



GRIEF, LOSS AND CHANGE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is a natural response to the death/loss of someone/ or a pet who is important to us. We can also experience grief or a sense of loss when we have a significant change in our lives. E.g., parents separating/divorce, change of school.

By the age of 16 years old, most children and young people have experienced losing a loved one in death. (Childhood Bereavement Network, 2021).

WHAT MIGHT THEY FEEL OR EXPERIENCE?

Feelings and Experiences are unique to each person. Below are some examples of what a Child or Young Person could go through:

- Anxiety and Worry
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Anger
- Guilt and Blame
- Difficulty at School
- Feeling Sick or Poorly
- Extreme Sadness
- Numb



THE GRIEVING PROCESS

There is no right or wrong way to grieve after someone /or a pet has died. Everyone will be different; some people may be able to talk and show their emotions soon after a loss, other people prefer to take things slow and process their feelings in their own time.

It can be difficult to talk about grief therefore it can be beneficial to support CYP to find other ways to express/understands their experiences: E.g., Use emoji's, pictures/art, CYP books about grief.

Although your Child or Young Person may be able to express their feelings of grief through words, they may also display their grief through emotional and physical behaviours at times. Such as sleeping a lot, not eating much, clingy behaviour, aggressive behaviour such as hitting and pinching. They may also display worrisome behaviour such as risk-taking behaviour and threatening to hurt themselves. These are some of the normal and worrisome behaviours that may be signs of grief in your Child or Young Person.

WHEN WILL THEY FEEL BETTER?

Grief has no time limit; we will always miss the people/pet who has died but over time the pain and sadness become easier to manage.

It is OK to not be OK!

“Just like it rains when the clouds can no longer handle the weight, we cry because our heart can no longer handle the pain.”

– Unknown.

PHYSICAL SIGNS DURING BEREAVEMENT



Difficulty Sleeping



Tired/Lack of Energy



Tightness in Chest



Feeling Sick or Poorly



Changes in Eating Habits



Aches or Pains

The signs listed are just a small example. Everyone will be different in how they grieve and show physical signs of grief and loss.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON WITH GRIEF AND LOSS?

1. HOW TO TALK ABOUT GRIEF OR DEATH

Talk to them, if possible, when you are both reasonably calm. It is important to talk about what happened to person/pet /grief in a way that they will understand. Try to be honest, use clear and plain language like the person/or pet has died rather than they have passed away. Give them the opportunity to ask any questions they might have.

2. THE FUNERAL

Talk to and involve CYP with arrangements for funeral if possible. This discussion might include what the funeral might be like, would they like to go.

3. LET THEM KNOW YOU'LL BE THERE TO SUPPORT THEM WHEN THEY NEED IT

Reassure your Child or Young Person that you are there to support them when they need at any time.

4. SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE

Support and encourage your CYP to be honest about how they feel both to themselves as well as other people. Often people say "I'm fine" even when they are not fine, when people ask how they are. It is OK to not be OK!

5. SUPPORT NETWORK

Encourage CYP to speak with people they trust and feel comfortable with. It may be particularly helpful for them talk to other CYP who have gone through similar experiences. This might be people they know or a CYP support group.

6. LET SCHOOL OR COLLEGE KNOW ABOUT DEATH OF PERSON

The school may have support/counselling available at school to help support CYP. Concentrating on schoolwork may be difficult so important school aware of loss.

7. REMEMBERING A LOVED ONE

Finding a way to remember the person/pet who died can help. E.G keeping their photos on wall, creating a memory box with photos/pictures, talking about person/pet and your memories of them, writing about person/pet, drawing a picture, writing a message to them, listening to music they liked, doing something to remember person on special occasions, e.g., bake their favourite cake.

8. PAY ATTENTION TO HOW YOUR CHILD OR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE

Although CYP may need some space and time to grieve, try to be aware of any changes in their behaviour or if they appear particularly low in mood.

SELF-CARE

Self-care is extremely important. It is all about taking time out to look after yourself.

The emotional and physical impact of grief and loss can leave us feeling tired and worn out. Taking care of yourself mentally and physically can help. By spending some time doing something you enjoy can help focus your mind on emotions other than those related to grief/loss. This can help replenish your energy levels and balance your emotions.

Some examples could be:

- Getting enough sleep
- Regular/familiar routines
- Exercise/ Going for a Walk
- Relaxing/Meditation/Mindfulness
- Spending time with friends/family
- Listening to a Podcast or Music
- Cooking or Baking
- Sketching, Painting
- Writing/ Reading a Book



CAN YOU THINK OF ANYMORE?

GRIEF FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Grief and loss can be difficult to understand at any age. However, for very young children or young people who perhaps haven't much or any experience of grief it can be more difficult.

A child/young person may need some time and support from a parent/carer to help them understand what happened to their person/pet and that death is permanent.

Considering the CYP age/stage of development when talking/supporting them can help to support them through grieving process. Using age-appropriate leaflets, videos or books can help to explain death, grief and loss.

See our list of recommended reading for CYP.

Other issues which can affect grief process:

- Circumstances of death. E.g., sudden death, suicide
- Several losses, changes
- Relationship to person/pet

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES?

Below we have listed some great links to various National Bereavement services who have banks of information, videos, and other resources to help Children and Young People experiencing grief.

Child Bereavement UK

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org>

Childhood Bereavement Network

<https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/about>

Winston's Wish

<https://www.winstonwish.org>

Cruse Scotland

<http://www.crusescotland.org.uk>

Hope Again

<https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/hope-again-videos>

REACHING OUT FOR HELP!

It is important to remember you are not alone. Why not try reaching out to a trusted friend, family member or adult?

There are also trained specialists and professionals who are here to support you and anyone else who is bereaved.

The Miracle Foundation have a great team of counsellors and art therapists that can help you. We are here to support and help you when you are struggling through difficult times.

The Miracle Foundation SCIO are a bereavement and trauma organisation for Children and Young People between the age of 4 and 18 years old.

We have a great team of counsellors and art therapists that can help you deal with the thoughts and feelings you are experiencing. We will help you develop healthy techniques to deal with your emotions, build on your emotional strength and provide you with a hope for the future. We are here to support and help you when you are struggling during difficult times.

USEFUL CONTACTS

If someone is at risk of coming to harm, the services would need to get in touch with emergency services or appropriate authorities.

CHILDLINE

A confidential service, operating times can be found on the website.

TEL: 0800 1111

ONLINE COUNSELLING: 1-2-1 chat

SHOUT

A free confidential and anonymous service available 24/7.

TEXT: 85258

SAMARITANS

Whatever you are going through, Samaritans can be called any time, from any phone for free.

TEL: 116 123

BREATHING SPACE

A free, confidential, phone service for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16 experiencing low mood, depression, or anxiety.

TEL: 0800838587

IF YOU NEED HELP/SUPPORT STRAIGHT AWAY, YOU CAN CALL 999 OR GO STRAIGHT TO MY NEAREST ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPT IF YOU CAN GET THERE SAFELY.

