

When Someone Close Dies

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Introduction

This booklet was written to help children and young people understand and deal with some of the feelings and thoughts that often confuse them when someone close to them has died.

It includes some questions that other children and young people have asked in the past and tries to answer some of these difficult questions in a way which will help you to understand what is going on.

This booklet includes:

- ▶ answers to some questions you may have
- ▶ some reactions you may have to a death
- ▶ some things you can do that might help you feel better.

You might want to look at this book with someone else. It is up to you to decide who you would like that person to be (e.g. someone in your family or someone in your school).

Some commonly asked questions

Why do people have to die?

All living things, including people, have to die. Most people die when they are very old. Others die when they get very sick with an illness such as cancer. Some people die from being badly hurt, for example in an accident or in a fire.

If someone close to you has died you might be afraid that you too are going to die. Most people close to someone feel this but it may help you to know that most people will live a very long time, and so will you probably.

What happens to the people close to the person who has died?

All those people who are close to the person who has died will be upset in some way. Some may feel hurt and frightened, some very angry, some just numb and others may feel great pain. Your feelings are likely to be all mixed up but grief is the deepest sadness that anyone can feel.

These feelings may change from day to day and will vary from mild to very intense. Each person is likely to feel differently but most will be experiencing these strong feelings for the first time in their lives.

Some people may not feel like eating, may not be able to sleep, may have disturbing dreams or may spend all their time wishing for the person to come back.

Does the way the person died affect the way people feel?

Yes. If the person is older and we know they are going to die we can prepare ourselves a little (although we still get very upset). If a person is very sick for a long time we can get upset before they die as we miss the healthy person who was around before. However if the person is younger or their death is very sudden or unexpected then we cannot prepare ourselves and our reactions can be very confusing and severe.

How long will you feel upset?

This is different for each individual person. It can vary from hours to days, to weeks or longer. With most people the feelings are strongest in the beginning and gradually get less unpleasant and painful over time but anything can suddenly act as a reminder of the person or when they died.

Things like funerals, anniversaries and birthdays are very strong reminders and can bring all the upsetting feelings back for a short time. It will get better in time but you will always be a little bit more sensitive.

How should you behave?

There are no real rules of how to behave when someone dies. Many people get very uncomfortable and embarrassed, and neighbours and friends may not always know what to say. They often say nothing and/or avoid you completely.

Some people feel guilty about having fun after someone has died but it is important to remember and share the funny and enjoyable memories you have of them. They would not want you to be sad all the time and would want you to continue to have fun. Remember if you do what feels right for you it will probably be the best way to behave.

Why do some adults find it difficult to talk to you about what has happened?

It can be very upsetting when adults do not seem to be telling the truth or seem to be keeping you out of any discussions. Remember that the adults around you will be very upset themselves. They are struggling to handle their own grief and may be afraid they will be unable to cope with your reactions as well as their own. Adults like to think they are in control in relation to their children and they do not like being out of control. They may want to soften the blow or make it easier for you by telling you the story in bits and pieces. They may not know what language to use so that you can understand and they may be frightened of upsetting you. Remember it is a very hard thing for them to do this comfortably.

What sort of feelings will you have?

It is likely that these feelings will be different and stronger than any others you have felt before. Each person will react differently so do not think that you have to feel a certain way or that there is a proper way of reacting.

Don't be afraid if you are confused by these changing feelings, which can include numbness, sadness, real pain in some part of your body, anger, panic, emptiness etc. You may find yourself crying a lot for no apparent reason or find that something someone says suddenly sets you off crying again. You may be worried that these feelings may come and go in waves suddenly hitting you then going away again. This makes you feel as though you are 'out of control'. Remember that the adults around you may be as confused as you are by their own feelings and not always in the best position to make you feel better. It is important to talk about how you feel not just hold everything inside you.

Can this experience make you feel ill?

Yes. It is very common for people to feel ill when someone close to them has died. Many children can develop headaches and stomach ache, complain of feeling sick or experience pains in different parts of their bodies. Although these feelings are real they are signs that your body is reacting to the shock of the upset rather than being due to some unknown underlying illness. Remember to tell people close to you when you feel low and don't just try to soldier on.

Do all children react in the same way?

Everyone reacts differently when they hear the news. Some refuse to believe that it is true others feel numb and shocked. Others become hysterical and really cry for ages.

Some children on the other hand behave as though nothing has happened and carry on with their routines. Remember we are all different and react in different ways – your reaction is not a measure of how much you care.

Can it make you frightened of dying or worried about other people dying?

Yes. This often happens as this is probably the first time someone close to you has died. It makes you realise that life does not go on forever. You may start to feel frightened for your parents and other family members and this may make you feel insecure about all of your family and friends. This can be very frightening and you should talk to someone about your feelings. Remember that just because one person has died it does not necessarily mean that anyone else close to you will die for a long time. Most people die when they are very old.

Why is it that teachers, parents and other adults can get anxious and fussy?

All these people see themselves as keeping you from harm. When someone dies they cannot protect you from being hurt and they then try to make things easier for you, sometimes not very successfully. They are also feeling very upset and confused themselves and are trying to control their feelings. Remember, it is not easy for anyone when someone close to them dies.

How should you think about the person who has died?

There is no proper way of thinking. In fact your mind will be filled with a confusing mix of memories. Some of them will be really nice (which you can recall and enjoy) and some may not be so nice (which may upset you) and make you wish that you might have behaved differently. Some memories are very strong (where you might hear, feel or even smell the person). Remember, it is helpful to talk about these things with others and share your and their memories.

What is the most important thing for you to do?

The most important thing is to talk about the way you are thinking and feeling, and to ask questions about anything that is worrying you as this will make it easier for the adults to help you. Remember, it is very hard for your friends and family to guess what you are feeling particularly if they are dealing with their own very strong feelings.

What is the purpose of a funeral?

Funerals are a part of all religions, but groups without a formal religion also have some form of ceremony when people die. In addition to the religious reasons, funerals and services are the opportunity for a lot of people to get together and show their affection and respect for the dead person and to share their grief and thoughts. The rules and routines of funeral services are helpful, as people know how to behave and it may be helpful for people to cry in public. You may not like being at a funeral but it can be an opportunity to say a proper and last goodbye to the person you love.

Some reactions which you may have

Not everyone has these feelings and although they may be strong and confusing they are natural feelings, which hopefully will lessen over time.

Being anxious

You may find that you are far more anxious than usual and need constant reassurance from parents and teachers. You may find that you are worried about things that you have always taken for granted like crowds, traffic, heights, thunder, animals etc. and that you become very anxious or even panicky. It is very common for children to worry about the health and safety of their friends and family soon after the death but these feelings ease over time.

Having vivid memories

It is very common for children to have very strong day or night dreams about the person or the way that they died. These can be so vivid that they feel real and could be very upsetting. Some children can get very frightened as they see, feel, smell or have a conversation with the person who has died. If this happens to you try not to feel frightened. Try to enjoy the nice memories as these will help you keep the person in your mind and bad memories will get fewer over time.

Having trouble sleeping

It is not unusual for children to have difficulty sleeping or to wake up after bad dreams or nightmares. You may experience these problems. If this is the case you may find it helpful to have the light left on, or to have someone with you until you get to sleep for a while.

Feeling sadness

Most children go through a period of sadness and longing for the dead person. This sadness may come and go when we least expect it.

Changing behaviour

Some children's behaviour changes either at home or, more usually, at school. For example you may find that you feel bad tempered and may start to have outbursts. With patience from adults this phase does not usually last long.

Feelings of anger against people and things

Many children feel very strong feelings of anger. You may feel angry towards the following:

- ▶ the death itself (why should it happen to that person?)
- ▶ God (for letting it happen - it is not fair)
- ▶ some adults (who you blame for letting the person die)
- ▶ other adults (for not being honest with you immediately after the death)
- ▶ yourself (for letting the person die, or not being the person who died)
- ▶ the dead person (for dying and leaving you).

All these feelings will probably lessen with time.

Feelings of guilt

It is very common for children (and also adults) to feel guilty. This means that you might feel guilty that:

- ▶ you might have caused the person's death
- ▶ you could have done something to prevent it
- ▶ the dead person would only remember bad things about you
- ▶ you (rather than the dead person) should have died
- ▶ you are alive and they are dead
- ▶ the last thing you did with them was to be naughty, argue with them and be unpleasant.

Regressing to behaving like a younger child

Some children may behave for some time as they did when they were younger. This is called regression and seems initially to help you to deal with some of the strongest feelings. You might want to be cuddled or comforted more by your family or to do things you did when you were younger, such as play with babyish toys.

Changing personality

Some children may seem to change in their personality in several different ways. You may experience some of these changes to varying degrees. They include:

- ▶ isolating yourself and wanting to be alone
- ▶ becoming very grown up, mature and over serious
- ▶ beginning to feel life isn't worth it and there is no point in thinking about the future
- ▶ retreating into a fantasy world and withdrawing from adults and friends.

Experiencing school problems

Many children begin to have temporary problems with their school work. It is common to have difficulty in concentrating on what teachers say or on the work in hand. You may find that you think school work is unimportant, begin to show behavioural problems or have difficulty keeping friends in class. If your behaviour changes other children may find it difficult to understand how and why you are behaving differently.

Things you can do which may help you cope better with your feelings

You may find some of the following suggestions helpful:

Talking

It is very important to talk about your feelings however silly you may think they are. Talk to your friends, teachers and your family. This is the only way they will be able to understand and possibly help you. Sometimes it may be difficult to talk to those nearest and dearest to you and it may be advisable to get the help from someone outside the family. This can be an interested adult you feel comfortable with, e.g. a teacher or learning mentor. Talking over feelings does ease the pain in time.

Drawing and Colouring

Some children find that drawing and colouring can be very helpful. You may prefer drawing the person who has died doing the things you did together when they were alive.

Writing

Some children get a great deal of relief from writing stories or poetry about the person who has died.

Reading

Sometimes reading or looking at a book, such as one of those included in the recommended list at the end of this booklet, can be helpful. You may like to look at the book(s) with someone else or prefer to do this on your own.

Playing

Sometimes playing can be enjoyable and also help you feel a little better. This can take the form of imaginary play but also other competitive or intricate games which allow you to lose yourself for a little time.

Physical Exercise

Some children throw themselves into physical activity such as swimming, sport or jogging and find that it gives them some relief for some time.

Hobbies

A hobby can be a very helpful distraction for a while.

Music

Some children who can play an instrument or like listening to music say that they find this very helpful. It is probably because music can affect our mood and makes us feel happy or sad or simply produce nice feelings in us.

Photographs and Videos

Having a photograph or a video of the person who has died means that we have a permanent record of them when they were alive. It can be a wonderful keepsake which can remind you of the good times in the past.

Personal Belongings

It may help you to have something that belonged to the person who has died. Looking at, or handling, the item may bring back nice memories.

Memorials

Having a permanent memorial in memory of the person is often seen as a very helpful and positive action. Forms of this are plaques or memorial stones but it is much easier for small groups to buy a cup to present to school for prizes, to buy a bench or seat, to plant a tree or bush or to create a memorial flower bed or pond. It is nice to try and think what your loved one would have liked.

Recommended books for you to read

Suggested Reading Lists

Using stories and looking at books can be a really good way to help you think about and understand your feelings and what is going on. Other children and young people, as well as adults, have found some of these books helpful.

Books for children under the age of 5

Goodbye Mousie

By Robie H. Harris & illustrated by Jan Ormerod Aladdin
Paperbacks; Reprint edition (Nov 2004), ISBN 978-0689871344

This beautifully illustrated picture book tells the story of a little boy who's told that his pet mouse has died. At first he doesn't believe it, thinking it is just asleep, but by asking lots of questions and with the help of his family he begins to accept Mousie's death. This is a great story and would be very helpful to introduce death to young children and a starting point to discuss what happens after someone dies and the different feelings one may have.

I Miss You: A First Look at Death

By Pat Thomas & illustrated by Lesley Harker, 2001 Barron's Educational Series, ISBN: 978-0764117640

This bright and colourful picture book very simply talks about life and death. It briefly covers a range of issues such as why people die, how you may feel when someone dies and what happens afterwards. It includes questions for the reader to answer about their own experiences and a section at the back for adults on how to best use the book. An excellent educational book, which could be used as a starting point for discussion.

When Uncle Bob Died (Talking it Through)

By Althea & illustrated by Lisa Kopper, 2001 Happy Cat Books Ltd, ISBN: 978-1903285084

A young boy talks about death and about Uncle Bob who died from an illness. It clearly explains some basic facts such as what 'dead' means and what a funeral is. It also talks about feelings and memories. This small picture book would be a good starting point for very young children with lots of opportunity for further discussion.

Dear Grandma Bunny

Written and Illustrated by Dick Bruna, 1996
ISBN: 1-4052-1901-7

Suitable for very young children this book tells the story of what happened and how Miffy felt and coped when Grandma died.

Heaven

Written by Nicholas Allan, 2006, Red Fox
ISBN: 978-0099488149

Dill, the dog, knows his time is up, so he packs his case and tells Lily, his owner that he's off "up there". "Can I come too?" asks Lily. "Er ... not yet," replies Dill. While he is waiting for the angels to collect him, Dill explains to Lily what he thinks heaven is like: hundreds of lampposts to pee against, lots of whiffy things to smell and bones everywhere - with meat on them! But, Lily completely disagrees; she thinks heaven is quite different. Luckily, they agree to disagree just in time for a fond, and very poignant, last goodbye.

The Red Woollen Blanket

Written By Bob Graham, Candlewick Press 1996
ISBN: 978-1564028488

Books for children aged 5-8

A Birthday Present for Daniel: A Child's Story of Loss

By Juliet Rothman & illustrated by Louise Gish, 2001
Prometheus Books, ISBN: 978-1573929462

Told by a young girl whose brother, Daniel, has died, she talks about how things have changed in the family. She also talks about the things she does when she is sad and how these differ from other members of her family. This book has small black and white pictures with minimal text but it conveys some important issues. It would be particularly useful to broach the subject of birthdays as it describes how the family remembered Daniel on his birthday.

Always and Forever

By Alan Durant & illustrated by Debi Gliori, 2003 (h'back)
ISBN: 978-0552548779

Otter, Mole and Hare miss Fox when he falls ill and dies. They stay at home and don't want to talk about him because it makes them sadder. Then Squirrel visits and reminds them of all the fun times they had together. They all find a way to remember Fox and get on with their lives. Colourful, detailed pictures in this book emphasise the importance of holding on to memories.

Badger's Parting Gifts

By Susan Varley, 1992 Picture Lions, ISBN: 0006643175

Badger is old and knows he is going to die soon. When he does, the other animals think they will be sad forever, but they begin to talk about the memories they have of the things Badger taught them and learn to cope with his death. A lovely picture book that emphasises the importance of remembering the person who has died.

Drop Dead

By Babette Cole, 1998 Red Fox, ISBN: 0099659115

A humorous book with comic-like pictures, two 'bald old wrinklies' tell their grandchildren about their life growing up and how one day they will just drop down dead. It is a light-hearted book about life that emphasises the normality and inevitability of dying. It is very direct and some readers may not like its style.

Flamingo Dream

By Donna Jo Napoli & illustrated by Cathie Felstead
2003 Greenwillow Books, ISBN: 978-0688167967

In this bright and colourful book, a young boy tells the story of his Dad who is seriously ill and dies soon after a trip to Florida to see the place where he grew up. The collage style illustrations capture the things the boy collects to remind him of his Dad. A sensitive but honest book which emphasises the importance of memories.

Fred

By Posy Simmonds, 1998 Red Fox, ISBN: 0099264129

A light-hearted book with detailed illustrations about Fred, Nick and Sophie's lazy cat that dies. After burying him in the garden, they wake up at night to find all the cats in the area have come to say goodbye to Fred, the famous singer! This funny and touching story would be useful to introduce death to children.

Grandpa - The Book of the Film

Based on the story by John Burningham, 1990 A Red Fox Picture Book, ISBN: 0099752409

This beautifully detailed picture book has very few words but tells the story of a little girl's relationship with her Grandpa. It takes the reader through many happy times they spent together playing games, telling stories and on outings. On the last page, Grandpa's chair is empty, signifying that he has died. Children may benefit from reading this book with an adult to talk about the pictures and to elaborate some of the messages it conveys.

Saying Goodbye: A Special Farewell to Mama Nkwelle

By Ifeoma Onyefulu, 2002 Frances Lincoln
ISBN: 978-0711217010

This book has large bright colourful photos and follows a little boy, Ikenna describing what happens at the ceremony after his great-grandmother's funeral. It gives ideas of different ways to remember someone and an insight into Nigerian culture. A lovely book that could be used in many different situations, including schools.

There's NO Such Thing as a Dragon

By Jack Kent, Golden Books Publishing Company
ISBN: 0-307-10214-9

This book, part of the Family Story time series, relates the charming tale of Billy Bixbee, who awakens to find a dragon "about the size of a kitten" sitting on his bed. The dragon grows by leaps and bounds, until Billy dares to pet the attention-seeking creature and it shrinks back down into an adoring little lap dragon.

The Sunshine Cat

Written by Miriam Moss, Illustrated by Lisa Flather Orchard
Picture books, ISBN: 978-1841215679

Sunny the cat is loved by all his human family, but one day there is a knock at the door - Sunny has been killed in an accident. A sensitive story which aims to help children come to terms with death.

Heaven

Written and Illustrated by Nicholas Allan
ISBN: 978-0099488149

Dill, the dog, knows his time is up, so he packs his case and tells Lily, his owner that he's off "up there". "Can I come too?" asks Lily. "Er. ... not yet," replies Dill. While he is waiting for the angels to collect him, Dill explains to Lily what he thinks heaven is like: hundreds of lampposts to pee against, lots of whiffy things to smell and bones everywhere - with meat on them! But, Lily completely disagrees, she thinks heaven is quite different. Luckily, they agree to disagree just in time for a fond, and very poignant, last goodbye.

The Huge Bag of Worries

By Virginia Ironside & illustrated by Frank Rodgers,
1996 Hodder Wayland, ISBN: 0-75002-124-1

Jenny begins to worry about lots of different things and these worries build up and get out of control. She just can't get rid of them, until she meets the old lady next door who helps her feel better. A lovely story with fun illustrations encourages children to talk about their worries.

Saying Goodbye to Daddy

By Judith Vigna, 1991, (h'back) Albert Whitman & Company
ISBN: 978-0807572535

Clare's Dad died in a car accident and this book looks at changes in the family, difficult feelings, funerals and memories through the eyes of Clare. It would also be a good book to help parents understand the child's perspective. It gives good examples of how adults can answer children's questions, emphasising the need to be clear and honest.

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney

By Judith Viorst & illustrated by Erik Blegvad, 1987 Prentice Hall & IBO, ISBN: 978-0689712036

A young boy's cat dies and his parents suggest that he could think of ten good things about Barney to tell at the funeral. But he can only think of nine, until he talks to his Father about what happens to someone after they have died, and he discovers the tenth. A carefully written book with black and white pictures, that sensitively deals with death and lets the reader make his or her own decisions about what happens after the funeral.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death

By Laurie Krasny & illustrated by Marc Brown, 1998 Time Warner Trade Publishing, ISBN: 0316119555

This factual picture book uses cartoon dinosaurs to illustrate the text and comment on what is said. It is a bright and colourful book that explains death in a simple and unthreatening way. It covers many issues including 'why does someone die?', 'feelings about death' and 'saying goodbye'. It would be an excellent resource for anyone caring for young children.

Books for children and young people aged 9-12

Beginnings and Endings with Lifetimes in Between: A beautiful way to explain life and death to children

By Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen, 1997 Belitha Press
ISBN: 1855617609

This thought provoking book has large pictures complemented with small sections of text. It clearly explains about life and death focussing on plants, animals and insects before moving on to people. It emphasises that death is part of the life cycle and is natural and normal whenever it occurs. A simple book with a powerful message.

Death: What's Happening?

By Karen Bryant-Mole, 1994 Hodder Wayland
ISBN: 0750213795

This factual book has clear text and large photos. It uses stories of young people to discuss issues surrounding death such as feeling frightened, the funeral and the future. It includes advice on how to feel better and cope with difficult situations after someone has died. Using straightforward language, this book may reassure the reader there are other young people who have had someone important to them die and answer some of their questions and concerns.

The Cat Mummy

By Jacqueline Wilson & illustrated by Nick Sharratt
2002 Corgi Childrens, ISBN: 978-0440864165 (also on audiocassette)

Verity's Mum died the day she was born but she rarely talks about her. Verity doesn't want to upset her Dad or Grandparents. This humorous but sensitive story mainly focuses on Verity's missing cat Mabel but reveals some of the misunderstandings and anxieties children can have about death. It also shows it can be good to be open, honest and to talk about difficult issues.

The Ghost of Uncle Arvie

By Sharon Creech, 1997 Macmillan Children's Books
ISBN: 978-0333656327

This fun and humorous book is about Danny, an ordinary nine-year-old boy. However, once or twice a year a ghost visits him. This time it is the ghost of his Uncle Arvie who follows him, persuading him to make his three wishes come true. As a result Danny and his dog get into adventures which make him think about his dad who has also died. This book has some important messages and talks about death in an open way, but is primarily fun and imaginative.

The Mountains of Tibet

By Mordicai Gerstein, 1989 Barefoot Paperbacks
ISBN: 978-1898000549

Based on Tibetan teachings, this book tells of a small boy who grows up to be a woodcutter. When he dies, he discovers there is a chance to live again but first he must make a number of choices. A simple tale with deep meaning but the theme of reincarnation could be confusing.

Losing Uncle Tim

By Mary Kate Jordan & illustrated by Judith Friedman
1999 Albert Whitman & Company, ISBN: 978-0807547564

This picture book for slightly older children explains how a young boy finds out his Uncle Tim has AIDS and is going to die. It is a serious and sensitive book covering many of the issues, changes and difficult feelings that can occur when someone has a serious illness.

Michael Rosen's SAD BOOK

By Michael Rosen & illustrated by Quentin Blake
2004 Walker Books, ISBN: 0744598982

This book has large illustrations and small snippets of text. It is wonderfully honest and will appeal to children and adults of all ages. We all have sad stuff, but what makes Michael Rosen most sad is thinking about his son who died. This book is a simple but emotive story. He talks about what sad is and how it affects him and what he does to cope with it. In true Michael Rosen style, this book manages to make you smile as well.

Milly's Bug Nut

By Jill Janey, 2002 Winston's Wish
ISBN: 978-0-9539123-4-6

A short, simple story with black and white pictures, of a young girl whose Dad has died. It talks about the ups and downs of family life and how things slowly get easier as time goes. Milly misses her Dad and things are just not the same anymore. She knows when people die, they can't come back but she still keeps a wish to see her Dad one more time.

The Best Day of the Week

By Hannah Cole & illustrated by John Prater
1997 Walker Books, ISBN: 0744554675

This storybook tells of two young children who spend Saturdays with their Grandparents when Mum is at work. It has three chapters, with stories of three different Saturdays. The first is a happy day; the second is at the hospital and sad as Granny dies, the third at the theatre. It is a lovely story that gives an important message that it is still okay to have fun after someone dies.

Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining death to children

By Doris Stickney & illustrated by Gloria Stickney 1983
Continuum International Pub Group, ISBN: 0264669045

This pocket size booklet with small black and white pictures is based on a fable, associating death with a water bug's transformation into a dragonfly. It portrays the mystery around death but may need an adult to explain the analogy and help a child relate it to their own experience. It uses Christian beliefs with a focus on life after death and also contains advice for parents.

What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?

By Trevor Romain, 1999 Free Spirit Publishing Inc
ISBN: 1575420554

This book for older children is a factual guide, answering questions such as 'why do people have to die?', 'is it okay to cry?' and 'what is a funeral/memorial service?' It is written in a straightforward way, with practical tips, advice and information about different faiths and beliefs.

There's NO Such Thing as a Dragon

By Jack Kent, Golden Books Publishing Company
ISBN: 0-307-10214-9

There's No Such Thing as a Dragon (1975) by Jack Kent, part of the Family Story time series, relates the charming tale of Billy Bixbee, who awakens to find a dragon "about the size of a kitten" sitting on his bed. The dragon grows by leaps and bounds, until Billy dares to pet the attention-seeking creature and it shrinks back down into an adoring little lap dragon.

Books for young people aged 13-16

Double Act

By Jacqueline Wilson & illustrated by Nick Sharratt
1996 Corgi Children's, ISBN: 0440863341
(Also on audiocassette)

Ruby and Garnet are 10-year-old twins. They do everything together, especially since their mum died three years ago. When their dad finds a new partner and they move house, Ruby and Garnet find it hard and get into all sorts of trouble. Eventually, they settle down and learn to live with the changes. A lively and humorous book that deals sensitively with change.

Dustbin Baby

By Jacqueline Wilson, 2002 Corgi Children's
ISBN: 0552547964 (Also on audiocassette)

April was abandoned in a dustbin as a baby on the 1st April. Having spent all her life in a children's home and with different foster parents (one of whom committed suicide), things haven't been easy and April is struggling. Now she's fourteen and on her birthday, determined to find out more about her past, she sets off to find some important people. This is an emotive book with a great storyline in usual Jacqueline Wilson style. It is open and honest.

Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love

By Earl A. Grollman, 1999 Sagebrush Ed Resources, ISBN: 0785719873

This book was written after the author spoke to thousands of teenagers and found they often felt forgotten after someone has died. Written in short, clear sentences that are easy to read, it covers feelings, different types of death and the future. This book gives the reader many options of what can happen, how he/she may feel, giving advice and reassuring readers grief is normal.

The Charlie Barber Treatment

By Carole Lloyd, 1990 Walker Books, ISBN: 0744514886

Simon's Mum died suddenly from a brain haemorrhage and he came home from school to find she had died. With his GCSE coursework piling up and having to help around the house, Simon finds it hard and doesn't go out much with his friends. He then meets Charlie, who is visiting her Grandma, and believes their meeting was fate. Simon starts to enjoy life again and to re-build relationships with his family and friends. A sensitive and realistic book that conveys some of the thoughts and emotions of a teenage boy.

The Lost Boys' Appreciation Society

By Alan Gibbons, 2004 Orion Children's Books, ISBN: 1842550950

Teenage life is difficult enough for Gary and John, but when their Mum dies in a car accident, things get steadily worse. John struggles to keep the peace as Gary goes off the rails, saying his new mates are now his family. With GCSE exams looming and his Dad going out on dates, things become unbearable for John. A gripping book exploring relationships and how different people react to life events.

The Man who didn't want to die: from The Barefoot Book of Buddhist Tales

Retold by Sherab Chodzin & Alexandra Kohn Illustrated by Marie Cameron, 1999 Barefoot Books, ISBN: 1841480096

This short story is based on a Japanese folk tale and approaches death from an unusual angle. When a man decides he doesn't want to die, he is sent to the Land of Never-ending Life and expects to meet the happiest people in the world. However, the realities of living forever are not as attractive as he thought and he consequently learns an important lesson. This story is very thought provoking and could lead to some interesting discussions.

The Spying Game

By Pat Moon, 2003 Orchard Books, ISBN: 1843622017

Joe's dad died in a car accident and he feels really angry towards the man who killed his father. He decides to set up a secret 'Nightmare Plan' to vent his anger and begins to persecute the man and his family by scratching his car and sending hate mail. This powerful book reveals the difficult emotions Joe faces both at home and at school. A very readable and fast paced book that would appeal to many young people.

Two Weeks with the Queen

By Morris Gleitzman & illustrated by Andy Bacha, 1999 Puffin Books, ISBN: 014130300X (Also on audiocassette)

Twelve-year-old Colin, an Australian boy, is sent to stay with relatives in England when his brother becomes ill with cancer. He is determined to find a way of curing his brother, which leads him into all sorts of adventures including trying to visit the Queen! Colin finds a friend in an older man named Ted who helps him express his feelings and understand what he has to do.

Up on Cloud Nine

By Anne Fine, 2003 Corgi Childrens, ISBN: 0552548405 (Also available in audiocassette)

Stol falls out of a top floor window and ends up unconscious in hospital with lots of broken bones and no-one knows whether it was attempted suicide or an accident. This book is written from the perspective of his best friend Ian whilst he is sitting by his bedside. He recalls all the fun times they have had together as well as acknowledging the slightly different way Stol sees the world. Ian captures the emotions of his own adoptive parents as well as Stol's family and the hospital staff in an amusing yet moving way, illustrating how Stol has had an inspirational effect on everyone.

Vicky Angel

By Jacqueline Wilson & illustrated by Nick Sharratt, 2001 Corgi Childrens, ISBN: 0440864151 (Also available in audiocassette)

When Jade's best friend, Vicky, is run over by a car and dies in hospital everyone at home and school starts treating her differently. 'Vicky Angel' then starts following Jade around, distracting her and getting her into trouble. This moving but amusing story illustrates how hard it is to carry on with everyday life after a tragic accident.

And When Did You Last See Your Father

By Blake Morrison, 2006 Granta Books, ISBN: 978-1862079083

The book tells of how Dr Morrison's life slowly slips away during the last few weeks of his life. Interspersed with this are the author's recollections of his father, who, whilst being a difficult man at times, always remained a loving husband and father. The author is at all times open and honest - sometimes brutally so - and lays open his feelings for all to share. One of the strengths of the book is that whilst it is about the death of a loved one it never gets too mawkish or sentimental and remains at all times a good read.

Useful websites

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Winston's Wish is a leading childhood bereavement charity and the largest provider of services to bereaved children, young people and their families in the UK

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/

Cruse Bereavement Care promotes the well-being of bereaved people and enables anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. As well as providing free care to all bereaved people, the charity also offers information, support and training services to those who are looking after them.

www.rd4u.org.uk

RD4U ('road for you') is a website developed by Cruse Bereavement Care's Youth Involvement Project which aims to support young people, after the death of someone close to them.

www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/gfi/bestbits/bereavement.shtml

Due to the overwhelming interest in this bereavement special, GFI has been made available as a one-off download, which can be accessed through the link on the website.

Useful local organisations and contact numbers

Educational Psychology Service	01904 554320
Lime Trees Bereavement Team (Including information about Stepping Stones support group)	01904 726610
Cruse	01904 481162