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# Critical incident support for early years settings, schools and colleges in Hampshire

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## Help and information for Settings

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## Contents

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- 1. How HEP supports early years settings, schools and colleges**
- 2. Guidance to the setting**
- 3. Support after a death by suicide**
- 4. How to communicate with children and young people**
- 5. Developmental responses by children and young people**
- 6. Template letter to parents and carers- death of a member of staff**
- 7. Template letter to parents and carers- death of a pupil**
- 8. Loss and bereavement – useful websites**
- 9. Emotional support for staff**
- 10. HEP’s loss and bereavement resource books**
- 11. HEP’s story books for loss, bereavement, worry and reassurance**
- 12. Activities to support children and young people**
- 13. Self-care activities for children and young people**
- 14. Supporting wellbeing for school staff**
- 15. Supporting a bereaved child/young person returning to school**

# How HEP supports early years settings, schools and colleges in Hampshire

## Introduction

Educational Psychologists (EPs) from Hampshire Educational Psychology (HEP) provide support and guidance to schools and colleges in response to critical incidents. A critical incident may also be described as typically involving an incident which is sudden, outside of the 'everyday' or typical experience, unpredictable and brings distress to the school or college community.

Examples of critical incidents can include:

- death of staff member, pupil or member of the school community;
- serious accident involving pupils or staff members;
- a major fire in a setting;
- an event witnessed outside of school (such as a serious assault or accident).

Psychologists have established that the main aim of any response to a critical incident should be to reinforce existing, natural support networks: this is the case for children, young people and adults.

Therefore, the overall aim of the response of psychologists in HEP is to provide swift and evidence-based psychological support tailored to the needs of the individual setting/community. This may be guidance on how to respond to the needs of children, young people and adults following an unexpected death, or how to prepare for an expected event, such as terminal illness. While no circumstances are the same, there are underlying similarities in the reactions to expect and helpful steps to take.

It is important to note that we offer a response to all early years settings, schools and colleges across Hampshire. It does not matter if a school or college has a service level agreement (SLA) with us because this work is supported by Hampshire County Council.

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## How are educational psychologists usually notified of a critical incident?

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- A member of school staff, usually a senior leader, gets in touch with their SLA EP or a senior EP in their local area team.
- A school improvement manager sometimes contacts us on behalf of a headteacher.
- We hear about a critical incident from Hampshire's Safeguarding Team.

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## What to expect from a HEP educational psychologist?

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- Whichever way we hear about a critical incident, an EP will be in touch with the headteacher, principal or another senior leader, as soon as possible.
- The purpose will be to ask about what happened, what steps have been taken so far and what action might be helpful by an EP.
- If there is a role for an EP, we will make an internal decision about which EP takes on that role.
- We avoid duplicating readily available advice and guidance and so can provide details about helpful website and organisations that offer information and guidance on a range of critical incidents, and typical emotional and behavioural reactions.
- Support for school staff may be through a visit to your setting or may be provided at a convenient time online. We will agree with you about who to involve and the practical arrangements. We can meet with individual staff, groups of staff, or both.
- Discussion will need to involve clarifying the facts about an event, providing information about the behaviours and feelings that can follow a critical incident, and agreeing future action.
- It may be helpful to think through the developmental and psychological needs of children and young people and the emotional needs of adults and an opportunity to discuss support and management strategies for them.
- We can provide general staff professional development on loss and bereavement and signpost to organisations offering support.

- We accept that different people react to a critical incident in different ways and that some reactions may be delayed. This means we will always be available to be contacted at any time in the future.

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## Support and Contact

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### Supporting in the event of a suicide

When somebody dies by suicide, the impact on the wider community can be significant. A suicide death is a critical incident and HEP can offer support: it is important to be mindful of particular references to consider, so please do let us know if it is suspected that a death may be a suicide.

Hampshire's Prevention and Postvention Protocol for Hampshire Schools and Colleges can be found at [Hampshire Suicide Prevention & Postvention Protocol: Guidance for Schools & Colleges - Hampshire SCP](#)

### Contact

If you are seeking support or would like further information about how HEP can support your setting, please contact your local office, as below:

- West – Dr Anna Nolan, 01962 876239
- North – Dan Taylor, 01252 814835
- East – Dr Caroline Robertson, 01252 814729
- South – Dr Jamie Coe, 02392 441496
- PEP – Dr Becci Murphy [Rebecca.murphy@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Rebecca.murphy@hants.gov.uk)



Prepared by Hampshire Educational Psychology (HEP) 2025

## Guidance to the setting

- A senior member of staff should be the designated contact with the family of the deceased to offer sympathy, obtain factual details and to ask what the family would like others to be told. Consider a dedicated phone line for communication.
- If it is suspected that a death may be a suicide, see Hampshire's Prevention and Postvention Protocol for Hampshire Schools and Colleges. [Hampshire Suicide Prevention & Postvention Protocol: Guidance for Schools & Colleges - Hampshire SCP](#)
- If appropriate, ensure that a member of staff contacts any pupils who may have been affected if they are at home or in hospital and arrange a sensitive return to school or alternative teaching if necessary.
- If police are involved seek advice on what information can be shared. Seek advice from [HCC press officer](#) before any contact with media.
- Staff should be informed as soon as possible; ideally in a meeting before the start of the day. Staff and governors not present should be informed via email/phone.
- Decide which members of staff feel able to pass on the information to pupils, being aware of the staff for whom the news may have special significance e.g. own personal losses, close relationship with deceased or teachers early in their career. Class cover to be arranged if needed.
- Decide how and when the news will be shared with pupils e.g. smaller groups (class or tutor groups) may be better than large whole school assemblies, using a familiar member of staff (class teacher). Be aware of the impact on some pupils for whom the news may be especially difficult to cope with e.g. own personal losses/ anxieties, close relationship with deceased, pupils with additional needs.
- Agree what information should be shared with pupils; possibly have a written script to ensure consistency. Factual information should be shared, avoiding the use of euphemisms such as 'passed away' or 'lost' as this may be confusing for younger children (see 'How to talk to children' page).
- Time should be allowed for children to ask questions and express feelings. It may be beneficial to go off timetable temporarily to allow pupils to reflect and remember. However, usual routine should be returned to as soon as appropriate to support recovery of normality (some pupils will be ready before others).

- Letters/emails should be sent home to explain what has happened, what the pupils have been told and what support is available. Sad event and critical incident guidance from HEP for families could be shared. See sample letters.
- Create separate safe spaces within school for staff and pupils to talk and comfort one another.
- Providing an outlet for expressing sympathy (cards, poems, memory books etc.) can be helpful for pupils to share thoughts and feelings. See activities for children.
- An area for flowers/memories/cards should be made available for anyone wishing to express sympathy (this should be a temporary space and in an area that needs to be sought rather than as you first enter school).
- A staff debrief at the end of the day for staff to come together to give/receive support (e.g. tea and biscuits).



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## Following days/weeks

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- Contact should be made to the family regarding:
  - the funeral. Who is invited and when will it take place? Class cover should be considered. It may also be appropriate to hold something similar at school (lighting of a candle, remembrance assembly) for those that cannot attend.
  - ways for the community to share their feelings e.g. condolence/memory book.
  - Later an award, bench, piece of play equipment etc. may be appropriate and students and family may wish to be involved in thinking about that.

## Support after a death by suicide

After a suicide, schools and colleges play an important role in reducing the likelihood of imitational behaviour and helping recovery by preparing a response thoroughly and responding appropriately to a suspected suicide if the worst should happen. A Canadian study found that the suicide of a schoolmate increased the risk of suicidal thoughts or attempts among young people aged 12-17 years (especially 12-13 year olds) for up to two years following the suicide, and had an impact that was even greater than the suicide of a family member.



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### Postvention Support

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- *Hampshire*  
[Hampshire Suicide Prevention & Postvention Protocol: Guidance for Schools & Colleges - Hampshire SCP](#)
- *Cruse Bereavement Support*  
*Lead charity providing support in Hampshire for young people families and settings who have experienced death by suicide.*  
*Website: [Cruse Now – You're not alone](#)*  
*Email: [crusenow@cruse.org.uk](mailto:crusenow@cruse.org.uk)*  
*Phone: 03305550129*
- *The Samaritans*  
[Step by step support Help when you needed it most booklet UK EDS08 UK 2020 WEB.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#)

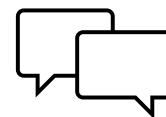
Samaritans offers the Step-by-Step service in order to support the school community, and reduce the risk of further suicide. [stepbystep@samaritans.org](mailto:stepbystep@samaritans.org) and 0808 168 2528



- *Papyrus*  
*Building Suicide-Safer Schools & Colleges – Guide for teachers & staff*

## Papyrus guide

- *Support After Suicide Partnership*  
<http://Supportaftersuicide.org.uk/support-guides/help-is-at-hand>
- *Winston's Wish*  
*Beyond the Rough Rock* (including scripts for supporting adults explaining to children) [Beyond the Rough Rock](#)
- *Hampshire CAMHS* – [www.hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk](http://www.hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk)  
SAFE Campaign – short film
- *National Suicide Prevention Alliance* - [www.nspa.org.uk](http://www.nspa.org.uk)
- Working together to safeguard children (Chp 5)
- *Stayingsafe.net* (Lots of practical support for a young person to support their wellbeing and make a safety plan if they are at risk) – [www.stayingsafe.net](http://www.stayingsafe.net)
- *Zero Suicide Alliance* training (20 minute really helpful training) - [www.zerosuicidealliance.com](http://www.zerosuicidealliance.com)
- [https://uktraumacouncil.link/documents/210505\\_UKTC\\_TB\\_ClinicalGuide.pdf](https://uktraumacouncil.link/documents/210505_UKTC_TB_ClinicalGuide.pdf) (A guide from the UK Trauma council for understanding & supporting traumatic grief)
- *When it is darkest. Why people die by suicide and what we can do to prevent it* by Rory O'Connor (2021) (Overview of recent research in accessible form).

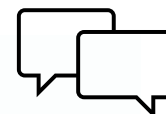


## How to communicate with children and young people

It's normal to worry about making things worse by saying too much or the wrong thing but remember that there is no 'best way' to communicate to a child that someone has died or is very unwell. Often adults want to protect children from death and it's normal to think that children need to be shielded. However, in reality children are very aware and will pick up when something as enormous as a death has occurred. It is helpful not to have preconceived ideas about what is the 'best way' to help as different people will appreciate different approaches. However, the following guidelines are helpful to consider:



- Use **clear and direct** language when telling a child someone has died, using words like 'died', 'dying' and 'dead' rather than ambiguous words (e.g. 'passed away' or 'lost'). Children tend to 'fill in the gaps' to try and make sense of what is happening so it is important to be **calm and honest**, sharing accurate information so they do not create scenarios in their heads.
- You don't need to give children all of the information in one go. When telling a child someone has died/is dying it's best to give them information in **smaller chunks** that are more manageable and build it up like a jigsaw.
- Let children ask questions about what has happened, letting them lead the conversation. Let children know that **they can continue to ask questions** and that adults will tell the truth.
- Be aware of providing **space and silence**, and not saying too much, communicating care and empathy through **non-verbal communication** rather than ask questions or assuming the child will talk.
- Be **careful of using humour** as that can appear as though the loss is being minimalised through attempting to 'lighten' the atmosphere.



## Telling a child with SEND about someone who has died/is dying

Consider the guidelines above as well as providing the relevant details to the level of the child's understanding and using their preferred mode(s) of communication. By giving children with SEND the facts about the illness/death, we are helping them to understand what has happened and supporting them with any changes this may bring, which is best for the whole family. The charity, Winston's Wish, has a resource called '[We all Grieve](#)' to assist adults who work with children with SEND.

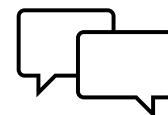


## Examples of ways to explain to a child that someone has died

Some suggested words:



- “We know that all living things will die someday. Flowers, animals, trees, butterflies, people all die eventually...”
- “... however, the great majority of people will die when they are very old.”
- “Occasionally, someone will die before they are old because, for example, of an accident or serious illness.”
- “When someone dies, their body stops working and they are no longer able to do the things they could when they were alive, such as move or talk or hug or play.”
- “Sadly, [name] has died. Everyone wishes they had not died and had lived for many more years. However, their body was not able to keep working and so they died. Their heart stopped beating, their lungs stopped breathing and their brain stopped thinking, and so they died.”
- “We are very healthy and we’re going to do all we can to keep that way, because I want to be around to [play with my great grandchildren/travel to Mars/celebrate the year 2100].”



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## Answering children's questions

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### **What will happen to me?**

'Daddy/Mummy/Granny/Grandad will still be here for you and will look after you. It is very important to me to make sure you will be safe and looked after. We have talked about it and made plans for what will happen.'

### **Will I get cancer?**

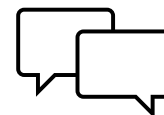
'Cancer is not like a cold and you cannot catch it. It is okay to sit close to Mummy/Daddy/Granny/Grandad and hug or kiss them.'

### **Am I going to die too?**

'You cannot catch cancer. Most people die when they are old and their bodies get worn out. It is very unusual and sad for someone young to be so ill that the doctors cannot make them better.'

### **Is it my fault?**

'Nothing you did, said or thought made me ill. It is no one's fault.'



### **Who will look after me if Daddy/Mummy/Granny/Grandad dies too?**

'If something happens to Daddy/Mummy/Granny/Grandad, we can arrange for someone you know well to become your guardian and they will look after you.'

## Developmental responses by children and young people

Children and young people might react quite differently to how adults would or how you might expect. Initial reactions to the news of a death may vary greatly from considerable distress, to finding it hard to speak, or they may not react very much at all. Young children in particular, tend to ‘jump’ in and out of their grief – a little like jumping in and out of a puddle – leaping from feeling very upset and distressed one moment to wanting to know what’s for tea or whether they can play football, for example. The reason for this is that children need a break from the powerful emotions that accompany their grief and so are able to jump out of them for a while in order that they are not overwhelmed. Whilst this can be difficult for adults to understand and to keep up with, it is very normal and it doesn’t mean that the child doesn’t care or isn’t impacted by what has happened. It may take them some time to process what has happened and they might need some help in finding ways to express how it feels for them.

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### Understanding by different ages

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(Children with additional needs’ understanding might be at a lower level than their chronological age)

#### One to three years old

- They may be aware that someone is missing but will not fully understand why and may notice changes in their life caused by the death particularly related to changes in their routines and care.
- They will not understand the finality of death and so may expect the person who has died to come back.
- They will react to other people’s emotional states, which they may not understand.

### Three to five years old

- They will struggle to understand what 'dead' means and they may expect the person who died to return.
- They will miss the person who has died. They may be able to recognise some feelings but are unlikely to be able to link it to their grief.
- A child at the top end of this developmental level may understand some of the physical reasons behind a death but will still find this difficult to grasp.

### Six to nine years old

- They will be beginning to develop an understanding that death is irreversible.
- They will understand that death is something that will happen to all living things but they may still be confused about it and have many questions.
- It is not uncommon for children at this developmental level to think of death as something spooky, like a monster or a spirit that comes to get you.

### Ten to thirteen years old

- At this developmental level, children are much more aware of the finality of death and the impact death has on them.
- They are able to understand death as both concrete and abstract.
- Children at this stage are beginning to think of the longer-term consequences of the loss of the relationship.
- They are aware of the loss they feel in the present but also of the losses they will experience in the coming months and years. The child will begin to understand that there will be further grief in the future – as the person who has died will not be with them for important milestones or occasions.

### Understanding at a thirteen+ year old

- At this stage, children will have a full understanding of death, the fact that it is permanent and that it is something that affects all living beings.

## Template letter to parents and carers – death of a member of staff

Dear parents/carers

I am sorry to inform you that a [well-respected/long-standing/well-loved/popular/well-known] member of our staff, [Name], died [suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness].

The pupils were told today [by their class teacher/tutor/head of year/in assembly] and many will be reacting to this news. When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

Our thoughts are with [Name's] family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember [Name's] life.



Headteacher



## Template letter to parents and carers – death of a pupil

Dear parents and carers

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/head teacher/head of year had the sad task of informing the pupils of the death of [Name], a pupil in [Year].

[Name] died suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness yesterday/last week/over the weekend/during half term.

He/She/they was/were a [value/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly] member of the class/school community and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her/them.

When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

Our thoughts are with [Name's] family and friends at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember [Name] life.



Headteacher



## Loss and bereavement – useful websites

Please find below a selection of useful website links for adults supporting children and young people who have experienced loss and bereavement. Click on the links below to visit the associated webpage.

### Loss and bereavement support

- [Winston's Wish](#)
- [Grief Encounter](#)
- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#)
- [Child Bereavement UK](#)
- [Childhood Bereavement Network](#)
- [UK Trauma Council](#)



### General resources and information relating to loss and bereavement

- [Simon Says - bereavement support charity that provides support and advice to young people and their families across Hampshire including Bereavement Support for Young People booklet \(PDF downloadable booklet\)](#)
- [Winston's Wish](#)
- [Hampshire CAMHS bereavement information page](#)
- [NHS Information page: Coping with bereavement](#)



## For young people

- [Young Minds](#) – Support pages for young people relating to grief and loss including topics such as: What is grief, working through your grief and where to get help.
- [Hope Again](#) - Cruse Bereavement Care’s website for young people with information, vlogs, podcasts, videos and sharing personal stories.
- [What’s your grief](#) – a support website created by two sisters who were bereaved of their parents and want to provide support for others. They have written a blog detailing different topics and articles.
- [Lost for Words](#) – a resource which shares supportive words from children who have experienced loss and bereavement.
- [Cards for young people](#) – Visual e-cards with suggestions from young people who have experienced loss and bereavement including cards providing tips for the young person and cards for seeking support from those around them (parents, friends and teachers).
- <https://apartofme.app/> - An app game designed to help young people cope with the death of a loved one (adults should look at this to see if it is appropriate for the child/young person first).



what's  
your  
grief?

## Additional helpful resources for schools and educational settings

- [Developing a bereavement policy](#) guidance is written by Child Bereavement UK including template policy and letters for parent/carers.
- Seesaw [School Pack guide to supporting pupils](#)
- Simon Says resources including:
  - [School Professionals - SimonSays](#)
  - [School bereavement policy and procedures - SimonSays](#)
  - [What to do when someone in the school community dies - SimonSays](#)
  - [Supporting bereaved pupils at school - SimonSays](#)
- Samaritans Step by Step resource [Help When We Needed it Most](#) (downloadable PDF) – guidance on school response to death by suicide.



## Emotional support for staff

### If you need urgent mental health support

- Call 999 in an emergency or 111 non-emergency NHS support
- [Samaritans](#) (116 123 – helpline 24 hours)
- If you need mental health support or counselling:
- [Hampshire Employee support](#) (0800 028 0199 – no referral needed)
- [Education Support line](#) (08000 562 561)
- [Solent Mind iTalk](#) (self-referral online)



### If you need support following a sudden death

- [Cruse Now – You're not alone](#) (03305550129)  
[crusenowiow@cruse.org.uk](mailto:crusenowiow@cruse.org.uk)
- [Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide](#) (0300 111 5065)



Please also get in touch for further information and resources relating to supporting loss and bereavement for children and young people with Special Educational Needs.

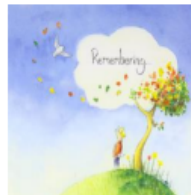
## HEP's loss and bereavement resource books



**Title: Someone I Know Has Died**

**Author: Trish Phillips**

Innovative activity book with interactive features written for bereaved children to do by themselves or with adult help. For pre-school and early years.



**Title: Remembering**

**Author: Dianne Leutner / Daniel Postgate**

It's part book, part scrapbook and was created to help keep a child's memories alive after the loss of someone special and to give children a place to return to whenever they wish.



**Title: When Something Terrible Happens: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief**

**Author: Marge Heegaard**

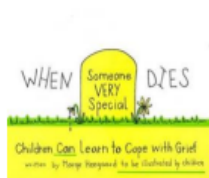
A practical format for allowing children to understand the concept of death and develop coping skills for life, this book is designed for young readers to illustrate.



**Title: Love Will Never Die**

**Author: Clare Shaw**

Using clear but child-friendly language, large colourful illustrations, this rhyming book addresses the mixed feelings a bereaved child might go through. It offers support and understanding alongside interactive areas where the child can express themselves through writing and drawing.



**Title: When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief**

**Author: Marge Heegaard**

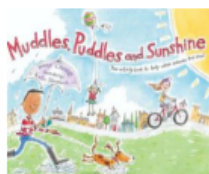
This workbook was designed to teach basic concepts of death and help children understand and express the many feelings they have when someone special dies. Communication is increased and coping skills are developed as they illustrate their books with their personal story.



**Title: Still Here with Me: Teenagers and Children on Losing a Parent**

**Author: Suzanne Sjoqvist**

This book is a moving and thoughtful anthology of the experiences of thirty children and teenagers who have lost a parent. In their own words, children and young people of a variety of ages talk openly and honestly about losing their mother or father. They describe feelings of pain, loss and anger, the struggle to cope with the embarrassed reactions and silence of others, and the difficulties involved in rebuilding their lives. They also share happy and loving memories of their parents, and talk about the importance of remembering while learning to accept their parent's deaths.



**Title: Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your Activity Book to Help When Someone Has Died**

**Author: Diana Crossley / Kate Sheppard**

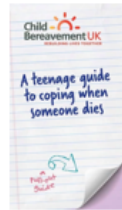
Offering practical and sensitive support for bereaved children, this book suggests a helpful series of activities and exercises accompanied by the friendly characters of Bee and Bear. It aims to help children make sense of their experience by reflecting on different aspects of their grief.

## HEP's loss and bereavement resource books



**Title: Grief Encounter**  
**Author: Shelley Gilbert**

Aimed at 8-15 year olds. The focus is on the death of a parent, but suitable for the loss of a sibling, grandparent, friend. Author recommends that the book is used with an adult, at least initially.



**Title: A teenage Guide to Coping When Someone Dies (fold out A3 guide)**

**Author: Child Bereavement**

This resource can be folded down to fit in a pocket. It contains practical advice and guidance for a young person managing confusing emotions when someone important in their life dies. Original text written by a young person whose father died.



**Title: Grief Encounter**  
**Author: Shelley Gilbert**

Aimed at 8-15 year olds. A workbook to encourage conversations with children, young people and adults about death. Grieving is hard work, especially for parents and children in deep grief. The upward spiral of grief replaces stages theory and allows time for people to adjust to the fact that someone special has died. The book is full of creative activities and offers incredible comfort to mourners-old and young. The focus is on the death of a parent, but suitable for the loss of a sibling, grandparent, friend. Author recommends that the book is used with an adult, at least initially.



**Title: Teenage Guide to Coping with Life after Death: Helping Teenagers Through the Death of the Mum, Dad, Sister, or Brother**

**Author: Grief Encounter**

This guide is to introduce young people to some ideas, to Grief Encounter, and to other things that may help. Grief Encounter aim to help young people feel less alone, acknowledge what they are going through, and to help them feel back in control.

<https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/12583-Teenagers-Guide.pdf>



**Title: Sometimes Life Sucks: When Someone You Love Dies**

**Author: Molly Carlile**

Teenagers experience loss in all kinds of ways. Whether it's the death of a grandparent, pet or school friend, a teen fatality, a peer with terminal illness, living without a mum or dad, or the death of a celebrity. Like everyone else teenagers also struggle to come to terms with their shock and grief. Full of great tips, stories and gentle advice, *Sometimes Life Sucks* helps teens to navigate their personal experience of grief.



**Title: What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?**

**Author: Trevor Romaine & Elizabeth Verdick**

Suggests ways of coping with grief and offers answers to questions such as 'Why do people have to die?' and 'How can I say Goodbye?' Friendly, accessible text and illustrations aimed at ages 8-14.

## HEP's loss and bereavement resource books



**Title: Out of the Blue**

**Author: Julie Stokes & Paul Oxley**

This book has been written and designed specifically for teenagers with aim of supporting them through their bereavement using a range of activities. Narrated throughout by teenagers words and stories, the book talks openly about the real feelings they may struggle with when someone important in their life dies. The activities in the book allow those feelings to be worked through and safely explored. Each character in the book reinforces the message that "I'm not alone." Out of the Blue can be completed by a teenager on their own or with the help of a family member or appropriate professional.



**Title: Beyond the Rough Rock**

**Author: Winston's Wish**

Explaining to a child that someone has died by suicide is possibly one of the most difficult situations that a parent or carer might ever face. This booklet offers practical advice for families in the immediate days and weeks when suicide has been the cause of death. It is a useful booklet aimed at giving parents and professionals the confidence to involve children in discussions about the nature of a death by suicide. It is hoped that children may then begin to understand some of the complexities that often surround suicide. The booklet includes child-friendly activities for you to do as a family as you begin to make sense of what has happened and start to look at ways in which your family can learn to cope.



**Title: Hope Beyond the Headline**

**Author: Winston's Wish**

This specialist book offers practical advice for families in the immediate days, weeks and months following a murder. It is written for both parents and professionals, giving them the confidence to involve children and young people in understanding and managing the particular difficulties and complexities that so often surround a death by murder or manslaughter. It includes child-friendly activities to do with children or as a family to help them to make sense of what has happened and to begin to express their grief.



**Title: The Family Has Been Informed**

**Author: Winston's Wish**

In this booklet we offer information that aims to be helpful to families and professionals who come into contact with children and young people from military families who have been bereaved. We also suggest practical ideas and describe the services that Winston's Wish can offer nationally.



**Title: As Big as it Gets: Supporting a child when someone is seriously ill**

**Author: Winston's Wish**

This booklet provides a range of ideas for parents and carers so that they feel able to involve their children in what is happening. The book also includes some suggestions about what parents might say to children and how to offer support.

## HEP's loss and bereavement resource books



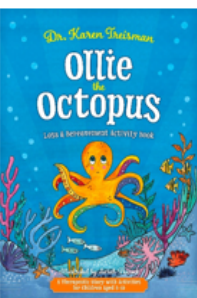
**Title:** Never Too Young to Grieve: Supporting children under 5 after the death of a parent  
**Author:** Winston's Wish

Bereavement during a child's early years interrupts the attachment that they have with that person. In the absence of strong memories of their own, it can be hard for a young child to remember the person who has died and to feel connected to them. This booklet is designed for parents, carers, childcare professionals and other adults supporting children up to the age of 5 who have experienced the death of a parent or carer. It offers information and ideas as well as some activities which we hope will benefit children and their families.



**Title:** We All Grieve: Supporting bereaved children who have special educational needs and disabilities  
**Author:** Winston's Wish

In the past, the needs of bereaved children with SEND have not always been considered. We All Grieve looks at how children with SEND are affected by a bereavement, how those around them can support them and help to develop the child's understanding of death and loss. This book is designed for parents, carers, educational professionals and other adults supporting children and young adults with SEND who have experienced the death of someone close to them. It offers information, practical suggestions and ideas for activities as well as where to find other support.



**Title:** Ollie the Octopus – Loss and bereavement activity book  
**Author:** Dr Karen Treisman

This is a therapeutic story and related activities for children aged 5-10. Written by clinical psychologist Dr Karen Treisman. The activities include those around remembering the person you cared about as well as those to help you manage your feelings when they seem too big. There is a guide for adults to support this work, it's at the back of the book but best to read first.



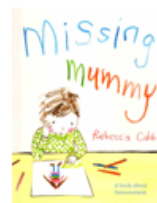
**Title:** You Just Don't Understand  
**Author:** Winston's Wish

The transition from childhood to adulthood can be a challenging process at the best of times. This booklet aims to help you understand what is normal adolescent development, and to recognise the additional problems teenagers may face if someone important dies during these years. This booklet is based on many years' experience of working with bereaved teenagers, families and professionals who support them and the information here will help you to consider how to respond to the individual needs of a bereaved teenager.

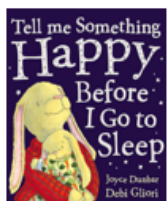
## HEP's story books for loss, bereavement, worry and reassurance



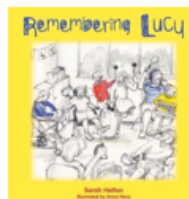
**Title: The Feelings Book**  
**Author: Todd Parr**  
This could accompany the spiral model of grief.



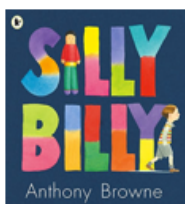
**Title: Missing Mummy**  
**Author: Rebecca Cobb**  
When mummy dies this little girl is confused and has many questions.



**Title: Tell Me Something Happy Before I go to Sleep**  
**Author: Joyce Dunbar / Debi Gliori**  
Not specifically on bereavement but reassurance to sleep.



**Title: Remembering Lucy**  
**Author: Sarah Helton / Anna Novy**  
When a friend dies in school, friends grieve and remember.



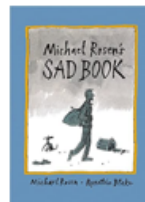
**Title: Silly Billy**  
**Author: Anthony Browne**  
We have worry dolls to go with this story. Not specific to loss but about Billy's worries.



**Title: The Garden of Hope**  
**Author: Isabel Otter / Katie Rewse**  
Beautiful story - recognises how hard loss can be but that a parent can support a child to find joy and hope again.



**Title: Ruby's Worry**  
**Author: Tom Percival**  
Reassurance that we all have worries and it's good to talk.



**Title: Michael Rosen's SAD BOOK**  
**Author: Michael Rosen / Quentin Blake**  
Michael writes about the loss of his son Eddie – the pain of grief but key messages like "I'm sad, not bad."



**Title: There's No Such Thing as a Dragon**  
**Author: Jack Kent**  
Lovely metaphor – if we don't take notice of something it may get bigger and bigger.



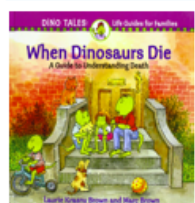
**Title: The Paper Dolls**  
**Author: Julia Donaldson / Rebecca Cobb**  
Can be used as a metaphor around loss and change – a sad loss occurs in the story.

## HEP's story books for loss, bereavement, worry and reassurance



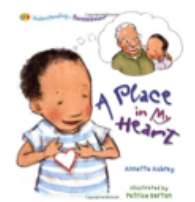
**Title: The Goodbye Book**  
**Author: Todd Parr**

A picture book about how hard it is to say goodbye and having days of different feelings, but there will always be someone to love you.



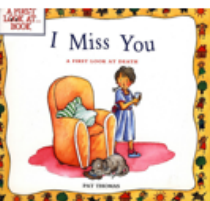
**Title: When Dinosaurs Die**  
**Author: Laurie Raszny Brown & Marc Brown**

When a child needs a lot of details – maybe has lots of questions or to dip into.



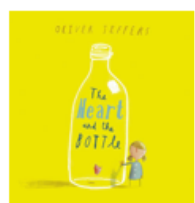
**Title: A Place in my Heart**  
**Author: Annette Aubrey**

Grandad has died – The sadness of grief; the support from family; the importance of remembering.



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

This has a reassuring tone and normalises feelings of grief. Helpful with young children.



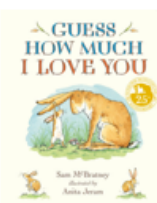
**Title: The Heart and the Bottle**  
**Author: Oliver Jeffers**

Bottling up the painful feelings is not always the answer. Could be linked to dual process model.



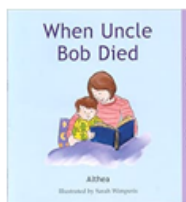
**Title: The Worrysaurus**  
**Author: Rachel Bright / Chris Chatterton**

A picture book that helps young worriers to let go of their fears and feel happy in the moment.



**Title: Guess How Much I Love You**  
**Author: Sam McBratney**

Sometimes when you love someone very much you want to find a way of describing how great your feelings are but love is not an easy thing to measure.



**Title: When Uncle Bob Died**  
**Author: Althea / Sarah Wimperis**

Helpful for young children trying to understand death.



**Title: A Jumble of Knotted Thoughts**  
**Author: Sarah Helton**

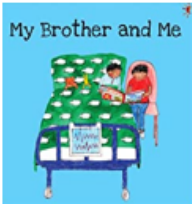
Personally I think this would be to share the idea of a sensory story for children with complex needs but I'd be tempted to change the story used.



**Title: I Miss My Sister**  
**Author: Child Bereavement Charity**

For young children – includes memory box to remember her sister who died.

## HEP's story books for loss, bereavement, worry and reassurance



**Title: My Brother and Me**

**Author: Child Bereavement Charity**

Note – not bereavement but a brother who is very poorly in hospital.



**Title: Mum's Jumper**

**Author: Jayde Perkin**

Beautiful book that draws on the concept that grief doesn't shrink – we can grow around it. Could link to the Tonkin Model of Grief.



**Title: No Matter What**

**Author: Debi Gliori**

A reassuring story of unconditional love, including reference to stars in night symbolising that have died but shine on – link to remembering those we've lost.



**Title: The Invisible String**

**Author: Patrice Karst**

Reassurance that you are loved even at a distance from your key adult.



**Title: Goodbye Grandma**

**Author: Melanie Walsh**

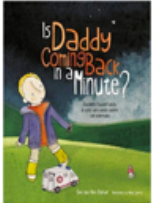
Supportive to young children understanding death and reassuring them about their worries and questions.



**Title: Always and Forever**

**Author: Alan Durant**

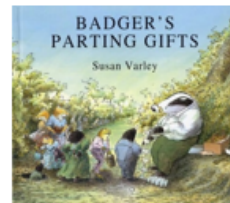
Story based around one of the animal friends dying – remember Fox but still moving on in their lives.



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

**Author: Elke & Alex Barber**

Answering a young child's questions. Need to judge whether this suits your child. It would be used to support an adult – the language they can use.



**Title: Badger's Parting Gifts (35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ed)**

**Author: Susan Varley**

Badger gets old and dies. The other animals use the things he taught them to cope with his death.



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

**Author: Elke & Alex Barber**

Answering a young child's questions about what happens to the body after death.



**Title: The Huge Bag of Worries**

**Author: Virginia Ironside**

Encouraging sharing worries.

## HEP's story books for loss, bereavement, worry and reassurance



**Title: Suzie Goes to a Funeral**

**Author: Charlotte Olson**

Suzie goes to grandma's funeral and says goodbye. Helps explain to a child who may be anxious about going to a funeral for the first time and shows them what they might experience.



**Title: The Boy Who Built a Wall Around Himself**

**Author: Ali Redford**

Uses metaphor to explain how children who have had painful or traumatic experiences can build barriers between themselves and others. Helps explore feelings and encourages communication.



**Title: Benny's Hat**

**Author: Juliet Clare Bell**

Deals with the subject of a sibling dying from the viewpoint of a sister. Shows how children might deal with serious illness and death differently to adults and how adults can support the child.



**Title: One Wave at a Time**

**Author: Holly Thompson**

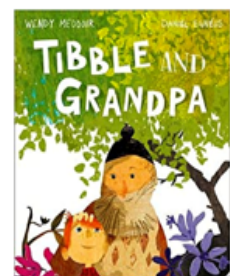
A story about grief and healing. Kai and his family share waves of grief when his dad dies. Reassuring message about the mix of emotions, about peer support and remembering.



**Title: Ben's Flying Flowers**

**Author: Inger Maier**

For children aged 4-8. Feelings a child may experience when they lose a sibling after a long illness; what helps; importance of remembering.



**Title: Tibble and Grandpa**

**Author: Wendy Meddour**

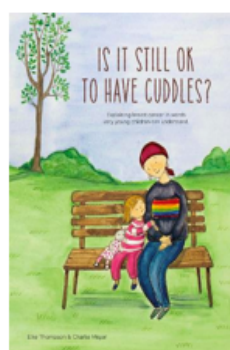
Young Tibble is trying to connect with Grandpa but Grandpa is suffering grief after his wife has died. Tibble doesn't give up and uses a game to find a way through to Grandpa. Their relationship is mutually supportive and the story is reassuring about families helping each other.



**Title: Stewart's Tree**

**Author: Cathy Campbell**

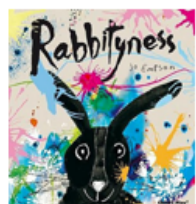
A sibling's baby brother has been "lost." Helps explain sibling loss shortly after birth, and provides guidance for adults written by clinicians.



**Title: Is it still ok to have cuddles? Explaining breast cancer in words very young children understand**

**Author: Elke Thompson & Charlie Meyer**

Beautifully illustrated and sensitively explained, this is an autobiographical account of a Mum having breast cancer treatments and explaining those to her daughter so she can understand the impact and know cuddles are most definitely still ok.



**Title: Rabbityness**

**Author: Jo Empson**

When a special, talented Rabbit suddenly disappears, his friends are desolate. But Rabbit left behind some very special gifts for them, to help them discover their own rabbity talents.

## HEP's story books for loss, bereavement, worry and reassurance

**Title: The Copper Tree****Author: Hilary Robinson & Mandy Stanley**

A sensitively written book about a primary teacher dying and how the children can be supported with their sadness and remember the kindness of their teacher.

**Title: Why do things die?****Author: Katie Daynes**

A 'lift-the-flap' book to help young children answer difficult questions about death and funerals, emotions and memories.

## Activities to support children and young people

The charity, [Winston's Wish](#), have some helpful activities and resources to support children to understand loss and grief and to remember their loved one who has died.

### Memory jar

These are jars filled with coloured salt and help children and young people to remember important things about the person who died. The different colours represent different memories – it could be their favourite football team, something you used to do together, their favourite meal etc. Creating these jars gives you the opportunity to talk about the person who died, together.



### Memory box

A memory box is really useful to be able to keep and treasure all kinds of things that remind children and young people of the person who has died. A memory box can be customised to make it more personal and filled with photos, letters and objects such as jewellery, a watch, perfume or clothing. Your children could write a note for each item, explaining why it is important, and, if they want to, it can be nice to share the memory box and talk about their memories with friends and family.

### First Aid Kit



Many of us are familiar with First Aid boxes – there is usually one in each classroom. They contain plasters, creams and bandages for the hurts, pains and bumps that can be seen on the outside. But we also need a First Aid Kit that helps when the hurts, pains and bumps are on the inside – a kit that reminds us of what we need to look after us when we may be feeling overwhelmed, on difficult days or when things build up to bursting point.

### Button tree



When someone special to us is ill or has died, it can help to think about who we have around us and that the person who is ill or has died still has a place in our family. Creating a button tree is a nice way to remember the branches of our family and to think about who is closest to us.

### Calendar of memories

For a bereaved child or young person, there will be many moments throughout the year when they particularly remember the person who has died. This could be that person's birthday, the anniversary of the day they died, Mother's or Father's Day, religious festival etc. Making a note of these days on a Calendar of Memories can help children and those around them to be aware of these potentially difficult days and find a way to mark them.

### Explaining death to children using insects



Death can be a difficult concept for children to understand, particularly for younger children. We need to show them the difference between dead and alive and using nature can be a useful way to do this. Our dead insect activity helps you to show children the difference between insects that are alive and those that are dead and then begin to explain what it means when a person dies.

### Beaded bracelet

Making a beaded bracelet can be a good way to remember the person who has died or is very poorly or the happy memories that can help you when you feel sad. Or you could make a bracelet to remind you of the people who are around you now and who help you to cope. Wear the bracelet on days that are difficult to remind you of your loved one or the people you have around you now.



## Self-care activities for children and young people

### Body Based Grounding

We can use grounding exercises to help bring ourselves into contact with the present moment – the here and now. They go hand in hand with compassion – it's easier to notice our needs and the needs of others when we are present.

#### Standing on one leg

Lift your knee out in front of you to hip height (Karate Kid style), arms out by sides for balance and supporting leg rooted to the ground. Try to maintain balance for at least a minute on each leg. As you balance, think about how your body is feeling. Is your centre becoming more tense? Can you feel the parts of your foot that are in contact with the floor?

#### Swinging arms

With your feet shoulder-width apart, raise both hands up and then swing them down by the body in a relaxed way. Notice how, if you bend your legs with each swing, you can generate the power from the legs and centre to swing the arms. Try this arm swinging for one or two minutes, then spend some time reflecting on how it felt.

#### Stomping grounding exercise

Stomp from side to side for one to two minutes. Notice how the ground feels under your feet. It helps to practice shoeless – feel as the ground supports you. How do your legs feel in response?

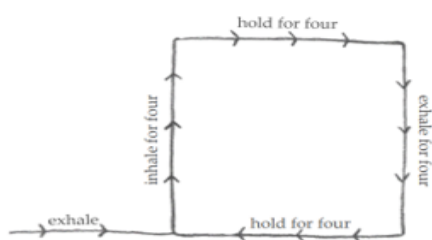
### Smiling Mind App

Smiling Mind is a way to practice daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. Smiling Mind is a free tool developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to your life. This is really helpful during times of stress and is a fun and unique way to help you put a smile on your mind. Free on Android and iOS



## Soothing Breathing

Using our breath can be a helpful way of settling our mind and body when we are experiencing uncomfortable sensations such as worry, sadness, irritability, frustration or stress. Square breathing is a type of breathwork that can shift your energy, connect you more deeply with your body, calm your nervous system, and decrease stress in your body.



Begin by slowly exhaling  
all of your air out

Gently inhale through your  
nose for a slow count of 4

Hold at the top of the  
breath for a count of 4

Gently exhale through your  
mouth for a count of 4

Hold at the bottom of the  
breath for a count of 4

Repeat for as long as  
desired



## Sleep Resources

- 6 Tips For Better Sleep – Dr Matt Walker  
Short YouTube video with tips on how to not only fall asleep quickly but also stay asleep for longer from sleep Scientist Matt Walker author of ‘why we sleep’ who outlines a checklist of easy yet important factors for getting a good night’s sleep for adults and children alike.
  
- Guided Sleep Relaxation - Saqib Rizvi  
This Sleep meditation is on ‘Insight Connect’ free app. It guides you through how to relax your mind and body to prepare for sleep. Available online or via the free app: Insight Connect. The Teen Sleep Hub. This is a website, a ‘one stop shop’, with information about sleep. Advice on how to sleep better, tips for tweaking your sleep routine as well as the science behind your sleeping patterns. You can download their eBook and try their suggestions.



## Sensory Connection

When we have many thoughts and feelings running through our head at once, we might lose the space to be present or ‘in the moment’, instead we can be left feeling overwhelmed. Sometimes it can be really helpful to use a few moments to engage with our surroundings, by using our senses to connect with the ‘here and now’.

- Go for a walk and mentally count of list all the different sounds that you hear; Try to focus on all of the little sounds, keeping your breathing slow and steady. For example: My footsteps; on the pavement, on gravel, on dried leaves - Two different types of birds - A jogger’s shoes - Cars whooshing past.
  
- Start the exercise by taking a few deep breaths. Then, one by one, focus on one sense at a time and notice;
  - Five things that they can see
  - Four things that they can hear
  - Three things that they can feel
  - Two things that they can smell

- One thing that they can taste
- End the exercise with a few more deep breaths



## Compassionate Box

A box, dedicated to self-soothing things, which you can add to over time. It is then available whenever you might need it. Spending time contributing to a box that's dedicated to caring for yourself sends a message about how important this is. Try to keep your box somewhere that is accessible. As well as making it available for whenever you might feel they need it, trying to notice when your soothing strategies may need topping up.

Find a small box and try to think about the things you find soothing or calming:

- encouraging messages or quotes
- small objects or images that are comforting to look at or hold
- a drawing or photo/s
- DVD, book, magazine or a talking book
- smell that you find comforting e.g. lavender
- soft woolly socks or blanket, a cool stone, toy/teddy bear
- warm bubble bath, nail varnish
- soothing or inspiring music
- reminders of:
  - place a reminder for a funny or inspiring YouTube video
  - a walk or place that is important or special to you



# 5 ways to wellbeing

Health  
in Mind

Looking after your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Research by the New Economics Foundation has found there are five ways to look after your mental wellbeing:



Connecting with the people around us is a great way to remind ourselves that we're important and valued by others.

- Arrange to meet people regularly
- Reach out to someone
- Take time to get to know your neighbours



By making sure we are regularly moving our bodies, we can look after our mental and physical health at the same time.

- Go for a walk during your lunch break
- Try activities that bring our focus to the mind-body connection, like yoga or tai chi



Taking notice of our thoughts, emotions and surroundings is a great way to stay present and pay attention to our needs.

- Take up a mindful hobby e.g. knitting
- Write down three things you feel grateful for



Learning new things is a good way to meet new people and boost our self confidence, which in turn improves our mental health and wellbeing.

- Try out a new recipe
- Join a class or learn a new language
- Learn something new about the people around you



Research has found a link between doing good things and an increase in wellbeing.

- Try and do one kind thing every day
- Become a Health in Mind Hero by giving your time through volunteering/ fundraising

[www.health-in-mind.org.uk](http://www.health-in-mind.org.uk)



Health in Mind is a charity registered in Scotland SC004128 and a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland SC124090. The registered office is 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RT

# MY FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

## PLAN

Connect

Talk, listen and develop friendships



Set goals, develop skills, try new things.

Learn

Be  
Active

Do what you can, enjoy what you do



Give time, your words, your presence

Give



Notice

Remember what makes you happy



## Support for wellbeing for school staff

A critical incident/sad event is difficult for all involved and considering our own needs is important not only so we can support others but to ensure we are aware of our own wellbeing.



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### Immediate

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- Ideally, find someone to talk to (colleague, friend, and partner) within the first 12 hours. If there is no one, sit quietly and go over the events in as much detail as possible. Carry out your own debrief in drawn/written form. In addition, ask yourself or a colleague:
  - Is my continued involvement appropriate?
  - Is this the time to be involved in a different way?
  - Do I need any additional support?



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### Short term

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- Share your experiences with colleagues. Participate in personal/team discussion both for support and sharing of experiences.
- Be aware that you may experience physical and emotional symptoms such as fatigue, anxiety, depression, irritability, aggression, anger, etc., which are normal reactions.
- Consider setting up a 'buddy' system so that everyone can support each other.



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## Long term

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### **The NHS ‘5 steps to wellbeing’ framework can be helpful for this**

- Be gentle with yourself! Remember that we can't ‘fix’ everything but being emotionally available for others is an important part of caring for others.
- Give support and encouragement to colleagues and to management. Learn to accept it in return.
- At the end of each day, focus on a positive thing that occurred during the day.
- Take time to care for yourself, and engage in hobbies or relaxing activities. If you feel you are continuing to have intrusive thoughts about the event, and these feelings are not lessening after a few weeks, you may need some more support. Some possible options are:
  - Contacting your GP or calling 999 in an emergency
  - Samaritans (116 123 – helpline 24 hours)
  - Hampshire Employee support (0800 028 0199 – no referral needed)
  - Education Support line (08000 562 561)
  - Solent Mind iTalk (self-referral online)
  - Cruse Bereavement Support (0808 808 1677)
  - Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (0300 111 5065)

# How to support a child/young person returning to school after a bereavement

## Ideas to communicate care and they are being held in mind by the school community whilst absent

- Letters/card from their class teacher/tutor/key adults and key friends.
- Home/school communication with one key member of staff liaising with family, with information shared as appropriate and agreed. This might include information about the circumstances of the death, what scripts/narrative the family are sharing with the child, funeral plans.

## Funeral

- If agreed with family, a couple of members of school staff to attend the funeral to show their support and share in the child's memories from that day.

## Returning to school

- Consider with the parent/carer and child if appropriate, what the child might need to support their transition back to school. This could include:
  - Being greeted on arrival by a trusted adult;
  - Coming into school via the office rather than the playground/cloakroom;
  - Consider a shorter (prior to a full day) visit that might include some activities that the child enjoys with one or two friends. For example, baking, craft, construction, being outside;
  - Gentle discussions with the other children about giving the bereaved child time and space and not asking too many questions;
  - Quiet space at break/lunch times with a few peers if appropriate in case they are feeling overwhelmed by larger numbers of children;
  - Emotional literacy support as appropriate, and at the right time. This might not be immediately when the child returns to school.





## Ongoing over time

- Make sure that the anniversary/deceased person's birthday is known to key people in school and held in mind in the days and weeks leading up to it.
- Be aware of special events like Mothers and Father's day but also events that are less obvious e.g. transition time for when an older sibling would have moved to a new school and where their friendship group is.
- Consider stories/topics and how they could be triggering for the child - could another book be used or does the child need prior warning of the topic?
- Continue to have strong home/school links between key adults. Consider a home/school communication book or another way of being able to highlight any difficulties the child is having and any 'out of the ordinary' events happening e.g. photo day or assemblies.
- Sharing information, as agreed with parents/carers, during transitions to new class/school, including significant dates and things that the child has found supportive previously.



# Has someone important to you died?

## Ideas to help you in your grief

People cope in all sorts of ways when someone dies. It can be hard to know what to do to get through this time, especially while we have to be apart from family and friends. Here are some suggestions from other bereaved young people about things you could do. Tick the ones you think would help at the moment, and keep it as a reminder.

Tell people what helps me feel better and keeps me feeling safe

Remind myself that, like the seasons, things will change

Ask if I can keep something that belonged to them

Look after myself and allow time for sleeping, eating resting, thinking and relaxing

Start a memory box or book to help remember them

Ask questions about what happened even if people get upset. I need the facts to understand, and talking about it will help me

Share with others if I start to think I am to blame

Remind myself I'm not going crazy. My sleeping, eating, thinking, memory, concentrating & motivation will be up and down

Laugh and have fun without feeling bad about it

Talk to the person who died in my imagination or write them a letter. This may help me say things I never got the chance to say, and to stay feeling connected to them

Ask ..... for help and support whenever I need it

Stay connected with friends and family even though we may be apart

Find ways of expressing my feelings by writing, drawing, music or exercise

Find an adult at school I feel comfortable talking to. Ask for any extra help I need with my work

I'm going to try  
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For more ideas and local and national support organisations, visit [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)