

Bereavement

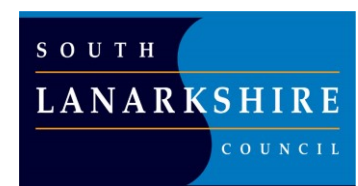
Death

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 – Cambuslang Gate, 27 Main Street, Cambuslang, G72 7EX – 0141 613 5160

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

Email: enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk

Cam/Glen Psychological Service Centre

Cambuslang Gate

27 Main Street

Cambuslang

Tel: 0141 613 5160

Email: enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk

Lanark Psychological Service Centre

Council Offices

South Vennel

Lanark

ML11 7JT

Tel: 01555 673249

Email: 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

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk



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(March 2008)

Our acknowledgement and thanks are extended to Jane Thomson and the Literature Group for their research in compiling this leaflet.