



YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND

SUPPORTING BEREAVED TEENAGERS

**WINSTON'S
WISH **

Giving hope to grieving children

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A framework to support grieving teenagers

This booklet is for parents, carers, teachers and other professionals involved in supporting young people who have experienced the death of someone important.

The successful passage through the teens involves a transition from a dependent child with a sense of identity largely based on living within a family unit to an independent young adult with their own sense of identity. This involves separation from parents or principal care-givers and the process may be rocky and difficult for both adults and teenagers. When bereavement is thrown into the mix it is not surprising that the reactions of the young person may be overwhelming and very difficult to manage.

Winston's Wish, the charity for bereaved children, is a leading authority on child bereavement and the largest provider of services to bereaved families in the UK. The information in this booklet is based on our clinical experience gained since the charity was founded in 1992 of working with bereaved teenagers and those most closely involved in their lives – parents, siblings, teachers, health care workers and social services.

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The transition from childhood to adulthood can be a challenging process at the best of times.

Introduction: setting the scene

“Why can teenagers be so difficult?” Jon

“My son has just shut me out of his life. He won’t talk. What can I do to help him?” Sam

“My husband hanged himself. It was just after I said we had to separate. Now the children hate me – they say it’s my fault.” Katie

“He just refuses to believe his dad is dead.” Sasha

“The boys knew for months that their dad was dying and they were brilliant. It felt like a relief when he died – he wasn’t suffering any more – but now they seem to have fallen apart.” Paula

“I just don’t know how to separate out his being a normal teenager from how he feels about the death of his mum.” Jim

Time of transition

The transition from childhood to adulthood can be a challenging process at the best of times. This booklet aims to help you understand what is normal adolescent development, and to recognise the additional problems teenagers may face if someone important dies during these years.

If you are supporting a bereaved teenager, you may find it very difficult to work out what is due to ‘just being a teenager’ and what may be due to grieving – the emotional and behavioural changes can be very similar. This booklet is based on many years’ experience of working with bereaved teenagers, families and the professionals who support them – we hope the information here will help you consider how to respond to the individual needs of a bereaved teenager.

Grief and mourning rituals are deeply influenced by different cultural, social and faith groups and it is important for anyone involved in supporting a bereaved teenager to be sensitive to their own customs. The range of cultural differences following death is beyond the scope of this booklet.

Normal teenage development

The developmental melting pot

Adolescence involves physical changes, a development in thinking, and changes in the way feelings and emotions are expressed. This developmental melting pot may also result in changes for the teenager in their behaviour and this can be very difficult for them and everyone else to manage.

There is often awkwardness as the body changes with the onset of puberty and this may result in low self-esteem and insecurity at a time when a teenager is developing interests in the opposite – or same – sex. Physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of development do not always progress at the same rate. For example, a young person may be physically mature but not have the corresponding emotional maturity, and this can make them vulnerable.

Conceptual and abstract thinking develops through the teenage years. There is an increased ability to show empathy but it can also be a time of great egocentricity and an expectation that they should be able to do whatever they want.

A sense of personal morality develops with strong feelings about what is right and wrong. There is the development of a sense of spirituality in terms of what gives meaning to life

and this can be deeply challenged when a young person experiences the death of someone important and begins to have a sense of their own mortality.

Sense of identity

As the adolescent learns to separate from their family they seek out their own sense of identity and this may result in experimentation and risk-taking activities. Friends become increasingly important and teenagers may choose only to confide in them about difficult issues. As a parent you may feel excluded and shut out of their life: this can be difficult to manage when not so long ago you would have been the first person they would talk to. It is important to understand that it is normal at this stage to develop a strong sense of identity outside the family unit.

Emotions run high and a good-natured child may seem to be turning into a sullen or uncommunicative teenager. There may be frequent arguments as boundaries are pushed against and the teenager looks for more freedom and a need to feel less controlled by parents. However, separating from the family is an important part of growing up.



“I just get really down now that mum has died. I can’t talk to dad and my mates don’t understand.” Jamie



What is normal for a grieving teenager?

Physical symptoms

Physical symptoms can be caused by grief. Symptoms include a hollow feeling in the stomach, tight chest, weak or aching muscles, lack of energy, dry mouth, shortness of breath, headaches and sleep disturbance – sleeping more than normal or having great difficulty getting to sleep.

It is important to recognise the possibility of these symptoms being grief-related, but if they are severe or go on for a long time, it is important to see your doctor. Sometimes people become very anxious and may think they are developing similar symptoms to the person who died.

“James was 16 when his father died of a brain tumour after a short illness. He seemed to be coping quite well but six months after the death he started feeling sick and having bad headaches. These were the symptoms his dad had before he was diagnosed. James was reassured by his doctor that there was no physical reason behind his symptoms but he only started to improve when he was helped to understand the extent of his grief.” Polly

Thoughts and feelings

Teenagers may find it difficult to concentrate at school, find their mind going blank, feel confused or have negative thoughts that are difficult to get rid of.

When someone dies there may be a strong sense of shock and disbelief. This is especially the case with a sudden death.

**They've got the wrong person.
It can't have been her car.**

Sadness is the most common feeling following bereavement and may trigger crying. Boys may find it very difficult to allow themselves to cry – it is therefore good for them to see adults, and perhaps especially men, showing their emotions as this allows the boy to do the same. People often say how brave someone was not to cry at a funeral – that this ‘shows strength’ – when in fact this involves trying to block the sadness. It is natural and necessary to allow emotions to be expressed as part of the grieving process.

Numbness can trigger a sense of ‘it can't be real’. You may find that a teenager doesn't seem to react to a death – they feel numb – especially just after hearing of a sudden or traumatic death. This is a normal reaction and can protect the young person from the overwhelming pain of a sudden

Teenagers may find it difficult to concentrate at school, find their mind going blank, feel confused or have negative thoughts that are difficult to get rid of.

death. However, if this numbness goes on for a long time, it may lead to complicated grief and there may be a sense of being 'stuck' in what happened.

Guilt may follow if the bereaved person feels they could have acted differently and so prevented a death.

Why did I agree to swim out so far?

Why didn't I see how depressed she was?

I should have held on to him when he started to run across the road.

While it is well-accepted that adults often suffer from guilt, it is less recognised that young people do too. They may not be able to express this – or even identify the feeling.

It is rare for people not to have something they regret or wish might have happened differently after someone dies. Feeling guilty and having regrets may be particularly strong in teenagers bereaved of a parent if the relationship before the death had been difficult.

Anger is a common feeling after a death and occurs for many different reasons. There may be anger that a loved one has died and abandoned the teenager – this is particularly difficult when a teenager is bereaved through suicide as there can be a difficult mix of love and loss together with anger over the means of death.

If the death has been caused by another person – deliberately as in murder or accidentally as in the case of a road traffic accident – it is common for teenagers to express rage and a wish to have some sort of revenge on the person involved. This is a natural response, and one felt by adults too – but is usually a sign of great anger rather than a plan of action. It is important to talk to them about this and acknowledge their feelings at the same time as looking at less damaging ways of expressing their anger.

Relief may be the first feeling when someone dies. This may be the case especially after a protracted illness that is expected to result in death. Seeing the deterioration of a loved one with a terminal illness is very difficult and there can be a sense of relief that the suffering is over. It is important to recognise that relief in this situation is normal and is not something to feel guilty about. Relief can sit side by side with grief that the person has died.

Concentration on usual activities can feel impossible after a death. It can appear that nothing else really matters any more and continuing with school work seems pointless. A teenager may withdraw from activities, not want to see friends and be unable to complete school work. Teachers do not always understand that these behaviours are symptoms of grief.



"I knew he'd been drinking. Why didn't I stop him getting in the car? He should still be alive." Ethan



“When my sister died I felt like I was cut in half. But no-one asked how I was feeling.” Tim

What losses may a teenager experience?

Although this booklet focuses on death as the form of loss experienced, it is important to acknowledge that teenagers may experience many other losses that are not death-related but can result in a similar grieving experience. Parental divorce, moving school, breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend, loss of a family pet – these can all trigger strong grief reactions that may not be recognised by others. Here we are thinking about loss due to death but it is important to bear in mind that the response to a death may be influenced by previous loss experiences and may in turn impact on future losses.

Here are some comments made by bereaved teenagers about people who have died and how significant the death was for them.

“My mates don’t know how close I was to my gran. She was more like my mum. People thought I would be OK after the funeral.”

Joe, 13

“Dad was an alcoholic and sometimes I hated him. But mostly we had a lot of fun and I really miss him.”

Sally, 15

“When my sister died I felt like I was cut in half. But no-one asked how I was feeling – they just asked mum and dad how they were.”

Tim, 15

“No-one understood how close we were. It’s not like he was my boyfriend but he was my best friend and I told him everything. His parents didn’t think of asking me to go to the funeral.”

Amrit, 16

“Jenny was my first girlfriend and we did everything together. When she died no-one got it. They just said things like ‘you’re young, you’ll get over it’ or ‘it would never have lasted’. I can’t see myself ever getting over this.”

Tom, 15

“It was really hard work starting college and leaving all my mates who knew about my dad’s death.”

Hannah, 16

“My boyfriend supported me after mum died and then when we split up it felt like my world had fallen apart.”

Bethan, 14

Do boys and girls grieve in different ways?

“Emma talked to me a lot and was so loving – we cried together and looked at photos of her dad. All that Mike wanted was to get out of the house. He spent more and more time with his friends and he started drinking. I just didn’t know how to help him. I knew he was angry – but he just pushed me away.” Sarah, after the death of her husband who was killed by a drunk driver

It is important to recognise gender differences as teenagers develop and this is especially the case when it comes to understanding how boys and girls respond to bereavement. But we should not stereotype – an individual’s response to a death may be influenced by so many factors surrounding a death that gender difference may only play a small part.

As teenagers develop, friendships between boys and girls may show significant differences. Girls tend to have a greater emotional vocabulary and are more likely to seek out people to talk to. Girls miss emotional closeness when someone has died – boys are more likely to grieve the loss of shared practical activities.

Generally speaking, girls are more likely to show their grief through emotional changes such as anxiety and

depression. They tend to express loss through talking, and feel supported by being able to talk about the person who has died. Girls often find writing about their thoughts and feelings really helpful.

Boys often find it more difficult to express feelings in words, and their behaviour in school and at home may show signs of aggression and anger.

What may add to the difficulty of grieving?

When we think about how a teenager is responding to the death of someone special, there are several useful questions to consider.

What was the nature of the relationship with the person who died?

There may be intense grief for a person who does not seem to be a close relative, or a teenager may not appear to be grieving because they didn’t feel the relationship was close, even if others might have thought so.

There may have been a very difficult relationship with the person who has died. There may have been physical or sexual abuse or drug and alcohol issues. This does not mean the grieving is lessened but it may well be more



“Emma talked to me a lot. All that Mike wanted was to get out of the house. He spent more and more time with his friends and he started drinking. I just didn’t know how to help him. I knew he was angry – but he just pushed me away.”

Sarah



“Two policemen came to the door. Mum told me to go upstairs. I was scared so I went on Facebook to take my mind off things. Someone had posted that my dad had killed himself.” Rhiannon

complicated. The young person may not only grieve the loss of the person but the loss of the relationship they never had. The response following a death may be to idealise the person – or to be unable to remember anything good about the relationship.

Has the death resulted in other big changes in the teenager’s life?

The death of a single parent or loss of the main breadwinner in a family may result in a cascade of other losses that add to difficulties in grieving. There may be changes in who looks after the young person – sometimes foster care is a result – and there may be other changes such as moving home or school.

“When dad died we had to move house. That meant I had to change school and so I lost all my friends too. Everything changed.” Tom, 15

Have there been other losses in the teenager’s life?

When a loved one dies, some people gain strength from the fact that they have experienced previous losses and have come through them. But losses can

have a cumulative and negative effect – a new loss may be made more difficult because of previous experiences as memories of the past come to the surface again.

There may also be a ‘grief overload’. If a teenager experiences parental divorce, change of school and death of a grandparent in a short space of time, then the subsequent death of a loved pet may cause grief that seems out of proportion to the nature of the latest loss.

How was the teenager told of the death?

“Two policemen came to the door. Mum told me to go upstairs. I was scared so I went on Facebook to take my mind off things. Someone had posted that my dad had killed himself.” Rhiannon

Receiving difficult news is by its nature very distressing and is best given by someone close to the young person. If a teenager finds out from their peers or through social networking then the level of distress may well be greater.

Was the teenager involved in the funeral or other memorial events?

If a teenager is denied the opportunity to take part in a goodbye ritual they may struggle to accept the reality of the death and they will also be denied the emotional support of others who are grieving.

What were the circumstances of the death?

Grief may be more difficult if the death was traumatic, if the teenager witnessed a death or found the body. They may experience terrifying flashbacks or nightmares and show deep anxiety about others dying. If the teenager feels responsible for the death this will be more difficult for them. Sometimes they will actually have been responsible, such as causing death by driving under the influence of alcohol. On other occasions the teenager may feel responsible when in fact they aren't and this may be an expression of regrets about past conversations or the way they had behaved.

How does the teenager cope with difficulties generally?

Teenagers who have shown good coping mechanisms over other issues in their life will tend to cope better with bereavement. Generally speaking, those with a more extrovert personality will cope better as they can engage more readily with those who can give them emotional support. An introvert may become even more withdrawn with a loss of self-esteem and a sense of fear and isolation.

Does the teenager have support from family, friends, school?

A strong network of support for a teenager is a good predictor of a positive outcome if they are bereaved. If a young person is a loner, or comes from a chaotic home or doesn't relate to staff at school they will be at greater risk of problems following a bereavement including risk-taking behaviours and possible youth offending.



Does the teenager have support from family, friends, school?

A framework to support grieving teenagers

Be honest about the nature of the death

Give honest and accurate information – show you trust your teenager. This is especially the case when a death has been sudden or violent as you may also be reeling with shock. Sometimes it is necessary to give information in small chunks to avoid an overload but be sure that any information you give is true so that it does not need to be changed later.

You may not have all the details about a death for some time. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know the answers yet – but when I find out we can talk again." Inquests, police investigations, trials and in cases of military death service enquiries, all add to difficulties in coming to terms with a death.

Violent deaths

Explaining the circumstances surrounding a suicide is very difficult and many parents naturally want to try and protect their teenagers from distressing facts. But it is important that they hear about the circumstances of the death from someone close – the media interest in a suicide will make it almost impossible to keep the details secret. Teenagers who have found out the details from social networking or computer searches or unkind

comments from their peers will have an even more difficult time with their grief.

When death is due to murder or manslaughter you may be faced with horrific images of how a person has died, possibly after a period of being missing. Media attention will ensure that teenagers will have access to information – it is much better that they hear details from you in as calm and sensitive a way as possible.

Military deaths also receive a very high profile in the media and details may be very difficult to hear – but again, it is far better to learn about what has happened to a parent or sibling who has died in the Armed Forces from someone close.

As with younger children, you may need to go over what happened more than once. This is all part of helping the young person process and accept the death.

Encourage them to be involved with the funeral or goodbye ritual

Funerals are not easy, but they can bring many benefits to those who are mourning. It is a way of showing respect for the person who has died and gives us a chance to say goodbye. A funeral helps people

accept the reality of the death and allows family and friends to come together to share their sorrow and to offer support as the person's life is remembered and celebrated.

★ **Ask for your teenager's thoughts about the funeral or any memorial planned. They might like to choose some music, to write something to put in the coffin or to choose a reading. They will be glad to be involved and feel part of the saying goodbye process. This may especially be the case if the death was sudden and there was no opportunity to say goodbye to the person directly, or to say sorry if there were difficulties in the relationship. Our experience is that young people have strong and positive memories of a funeral if they feel they have had some part to play.**

"So many people came to the funeral – I didn't realise how many people my mum knew and how much they loved her too. It made me feel so proud to be her son." Kenny, 17

Helping teenagers understand the grieving process

Grief is a combination of intense feelings that occur when someone important has died. There is no set path – everyone has a unique grief journey – but there are features in common and it can be helpful to explain these to reassure the teenager. For many people, the

expectation that the pain of grief will simply shrink day by day until it can be declared that they have 'come to terms with it' is out of kilter with their experience. It may help to show the illustration below. Grief is represented by the red ball in a vase that represents the person grieving. The illustration shows that it is not realistic to expect that the pain of grief will simply shrink and that one will soon be 'over it', as shown in A to C below. Grief over the loss of a loved one stays with us but we can in time engage more in everyday life so that it doesn't seem that grief dominates. The grief is still there – but there is much more going on inside as well.

“I don't want to say the wrong thing”

When we talk to someone who has been bereaved we try to bring comfort and 'say the right thing'. Perhaps we should think about listening rather than talking – no words we can say to a grieving teenager will make the death of someone they loved easier to bear. But there are some pitfalls, even though well-intentioned, in responding to a grieving teenager.

Adapted from Tonkin, 1996,
*Growing Around Grief – Another
 Way of Looking at Grief and Recovery*

★ Be available, but let the teenager take the lead on when and where to talk. They may prefer to talk to their friends – this is natural and normal. Teenagers can be very supportive of each other and it might be helpful to make opportunities for them to get together at a time when your teenager may not have the energy to arrange things for themselves.

Talking with teenagers

The following comments in grey have been reported to us by teenagers – the words in red reflect the teenagers' reactions. Following those, in green, are some suggestions for more empathic responses.

Responses that are insensitive or suggest a teenager's grief is not taken seriously:

You should be over it by now.

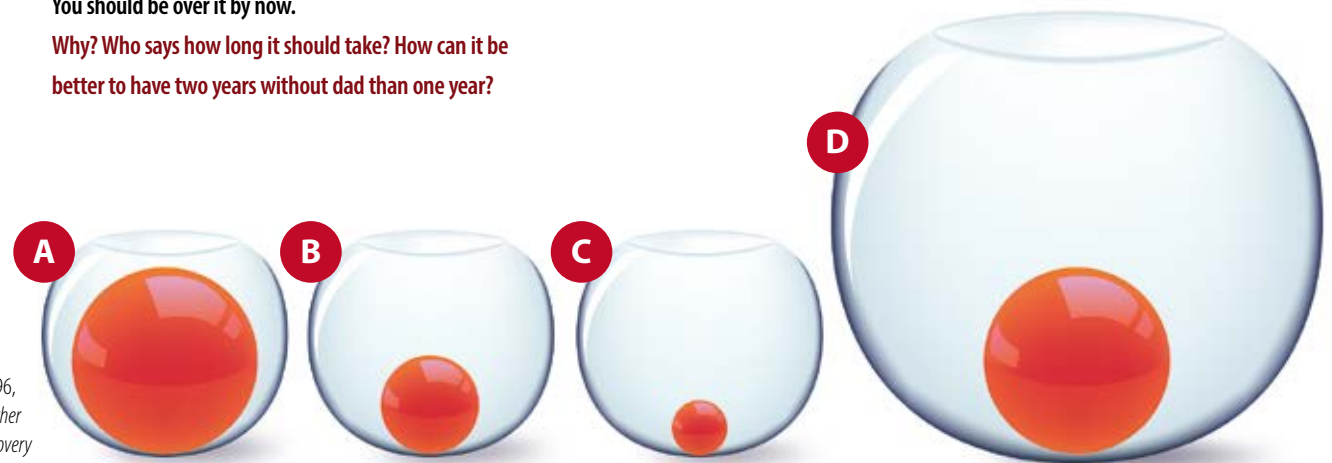
Why? Who says how long it should take? How can it be better to have two years without dad than one year?

I know it is a while since he died – maybe you are worried that it still hurts. That's OK. I feel the same. It is really difficult when memories of dad come flooding back.

Stop moping around – he was just a friend.

You just don't understand. I could tell him anything. He was always there for me. He was the first person I would go to with a problem. And he did the same with me. I feel lost without him.

I can see you are still feeling very sad. Friends are so important – we often feel closer to friends than members of the family. I can't make up for you not having your friend around, but I am always here to listen if you want to talk.



You had no experience
of someone wanting to
kill themselves or how
seriously to take
this threat.



What else can you expect? You knew he was drinking before he got in the car.

I feel so guilty anyway – I would give anything to go back and make things different. I don't know how I am going to live with this.

I can see why this feels so difficult for you – but you were not the person who sat in the driver's seat. He had some responsibility for his actions even if he had been drinking. But it is still so sad that he died.

You knew how bad she felt – you should have told someone. She said she didn't want to live, that she felt really down – but I never thought this meant she would kill herself. She seemed so happy when I last saw her and she gave me a present. I wish I'd realised that she was saying goodbye – I could have stopped this...

You had no experience of someone wanting to kill themselves or how seriously to take this threat. Even professional psychiatrists get it wrong. You had no way of knowing she would kill herself.

Avoid clichés, even if they are meant to be comforting:

Time is a great healer.

But I'm still not OK. I still think about my dad all the time.

Does this mean I am not normal?

It may be a while since dad died – but we all still feel so dreadful that he is not with us any more. Every time we have special days it feels as though he has only just died. It is normal to feel great waves of sadness at these times.

I know how you are feeling.

No – you DO NOT know how I am feeling. No-one does.

Even if you have had someone close die – it is not the same for me.

I can't begin to understand how you are feeling. But I am here to listen if you want to talk.

At least he had a happy life.

Yes – but he was only 15. Why does someone of 15 have cancer?

He was only 15 and died of cancer. This is a tragedy and nothing can make that feel better. Sometimes there are just no explanations. I feel really angry that this happened – maybe you feel that too. No-one can make sense of the loss of life in someone so young.

She was old – her time had come.

I know gran was old – but she was so brilliant. I could go and talk to her about anything. None of my friends think it was a big deal when she died – they just don't get how sad I am.

I know gran was old but that doesn't make it any easier that she has died. I know how important she was in your life and I am so glad you had her to talk to. We can still talk about her and think about the wonderful times you had together. Is there something of gran's you would like to keep as a special memory?

Just think – he is out of his suffering.

I know he suffered, and it was really hard to see dad in pain. I knew he was going to die – it doesn't make it any easier now though.

The fact that dad has died and is not in pain any more does not mean we miss him less. Even in his pain he wanted to be there for us. And even though we knew for a long time that he would die, that doesn't make it any easier.

It was her time to be with God.

Well God is really mean then. I need my mum more than God.

Some people say it is time for someone to be with God. This seems really hard – it sounds as if God is quite selfish in taking people when they still have so much to give in their life with people they love and who love them. Sometimes there are just no answers. It's tough.

The importance of memories

When someone has died, especially if the death was sudden or the circumstances were traumatic, it can seem that this is all you can think about. Putting the death in the context of a teenager's life by sharing memories is a helpful and healing process.

- ★ Have conversations based on an activity, for example looking at photo albums.
- ★ Share memories of being with the person who has died. What was the best day you had together? What was the craziest thing they ever did?
- ★ Get into the habit of talking about the person in everyday conversation. For example, "Remember when we all used to go to the beach together" or "Your mum really loved this programme."

★ Put together a memory box of items that help you remember the person who has died. Here are some of the items young people we work with have put in their memory boxes:

- clothing – a tie, scarf or T-shirt
- jewellery – a watch, ring or necklace
- aftershave or perfume – the sense of smell is closely connected to the emotional centres of the brain and the scent a person used is very evocative
- photos
- a playlist of favourite pieces of music
- family DVDs.

Recognising teenagers' support systems

'Peer pressure' in the teenage years has many negative connotations but it is important to appreciate that teenagers can also be very supportive of each other. Teenagers may turn to their friends as their first source of support – don't worry about this, it is normal and natural.



Vigorous activity such as swimming or football can help to release anger in a healthy way.

Supporting emotional expression

It has been shown that boys and girls may respond in different ways and so have different needs from those supporting them. Here are some suggestions for supporting bereaved boys in a way that is adapted to their communication style and activity-based interests. Don't expect face-to-face conversations and high levels of eye contact. Get involved in a shared activity and let conversation develop naturally.

Boys may find it easier to write about activities they have shared with the person who died rather than reflect deeply on their feelings, so using the computer to express thoughts rather than direct contact may be helpful here.

Physical activities

Physical activities serve several purposes. Vigorous activity such as swimming or football can help to release anger in a healthy way. It can also be beneficial to have some 'time out' from grieving and to realise that it is OK to have fun even after someone has died.

- ★ Visit places that were important to the person who died – this may stimulate conversation, But, equally, you can show your support by just being with the teenager in silence.
- ★ Offer to go with the teenager to the grave – but also let them choose if they want some time alone there.
- ★ Sometimes it can help to visit the scene of an accident.

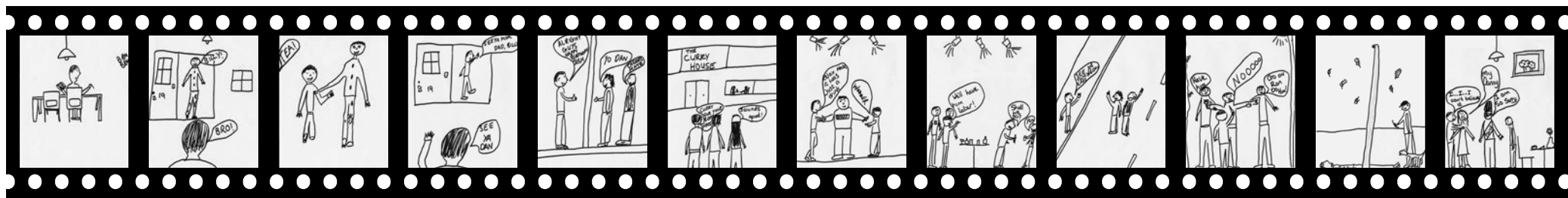
- ★ Sharing general domestic tasks such as cooking or washing up can pave the way for easy conversation.
- ★ Car journeys are great for talking – or not talking, and listening to music together. Young people really appreciate adults sharing their music.

Creative activities – writing, music and art

Writing

- ★ Encourage teenagers to write. It can be easier to put words onto paper than to talk. Computers will be the preferred choice for many but there is something special about handwriting a poem, or the recollection of memories or a tribute to the person who has died if this is handwritten.
- ★ Following a sudden death when the teenager may have unfinished business or want to say sorry, a letter expressing all those feelings can be very helpful.

"I feel I am in a long dark tunnel. At the end I can just see a faint green glow of an EXIT sign. There are doors along the tunnel and I wonder if I can short-cut the dark tunnel by opening them. I don't know what is behind each door until I open it. I go through a door and find alcohol behind it. I try this for a while – but leave it behind and come back to the tunnel on the opposite side – but no further along the way. The same happens with doors that lead to thinking about killing myself, taking drugs, sleeping around. In the end, I know the tunnel is something I have to walk through, one step at a time. Sometimes it's like for every step forward I take two back – but I have to carry on." Sophie, 16, following the suicide of her boyfriend



Music

Music can help in grief in several ways.

- ★ Sometimes teenagers feel they can't cry – or don't want to let themselves cry. Music can be a way of tapping into deep feelings allowing the release of pent-up emotion. The lyrics of many love songs and ballads express the feelings that follow the loss of a relationship but equally well express loss through death. If tears flow this may need to be a private time.
- ★ Some young people have made playlists of favourite pieces of music of the person who died.

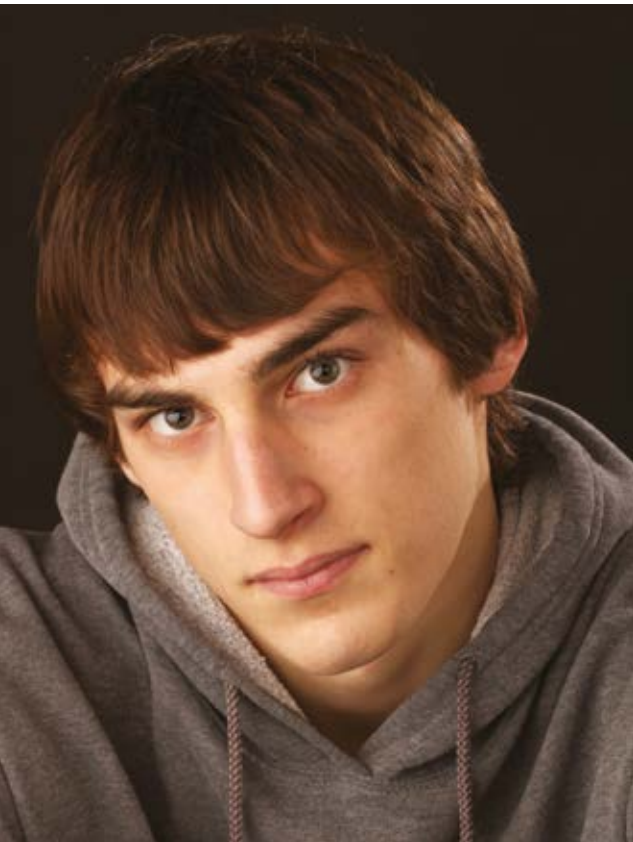
“Dad loved rock ‘n’ roll songs and at parties he used to really embarrass us by doing karaoke. I made a playlist and listen to it when I visit dad’s grave. At first it made me cry but now I just smile when I think of how funny he was.” Jo, 16

- ★ Music can match moods. Sometimes it is helpful to sit with your sad feelings and let the tears flow listening to music that is slow, calm, perhaps with words that express deep feelings.
- ★ Music can also be used to lift mood – dancing and moving to high energy up-beat music can build a real sense of well-being and is a good way of reducing anxiety and releasing energy.

Art

- ★ Art can offer a safe and non-threatening medium to explore feelings and emotions. Non-verbal connections can be made with the emotional centres of the brain and allow an exploration of what is going on inside.
- ★ Drawing the story of what happened around a death as a filmstrip can help young people to build a narrative of what happened and support them in finding the words to describe the situation. It can also be helpful by allowing difficult images to be illustrated on paper and then symbolically put out of the young person's head. This can release difficult emotions and is an activity that is best supported by working with an adult.
- ★ Clay modelling can also be very therapeutic. Just handling and moulding wet clay allows reflection and it is a medium that can be punched and shaped, giving a sense of control.
- ★ In our residential groups young people are encouraged to hurl lumps of clay against an ‘anger wall’ which has sheets of paper with words written on them that express difficult feelings and emotions. The paper ends up shredded: the release of energy helps to dissipate anger in a safe way and the clay can then be moulded into some shape or object to keep.

Drawing the story of what happened around a death as a filmstrip can help young people to build a narrative of what happened and support them in finding the words to describe the situation.



"I feel much older than my friends now. They seem like silly kids." Jordan

For parents – helping your grieving teenager

Show that you take their grief seriously. Just because they are young doesn't mean they aren't hurting.

"You just don't understand." Brandon

"Nobody gets me." Taylor

"I pretend I'm OK – but when I see everyone at school just messing about it's really hard." Mia

"I feel much older than my friends now. They seem like silly kids."

Jordan

Contact with friends

It can be difficult as a parent when children start to move away from confiding in us and instead revealing more to their friends. When there has been a death of someone important some young people will go back to greater closeness with a surviving parent – but others will lean even more on their friends. This can be very difficult if you feel the friendship group has a negative influence.

As a parent you can support your teenager by encouraging contact with friends at a time when they may have little energy to motivate themselves.

Coping with difficult behaviour

It is important to remember that teenagers can be very unpredictable. They may be helpful one minute and then storm out of the house over a disagreement the next. They may seem inconsolable until their phone goes off and they then chat happily with a friend.

Teenagers often take things very personally so it may feel deeply unfair that someone has died. Feeling hard done by can make people angry and aggressive – acknowledging that it is not fair will help.

Teenagers are notorious for their risk-taking behaviour as they try to establish their own sense of identity. Experimenting with drugs, alcohol and sex are features that you may recognise as normal teenage behaviour but when they are coping with a death this may become more pronounced. Drugs and alcohol may be used to numb the pain of the loss and sexual experimentation may be a way of looking for love when a loved one has died.

Help them to keep themselves safe. For some young people the death of someone important can tip them into really dangerous behaviour such as serious drug use, self-harming or suicide attempts. If you are worried, seek help. (See the section starting on page 26 for more thoughts about important issues relating to teenage bereavement.)

Communication

- ★ Teenagers may want to talk a lot to you about the death – or they may seem to shut you out. If they do want to talk, then make the time there and then – the opportunity may not arise again. Try not to put pressure on them to talk to you; they may feel more comfortable talking to a friend, a teacher or someone in the family who is not so close.
- ★ Sometimes talking is just too painful. You can keep communicating by brief text messages or e-mails, or even by sticking post-it notes on the fridge. Don't be put off by not getting a response – deep down your response will be appreciated.
- ★ Sometimes we try to reassure a young person – and ourselves – by saying things like “Life will get back to normal in time.” It is more honest to say “Things will never be the same again – but we will be OK.” You may be coping with other changes as a result of a death such as loss of income, having to move house or school, changes in who is caring. Try to keep as much stability and normality as you can but acknowledge that there can be a number of other losses after the death and this may make the grief more complicated.

Looking after yourself

- ★ If you are bereaved of the parent of your teenager you will be grieving too. You may put the emotional well-being of your teenager above your own and not allow yourself time to grieve. However, it is essential that you have your own space for grief – look for support from family and friends, and make time for yourself.

- ★ Don't be afraid to show your own feelings. You will be showing your teenager that it is OK to cry, to be angry, to feel lost or in despair. Sometimes each member of a family grieves as if in their own individual bubble. If you can find ways of doing things together, sharing memories or planning what to do at family occasions when someone will not be there for the first time, you will be able to grieve together and give each other support.
- ★ If a parent has died, a teenager may feel the need to step into their role for the sake of the surviving parent and their siblings. This can cause great conflict for a teenager as this developmental stage should be about separating from the family to some extent rather than becoming more closely involved to fill a gap. Help them to know that they do not need to try and take the place of the person who has died.



“We stopped talking after Jen died. It just hurt too much. But after I called the helpline we worked out ways to do stuff together and talk about our memories!” James



“When his dad died, Ryan felt he had to be the man of the family for me. It was really important to say he could still be a teenager. Now we make time to talk and remember.” Tracey

Things to remember for parents and carers

- Remember that perfect parents don't exist. Just do what you can, when you can. Accept that some things can't be 'made better' in a short time.
- Be honest about life in the future. It can never be the same after the death of an important person but people can find a 'new normal'.
- Be prepared to talk when the young person wants to, even if it's late at night. The opportunity may not come up again.
- Don't be afraid to show your own emotions.
- Answer questions honestly – even difficult news is better coming from someone close rather than via social networking or on the web.
- Find ways to involve young people in goodbye rituals and ways of remembering the person who has died.
- Look after yourself too.

For teachers – grieving in school communities

We often get calls from schools following the death of a pupil or teacher about how best to respond.

“I teach a group of eight young people in a pupil referral unit. Our teaching assistant died suddenly during the holidays. How do I talk to them about it?” Tara

“I am head of an infant school. One of the parents was murdered by her partner. How can I explain what has happened to such little children?” Anita

Deaths that may affect a school

The impact of death on a school depends on many factors and each situation warrants an individual response in the context of a whole school strategy. Sudden deaths are experienced differently from expected death. Traumatic or violent deaths can shake a school community and there is a difference whether it is the death of a pupil, a member of staff or a parent.

People describe the impact of a pupil death in a school community as having a ripple effect. This ‘resonant trauma’ can be difficult to handle. Close friends of the pupil who has died may resent overt signs of grieving from those who weren’t friends and who might even have bullied the person who

died. It can seem that everyone wants to stake a claim on grief for the person who died.

Talking about feelings and relationships

★ It can be very difficult for young people to find the words to express how they are feeling. It can also be hard to understand how relationships with friends and family may have changed following the death of someone important. The Blob tree provides a simple but effective way of showing what is going on in their life and can open up discussion in a non-threatening way.

You are looking at the tree:

Which Blob do you feel like today?

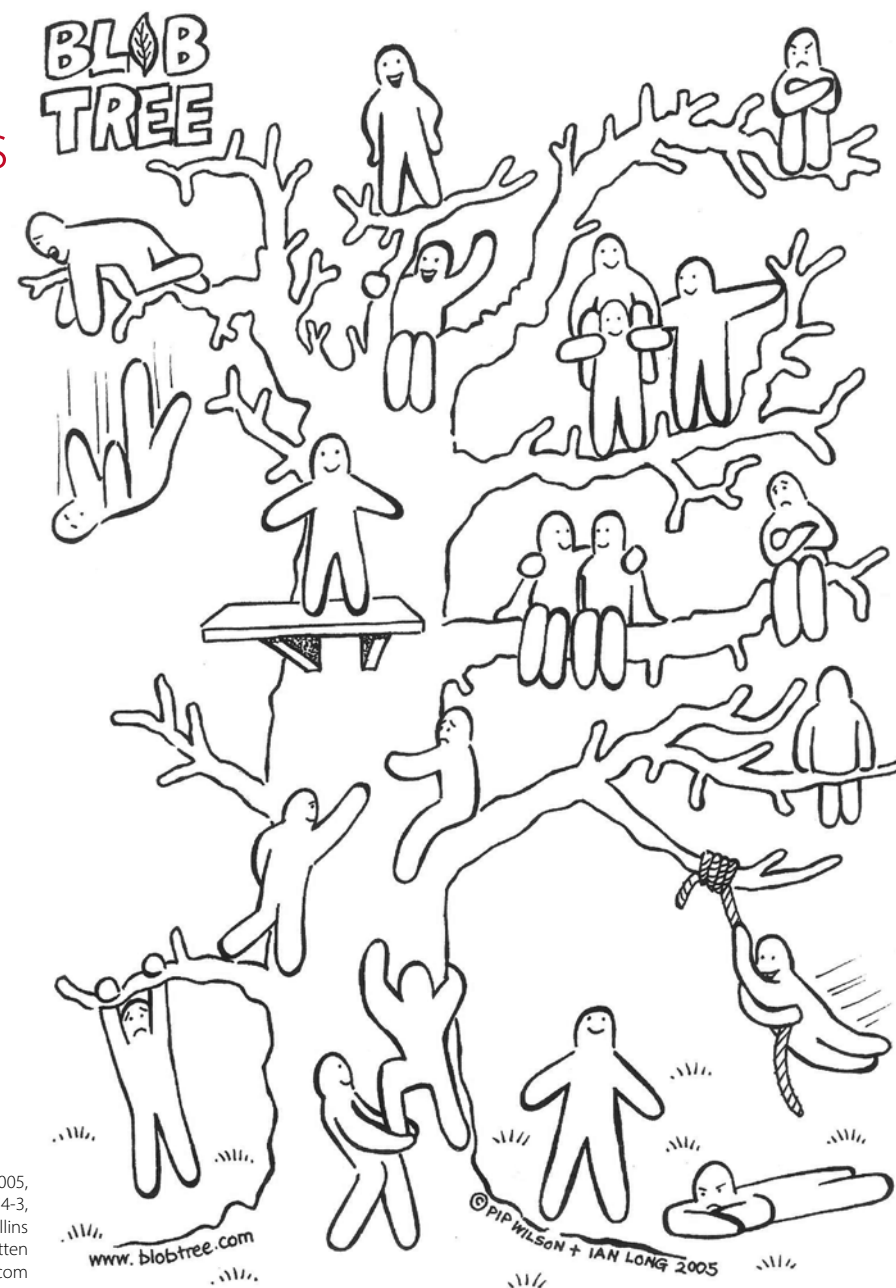
Which Blob would you like to be?

Which one are you on your worst day?

Think of you and the important person who has died. Which two Blobs would you be?

Think about your friends – which Blobs are they?

What about people in your family? Which Blobs are they?



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Planting a tree for someone who has died is a powerful way of showing that life continues and the person who has died is not forgotten.



How schools can help

- ★ Give honest information as soon as possible; rumours are quick to circulate and difficult to dispel. You may want to consider how best to give out information. An assembly? In small tutor groups? By engaging parents so they can choose how to give the news in a sensitive home environment?
- ★ Keep the whole school community informed – pupils, staff and parents.
- ★ Support friendship groups and tutor groups by allowing time to talk and to share activities such as making memory jars (see activity sheet on page 36).
- ★ Call the Winston's Wish Freephone National Helpline 08088 020 021 to talk through any issues arising from the death. The Helpline is open Monday to Friday. For more details please visit the Winston's Wish website at www.winstonswish.org

School memorials

- ★ Have a noticeboard for the person who has died and invite anyone from the school to put up notes, drawings or messages. Give a designated time for this to be used – for example, say "This noticeboard will be up for three weeks until half-term." It is important that the school values these contributions and has a sense of the importance of their messages – they will not just be taken down and put in a bin.
- ★ We have worked with schools that have put all the messages into a book for the parents of a pupil who has died, or the relatives of a teacher who died. This could be given to the family privately or bereaved relatives may derive great comfort in being presented with the book at a school event in which

the life of the person who died is celebrated. We have seen how supported bereaved relatives feel when they appreciate the love and care felt by the wider community for the person who has died. Clearly the wishes of the bereaved parents should be followed.

- ★ Planting a tree for someone who has died is a powerful way of showing that life continues and the person who has died is not forgotten. Some schools have a 'memorial garden' area – a peaceful place where pupils can just go and sit at difficult times.
- ★ A water feature in a garden or school entrance area can be a source of comfort. The continually flowing water shows that life continues – pebbles added when someone has died is a way of remembering them.
- ★ It is important to think ahead to significant times such as anniversaries of the death, other anniversaries, birthdays, Father's Day or Mother's Day. A quiet, sensitive word with a teenager to acknowledge a difficult day will be appreciated if they seem unfocused or withdrawn and are lost in their thoughts.
- ★ When a pupil has died through suicide it is important to acknowledge the life of the person and to be honest about how they died. However, care has to be taken that the death is not glorified in any way. There has been a worrying rise in pro-suicide websites and these can be very damaging to vulnerable bereaved teenagers.

How can I recognise the effects of bereavement in my pupils?

Pupils may become withdrawn and difficult to engage. There may be an increase in absenteeism as they experience physical and emotional symptoms of grief. Poor concentration may result in not completing school work and therefore dropping grades. This can further damage their self-esteem and needs careful handling to ensure the teenager feels supported to get back on track. Some teenagers respond by being restless, aggressive or attention-seeking.

What bereaved teenagers say helps them in school

“My form tutor said I could talk to him any time – I didn’t very often, but it was good to know I could.” Shaun

“I was allowed just to go out of class for a bit if I got upset. I would walk around for a bit and come back in when I wanted.” Zhane

“My teachers knew I couldn’t concentrate on my work and they didn’t get cross if my work wasn’t so good or I couldn’t hand it in on time.” Lia

“I didn’t want to feel different at school. My teacher just talked to me quietly and didn’t make a big deal in front of everyone else.” Kaedon

You can download further information for schools from our website (at www.winstonswish.org). This includes a schools information pack, a strategy for schools and a variety of lesson plans for Key Stages 1–4 that describe ways of covering issues relating to death and bereavement in different subject areas.



“We had a pupil suicide and the shock went through the whole school. Talking plans through on the helpline really helped.” Richard, Head teacher



“The last time I saw dad I said I hated him. That’s all I can think about now.” Lola

Does the way a person died make a difference to grieving?

Any death may result in considerable emotional pain but our experience shows that there are different issues relating to the circumstances around the death of a loved one that can affect the range and extent of feelings and emotions and the course of the grief journey.

Expected death following illness

An expected death is difficult for everyone. Grieving may have started at the beginning of a serious illness and those around the dying person will have a period of anticipating life without their loved one. A terminal illness may be difficult and protracted but people are left with the feeling that there was time to say goodbye, to say ‘I’m sorry’ if there were difficulties in the relationship, and to create happy memories as the remaining time together is truly valued.

It is a time for keeping young people in the family in touch with what is happening, being honest and communicating. But just because a death is expected, it does not mean that the grief is any less intense.

“I wanted to leave my boys with as many happy memories as I could. We have spent the last few months talking, laughing and going to lovely places. And I have had time to write messages for them for the future.” Maggie, 39, died of breast cancer leaving sons aged 12 and 15

There may be very mixed emotions after the death. There may be relief that the person has died and so is not suffering. There may also be relief that the focus of family life is no longer on the dying person but, mixed in with this, the teenager may feel really guilty for having these feelings. It is important to say to them that all feelings are allowed – the important thing is to try and talk about them.

There may be anger after the death if the illness, diagnosis or death itself were handled badly. For example, being present at a painful or distressing death can result in persistent memories and be difficult to deal with. On the other hand, there can be great comfort for people seeing someone die quietly and peacefully, feeling they were not alone at the end.

Sudden death due to accident or illness

Shock and disbelief may be the first responses to a sudden death due to accident or illness and there is a real feeling of not being able to say goodbye. There may be unfinished business that can never be finished now. A teenager may feel very guilty about their behaviour or regret the fact that a last conversation with someone was an argument.

Sudden violent death – murder, manslaughter, suicide and military

Murder and manslaughter

The impact of a murder has a massive effect on those most closely involved as well as friends and the wider community. Following notification, families are allocated a Family Liaison Officer who will support them in the difficult days and weeks ahead. There are so many aspects of a death by murder that make grieving even more difficult – it has been called ‘grief with the volume turned up’.

There may have been a period when the person was missing, there will be an investigation, the murderer may not be caught, or the murderer could be a family member. The murder may have been witnessed.

Managing the press may be very difficult. Young people may feel very angry over the portrayal of the person who has died and there is a sense of private grief becoming public property. Relatives may not be able to see or touch the body and they may lose control over when a funeral can take place. Even when a funeral has taken place, inquests and trials can drag on for many months and so have an effect on grieving. There may be many unanswered questions for a long time.

One of the most disturbing aspects for those bereaved by murder is when the perpetrator is seen to be given a very lenient sentence. Children will be very angry in this situation but are unlikely to be in a position to act on this. A teenager’s anger and sense of injustice can lead to a wish to have revenge and it is important to acknowledge that this is a natural response but one that cannot be acted on.

To begin with, memories may be totally dominated by the nature of the death with intrusive thoughts and images of how a person died that are very disturbing. Our experience with young people bereaved by murder shows that acknowledging the dreadful nature of the death and working on memories of the person who has died – thinking about good times together – does allow them to move forward from a preoccupation about the circumstances of the death.

Suicide

Suicide is the third most common cause of death for the population as a whole and is the second most common cause of death for 15–24-year-olds.

A huge mix of conflicting emotions occurs after a suicide. There may be feelings of abandonment, confusion and



“The hardest thing I ever had to do was telling the girls their brother had been murdered. I wanted to protect them. But I know I didn’t want them to find out what had happened on the internet.” Phil



bewilderment as well as guilt, shame and hate over what has happened. For a teenager in the middle of the process of working out their own concept of the meaning of life, this can be a devastating time.

"I'm really sad dad died – but I'm really angry about how it happened. I wish I could say he'd had a car crash or something." Sam, 14, bereaved by his dad's suicide

Those bereaved by suicide often describe a great sense of isolation as the death is stigmatised and people just don't know what to say. Guilt, hate and love make a very difficult mix to cope with – a rollercoaster of extremes of emotion.

"I could tell in people's eyes that they wanted to say something about my dad, and then they would just block off what they were going to say and say nothing. People always avoided talking to me or asking me about my dad – I think this was because they didn't want to upset me. I needed the teacher to tell my class what had happened so that I would not have to tell them myself – in the end I did have to tell some people because no-one else said anything." Amy, 16, speaking of her dad's death by suicide

Why did they do it? Sometimes there have been signs of mental health problems, drug or alcohol abuse, or earlier suicide attempts leading up to a suicide. A suicide letter may have been left, though by no means always. But we often talk to people bereaved by suicide who are totally bewildered and struggle to understand why a parent or sibling could leave them with such pain and anguish. The guilt after a person has died through suicide can be deep and difficult. Unfortunately there may be no answers and those bereaved through suicide may struggle coming to terms with what has happened. While younger children may not express guilt, teenagers often do.

Did I miss something?

Why couldn't I see this coming?

Why didn't she come and talk to me?

Helping a teenager bereaved by suicide

- ★ Invite them to be part of a goodbye ceremony – choosing music, writing words to be read out or put in the coffin.
- ★ Say it's OK to express emotions, however difficult these may be. People often go through life hating the person who has died because of the circumstances of their death. Perhaps they found the body or are left with awful images gained from press reports.
- ★ Don't try to stop tears. It is difficult sitting with a very distressed teenager and the natural reaction is to soothe and comfort. Sitting with someone crying, letting them give full expression to their tears, giving them physical contact if they want it, such as just making contact with a hand or shoulder, may be the best thing you can do. Words aren't always needed.
- ★ Don't feel you have to give answers or explanations. There may be no explanations for why someone chose to take their own life. Sometimes we have to live with 'not knowing'. What is important is that young people know as much – or as little – as there is to know.
- ★ Talk about the person who has died, and use their name. Suicide is often felt as such a stigma that the person is not mentioned. This is very difficult for a teenager still wanting to remember and value the person who has died.
- ★ Let them have time on their own – they may just want to be left with their thoughts and memories. A constant checking with "Are you OK?" may be met with anything from a dismissive shrug or "I'm fine" to an angry outburst and a slamming of doors.

Winston's Wish is able to support young people bereaved by suicide. There can be great benefits in meeting others in a similar situation.

Bereavement due to a military death – coping with a double blow

When a member of the Armed Forces is killed on active duty, the death delivers a double blow to families – not only do they have to cope with a sudden, unexpected death, they may also have to deal with the way their relative has died if there has been a traumatic death in conflict.

Parents, grandparents and siblings who are left may be overwhelmed and bewildered by what has happened. Children and young people are often the 'hidden victims' left to exist, survive, grieve and despair 'behind the headlines' – behind the sensationalism and media frenzy, inquests and possible service enquiries. Private grief may become very public property and families may feel overwhelmed.

More detailed information about supporting bereaved children and young people from military families can be found in our booklet *The family has been informed*.



"Until Brad and Callum went to the group, they felt they were the only boys whose dad had killed himself. It really helped them to talk to others about what had happened." Anna



A young person suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder may also be unable to recall important aspects of the event. They may no longer want to take part in activities that they previously enjoyed and feel detached from others.

Important issues

What are the warning signs for someone needing specialist support?

The warning signs for someone needing specialist support can include the following:

- withdrawal from friends and family
- major changes in behaviour
- self-harming
- abuse of alcohol or drugs
- talking about suicide
- feeling guilty about the death
- decline in school performance
- constantly thinking about the death.

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a diagnosis made by specialists and involves a pattern of symptoms that have been present for over a month.

Firstly, these symptoms include the traumatic event being persistently re-experienced through intrusive thoughts and images. There may also be flashbacks or nightmares, as well as intense psychological distress and physiological symptoms on exposure to stimuli that resemble the traumatic event.

Secondly, there is continued avoidance of anything associated with the trauma, or emotional numbing that can make it difficult to carry on with normal life. Efforts may be made to avoid any conversations associated with the trauma, as well as avoiding activities, places or people who trigger memories of the trauma. A young person suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder may also be unable to recall important aspects of the event. They may no longer want to take part in activities that they previously enjoyed and feel detached from others.

Thirdly, there will be signs of increased and exaggerated emotions. This may involve decreased concentration, difficulties in getting to sleep, hyper vigilance, irritability or outbursts of anger, and an exaggerated startle response.

All these symptoms may cause significant distress or impairment in all aspects of daily life. Post-traumatic stress disorder needs specialist treatment and professional advice should always be sought.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is most likely if there has been a traumatic event such as a murder or suicide that the young person has witnessed or being involved in an accident in which others were killed.

Teenagers and suicide risk

What factors add to the risk of teenage suicide?

Following a significant bereavement, teenagers may express suicidal thoughts and research shows that they are more likely to express these thoughts to friends than to parents, so keep in touch with their friends.

However, it is important to know that studies show that 20–45% of older adolescents have had suicidal thoughts at some point as they question who they are in the world or the

point of being alive. In most cases these thoughts are never acted on. However, there are some additional warning signs. If a young person starts giving away personal possessions, or appears to be saying goodbye, they may be planning a suicide.

Should teenagers be asked about suicidal thoughts?

People often think that it is wrong to directly question someone about thoughts of suicide, thinking it may actually put these thoughts into their head. This is not the case. It can be very reassuring for a young person to be asked about such thoughts and it can help to have a conversation about very worrying and isolating thinking. When people express suicidal thoughts it is often not that they actually want to die but more that they are in such pain that they can't see how to continue living.

Using the internet – the good and the bad

Online memorial sites are increasingly popular and young people can be very supportive of each other. However, there is a negative side to this too. Postings are sometimes made on these sites that are abusive and cause considerable distress.



“I think children surviving a parental suicide have such terrible grief – it can be so difficult to move on. Talking really helped me, as a surviving parent and for my daughter.” Simon



It can help to have a conversation about very worrying and isolating thinking.

Access to pro-suicide websites is alarmingly easy. Vulnerable young people may be swept into suicide forums and chat rooms. It is important to consider this aspect of internet use and mental health professionals recommend asking those who are depressed or expressing suicidal thoughts about their internet use. Young people can be directed to helpful and supportive resources online that will be therapeutic rather than harmful. The Winston's Wish website – at www.winstonswish.org – has a moderated site for young people to post their thoughts and feelings as well as to support others.

How can schools respond to a pupil's suicide?

Here are some ideas.

- Inform all staff as soon as possible and give them the opportunity to ask you questions and voice their concerns.
- Ensure all information shared with staff and students does not sensationalise the story.
- Assign a member of staff to deal with any media interest.
- Give accurate information to the school community. This is often best done in small tutor groups rather than as a whole school assembly because it allows the staff to gauge the effect that the information has on the students.
- Closely monitor the school's emotional climate and refer vulnerable students on to support services if necessary.

If you have cause to be concerned about the risk of suicide for a young person in your care, do check the website of Papyrus. (See the section 'Sources of information and support' starting on page 42.) Papyrus provides excellent material on identifying suicide risk and suicide prevention as well as useful guidelines on how to assess the influence of websites relating to suicide.

Complicated grief

Grief is described as complicated if there are persistent or intrusive thoughts and intense yearning and pain for over six months following the death of someone close. These are the features that may be seen:

- difficulty accepting the loss
- diminished sense of self
- avoidance of reminders of loss
- inability to trust others
- bitterness over the death
- difficulty moving on
- emotional numbness
- meaninglessness
- difficulty expressing feelings.

Grief revisited

Teenagers may have been bereaved as young children but can find they grieve again as they grow up. They may have further questions about how the person died, and as they prepare for independent adult life they may really miss the guidance of a parent. Major life events may appear empty and meaningless as a parent is not there to share the moment. This needs sensitivity and a willingness on the part of the surviving parent to talk again about the death so that a teenager can develop a more adult understanding of what happened.

Anxiety about the young person's own mortality may feature at this stage. Some families do have an increased incidence of cancer or genetic conditions that may be life-limiting. Honesty and openness are essential and while it may not be possible to totally reassure a young person about their own chances of developing a serious condition, they will feel more in control if they know about screening possibilities and lifestyle choices that can make a difference. It may be helpful for them to have the opportunity to speak to their GP about these issues.

Risk-taking behaviour

“The first time I tried cocaine I was at my brother’s wake. I just got given it in the pub and it sort of made me happy... after, if anyone mentioned my brother’s death, I would just snap but if I was on the drugs and someone mentioned him I could talk about him.” Mark, 17

Risk-taking behaviour is a common feature of teenage development and it can be difficult to unravel how much of this would have happened anyway and how much is due to bereavement. Teenagers may look to numb their grief by abusing drugs or alcohol and they may look for closeness through sexual experimentation. It is important to note major changes in these areas and consider how young people can be supported to express their grief in more appropriate ways using ideas in this booklet.



“I was only four when dad died. Now I know what I have missed and it’s really hard.” Charlie



When a person's grief is not recognised it can be a very isolating experience.

¹ Doka KJ (ed) (2002) *Disenfranchised Grief: New Directions, Challenges, and Strategies for Practice*. Illinois: Research Press.

When grief is not recognised – disenfranchised grief

When a person's grief is not recognised it can be described as 'disenfranchised grief'¹ and this can be a very isolating experience.

In a teenager's life this may be because the relationship is not seen as important.

"Tom was a popular boy at school and had a great future ahead of him. After a short illness, meningitis was diagnosed and he died 48 hours later. His family and school friends were devastated. No-one really thought about Max who took an overdose after Tom's death. It turned out he had in fact recently embarked on a homosexual relationship with Tom that no-one knew about." Geoff

A teenager may also be grieving for the loss of a relationship that others do not think was particularly close. The death of a grandparent or a family friend may have a devastating effect on a teenager that may not be acknowledged.

"Jane was mum's best friend. Our two families spent so much time together. When Jane became very ill with cancer her children stayed with us a lot and we all visited her in the hospice. After the funeral, teachers were very kind to Jane's children but didn't see that Joe and me were very upset too and we got into a lot of trouble with our school work." James, 15

Another difficulty is if a teenager is excluded from information about a death and attending goodbye rituals. This may be the case if people think the bereaved teenager is unable to understand what has happened or there is a sense of wanting to protect the young person.

"Rob has Down's syndrome. He is 14 but is more like a 7-year-old. He had been in our foster care for 18 months because his single mum had lung cancer and couldn't look after him. We took him to see his mum regularly but he seemed upset after every visit. So when she died we thought it best if he didn't come to the funeral. Rob's behaviour became very difficult – he started soiling and hitting out at me. When I got some support from a bereavement counsellor we realised what he needed and we had another ceremony for him to say goodbye. We also made a memory box. Rob is much better now and we make sure we talk about his mum a lot." Sally, foster carer

Sometimes a teenager is in a new family following a difficult separation and hasn't recently seen the person who has died. Secondary losses like this can make the grieving process much more difficult.

“Mum left dad because of his drinking. She didn't seem sad at all when he died of a heart attack. Dad's new partner didn't want any of us at the funeral – I don't think mum would have gone anyway. I hadn't seen much of dad but I still wanted to say goodbye. I think I am the only person who feels sad that he has died.” Sophie, 15

The circumstances of a death may be stigmatised. Those who have been bereaved through suicide, drug abuse or AIDS often say that people don't seem to realise how much they are grieving.

“My brother was a heroin addict and he died of an overdose. Everyone said it was his own fault. It was really – but that doesn't mean I don't miss him. He was a great brother and I just wish we could still have good times together.” Chris, 17

Survivor guilt – “It should have been me”

James, aged 18, celebrated passing his driving test by taking three friends out. His car was involved in a head-on collision with a car driven by a drunk driver. James survived. His front seat passenger suffered a spinal injury and is now in a wheelchair. One of his passengers died from injuries.

Death can appear to be very random and teenagers who have been involved in an accident may question why they survived and someone else died. In the case of a sibling death, there may be the unspoken sense that the 'favourite' child died and the 'problem' child survived. Some teenagers feel they have to make up for the loss of their sibling and this can be a very heavy burden.



“We're planning to get together on Tim's birthday every year and have a party.”

Kayla, friend of Tim who died, aged 16, in a road traffic accident



“We still miss dad so much. It really hurts sometimes. But hugging helps.” Cerys

Grief triggers

Special occasions throughout the year can be a trigger to grief, even long after a death. Christmas and other festivals, Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, the birthday of the person who has died or the anniversary of their death can bring up feelings that may seem as strong as when the person had just died. This can be quite frightening and people may feel they have gone backwards in their grief journey. It is important to recognise these feelings as normal and it can help to plan ahead for such events.

“The death was like an earthquake in our lives – I just didn’t realise how many after-shocks there would be.” Elena

“The first anniversary of Emma’s death was always going to be difficult. It fell on Mother’s Day and was the day before her birthday so that was even worse. We decided to plan to take the day off work and school – to go to the beach where we had our last holiday. We thought a lot about Emma, and released helium balloons with messages – but we also had a great day wind-surfing. We’re going to do this every year.” Pete, father of 14-year-old Josh, after the death of his wife

Grief can catch us unawares. A piece of music, a smell or a place can take us back to a time when we initially grieved deeply after the death of someone important. This is normal. Teenagers may have this experience and worry that they haven’t ‘got over’ a death properly. It is important to reassure young people that it is OK to be upset again that someone has died – even many years after the event.

FOR TEENAGERS...

*FOR YOU TO USE YOURSELF OR PASS ON
TO A GRIEVING FRIEND.*

*THIS IS A SECTION WITH IDEAS FROM TEENAGERS WE HAVE WORKED WITH THAT THEY HAVE
FOUND HELPFUL. YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO PHOTOCOPY THIS SECTION.*

LOSS

SAD

ANGRY

IT'S
ONLY
ME.

RIP

WHY?

memories

UPSET

alone

freaked
out

Winston's Wish
the charity for bereaved children

FOR TEENAGERS...

WHAT CAN I DO FOR MYSELF?

WE WORK WITH BEREAVED TEENAGERS IN FAMILIES, THROUGH INDIVIDUAL WORK AND IN GROUPS. THEY TELL US WHAT HAS HELPED THEM MOST. SEE IF SOME OF THEIR IDEAS WOULD BE GOOD FOR YOU TO TRY.

"HAVING ADULTS I CAN TALK TO. SOMETIMES IT'S VERY DIFFICULT WITH MUM OR DAD - WHO ELSE COULD YOU TALK TO? TEACHERS, FORM TUTORS, FRIENDS, SCHOOL COUNSELLOR?"

"KNOWING WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO THAT I CAN TALK ABOUT IT WITH FRIENDS."

"IT HELPED ME TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHY DAD DIED - FROM A HEART ATTACK. I THOUGHT IT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME AS WELL BUT NOW I KNOW WHAT TO DO TO HAVE A HEALTHY HEART."



"MUM DIED WHEN I WAS QUITE YOUNG AND I USED TO THINK I WAS FORGETTING HER. WHEN I TALKED TO GRAN AND MY DAD AND WE PUT THINGS OF MUM'S TOGETHER IN A MEMORY BOX IT FELT MUCH BETTER."

"MEETING OTHERS WHO HAVE ALSO HAD SOMEONE DIE - I FELT VERY DIFFERENT WHEN I WENT BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER DAD'S SUICIDE - NO-ONE ELSE KNEW WHAT THIS WAS LIKE AND THEY LOOKED AT ME DIFFERENTLY."

"IT'S OK TO HAVE FUN. IT WAS HARD AT FIRST BECAUSE I FELT GUILTY IF I STARTED LAUGHING AT SOMETHING. BUT IT FELT REALLY GOOD WHEN I STARTED PLAYING FOOTBALL AGAIN AND GOING TO PARTIES. IT DOESN'T MEAN I'LL EVER FORGET MY BROTHER."

"BEFORE DAD DIED HE SAID 'YOU WILL HAVE TO LOOK AFTER MUM NOW.' THAT WAS REALLY HARD AND FOR A WHILE I DIDN'T GO OUT WITH MY FRIENDS. NOW I KNOW IT'S OK AND MUM STILL WANTS ME TO HAVE FUN!"



I'M WORRIED I WILL JUST MAKE THEM UPSET IF I BRING IT UP. THEY ARE ALREADY UPSET UNDERNEATH AND THE DEATH WILL BE ON THEIR MIND. IT CAN BE VERY HELPFUL TO LET THE FEELINGS OUT WITH A FRIEND WHO CAN JUST BE WITH THEM. DON'T TRY TO DRY THE TEARS - A COMFORTING ARM ROUND THE SHOULDERS WILL MEAN MORE.

Winston's Wish
the charity for bereaved children

PEOPLE KNOW THE DEATH WAS BY SUICIDE - BUT MY FRIEND WAS TOLD IT WAS A HEART ATTACK.

THIS IS A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION AS SOME FAMILIES FIND IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY A DEATH WAS DUE TO SUICIDE AND TRY TO HIDE THE FACTS FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE. SADLY, THE NEWS MAY COME OUT THROUGH NEWSPAPERS OR COMPUTER SEARCHES, BUT IT IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SAY WHAT HAS HAPPENED. SUPPORT YOUR FRIEND AS MUCH AS YOU CAN BUT DO SAY YOU NEED TO SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH A TRUSTED ADULT.

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

YOU CAN'T MAKE THINGS BETTER BUT YOU CAN GIVE YOUR FRIEND SUPPORT JUST BY BEING THERE AND SAYING "I'M SO SORRY ABOUT YOUR MUM." YOU WON'T MAKE IT WORSE FOR YOUR FRIEND BY MENTIONING WHAT HAS HAPPENED.



I'VE NEVER COME ACROSS DEATH BEFORE. MANY ADULTS ONLY COME ACROSS A DEATH QUITE LATE IN THEIR LIVES. IT IS A SHOCK WHEN THIS HAPPENS AS A TEENAGER, ESPECIALLY IF THIS IS THE DEATH OF QUITE A YOUNG PERSON OR ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS THROUGH SUICIDE. IT IS VERY DIFFERENT TO A DEATH IN OLD AGE OR DUE TO AN UNTREATABLE ILLNESS - WITH A SUICIDE DEATH, SOMEONE HAS CHOSEN TO DIE AND THIS IS VERY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

IS IT BEST TO PRETEND THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED?

SOMETIMES YOUR FRIEND WILL WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE AND GET ON WITH THINGS AS NORMALLY AS POSSIBLE. THIS IS A HEALTHY WAY OF COPING AND ALLOWS SOME NORMALITY BACK INTO LIFE. BUT IT IS ALWAYS GOOD TO LET YOUR FRIEND KNOW THAT YOU KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED - EVEN IF YOU SIMPLY SAY "I KNOW YOUR DAD DIED AND HOW IT HAPPENED. YOU DON'T NEED TO TALK ABOUT IT - BUT I AM HERE IF YOU EVER WANT TO TALK."

FOR TEENAGERS...

HOW CAN I HELP MY GRIEVING FRIEND?

IT CAN BE VERY DIFFICULT KNOWING WHAT TO SAY AND TO BE AROUND SOMEONE WHO HAS EXPERIENCED THE DEATH OF SOMEONE CLOSE. ADULTS FIND IT DIFFICULT TOO, SO DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT THIS. THESE ARE SOME OF THE REASONS THAT MAY MAKE YOU FEEL YOU WANT TO AVOID A FRIEND WHO IS GRIEVING.

WHAT IF I CRY?

YOU MAY CRY. YOU WILL BE THINKING ABOUT WHAT IF THIS HAPPENED TO SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY AND HOW QUICKLY LIFE CAN CHANGE. YOUR TEARS WILL ALSO SHOW HOW MUCH YOU FEEL FOR YOUR FRIEND. BUT REMEMBER, IT IS THEIR EXPERIENCE - YOU ARE WANTING TO SUPPORT THEM.

WHAT IF THEY CRY?

TEARS ARE OK AND A NORMAL WAY OF GRIEVING FOR BOYS AND GIRLS AS WELL AS MEN AND WOMEN. PEOPLE OFTEN FEEL BETTER AFTER THEY HAVE CRIED.

IT MAKES ME TOO WORRIED TO THINK ABOUT MY OWN PARENTS DYING.

AS A TEENAGER YOU ARE PROBABLY THINKING ABOUT WHEN YOU LEAVE HOME AND PERHAPS YOU ARE HAVING LOTS OF ARGUMENTS WITH YOUR PARENTS. BUT WHEN THE PARENT OF A FRIEND DIES SUDDENLY, YOU MAY LOSE ALL CONFIDENCE IN YOUR PARENTS BEING AROUND AND FIND YOURSELF WANTING TO CHECK HOW THEY ARE. IT IS NORMAL TO FEEL THIS WAY, BUT TRY ALSO TO FOCUS ON YOUR FRIEND: THEY ARE ACTUALLY LYIVING WITH THE DEATH OF A PARENT.

MY FRIEND SAYS SHE WANTS TO DIE TOO. WHAT CAN I DO?

THIS IS SOMETHING YOU CAN'T HANDLE ON YOUR OWN. LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR FRIEND IS SAYING BUT TELL HER THAT IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT THAT AN ADULT KNOWS HOW SHE IS FEELING. MANY MORE PEOPLE HAVE THOUGHTS ABOUT SUICIDE THAN TAKE THEIR OWN LIVES. IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR FRIEND, IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO GO AND TALK TO AN ADULT YOU TRUST.

FOR TEENAGERS...

HOW TO MAKE A MEMORY JAR

EACH DIFFERENT COLOUR IN YOUR MEMORY JAR WILL REPRESENT A MEMORY THAT YOU HAVE OF THE PERSON THAT DIED. WHETHER HAPPY OR SAD THEY ARE IMPORTANT MEMORIES TO YOU. YOU MIGHT THINK OF HOLIDAYS YOU USED TO HAVE AT THE BEACH AND CHOOSE THE COLOUR YELLOW. OR IF THEY WERE ANGRY A LOT YOU CAN REPRESENT THAT WITH THE COLOUR RED.



STEP 1: BEGIN BY THINKING OF FIVE MEMORIES OF THE PERSON WHO DIED THAT YOU WANT TO CAPTURE IN YOUR MEMORY JAR. ASSIGN A COLOUR TO EACH MEMORY. COLOUR THE MEMORY JAR TEMPLATE ON THE RIGHT WITH THE COLOURS YOU HAVE CHOSEN, AND WRITE THE MEMORY NEXT TO IT.

STEP 2: FILL A JAR RIGHT UP TO THE BRIM WITH SALT, MAKING SURE IT IS JAMMED FULL. THIS GIVES YOU THE EXACT AMOUNT OF SALT NEEDED. THEN TIP THE SALT OUT OF THE JAR INTO FIVE PILES. EACH OF THESE PILES WILL REPRESENT A MEMORY, SO YOU COULD MAKE THEM EQUAL IN SIZE, OR IF YOU HAVE A MORE SIGNIFICANT MEMORY, PUT MORE SALT IN THAT PILE.

STEP 3: PICK A COLOURED CHALK AND START TO RUB IT INTO THE SALT OF ONE PILE. AS YOU RUB IT IN, THE SALT WILL BEGIN TO TURN THAT COLOUR. KEEP RUBBING UNTIL IT IS THE COLOUR YOU WANT – THE LONGER YOU RUB, THE MORE VIBRANT THE COLOUR!

STEP 4: ONCE YOU HAVE COLOURED ALL FIVE PILES OF SALT, CAREFULLY TIP THEM INTO THE JAR. YOU CAN DO THEM IN STRAIGHT LAYERS, OR DIAGONAL ONES, IN THIN STRIPS OR LARGE ONES, IT IS TOTALLY UP TO YOU. ONCE YOU HAVE FINISHED, PLACE A COTTON WOOL BALL ON TOP AND SCREW THE LID BACK ON.

DRAGGING A COCKTAIL STICK UP THE INSIDE OF THE JAR CREATES A GOOD EFFECT. EXPERIMENT FIRST AND SEE WHAT YOU COME UP WITH.

THINGS YOU WILL NEED:

- * A JAR (JAM / PASTE / BABY FOOD ETC)
- * PACKET OF TABLE SALT
- * COLOURED CHALKS OR PASTELS
- * COTTON WOOL BALL

MEMORY JAR

IN MEMORY OF:

FIVE MEMORIES
I HAVE:

MUSIC CAN HELP WITH GRIEF IN SEVERAL WAYS.

- ★ *CONNECTING WITH FEELINGS. YOU MAY BE WORRIED THAT YOU CAN'T CRY AND YET YOU WANT TO. MUSIC CAN HELP YOU TAP INTO YOUR EMOTIONS, AND HELP YOU TO CRY IF THIS IS WHAT YOU NEED TO DO.*
- ★ *MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH THE PERSON WHO HAS DIED BY MAKING A PLAYLIST OF THEIR FAVOURITE MUSIC AND PLAYING IT WHEN YOU WANT TO THINK ABOUT THEM.*
- ★ *YOU MAY JUST WANT TO SIT FEELING QUIET AND SAD – LISTEN TO GENTLE MUSIC, BREATHE SLOWLY AND RELAX.*
- ★ *IF YOU WANT TO FEEL REALLY PHYSICAL LISTEN TO LOUD ENERGETIC MUSIC, MOVE TO THE MUSIC, PLAY AIR GUITAR, PLAY THE DRUMS WITH WOODEN SPOONS ON YOUR PILLOW.*

FOR TEENAGERS...

HOW CAN MUSIC HELP GRIEF?



It can feel very lonely when someone has died. Finding out what to expect and what you can do really helps.

Useful reading

Books for adults



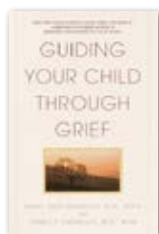
Healing a Teen's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas for Families, Friends and Caregivers

Alan D Wolfelt

Companion, 2001

ISBN 978-1-879651-24-1

Often people do not know what to say, or what not to say, to someone they know who is mourning. This series teaches us that the most important thing a person can do is listen, have compassion, be there for support, and do something helpful.



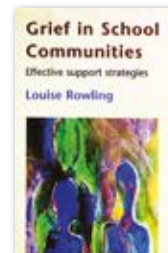
Guiding Your Child Through Grief

Mary Ann Emswiler and James Emswiler

Bantam Books, 2001

ISBN 978 0553380255

This book, by the founders of the New England Center for Loss and Transition and The Cove, a highly praised programme for grieving children, takes away the uncertainty and helpless feelings we commonly feel as we reach out to children who mourn. This caring and compassionate guide offers expert advice during difficult days to help a child grieve the death of a parent or sibling.



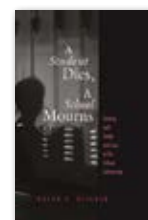
Grief in School Communities: Effective Support Strategies

Louise Rowling

Oxford University Press, 2003

ISBN 0 335 2111 1 (paperback), 0 335 2116 X (hardback)

In the preface, the author expresses a hope that the book will provide individuals and school communities with the means to create environments in which grief, while a difficult experience, is seen as a normal life event. Rowling's book does just this. Instead of presenting a targeted intervention for young people at risk, the emphasis is on helping all the school population in a variety of ways.



A Student Dies, A School Mourns: Dealing with Death and Loss in the School Community

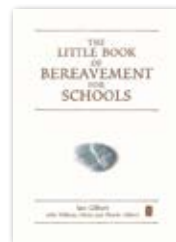
Ralph L Klicker

Taylor & Francis, 2000

ISBN 1-56032-742-1

Among the abundance of material available about death and dying, there is a very limited amount that deals directly with the needs of a school community when one of its members dies. In addition, a great need exists for schools to develop

an organised plan for responding to the death of a student or staff member. The book aims to fill this gap. It not only examines and explains the grief reactions of students and school staff members, and the factors that affect these reactions, it also provides a systematic guide for developing a death-related crisis response plan.



The Little Book of Bereavement for Schools

Ian Gilbert

Crown House Publishing Ltd, 2010

ISBN 1845904648

This book is written by best-selling author Ian Gilbert together with his three children. It is a very personal account of the way educational institutions tried and succeeded, tried and failed, and sometimes didn't try at all to help William, Olivia and Phoebe come to terms with the death of their mother.



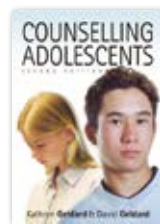
Disenfranchised Grief: New Directions, Challenges, and Strategies for Practice

Kenneth J Doka (editor)

Research Press, 2002

ISBN 978 0878224272

This useful book highlights the complications that may accompany bereavement, if the bereaved person is excluded from the grieving and mourning rituals. The author illustrates ways in which we can support the involvement of young people after a death.



Counselling Adolescents

Kathryn Geldard and David Geldard

SAGE Publications, 2007

ISBN 978 1412902359

The book is an excellent resource offering a holistic and flexible approach and a variety of techniques. These provide a useful toolkit for practitioners working closely with young people. However, its core readership is counsellors with young people. Though there are now many different kinds of counselling leading to qualification (and careful selection is necessary), there are few that are particularly oriented towards counselling young people.

Books for teenagers



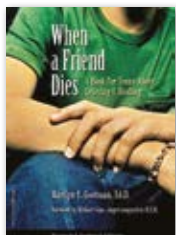
The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and their Friends

Helen Fitzgerald

Fireside, 2000

ISBN 13:978-0-684-86804-2

Although the circumstances surrounding a death are difficult to handle at any age, adolescence brings with it challenges and struggles that until now have been largely overlooked. But in this unique and compassionate guide, renowned grief counsellor Helen Fitzgerald turns her attention to the special needs of adolescents struggling with loss and gives them the tools they need to work through their pain and grief.



When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens about Grieving and Healing

Marilyn E Gootman
Free Spirit Publishing, 2012
ISBN 1 57542 170 4

The advice is firm but gentle, non-judgmental and compassionate. The death of a friend is a wrenching event for anyone at any age. Teenagers especially need help coping with this painful loss. This thoughtful and helpful book answers questions about grieving that teenagers often have, like “How should I be acting?” “Is it wrong to go to parties and have fun?” and “What if I can’t handle my grief on my own?” This book is suitable for age 11 and up, and for parents and teachers too.

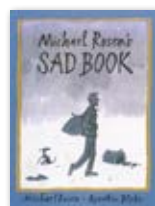


Teacher's Dead

Benjamin Zephaniah
Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2007
ISBN 0747586098

A teacher is dead, murdered by two of his students in front of the school. He was a good man. People liked him. So how could this happen? Why? It just doesn't make sense to Jackson, and he is determined to investigate the case until he

understands. Benjamin Zephaniah has chosen a topical and hard-hitting subject – and he deals with it in his own uniquely empathetic and edgy way.



Michael Rosen's Sad Book

Michael Rosen
Illustrated by **Quentin Blake**
Walker Books, 2004
ISBN 978-1406313161

This book has won several awards for its honest and sensitive look at sadness, how it feels, and what to do to cope with the feelings. The author looks into his own unhappiness caused by the death of his son Eddie, and offers insight and experience to help young readers dealing with complicated emotions. A simple, touching book with thoughtful illustrations.

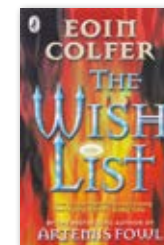


The Death and Life of Charlie St Cloud

Ben Sherwood
Pan Macmillan, 2005
ISBN 0330488902

This book tells the story of a young man who narrowly survives a terrible car wreck that kills his little brother. Years later, the brothers' bond remains so strong

that it transcends the normal boundaries separating life and death. Charlie St Cloud lives in a snug New England fishing village. By day he tends the lawns and monuments of the ancient cemetery where his younger brother, Sam, is buried. Graced with an extraordinary gift after surviving the accident, he can still see, talk and even play catch with Sam's spirit. But townsfolk whisper that Charlie has never recovered from his loss.



The Wish List

Eoin Colfer
Penguin Books Ltd, 2003
ISBN 014131592X

Meg Finn is in trouble, unearthly trouble. Cast out of her own home by her stepfather after her mother's death,

Meg is a wanderer, a troublemaker. After a botched attempt to rob a pensioner's flat, Meg and her partner in crime, Belch, end up in a very sticky situation. Meg's soul is up for grabs as the divine and the demonic try every underhand ploy imaginable to claim it. Her only chance of salvation is the Wish List. But how can she persuade the pensioner Lowrie to help her when she has wronged him? Even if she can persuade him, will she really have enough points to face up to St Peter?



On Eagles' Wings

Sue Mayfield

Lion UK, 2004

ISBN 0745948901

Tony's mother is dying.

There's nothing he can do about it and he can't always

put a brave face on things. Often he wishes he could just fly away from everything, like an eagle, powerful and free. Gradually, through his experiences, Tony begins to understand that death can sometimes bring freedom. A very readable and sensitive story about growing up and family relationships.



Up On Cloud Nine

Anne Fine

Corgi Children's, 2006

ISBN 0552554650

How stupid do you have to be to fall out of a top floor window? Or was Stolly trying

something else – up on cloud nine, even then? Stolly has always been so *alive*, so inspiring, taking risks, hiding nothing, notorious for being the school's most imaginative liar (or fantasist, as he calls it). But now he's lying in a hospital bed and Ian, his best friend who's as close as a brother, is watching, waiting and remembering.



Sources of information and support



Giving hope to grieving children

Winston's Wish

Winston's Wish is the charity for bereaved children, supporting families, young people and professionals dealing with bereavement of parents and siblings. Winston's Wish provides resources and training as well as extensive downloadable website information.

Helpline: Freephone 08088 020 021 – open Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm.

E-mail: info@winstonswish.org

www.winstonswish.org

www.talkgrief.org



Brake

Care for those

bereaved or affected by serious injury following a road traffic accident. Brake has two useful booklets for adults to read with young people who have been bereaved through sudden death and accident.

Phone: 01484 559909

www.brake.org.uk



Child Bereavement UK

Supports families and educates professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement. Trains around 5,000 professionals at the front line of bereavement support every year.

Phone: 01494 568900

E-mail: enquiries@childbereavementuk.org

www.childbereavementuk.org



Child Bereavement Network

Provides a directory of organisations around the country that can offer local bereavement services to families and young people. Also offers publications and information on training.

Phone: 020 7843 6309

E-mail: cbn@ncb.org.uk

www.childbereavementnetwork.org.uk



Child Death Helpline

Freephone service for anyone affected by the death of a child of any age, including still birth, under any circumstance, no matter how recently or long ago. Open every day of the year, and staffed by trained volunteers who are all bereaved parents.

Helpline: 0800 282 986 and 0808 800 6019 – open Monday to Sunday, 7pm to 10pm, also 10am to 1pm on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, and

10am to 4pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays

E-mail: contact@childdeathhelpline.org

www.childdeathhelpline.org



ChildLine

Confidential listening service for

children and young people. Trained counsellors are available 24 hours a day. Chat online or call, whatever the worry.

Helpline: 0800 1111 – open 24 hours a day, every day
www.childline.org.uk



The Compassionate Friends

An organisation of bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents offering support and mutual understanding to others after the loss of a child, of any age, from any cause. Offers a national helpline, answered by bereaved parents, and an online members forum. The

helpline can put people in touch with local groups or individuals.

Helpline: 0845 123 2304 – open every day, 10am to 4pm and 7pm to 10pm

**E-mail: helpline@tcf.org.uk
www.tcf.org.uk**



Cruse Bereavement Care

National organisation offering bereavement support from trained volunteers, including a network of local groups.

Helpline: 0844 477 9400 – open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm

**E-mail: helpline@cruse.org.uk
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk**



Family Lives

Family Lives is a charity that supports parents, children, young people and families: people get in touch about all aspects of family life. Family Lives helps when life becomes complicated and provides support around relationships, family health and well-being, rights, responsibilities and education. Make contact via helpline, e-mail, live chat and Skype.

Helpline: 0808 800 2222 – open Monday to Sunday, 7am to midnight

**E-mail support: parentsupport@familylives.org.uk
www.familylives.org.uk**

Live chat: <http://familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/online-chat>



Get Connected

Provides a free, confidential helpline that gives young people in difficult situations the support and

information they need to decide what they want to happen next. It could be anything from a listening ear to somewhere safe to stay for the night.

Helpline: 0808 808 4994 – open 7 days a week, 1pm to 11pm

**E-mail: help@getconnected.org.uk
www.getconnected.org.uk**



Macmillan

Macmillan supports young people (aged 12 to 21) who are affected by cancer – either that of a family member or if they are ill themselves.

Helpline: 0808 808 0800 – open Monday to Friday, 9am to 10pm

www.macmillan.org.uk



PAPYRUS – Prevention of Young Suicide

The national charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide. PAPYRUS is a membership organisation; many of its members have been touched personally by a young suicide. As well as campaigning, PAPYRUS offers training in suicide awareness and intervention as well as a professionally staffed helpline, HOPELineUK, which provides advice for young people who may be having thoughts of suicide and to those who are worried about a young person they know who may be suicidal.

HOPELineUK: 0800 068 41 41

E-mail: pat@papyrus-uk.org

SMS: 07786 209697

www.papyrus-uk.org



"I still have bad days – but I'm doing OK." Mark



The Road For You, RD4U

This website, developed by Cruse Bereavement Care's Youth Involvement Project, aims to

support young people after the death of someone close to them. Young people can e-mail for support and receive replies from trained volunteers. Messages and stories can also be posted for others to read.

Young persons freephone helpline: 0808 808 1677 – open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm

E-mail: info@rd4u.org.uk

www.rd4u.org.uk



Samaritans

Provides confidential non-judgemental

support, 24 hours a day, for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair that could lead to suicide.

Helpline: 08457 90 90 90 – open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

E-mail: jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org.uk



SAMM – Support After Murder and Manslaughter

Offers emotional support to those bereaved through murder or manslaughter, in this country or abroad.

Phone: 0845 872 3440

E-mail: info@samm.org.uk

www.samm.org.uk



SOBS – Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

A self-help organisation set up to meet the needs and break the

isolation of those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend.

Phone: 0844 561 6855

E-mail: sobs.admin@care4free.net

www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Winston's Wish was established in 1992 to provide continuing support for children whose parents or siblings had died.

We operate a Freephone National Helpline for anyone concerned about a child who has been bereaved or who is facing the possible death of a family member. We have a comprehensive website which includes activities for children, we produce creative publications and resources, and conduct training and consultancy for professionals.

These activities are informed by our direct experience of supporting children and families individually and in groups.



The challenge of supporting a grieving teenager is to work out what may be due to developmental changes that would have happened, whatever the family circumstances – and what may be a result of bereavement.

This book from Winston's Wish, offers practical advice for families and professionals supporting bereaved teenagers. We aim to give those involved the confidence to engage with bereaved young people and to recognise valuable practical activities to engage them. Making sense of what has happened, and looking at ways of coping and moving forward, is crucial if young people are to fulfil their potential after the death of an important person.

Written by Dr Helen Mackinnon. Edited and designed by www.portfoliopublishing.com

This publication was generously funded by the Spirax-Sarco Charitable Trust.



WE CANNOT SUPPORT BEREAVED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT.

BY PHONE:

To make a donation by phone using your card please call our fundraising team on **01242 515 157**

BY POST:

Please download our donation form from our website and send alongside a cheque to the address below. Cheques made payable to 'Winston's Wish'. Kindly post to: **Conway House, 31-33 Worcester Street, Gloucester GL1 3AJ**



Helpline: 08088 020 021 winstonswish.org

Conway House, 31-33 Worcester Street, Gloucester GL1 3AJ | Tel: 01242 515 157

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