



# Moorside Primary School and Nursery Bereavement support for children and families



This information has been collated from a range of sources and resources (listed) to provide support, advice and strategies for parents and carers of children at Moorside Primary School and Nursery.

When someone you care about is grieving after a loss, it can be difficult to know what to say or do. This is even harder, when you are also coming to terms with the death/ bereavement. Bereaved adults and children all struggle with many intense and painful emotions at differing times, these can include depression, anger, guilt, and profound sadness. Often, you can feel isolated and alone in your grief, even though there may be other family members in the same household.

The intense pain and difficult emotions experienced during this time can make people uncomfortable and unsure about how to offer comfort and support. You may be afraid of intruding, saying the wrong thing, or making your loved one feel even worse at such a difficult time, maybe you think there's little you can do to make things better. That's understandable - but don't let discomfort prevent you from reaching out to someone who is grieving. Now, more than ever, your loved one needs your support; you don't need to have answers or give advice or say and do all the right things. The most important thing you can do for a grieving person is to simply be there because it's your support and caring presence that will help your loved one cope with the pain and gradually begin to heal.



## Informing a child of a bereavement.

It is important to tell a child of any age when someone in their lives has died, and ideally, this is done by an adult who is closest to them.

Children under the age of six do not usually understand that death is permanent and so they may be expecting the person to come back. It is still important to tell them that the person has died.

An explanation that helps young children to understand what death means:

*'When someone dies, their body stops working, and this means that they don't need anything to eat or to drink and they can't feel anything. Because their body has stopped working, they can't come back to life, even though we may really want them to.'*

You could use visual examples from the natural world to help explain, such as comparing a dead leaf on the ground and a living leaf on the tree.

## A general guide to Children's understanding of what death means to them at different ages:

### Children aged 2 to 5 years

Young children are interested in the idea of death in birds and animals. They can begin to use the word 'dead' and develop an awareness that this is different to being alive. Children of this age do not understand abstract concepts like 'forever' and cannot grasp that death is permanent. Their limited understanding may lead to an apparent lack of reaction when told about a death, and they may ask many questions about where the person who has died is and when that person will come back. Children at this age expect the person to return. Young children tend to interpret what they are told in a very literal and concrete way; therefore, it is important to avoid offering explanations of death such as 'lost', 'gone away' or 'gone to sleep' that may cause misunderstandings and confusion. Provide honest answers to their questions but do not feel you have to tell them everything in detail or all at once. Information can be built on over time. Children may have disrupted sleep, altered appetite, less interest in play and may become more anxious about separation even when being left with familiar adults. There may be regression in skills such as language or toilet training.



## Children of primary school age Between the ages of 5 and 7 years

Children gradually begin to develop an understanding that death is permanent and irreversible and that the person who has died will not return. Children who have been bereaved when they were younger will have to re-process what has happened as they develop awareness of the finality of death. Children's imagination and 'magical thinking' at this age can mean that some children may believe that their thoughts or actions caused the death, and they can feel guilty. Not being given sufficient information in age-appropriate language can lead them to 'make-up' and fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Children increasingly become aware that death is an inevitable part of life that happens to all living things. As a result, they can become anxious about their own, and others', health and safety. Children at this age need honest answers to their questions that can be built on over time, and opportunities to express their feelings. They can need reassurance as they may feel that it was something that they said or thought that caused the death.

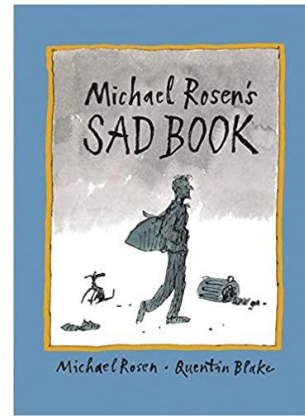
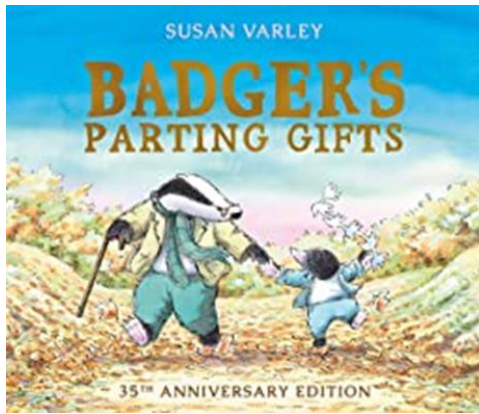
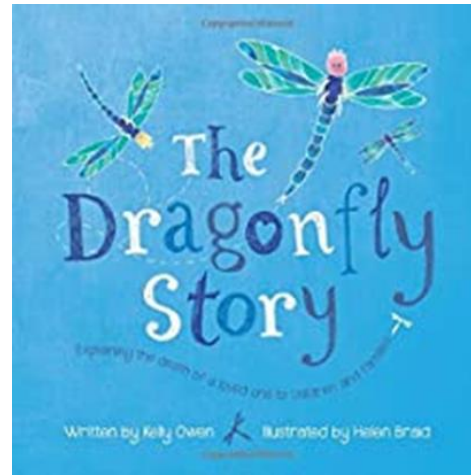
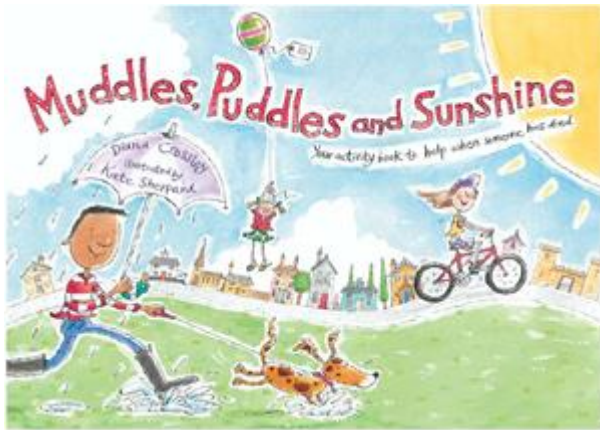
## Teenagers

Adolescence is a time of great change and grief impacts on the developmental task of moving from dependence to independence. Young people are moving from familial ties to increased involvement with peers. It can be difficult to ask for support while trying to demonstrate independence. Young people do not like to feel different to their peers in any way and being a bereaved young person can be extremely isolating. The support of peers with similar experiences can be very powerful. Teenagers will have an adult understanding of the concept of death but often have their own beliefs and strongly held views, and may challenge the beliefs and explanations offered by others. Some young people may respond to a death by becoming more withdrawn, some may 'act out' their distress while others cope with the awareness of their own mortality through risk-taking behaviour. Others may take on adult responsibilities and become 'the carer' for those around them. Keeping to the usual boundaries of acceptable behaviour can be reassuring for bereaved young people. Young people who have been bereaved at an earlier age may need to re-process their grief as they think about and plan for their future and fully understand the impact of life without the person who died.

(adapted from Child Bereavement UK)



Book suggestions that may be helpful to share with your child





Below are some activity ideas that your child/children may find helpful. Some children may find it easier to be creative as a means of expressing their feelings rather than verbalising their thoughts and feelings. Children's behaviour may be changeable during this time as they try to process the impact of what has occurred on them and they come to terms with this change.

The workbook below taken from the Twinkl website.



We will make this plan together to help us deal with the feelings we have about the person who has died.

We are going to work together and be honest about how we are feeling and what we need from each other.

### 1. How Are We Going to Tell Each Other How We Are Feeling?

It is important to be able to talk to each other about our feelings and to be able to explain what we need from each other.

- We could have five minutes at a regular time each morning to talk.
- We could leave a note for each other on the kitchen table.

Another idea is...



## 2. What Helps Us Both Feel Better When We Are Having a Difficult Day?

- We could share stories about the person who has died.
- We could look at pictures of them and laugh about silly things that happened.
- We could do something to distract ourselves, such as go to the shops, go for a swim or read a book.
- We could spend time together doing something that we both want to do.

Another idea is...

## 3. When Is It Time to Talk?

During the day, we will both be busy. We have to go to school or work etc.

A good time to talk is when we are both together and we have the time to talk uninterrupted.

Our special time to talk will be...





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#### 4. What Is One Thing That We Will Do Together That Will Help Us Both?

Making time to talk is really important, but we also need to spend quality time together doing something that acts as a distraction for us both. This distraction will give us respite from our difficult feelings and will help us to feel more energised afterwards.

Some examples of spending quality time together might include climbing, trampolining, walking, going on a bike ride, making a den or camping in the garden.

- We could plan to do one of these each week or each month.
- We could plan the activity together.
- We could be brave and try something new.
- We could invite someone else.

#### 5. What Positive Affirmation Can We Agree to Say Together Every Morning and Every Night?

If we agree to say something positive every morning and every evening, it will help us to feel stronger.

Some examples of positive affirmations include:

- We can laugh and we can have fun.
- We are brave and we are courageous.
- We are going to have a good day.

Our positive affirmation is...



## Special Memories

This is an opportunity for you to take some time and think about all the happy moments you shared with the person you have lost.

You may want to think about all the things you did together, the times when you laughed and when they did something to look after you and kept you safe or just a time when you felt really happy to be with them.

There are many ways you can record these memories. You may wish to write them down, draw what happened or how you felt. Whatever way you choose is up to you.

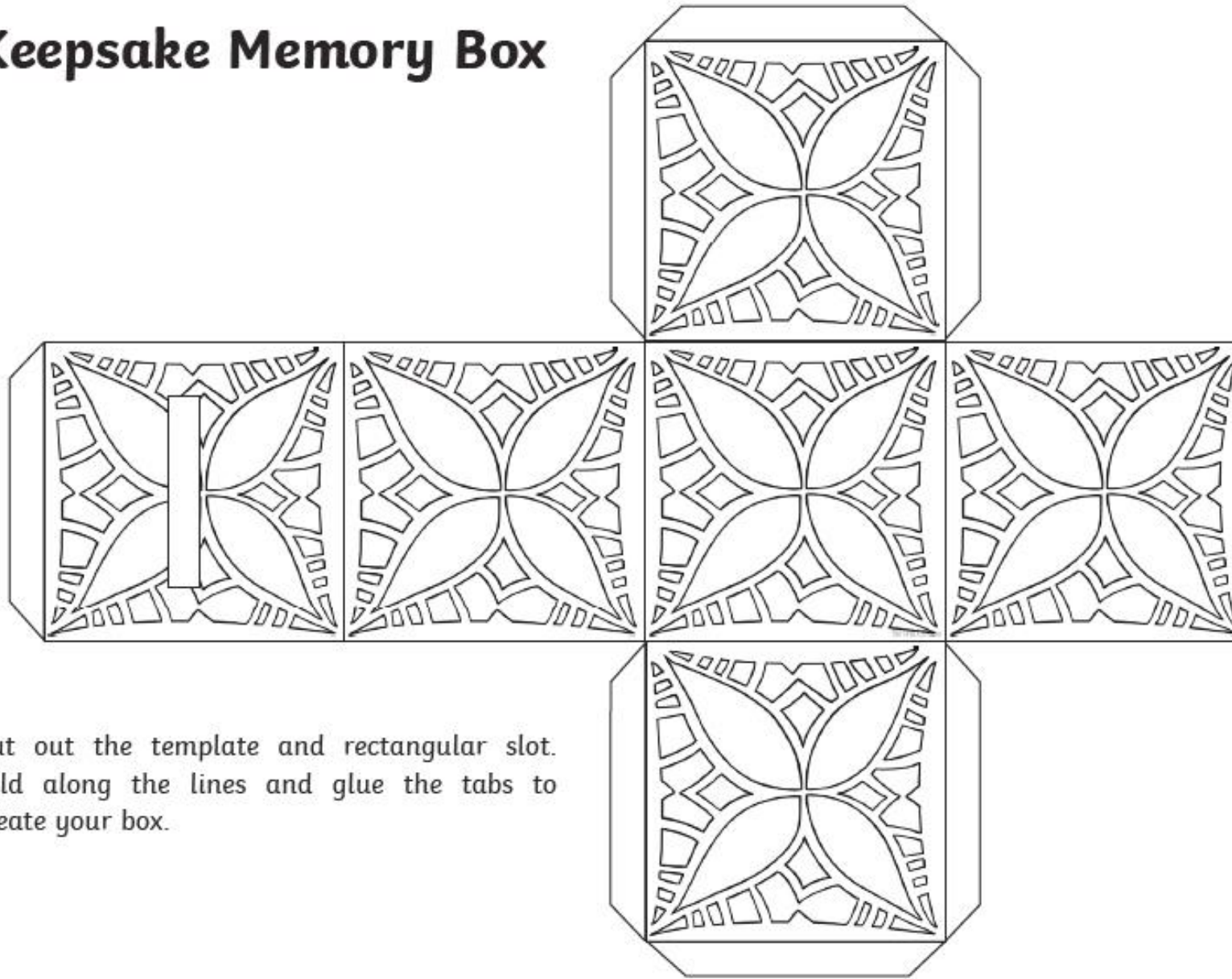
Attached are a number of cards which you can use to record those special memories. You could write or draw how you felt and what happened.

These special memories need to be kept safe, so you may want to keep these cards in a memory keepsake box. If you prefer, you can keep them in a journal along with your other memories and thoughts.





# Keepsake Memory Box



Cut out the template and rectangular slot.  
Fold along the lines and glue the tabs to  
create your box.



## Different suggestions for remembering a loved one

- Let them keep something that belonged to the person who died, such as an item of clothing.
- Plant a tree or flower in the garden
- Create an area for thought and reflection.
- Make a treasure box where the child can keep all the special items that remind them of the person.
- Get each member of the family, including the child, to choose a button or gem stone that represent a happy memory of the person. Make the buttons or gemstones into a collage.
- If the child is finding it hard to go to school, create a handkerchief with your fingerprints or handprints on it, and maybe even spray it with scent. This can help them feel that their carer is close to them and safe.
- Share happy stories about the person who has died and talk about them.
- Look through old photographs or videos.
- Make a memory book scrapbook together about the person who has died.
- Start a journal of memories that can be added to by anyone at any time. This may help children who have lost someone at a young age to remember the person who has died as they grow up.
- Involve the child in choosing pictures for a social media memorial page.





Short videos from Child Bereavement UK:



How can I support a grieving child <https://youtu.be/imu3pRNQnDs>

Different ways to remember a loved one <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/remembering-someone-who-has-died>

Building resilience in a bereaved child <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/building-resilience-in-a-bereaved-child>

Supporting Bereaved teenagers <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/should-i-be-worried-about-my-bereaved-teenager>

Supporting children with an Autism spectrum disorder <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/supporting-a-bereaved-child-with-autism-spectrum-disorder>

parenting bereaved children - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uw1MZlKLK14>

When a parent has died [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=h-qFkRaPRYY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=h-qFkRaPRYY)

Children and young people grieve just as much as us adults but they express it in different ways. They learn how to grieve by copying the responses of the adults around them, and rely on adults to provide them with the support they need in their grief. We hope that you have found this information booklet helpful.

Listed below some of the Local charities that may be able to offer you additional support or advice. This list is not exhaustive and may change.

### Bereavement support – charities and websites for information/further advice



Herriot Hospice Homecare offers a bereavement service to Children, Young People and Adults living in the Richmondshire and Hambleton District. We support individuals following any death, including terminal illness, suicide and Road Traffic Accidents.

To access our Adult service, please contact us on: **01423 814 480** or for our Children and Young People's service please contact us on **01423 856 790**. Alternatively, you can contact us on [info@justb.org.uk](mailto:info@justb.org.uk).



Just 'B' Bereavement Support Tel: 01423 814480 (adults) / 01423 856790 (children)

Email: [info@justb.org.uk](mailto:info@justb.org.uk)

We offer support free of charge to children, young people and adults.

We offer support at our two bespoke Just 'B' premises at Burton House on Hookstone Oval, (Children and Young People services) and Starbeck (Adults services)

**gr'ef  
encounter**  
supporting bereaved children & young people

Welcome to 'grieffalk', the brand-new helpline from Grief Encounter, providing support for you, when you need it. **TALK** Talk to grieffalk from any phone for free 0808 802 0111. Have a **1-2-1 CHAT** live session with a grieffalk counsellor. **TYPE** send an email to [grieffalk@griefencounter.org.uk](mailto:grieffalk@griefencounter.org.uk)



National Freephone Helpline\*: [08088 020 021](tel:0808802021) (open 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday – Helpline is closed over the Easter weekend)

ASK email support: [ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org)

Crisis Messenger: Text WW to 85258 (available 24/7)

Online chat: [click here](#) (available 12–4pm, Wednesdays and Fridays – closed on Good Friday)

## References

Winston's Wish, Just Be, Twinkl. Herriot hospice, Grief encounter, Child Bereavement UK, the Help Guide and Marie Curie