

## What Might Help?

At this time, you may need to show and tell your child or youngster, more than usual, that **they are loved and cared for**, so that they feel secure. **Gently encourage your child/ young person to talk about what they think and feel.** A good time for this is during everyday activities, such as trips in the car, walking to school, feeding pets, or cooking.

**Listen to what your youngster is saying** and try to understand from their point of view.

**Be honest, taking into account your child's level of understanding.** Children may repeatedly ask the same questions: it is important to keep your answers to what you know. If you don't know an answer, say so. You will feel more confident if you have prepared how to respond to particular questions, in advance, preferably in consultation with other key adults.

**Some children/young people may find it hard to talk.** They may find other ways to show how they feel, such as drawing a picture or writing a letter.

**Share your own feelings if they are not too distressing.**

**Encourage your child to carry on with their usual activities**, especially ones that include their friends, physical activities and things that take their mind off their grief for a while.

## When and where to get more support

Parents/carers providing support for their children or young people need to have support themselves. The following contacts may be helpful.

### Child Death Helpline

A service staffed by bereaved parental volunteers, with professional support, for all of those affected by the death of a child. Every evening 7.00pm to 10.00pm and weekday mornings 10.00am to 1.00pm

[www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)

Freephone: 0800 282986 or 0808 800 6019 free for all mobiles.

### Cruse Bereavement Care

A National charity manned by volunteers and professionals for adults and sometimes children/young people.

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

Telephone: 0844 4779400 (National)

South Staffs. local branch: 01543 433479

Burton on Trent branch offers support for children: 01283 533362.

### Dove Service:

For North Staffordshire or people who can reach Hanley. For anyone affected by bereavement at any time in their lives, or by a life-changing illness. It is able to provide support for children and those with learning disabilities.

[www.thedoveservice.org.uk](http://www.thedoveservice.org.uk)

Telephone: 01782 683155

**If you are still worried about your child you should consult a doctor or nurse.**

## When Someone Special Dies

A Guide for Parents  
and Carers



We hope this leaflet will help you understand how the young people might be feeling and how you might support them.

Staffordshire Educational Psychology  
Service 2020



## Key messages

**The best people** to support children or young people immediately after they have experienced grief or trauma, are people that they know and trust, such as their parents or adults in school.

**There are different ways** to feel and express grief. Try not to judge as every youngster will grieve in their own way.

**How young people feel and behave depends on many factors**, such as their emotional development, their personal circumstances and their life experiences. It is not possible to predict how affected each individual child might be.

Please remember that **you can't take away the pain**. Resist the temptation to make things up in order to console the young people.

**Children and young people can gradually come to terms with loss** if support and comfort is provided.

Things may change when people die but **life can be good again**.

## Children and Young People may have some, but not necessarily all, of these feelings

**Feeling Numb/Shock** - at first it is often hard to take in what has happened, Young people may seem apathetic or abnormally calm.

**Denial** - it can be hard to believe that the person has really died and some people may continue to make plans for them

**Sadness** – it is natural for children or young people to feel sadness, pain and loss. Some children or young people may cry, others may not; it does not show how much they care.

**Guilt** - it is very common for people to feel guilty. Some children or young people might feel that they have caused the person's death or that they could have done something to prevent it.

**Anger** – some children or young people may feel anger against individuals who were unable to prevent the death such as adults or family. Sometimes children or young people may feel anger towards the person who has died, because of the pain and upheaval the death has caused.

**Confusion** – children or young people may be confused about what they have heard and what is happening. Sometimes they may not have been able to take in the information they have been given.

**Anxiety** - when the reality of the loss sinks in, the child or young person may then become anxious about the changes and loneliness ahead.

## Children and Young People might...

**Find it difficult to listen** when other people are talking. It therefore might be helpful to have important information recorded for them.

**Find schoolwork more difficult than usual.** It often helps young people to attempt the usual expectations and work set for them. However, they need to know that you will understand if their work is not to their usual standard.

**Struggle with concentration in daily life.** For example, children might need adults to help them take more care when crossing the road. Young people might need reminding to take care when making hot drinks or cooking.

**Think that they have seen or heard the person that has died** - perhaps in a crowd or in the distance.

**Be very tired**, even if they've had lots of sleep.  
**Feel more irritable** than usual or easily upset.  
**Lose their appetite** or perhaps eat more.

### Young Children and Children with Special Educational Needs ...

**May not understand that death is permanent** and may ask where the person has gone or if they're coming back. Therefore, it is important to use factual language, (not language such as "gone to sleep" or "passed on").

**Ask the same questions many times** in order to be able to take in the information and feel reassured.