

**Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.**

## Supporting children with bereavement

**Bereavement is a difficult subject and one we may tend to avoid or try to shield from young children.**

We have provided you with some top tips for supporting children so you can feel confident in addressing this topic.



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 the Joe”, they may wonder where they can find them. Answer their questions gently but concisely using words such as died or dead, so they can begin to understand what has happened
2. Be honest with children when they ask questions and use plain language and concepts to explain death. Children will want to repeat questions again and again; it is an important part of helping them to process what has happened
3. If a child has recently experienced the death of a close family member, any news coverage of deaths may remind them of that time and those feelings of grief
4. 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
5. 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
6. 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
7. You may wish to provide parents with information about how you are talking about death with the children, so they know how to support their child at home
8. For further support and information visit:
  - a. <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/supporting-a-bereaved-child/>

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

**Find more resources at [www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna](http://www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna)**