

Supporting our pupils' Mental Health and Wellbeing

Helping children manage the feelings of loss



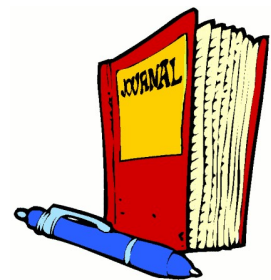
We have come together as an Emmanuel School community to support each other with loss of one of our own pupils. Members of our school community have also lost people close to them. When talking about this, we recognise that this is a trigger for a conversation with children who had already experienced some sort of loss. This loss may have been a family member (even those they had never met), a change in home setting or parent separation, a loss of a pet or experiences missed due to the COVID pandemic. We were heartened by the openness, empathy and maturity shown by our children when we have talked about loss in our classes. This Wellbeing update focusses on some guidance from the Camden support team to help you in those conversations which may continue into the holidays.

10 steps to support the grieving process for a child or adult:

1. Acknowledge the person's loss—show concern and support and willingness to talk but respect they may not want to talk.
2. Be kind and empathetic e.g. "I am sorry to hear that".
3. Listening is key—there is no right way to respond. What is important is that they know you are listening. Hold back from talking about your own experience of grief.
4. Accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions. Let them know that what they are feeling is normal.
5. Understand that everyone's grieving process is different and people may move in and out of grief. Everyone grieves in their own way.
6. Face-to-face support from people who care can be helpful for those grieving.
7. Be aware that special dates such as birthdays, the anniversary of a death, religious and cultural festivals may have particular significance.
8. Avoid telling them what you would do, enable them to decide what help they want—perhaps offering possible options.
9. Help the person to remember to continue to look after themselves.
10. Identify someone that they can go to for help e.g. their teacher, Mrs Watkins in the Bubble.

Ways to help

1. **Acknowledging and helping them recognise different emotion:** Children may experience a variety of different emotions and behaviours such as anxiety, sadness, withdrawn, lack of concentration, extreme tiredness, challenging behaviours masking emotions, confusion, blame, guilt or shame - or physical complaints. All these are normal. Children can manage the sense of loss differently and at different speeds.
2. **Comfort item** - Some children find it helpful to carry a comforting object with them in their pocket such as a soft piece of fabric, a pebble, or a reminder of the person who has died. Holding onto something tangible can help a child remain grounded and in control, or provide a comforting memory.
3. **Writing and art** - Use a notebook to help a child who finds it difficult to verbalise their feelings. Alternatively, they can draw or paint their thoughts and feelings (what colour is it? What shape is the feeling?).



If you would like to talk about any concerns about your child's mental health and wellbeing, please contact Lorraine Watkins, our school ELSA, through wellbeing@emmanuel.camden.sch.uk

