



Helping Your Child Deal with Loss

Understanding Loss in Children

Children experience loss in many ways—this could be the death of a loved one, a pet, or even changes like moving house, divorce, or a parent leaving. Children may not always express grief in words, and their reactions can vary depending on age, personality, and understanding.

Common Reactions to Loss in Primary-Aged Children

- Sadness, crying, or mood changes
- Anger or irritability
- Confusion or questions about death
- Clinginess or fear of being separated
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Regressive behaviours (e.g., bedwetting, thumb-sucking)
- Guilt or self-blame

It's important to remember: all reactions are normal, and children may process grief differently at different times.

How Parents Can Support Their Child

1. **Be Honest and Clear:** Use age-appropriate language. Avoid euphemisms like “gone to sleep” which can confuse younger children.
2. **Encourage Expression:** Let your child talk about their feelings, draw, or play. Art, writing, and play can be therapeutic.
3. **Listen and Validate:** Show empathy and reassure them it's okay to feel sad, angry, or confused.
4. **Maintain Routine:** Stability helps children feel safe during times of loss
5. **Share Memories:** Encourage storytelling about the person or pet they have lost
6. **Model Coping:** Demonstrate healthy ways of dealing with grief, like talking about feelings or seeking support
7. **Seek Support When Needed:** Some children may benefit from talking to a counsellor, school wellbeing staff, or bereavement specialist.

Books That Can Help Children Understand Loss

Age Range	Book	Author/Details
3–7 years	<i>The Invisible String</i>	Patrice Karst – focuses on love and connection even after loss
4–8 years	<i>Badger's Parting Gifts</i>	Susan Varley – helps children understand death and grief
5–9 years	<i>The Huge Bag of Worries</i>	Virginia Ironside – deals with expressing worries and coping
6–10 years	<i>Always and Forever</i>	Alan Durant – story about coping with the death of a loved one
7–11 years	<i>Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children</i>	Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen – a sensitive, honest explanation

(Tip: Always read books first to ensure they are suitable for your child's understanding and emotional state.)

Charities and Support Organisations

- **Child Bereavement UK** – www.childbereavementuk.org
Support for families when a child or parent dies. Resources, counselling, and peer support.
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** – www.cruse.org.uk
Offers guidance, counselling, and local support groups for children and families.
- **Winston's Wish** – www.winstonswish.org
Specialist support for bereaved children, including online resources and helplines.
- **Young Minds** – www.youngminds.org.uk
Mental health advice for children and guidance for parents.
- **Place2Be** – www.place2be.org.uk
Support for children's emotional wellbeing, including grief and loss.

Remember: Grief is a normal part of life, and with love , support , and the right resources, children can learn to cope and grow through loss .