in the same situation as him was so helpful."
John (parent)

M

Meet others

Bereaved children benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.

"It was good to be with other people who had an idea of what I was going through."
Chris (13)

E

Established routines

Bereaved children should, whenever possible, be able to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.

"I kept going to swimming club. I thought about my brother while I swam."
Amy (14)

N

Not to blame

Bereaved children should be helped to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.

"I now understand that it wasn't something I did or didn't do that made her die."
Neela (16)

T

Tell the story

Bereaved children are helped by being encouraged to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. These stories need to be heard by those important people in their lives.

"My picture shows how the car missed me but knocked dad off his bike."
Sophie (9)

Winston's Wish
the charity for bereaved children

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Helpline 08452 03 04 05 • E-mail info@winstonswish.org.uk

www.winstonswish.org.uk

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Useful Links and Contacts

CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE

Call National Helpline on 0844 477 9400

Email help is available at helpline@cruse.org.uk

Web page for supporting children: <http://www.cruse.org.uk/children/how-to-help>

Bath and District Area Helpline: 01761 417250 Monday-Friday 10am-1pm

Bristol: 0117 926 4045

Provides one-to-one and other support to the bereaved organised through local branches. Information about bereavement and other issues on helpline and excellent bookshop on the website.

CHILD BEREAVEMENT UK

www.childbereavementuk.org

Clare Charity Centre, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire HP14 4BF

Support & Information Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm Tel: 0800 02 888 40

WINSTON'S WISH

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Helpline: 08452 03 04 05 (*Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm and Wednesday evenings 7pm to 9.30 pm*)

3rd Floor, Cheltenham House, Clarence Street, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3JR

Email: info@winstonswish.org.uk

Gives support for those caring for children affected by the death of a parent or a sibling and to the children themselves.

CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT NETWORK

Tel: 020 7843 6309

Web: childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Although this organisation is mainly a professional network their website has a good search facility on its front page to allow you to find support services for children in your local area.

TCF (formerly The Compassionate Friends)

T: 0845 123 2304

Every day of the year 1000-1600 and 1830-2230

W: www.tcf.org.uk/

Support by telephone, befriending and local groups for parents, siblings or anyone affected by the death of a child. The charity supports people irrespective of the age of the child at the time of death i.e. the child may have reached adulthood.

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Resources 1: Information and Guidance Documents

The documents in this section are from the “Winston’s Wish” charity, which supports bereaved children. You are allowed to copy and pass on any of their information on condition that Winston’s Wish is acknowledged as the source:-



This book is a very useful and informative introduction for any adult who is supporting a child through bereavement. It covers a variety of issues that may affect a child when a person close to them dies, both immediately and in the longer term. The book offers practical suggestions and ideas for activities to do together with a child and includes a section on suggested further reading and where to find additional support. – The booklet is for sale at: <http://winstons-wish.myshopify.com/collections/books/products/a-child-s-grief#sthash.RIUWFqXr.dpuf> and we also have a copy in the Footprints Bereavement Pack lending library

It includes the section “*What are they feeling?*” An outline of children’s levels of understanding within different age ranges: Children aged **2 – 5 years**; aged **6 – 9 years**; Children aged **9 –13 years** and Adolescents.

Guides for Parents

This link takes you to a webpage where there are links to guidance for supporting children in specific situations e.g. at funerals, suicide, military deaths, ways of remembering.

There is also a downloadable guide for parents/carers. The guide includes practical activities as well as a list of contact details for other sources of support. Separate guides are downloadable in English, Arabic, Bengali, Polish, Spanish, and Swedish.

<http://www.winstonswish.org.uk/supporting-you/supporting-a-bereaved-child/>

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Resources 2: Books



Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children

by Doris Stickney (2004): The Pilgrim Press; Revised edition

This story of the water bugs' short life under water and their emergence as beautiful dragonflies into the bright sunlit world above the water, can be used to start to talk about death as part of the life cycle and, perhaps, as an introduction to the idea of life after death which can be a reassuring way of explaining death to children.



Always and Forever

by Alan Durant (2013): Picture Corgi

This story shows that grief is normal – and that a time comes when it eases.

When Fox dies the rest of his family are absolutely distraught. How will Mole, Otter and Hare go on without their beloved friend? But, months later, Squirrel reminds them all of how funny Fox used to be, and they realise that Fox is still there in their hearts and memories.

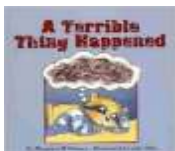


Helping Children With Loss: AND The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back

by Margot Sunderland (2003): Speechmark Publishing Ltd

A children's story book with adult's guide to help children who are suffering from the pain of loss or separation from someone or something they love deeply: if they

- have had a parent, relative or important friend leave or die
- are obsessed with their absent parent
- have lost someone they love, but have never really mourned
- are trying to manage all their painful feelings of loss by themselves
- feel that they have lost the love of someone they love deeply
- are suffering from separation anxiety
- are adopted or fostered children who miss their birth parent terribly



A Terrible Thing Happened

by Margaret M. Holmes (2000): American Psychological Association

This gently told and tenderly illustrated story is for children who have witnessed – or been very close to someone who was involved in - any kind of violent or traumatic episode, including physical abuse, school or gang violence, accidents, homicide, suicide, and natural disasters such as floods or fire. An afterword written for parents and other caregivers offers suggestions for helping traumatized children, including a list of other sources that focus on specific events.



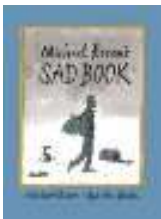
Are You Sad, Little Bear?: A book about learning to say goodbye
by Rachel Rivett (2009) Lion Hudson plc

Grandmother Bear has gone for ever, so it's no wonder that Little Bear is feeling sad. His mother wisely suggests that perhaps the Wildwood can help him understand his loss. Little Bear's day of exploring and asking questions brings him comfort and hope.



Lifetimes
by Bryan Mellonie (1998): Bantam Books

This simple, non-fiction book shows death as a natural part of the process of living for all creatures. The book highlights that it's the life spent between being born and dying that is important, no matter how long or short it is.



Michael Rosen's Sad Book
by Michael Rosen (2011): Walker

This book makes complicated feelings clear with simple text and Quentin Blake's expressive cartoons. It is realistic because it is based on Michael Rosen's personal experience.



What Does Dead Mean?: A Book for Young Children to Help Explain Death and Dying
by Caroline Jay (2012)

This book helps to answer some of the difficult questions that children often ask after someone has died. It also gives children the opportunity to explore and discuss their own thoughts and feelings.

A helpful list is included of websites and organisations which offer additional support for children and their families



Gentle Willow

by Joyce C. Mills (2003): Magination Press

Written for children who may not survive their illness or for children who know others with terminal illness, this tale helps address feelings of disbelief, anger, and sadness, along with love and compassion.



Badger's Parting Gifts

by Susan Varley (2013): Andersen

Badger is so old that he knows he will soon die. He tries to prepare his friends for this event, but when he does die, they are still grief-stricken. Gradually they come to terms with their grief by remembering all the practical things Badger taught them, and so Badger lives on in his friends' memories of him.



Understanding... A Place in my Heart

by Annette Aubrey (2008): QED Publishing

This book helps young children understand the term “a place in my heart.” In this story, Grandad has died and Andrew is feeling very sad and confused. He talks about his feelings with his mum and dad.



The Lonely Tree

by Nicholas Halliday (2006):

This story gives gentle reassurance that saying goodbye is a natural part of life.

The young evergreen is befriended by the oldest oak who has lived for hundreds of years. When winter arrives all the oak trees must go to sleep. After a long, cold and lonely winter, spring brings both sadness and joy to the little tree.