

# Grief and loss

## What is grief?

Losing someone we love and feel close to, or going through a bereavement, can be extremely painful. Grief is our natural response to this loss, and it is a process rather than an event.

Your child or young person, as well as you and other family members, may be grieving because:

- someone in the family has died, like a parent, grandparent or sibling
- their friend or someone at school has died
- they have lost someone by suicide
- someone they are close to has become ill
- a pet has died or been lost



## What does grief feel like?

Grief feels different to every individual child or young person. Our feelings around grief also change over time.

It's important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. It's okay to feel whatever emotion we do, and to process it in our own way. It's a time for being kind and patient with ourselves.

You might sometimes hear people talk about the 'stages of grief' or the 'grief cycle'. These describe some of the common feelings that people who are grieving can experience.



### What are the 'stages of grief'?

1. Denial – for example, feeling confused, numb or in shock.
2. Anger – this might be towards the person who has died, or with the world in general.
3. Bargaining – for example, going over things from the past, or feeling guilty or anxious.
4. Depression – this might feel like intense sadness or loneliness about living without the person.
5. Acceptance – this might be feeling more able to live with our grief, rather than feeling we have 'got over it'.

It's important to understand that not everyone experiences all these things, and that we do not move through these stages one-by-one.

We might move forwards or backwards between them, or experience them in any order. Or we might feel different emotions.

Your child or young person might also experience some of the physical signs of grief. These can include:

- waves of crying, which can sometimes feel like they come out of the blue
- feeling unwell or sick
- eating more or less than before
- being extremely tired
- finding it difficult to get to sleep
- finding it difficult to concentrate, including at school

It's helpful to remember that it is normal for your child or young person to feel and experience these things after a loss.

## Tips for talking about grief and loss



Explain what's happened and what it means

When someone has died, tell them about this clearly using age-appropriate language. You can get advice to help you find the right words on the [Winston's Wish website](#).



Use clear language

Even though it can feel difficult, use direct words such as 'died' or 'dead'. Avoid expressions such as 'gone to sleep' or 'passed on', as these can be confusing.



Give space for them to ask questions

Some children and young people might want to talk about what happens after we die. It's okay to be curious about what they think, and to say you don't have all the answers. You and your family might have your own religious and cultural beliefs about this, and you might want to talk about these together.



Focus on listening and empathising

Be curious and non-judgmental about how they're feeling. Avoid trying to 'fix' things. You won't be able to make it all better, but being there to listen makes a huge difference.



Let them express whatever they're feeling

Remind them that there's no right or wrong way to grieve. It's completely understandable to feel however they do. If they are worried about feeling nothing or numb, reassure them that this is a normal reaction. It can be our body's way of protecting us until we are ready to start processing what's happened.



Make sure they know it isn't their fault

Your child or young person might tell you they are blaming themselves, or you might be worried about this. Be very clear that while it's normal to worry about this, it is absolutely not their fault or responsibility. No one is ever responsible for someone dying or getting ill.

## Supporting your child or young person with a sudden death

When someone they're close to dies suddenly or unexpectedly, children and young people are likely to feel extremely shocked. They may find it impossible to believe that it's happened, or feel numb and empty. They might find it difficult to talk, or to eat or drink. They may experience physical symptoms like tummy aches, headaches and being extremely tired. These reactions are a normal way of coping with huge shock.

In the days and weeks after a sudden death, the most important thing you can do is provide safety and support.



 **Hold and reassure them**

Wrap your arms around them and tell them how much you love them. Let them know they're not alone and you're here for them.

 **Tell the people who need to know**

Tell everyone who needs to know what's happened, including someone at their school.

 **Help them meet their basic needs**

Guide them through daily things like eating (even if it's something small), drinking water, washing, keeping warm and getting some sleep.

 **Take care of their normal responsibilities**

Let them continue with things like feeding and walking pets if they'd like to. But make sure they know they don't have to do these things right now. Arrange for someone else to cover them if they're worried about it.

 **Gently offer opportunities to talk**

Create space for them to start talking when they're ready, letting them speak as often and for as long as they need to.

## Looking after yourself

Supporting a young person who is grieving can be a very emotional experience. Take time to look after yourself and top up your own batteries when you can. If you are also grieving, things may feel overwhelming at times. Allow space for your own grief too. Remember that it's okay to ask for help from family and friends when you need it.

If you need support with your own grief, or you're struggling to cope, it's really important that you get the help you need. This will make you more able to be there for your child. You can access counselling, helpline support and support groups via the grief services listed below.



The school has an extensive wellbeing support team and is fortunate to also be supported by external agencies. All young people can access support through their year teams initially. Where a young person requires additional or specific wellbeing support the year teams will internally request this via the therapeutic team.

The people shown below have specific training and skills to support young people around feelings and wellbeing.



**Sam Whittaker**  
Assistant Headteacher



**Mrs K**  
MHFA Instructor



**Mollie**  
Therapeutic Practitioner



**Sian**  
Therapeutic Practitioner



**Beth**  
Engagement & Therapeutic Practitioner



**Julia**  
SEMH Inclusion Practitioner



Ms Mason  
Miss Fleming  
Mrs Moloney  
Miss Phillips  
Miss Gallagher

Miss Ralph  
Mrs Kent  
Mrs Merry  
Ms Kyprianou  
Mr O'Kane

Ms Ackroyd  
Miss Novitt  
Mrs Davis  
Ms Maberley  
Mr McLaren

Mr Vaughan  
Mrs Bray  
Mr Purdey  
Dr Wallace  
Mr Beverly

Miss Wells  
Mr Osbourne  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Ashdown  
Miss Adamson

Miss Bromley  
Miss Britton  
Miss Harris  
Mrs Martin  
Miss Napier

Mrs Pastor  
Mr Gant  
Mrs Callard  
Ms Gallagher  
Ms Fleming



**Tara**  
Counsellor



**Laura**  
Counsellor



**Jennie**  
Senior Mental Health Practitioner



**Jane**  
Clinical Psychologist



**Katy**  
Children's Wellbeing Practitioner



**Sophie**  
Children's Wellbeing Practitioner

# GET SUPPORT

The links and organisations below are specifically for young people to get support around their wellbeing.



<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/>



<https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>



**I-ROCK**  
14-25 in East Sussex and need to talk ?

Email - : [irockeastsussex@spft.nhs.uk](mailto:irockeastsussex@spft.nhs.uk) to book a face to face appointment.

You can also chat with us in our virtual drop in service by video call, audio call or text chat, we are online waiting to chat every weekday between 11am and 6pm



<https://www.talkgrief.org/>



### INFORMATION ON GRIEF

Advice, resources and talks to help you understand grief and how it might impact you.



### SHARE WHAT IT'S REALLY LIKE

Grieving young people share their real experiences – the good, the bad and the ugly.



### EXPERT SUPPORT

Trained bereavement support workers to listen and support you in your grief.



### DEDICATED SPACE FOR YOU

Grief is different for everyone, so however you are feeling you'll find something to relate to.



Giving hope to grieving children

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/grief-support-young-people/>



### Live chat

Chat online between 8am and 8pm, weekdays by clicking the blue 'Chat with us' button at the bottom right of your screen.



### Email

Email us on [ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org) or fill out our [contact form](#) and we'll reply within two working days.



### Call

Call us for free on 08088 020 021 between 8am-8pm, weekdays.



### Text

If it's urgent, text WW to 85258 to speak with someone from our trusted partner, Shout.

## YoungMinds Parents Helpline



We support parents and carers who are concerned about their child or young person's mental health. Our Parents Helpline provides detailed advice and information, emotional support and signposting.

You can speak to us over the phone or chat to us online.

You can speak to us over webchat between 9.30am and 4pm from Monday-Friday. When we're closed, you can still leave us a message in the chat. We'll reply to you by email in 3-5 working days.

Opening times: 9.30am-4pm, Monday-Friday  
[0808 802 5544](tel:08088025544)

[Parents Helpline](#)

## Winston's Wish



Offers practical support and guidance to bereaved children, their families and professionals.

[Online chat service](#) also available on their website.

Opening times: 8am-8pm, Monday - Friday  
[08088 020 021](tel:08088020021) (for those supporting a grieving child or young person)  
[ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org)  
[WW to 85258](tel:080085258) (24/7 support for young people in a crisis)

[Winston's Wish](#)

## Hope Again



Cruse Bereavement Care's website for young people experiencing grief.

Has lots of personal stories from young people who have lost someone, as well as information and advice.

Opening times: 9:30am - 5pm, Monday - Friday  
[hopeagain@cruse.org.uk](mailto:hopeagain@cruse.org.uk)  
[0808 808 1677](tel:08088081677)

[Hope Again](#)

## Cruse Bereavement Care



Support for anyone who is grieving. You can get help through their Helpline or access 1:1 sessions with a bereavement supporter.

Opening times:  
9.30am - 3pm, Monday to Friday  
[0808 808 1677](tel:08088081677)

[Cruse Bereavement Care](#)

## Grief Encounter



Supports children and young people through bereavement.

[Free webchat service](#) available.  
Opening times: 9am - 9pm, Monday - Friday  
[0808 802 0111](tel:08088020111)  
[griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk](mailto:griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk)

[Grief Encounter](#)

## Marie Curie



Offers care, guidance and support for people living with any terminal illness and their families.

If English isn't you or your family's first language, they can provide an interpreter for over 200 different languages.

[Free online chat service](#) also available.  
Opening times:  
8am - 6pm, Monday - Friday; 11am - 5pm,  
Saturdays; 10am - 4pm, Bank Holidays  
[0800 090 2309](tel:08000902309)

[Marie Curie](#)