



Supporting your child through grief and loss during Covid 19

How can I help my child?

When a family member, friend or pet dies, it affects everybody and children particularly need support and help to deal with a range of complex thoughts and feelings during such a difficult time. It is important to remember that all children are unique and as such will react and process grief in many different ways based on several factors such as;

- How close the child was to the person and the depth of the relationship
- Whether the death was sudden or expected
- The circumstances of the death
- How other family members deal with the death
- Religious or cultural influences
- The age of the child

How does the age of my child affect his or her understanding?

Infants and small children often pick up on the feelings and emotions of the adults around them. They may also be sensitive to changes to routines which can make them unsettled, anxious and clingy.

Pre-schoolers usually see death as temporary and reversible and have difficulty in accepting people or animals will not 'come back to life.'

From age five children understand the basic facts: death happens to all living things and is permanent.

Young children can sometimes believe that they play a part in what happens around them and may have feelings of being to blame for the death, e.g. by being "naughty" or unkind

Teenagers understand death more like adults; they are aware of others' feelings but may struggle to talk about their own and not be able to

find the right words. They may not show their feelings but instead appear quiet or withdrawn. They may worry about upsetting others.

What is the impact on mental health?

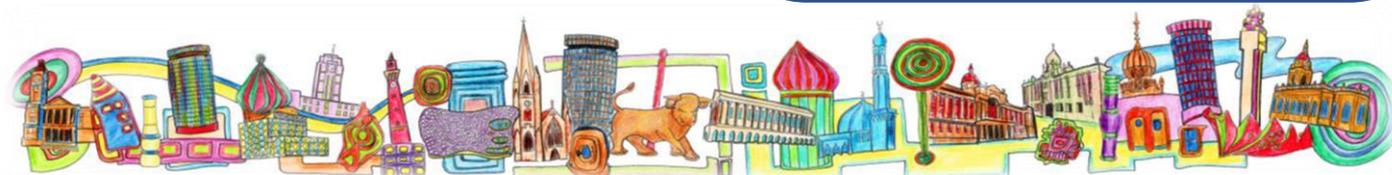
Although children respond differently to news of a death, almost all children experience some form of distress. There may be changes to their mood and behaviour whilst they try to come to terms with a range of different thoughts and feelings. Common responses include;

- Crying
- Feeling anxious or worrying
- Not sleeping or disturbed sleeping
- Nightmares
- Loneliness
- Losing interest in normal activities
- Concentration difficulties
- Feeling angry
- Irritability
- Physical effects e.g. headaches and tummy aches

All of these feelings and behaviours are 'normal' and natural responses to a bereavement. If you are particularly concerned about your child it's always a good idea to seek professional advice and support. See '[Charities and Organisations](#)'

Parent / Carer wellbeing... ...so important!

Supporting children during a bereavement is a difficult task when adults are having to cope with their own grief. It's incredibly important to try and have some time away from the situation to process your own loss. Engaging in healthy, stress-relieving activities can be helpful such as; talking/seeking support from friends, having time and space alone, eating a healthy diet, exercising, being outside or practicing relaxation techniques and mindfulness activities.

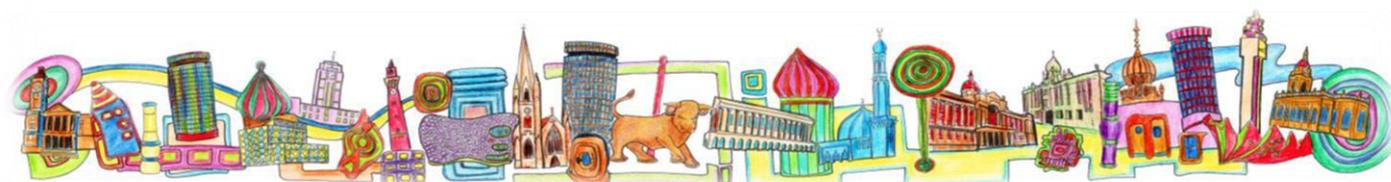




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What can I say or do?

- **Be open and honest with your child.**
Use simple words to explain why the person died. Avoid using terms like 'gone away' or 'gone to sleep'. These expressions can be confusing for young children as they may believe loved ones will come back.
- **Expect questions**
Be prepared for your child to ask the same questions repeatedly. Going over it again and again can help them to process their loss and gain reassurance.
- **Listen and reassure your child**
Tell the child you understand how they are feeling and reassure them that you are there for them if and when they want to talk. If they blame themselves, reassure them that it's not their fault.
- **Be assured it is fine to express your own emotions!**
By showing grief you are encouraging your child to express theirs too. Sometimes their emotions may come out and show at unexpected times.
- **Prepare your child for changes in daily life**
The death of a loved one can have a huge impact on the family's routine and structure. Ease any worries such as who will pick them up from school.
- **Talk to your child about how they want to say goodbye.**
Some options could be lighting a candle, letting off balloons, saying a prayer or poem, writing a letter, planting a shrub or visiting a special place.
- **Help them to make a memory box**
This could contain photos, films, drawings, some clothing, a favourite perfume/aftershave and any other treasured or significant items. This can be a huge source of comfort.
- **Take care of yourself**
Allow yourself time and space to grieve for your own loss. The more you look after yourself, the better able you will be to support your child.
- **Seek professional advice**
You may want to contact your GP in the first instance if you are worried and need support in helping your child through the grieving process.
- **REMEMBER you are not alone!**
There are lots of organisations that can provide support to families who have experienced a bereavement.





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Many of us feel uncomfortable having conversations about death or loss. These conversation openers may help...

It's okay to be
upset and to tell
me how you feel...

Would you like
to talk about...

Would you like to
talk about what
happens when
somebody dies...

How could we
remember (name)...
How would you like
to say goodbye...

What could I do
to help you now...

Do you understand
what happened to
(name), shall I explain
again...





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Charities and Organisations for further advice and support:

Child Bereavement UK

Childhood bereavement charity

www.childbereavementuk.org

Helpline number - 0800 02 888 40
(Mon - Fri 09:00-17:00)

Email
support@childbereavementuk.org

Young Minds

Mental health support for young people and their families

www.youngminds.org.uk

Parents Helpline – 0808 8025544

Winston's Wish

Childhood bereavement charity

www.winstonswish.org

Free Helpline: 08088 020 021
(Mon - Fri 09:00 – 17:00)

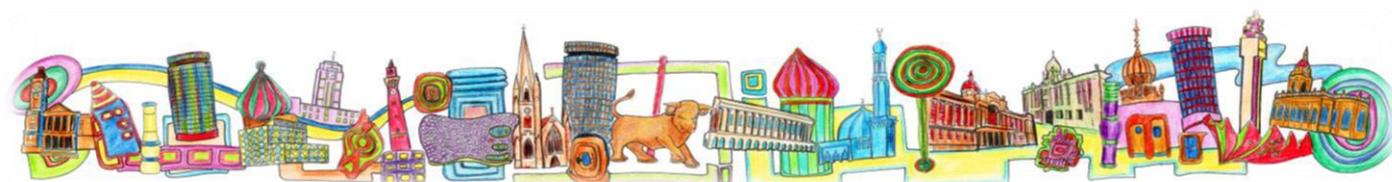
Email their ASK email service for free advice and support following a bereavement:

askmailbox@winstonswish.org.uk

Gingerbread

Support for single parents and their families.

www.gingerbread.org.uk



www.cobschool.com/behavioursupport