



Many thanks from the Silverdale Outreach Team. For any further support or information please email:

silverdale.outreach@ntlp.org.uk



Supporting Your Child Through Grief Loss and Bereavement



Before the age of 16, 54% of children experience the death of a family member. Before the age of 6, 22% of children have lost a pet, friend or family member. Most parents say 6 years old is the perfect age to begin discussing death, with younger children possibly not understanding that death is permanent. The Silverdale Outreach team have collated the following information to give guidance for parents, in supporting their child through a bereavement.

How children show grief?

“Grief feels chaotic, grief follows no rules”

Every individual, whether adult or child, will have a unique and very personal reaction to grief. You may be concerned that your child is not responding the way you feel they should, but it is important to remember that grief is deeply complex. We recognise that adults experience shock, denial, anger, sadness and adjustment in response to bereavement. Children appear to experience these things also, just with different behavioural expressions.

Possible Reactions

- Asking questions and exploring what death is
- Picking up on upset and tension
- Anxiety, insecurity and feeling frightened
- Anger
- Feeling responsible/guilty and taking on a carer role
- Denial
- Unable to sleep
- Unable to concentrate
- Physically unwell

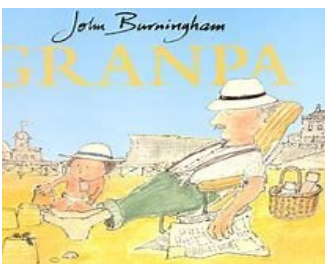
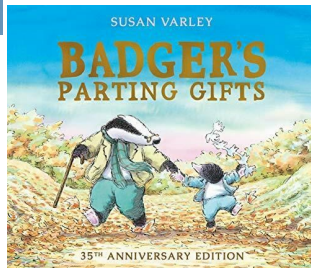
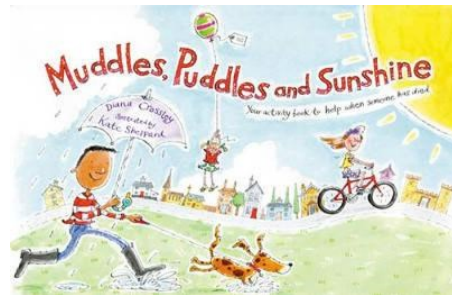
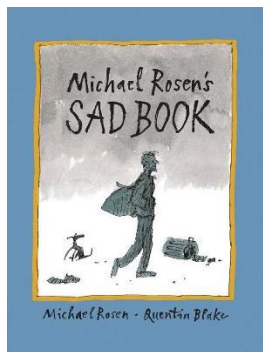
The important things to remember, are that you are not alone and that there is no correct way to grieve or support your child in their grief. As signposted, there are a variety of support networks available for use and your GP and school are good places to reach out to start.

The Silverdale Outreach Team



Books

- Sad Book by Michael Rosen. The book helps to normalise feelings of sadness and can be useful as a trigger to help difficult conversations.
- Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: An activity book to help when someone has died. Designed to help younger children to cope with the death of someone close to them.
- Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley.
- The Invisible String by Patrice Karst.
- Granpa by John Burningham.
- Marvin the Maple Tree, by Rev Richard Littledale. A book to help children who have lost an adult in their lives.



Possible Reactions Continued

- Appearing not to react
- Numb
- Irritable
- Withdrawn

How Can I Help?

By giving your child **reassurance**, **acknowledging what has happened and how they are feeling**, giving them **clear and age-appropriate information** and keeping them to their **normal routines** where possible, will all contribute to helping them cope with the reactions discussed.

- Similarly to adults, children will go through a process of grief. Try to be understanding with your child and support them as best as you can; whether they are upset and sad, or angry and frustrated.
- Use correct language, no euphemisms
- Answer questions honestly and simply.
- Allow children to demonstrate feelings in a safe way and not shut them down. Let them know it's okay to have and express feelings.
- Be there for them and share how you are feeling; this will help them to understand they are not alone in their grief.
- Do not force your child to talk about how they feel if they are not ready, but try to ensure they are not hiding their feelings to protect you.
- Talk about the bereaved person and related good memories.
- If your child expresses their want to be back at school, try not to feel like you should be keeping them at home; the normality of school may help with the progress of their grief.

- Do not be afraid to reintroduce boundaries if your child hurts themselves or others; explain you understand they may be feeling angry or frustrated but this is not acceptable.
- Do not force your child to attend the funeral if they express their concerns.
- Let your child know its okay to play and have fun.
- Be prepared for their grief to resurface at times.
- Allow your child to take the time they need to grieve.
- Inform your child's school so they can also provide support for your child.
- Watch for signs of depression; if you are worried, take your child to a GP.
- Do not feel like you have to cope on your own, look after yourself and seek extra support if needed.

Where to Seek Support?

Professional Help

- Doctor/GP. A key person to visit to help support your child's mental health and wellbeing. They may refer you onto Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Counselling/therapy. A counsellor or therapist can provide extra emotional support for your child. This can include pre-bereavement counselling if you know someone close to them is about to die. Your GP or child's school will be able to signpost you to receive this help.

Reference List

Websites, Email and Telephone

- Child Bereavement UK

Website: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 028 8840

Email: support@childbereavement.org



- Cruse Bereavement Care

Website: www.cruse.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 808 1677

Email: info@cruse.org.uk



- Grief Encounter

Website: www.griefencounter.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 0111

Email: griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk



- Winston's Wish

Website: www.winstonswish.org

Telephone: 0808 802 0021

Email: ask@winstonswish.org



- Childline

Telephone: 0800 1111



- The Mix

Website: themix.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 808 4994

