

Death and Loss



**Easy
Read**



MindEd

e-learning to support young healthy minds

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Facing death and Loss



Everyone will have to face the death of someone close to them, or the loss of something important.



Children may have difficulty dealing with the strong feelings of sadness that comes with loss and grief.



Often children can cope if they have good support.



But sometimes they find it very difficult and need extra help.

Grieving



People who have lost someone will feel very sad. It is called **grief**.



Grief is a strong emotion or feeling that people feel in different ways.



It can be mild or very bad. It can last a short time or a long time.



People who are suffering from grief might cry a lot. They will feel very sad. They might also feel angry.



Children also feel loss and grief.



People will usually suffer grief the hardest after the death of someone very close.

This grief might last a long time - even years.



People also suffer grief when bad things happen - like their parents splitting up, or if they lose something they are fond of.

This grief will usually last a shorter time - but it might be days or weeks.

The break up of a relationship



People often feel grief if a relationship breaks down.

The change in relationship might lead to a parent leaving, or less contact with a good friend or parent.



For children, a break up of a relationship can also lead to a feeling of disappointment.

They feel disappointed because of the loss of their hopes for the relationship.

The feeling of disappointment can lead to grief - but it is usually not very deep or long lasting.



It feels different to every person.

You cannot know how long the feelings will last.

Failure



Failure can lead to feelings of disappointment and grief.

For instance, not getting into a team, or not doing well at school.



Memories

Sometimes something very ordinary can suddenly make you feel very sad.

Something ordinary can remind you of some sadness in your past and make you feel sad again.

Feelings about things and places



Children and adults can have strong feelings about places and things.



Losing something special can lead to feelings of grief.



Having to move house can make people very sad. Usually this grief is not so bad and doesn't last very long.

Understanding your child's grief after different types of losses



Parents don't always understand how their child is feeling if they lose something or someone.



The way a child feels will depend on how good they feel about themselves.



If they generally feel very good about themselves they might not feel grief so badly.



If they generally don't feel very good about themselves they might suffer grief much worse.



The amount of grief that a child feels also depends on how much support they get from family, friends or teachers.

How to understand your child's grief better



Children often find it hard to explain how they are feeling to their parents.



Parents may have to work hard sometimes to understand how they are feeling.



Here are some tips:-

- Listen carefully to what your child says about the loss.



- Think about how they are feeling.



- Look at their face and body language to try to understand how they feel.



- Look at how they are behaving. Has this changed recently?

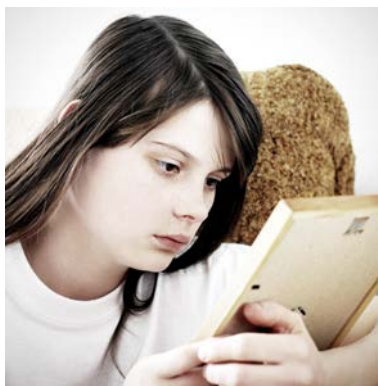


- Keep an eye on how they are eating, sleeping, doing their school work and how they are behaving with their friends.

Other causes of grief



Sometimes parents do not know what has caused their child to suffer from grief.



It might be caused by something outside the family. It might be the death of a pet or a celebrity.



Children can also share the grief of a friend who has lost someone. They can become very upset because their friend is upset.



To understand this more - you need to find out what the friend, celebrity or pet means to your child.

Ways to cope with loss by death



Breaking the news

Children can react in different ways depending on how old they are.

You should be honest but not frighten your child with too much information about what happened.



Think about their age and give them as much information as they can take in.



If you tell your child that someone died in their sleep it can make them frightened of going to sleep.

What age should a child go to a funeral?



There is no set age. It is up to you and the family to think what is best.

You could make it easier by visiting the **crematorium** beforehand with your child so they know what to expect.

The **crematorium** is where the final service takes place. It is where the coffin is taken away for burning or to be buried.



Instead of the funeral could have something different for your child like:-

- Attaching messages to something sent off in the wind or water.
- Help them to make a drawing or a letter that can go in the coffin.
- Take photos of the service and flowers for young children to look at when they are older.



Ways to help your child with different types of losses



You could:-

- Make a memory box. Put things to remember the person in a box for safety.



- Keep doing the things you usually do in everyday life. This is important.

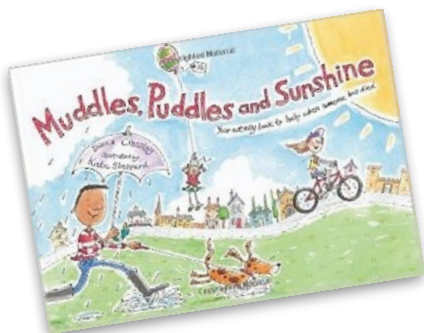


- Keep to your usual ground rules - like bedtimes. This is important.



- As a parent you should also look after yourself. Arrange to go out, get a babysitter.

A good book to help young children is “Muddles, puddles and sunshine” by Diana Crossley.



There are a list of other organisations that can help on page 18.

When to get help

You should get help from your doctor if:-



- Your child stops going out and seeing friends, stops eating, or joining in with things.
- Their difficulties are lasting longer than you would expect.
- Your child doesn't eat - or loses weight, or stops sleeping.
- Your child starts to harm themselves or feels guilty about the death.
- Sometimes grief can turn into a mental illness like **depression** or **anxiety**. You should get help from your doctor if you think this is happening.

Depression is where you feel down and upset all the time.

Anxiety is where you are very worried all the time. The worry might stop you from doing things or going places.

More help

You can get more help from these organisations:-



Child Bereavement UK. A charity which support families when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement.

Web: www.childbereavementuk.org



Good Grief. Helps children and teens to cope with loss.

Web: www.good-grief.org



Grief Encounter. Helps children through bereavement.

Web: www.griefencounter.org.uk/



MacMillan. Cancer support and information.

Web: www.macmillan.org.uk



Star. Provides support for children and young people around bereavement and loss.

Web: www.starwakefield.org.uk



Winston's Wish. A charity for bereaved children.

Web: www.winstonswish.org.uk/

For more information



This resource is part of the MindEd online learning site. For more information please contact:

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