

GRIEF & LOSS

Responding to, Answering Questions and
Supporting Children Through Grief



BRIDGE THE GAP
Child Mental Health

FAMILY WELLBEING

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Grief is something that will effect everyone at some point, and it will effect each of us in a different way.

Everyone grieves in their own way, and will move in and out of these different stages in their own time. It's okay to feel happiness when you are grieving. Don't feel like you're 'doing it wrong' - we all experience our grief and emotions differently. Whether it is a pet or a person, ensure you allow your child to make decisions about their involvement. If it's a pet, could they have a say as to how they say goodbye? Keeping a memory box or scrapbook can be something to treasure, and to add to over time.

Bereavement is a complicated process; it is helpful to talk to our children and young people about the process of grief to ensure that they know how to access support when they might need it. There are some videos to help with this on our Facebook Groups for children.

There are resources and information within this booklet to support you in how to approach this topic with children and young people in a safe way.

Please do get in touch for further information and support if you feel that would be beneficial.



RESPONDING TO CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS ABOUT DEATH

Children may ask practical questions instead of talking about their feelings. Sometimes these might sound strange. What's it like inside a coffin? What does a dead body really look like? Will I be a ghost when I die? These are entirely sensible things to wonder – and it can be reassuring to a child if you discuss them, rather than dismissing them as silly.



Listen carefully so you know exactly what they mean. If you don't know the answer, say so.

Don't worry if you think you've answered the question badly – it's more important to the child that you've paid attention.



Be clear and direct in your language – using phrases such as 'passed away' rather than 'died' can leave them confused.

Children understand words very literally, and you may need check they haven't misunderstood.



Try not to look uncomfortable answering their questions – it may create the impression that talking about these things is not allowed.

Try and answer their question as soon as they've asked it – children's attention span is limited. A series of short conversations is often easier than long sessions.



There's no harm in a child seeing that you are sad or crying if someone has died. It may help them know their own grief is acceptable.

THE STAGES OF GRIEF



SHOCK

The death of a loved one can feel like a bolt of lightning out of nowhere. You might feel 'numb' or 'empty' and this is your shock response. Our brains are very clever - creating this 'numb' sensation, it protects us from a lot of overwhelming emotions all at once.

DENIAL

To try and cope with the new reality of not having the person we love with us anymore, we might avoid thoughts about it or talking about it so as to try and stop the pain we feel from it.



ANGER

It is normal to feel very angry that your loved one has died; it doesn't feel fair. We might shout or hit out at other people around us at this stage.

DEPRESSION

When you have begun to process the thoughts of your loved one no longer being there and the reality that they will not be coming back, you might feel extreme sadness. You might not want to face the world or do anything.



ACCEPTANCE

The deep sadness begins to lift and you begin to find some hope that things will be ok. You begin to accept that this is permanent and are able to think about the future in a positive way.



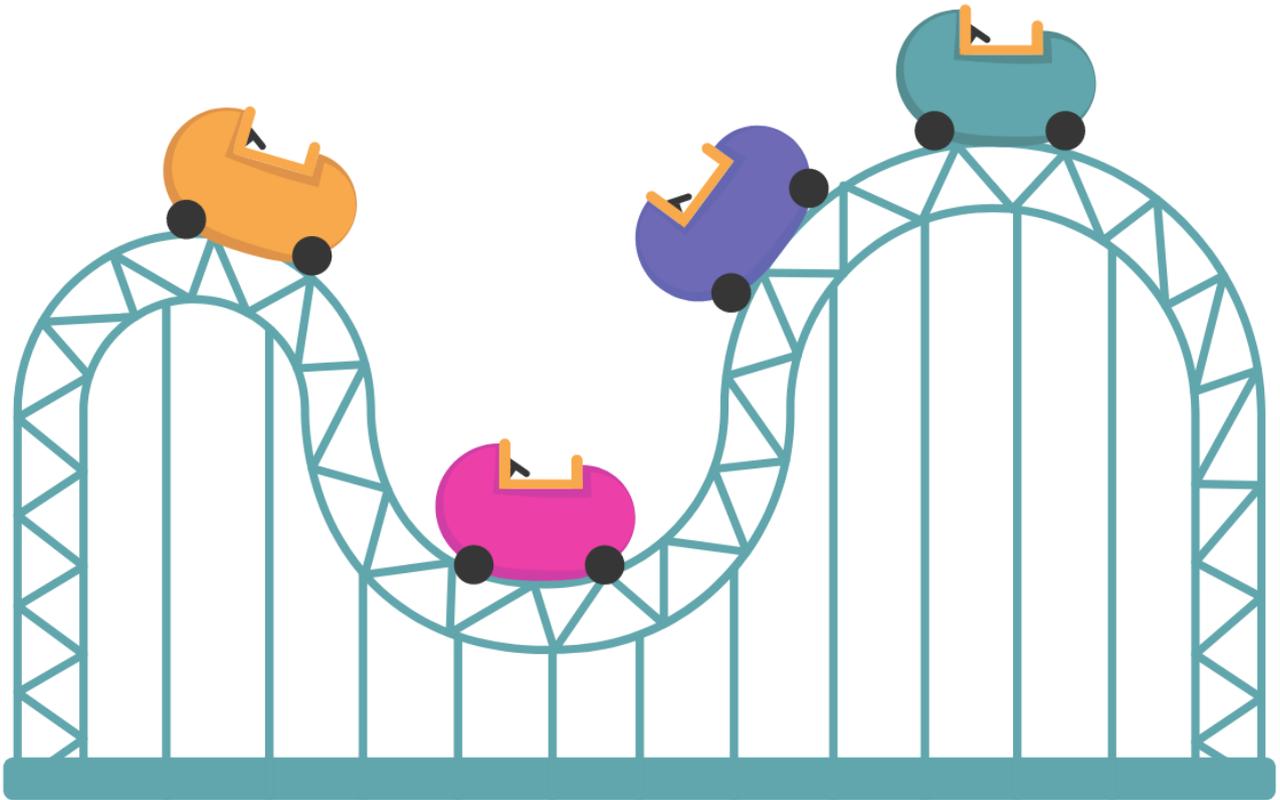
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ROLLERCOASTER OF GRIEF

When someone we love dies we go through lots of different and overwhelming emotions. See if you can think of something you might do to help for each emotion we feel on this rollercoaster; for example have a hug, write a short story, think of a nice memory.

ANGER:

CONFUSED:



SADNESS

LONELY

ACTIVITIES TO HELP US COPE WITH AND PROCESS GRIEF

CREATE A COLLAGE

Use different colours and pictures to represent all of the different emotions you are feeling

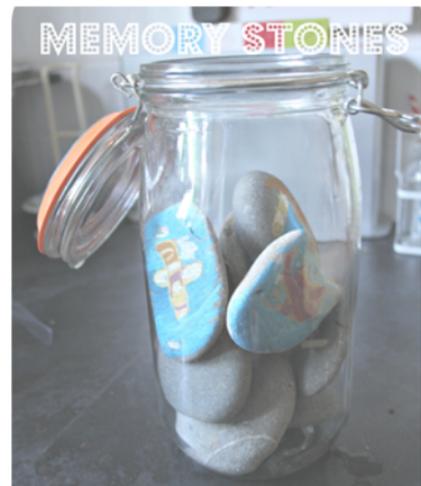


GROUNDING

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

MEMORY STONES

Fill a jar with stones that are painted with special memories of a loved one who has died.



breathe



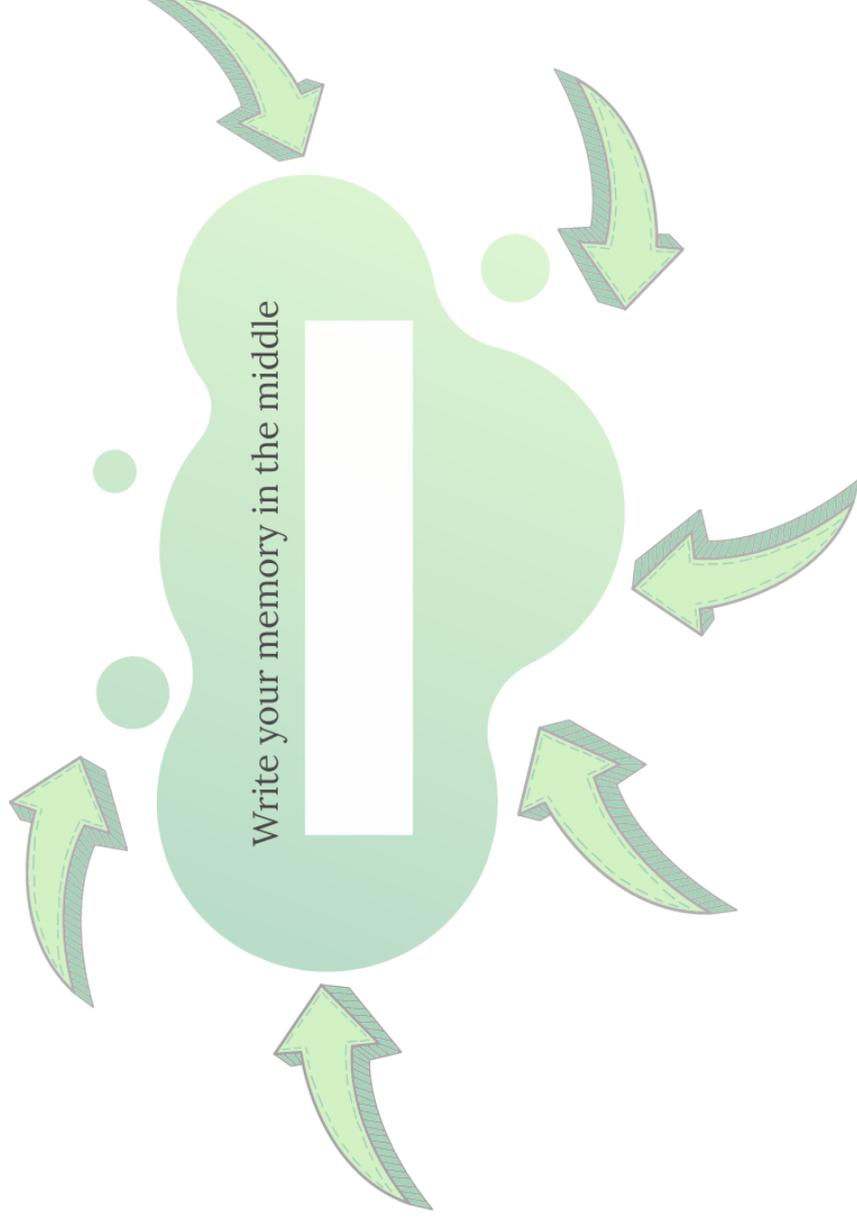
BROKEN BOWLS

The idea of a bowl being smashed is similar to the feeling that we feel broken when someone we love dies. Smash a bowl together, paint all the pieces and then glue them back together as you would mend yourself through the grieving process.



MEMORY MIND MAP

When you think of a memory that you would like to treasure, write it in the middle and add the details around the edge. You could use the information to make a scrapbook or just keep your memory mind maps together to make a memory book.



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Write all of the details of the memory around the outside- things that were said, where you were, how you felt for example.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Young Minds Helpline = 08088 025454

Child Bereavement U.K Helpline = 0800 02 888 40

Much Loved FREE online counselling service
muchloved.com

Cruse Helpline = 08088 081677

Dyingmatters.org



*You matter, you are loved, you are
Not alone...*