**Chapter 10**

**Children who have suffered loss and grief, including bereavement**

# Introduction

This chapter explores:

* What is meant by the terms loss, grief and bereavement
* The concept that children can feel loss through separation and relocation as well as bereavement
* the emotional processes children experience and their conceptual understanding of loss and death
* Events that can cause loss, grief & bereavement
* How school can support, including aspects of good practice and resources

Robert Kastenbaum (1972) suggests that adults like to think of childhood as ‘the kingdom where nobody dies’, but children are very aware of death from an early age. Some children may experience loss due to the death of a family member or friend, while others experience the loss of separation from significant people or home due to relocation, maybe even through seeking refuge in another country. Children are also aware of loss through media platforms which stream news and events directly, instantly and graphically into their homes, computers and phones (Doka, 2000)

Children in armed forces’ or diplomatic service families may relocate quite regularly and others may ‘lose’ a parent due to relationship break up or divorce. Young children are especially vulnerable to divorce, manifested in challenging behaviour, psychological distress and academic problems. (Allison and Furstenberg 1989). According to the Office for National Statistics (2013) almost half (48%) of couples divorcing in 2013 had at least 1 child aged under 16 living in the family. The effects of loss, separation and grief are similar and therefore it is appropriate to link them in this chapter which seeks to help those working with children feel more confident about supporting them as they cope with loss. The founder of Winston’s Wish, a charity that provides support, training and resources for children and families suffering bereavement says:

‘The more that educators, counsellors, school administrators, parents and anyone else who works with children and adolescents realize this, the more equipped they will be to help young people cope with grief and incorporate loss in their lives in ways that are mentally and physically healthy’.

Julie Stokes (2004)

# What do we mean by loss, grief and bereavement?

Loss can be defined as the fact or process of losing something or someone, or the feeling of grief after losing someone or something of value. Grief can be defined as the feeling of intense sorrow experienced as a result of loss, while bereavement is the condition of being without the significant person.

# Case study 1: Sarah's story

When Sarah’s father died suddenly she was just 15 and it changed her life in more ways than one. Her father’s work took the family to many places but they had been settled for over 6 years and Sarah couldn’t remember living anywhere else. She had loyal friends, a great school and a good life, a big house with plenty of freedom and no money worries.

Just before New Year, Sarah’s dad was admitted to hospital and while Mum played it down, the children continued life as normal, expecting Dad to recover and return home soon. But two weeks later he died. Sarah was able to say goodbye to him but she was confused because in her grief and desire to keep life as normal as possible, Mum didn’t talk to her much. Five years on there are still unanswered questions, things that are unspoken. Occasionally details emerge, a small piece in the jigsaw but the big picture is still elusive.

In the immediate aftermath of Dad’s death, life was a blur, seen through a veil of tears and a mist of confusion. Sarah had a few days off school during which her friends kept in contact. Within days though, they were leaving the tied house that was owned by the company dad worked for, on the move again, and effectively homeless. An evening out to say goodbye to friends and then before she knew it, the family was back in London, Sarah had lost her father, her home, her friends and her school.

Sarah and her mum stayed with her aunt and uncle for a while. Sarah shared a room with her cousin, and shared her cousin’s friends and her life. She joined her cousin’s school, in the same year group and the same classes. Some of the subjects were different, she had been studying dance, and now she was studying food technology. She missed her friends, the freedom to come and go as she chose and not having to worry about money. She was living in someone else’s home, following someone else’s rules and living someone else’s life.

After a while, the magnitude of the situation hit Sarah and she became depressed and the school arranged some counselling which proved a life line. Later mum got a job and they moved to their own home, but life had changed forever, and so had the future.

### Activity 1

Reflect on this story and consider the issues for Sarah. As well as her father’s death, what other grief and loss did she experience? Very little has been said about the schools in this story. What do you think they could have done to support Sarah?

### What are the statistics?

There is no official data collected on the number of children affected by the death of a parent, sibling, carer or other significant person so these figures from the Child Bereavement Network are therefore estimates.

* 78% of 11-16 year olds in one survey said that they had been bereaved of a close relative or friend.
* In 2014, 23,200 parents died in the UK, leaving dependent children i.e. one parent every 22 minutes, leaving around 40,000 newly bereaved dependent children aged 0-17.
* By the age of 16, around 1 in 20 young people have experienced the death of a parent
* In the last national survey in 2004, around 3.5% of 5-16 year olds in the UK had been bereaved of a parent or sibling i.e. around 309,000 school age children
* In a survey of primary schools in Hull over 70% had a child on roll who had been bereaved of someone important to them in the last two years.
* The incidence of childhood bereavement in youth offenders is 10 times higher (41%) than the national average (4%). We might question whether this has contributed to their situation.

Children may also experience the death of siblings, close friends, grandparents and significant others. An Institute of Education study found that grandparents provide over 40% of childcare for parents who are at work or studying and over 70% of childcare at other times (Dex & Joshi, 2004). More children live in extended family households, with a third of grandparents sharing their home with a dependent grandchild. (Grandparents Plus)

Mortality rates vary by social class and geography, so children living in disadvantaged areas are more likely to be bereaved. The Childhood Bereavement Network also notes that mortality rates among disabled young people with complex health needs are higher than general, so young people attending special school are more likely to be bereaved of a friend.

Children growing up in forces’ families are also more likely to experience the loss of a parent on active service. In 2011 OfSTED found that service children were generally susceptible to social and emotional disturbance while a parent was on active deployment and that moving regularly also had an impact on their performance at school and their wellbeing. (OfSTED 2011)

### What are the emotional processes children experience and their conceptual understanding of loss and death?

Bowlby reminds us that we need special people in our lives for social and emotional development and therefore the loss of this person ‘can have profound effect on a child and may lead to anxiety, depression and insecurity later in life’. (Rathbone 1996, p18) How a child or young person responds to someone dying will depend on their age and understanding, the relationship they had with the person who died, and how that person died. All children are different so we need to consider individual needs, experience, age and stage of development and therefore responses will vary according to the range and intensity of behaviours. Children and young people grieve just as deeply as adults but they show it in different ways. They learn how to grieve by mirroring the adults around them, and rely on adults to provide them with what they need to support them in their grief.

**Common responses, feelings and behaviours**

Child Bereavement UK is a charity which supports families and educates professionals when a baby or child dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement. They provide excellent materials and resources as well as valuable guidance and advice from which some of the following is derived. It is useful to understand that “puddle jumping” is a type of in-built safety valve that prevents young children being overwhelmed by powerful feelings, dipping in and out of their grief, intensely sad one minute, then playing happily the next. However, as children get older, this instinctive “puddle jumping” becomes harder and teenagers may spend long periods of time in one behaviour or another. A young person will not ‘get over’ their grief, but with time and appropriate support, they will hopefully learn to live with it.

‘A child jumps in and out of puddles of grief, but an adult is deep in a river, being swept along with the current, finding it very difficult to get out’. (Adams 2011)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age | What are they thinking? | How are they feeling or behaving? | How can adults help? |
| Pre school 0-5 | Very young children can’t understand about death, but they do know that someone they love is missing  They may believe death is temporary or reversible and struggle with the concept of forever.  They may think death is like sleeping and ask when will they come back/wake up, why did they go away, why can’t I visit them in heaven?  Young children tend to take this literally and may see the world as part real and part fantasy.  They may worry about who will care for them and fear abandonment.  They may think they can bring someone back if they are ‘good’ or make up ideas to fill gaps in knowledge - ‘magical thinking’ | They may pull away, cry, search for the missing person  They can sense the mood around them and may be clingy or afraid of strangers  They are egocentric; see themselves as the cause of events around them.  They may be irritable, aggressive, or regress e.g. bed-wetting or thumb-sucking, or have feeding or sleeping problems  They may play at being dead, trying to make sense of the world around them.  Not having the language to communicate how they are feeling, they may show it in their behaviour.  They may ‘puddle jump’ in and out of their grief, between sadness and normality | Provide reassurance and comfort, the world can become a very scary place for a child. Perhaps provide something that feels or smells like the missing person and try to keep to routines as far as possible.  Distract them and give gentle explanations, using very concrete terms to acknowledge and explain what has happened, avoiding euphemisms like ‘gone away/to sleep/to heaven’.  As children grow, they need more information to help them make sense of the situation and they may need repeated explanations and information given in different ways. Don’t assume they understand.  Find out what has been said at home and respect the beliefs of the family to avoid confusion.  Provide a supportive and safe environment where it’s ok to ask questions and share feelings and encourage adults to role model their emotions.  Give opportunities to express feelings through play and creativity.  Understand that ‘puddle jumping’ is a safety valve and give them time and space rather than trying to ‘cheer them up’ |
| Primary age  5-11 | Begin to understand that death is final, permanent, universal and unavoidable.  May see it as something a bit ‘spooky’, a spirit, like a ghost, angel, or skeleton.  Children with family pets may have experienced it already and know that a beloved pet will not be coming back.  May be curious about specific details of what happens after death | Physical symptoms - headaches, tummy ache, manifestations of emotional pain, and stress related conditions such as eczema or asthma may be exacerbated.  They may be withdrawn, feel sad, lonely, depressed, angry, guilt, insecure, clingy  They may have nightmares, fear of abandonment and worry about the future such as where they will live  They may be the ‘perfect’ child, brave and in control or want to be very grown up, taking over the role of care giver or they may have behaviour, learning or freindhip issues.  They may feel overwhelmed, worry that they are to blame for the death and react by withdrawing or losing interest in everything. | Realise that regression is instinctive not chosen behaviour  Allow them to feel angry and find safe ways of dealing with their feelings e.g. stress ball or physical activity  Maintain consistency with the usual boundaries around acceptable behaviour  Adults need to show their feelings and emotions to show children it is okay.  Beware of expecting too much of them e.g. ‘man of the house now’.  Rather than trying to cheer them up it’s probably best to give them some time and space.  Involve them in arrangements and include them in the planning if possible. |
| Adolescents  11+ | Death may challenge their developing ideas about themselves and their future leading them to question their faith or understanding of the world.  Understand finality of death, and the impact it has had and will have on their future e.g. not sharing milestones with a parent  The want to be grown up and independent but also need support but find it hard to balance the two. | May reflect on the meaning and purpose of life, or not want to reflect, and hide their feelings.  They may be withdrawn, sad, feel lonely, confused and depressed. Life can lose purpose and meaning. They may become apathetic or develop a “what’s the point” attitude, resisting support.  The death of someone important may make them feel different, at a time when they want to be the same as everyone else.  Relationships with others becoming increasingly important and any loss can lead to feelings of anger or severe distress. They may spend more time with friends or withdraw from the family to be alone. But they can feel that friends just don’t understand and they then struggle to maintain social groups.  Influenced by social media, they may prefer to share feelings online or through their mobile phones rather than face to face.  May become very hard working to compensate for feelings of guilt or ‘act out’ in anger, impulsively or recklessly e.g. substance misuse or fighting.  Dependence or regression to younger age, insecurity, low self esteem but they may show maturity and wisdom beyond their years with real empathy for others going through difficulties.  They can feel completely overwhelmed by powerful feelings and emotions that they do not understand or expect and cannot control. | Treat them as individuals with their own specific needs. Ask them what they need and involve them in discussions around plans for their support. Encourage them to take responsibility and make choices from a range of options.  Provide information they need to understand what has happened, why and the implications for their lives. Be honest.  Let them know you are there if and when they need you without putting them under pressure and don’t be offended if they prefer to speak to someone of their own age group, or other adults so remind them who else they can go to.  Provide activities to ease the pressure of talking and spending time with other bereaved young people can help e.g. creating a memory collage  Be consistent around behaviour expectations so they feel safe and there is continuity even when life feels very far from normal.  Highlight positive attitudes and worthy attributes.  Be prepared to seek additional professional help if necessary. |
| SEN | All children struggle with the concept of death and its permanence but children with learning difficulties may find this particularly difficult to grasp and benefit from simple, practical examples to illustrate the difference between dead and living things. | They long for things to be the same as they were before.  In some cases, they may never come to a complete understanding of the finality of death, believing that the dead person has gone away and will return one day.  Many of the feelings and actions are the same as those for young children.  For children with SEN it is about their needs and development, not their age | Don’t underestimate their ability to understand and cope with tough things in life.  Find creative ways to communicate without words if needed.  If using words, use the real ones e.g. dead and dying, not euphemisms. |

Schools with children with medical needs are likely to be well equipped and experienced in supporting their pupils through the trauma of loss and death, simply because they may experience the loss of pupils due to their medical conditions.

The activities and ideas below will be helpful for all children and may be especially helpful to those with additional needs.

* Acknowledge any death because to ignore what has happened implies that this is an unimportant event and denies the existence of the person who has died.
* Use as many real life examples as you can, e.g. pictures of funerals and coffins to aid understanding.
* Try to include the child with the helpful rituals of death, such as condolence cards or attending the funeral. If this is not appropriate, give them an opportunity to say goodbye with their own simple ceremony.
* Pre-grief work is especially important to help prepare for an expected death. A well thought through visit to a hospice or hospital may help or use video or TV programmes that depict someone seriously ill and then dying. Many hospices have bereavement services. (St Christopher’s Hospice)
* Watch a bunch of flowers wilt, wither, and die then compare to a fresh bunch of the same type. The dead flowers illustrate that death is permanent, the flowers do not return to life.
* Act out or simulate a death, perhaps of an animal or bird, or use stories to help explain what happens when something or someone dies.
* Help them express emotions and reassure them they are normal and necessary. Looking at photographs or watching videos of the person who has died can facilitate expressions of sadness or anger.
* Offer opportunities for safe ways to express frustration and anger. Reassure that being angry is OK using paint, clay, rolled up newspaper to shred by hitting against a desk.
* Memories help to construct a sense of who it is they are grieving for and why e.g. a piece of fabric, from an item of clothing worn by the person who has died, or their favourite perfume or aftershave on a hanky.
* A memory box of tangible reminders chosen by the child or listening to recordings of the voice or favourite music of the dead person may help the visually impaired.
* Create a timeline with photographs of significant events and then build the deceased’s life story.

### Events that can cause loss, grief & bereavement

# Case study 2: William's story

When William was about 18 months old, his mum decided that she wasn’t really ready for motherhood and left William and his dad to manage for themselves. Occasionally, mum arranged to come and take William out for the day, but often something would crop up, a crisis at work and she wouldn’t be able to make it.

William’s dad worked shifts so he employed a live in nanny to support him with William’s care and she became a significant part of William’s life. She was a kind of surrogate mum.

When William started school, he found learning difficult and couldn’t keep up with the other children. He was shy and didn’t always understand or express himself clearly. He found it hard to make or maintain friends and was often teased and bullied because he wore glasses and didn’t seem to say or do the right things. Learning to read and write were particular challenges for him.

A few years later, dad moved him and William to be closer to dad’s family. William’s Mum did not object as she was in a new relationship, although still married to William’s dad. So they moved to live with Grandma and Granddad. William started a new school, and a few months later, Dad started a new job, and a new relationship and things seemed to settle down. Later Dad divorced William’s mum and married again, so William had a ‘new mum’.

William was assessed for his special needs and he transferred to a residential special school, where his learning and social needs could be met. William left school at 16 with no formal qualifications and now, in his forties, he works part time in a warehouse and he lives alone.

### Activity 2

Consider the issues for William. How did he experience loss and how did it affect him in the short, medium and long term?

What might be the implications for your own setting?

**"Not for nothing are they called the 'forgotten mourners'. Typically, they are uninvolved because grown-ups are trying to protect them from painful reality. And children often try to protect adults' feelings by not talking about how they feel when there has been a death.’**

**Julie Stokes, Founder of Winston’s wish, in an interview 2014 (BBC 2014)**

### Separation, divorce, forces children and families who are transitory.

As Yvonne Gabell observed ‘One event in a child’s life may lead to multiple loss’ (Gabell, 1996). The death of someone important can be devastating for any child but, for service families or other families who move around a lot, perhaps on short term contracts, travellers or refugee families, there are additional challenges. The disruption to their schooling due to moving house, or even country, leaving familiar surroundings, and friends, can be stressful and isolating for the children and their families.

Having to change school mid-term, adds to the stress, as they may face difficulties integrating into a new school, and having to make new friends, breaking in to established relationships. They may have to move several times before eventually settling and every time they change school they have to explain their situation all over again and for some this may be too hard and they choose to keep quiet. Friends and staff can inadvertently say hurtful or inappropriate things which add to their grief. Child Bereavement UK (Child Bereavement UK, 2011) provides valuable advice for supporting forces families and Gypsy and traveller families. Gypsies and travellers die on average 10 or 12 years earlier than the mainstream population and are more likely to experience the premature death of a child (17% compared to just under 10% of the wider population) and have a high suicide rate, particularly amongst young men.

When someone close dies, children from these groups may lose not just their own family unit but also belonging to a much wider one. Their identity is often very bound up with the role of the parent and if that person dies, causing them to rethink their place in the world. Teenagers especially may feel a huge sense of loss around who they thought they were and struggle with what feels like a whole new identity.

Children, whose parents may work abroad or are away for long periods, may find it difficult to accept that the person who has died is never coming back and this makes it more difficult for them to deal with the reality.

As long as they are well prepared and given a choice, seeing the dead body can help children begin to understand what being dead means and the difference between dead and alive but children in Forces families may be denied this opportunity for understandable reasons.

Death in action or through violence is often totally unexpected, sudden and traumatic, heightening the sense of shock and disbelief. Visiting the scene after a traumatic death can help those affected to make some sense of what has happened and to start to answer “how” and “why”. The opportunity to do this is limited if it happens in some far away and dangerous place. Without answers to those questions, a child may make up their own story based on unhelpful fantasies, their ‘magical thinking’. Traveller and Gypsy families traditionally burn the trailer or caravan of the deceased, removing all memories, which can also be traumatic.

Forces families may have to cope with intrusive media coverage and perhaps face Service Inquiries and an Inquest. Ongoing coverage of the conflict can have a big impact on children and prolong their grief, similarly with refugee families.

For any grieving child, school offers space and time to escape from overwhelming emotions found at home. Bereaved Forces children may be more susceptible to low self-esteem, loss of identity, and may find the expected changes that happen within a school environment, difficult to cope with.

Bereaved Forces families lose a very structured way of life and all the support mechanisms that go with it so any practical help that can be offered will be greatly appreciated.

It helps to remember that forces families are surrounded by constant reminders in the media. Try to sensitively remind peer groups that talking about what they see in the media about any conflicts, might be particularly upsetting for their friends.

### How can school support? Key aspects of good practice and resources

For a child, or young person, whose life has been turned upside down, the routines of school life can give a sense of normality. Everything else may have fallen apart but school and the people within it are still there, offering a sense of security and continuity.

(CBUK)

The death of a child is always distressing, whether expected on not. Children in school may have life limiting or even terminal illnesses for which the school and family will have a management plan. This may apply more often for children attending special educational needs settings. However, when the time comes it is always a shock.

# Case study 3: Darren's story

Darren was a normal, fun loving, cheeky, popular, energetic six-year-old playing in the garden in the summer holidays, with his brother and sister when suddenly he collapsed. An ambulance came but sadly Darren was pronounced dead at the scene, having suffered a major heart attack.

It was by chance that the Head teacher of his school was tidying up in her office, taking advantage of the peace and quiet of the holidays, when she picked up a voicemail from the local authority safeguarding team, informing her of Darren’s sudden death. It was a shock; she couldn’t believe it and needed to understand what had happened. Unbeknown to the school, Darren had an underlying heart condition, diagnosed and treated as a baby, but not thought to be a continuing worry, so mum had not told the school about it. She wanted him to grow up like any other active little boy.

The Head teacher carefully worded a message which she sent to all staff. It was important that they heard about it as soon as possible, from her, before they picked it up on the grapevine, since many of them lived in and were part of the local community. Staff were equally shocked and needed to know what to do and how to react.

As soon as possible, the Head teacher contacted the family, to give her condolences and to talk about how the school would respond at the beginning of term. It was also important to consider the needs of Darren’s siblings and his friends in school.

While staff tried to come to terms with their own feelings, they knew that they needed to plan for the start of term and how they would handle the first day. It was agreed that the Head teacher would break the news to Darren’s class first and then to the whole school in assembly, following which each teacher would spend time talking with their class and giving them time to absorb the news in their own way. The family was consulted at every stage to ensure that they were happy with what was being said and how it was being handled.

The local authority provided support through the human resources and psychology teams. The school’s family worker and learning support mentor were key roles in providing support to staff, children and families, making good use of the resources of local services too, such as a local hospice that provided bereavement counselling and training.

Activity 3: School action plan

What does your setting already have in place to support children with loss and bereavement?

Begin to discuss these issues with colleagues and prepare a draft action plan with the aim of developing a policy or protocol. Don’t wait until something happens.

There are two elements to how a school can support children suffering grief, loss or bereavement. The first is ‘after the fact’, that is, the response to the event itself, how to work with the family, communicating effectively and drawing upon the available services. The second is about providing children with some understanding of death and providing all children with an environment where they can learn about and feel safe and secure to express their feelings and emotions.

In January 2013 South Whitehaven Children’s centre was acknowledged by OfSTED as a model of good practice in this area (OfSTED 2013) as they provided a ‘sensitive, responsive, empathic approach’ to enable children to express their feelings, acknowledge their loss and develop skills to cope with their changed lives.

Their children’s bereavement group provided a safe and protected space where children felt safe to talk, express their grief and felt listened to. It also provided parents and carers with opportunities to share their experiences, where they had time, a listening ear and opportunities to grow and heal at their own pace.

South Whitehaven’s eight-week course uses play therapy, art, music and massage to help children and families learn that all emotions are acceptable, including laughter and fun as well as time for reflection and acknowledgement of the pain.

The staff are skilful and astute, realising there is no universal route to supporting someone through bereavement and therefore they also provide one to one support if preferred. This has implications in terms of training for staff in schools. The resources section below provides some useful contacts which can help schools to train staff.

The following is a possible timeline for dealing with the death of a parent and can be used as a starting point for developing a programme suitable for your own school or setting (Winston’s Wish 2011).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Short term | * School informed of death of a parent * Child and family consulted on how to tell the rest of the school * Head teacher seeks advice from LA, CBUK and WW * CT informed * CT contacts child at home to express sympathy and support * Rest of the staff informed * Plan how to tell the rest of the children * Staff reminded about other children in school who have suffered bereavement and for whom this may be especially difficult * Letter written to inform parents * Governors and key parents may support by being around at home time * Information given to teachers on how to manage various responses & where to seek additional support * Letter of condolence sent to family * Staff discuss how to respond to child on return to school, what to say and how to behave * The child's class given a chance to focus on feelings and ask questions * CT supported by key staff e.g. family worker, learning mentor * CT (& other key staff) visit family at home to explain what the school is doing & plan for return |
| Medium term | * Child returns to school, met by CT & given some time to adjust to being back * Check everyone still happy with the plan * Child given chance to identify an adult supporter * Child given permission to dip out of lessons whenever needed for the next few days and seek out chosen supporter. * Child is supported as they share with the class what has been agreed * Class mates advised that child wants people to talk about it and understand when they cry sometimes * Time set aside at the end of the day to review with CT how things have gone and any changes for the next day |
| Long term | * In consultation with family, agree how the school will mark the funeral – who will attend and whether school will close. * Other members of the school may wish to contribute memories * In agreement with the rest of the staff, arrange a system for child whenever the pressure of grief builds up e.g. ‘time out’ to visit her supporter * Ensure family knows about local and national child bereavement services. * CT compiles a ‘calendar of memories’ – noting any significant sensitive dates e.g. the anniversary of the death, birthday, Father’s Day etc. This calendar can follow through the school and on to next school * Staff need heightened sensitivity to issues e.g. if the death was in a fire, then be aware that studying the Great Fire of London might be difficult. |

In terms of curriculum and teaching programmes, there are some obvious links such as in religious education where children can learn about the traditions and beliefs of different religions. This helps them to see that there are different ways to respond to death and bereavement. Children can visit places of worship and hear from faith leaders about what they believe and about what happens when someone dies. For example, most Christians believe in some kind of heaven but this may vary according to denomination while Muslims may believe that death is just moving on to another part of the journey of existence. The London Borough of Bromley Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education includes a module for children in Year 5/6 to explore emotions connected with loss and leaving, including religious teaching concerning death and the after-life. It also looks at what has changed during the year such as new teacher, friends, new home etc.

In Science, children learn about life and living processes, so it seems appropriate for them to look at what happens at the end of life too. Looking at a dead bird or insect can help them to understand that it has no feelings or senses any longer, not does it suffer pain. This can help children to accept the permanence of death.

In English, there are many opportunities to read stories about death and to discuss them. Some suggested books are listed in the resources section. Children can also be encouraged to write letters, poems, stories, journals or diaries, or captions for pictures that they may create.

In PSHE, there is an opportunity to think about feelings and emotions and how we respond to different situations, helping children to recognise that it is okay to have feelings, and to express them. (Winston’s Wish, 2011). The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme which was widely used by schools, and is still used in many, provides an excellent framework for helping children to look at emotions and relationships. (DFES, 2005). It is worth seeking out, although it has been officially archived by UK government.

### Memo from a grieving child

Please:

* Keep me informed of what is going on
* Be honest with me, even if you have to say ‘I don’t know’
* Speak in simple language with no euphemisms
* Let me be involved in the grieving process with others – don’t exclude me
* Let me cry alongside you
* Let me be able to comfort others
* Assure me that I am loved and safe and will be taken care of
* Accept what I do or say without judgement – don’t compare me with others
* Let me be able to say goodbye
* Allow me to talk about the person who has died
* Give me the structure, discipline and routine that will help me recover
* Help me keep the memories alive

(Perkins, 2007)

### Useful resources

### Websites

Winston’s Wish - [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

Child Bereavement UK - <http://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

CRUSE bereavement care - <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Childhood Bereavement network - [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

### Books for adults

A Teachers Handbook of Death by Maggie Jackson and Jim Colwell, 2001, Jessica Kingsley.

Childhood Bereavement: Developing the Curriculum and Pastoral Support by Nina Job and Gill Frances, 2007, National Children’s Bureau.

Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults by Atle Dyregrov, 2008, Jessica Kingsley.

Grief in School Communities by Louise Rowling, 2003, Open University.

Supporting Bereaved Children: A Handbook for Primary Schools by Erica Brown, 2009, Help the Hospices.

Then, Now and Always: Supporting Children as They Journey Through Grief: A Guide for Practitioners by Julie A. Stokes, 2004, Winston’s Wish

### Books for children and young people

A Sky of Diamonds: A story for children about loss, grief and hope by Camille Gibbs, 2015, Jessica Kingsley

A Teen’s Simple Guide through Grief by Alexis Cunningham, 2001, Jalmar Press

All Kinds of Feelings: A Lift the Flap Book Illustrated by Emma Brownjohn, 2003, Tango Books.

Always and Forever by Alan Durant & illustrated by Debi Gliori, 2003, Random House

Are You Sad, Little Bear? A Book About Learning to Say Goodbye by Rachel Rivett, Tina McNaughton, 2009, Lion Hudson

Badger’s Parting Gifts by Susan Varley, 1992, Picture Lions

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson, 1995, Puffin

Goodbye Mog by Judith Kerr, 2003, Harper Collins Children’s books

Goodnight Mr Tom by Michelle Magorian, 1993, Puffin

Granpa – The Book of the Film Based on the story by John Burningham, 1991, Ladybird Books Ltd

Michael Rosen’s Sad Book, by Michael Rosen, Walker Books, 2011

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