Rainbows

GUIDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH LIFE'S STORMS ®

Rainbows Bereavement Support GB
www.rainbowsgb.org

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS AT TIMES OF BEREAVEMENT

St John the Baptist RC Primary School, Padiham

- When a sibling dies, acknowledging their loss is essential.

Ways of Remembering

- In the early stages of bereavement it may seem far too painful to worry about mementos but later many people find such things helpful. Ask your child if there is any particular item they would like to have. It could be important that you let all significant adults know how special this is to the child.

- It may be helpful to visit together places which hold special memories.

- Look through photographs together and share memories and stories. You may wish to make a “memory box”.

- Although visits to a cemetery may be an important part of our remembering, long term dependency on frequent visits may not be helpful to children.

We hope you have found this little booklet of some use but please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

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School

- Remember that your child may be scared of leaving you or the rest of the family in case another death occurs when they are away.

- Remember though that going to school is a way of maintaining a degree of normality. It may also be the only place where a child can escape the atmosphere of grief at home.

- Talk to your child about his or her friends. Explain that friends, yours too, often find it difficult to know what to say or how to help.

- Make sure you always arrive on time to meet your child.

Saying Goodbye

- At funerals some people will be sad and cry. Sometimes a child would like to have an input into the service. Your school should be able to support them to do this, perhaps by choosing a favourite song or reading.

- A funeral service is a time of thanksgiving for the life of the person who has died, a celebration of their gifts and our opportunity to say goodbye. Experience would suggest that it is helpful for children to be involved in some way in the funeral service. Simply being there is an involvement itself.

- If a child chooses not to go to a funeral look for other ways of giving thanks, celebrating the life of the person and saying goodbye. Encourage the child to talk or write about the person.

- When a baby dies shortly after birth it may be helpful for older brothers and sisters to have time to say hello and goodbye.

St John the Baptist RC Primary School
Headteacher: Mrs Kathleen McKeating

Dear Parents/Carers

The painful experience of bereavement hurts deeply and is felt as intensely by children as well as adults. When a close family member has died, you yourself will be trying to cope with your own grief as well as the grief of your child.

One of the most difficult problems at the time of a death is what to tell children. There are no easy answers but we hope that this little booklet, together with our thoughts and prayers and any practical support we can give, may assist you at this difficult time.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you think your child requires any additional support in processing the loss of Tia.

Best wishes

K. McKeating

K. McKeating
Headteacher

Coping with Grief

- Every child will respond differently to bereavement depending on age, temperament and many other things. Reactions may include shock, anger, denial, feelings of guilt, irritability, tiredness, displaying indifference, or unusually good or quiet behaviour.

- You may need to reassure your child that s/he is not to blame for the person who has died.

- Try to maintain as normal a routine as possible. Children need to remain within the family home and not moved to a 'seemingly protected' environment.

- Don't hide your own grief. Seeing you grieve and talking with you about the person who has died may help a child express his or her own feelings.

- Drawing and playing may help young children work through their grief and express their feelings. Older children may like to keep a journal of their thoughts and feelings.

- Appropriate reading material may be helpful as will some bereavement websites. Be aware of children's access to social networking sites which you will need to monitor.

- Reassure your child that they do not have to feel guilty about having fun. Explain that the person who has died would be happy at the thought of children enjoying themselves.

- Try not to burden older children by expecting them to be brave or take on the role of the person who has died.

- Young children tend to know more than you think. They will notice a change of atmosphere at home and may overhear adult conversations. Try to keep them informed as to what is happening rather than letting them hear things second hand.

- Be prepared for unusual and or repeated questioning.

- A child's question may be more straight forward than it appears. 'Where has x gone?', may not require you to delve into deep theology. It could be simply about the location of the grave.

- Try to be open and honest with your child and admit when you don't know the answers. This is a process you are going through together.

- Explain that the dead person can no longer feel pain, or heat, or cold. This may relieve some of the child's anxieties about burial/cremation.

- Some phrases cause confusion and should be avoided. Talking about death as a long sleep may make the child afraid of going to bed at night. Using the word 'lost' could also introduce a hope that the dead person may be found.

- Reassure your child that other healthy family members, including themselves, have a long healthy and happy life ahead of them. .

- Older children may need reassurance over arguments they may have had with the person who has died. Reassure them that we believe that the person who has died is now at peace.