

Bereavement

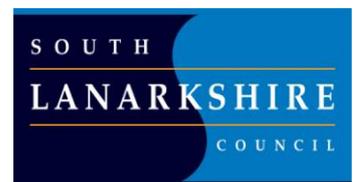
Death

Dying

Loss

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

The  
Psychological  
Service



EDUCATION RESOURCES

## **What should the initial response be for face to face contact with a grieving child?**

- Listen and show you believe the child or young person.
- Be sympathetic, offer tissues, but it is probably best to avoid physical contact with the child, as this may be misunderstood.
- Validate feelings – there are no right and wrong feelings.
- Dispel any feeling of fault or guilt.
- Identify sources of support and how to access them e.g. family, friends, guidance teachers.
- As a familiar teacher you are in a good position to help the young person; refer to outside professionals only as a last resort.

## **If there is time to chat, perhaps after the facts of bereavement are clear, what could be helpful?**

- Encourage the young person to think of ways in which they can remember the loved one, thus fostering independence.
- Speak a little about your own experience of loss, but be careful not to become emotional or overshadow child's feelings. Instead ask about any previous loss (e.g. death of pet – what helped then?)
- Stress that the loved one will always be there in their memories.
- Accept the normality of anger, guilt, numbness or euphoria as part of the grieving process.
- Stress that grieving is a process, with many of the stages above, which will lessen in time.
- For some young people, an ongoing feeling of relationship with the deceased person may be very important.

## **What is the process of mourning about?**

- Accepting the reality of the loss.
- Experiencing the pain of the loss.
- Adjusting to the environment, in which the deceased is missing.
- Finding ways of remembering the deceased person.

## **What are the needs of grieving children?**

- Reassurance.
- Open and honest communication.
- Recognition of grief.
- Sharing grief.
- Saying goodbye.
- A break in grieving.

It is important to note that children from all cultural backgrounds do not have the same assumptions about death and subsequent funeral arrangements may be different.

### **What are the possible signs of grieving?**

**Thinking** – confusion over the event, difficulty in concentration, absent mindedness, impaired reasoning, decline in academic performance.

**Psychological** – obsessive behaviours, loss of attention skills, personality change, increased dreams/nightmares, fear of recurrence of the event, over-concern for others, fear of losing other loved ones.

**Emotional** – the need to be looked after – dressing, washing, regression i.e. going back to a more childish stage, anxiety, anger, guilt, disbelief.

**Spiritual** – rediscovery of faith, loss of faith.

**Behavioural** – any sudden change in behaviour, clinging, reappearance of childish habits, obsessive or repetitive talking, decline in self discipline and responsibility to others.

**Physical** – headaches, shock, shivering, constriction of throat, loss of appetite, loss of physical control, disturbed sleep, avoidance of others including school refusal.

**Practical** – inability to cope with regular routine.

(Adapted from Best and Mead 1996)

## **Support Agencies**

- Cruse – Hamilton – 01698 303 099
- Cruse – East Kilbride – 01355 244288
- The Compassionate Friends – 6 Denmark Street, Bristol, BS1 5DQ
- Hamilton Psychological Services – 23 Beckford Street, HAMILTON, ML3 0BT – 01698 455800
- Lanark Psychological Services – Council Offices, South Vennel, LANARK, ML11 7JT – 01555 673249
- East Kilbride Psychological Services – c/o St Andrew's and St Bride's High School, Platthorn Drive, EAST KILBRIDE, G74 1NL - 01355 574121

*The 'Professional Development Programme for Educational Psychologists in Scotland 1998' was most useful in compiling this leaflet.*

## *South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Service Centres*

### **Hamilton Psychological Service Centre**

23 Beckford Street

Hamilton

ML3 0BT

Tel: 01698 455800

Fax: 01698 455822

Email: [enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk)

### **East Kilbride Psychological Service Centre**

c/o St Andrew's and St Bride's High School

Platthorn Drive

EAST KILBRIDE

G74 1NL

Tel: 01355 574121

Email: [enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk)

### **Lanark Psychological Service Centre**

Council Offices

South Vennel

Lanark

ML11 7JT

Tel: 01555 673249

Fax: 01555 673392

Email: [enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk)

For more information or if you want this information in a different format or language,  
please phone 01698 455800 or email [enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk)

**[www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk)**



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