



### **Wellbeing Support: Bereavement**

We are sorry that you are experiencing loss and bereavement in your family, whether you are grieving now or knowing grief is going to happen imminently. We hope this provides you with some support.

The charity <https://www.winstonswish.org/> Winston's Wish provides emotional and practical bereavement support to children, young people and those who care for them, across the UK. They offer one off and ongoing bereavement support as well as online resources and very helpful information which can be posted to you.

Winston's Wish **freephone helpline number** is: 08088 020 021

Call between 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Calls are free and confidential. You can ask for advice, guidance or for information/packs to be sent to you in the post.

Winston's Wish has a [live chat](#) where you can ask questions or for help and guidance. Chat to them online between 1-5pm on Tuesdays and 9am-1pm on Fridays.

You can **email** Winston's Wish on [ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org). They aim to reply within two working days.

If you email or call to ask, Winston's Wish gives their **publications** out for free to families. You can also buy them on their website. They include guides on:

- supporting children who has a parent or sibling who has died or who is seriously ill,
- supporting children who have been bereaved through suicide,
- guides for teens,
- guides for children under 5,
- plus many more.
- They also have a very special book called 'Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine' which you can go through with your child/ren (each child can have their own copy) to remember the person who has died as well as focus on their feelings. It focuses on special memories and what the child continues to enjoy in their life so they know that it is okay for them to still be happy.



## **Supporting a Child who has Experienced Bereavement**

Please do take a look at the guide on 'Explaining Difficult Situations to children' which is all suitable and relevant for a child who has experienced a bereavement. It includes guidance on **speaking to children about the facts**, reassuring you why and how it is okay and healthy to **cry together**, how **empathy** helps calm children and how **you do not need to have all the answers**.

The guide also provides information on speaking to children in **clear language**, which is especially important after the death of a loved one.

- Try to avoid language or phrases such as “gone to sleep”, “they’re in the sky” or “he is with the angels”. Children do not understand these turns of phrase.
- Try to be clear with what has happened to ensure the child knows that the person who has died is not going to come back. For example, “Their heart stopped working which means they have died”, or “Your special person has died which means their body has stopped working. They are not breathing any more and we won’t see them again”.
- Your religious beliefs are important and you can explain your beliefs to your child about what happens when a person has died. Make sure the child still understands that they are not going to see the person who has died again, in body.
- This clear, age-appropriate language might seem harsh to us as adults but it is clear, and clarity helps children be regulated. This is the guidance all bereavement support agencies will offer.

**Children need to know that no death is their fault.** Children can think that if they were better behaved, or if they had helped more at home, then maybe the person wouldn’t have died. Children will need to hear that they are not in control of whether a person has lived or died.

Children switch between different emotional states much more than adults. For example, they might be very distressed in their grief but quite quickly move through their emotions and start playing a happy game. This doesn’t mean children are not processing their feelings properly. Similarly, children might get really upset and be inconsolable for a while, and this doesn’t mean they will never be happy again.



It will be very important for children to be able to talk about the person who has died and feel able to share memories and feel a continued bond with them. A special way to do this is to create a **memory box** or book together and add to it as time goes on. On special occasions such as the person's birthday or Christmas, memories or messages can be added. [Here](#) is a guide to making a memory box.