



APRIL 2022 • VOL. 2

# A positive approach to loss & grief



## Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter for schools.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to this programme. We hope that the supervision sessions are proving valuable and are helping you to put into practice your training and use the resources we provided.

If you haven't already done so, please check out our activity sheets online on our hub, [www.wellnesshub.life](http://www.wellnesshub.life).

We continue to update and add to these resources on a regular basis. If there is something you'd like to see there that's missing, let us know and we'll do our best to help.

Equally if you come across a resource you think others will find helpful, please send this through to us.

We can then add it to our professional resources section online.

We are very much looking forward to receiving your reflections and audits. Thank you to those who have already submitted their feedback. Dr Maggie Jackson, from Teesside University, has kindly agreed to evaluate and review all the information and we look forward to seeing her findings.

As always if there is anything we can do to support you in your work, please do not hesitate to contact the Hospice.

Best wishes to you all.

**Deborah Robinson and Ben Bourne**

# Loss & Grief in The Classroom



**We are all happy to talk about birth, new life, weddings and other happy life events with children, but most of us, understandably, find it difficult to know how to discuss palliative illness, death and bereavement. However, these are all subjects which teachers may be required to face at some point in their career.**

Loss and bereavement is a subject that schools can struggle to know how to approach. Shown below are some links to organisations who have provided online lesson plans to help you with this:

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[www.winstonswish.org/pshe-lessons/](http://www.winstonswish.org/pshe-lessons/)



Winston's Wish have created a series of lesson plans for Key Stages 1-4.

Each set of age appropriate resources includes lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations for two lessons as well as four activities for your class to complete. These can be used as they stand, or provide you with ideas so you can support your class in the way that works best for them.

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<https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>



Childhood Bereavement UK offer a range of resources for schools including downloadable packs of activities which support primary schools to help pupils develop coping skills for loss and bereavement.

Child Bereavement UK produce Fink cards to help stimulate discussion. If you work with secondary aged pupils you will have had a pack in your resource box.

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Including lessons on loss and bereavement in your rolling programme for PSHCE can help to develop resilience and coping skills but sometimes an event may happen which brings these issues into focus in the moment.



- You may have a member of staff or pupil who is diagnosed with a palliative condition.
- You may have a pupil with a parent who is seriously ill or dying.
- You may have a pupil who dies suddenly e.g. in a road accident.
- You may have a close member of the school community who dies suddenly.

When these things happen the school can feel a sense of shock, disbelief and uncertainty about what to say or do. There are a few important things to remember:

- Ask for help – you don't have to do this alone. There are specialists out there who are willing to talk with you, provide you with ideas and support. Staff at St Teresa's are able to support you and suggest activities or resources.
- When children ask you questions, answer them as honestly as you can. You don't have to give a detailed explanation, just an honest answer, even if it is "I don't know" – what you say will depend upon the age and stage of the child. Take advice if you are unsure.
- Put it back to the child by simply asking them, "what do you think?". This can be empowering for a young person as it allows them to consider the situation and come up with a possible explanation that fits for them as well as taking the pressure of yourself to provide a neat, packaged answer that may not be possible anyway'.
- You need to respect the family's wishes about what will be said, agree as a staff what you are going to tell other parents or the children so there is no inconsistency.
- Every situation is unique, you won't have all the answers, but organisations such as Winston's Wish and Child Bereavement UK have lots of ideas and resources that can help and guide you.
- Make sure you and all staff members who are involved get the emotional support they need. It is OK to find it hard and talking about what you are feeling, in a safe space, can be helpful.

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### Where appropriate you can:

- Lead a whole school assembly where everyone is told the situation.
  - Have circle time in the class where children can express their feelings.
  - Put out a worry box so children who feel unable to speak up can write down their question and it can be answered anonymously.
  - Remember to keep open communication with the family and young person primarily affected by the loss, ensuring they are consulted around or aware of how this is being addressed at school.
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# A spotlight on Coping with Anger

**Anger is a natural, normal reaction, especially when you are a young person trying to make sense of death. Although anger is one of the most common expressions of grief, it is often the most misunderstood. While most people expect to see sadness and crying as expressions of grief, anger often accompanies grief as well.**

We find that society can often label anger as a negative emotion. This can lead to young people who are angry questioning whether they should be feeling this way and thinking that it is not appropriate to be angry when someone dies.

## Anger at School

In a school setting an angry child can disrupt a class room so as a result the message is given that anger is 'bad' and not allowed which can lead to a child feeling confused and in turn judging themselves negatively for feeling angry.

It is important to remember that everyone grieves in an individual way and that ALL emotions are appropriate.

In every day life anger is a result of thinking that we have been unfairly treated or disrespected, or that something is unfair. These feelings are magnified greatly when bereaved young people are told that anger is bad or wrong. This can lead to changes in their behaviour that is then also judged and punished leading to a child managing a sense of huge unfairness and resentment that can gather great momentum.

Anger can be very useful at times. It can kick start us into action and can help us make life saving and vital actions. However, it can become a problem if it seems like we're getting angry very often, and it is affecting our mood, relationships or mental wellbeing.

Thinking this way leads us to feel angry, which stimulates the body's adrenaline response which is our body's way of helping us to cope with either fighting, or running away ('fight or flight' response). We respond to those thoughts and feelings, by acting, or feeling an urge to act, in threatening or aggressive ways.

Anger is often used as a MASK for GRIEF in young people. Anger is a much more powerful response than being afraid or appearing weak. No child wants to appear weak or vulnerable so as a result wearing a mask of anger becomes much more acceptable.



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## Supporting a Young Person when they feel Angry

There are ways you can support a child to let go of their anger in a safe way, allowing them to have the release they need without being destructive or harmful to themselves or others. This will normalise their feelings as a natural part of grief; it says that it isn't their anger that is bad, but the way they express it can be harmful to themselves and others.

- Pounding (clay, play dough, bread dough, pillow/cushions)
- Make an emotions pillow case. On a plain pillow case trace images on one side with a fabric pen that a child associates with happiness or special memories of their loved one. On the other side draw on images associated with anger. The child can have an arrangement with their parent/carer that if they leave their pillow case on the angry side on a morning they can check in with them and see if they want to talk about it further. Often an adult being aware that a child is feeling a little 'wobbly' can take the pressure off them having to find a way to explain this or ask for help/support.
- Building a tower of blocks/Jenga and then kicking it down can relieve tension and help release anger.
- Scribbling in a designated "scribble/anger book". Keeping a diary of angry thoughts and feelings.
- Throwing water balloons against a wall.
- Tearing paper (have a designated anger magazine stack) or popping bubble wrap.
- Stomping feet (set up a stomping circle, set timer for 1 minute. Only foot stomping allowed).
- Stress Ball or simply clenching/releasing fist.
- Yelling (silent or out loud outside) Following completion of this, teach a calming technique/relaxation response.
- Use a bubble wand to blow away anger for now.
- Breathing techniques, visualising blowing the anger away and imagining red and breathing in calmness (green).

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**It is important to remember that these activities are not designed to 'fix' the grief but to release the energy of the anger so you (or another professional) can further explore the grief reaction at a later, more appropriate time.**

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Look for your own copy in your school resources box.



## You Will Be Okay by Julia Stokes

You Will Be Okay is an honest, comforting and strength-building guide for children aged 8+ experiencing grief.

Written by clinical psychologist, executive coach and founder of childhood bereavement charity Winston's Wish, Julie Stokes OBE, You Will Be Okay is a toolbox for bereaved children. The book offers comforting and practical advice for coping and remembering. In addition, there are free resources available for educators to help pupils explore the key themes in the book.

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### Book Review by Annie (aged 17)

'You will be okay' by Julie Stokes is perfect for children aged between 7 and 13 who have been recently bereaved. I lost my brother when I was 9 and I feel that this book would have helped me to come to terms with my grief.

The book is split into different chapters that take the reader through various emotions they may be having and draws upon the stories of people in public eye who have undergone the death of someone close to them.

Throughout the book are activities that the reader can complete, either by themselves or with someone they trust, to help them come to terms with the bereavement. I completed many of these activities myself in the years after my brother died and I found they really helped me to cope with how I was feeling. In the year following my brother's death, I found it very difficult to talk to people about how I was feeling, so this book would have been perfect for me to work through these feelings.

If you have a bereaved child, I would definitely recommend this book to help them comprehend their grief.

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# The Wellness Hub Resources



We have worked hard to create a virtual resource centre of information that you can access digitally - The Wellness Hub.

The Wellness Hub is a resource for staff, patients and professionals where we share information, videos and useful links.

- You can access the Hub by visiting [www.wellnesshub.life](http://www.wellnesshub.life) and then registering for an account. You'll then be asked to fill out our short form.
- If you have any problems you can find help on our FAQ page [wellnesshub.life/faqs](http://wellnesshub.life/faqs) or you can email [enquiries@darlingtonhospice.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@darlingtonhospice.org.uk).
- Once you've registered, we will approve your account and you'll receive an email letting you know that you can now access all the information in the Hub.
- Then, explore the Wellness Hub as much as you want!
- All of the Schools resources, including our worksheets (below) can be found in the 'Learn' Section, and you can see a flavour of what we have to offer below.
- We hope you find this helpful!

**Breathing Techniques for Bringing Bubbles**

**Bibby Breathing**

**Using books in Bereavement Support**

**Final Note**

**Fish - Making a Memory Box (Age 5 to 6)**



## 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

[www.help2makesense.org](http://www.help2makesense.org)

### **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)