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St Teresa's  
Hospice

Giving to life

Registered Charity 518394

# A positive approach to loss & grief



## Hello and welcome to our new e-bulletin for schools.

We hope you are all not too tired as you head towards your well-deserved Christmas Break.

It has already been great to work with a number of local schools through our “positive approach to helping children and young people grieve” workshops and we look forward to welcoming the next cohorts on to the programme in the coming weeks. So far we have been really encouraged by the willingness of all participants to develop their skills, knowledge and, more importantly, their confidence in supporting children and young people affected by loss and grief. Your feedback tells us that you have already been able to implement positive changes and have appreciated the chance to further explore how to embed your training through attending the follow up group supervision sessions.

As Christmas is approaching we're sure you are all aware that it can be a difficult time for

children and young people who have experienced a death of someone close to them. It is important that we are mindful about these children's needs, thinking about how we accommodate their loss in school and how we can help these children and young people to remember. For many children, practical ways of remembering someone special at Christmas can be extremely helpful. Ideas include making a Christmas card and placing it on a grave or next to a photo of that person, or making a special Christmas decoration in memory of a loved one. There are some more ideas around supporting bereaved children and young people at Christmas in this e-bulletin.

It has been lovely to meet so many professionals who have a genuine concern for the emotional well-being of children and young people and we look forward to our ongoing work together in the New Year.

Best wishes to you all.

**Deborah Robinson and Ben Bourne**

# Coping with Grief at Christmas Time

**When a loved one has died, Christmas can become a very emotional time. Planning how you want to spend the festive period can help you and your family to cope and reduce some of the apprehension for everyone.**

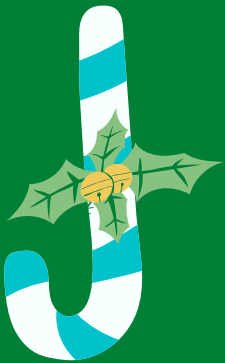
For bereaved children and young people too, there can be a confusing mixture of sadness and excitement about the festive season. Whether you yourself are living with loss or supporting a family at school, the following offers food for thought for anyone bereaved.



## Planning around Christmas Day

If having a traditional Christmas is too hard this year it's okay to scale things down and have a quieter celebration.

- Discuss as a family whether you want to celebrate as normal or keep things low key.
- Remember that Christmas can still be special for children in the family.
- You may want to focus part of the day on remembering the person who has died. You could plan a visit to their grave or a significant place. Maybe you could do something in their memory like a sentimental walk, or create a photo montage of their life and who they were.



## Caring for yourself

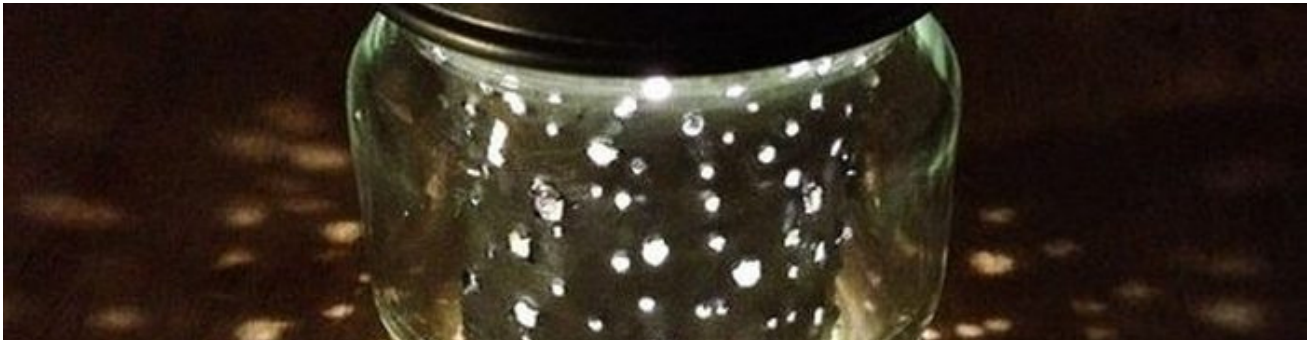
- Keep in touch with friends during the school holidays to help you feel less isolated and more connected to everyday life as you grieve.
- Take care of your physical health too. Try to make time for some fresh air and exercise each day and manage your diet when there is more food and alcohol around than usual. Even though it can be a busy time, getting regular sleep is important.
- This might be a year to worry less about tradition and focus on putting your emotional needs first.



## Communicating with others

Friends and family often want to support someone they know is grieving and communicating about how they can do this helps them to understand.

- During celebrations it's okay to make people aware you may need some quiet time to gather your thoughts. Just mention you might need to step out for a while, or even cancel plans if it's not right for you at that time.
- Adults in the family should check in with children and identify a safe place or person they can go to if they are finding things too much.
- Spending social time with supportive friends is important. If you get upset they won't judge you. They'll understand your grieving doesn't stop at Christmas.
- Conversations about the person who has died can bring people closer and help children feel included so try to join in by sharing your memories of them.



## Make your own Constellation Jar

Christmas can be particularly hard when a loved one has died and you might see children's grief being shown in different ways at school. You can make a Constellation Jar as a way of thinking about and remembering their loved one. This can give them time to think and talk about their loved one as well as have something they can take home and light when they want to remember the person who has died.

Cut a piece of tin foil the size to fit coiled inside your jar.

Lay the foil on an old piece of card and use the pencil to poke holes in it – you could print out an image the child likes, such as a shooting star and poke through the paper to translate the image to the foil.

Roll the foil inside the jar, then place the tea light inside and turn it on in a darkened room.

If the child likes, they could decorate the lid with stars or stickers or write on the name of their loved one.

### *What you need:*

- Jam jar
- Tin foil
- Electric tea light
- Pencil

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## Apps for teens - Downloadable in your App Store

As Christmas approaches, young people may feel a greater need to talk about the person who has died, but find it hard to share things face to face with people they know. There are some good, secure apps which they can download at any time of the year to give them the opportunity to chat online with other people their age who have been through a similar experience.



**Apart of Me is a mobile gaming app developed to provide children with strength and resilience when someone is dying or has died.**

Upon opening the app, users are introduced to a peaceful island that is theirs to explore. As they discover the various parts of the island, they can undertake quests and puzzles. These have been especially created to help children process their emotions and also help adult carers to begin and support difficult conversations with them.



**Lilies is a user-friendly mobile grief app for young people which gives virtual hugs.**

Developed by six girls from Stratford Grammar School in Warwickshire, the app provides a safe community to share thoughts and memories, as well as grief tips.

[liliesgriefsupport.weebly.com](http://liliesgriefsupport.weebly.com)

# Blob Bereavement Resources

One of the resources in our school's pack is a Blob Bereavement Tree poster. When used sensitively, this poster can be a "launch pad" to enable a child or young person to communicate their thoughts and feelings.

As with any activity, it is essential that we are mindful of the needs and limits of each child or young person and endeavour to meet them where they are on their bereavement journey.

## Using the Blob Bereavement Tree Poster

Invite the child you are supporting to look at the poster and discuss what they see. You can pick up on cues to carefully reflect back what you hear and be curious about what is happening for them. Perhaps they can identify themselves or someone important to them in the images.

**The following questions may also help to stimulate discussion:**

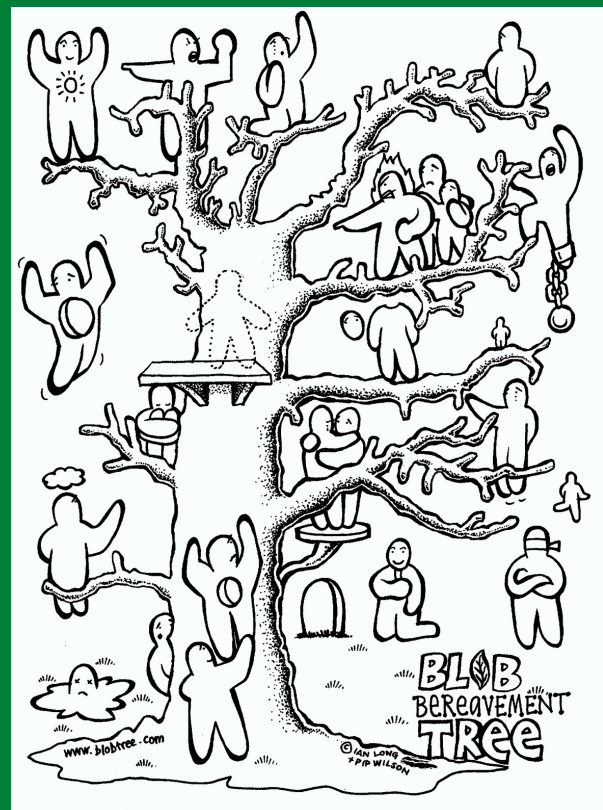
Which Blobs look the saddest?

Which Blob emotions have you seen before?

Which Blobs have you felt like recently?

Which Blobs would you never like to feel like?

Can you give a feelings word for each type of the Blobs?



If you'd like to look at a free downloadable Christmas version of a Blob Tree please visit: [www.blobtree.com/blogs/news/16365348-blob-baubles-free-download](http://www.blobtree.com/blogs/news/16365348-blob-baubles-free-download)



## Useful Website Links

Here are some websites which may be useful. They provide information and emotional support for young people who are able to independently research around bereavement and loss.

### **The Wellness Support Hub**

[www.wellnesshub.life](http://www.wellnesshub.life)

### **Child Bereavement UK**

Support for young people | Child Bereavement UK  
[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

### **Winston's Wish**

[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

### **Help 2 Make Sense**

Support for grieving young people  
[help2makesense.org](http://help2makesense.org)

### **Young Minds**

How To Deal With Grief and Loss | Mental Health Advice | YoungMinds  
[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

### **Young Minds - General Mental Health Support**

Mental Health Support For Young People | YoungMinds  
Help With How I'm Feeling | Mental Health Advice | YoungMinds | YoungMinds  
[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

### **NHS**

Bereavement and young people  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **Youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care**

[www.hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.hopeagain.org.uk)

### **Childline**

[childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/when-someone-dies](http://childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/when-someone-dies)  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **Grief Encounter**

[www.griefencounter.org.uk](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk)