



# Bereavement:

where to go for help

A guide for families and professionals when a child or young person has died from cancer



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From 1st August 2006 the UK Children's Cancer Study Group and UK Childhood Leukaemia Working Party merged to form the Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG)

**Available online at [www.childcancer.org.uk](http://www.childcancer.org.uk)**



## Introduction

The loss of a child is a devastating experience for anyone who loved the child. However close family members may be, the child's death can leave them feeling very alone. This leaflet will give suggestions of sources of support for families who have lost a child from cancer. It may be helpful to bereaved parents, grandparents and other family members as well as to those such as teachers, health professionals and friends who are offering support to the bereaved family.



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## How family members grieve

Grief is a natural process after someone important has died. The death of a child or young person is particularly hard to accept and cope with. Parents who have lost a child grieve over a long period of time, usually for very many years. Bereaved parents often experience strong emotions and often a need to be with their child. They may find that this grief takes up all of their energy, making it hard to cope with any other demands on them. As a result parents will often not be able to ask for, or find, the support that might help them at this time. Grandparents too may find that they are overwhelmed by grief, often feeling that it should have been them, not their grandchild, that has died.

Children need to grieve too. Some children are able to talk openly about their feelings which

emotions of their parents and may not want to discuss their thoughts and fears with them, feeling that their worries may worsen their parents' sadness. Bereaved parents may themselves feel that the strength of their own grief means that they do not have the capacity to fully support their other children.

Whatever your relationship with the child who has died, there are professionals who can offer help, free booklets and websites as well as books that can be bought or loaned that give guidance.

## People who may be able to help

There are professionals who may be able to help support parents and children. These professionals may already know the family well or have experience in supporting families coping with bereavement.

Talking with other bereaved families can also help. There may also be local sources of help and support – your specialist nurse or social worker will be able to advise you of what is available in your area.

### *From the treatment centre*

Outreach nurse  
Social worker  
Psychologist  
Bereavement counsellor  
Doctor

### *Other professionals who may be able to help*

G.P.  
Teacher  
Religious leader  
Bereavement organisations  
Hospice staff  
School counsellor

## Helpful Organisations

### **The Compassionate Friends**

*A charitable organisation of bereaved parents and their families offering understanding, support and encouragement to others after the death of a child including support for brothers and sisters of any age. Also provides helpsheets on a variety of topics (e.g. Grandparents, Coping with Special Occasions), some local support groups, newsletters, penfriends and a library of books.*

**Website:** [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)

**Helpline:** 0870 167 1677

### **The Child Death Helpline**

*A helpline for all those affected by the death of a child.*

**Freephone:** 0800 282 986

Mon to Fri 10am – 1pm

Every evening 7.00pm – 10pm

The helpline is open 365 days per year

### **The Child Bereavement Trust**

*A charitable organisation offering a range of resources to support bereaved families and young people.*

**Website:** [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

**Helpline:** 0845 357 1000



### **The Childhood Bereavement Network**

*A national multi-professional body for people working with bereaved children and young people; provides information on local services available and has a range of publications.*

**Website:** [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 020 7843 6309

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

*A national organisation offering bereavement support.*

**Website:** [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

**Helpline:** 0870 167 1677 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-5pm)

**Including: Young persons' website RD4U 'the road for you'**

*The site is designed specifically to support young people after the death of someone close to them.*

**Website:** [www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk)

**Helpline:** 0808 808 1677 (9.30 – 5.00 pm)

### **Winston's Wish**

*Supports bereaved children and young people and offers help and advice to families and professionals concerned about a child after bereavement.*

**Website:** [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

**Helpline:** 0845 20 30 40 5

### **Siblinks**

*A support network for young people aged 13-25 who have or have had a family member affected by cancer.*

**Website:** [www.siblinks.org](http://www.siblinks.org)

### **CLIC Sargent**

*Supports and provides information for children and young people with cancer and their families and for anyone concerned about childhood cancer.*

**Website:** [www.clicsargent.org.uk](http://www.clicsargent.org.uk)

**Child Cancer Helpline:**

0800 197 0068 (9am-5pm)

## Bereavement Centres

There are currently three established Bereavement Centres in the UK. They may be able to offer details of local sources of support if they cannot offer direct help.

### **Sunrise Bereavement Centre**

West Midlands

*For parents who have lost a child or children who have lost a family member.*

**Tel:** 0121 454 1705

### **The Alder Centre, Liverpool**

*Provides counselling and support for anyone who is affected by the death of a child.*

**Tel:** 0151 252 5391

### **The Laura Centre, Leicester**

*A family bereavement counselling centre offering support to anyone affected by the death of a child of any age and from any cause.*

**Tel:** 0116 254 4341

**Website:** [www.thelauracentre.org](http://www.thelauracentre.org)

There may be a local bereavement centre in your area, please ask for details at your child's treatment centre or local hospice.

### **Postcards that help grieving children and young people**

The Childhood Bereavement Network (above) produces packs of postcards designed for children and young people to give to their teachers, carers or friends, to tell them how they can help during this difficult time. The child/young person can indicate any ideas that they particularly like on the card. (A pack of 100 cards is currently sold for £8).

## Books

There are books written for both parents and young people dealing with some of the issues raised in this leaflet. They may be available from the treatment centre where the child was treated. Professionals may know of other books that may be helpful to you.

Books that can be ordered through bookshops:

### For Parents

#### **The Bereaved Parents' Survival Guide**

– Juliet Cassuto Rothman. Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.  
ISBN 0826410138

**Losing a Child** – Linda Hurcombe.  
Sheldon Press. ISBN 0859698866

#### **Facing the Death of your Child**

– Lesley Edwards and Jacquie Palmer on behalf of the CCLG Publications Committee.  
Available from the CCLG

### For Adults Supporting Children and Young People

**The Grieving Child** – H. Fitzgerald.  
Simon & Schuster Inc. ISBN 0671767623

**Bereaved Children and Teens:  
A Support Guide for Parents and  
Professionals** – Edited by Earl A. Grollman.  
Beacon Press. ISBN 0807023078

**Helping Children Cope with Grief: Facing  
a Death in the Family (Overcoming  
Common Problems)** – Rosemary Wells.  
Sheldon Press. ISBN 085969559X

**Grief Encounter** – Shelley Gilbert.  
Grief Encounter Project, PO Box 49701,  
London N20 8XJ. ISBN 0954843401

### For Children

**On the Wings of a Butterfly: A Story  
about Life and Death** – Marilyn Maple,  
Earl A. Grollman and Sandy Haight.  
Parenting Press.  
ISBN 0943990688

*Lisa, a child dying of cancer befriends a caterpillar about to change into a butterfly as she goes on her own journey of change towards death.*

**Waterbugs and Dragonflies: Explaining  
Death to Young Children** – Doris Stickney.  
Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.  
ISBN 0826464580

*A short story explaining death through the lifecycle of a dragonfly.*

**Badger's Parting Gifts** – Susan Varley.  
Picture Lions. ISBN 0006643175

*The animals of the forest are heartbroken when Badger dies, but gradually find ways to remember him.*

#### **Remembering my Brother**

– Ginny Perkins. A & C Black.  
ISBN 0713645415  
*Story with photos showing a family of children who have lost a brother. Will help 4 - 10 year olds understand grief.*

**When Someone Very Special Dies**  
– Marge Heegaard. Woodland Press.  
ISBN 0962050202

*A book to help children communicate their understanding about death. Also written to help the adults supporting them.*

**Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your  
Activity Book to Help When Someone  
Has Died** – Diana Crossley. Hawthorn Press  
Ltd. ISBN 1869890582

*An activity book for younger children.*

**Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing With Loss** – Michaelene Mundy. Abbey Press. ISBN 0870293214

*Book exploring grief for children aged 4 and over-sensitive to different religious beliefs*

**The Mountains of Tibet: A Child's Journey Through Living and Dying** – Mordcai Gerstein. Barefoot Books Ltd. ISBN 1898000549

*Story of a boy who dies and is reborn, in line with Buddhist thinking.*

**For Young People**

**Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love** – Earl A. Grollman. Beacon Press. ISBN 0807025011

*Suggests how to deal with grief and other emotions.*

**When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens About Grieving & Healing** – Marilyn E Gootman. Free Spirit Publishing. ISBN 1575421704

*A book for teenagers about grieving and healing.*

**The Grieving Teen: a Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends** – Helen Fitzgerald. Simon and Schuster Ltd. ISBN 0684868040

*Offers advice for helping a teenager cope with death and bereavement.*

**Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins**

– Enid Samuel-Traisman. Centering Corporation. ISBN 1561230561

*A journal for teenagers experiencing a loss.*

**For Professionals**

**An Intimate Loneliness: Supporting Bereaved Parents and Siblings** – G. Riches & P. Dawson. Open University Press. ISBN 0335199720

*Provides much insight into the effects on family members of losing a child.*

**Then, Now and Always: Supporting Children as They Journey Through Grief: A Guide for Practitioners** – Julie Stokes. Winston's Wish Publication. ISBN 0953912353

*Practical sensitive information for anyone involved in running a child bereavement service.*

**DVDs**

**Not Too Young to Grieve** – Leeds Animation Workshop (Tel 0113 248 4997)

*15 minute DVD helping parents and carers understand the grief of very young children and how to help them.*





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Registered Charity No: 286669

**UKCCSG/CCLG leaflets are available to  
download from [www.childcancer.org.uk](http://www.childcancer.org.uk)**