

Trauma and Bereavement

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Aspire Academies, we recognise that this is an ever-changing time where sadly, trauma and bereavement are touching more and more of us.

We have put together some resources to guide you in supporting your child through trauma and bereavement. Please do remember that you are also very important at this time, and that if you need to, you should contact your doctor or some of the organisations mentioned below if you need support yourself.

Talking to your child about death or loss is not easy. If you want to start a conversation, you could try some of these questions and phrases from Young Minds



Try to...

Validate how they are feeling

Praise them for being honest about how they are feeling

Offer empathy

Reassure them

When you can't visit someone because they are ill

- Be honest and clear. You might say: "You know Sam is ill. He is now being looked after in hospital. We don't want him to catch the coronavirus, which would make him more ill. So we can't visit him."
- For young children, use simple words and positive ideas. You might say: "Nanny is poorly. We can't visit her today but let's send her a video. Shall we show her your picture?"
- Answer questions honestly. It is OK to say if you don't know the answer.
- Check their understanding. You might say: "That's a great question. What do you think?"
- Show your feelings. You might say: "I'm really sad about Grandad being ill.... but it's OK to be sad sometimes. I'm OK".
- Give your child an item that connects them to the person who they can't visit.
- Children can write the person a letter or card, or draw a picture, that you could post, or send a photo electronically.

Be kind to yourself. Recognise this is a very difficult time, and that you can only do so much.

Make a list of things that help to calm or distract you when you are not feeling okay. For example – a hot bath, watch a movie, go for a walk, play a game, meditate.

Make time for you, and seek support if you need it.

Telling a child that someone has died

It is important to tell a child of any age when someone important in their lives has died. Ideally, this should be done by someone who is closest to them.

- Tell a child as soon as possible, in a place where they can be supported and away from distractions.
- Use clear language that they can understand, for example:

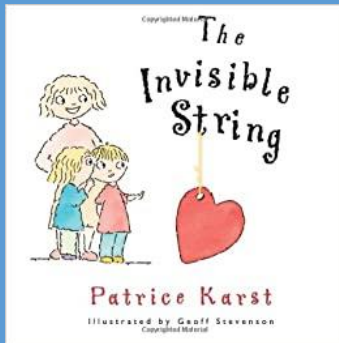
"I have something very sad to tell you. _____ has been ill for a while and now he/she has died"

- Clear words such as 'he has died' are easier for children to understand than 'lost' 'passed away' or 'gone to the stars'.
- Allow for time together for comfort, support and any questions they may ask.
- Answer questions honestly, but keep explanations short, clear and appropriate for their age and understanding. It is okay to say you don't know the answer to a question, but that you will come back to them if you find an answer.
- Especially with a young child, you may need to repeat the information.
- It is OK to show your emotions and to explain that you are sad because the person has died, and that it is okay to be sad sometimes and happy sometimes when someone dies.
- Tell them about plans for the days ahead. This will help them to feel secure

Books

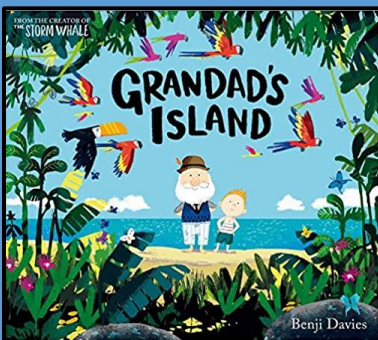
Stories can be a gentle way to raise the subject of death or illness. Reading stories together can answer questions and support time together.

These are some stories have been written to support children after a bereavement.



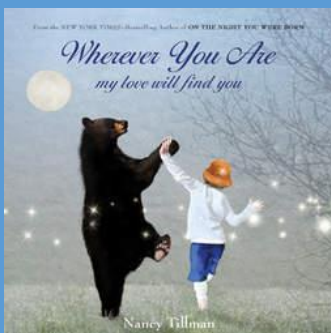
The Invisible String
By Patrice Karst

An under-the-radar bestseller that has helped countless readers of all ages across the world cope with separation anxiety, loss, loneliness and grief



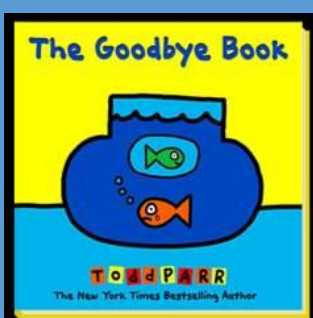
Grandad's Island
By Benji Davies

Sure to provide comfort to young children struggling to understand loss. Benji Davies' tale is sensitive and beautiful reminder that our loved-ones live on in our memory long after they are gone



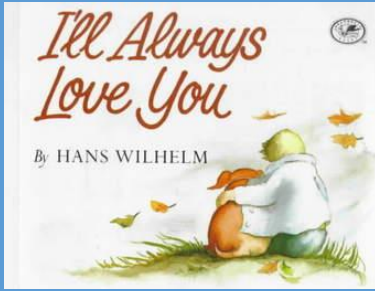
Wherever You Are, My Love Will Find You
By Nancy Tillman

If love could take shape it might look something like these heartfelt words and images from Nancy Tillman. Here is a book to share with your loved ones, no matter how near or far, young or old they are



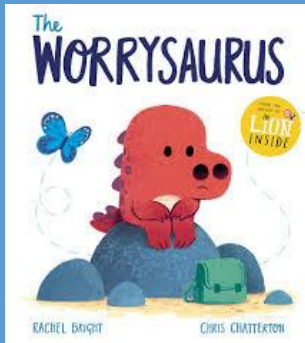
The Goodbye Book
By Todd Parr

Through the lens of a pet fish who has lost his companion, Todd Parr tells a moving and wholly accessible story about saying goodbye. Touching upon the host of emotions children experience, Parr reminds us that it's okay not to know all the answers and that someone will always be there to support them



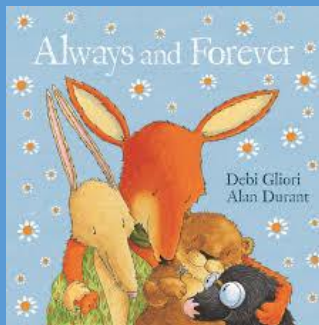
I'll Always Love You
By Hans Wilhelm

In this gentle, moving story, Elfie, a dachshund, and her special boy progress happily through life together until one morning Elfie doesn't wake up



The Worrysaurus
By Rachel Bright

A soothing story that will help to open up conversations about anxiety, worries and mindfulness in a gentle and approachable way



Always and Forever
By Debi Giliori and Alan Durant

When Fox dies the rest of his family are absolutely distraught. How will Mole, Otter and Hare go on without their beloved friend? But, months later, Squirrel reminds them all of how funny Fox used to be, and they realise that Fox is still there in their hearts and memories

Children can find it helpful to draw or write how they are feeling. This can also be a way of starting a difficult conversation with a child. Older children might find it helpful to write a letter to the person who has died and younger children might enjoy drawing them a picture.

Other Websites that can offer support during difficult times are:



10 Ways to Remember

1. Light a candle
2. Cook a favourite meal
3. Make a scrapbook
4. Reach out to family and friends to share stories
5. Plant a tree or some flowers in their memory
6. Write a letter or draw a picture
7. Listen to a favourite song
8. Turn their clothing into a teddy or a blanket
9. Continue to celebrate their birthday
10. DIY – Design it yourself! Design a special ritual all of your own. Remember, all that is important is that it is meaningful to you.