

In relation to children and young people's understanding of death, it is important to recognise that when growing up, children may mature at different times.

This can mean that their understanding and concepts of death may differ, depending on the individual child or young person concerned.

Stages of child development

These stages are guidelines only.

Birth to 3 years

At this stage, grief tends to show itself over short-term losses. Feelings are often expressed vocally through crying and hitting out. It is important to recognise that grief is often overlaid with confusion.

4 to 7 years

This age group often has difficulty conceiving the ending of life, and of death as being final. There is often a sense of illogical self-blame and intense feelings may be expressed in a very open manner. Game playing may be used by children, to help them make sense of their growing understanding of life and death.

8 to 12 years

At this stage, children develop a more abstract way of thinking. They start to accept the permanency of separation. This can enable them to speak about death and to share their feelings of grief.

- Potentially they may also
- ❖ develop symptoms of other illnesses to express their emotional pain;
 - ❖ be interested in gathering facts and concrete details concerning the bereavement. They can have the ability to move from intense grief and sadness to finding distractions from this.

12 to 18 years

This age group have an increased ability to think in abstract ways and to use peer support. There may also be a questioning of the meaning of life, together with a growing awareness of their own mortality.

Potential difficulties

All young children have some concept of death, but individual differences are also important.

Children's self-centeredness and literal thinking may cause them to blame themselves for another's death.

Following bereavement, some children may have difficulties in concentrating, as well as with other learning at school.

Some children may also feel anxious about losing another loved one.


Older children and teenagers may very quickly adopt a parental role. Younger children only gradually develop the capacities to sustain feelings of sadness over


a period of time, and this may be misinterpreted as being unfeeling.

Children may create a family life, where a parent is still alive, when talking at school, so as not to be seen as different.


Some resources available


This list of resources has symbols to indicate the style and content of each resource.

Worksheets 

Read to young children 

Learning difficulties LD

Video 

Religious overtones 

For children

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---|---|
| When something terrible happens | (8 years+) |  | LD |
| Lifetimes | (5 years+) |  | |
| Remembering Mum | |  | |
| I will always love you | (5 years+) |  | LD |
| My Granddad | (8 years+) |  | |
| Badger's parting | (5 years+) |  | LD |
| Good grief | (5 - 12 years) |  | LD |
| Water bugs and dragon flies | |  |  |
| A child's questions about death | | | |
| Someone special has died | | | |

For young people

Good grief 2 (teenagers/young adults)



LD

Your parent has died (teenagers)

Straight talk about death (teenagers)

What if?



For parents

Talking to children

What do I tell children?

A child's grief - coping with the death in a family

Coping with loss for parents

Further information and support

Carers' Psychological Support Service

☎ 0207 188 4741

or pager 08700 555500 code 843330 .

Richard Dimpleby Cancer Information and Support Service

2nd Floor Lambeth Wing, St Thomas' Hospital

☎ 020 7188 5918

St Christopher's Hospice Candle Project

51 Lawrie Park Road,

Sydenham, London

SE26 6DZ

☎ 020 8778 9252

The St. Christopher's Candle Project offers family-based counselling to any child bereaved in the South East London area.

CancerBACUP

Help-line ☎ 020 7696 9003

0808 800 1234

Cancerlink

Help-line ☎ 0808 808 0000

Mac line for young people

☎ 0800 591 028

Carers' Psychological Support Service
Guy's, King's and St Thomas'



**Children, young
people and grief**

This leaflet is written for you....

*As a parent, a guardian or a friend supporting
children or young people who are bereaved
through the death of someone close to them.*

Guy's and St Thomas'
Hospital NHS Trust

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and Support Service 2004

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Further reading

| Title | Publisher | ISBN | Cost |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Forever in my heart | Mountain Rainbow Publications | 1-878321-08-0 | £5.50 |
| Remembering Granddad | Child's Play International | 0-85953-311-5 | £7 |
| My book about.... | St Christopher's Hospice | - | |
| What do I tell the children | CancerBACUP | - | £3 |
| When someone dies | Woodland Press | | £5 |
| Charlotte's Web | Penguin | | £5 |
| Mister God this is Anna | | | £6 |
| Grief and bereavement - understanding children (professionals) | | | £2 |
| Talking about death - a dialogue between parent and child | | | £12 |
| Let's talk about death and dying | | | £3 |
| Fred | | | £3 |
| Grief in children (adults & professionals) | | | £3 |
| Remembering my brother | | | £7 |

| Title | Number of Copies | Cost | Total Cost | Publisher | ISBN |
|--|------------------|--------|------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| When something terrible happens | 2 | £7.00 | £14.00 | Woodland Press | 0962050237 |
| Lifetimes with beginnings and endings in between- five years | 2 | £5.00 | £10.00 | Belitha | 1855617609 |
| Remembering Mum | 2 | £4.99 | £9.98 | Perkins GI | 071364432X |
| I will always love you | 2 | £5.00 | £10.00 | Hodder | 0340401532 |
| My Granddad | 2 | £5.00 | £10.00 | Oxford university press | 019272150 |
| Badger's parting gifts | 2 | £4.99 | £9.98 | Varley S | 0006643175 |
| Good Grief | 2 | £27.50 | £55.00 | Kingsley J | 185302340X |
| Water bugs and dragon flies | 2 | £5.00 | £10.00 | Stickney D | 0264674413 |
| A child's questions about death | 2 | £2.50 | £5.00 | St Christopher's Hospice | 1 851 44 148 4 |
| Someone special has died | 2 | £2.00 | £4.00 | St Catherine's Hospice | No ISBN |
| Good Grief 2 teenagers/young adults | 2 | £27.50 | £55.00 | Kingsley J | 1853021628 |
| Your parent has died - teenagers | 2 | £2.00 | £4.00 | St Catherine's Hospice | No ISBN |
| Straight talk about death-teenagers | 2 | £8.00 | £16.00 | St Catherine's Hospice | No ISBN |
| What do we tell the children? | 2 | £5.00 | £10.00 | PARC | 1900339013 |
| Coping with Loss for Parents | 2 | £7.00 | £14.00 | Picadilly | 853404535 |