



Supporting bereaved children

Mosaic Family Information Pack



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Introduction

Grief is a deeply personal journey, and when it touches a child, it can be especially challenging to navigate. As a parent or caregiver, your first instinct might be to shield your child from the pain, but it's important to understand that children need support to make sense of their emotions too.

Grief doesn't have a set timeline, and each child reacts differently based on their age, personality, and relationship to the person they've lost.

This guide offers suggestions and advice, drawn from the real experiences of families who have walked this path before. It's designed to help you create an environment where your child can feel whatever they feel, ask questions, and gradually begin to grow around grief learning how to live in new ways while carrying love and memories with us."

"Sharing the weight of loss can make it just a little easier to carry."

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Ways to support your child following a bereavement

Grief can be overwhelming for everyone. There's no "perfect" way to support your child, and you don't have to do everything at once.

These suggestions are based on the real experiences of families and young people. Take what feels possible, leave what doesn't for now, and remember: you're doing your best while coping with your own loss too.

Let Them Feel What They Feel

- Children and young people may feel sad, angry, guilty, confused or all of these within a very short time.
- Some children may show no emotion at all, which can be worrying, but feelings may surface later.
- Reassure them that it's okay to feel whatever they feel.
- Young children may move quickly from tears to play and this is normal.
- Let them know it's okay to laugh and have fun, too. Joy and sadness can exist side by side.

Show Your Own Emotions

- It's okay for your child to see you upset. Let them know you're sad because someone has died, this gives them permission to show their own feelings.
- Hiding your emotions may make them feel they have to do the same.
- Talk when you can. If your child isn't ready, let them know you'll be there when they are.

Keep Routines Where You Can

- Familiar routines can bring comfort and a sense of safety.
- Encourage school, hobbies, and time with friends where possible.
- You don't have to keep everything the same, just holding on to a few familiar things helps children feel more secure.

Reassure Them It's Not Their Fault

- Children sometimes blame themselves, especially if there were arguments or tension before the death.
- Gently and clearly explain that nothing they said or did caused the death.



Expect Changes in Behaviour

- Temporary regression (like bedwetting, clinginess, or tantrums) is common in younger children.
- Teenagers may withdraw, act out, or seem distant.
- Be patient, keep boundaries, but acknowledge their emotions.
- Encourage healthy ways to cope, such as drawing, exercise, or talking to someone they trust.

Explain What's Happening Next

- Grief brings change and change can be scary.
- Give clear, age-appropriate updates about what will stay the same and what might change.
- If you don't know the answers, be honest and reassure them they are safe and loved. It's okay to say, "*I don't know.*"

Offer Consistent Comfort

- Younger children may need more cuddles, closeness, and physical comfort.
- Older children or teens might prefer space or time with friends, that's okay too.
- Let them know you're available, even if they're not ready to talk yet.

Let Them Know It's Okay to Have Fun

- Play is how younger children process emotions.
- Encourage fun and silliness, these give healthy breaks from sadness.
- Join in when you can. Moments of connection help both of you.

Create Memory Activities

- Keeping memories alive can bring comfort.
- You might try making a memory box or book, writing letters or drawing pictures, or creating a jar of favourite stories or sayings.
- Visiting special places or starting small rituals can also help, if your child wants to.

Grief Takes Time

- Every child grieves in their own way and at their own pace.
- Big feelings may return at birthdays, holidays, or anniversaries.
- Let teachers or caregivers know so they can support your child during these times.



Look After Yourself Too

- You matter. Supporting your child while grieving yourself is incredibly hard.
- Ask for help from friends, family, or professionals and you don't have to do it alone.
- Be kind to yourself. You don't need to have all the answers.
- Taking care of yourself helps your child feel safe and supported.



Talking about death

Talking openly about the person who has died helps children understand and process their grief. One of their biggest fears may be forgetting that person, so sharing memories and stories is especially important.

Answering Difficult Questions

When a child asks something hard, try asking, *"What do you think?"*

This helps you understand what they already know so you can build on it gently and remember, **it's absolutely okay to say "I don't know."**

You don't need to have all the answers. What matters most is that your child feels listened to and safe to ask.

Clear and Honest Language

Use simple, clear words like "died" or "dead". Be honest, but kind and give small, clear explanations and repeat them as needed. Avoid vague phrases like "lost", "gone to sleep", or "passed away" as these can confuse or even scare children. For example:

- "We've lost your mum" – may make a child worry no one is looking for her.
- "Granny went to sleep" – may cause sleep anxiety in children

Even well-meaning words can confuse young minds.

Beliefs About Death

Families believe different things about what happens after someone dies, such as heaven, stars, spirits, reincarnation, or that death is the end.

Whatever your belief, invite your child to share what they've heard or think. Use simple, clear explanations to help them understand.

If they ask something you're unsure about, it's okay to say: *"That's a really good question and I don't know for sure. Let's think about it together."*

Being honest like this helps build trust and shows them it's safe to talk about difficult things. You might say: *"People believe different things about what happens after someone dies"*



Children will hear different views, which can be confusing. Support their curiosity with reassurance and space to talk.

Key Takeaways:

- Keep explanations short, clear, and age-appropriate.
- Be patient, young children often need repetition.
- Let children lead with their questions and feelings.
- It's okay not to have all the answers. Being present, honest and kind is what matters most.



How children react to a death

Every child is different and their reaction to a death will depend on their age, relationship to the person who died, and the support around them. Some children may cry a lot, and others might carry on playing or seem unaffected at first. All of these are normal reactions.

Your child may not have the words to express how they're feeling, and that's okay. They might show their grief through behaviour or changes in routine instead.

Emotional Responses

- Children often feel overwhelmed or scared by their emotions. Let them know this is called grief, and that it's normal.
- Don't assume how they feel, ask gently and listen. Give them space to ask questions.
- Children often "puddle jump", they may be upset one moment and playing the next. This is a normal coping mechanism and doesn't mean they haven't understood or don't care.
- Some will want to talk openly, others won't and both are okay.

Changes in Behaviour

- You may notice clinginess, anger, being quieter than usual, or regressing in age or behaviour.
- These are all normal grief responses, not bad behaviour.
- Understanding this can help you respond with patience and support.

Supporting Them to Talk

- Gently encourage conversation, but don't force it.
- Let them know there are safe people (at home or school) they can talk to.
- Some children may benefit from: time-out cards at school, worry box or bag at home or creative outlets like drawing or journaling.

Sleep Difficulties

It's common for grieving children to have nightmares or broken sleep.

What helps:

- Keep routines steady and calming.
- Talk through worries during the day, not at bedtime.
- Use tools like a worry box to ease bedtime anxiety.
- If sleep problems persist, speak with your GP.



Separation Anxiety

Many children worry after a death that someone else they love might die too.

What helps:

- Acknowledging their fears.
- Gently explaining that most people live a long time.
- Trying small comfort strategies like: **Handprints**: One for each of you to keep in a pocket or bag. **Transitional objects**: Swap small toys or items when apart. **"Later today..."**: Mention something you'll do together after school to offer reassurance.

Building Confidence

Grief can knock a child's confidence, which can make them feel unsure or anxious in everyday situations.

What helps:

- Praising their efforts, even the small ones.
- Reminding them of times they've coped before.
- Offering gentle encouragement with achievable steps.

Key Takeaways

- Every child grieves in their own way, there's no "right" reaction.
- Children may **"puddle jump"** between emotions and activities, this is normal.
- Grief can show through behaviour, emotions, or sleep changes.
- Reassure them it's okay to feel sad, angry, numb or even playful.
- Give them routine, space, and ways to talk or express feelings creatively.
- Let school know what's happened, they can help support your child.
- Most children adjust over time, but support is key, especially around anniversaries or big dates.



How children understand and react to a death

Children respond to death in very different ways depending on their age, stage of development, and life experience.

A child's understanding of death and their ability to express how they feel changes as they grow. Knowing what to expect at different stages can help you respond in a way that feels supportive and age-appropriate.

The guidelines below offer a general idea of how children at different ages may understand and experience death.

Early Years (Under 2 Years)

- Babies and toddlers don't understand death as adults do, but they do experience the loss of someone they were attached to.
- They are very sensitive to the emotions of the adults around them. If a caregiver is distressed, they will feel this and may react.
- Grief may show through changes in behaviour: crying, clinginess, sleep difficulties, anger.
- They need reassurance through physical closeness, comfort, calm voices, and familiar routines to feel secure.

Ages 2–5

- At this age, children often believe death is reversible. They may think that someone can come back 'magical thinking' or that something they said or did caused the death.
- Use clear, simple language, say "died" instead of "gone to sleep" or "lost".
- Be prepared for repeated questions, this is how young children make sense of what's happened.
- They may regress (e.g. bedwetting, tantrums, separation anxiety), which is a normal grief response.
- Reassure them that the death is not their fault, and give bite-sized, age-appropriate explanations, repeated gently over time.
- Books, drawing, and play are helpful ways to explore and express feelings.

Ages 6–9

- Children begin to understand that death is permanent and happens to all living things.
- They may still feel confused or anxious, especially if they've seen upsetting media or heard myths about death.



- Some may find death frightening or “spooky” and may develop new worries.
- They may ask direct or even graphic questions, and this curiosity is normal.
- Physical complaints (e.g. tummy aches, headaches) can be a sign of grief, especially when emotions are hard to express.
- Continue to offer honest answers, space to talk, and reassurance.

Ages 9–13

- Children in this age group have a much clearer understanding of death as final and irreversible.
- They may start to reflect on what the death means to them personally and may feel sad, angry, or isolated.
- Peer relationships are becoming more important, and they may feel different from others because of their grief.
- Mood swings, irritability, or withdrawal can be signs of struggling to process emotions.
- Support them by being available, encouraging healthy routines, and offering time to talk.
- Help them build confidence and resilience by recognising their strengths and giving praise for small steps.

Teenagers (13+)

- Teenagers do not yet fully understand or process death as adults do, even though they may seem mature.
- They are dealing with questions of identity, independence, and future plans, and a bereavement can shake this deeply.
- Grief may show as anger, detachment, mood changes, or risk-taking behaviours. Others may become very quiet or withdrawn.
- They may avoid talking about the death for fear of becoming overwhelmed or losing control.
- Some teens may appear “fine” but be holding emotions in, stay gently available without pushing them to talk.
- Encourage healthy outlets like sport, creative expression, peer support, or talking with a trusted adult or counsellor.
- Stick to clear boundaries and routines, and reassure them they are still loved and supported, even when they act like they don’t want it.



Key Takeaways

- A child's understanding of death depends on their age and development—adjust your language and support accordingly.
- **Babies and toddlers** feel loss through separation and respond to the emotions of adults around them.
- **Young children** may believe death is reversible or their fault. Use simple, honest words and repeat explanations.
- **Older children** may have fears or physical symptoms related to grief. They need space to talk and ask questions.
- **Teenagers** may seem independent but still need emotional support, structure, and gentle reassurance.
- Reactions such as repeated questions, mood swings, regressions, or changes in sleep and behaviour are all normal grief responses.
- Use tools like books, drawing, talking and listening to help children express what they're feeling.
- Keep routines where possible, this helps children feel safe and secure.
- Let school know what's happened so they can offer ongoing support, especially around significant dates or changes.



Supporting children with Additional Needs

Children with additional needs, or neurodiversity, may not express their grief in typical ways, but they still experience loss and benefit from sensitive, tailored support.

With the right communication and approach, they can begin to understand what has happened and feel safe and supported as they grieve. The most important thing is not to avoid the topic, children with additional needs need honest, clear explanations just like anyone else.

Helping Them Understand What Has Happened

Children with additional needs, or neurodiversity, may find it harder to understand abstract ideas like death. To support their understanding:

- **Check what they already know** – their understanding may differ from their peers or chronological age.
- **Use simple, clear language** – words like “died” and “dead” are easier to understand than phrases like “gone to sleep” or “passed away”, which can confuse or scare them.
- **Use concrete, factual explanations** – e.g. “When someone dies, their heart stops beating and their body stops working.”
- **Relate to real-life examples** – such as a pet that has died or flowers that have wilted.
- **Stick to routines where possible** – predictability and structure can help children feel safe when everything else feels uncertain. These can help children understand what death means, and what changes they can expect.

Using Visual and Creative Approaches

Many children with additional needs, or neurodiversity, respond well to visual and hands-on activities to help them process information and feelings. You might:

- Use **photos, symbols, drawings, picture books or short videos** to support conversations.
- Link explanations to their **interests** (e.g. favourite characters, vehicles, animals).
- Make a **visual scrapbook or timeline** showing life before and after the death (e.g. blooming flower → wilting flower).



- Create a **social story or comic strip conversation** to explain changes and expected events.

Explaining the Body and Death

Some children find it helpful to understand that the person is no longer alive in a physical, visible way. You might say:

"Their body has stopped working. That means they can't feel anything and don't eat, sleep, or talk anymore."

If the child wants to see the body, this can support their understanding, but they will need careful preparation. A trusted adult and the funeral director can help guide this.

Supporting Emotional Understanding

Children with additional needs, or neurodiversity, may struggle to express feelings verbally. Grief might show up as:

- Changes in behaviour
- Withdrawal or clinginess
- Anxiety or agitation
- Physical symptoms (e.g. tummy aches)

You can support them by:

- **Naming the feeling:** *"This feeling is called grief. It's what happens when someone we care about dies."* *"You might feel sad or angry or not sure how you feel and that's okay."*
- **Offering regular check-ins** without pressure to talk
- **Using creative or sensory activities** to help them express themselves

Let them know that however they feel is okay. Some children may not show much emotion at first, it can come later, and that's normal too.

Key Takeaways

- Children with additional needs, or neurodiversity, can understand death with the right support.
- Acknowledge the death, don't assume they don't notice or feel it.
- Use clear, direct language, avoid euphemisms.
- Offer visual tools, repetition, and real-life examples to aid understanding.
- Give time and space for expression and let their responses guide the pace.



What about you?

When a child is grieving, it's natural to focus all your attention on them, but your wellbeing matters too.

Taking care of yourself doesn't take away from their grief, it helps you stay grounded and shows them that seeking support is something everyone deserves.

Grief affects everyone differently. Your emotions and needs are just as valid as anyone else's.

Common Grief Reactions

- **Forgetfulness or difficulty concentrating** – You may feel scattered, struggle to make decisions, or lose track of time.
- **Emotional waves** – Feelings can rise and fall without warning. These might include sadness, numbness, anger, or even moments of relief or guilt. All of these are valid.
- **Changes in sleep** – You may find it hard to fall asleep, wake during the night, or still feel tired after rest.
- **Irritability or short temper** – You might find yourself reacting more strongly than usual. This often comes from emotional and physical exhaustion.
- **Avoiding certain tasks** – It's okay to find some routines difficult, especially those your loved one used to manage.
- **Guilt or "what if" thoughts** – Looking back and questioning things is a common part of grief. These thoughts don't mean you've done anything wrong.

Things That Can Help — When You're Ready

- **Let others support you** – People often want to help but don't know how. Be honest about what would help, whether it's practical tasks or simply company.
- **Lower the pressure** – You're not expected to function the way you did before. Be kind to yourself and let others know if you need space or time.
- **Look after your body** – Try to eat small meals regularly, rest when you can, and spend time outdoors if possible. A short walk or fresh air can help ease stress.
- **Express yourself in your own way** – If talking is difficult, try writing, drawing, or listening to music. There's no right way to express grief.
- **Spend time with safe people** – Whether it's talking, doing something ordinary, or sitting quietly together, being around people who understand and respect your pace is important.
- **Moments of comfort are okay** – Enjoying something or laughing does not mean you've forgotten. These moments are part of healing too.



- **Reach out if grief feels too heavy** – Speak to your GP or access bereavement services for adult support. You're not expected to cope alone (a list of support organisations can be found at the end of this pack).

Key Takeaways

- You matter. Your wellbeing is just as important as your child's.
- Grief can affect your energy, emotions, memory, and motivation that's normal.
- There's no timeline. Do what helps, when it helps.
- You don't have to do it all. Let people help, and don't hesitate to ask.
- Being gentle with yourself is not selfish, it's part of healing.
- What you model for your child now (seeking support, resting, asking for help) teaches them that they can do the same.



Funerals and saying goodbye

Many children don't understand what a funeral is unless they've been to one before. They may have questions or worries about what will happen.

Being honest, gentle, and simple in your explanations can help children feel less anxious. If children aren't given enough information, they may fill in the gaps themselves in ways that are more confusing or scary than the truth.

Your beliefs, culture and family traditions will shape how you explain death and funerals. Involving children (in ways that feel right for them) can help them feel part of what's happening and supported through the experience.

Talking About the Funeral

- Ask what they already know and correct misunderstandings.
- Explain what a funeral is: a special ceremony to say goodbye and remember someone.
- Reassure them it's okay to have big feelings or none at all.
- Talk them through what will happen during the day, step by step.
- Give them the choice to attend but don't pressure. Let them know they can change their mind.
- If they don't want to go, help them think of their own way to say goodbye.

Ways Children Can Be Involved

- Placing a drawing, toy, or letter in the coffin.
- Helping choose music, a poem, or reading.
- Helping plan or prepare refreshments.
- Visiting the location beforehand (if possible) or looking at photos to prepare.

Explaining Burial and Cremation

Burial:

"After the funeral, the coffin will be taken to a cemetery and lowered into a hole called a grave. It will be covered with soil, and later we can visit that place to remember them."

Cremation:

"After the funeral, the coffin goes to a special place called a crematorium, where the body is turned into soft, powdery ashes. The ashes are placed in a special pot, and we can decide together what we'd like to do with them."



Use gentle language and try to avoid words like “burned” unless a child asks directly and is old enough to understand. Follow their lead and give as much information as they ask for.

When There Is No Funeral or Goodbye (Direct Cremation)

Where there is no funeral or ceremony, a child may not have had a chance to say goodbye in person. If this is the case, it can still be meaningful to help them mark the death in their own way, such as:

- Lighting a candle and saying a few words
- Creating a memory box or scrapbook
- Drawing or writing a letter to the person
- Planting a flower or tree in their memory
- Choosing a photo to keep in a special place
- Sharing stories together as a family

Let your child know that not being there doesn’t mean they can’t say goodbye, they can still remember the person in a way that feels special to them.

If a Child Doesn’t Want to Attend

- Respect their decision and reassure them it’s okay.
- Offer other ways to say goodbye now or later, when they feel ready.
- Important dates like birthdays or anniversaries can be a good time to create small rituals or moments of remembrance.

Key Takeaways

- Use simple, honest explanations and avoid vague or confusing terms.
- Let children know what to expect and give them the choice to attend.
- If there’s no funeral or they don’t attend, help them find their own way to say goodbye.
- Even small acts, lighting a candle, drawing a picture, planting a flower, can help children feel connected.
- There’s no “right” way to say goodbye, what matters is that the child feels included, supported, and listened to.



Preparing a child to view the body

Viewing the body of someone they love is a very hard decision to make and what matters most is that it is their choice, made with care and support.

As a parent or carer, it's natural to want to protect your child. If a child (especially an older one) is asking to see the body, it's important to listen to their wishes, likewise, don't insist if they say no, what feels right for one child may not feel right for another.

Supporting Their Decision

- Talk calmly and openly about the option, without pressure.
- Reassure them that whatever they decide is okay, and they can change their mind.
- Speak with the funeral director, they can guide you and help prepare the setting.
- If possible, visit the location yourself beforehand so you can describe it and reassure your child.

What to Explain

- Be honest about what to expect and let them know that the person will look different.
- You might say: *"Their body has stopped working, and that means they have died. They can't see, hear, or feel anything anymore."*
- Avoid using phrases like "asleep" or "gone to sleep," which can confuse or frighten younger children.
- Use gentle, clear words that match your child's level of understanding.

Helping Them Feel Prepared

- If possible, show photos of the building or room they'll visit, this can help reduce anxiety, especially for children with additional needs.
- Let them know they can stay for as little or as long as they want, and they can leave at any time.
- Offer to go in with them or arrange for a trusted adult to be there.
- They may want to bring something meaningful, a drawing, toy, or letter, to leave with the person.



Emotional Reactions

- Your child may not know how to react, and that's okay. They'll often take cues from you, so if you cry, you're showing that it's okay to be sad.
- If they show little or no emotion, that's also normal. Grief can show up in different ways and at different times.
- Be available for them later or make sure another trusted adult is, if they need to talk or seek comfort.

Key Takeaways

- There's no "right" way to react; what matters is that the child feels safe and supported.
- Viewing the body is a personal choice; children should never be pressured.
- Prepare them gently, using simple, honest language.
- Support their emotional response, whatever it may be.
- Include the funeral director; they can offer helpful guidance.



Supporting children bereaved by traumatic death

Some deaths come suddenly and without warning. When a loved one dies in a traumatic way, such as through a road traffic accident, suicide, or violent death, it can bring added shock, confusion, and distress for a child.

In these situations, children and young people sometimes believe they caused the death, especially if there was an argument or tense moment beforehand. For some, it can feel easier to blame themselves than to accept that it was an accident or out of anyone's control.

These feelings of guilt can be powerful, even if they don't reflect the truth. Children need time, honesty, and a calm, caring approach to help them feel safe, reassured, and supported.

Sudden Deaths and Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs)

When a person dies suddenly, in a road accident or unexpected medical event, it can be extremely difficult for a child to understand. There is often no chance to say goodbye, and children may feel shocked or frightened.

Even young children can sense that something terrible has happened. They may experience:

- Worry about safety (e.g. fears of travelling in cars or losing someone else suddenly).
- Sleep difficulties or nightmares.
- Physical complaints (e.g. tummy aches, headaches).
- Withdrawn or unsettled behaviour.

You can support them by:

- Using clear language "*They died in a car crash.*"
- Letting them ask questions gradually.
- Keeping to familiar routines where possible.
- Letting school know so they can provide extra emotional support.

If legal or police processes are involved (such as an inquest), this can delay funerals or bring added confusion. Be honest about any waiting or changes, and help the child feel informed in small, manageable steps.



Suicide, Murder or Manslaughter

Deaths caused by suicide or violence are especially difficult to talk about. They can raise intense emotions such as guilt, anger, fear, or shame, and often leave children with unanswered questions.

It's important to be honest in an age-appropriate way. If a child isn't told the truth and later finds out from someone else, it can feel like another bereavement, as well as create a loss of trust in the parent or carer.

Some children may feel they've been lied to, which can make it harder for them to talk openly in the future.

After a Suicide

- Children may struggle to understand why it happened.
- Some may wrongly blame themselves or others.
- Public or social media attention can make the experience more painful.
- The official investigation (inquest) can take many months or longer.

Be clear and gentle, try to avoid vague explanations and go at the child's pace. They may need reassurance that they are not responsible, and that the person who died was struggling.

After a Violent Death (Murder or Manslaughter)

- These deaths often involve police investigations, court cases, and delays to the funeral.
- The person responsible may be known to the child, which can add even more confusion and pain.
- Children may feel afraid, unsafe, or mistrustful of others.
- They may have to move home or be cared for by different adults.

These situations are deeply unsettling, and professional help may be needed alongside your support.

How to Help After Any Traumatic Death

- Be honest but sensitive and use direct language like "died" rather than "lost" or "gone away".
- Follow the child's lead. Let them talk or ask questions when they're ready.
- Reassure them they are safe, loved and not alone.
- Look out for signs of trauma: nightmares, flashbacks, panic or sudden behaviour changes.



- Speak to your GP or school if you're concerned, they can help refer to bereavement or trauma support.
- Limit media exposure to distressing news or speculation.

Key Takeaways

- Children affected by traumatic deaths need clear, gentle explanations and lots of reassurance.
- **Be honest in an age-appropriate way, especially around suicide**, finding out the truth later can feel like another loss and damage trust. If a death was by suicide, use simple, clear language. You might say, *"They died because they were very unwell in their mind, and their thoughts made them believe there was no other way. It wasn't your fault."* Avoid vague phrases like "gone away" or "had an accident".
- Routines, familiar faces, and kindness go a long way in helping children feel safe again.
- **Social media can spread details quickly and sometimes inaccurately**; help children manage or limit exposure to avoid confusion or distress. Check privacy settings and, if possible, delay online exposure until you've spoken with your child. Offer to look at content together so you can answer questions or correct misinformation.
- Their grief may be complicated; give them space to feel whatever they feel.
- Encourage questions, but don't push, some children need time before they're ready to talk.
- Watch for signs of trauma and seek professional support if needed.



Support from your child's school

Schools can be a key source of support after a death. Letting them know as soon as you can (or asking a friend or family member to do so) allows staff to support your child from the start.

Even if your child's school hasn't dealt with bereavement before, most schools offer strong pastoral care and are willing to help however they can.

Why School Can Help

- School offers routine and stability, which is especially helpful after a big loss.
- For some children, school is a safe space to talk to someone outside the family.
- Some children want to return quickly; others may find it harder to leave home. That's okay, schools can help plan a gentle return.

Ways the School Might Support

- Meet with you and your child to plan their return.
- Share the news with staff or classmates in a sensitive way.
- Offer a key adult for support and check-ins.
- Use a "time-out" card if your child needs space.
- Be flexible with schoolwork and deadlines.
- Help with referrals for extra emotional support if needed.

Emotional Support in School

- Some days your child may want to talk; other days, they may just want to get on with things and both are normal reactions.
- Staff like pastoral leads or ELSA workers are trained to support children with emotional needs, including grief.
- They don't need to be counsellors, just someone who can listen.

Key Takeaways

- Let school know early so they can support your child's return.
- Routine and a familiar environment can help children feel safe.
- Ask about key adults, quiet spaces, and flexibility with schoolwork.
- Emotional support doesn't have to be formal; sometimes a caring, listening adult is enough.
- Mosaic can offer extra advice to your child's school if needed.



When to get professional help

Grief doesn't follow a set timeline; feelings may come and go, change over time, or stay close for much longer than expected. With support from family, friends or school, most children will adjust and find ways to manage their grief.

Sometimes grief can remain very present and start to impact a child's daily life. If your child or teenager is feeling overwhelmed, showing changes in behaviour, or struggling emotionally or physically for a long time, it may be time to seek extra support.

Talking to a GP, school staff, or a bereavement service like Mosaic can help you decide what's needed.

When to Speak to a Professional

Look out for signs such as:

- Long-term difficulties with eating or sleeping.
- Frequent physical complaints (e.g. stomach aches, headaches).
- Withdrawing from friends or family.
- Risk-taking, acting out, or behaviour changes.
- Signs of depression, anxiety, or hopelessness.
- Self-harm or thoughts of suicide.

Speak to your GP, school nurse, or contact Mosaic for advice.

Some children may also ask to talk to someone outside the family. If so, this is a good time to explore support options.

Early Bereavement Support (EBS)

EBS offers short-term emotional support, usually 1–3 sessions with a qualified counsellor. It is not bereavement counselling, but can help a child begin to understand and express their feelings.

- Sessions can take place at home or school.
- They may involve just the child or the whole family.
- Sessions are spaced out, not weekly.
- Normally offered after the funeral (except in rare circumstances).



Bereavement Counselling

- Some children and teenagers may benefit from more in-depth, long-term support, particularly if the death was traumatic, complicated, or they are revisiting grief as they grow.
- Mosaic's bereavement counsellors work with each child's needs using creative, age-appropriate approaches like play, drawing, talking or craft.
- If you think this might help, contact us to speak with a Senior Counsellor first. If counselling is appropriate, we may work with your child's school or another agency to support a referral

Key Points

- Most children cope with grief over time, but some may need extra support.
- Look out for ongoing emotional or physical distress, risky behaviour, or withdrawal.
- Early Bereavement Support can help children begin to talk and process; it's not counselling.
- Counselling may help if grief feels stuck, overwhelming, or is linked with trauma.
- Always be led by the child, support works best when they are ready and willing.
- Contact Mosaic for advice, guidance, and referral support.



A few last words for parents

There's no handbook for the perfect way to help a grieving child. Some days you'll feel you're doing well; other days you might feel you're falling short both are normal. What matters most is that your child feels loved, listened to, and not alone in their grief.

You don't have to have all the answers or always get it "right." Your willingness to be there, to sit with them in their sadness, and to keep showing up, even when you're hurting too — is more powerful than you might realise.



Helpful organisations for bereavement support

AtaLoss

UK bereavement signposting and information website

www.ataloss.org/bereavement-services

Brake – The Road Safety Charity

Help for Victims and those bereaved by road crashes

www.brake.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK

Supporting families with pre-bereavement (merging with Winston's Wish)

www.childbereavement.org

Childhood Bereavement Network

Information and advice on bereavement services nationwide

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Dorset Open Door

A partnership of local and national bereavement charities and healthcare organisations offering tailored advice and referrals — especially for traumatic or sudden losses. It's a great first-stop resource to explore your options.

Email - dhc.dorsetopendoor@nhs.net Tel: 01305 361361

Family Lives (now incorporating Parentline Plus)

A UK-wide website offering parenting advice and support following bereavement, including local support.

www.familylives.org.uk

Hope Support Services

Hope provides support to young people when a family member is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. We support young people aged 5-25

www.hopesupport.org.uk

PAPYRUS (Prevention of Young Suicide)

Dedicated to preventing suicide in individuals under 35, PAPYRUS offers HOPELINE247, a free, confidential support for those in crisis or concerned about someone else **0800 068 4141**

www.papyrus-uk.org

SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society)

www.sands.org.uk

SPRING (Poole)

Local support for parents and relatives following loss of a baby

www.springsupport.co.uk



Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

Provides peer-led support groups (both in-person and virtual), a support line, email support, and an online community for adults bereaved by suicide. Perfect for parents or older family members seeking connection with others who've experienced similar loss.

www.uksobs.org

The Compassionate Friends (TCF)

Peer-to-peer support for parents, adult siblings and grandparents affected by the loss of a child, sibling or grandchild

www.tcf.org.uk

The Mesothelioma Centre

Mesothelioma cancer resource website

www.asbestos.com

The WAY Foundation (Widowed and Young) Organisation (partnered with Winston's Wish)

Supporting young widows and widowers aged 50 or under

www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

Winston's Wish (merged with Child Bereavement UK)

UK Website offering information and support to anyone caring for a bereaved child, including family members and professionals

www.winstonswish.org

Young Lives vs Cancer (formerly CLICSargent)

UK children's cancer charity providing support and advice to children suffering from cancer and leukaemia and their families

www.younglivesvscancer.org.uk

Young Minds

A guide to supporting a child or young person with grief, bereavement or loss

www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/grief-and-loss/

