

BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS

Talking to children about death is difficult at any age. Grief is normal, so normalising the process of grief for a bereaved child is very helpful, but we also all grieve differently. Loss can be experienced in different ways, and talking about the death of someone with children can ignite powerful emotions and other feelings of loss, for instance, the death of a pet, moving home, changes to trusted adults (e.g. teachers), loss of special possessions, Covid lockdowns, separation of parents, etc. Your support in helping to validate their feelings will help their longer-term processing of what has happened. In supporting our loved ones we all bring our own hurts and losses, our own feelings about loss by death, and our own struggles when we are hit by the tragedy and sadness of losing someone. Sometimes these things can take us by surprise or we can unconsciously project them on to others. It is important that you take time to care for yourself too.

What to say...

The Education Psychologist Service in Camden provided the following advice when talking to children about loss:

- Give children simple, factual information e.g. use the word 'died'.
- Avoid abstract ways of explaining death e.g. *gone to sleep, passed away*.
- Reassure children that it is not their fault.
- Gently remind them that the person will not come back.
- Maintain a normal routine as much as possible for the child.
- encourage children to ask questions and try to answer them honestly and simply. Be honest if there is no answer or you do not know the answer.

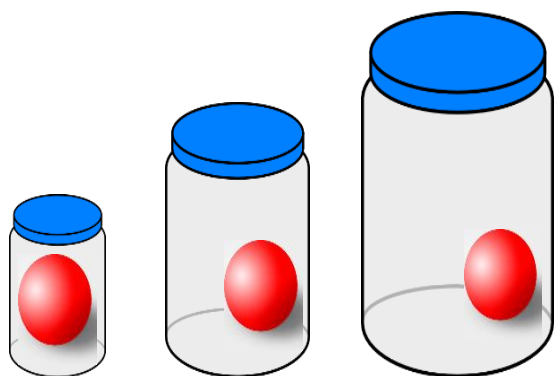
"Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give but cannot. All of that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go."

For free resources and book ideas, visit:

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/bereavement-resources-for-parents-and-school-staff/>



Grief does not go away, it is forever:

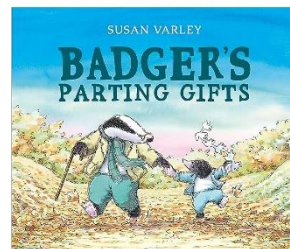
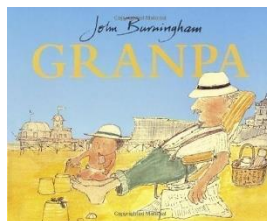


This visual (Barbara Monroe adapted Tonkin's model 'Growing Around Grief') helps show that grief does not lessen over time or become smaller. Instead life grows around the grief and people adjust their lives to accommodate the pain of living with the grief. This in turn leads to the grief being less dominant and all-encompassing in their lives. Other people and experiences come into their lives and although the person has not forgotten their grief they have learnt to live with it. Grief (the ball) doesn't get any bigger or any smaller. It stays the same. However, the jar (life) is getting bigger as time moves on.

Some recommended resources

Books

- Grandpa - John Burningham
- Badger's Parting Gifts - Susan Varley
- Fred - Posy Symonds
- Goodbye Mousie - Robie Harris
- When Dinosaurs Die: A guide to understanding death
- The day the sea went out and never came back - Margot Sunderland



Websites

Winston's Wish – www.winstonswish.org.uk - Freephone helpline: 08088 020 021 for guidance and information for families of bereaved children and professionals supporting bereaved children.

The Child Bereavement Charity - www.childbereavement.org.uk – National UK charity providing specialised training, information, support and guidance for professionals to help them respond to the needs of bereaved families. Support and Information line: 0800 02 888 40 excellent website/ support@childbereavementuk.org