

Supporting children through a bereavement

Bereavement is a difficult subject and one we may tend to avoid or try to shield from young children. However if a child in your setting experiences the death of a loved one then we have a duty to approach it in a sympathetic and sensitive manner. This week's top tip will look at ways to achieve this.



1. Children under five will not understand death, or the finality of it. Unless we are clear, their understanding will be very literal. For example if we say, "We have lost Grandad", they will wonder where they can find him. Answer their questions gently but concisely using words such as died or dead, so they can begin to understand what has happened. Children's will want to repeat repeat questions again and again; it is an important part of helping them process what has happened
2. Find out from the child's parents or carers how they have explained the death to their child. This will mean the child will get the same message from home and the setting and will prevent any painful confusion
3. Young children will not experience grief in the same way that adults do. Theirs will not be a linear journey. Their experience can be likened to jumping in and out of puddles. This looks like them being overwhelmed with grief one minute and happily playing in the next moment. This is because children need a break from the powerful emotions associated with grief. They will still need your support
4. Be vigilant for those times when they are overcome with grief. Sit alongside them, validate how they are feeling and sensitively answer any questions they might have, even if they have asked them many times before
5. Older children may find a story, such as The Goodbye Book by Todd Parr, helps them to find a quiet moment which they can use to think or talk about their loved one when they are feeling sad. If there is a copy of the book at the setting and at home, this provides continuity. Make sure the child knows that the book is available to them when they need it
6. For further support and information visit:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/supporting-a-bereaved-child/>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/understanding-grief/grief-experiences/children-young-people/>

NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [Developing Resilient Children - Live Virtual Classroom](#)

Find more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna