

Children and young people can manage in the most dreadful situations. There are lots of different ways you can help:

- Talk about the situation when asked
- Use language they understand
- Give honest answers to their questions
- Give explanations in small chunks
- Reassurance that it is not their fault
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings
- Acknowledge your own feelings
- Talk about anxieties
- Try to maintain familiar routines and stability
- Give chances to talk and play and hear stories
- Don't make assumptions about what they know and understand
- Identify people they can turn to if they want to talk



When someone has died it is helpful for children and young people to -

- Find opportunities to say goodbye
- Participate in goodbye rituals
- Talk about the person who has died
- Make a memory box
- Prepare for anniversaries, birthdays etc. to remember the person who has died



### How children grieve

Children may feel grief just like adults but they do not always express it in the same way. We cannot prevent them from experiencing the pain of loss but we can help them in their sadness.

It is often said that you should not be a hero but a model to children. If everyone around them appears to be behaving as if nothing has happened it can be a cue to hide or bottle up emotions.

As children grow up their understanding of death will change. It is not unusual for them to revisit the loss.

Common reactions include:

- Aggressive behaviour;
- silliness;
- disturbed sleep patterns;
- fear of separation;
- lack of energy;
- changes in appetite;
- lack of concentration;
- school absences,
- falling grades;
- aches and pains.

### When someone in the family is seriously ill

Children can be deeply affected by the serious illness of a parent, grandparent, brother or sister. Adults tend to underestimate their child's ability to deal with the truth. Even very sad truths will be better than the uncertainty of not knowing what is happening. Imagine how hard it is to hear bad news about your family from someone else, in the playground or on the bus?

Serious illness can make a family feel helpless and scared. Recognise these feelings, talk about them and try to find ways to have fun and be together.

School can be a haven from what's happening at home or it can be a dreaded part of each day. It is important to keep school advised of the situation and ask them to let you know if they observe changes in your child's behaviour.



The Sunflower Project is based at The HUB and is a support service for children and young people when they are experiencing a bereavement or someone in the family has a serious illness. The Sunflower Project supports any child of school age.

The Sunflower Project offers –

- Information, advice and resources for parents, carers and teachers. Including how to tell your child, how to involve the school etc?
- Support for children and families together
- 1:1 support at The HUB, or at school for children and young people
- Advocacy support for children in school
- Group sessions for children and young people to meet others experiencing similar issues and to find space to have fun and relax

The HUB is an information and advice service for young people. It offers:

- Drop in sessions
- Outreach in schools and clubs
- Mentoring
- LGBTQ support
- Online Safety
- Disability support
- And much more...



## Contact us

For telephone advice, a request for further support or for resources

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# The Sunflower Project

Support for children and young people when they are bereaved or someone in the family has a serious illness

Information and support for families and professionals



Believe in  
children  
 Barnardo's