

Helping a Child Through Bereavement

Social worker Susan Thomas, in an article entitled, 'How Children Grieve' talks about how adults "have one foot in grief and one foot on the outside, but kids jump in and out of grief." As a result, it can be hard to know how a child is coping or how much support they need. Here are a few ideas that can help a child through the loss of a loved one.

Stories

The stories below are all to do with grief and losing a loved one. It is always helpful to read these books with the child/children so that they can share their thoughts whilst going through and is a great way to open up communication about this difficult topic.

Recommended Books:

The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back by Margot Sunderland (to buy on Amazon for £11.99 - <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Day-Went-Never-Came-Back/dp/0863884636>)

Free online to watch/listen to:

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rZNTFf35Aw>

Ida, Always by Caron Levis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XfbZpGjHQo>

(This story, about two polar bears, gives more of a description of the process of death.)

The Memory Box by Joanna Rowland: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DC1vlvdv81M>

The Memory Tree by Britta Teckentrup https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MyU8RDv7_c

The Copper Tree by Hilary Robinson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScwEfNcVLaA> (a story about the death of a teacher)

Making a memory box

The author of *The Memory Box*, by Joanna Rowland, (link above) also gives a little tutorial of how you could make your own memory box for a loved one you have lost.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Doz2FsyqTVE>

This is a lovely idea to do together as a family to help remember your loved one and keep treasures safe.



Making a Memory Tree

The books *The Memory Tree* and *The Copper Tree* both explore the ideas of collecting memories of the loved one you have lost and creating a tree with them. This could be a lovely craft activity for within a family or within a school as a community way to recognise loss, if as a result of Covid-19, you are experiencing a lot of cases of bereavement within the school.

Encourage keeping a diary/journal

This is something that could be kept in the memory box. It is helpful to encourage a child to write down how they are feeling. This could be done in a multitude of ways, single words, pictures, poems or doodles, as sometimes, talking about these things out loud can be really difficult.

For younger children activity books can be a useful way of prompting these same practices, for example, *Letting Go! Mindful Kids: An activity book for children who need support through experiences of loss, change, disappointment and grief.*

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Letting-Mindful-Kids-experiences-disappointment/dp/1787415899/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=grief+activity+book+for+young+children&qid=1611679239&s=books&sr=1-2

Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your Activity Book to Help When Someone has Died

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Muddles-Puddles-Sunshine-Paperback-Activity/dp/1869890582/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2MIFI7XAC0PD3&dchild=1&keywords=muddles+puddles+and+sunshine+book&qid=1611880268&s=books&sprefix=muddles+%2Cstripbooks%2C162&sr=1-1



Other Arts and Crafts

Activities such as decorating a photo frame, making a bracelet or a collage are all ways that could encourage conversation and provide a therapeutic time to remember those we may have lost.

Scriptures

God knows and understands

Psalm 56:8

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded them each one in your book.

1 Peter 5:7

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Matthew 5:4

God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

It is important to recognise that it is ok to be sad. There were even times that Jesus was sad, such as when his friend Lazarus died (John 11) or when he was going through a difficult time in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26: 36-46).

Resources for Parents/Teachers:

Helping Children Cope with Loss and Change is a book by Amanda Seyderhelm who is an experienced play therapist who has worked with Great Ormond Street hospital. Her book, (published pre-Covid-19) explores the loss and change of bereavement, divorce, new school or home and is focused on 4-10 year olds. It offers case studies, therapeutic stories and creative activities and exercises to support both child and care-giver. (Amazon £21.30)

