

## Children Seek Re-assurance

Plan a script to describe what happened – e.g., the doctors couldn't make him/her better so he/she died.

...won't be living with us anymore but you will still be his/ her....And ...still love him /her very much.

Repeating the script of what happened and sharing this with all families and friends and the school.

If you don't have answers these phrases can help:

Some families say .....

Some people say .....

We believe this .....



### How You Can Help:

- Try to answer questions as honestly and accurately as you can in words a child will understand
- You may feel you want to be especially protective but, if possible, stick to familiar routines
- Allow children opportunities to talk about their feelings and let them know it is okay to cry or be angry
- Be ready to LISTEN but do not be upset if the child chooses not to talk

**Make time for yourself and make sure that you have other adults to talk over your feelings and concerns. The child will benefit from this.**

Always explain to your school, the circumstances and how the school community can help you and your family...

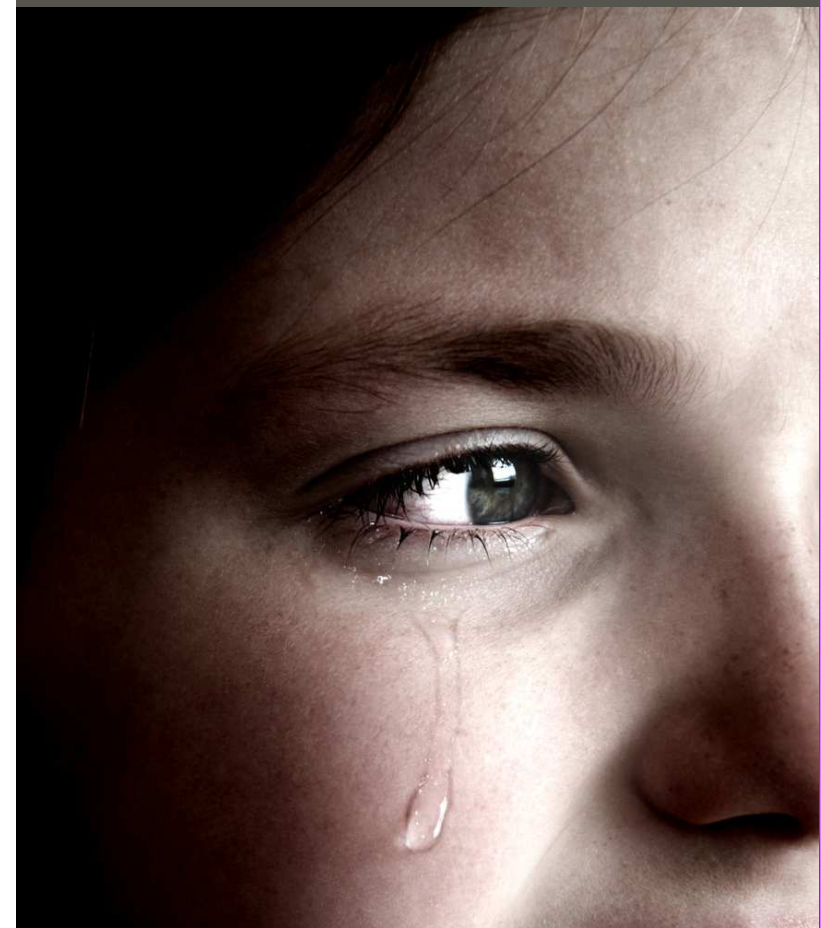
You might also want help from your Doctor, Church or organisations such as The Samaritans.

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**"Finding Safe Ways to Remember, when circumstances in life change...."**

A Guide for Parents, Relatives and Friends

# Grief

Learning to deal with death, separation or a change in life circumstances is a natural part of growing up. Sometimes it can be hard to know what to say to our children about what's changed.

This leaflet might help you.....

All those involved will have been affected in some way, though each person's experiences will be personal and therefore different.

You may have thoughts and feelings unlike any others you have had before.

Children have similar feelings.

This is a NORMAL reaction and these emotions may last for some time.

This leaflet may help you to know how others have reacted in similar situations and help you understand what effects death separation or a change in life circumstances can have on your thoughts and feelings and those of your children.

## The feelings and emotions you are now experiencing are a normal reaction to an upsetting event.

- In the early stages you might be in shock and feel confused and helpless. You may also feel fear and sadness.
- As you think about what happened you may feel angry with yourself, with or with others; even with the person who had died, or left you.
- Often physical reactions follow such events e.g. tiredness to the point of exhaustion, sleeplessness, bad dreams, headaches, change in appetite and short temper (but don't have too).
- Try not to bottle up your feelings, it is important to talk to others. Crying is natural and often gives relief, as does laughing and smiling.
- As well as talking, be ready to listen to others.
- You may need to have time on your own for private thoughts – explain this to your family and friends, this is Ok.
- Accidents are more likely to occur when you are under stress; please be careful and take your time, particularly as your thoughts may drift off, concentration may be lost, be aware.

# How Might a Child React?

In tragic situations children experience similar feelings to adults and, like adults, may find it difficult to talk about their feelings. However, they might show you their feelings through changes in behaviour. Role modelling safe ways to remember is a gift you can share.

- Increased 'naughtiness', aggression and 'younger' behaviour or, alternatively needing to please. Wanting your attention as feelings of insecurity are common.
- Being quiet and withdrawn. Unwilling to go to school, as leaving familiar surroundings can be a struggle.
- Lots of 'pretend' play including acting out what took place in the original incident- or their perception of it. So useful to help reframe this if not a factual account.
- Poor sleep patterns including bad dreams, fear of being alone and fear of the dark.
- Clinginess, wanting to sleep with parents. Being upset by everyday events and particularly changes to routines.
- Difficulty concentrating on any task can be difficult especially in school. Forgetting things or toileting accidents.
- Worry about danger. Dislike of loud noises/quiet.
- Changes in appetite.
- Fears for their own safety or the safety of family and friends.

*Any of these behaviours can be described as 'normal' but if they persist for a long time, or if you are worried about your child, do not hesitate to contact your Doctor for support and guidance.*

