



Ysgol Caer Drewyn & Ysgol Carrog

Policy & Procedures

For

Loss & Bereavement

Introduction

Many children and young people will experience bereavement, through the loss of a parent, sibling, grandparent or friend. Children can also face the loss of a loved animal or pet which can be as significant for them as losing a relative or friend. The term 'bereavement' refers to the process of grieving and mourning and is associated with a deep sense of loss and sadness. It is a natural process; however, its effects can be overwhelming. At any one time, 70% of primary schools have a recently bereaved child on their roll.

One of the country's leading childhood bereavement charities, Winston's Wish, reports that children often feel isolated during their grief experience and may feel that nobody understands their feelings. Although experience of bereavement will be unique to the individual and it is very difficult to predict how someone will respond. Certain reactions are common to children as well as adults.

What can we do?

Normality

For the majority of children or young people whose life has been turned upside down the routines of school life can give a sense of normality. Everything else may have fallen apart but school and the people within it are still there, offering a sense of security and continuity.

Relief from Grief

For children and young people, school can give relief from an emotionally charged atmosphere at home. They may feel overwhelmed by a grieving family. There may be a constant stream of visitors expressing their own grief. Children and young people can find this difficult to deal with.

An Outlet for Grief

When a parent or sibling has died, children and young people can try to spare their surviving parent by hiding their own grief and appearing to be OK. School is often seen as somewhere safe to express this grief.

A Listening Ear

Family members struggling to deal with their own grief can overlook children. For a child who wishes to, school staff can provide opportunities to talk about what has happened with a familiar and trusted adult in relative peace and calm.

The Opportunity to be a Child

Even when deeply sad, children still need to be children. School offers the chance to play, laugh, sing and generally just be a child without feeling guilty.

General Support

Systems should be in place to keep in contact with home. Discuss concerns but also successes. Grieving children and young people can display altered behaviours in different situations. Good communication with home will help school be aware of this and provide a more realistic picture of how the child is coping.

How children understand death at different ages

Preschool – age children (2-5 years old)

At this stage of development children may be convinced that it was something that they said or did which caused the person to die. Abstract concepts are not easily grasped, and so it is important that the child is spoken to in very concrete terms. In order to make sense of what has happened children at this age may often ask the same questions over and over again.

Key points at this age

- Are curious about death and believe death is temporary or reversible
- May see death as something like sleeping – the person is dead but only in a limited way and may continue to breathe or eat after death.
- Are characterized by ‘magical thinking’ and understand the world as a mix of reality and fantasy.
- Are naturally egocentric and see themselves as the cause of events around them.
- Often feel guilty and believe that they are responsible for the death of a loved one, perhaps because they were ‘bad’ or wished the person would ‘go away’.
- May think that they can make the deceased come back if they are good enough.
- Will worry about who will take care of them and about being abandoned.
- Are still greatly affected by the sadness of surviving family members
- Cannot put their feelings in to words and instead react to loss through behaviours such as irritability, aggression, physical symptoms, difficulty sleeping or regression (such as bed-wetting and thumb sucking)

Primary school-age children (6-11 years)

Children begin to develop the understanding that death is irreversible and something that happens eventually to all living things. Death may be regarded as something that is a bit ‘spooky’ and they may display what seems to be an unhealthy curiosity in the more morbid aspects of the death. Children at this age may complain of headaches, a sore tummy or other ailments. These are referred to as ‘somatic’ complaints and are generally physical manifestations of emotional pain. Behaviour may change, but it is important to encourage children at this age to express their feelings and understand that they are feeling is perfectly natural.

Key points at this age

- Understanding that death is final, but see it as something that happens only to other people.
- May think of death as a person or a spirit, like a ghost, angel or a skeleton.
- Understand that death is universal, unavoidable and will happen to them (by age 10)
- Are often interested in the specific details of death and what happens to the body after death.
- May experience a range of emotions including guilt, anger, shame, anxiety, sadness and worry about their own death.
- Continue to have difficulty expressing their feelings and may react through behaviors such as school phobia, poor performance in school, aggression, physical symptoms, withdrawal from friends and regression.
- Still worry about who will take care of them and will likely experience insecurity, clinginess and fear of abandonment.
- May still worry that they are to blame for the death.

Supporting a bereaved child with Additional Support Needs

Children and young people with additional support needs are sometimes assumed to need protection from death and dying more than most or not have the capacity to understand. It can be easy to underestimate their ability to cope with difficult situations. The challenge is finding creative ways to communicate when words are sometimes not appropriate. If using words, use the real ones, for example dead and dying, not euphemisms.

Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of the Health and Wellbeing AOLE. It is also addressed through cross curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, through art, literacy and religious education. Assemblies may also be used to address aspects of death e.g., Remembrance Day or commemorative occasions.

Any questions relating to loss or death will be answered in a sensitive and age-appropriate yet honest and factual way.

Children are given the opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death as well as being encouraged to express their own responses and feelings.

Teaching and Learning

Our teaching will be based on an understanding of the principles stated above and that a variety of approaches should be used to meet the needs of our pupils and show sensitivity to their age and experience.

Teaching methods adopted in the classroom include:

- Giving clear, truthful and accurate information, not trying to soften the blow with ambiguous language which does not tell the truth
- Practicing the collaborative social skills necessary to help cope with the feelings of loss.
- Giving relevant and appropriate advice and support

Breaking news to staff, pupils and families

This is usually done when a pupil or staff member has died.

- Obtaining factual information should be made a priority. Think through how this might be done, remembering that contact with those directly involved may be difficult. It is vitally important not to make assumptions or repeat what has been heard through rumour. This will add to distress. It is essential that all staff are informed straight away, ideally before pupils.
- Pupils should be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. A large school assembly is usually not ideal.

Guide for how to inform pupils

- Be honest
- Use clear language
- Expect questions
- Recognise every death and reaction to it is unique
- Don't assume
- Allow time
- Acknowledge that some days will be better than others

Suggested scripts

"I've got some really sad news to tell you today that might make you sad. (Name) died yesterday. This means that we won't see (Name) again. We have lots of memories of (Name) that we can think about and we can celebrate those together."

Pupils can access support either through the Seasons for Growth programme (Ffion Bramhall at Ysgol Caer Drewyn is trained to deliver this programme) or we can contact Cruise bereavement for 1:1 sessions.

Monitoring

The policy will be monitored and updated every 3 years.

This policy was adopted in Spring 2023 and will be reviewed in Spring 2026.

Books on Bereavement

- Grandpa – John Burningham
- When Dinosaurs Die – L & M Brown
- Liplap's Wish – Jonathan London & Sylvia Long
- The Memory Tree – Britta Teckentrup

There will also be other books within the school and county libraries and on Giglets that we can access.

Bereavement services available



Betsi Cadwaladr University Health

Board's Bereavement Services are available at Glan Clwyd Hospital - 01745 534 147, Ysbyty Gwynedd - 01248 384384 Ext: 5982, and Wrexham Maelor Hospital - 01978 725 327.



Cruse Bereavement Support North

Wales offers confidential one to one bereavement support to anyone grieving the loss of a loved one.

Cruse Bereavement Support North Wales offers:

- Literature, advice and access to a free helpline 08088081677 (national) or Colwyn Bay 01492 536577
- Email support at helpline@cruse.org.uk
- Access to two websites www.cruse.org.uk (adults) and www.hopegain.org.uk (children under 18).
- Trained bereavement support volunteers deliver one to one bereavement support, group support and telephone /zoom /face to face support to adults in North Wales .
- One to one support is also available to children up to the age of 18.



Hope Again

[Hope Again](#) is the youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care. It is a safe place where you can learn from other young people, how to cope with grief, and feel less alone.

Here you will find information about services provided, a listening ear from other young people and advice for any young person dealing with the loss of a loved one.

Phone: [0808 808 1677](tel:08088081677)

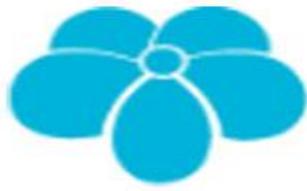
Email: hopeagain@cruse.org.uk



Bereavement Advice Centre

[Bereavement Advice Centre](#) is a free helpline and web-based information service giving practical information and advice and signposting on the many issues and procedures that face us after the death of someone close.

Freephone: [0800 634 94 94](tel:08006349494)



Childhood
Bereavement
Network

Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN)

[Childhood Bereavement Network \(CBN\)](#) is the hub for those working with bereaved children, young people and their families across the UK.

Email: cbn@ncb.org.uk

Phone: [020 7843 6309](tel:02078436309)



Child Bereavement UK

[Child Bereavement UK](#)

Freephone: [0800 0288840](tel:08000288840)

Email: support@childbereavementuk.org



Dying Matters

[Dying Matters](#) - Resources and support for anyone who loses a close friend or relative, especially if it's sudden or earlier than expected.



Grief Encounter

[Grief Encounter](#) is one of the UK's leading childhood bereavement charities, created to help children who have suffered the death of a parent or sibling. Are you a child, teenager or adult who has experienced the death of a loved one? Are you a caregiver who needs advice on how to support young people following the death of a parent or sibling? Do you need to talk? You can call, email or instant chat with trained professionals at grieftalk, 5 days a week, 9am – 9pm.

Email: griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk

Phone: [0808 8020111](tel:08088020111)



The Compassionate Friends

[The Compassionate Friends](#) is an organisation of bereaved parents offering support, understanding and friendship to others after the loss of a child, of any age, from any cause. National Telephone Helpline, staffed by bereaved parents, is available for support and information 365 days a year.

Phone: [0345 123 2304](tel:03451232304)

Email: helpline@tcf.org.uk



2 Wish Upon a Star

[2 Wish Upon a Star](#) was established in 2012 to provide bereavement support for families who have suddenly and traumatically lost a child or young person aged 25 years and under. This service has been extended to provide to support professionals from any field. 2WUAS are able to offer support in a number of ways, all of which are confidential.



Grief Chat

[Grief Chat](#) is a safe space for grieving or bereaved people to be able to share their story, explore their feelings and be supported by a qualified bereavement counsellor. In addition to this, Grief Chat can help bereaved people to consider if they need additional support and where to get this from.

Using Grief Chat is free of charge and is open Monday-Friday, 9am-9pm (UK time) to grieving or bereaved people. If they are not online, you can still send a message using the chat box and they will reply as soon as back online.

Phone: [01524 782910](tel:01524782910)

Email: info@griefchat.co.uk



Winston's Wish

[Winston's Wish](#) - Every day, more than 100 children are bereaved of a parent in the UK. Winston's Wish is the leading childhood bereavement charity in the UK, offering practical support and guidance to bereaved children, their families and professionals.

Phone: [08088 020 021](tel:08088020021)

Email: ask@winstonswish.org

Seasons for Growth Children and Grief



When a child is grieving it is natural to want to support them. Yet, we often feel very uncertain about how best to do so. Perhaps you feel uncomfortable about discussing loss and grief, worried whether your child's behaviour is normal, and unsure what you can do to help. This factsheet offers some guidance for adults (parents, carers, relatives, teachers and others) to help you support a child who is grieving and nurture them to grow through the experience.



What is grief?

Grief is the human response to change and loss in our lives, such as the death of someone we love, parental separation or other major change. It is a natural and normal response, which has a physical impact on our bodies as well affecting our emotions and our thinking. Grief challenges the way we think about ourselves and the world, and influences our spirituality and relationships.

How do children express grief?

Like adults, children express grief in unique and personal ways. This can be influenced by a child's age and understanding of the loss, but also by other factors such as their character, situation or experience. Some children may openly express their hurt, while others may withdraw. Many children also dip in and out of grief, alternating between grieving and more playful behaviour. It is important to remember that grief is a normal and natural response and that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Some (not an exhaustive list) of the reactions children may experience:



Emotions that children may feel ...

- May be anxious, fearful, fretful and sad
- May be angry, frustrated or disillusioned
- May try to mask their feelings to 'save' or 'help' adults around them

Thoughts that children may have ...

- May have unrealistic thoughts about their loss
- May try to recreate 'what was' before their loss
- May blame themselves
- May have frightening thoughts or worry about the future

Behaviours that children may show ...

- May regress to younger behaviours
- May 'lash out' at family, friends or teachers or 'act out' in anger
- May be overly clingy or uncooperative
- May try to be overly helpful and cheerful

Physical reactions that children may experience ...

- May be tired, distracted and unable to concentrate
- May have stomach aches and headaches

How to support a grieving child

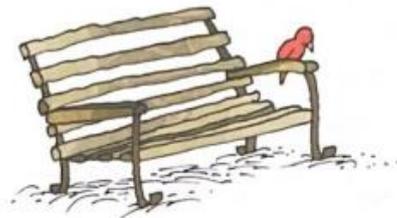
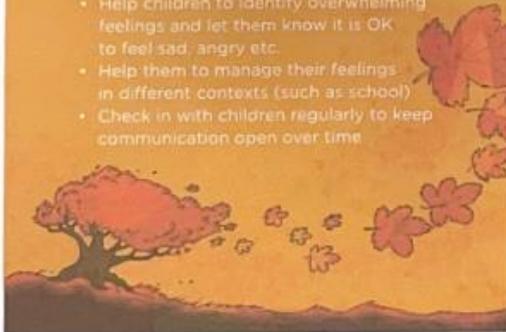
- If we think of grief as a journey, our role as adults is to walk alongside children. We cannot take away the loss a child has experienced and we cannot grieve on their behalf. However, we can help them to understand and navigate the journey and we can hold their hand, encourage and support them when the going gets tough.

What support do children need?

- A strong, loving relationship with a parent or primary caregiver who they can rely upon and trust.
- Clear, factual age-appropriate information about the loss they have experienced.
- Warm, open communication to talk through and make sense of what has happened, repeatedly and without judgement.
- Space to express a wide range of emotions (such as sadness, anger, fear, guilt and humour).
- Help to make sense of their emotions and reactions.
- Security from their usual boundaries and routines.
- 'Time out' from their grief, to be allowed to laugh and be playful.
- Opportunities to be involved in decisions linked to their loss.

How to help as relative, friend, teacher or other professional

- Let children know their loss is recognised.
- Identify yourself as a safe person who is open and willing to listen (although don't force children to talk).
- Help children to identify overwhelming feelings and let them know it is OK to feel sad, angry etc.
- Help them to manage their feelings in different contexts (such as school).
- Check in with children regularly to keep communication open over time.



Involving children in decisions at school

Talking with children about new arrangements can be a way of acknowledging their loss without focusing on it directly. For instance, a teacher might ask a child how they would like the teacher to respond to questions from other students, or discuss whether there are any special arrangements that might help them cope in the classroom.

Further Support

Seasons for Growth is an education program that gently helps children learn about the grief process. Train to be a 'Companion' to facilitate the small group (4-7 participants) over 8 sessions. There are four levels of the program to support children and young people 6-18 years. All four levels of the Program have flexibility to cater for participants with different learning needs. Each session explores a theme such as:

- Life is like the seasons
- Change is part of life
- Valuing my story
- Caring for my feelings
- Making good choices

The Program has a safe and engaging curriculum that incorporates a range of age appropriate activities involving drawing, stories, discussion, playdough, music and journal activities.



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Justice
Hope
Collaboration
Compassion
Respect



What people say about Seasons for Growth

"I felt a lot better because I was letting all the pain out. Sometimes in school I'd feel like crying about it, and I nearly cried. Then I just held it in. But when I went to Seasons for Growth I could just let it out, and talk about it. I didn't need to cry because I could talk about it" (Matt, 9).

"Having other people with the same problem to talk to has really helped" (Antonio, 12).

"I'd like to think my son wasn't affected by the divorce but I know he was. The program has helped him to know that it happens in other families too" (Parent).

"The Seasons for Growth training has helped me to realise the impact that change and loss can have on kids' behaviour at school" (Teacher).

"This program has been a source of great joy for the children who have participated in the program over the past ten years. It has been a source of satisfaction to me and I continue to be amazed at the results of this wonderful program" (Companion).



For more information contact us:
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In your community:



Change and loss are part of life, and grief is a normal response to these losses.



Program for Children (6-12 years)



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Like the seasons our lives shift and change

- ♦ Friends come and go
 - ♦ We lose someone we love
 - ♦ Parents and families separate
 - ♦ We move to a new place
 - ♦ We experience a natural disaster
 - ♦ Illness impacts our life
 - ♦ Our family's work-life changes
- Seasons for Growth* is an innovative grief and loss education program that uses the imagery of the seasons to illustrate the experience of grief. It aims to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people (aged 6-18) who are dealing with significant life changes by:

- ♦ exploring the impact of change and loss on every-day life
- ♦ learning new ways to respond to these changes.

Trained adult 'Companions' facilitate the small group program, where participants support and learn from each other in age appropriate and engaging activities.

Young people learn that they are not alone in dealing with the effects of change, loss and grief and build their communication, decision making and problem solving skills within a supportive peer group.



Program structure

Seasons for Growth is a small group (4-7 participants) program of 8 sessions, plus a celebration.

The Children's Program has three levels:

Level 1: 6-8 years

Level 2: 9-10 years

Level 3: 11-12 years

Supporting materials for the children's program include individual participant journals, beautifully illustrated by Stephen Michael King, newly recorded *Seasons for Growth* music, and a range of links to online resources.

Level 4 is also available for young people 13-18 years, and *Seasons for Growth* Adult and Parent Programs are also available.



Companions

Trained adult 'Companions' facilitate each *Seasons for Growth* group. Companions may be school/agency staff, endorsed parent volunteers or other suitable adults who undertake a two-day training workshop and receive subsequent accreditation from Good Grief to deliver the program. Good Grief provides Companions with regular opportunities to meet, network and learn throughout the year through Reconnectors, newsletters, conferences and the website.



Outcomes for children

Seasons for Growth provides the support and space for children to:

learn about how different people respond to change, loss and grief

understand that it is normal to experience a range of grief reactions

explore new approaches to dealing with change and loss in their lives

build communication, decision making and problem solving skills

participate in a supportive network of peers and adults

integrate their new learning into their relationships with family, friends and others.

Seasons for Growth is an education program. It does not provide counselling or therapy.

