

Bereavement

ST PETER'S EATON SQUARE

6TH FEBRUARY 2024

Before we begin...

- Talking about death, loss and bereavement can be difficult and upsetting.
- Please take care yourself and be mindful of others in the room.
- Take timeout for yourself if you need to.
- Please be respectful of what people may choose to share.
- If you would like to speak privately after the session, please contact me via the school office or email me at jcollins@stpeaton.org.uk



Statistics

1 on 29 pupils aged 5-16 year has been bereaved of a parent or sibling. On average, that is one child in every class.

Approximately 127 children are newly bereaved every day.

A parent with a child under 18 dies every 20 minutes in the UK.

Every year approximately 6000 people in the UK die by suicide.

An estimated 15,600 UK children experienced the death of a parent from Covid-19-associated causes between March 2020 and November 2022.

Childhood Bereavement Network



Emotions

An emotional rollercoaster...

- **Anger**
- **Fear**
- **Love**
- **Loneliness**
- **Envy**
- **Relief**
- **Guilt**
- **Tears**
- **Laughter**



Unresolved grief

Risk factors

- Academic under-achievement (Abdelnoor & Hollins, 2004)
- Emotional/mental health issues (Jones et al, 2010)
- Substance misuse (Brent et al, 2009)
- Teenage pregnancy (Sweeting et al, 1998) (x6)
- Prison population (Finlay and Jones, 2000) (x10)
- Suicides (Wilcox et al, 2010)



Reactions

Common reactions

- Emotions (Sadness; anger; fear; guilt; relief; numbness; confusion; loneliness; shock; or anxiety)
- Sleeping/eating difficulties
- Feeling ill
- Regression
- Separation anxiety
- Lack of confidence
- Loss of focus/concentration

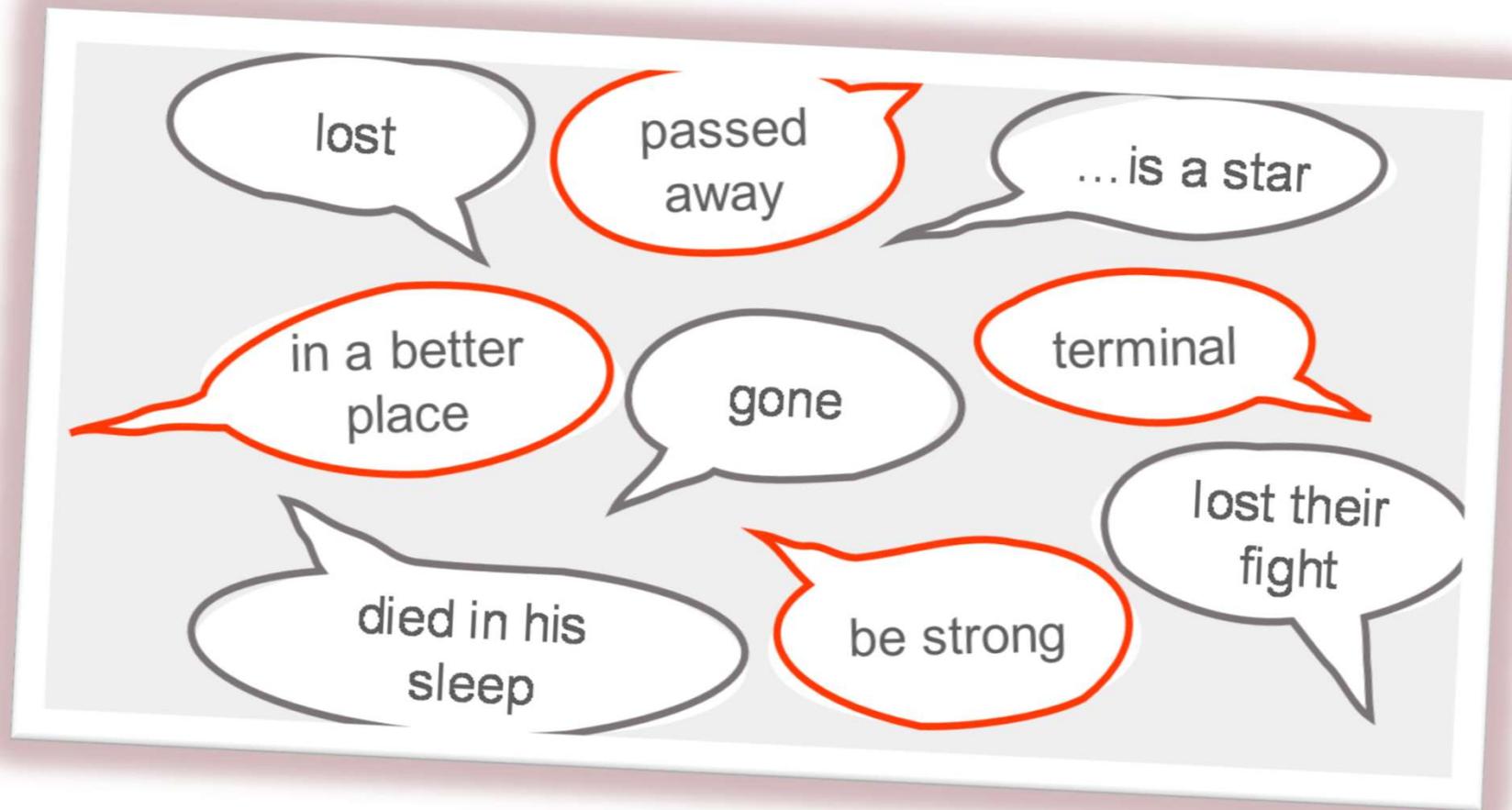


Children's Understanding of Death



Age Developmental stage	Conceptual understanding	Feelings/behaviour
Up to 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal of familiar person • Emotional withdrawal of main carer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abandonment; insecurity; crying in protest • Disrupted sleep and feeding patterns
6 months – 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing 'object constancy awareness' • Can 'miss' someone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation anxiety, searching behaviour • Withdrawal
2 – 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested in death, but no sense of its permanence or irreversibility • Concrete thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectation of return/clingy • Constant questions • Regression
5 – 8 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuller understanding of death • Magical thinking • Developing 'conscience' so can feel guilty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear the death of others • Often extremes of good/bad behaviour • Egocentric
8 – 12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands permanence, universality and consequences of death • May develop fear of own mortality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety about own health/death • Preoccupied at school • Possibility of social withdrawal
12+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puberty – time of great change • Understands impact of death on their life • Emotional maturity may not equate to physical development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly held views; reluctant to ask for help • Challenge own beliefs and those of others • Question their own mortality • May take grief outside the family

The Language of Death



Explanations of Death

His heart stopped beating, he stopped breathing and his brain doesn't work anymore.

She is not in any pain; she cannot feel hot or cold or hungry or thirsty.

They cannot come back, however much we may want them to.



When someone is not expected to live

It is important for children to know the truth in age-appropriate language. Some questions to consider:

- What has the child be told?
- What does the child know?
- What does the child understand?

Sometimes the progression of an illness is very gradual, other times it might be very fast, but when adults know that a person is not going to get better, it is important to help prepare the child, while allowing them to make memories and focus on the person while they are alive.

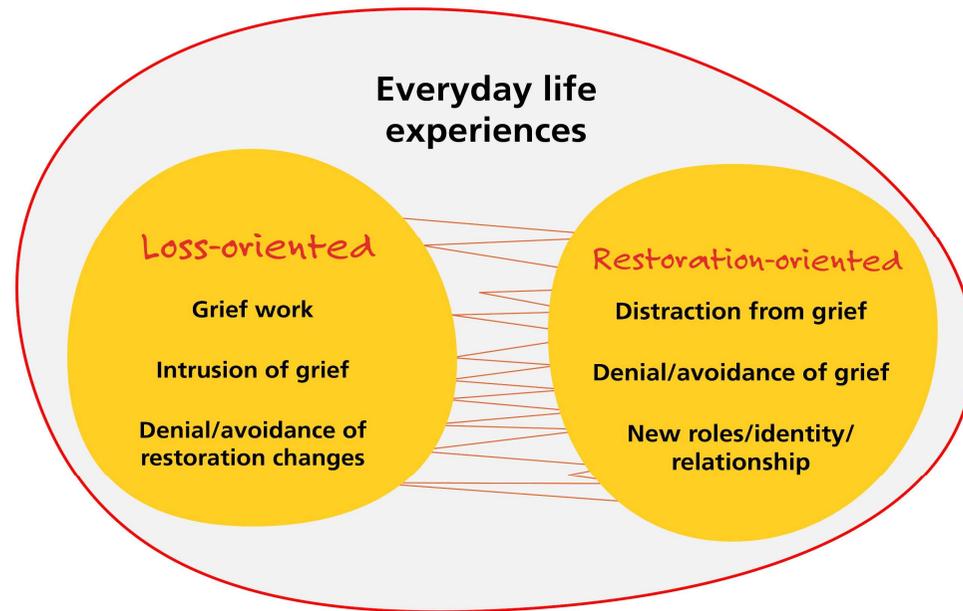


Theories

Worden's Tasks of Mourning



Dual Process Model



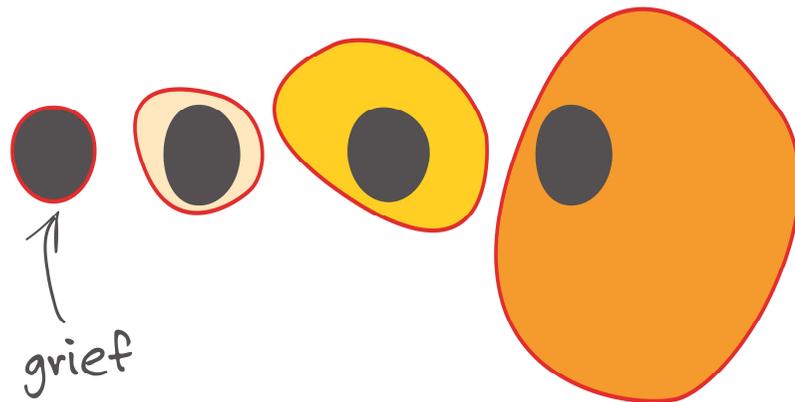
Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut (1999)

The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement: Rationale and Description, *Death Studies* 23:3 197-224

Puddle jumping

www.childbereavementuk.org/puddle-jumping

Growing Around Grief



Lois Tonkin (1996)

If we were to draw a circle to represent our life like the red one here on the left, when someone dies, we can feel that our grief overwhelms us and it consumes our whole life.

As time goes on, we gradually build a life around our grief.

The grief is still there but as we start to do more things we build on this life without the person there.

We used to think that grief diminished as time went on, but we now think it is more accurate to say that the grief stays the same but we develop a life around it.

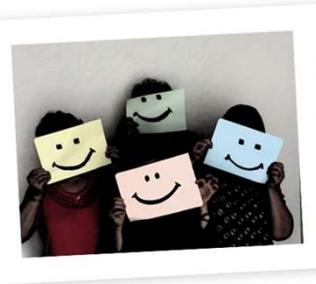
Factors Affecting the Grief Process



What do bereaved children say?



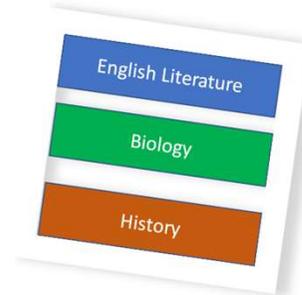
“ Let me leave the room if I feel stressed or emotional. ”



“ Ask me what I need; don't assume you know. ”



“ Don't expect me to 'get over it'! ”



“ Prepare me for potential 'trigger lessons'. ”

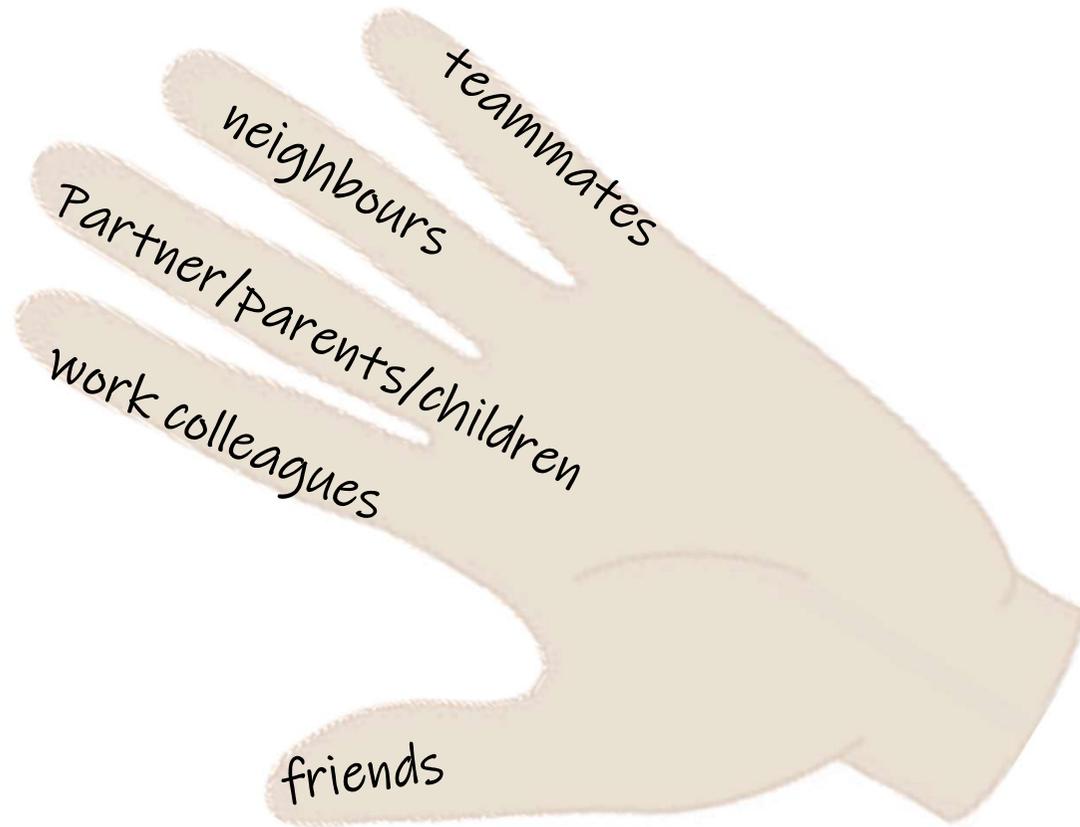


Supporting yourself

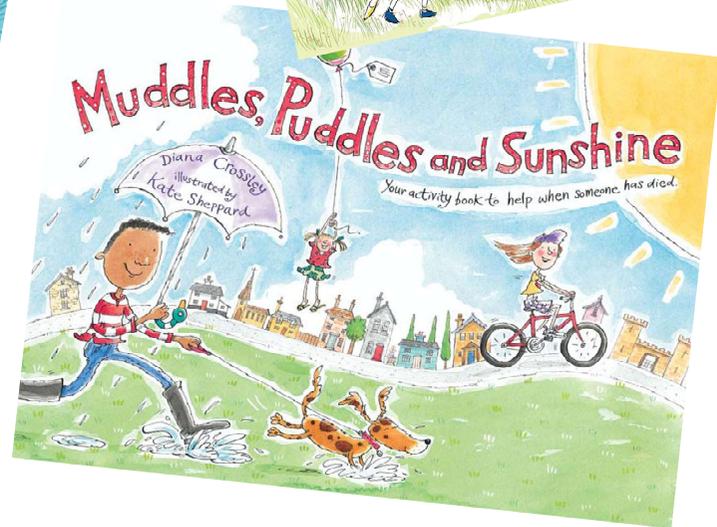
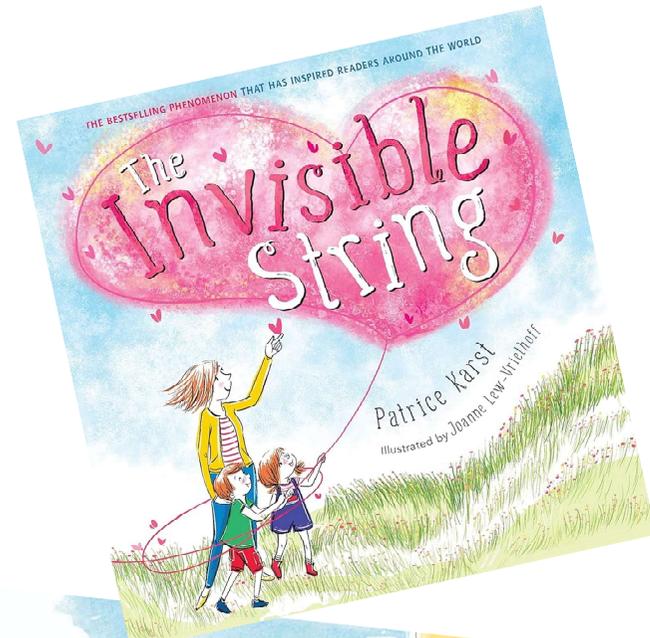
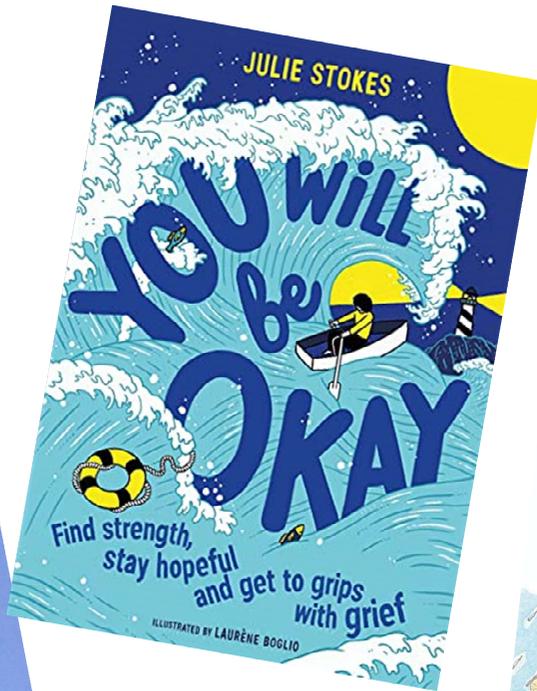
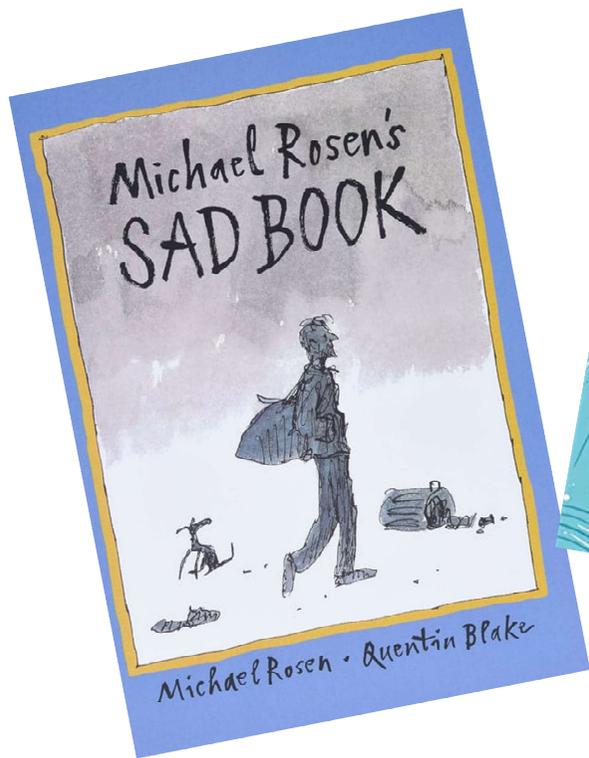
- Emotional reactions
- Vulnerability
- Talk and share
- Get support
- Wellbeing



Supporting yourself



Books and resources



Help & Support

- Child Bereavement UK

0800 02 888 40 / www.childbereavement.org / helpline@childbereavement.org

- Winston's Wish

08088 020 021 / www.winstonswish.org

- Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

