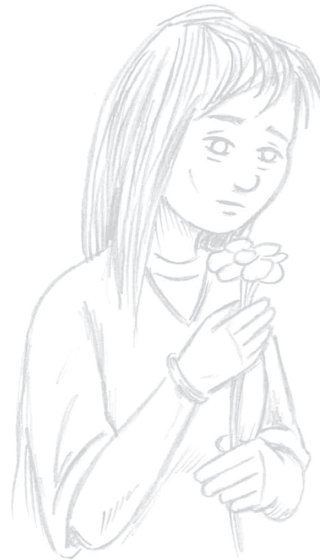


How might you help?

- Talking about the person who has died can help both adults and children, but neither should be encouraged to talk about their feelings until they feel they are ready.
- Shock can cause sleepless nights or bad dreams. Lots of comforting and attention will help to alleviate these.
- Keep to the usual routines. This can be very reassuring for your child and help to rebuild the security they may have lost.
- Explain to children that you understand how they are feeling and are there for them if they need to talk. If you are busy at the time, make an arrangement to talk to them later.
- Don't tell children not to be sad as this is all part of the grieving process.
- Saying goodbye – sometimes being allowed to go to the funeral can help the child to begin to say goodbye.
- Crying can be a good and natural way of releasing anger and grief. Let children know that it is OK to cry and to see you cry and to know that you are grieving too.
- Eventually, even though they may feel distraught and lonely, children will accept that the person has gone and with the help of precious memories, begin to 'let go'.
- It can be a good idea to tell the child's school.
- You may also need someone to talk to through the difficult times.



For further information

- **CRUSE Bereavement Care**
2 Maude Street, Darlington, DL3 7PW
T: 01325 355554
- **Winston's Wish**
Clara Burgess Centre, Bayshill Road
Cheltenham, GL50 3AW
T: 01242 515157
- **The Child Bereavement Trust**
Aston House, High Street, West Wycomb
Buckinghamshire, HP14 3AG
T: 01494 446648



Loss and Bereavement

Information for Parents

Helping the child



Middlesbrough Psychological Team
Middlesbrough Teaching & Learning Centre
Tranmere Avenue, Middlesbrough, TS3 8PB

T: 01642 201861
F: 01642 201908



How do I support my child when someone dies?



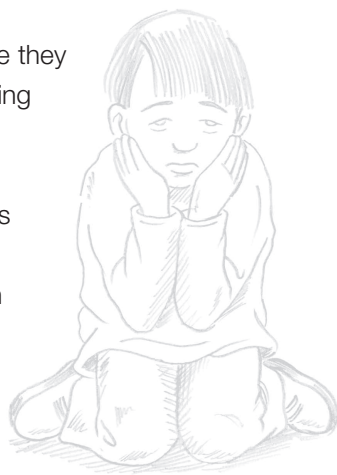
If someone close to you dies, it can be hard to know how to cope. The same is true of our children. There is no right way to react when someone dies. This leaflet will answer some commonly asked questions to help you to support your child.

What might my child be thinking?

- Adults can often find it difficult to talk about death due to their own anxieties, grief or the fear of getting it wrong and upsetting others.
- Some children find it difficult to express their feelings, but cope very well.
- Some children may find the need to talk about their feelings and ask questions as part of their natural curiosity about life.
- Religious beliefs may be comforting for some children, but do not erase the loss, nor give reasons as to why the person was taken away.
- Explanations are important, but children may need to ask the same questions over and over again, e.g. “Why did it happen?”, “When is he coming back?” or “Where has she gone?”

It can take some children a long time to accept what has happened and understand that someone they were close to is not coming back.

- Listening to the child’s questions and thoughts is vitally important and the most useful way in which adults can help a child.



How should I tell my child?

- Put aside some time to talk to your child and listen to his responses. Give him lots of reassurance, e.g. cuddles. This helps to maintain a sense of security. He needs to know that you will be there for him whenever he needs you.
- Silence does not spare pain. Protecting your child by not telling him can be bewildering. Tell him as soon as possible and answer questions as honestly and simply as you can.
- Try to use a normal tone of voice, not hushed tones because this can be frightening. Avoid some answers such as “Mummy has gone to sleep”, because the child may then fear going to bed.
- Don’t worry about hiding the fact that you are upset. Feelings are important and need to be acknowledged. However, the child may need to be protected from extreme adult grief.



How might my child respond?

- Children respond in different ways according to their age and experiences. Give them time and allow them to grieve in their own way and at their own pace. Very young children will still be aware that people close to them have gone, so it is important to maintain a sense of security for the child. Try to minimise disruptions within the family setting.
- Keeping the memories of the dead person alive in the young child’s mind will help him to understand the loss at a later stage in his life.

- As children develop a more mature understanding of death and dying, they are likely to become more curious about the cause of death, and then have a need for questions to be answered.
- They may become withdrawn, have emotional outbursts or regress, behaving like a younger child as they come to terms with the potential changes in their lives.
- Children might ask the same questions again and again. This is normal and is part of coming to terms with what has happened.
- It is important to make sure that children do not feel in any way to blame for the death as guilt can set in without due cause.

Seeing a ghost

- Some children have the ability to recall strong images of the person in particular and familiar situations. This can be a very vivid memory. It shouldn’t be regarded as frightening. It is best to enjoy the experience and remember the person. These images will happen less often as time goes on.

Too big to cry?

- Some older children may feel that they should hide their emotions and it is important that they know that it is normal and natural to feel upset and to want to cry.