

## Introducing children to picture books about death in the Primary School

In a generation, which has seen an explosion in the development of the picture book and a great diversity of themes addressed in these books, it is no wonder that a variety of books are now available which address the theme of loss. Because of the interplay of verbal and visual stimuli these materials can offer a powerful opening to discussion on challenging topics.



When a child is bereaved, adults including teachers, sometimes go looking for a book to explain things to a child. However this might not be the right time either for the bereaved child or his/her classmates to talk. It can be confronting. It can increase self-consciousness for the child. It can be very difficult to find the book that fits.

It can be helpful to think instead about where loss is already part of the curriculum and to avoid shying away from it as part of the overall learning of the child. In SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) for example, when exploring feelings we can use a picture book to initiate a discussion about the effects of loss on a character. Younger children might read *Gentle Willow* [Mills 2004] and talk about the sadness of the animals when the Willow Tree dies and how they planned to remember her. Senior classes might discuss *Her Mother's Face* [Doyle 2008] and talk about the struggles families experience as they grieve in different ways. In this way children explore the topic in a distance way and develop empathy and sensitivity, while no child is under pressure to share personal stories if they do not wish to.

In SESE (Social, Environmental and Scientific Education) children study life cycles so death is part of the conversation. A book such as *The Lonely Tree* [Halliday 2006] offers young children a chance to look at the life and death of an oak tree and allows them to integrate both cognitively and emotionally.

History is another subject where death can be part of the discussion and we have an opportunity to explore the impact of historical events on individual lives and communities. The book *Sadako* [Coerr 1997] for example tells the story of a child in Hiroshima who develops cancer in the aftermath of the atom bomb. It is a story of loss but also of friendship and community and ultimately a story of hope. The book can offer an integration of English, History, SPHE and Visual Art.

Exploring loss in the classroom is best done when nobody is recently bereaved but in

recognition that death is part of life. Then when children have a language for loss and an understanding of its effects they will manage relationships with their peers with more sensitivity when a death occurs.

The ICBN book list on this website is a resource for teachers but we offer it with a word of caution. We ask you to become familiar with some of these books and to think carefully and critically about

when you might use them with a class, an individual child or a parent.

### ICBN Booklist: For children and their families who experience Bereavement



When families experience grief, it can be challenging to know how to talk to children about death. Books can help to open up discussion about death and finding the right books to support your child during bereavement can help to answer questions that can be challenging or difficult. The ICBN has compiled a list of children's books which may help both you and your child to better understand bereavement.

The booklist here is a resource for those who know or are working with bereaved children, but we offer it with a **word of caution**. We ask you to become familiar with some of these books and to think carefully and critically about when you might use them with a class, an individual child or a parent. The below table is a useful guide when considering whether to use a book in your classroom or to recommend it to a family.

Terminology	Meaning
Best for classroom use in conjunction with a curricular area	This book should be used in conjunction with the specified curricular area. Not all books might be suitable for your class. Always read the book before considering using it. Remember that you know your class best, and therefore, you are best placed to decide on whether a book is appropriate for your pupils.
Best for one-to-one reading with support	This book should be used with caution as the content is sensitive. We suggest that these books are recommended to parents or guardians or perhaps used (with permission from parents or guardians) in school with support.
Suitable for adults	Some picture books are suitable for adults and can provide comfort. We have identified what picture books on this list are suitable for adults.

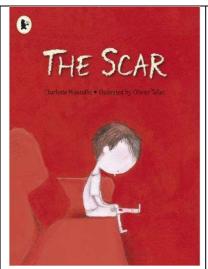
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### **Death of a Pet**

Goodbye Mog  Judith Kerr	Goodbye Mog by Judith Kerr Mog was tired. She was dead tiredMog thought, 'I want to sleep forever.' And so she did. But a little bit of her stayed awake to see what would happen next. Mog keeps watch over the upset Thomas family, who miss her terribly, and she wonders how they will ever manage without her. Publisher: Harper Collins Children's Books	Best for classroom use in conjunction with SPHE
Abselly frantyThe jetteres are a treat That Indicastron. Stratistics  Heaven  NICHOLAS ALLAN  A prigrant, bear versing stray for everyone who has one remort a per	Year: 2003  Heaven by Nicholas Allan A little girl has a conversation about heaven with her dog.  Publisher: Red Fox Year: 2014	Best for classroom use in conjunction with Religion
SCRUMPY Elisabeth Dale • Frédéric Joos	Scrumpy by Elizabeth Dale When Ben's dog dies, he thinks he will never be happy or want another pet again. As time passes, he remembers the happy times they shared and can move on with his life.  Publisher: Andersen Press Ltd Year: 1996	Best for classroom use in conjunction with SPHE
It Must HURT ALot  Copting 1122 or 10	It Must Hurt A Lot by Dr.  Doris Sanford  All children experience loss. It is a part of growing up. When Joshua's puppy is killed by a car accident he learns that some surprises come wrapped in the "package" of loss. We encourage adults to talk about these gifts with children.  Sensitive, caring adults are made not born.  Publisher: Multnomah  Year: 2014	Best for one-to- one reading with support

### Death of a Mother



The Scar by Charlotte Moundlic When the boy in this story wakes up to find that his mother has died, he is overwhelmed with sadness, anger and fear that he will forget her. With tenderness, touches of humour and unflinching emotional truth, Charlotte Moundlic captures Best for one-toone reading with support

**Publisher:** Candlewick Press **Year:** 2011

the eyes of a child.

the loneliness of grief through

RODDY DOYLE

Her

Mother's Face

FREYA BLACKWOOD

**Her Mother's Face** by Roddy Dovle

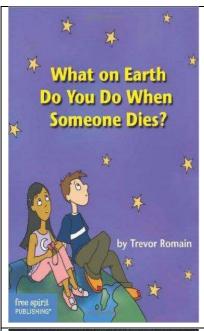
Award winners Roddy Doyle and Freya Blackwood team up to create a heartwarming story of loss, love, and what it means to be a family. When Siobhan was just three years old, her mother died, leaving Siobhan and her father alone in their house in Dublin. They never talk about her, and now, at ten years old, Siobhan no longer remembers her mother's face. With time, she and her father and her own daughter are able to remember Siobhan's mother with joy and laughter instead of tears.

Publisher: Scholastic

**Year:** 2012

I Must Tell You Something Rosernyn's story about the sudden death of her mother. Arno Bo	I Must Tell You Something by Arno Bo Nine year old Rosemary tells the moving story of her family's stay in hospital after a car accident in which they are all badly injured. Her mother dies and they have to come to terms with her death.  Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC Year: 1996	Best for one-to- one reading with support
SARA TAKES CHARGE	Sara Takes Charge by Joyce A. Stengel When Sara and Davey's mother dies, their father buries himself in his work leaving twelve year old Sara to worry about everything.  Publisher: Poolbeg Press Ltd Year: 1998	Best for one-to- one reading with support
Mynny Rebecco Cabb  American procession	Missing Mummy by Rebecca Cobb This book deals with the loss of a parent from a child's point of view. Perfectly pitched text and evocative artwork explore the many emotions a bereaved child may experience, from anger to guilt and from sadness to bewilderment. And importantly, the book also focuses on the positive - the recognition that the child is still part of a family, and that his memories of his mother are to be treasured.  Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books Year: 2012	Best for one-to- one reading with support

### **Death of a Father**



#### What on Earth Do You Do When Someone

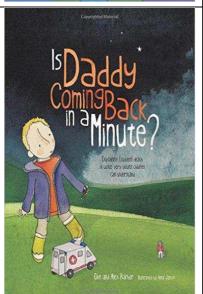
**Dies?** by <u>Trevor Romain</u> Trevor Romain knows. because it happened to him when his father died. This book can help you through a painful time. Trevor answers questions you might wonder about--"Why do people have to die?""Is the death my fault?""What happens to the person's body?""How can I say good-bye?--in simple, honest words.

Best for one-toone reading with support

**Publisher:** Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

**Year:** 2003

Best for one-to-



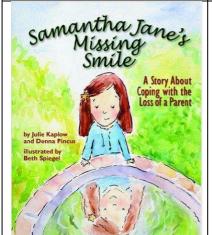
#### Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute? by Elke Barber

When we were on a No Girls Allowed! holiday, my daddy's heart stopped beating and I had to find help all by myself. He was very badly broken. Not even the ambulance people could help him...

This honest, sensitive and beautifully illustrated picture book is designed to help explain the concept of death to children.

**Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley

**Publishers Year:** 2016 one reading with support



### Samantha Jane's Missing Smile by Julie Kaplow

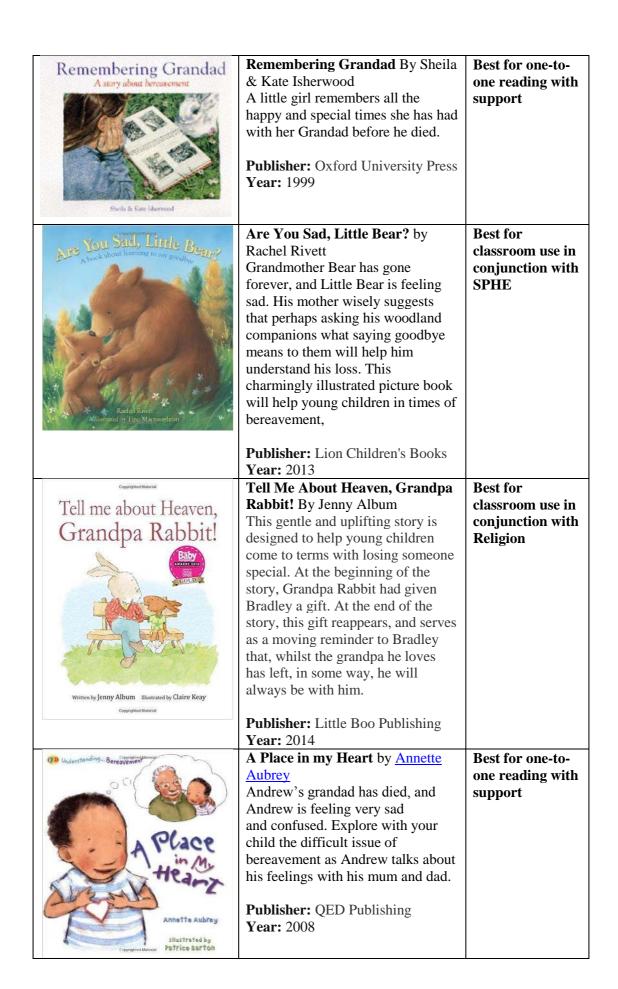
Since Samantha Jane's dad died, she has been sad and quiet, keeping to herself. One day, her neighbor Mrs. Cooper gently asks her about her missing smile, and Sammy Jane begins to open up about her grief, her worries, and her confusion.

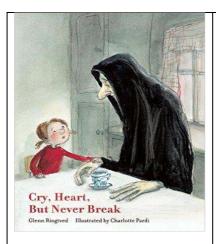
**Publisher:** Magination Press

**Year:** 2007

### **Death of a Grandparent**

OLIVER SEFFERS  The leart and the BOTTLE	The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers Award-winning picture book star Oliver Jeffers explores themes of love and loss in this life-affirming and uplifting tale. Once there was a girl whose life was filled with wonder at the world around herThen one day her father died and that made the girl take her heart and put it in a safe place. However, after that it seemed that the world was emptier than before. But would she know how to get her heart back?	Best for classroom use in conjunction with SPHE with senior classes
	Publisher: Harper Collins Children's Books Year: 2010	
Come Back, Grandma Sue Limb	Come Back, Grandma by Sue Limb Bessie loves her Grandmother very much. When she dies, Bessie never stops missing her until she grows up and has a daughter who is just like Grandma.	Best for one-to- one reading with support
Pictures by Claudio Manor.	Publisher: Red Fox Year: 1995	
GOOD-BYE, PAPA Una Leavy - Jennier Factus	Goodbye Pappa by Una Leavy Shane and Peter love staying at their grandfather"s. After they return home, he dies suddenly and they return for the funeral. Their mother suggests that they should remember all the happy times they shared. A picture book for sharing.  Publisher: Orchard Books Year:1999	Best for one-to- one reading with support
Grandpa & He	Just Grandpa and Me by Sally Grindley A story about a little boy"s happy day out with his Grandpa as they remember Grandma. A comforting book for sharing with a child who has recently lost a grandparent.  Publisher: Dorling Kindersley Publishers Ltd Year: 1998	Best for one-to- one reading with support





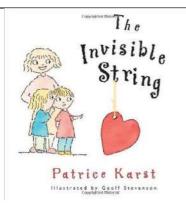
### Cry Heart but Never Break by Glenn Ringtved, Charlotte Pardi, and Robert Moulthrop

Aware their grandmother is gravely ill, four siblings make a pact to keep death from taking her away. But Death does arrive all the same, as it must. He comes gently, naturally. And he comes with enough time to share a story with the children that helps them to realize the value of loss to life and the importance of being able to say goodbye.

Best for one-toone reading with support. Also recommended for adults.

**Publisher:** Enchanted Lion Books **Year:** 2016

Best for one-toone reading with

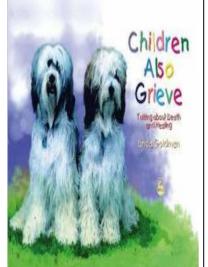


#### The Invisible String by Geoff Stevenson

A story that teaches of the tie that really binds. Mums (and Dads) feel the tug whenever kids give it; and kids feel the tug that comes right back: the Invisible String reaches from heart to heart. Here is a warm and delightful lesson teaching young and old that we aren't ever really alone.

support

**Publisher:** De Vorss & Co **Year:** 2001



#### **Children Also Grieve: Talking** about Death and Healing By Linda Goldman

This is an imaginative resource that offers support and reassurance to children coming to terms with the loss of a close friend or relative. The first part of the book is designed to be read and worked

through by children. The story tells of the experiences of Henry, the dog of a family whose grandfather has died. At various stages of the story, Goldman provides readers with the opportunity to share their own reactions to loss through words and pictures, using specific prompt questions that encourage the exploration of different facets of grief.

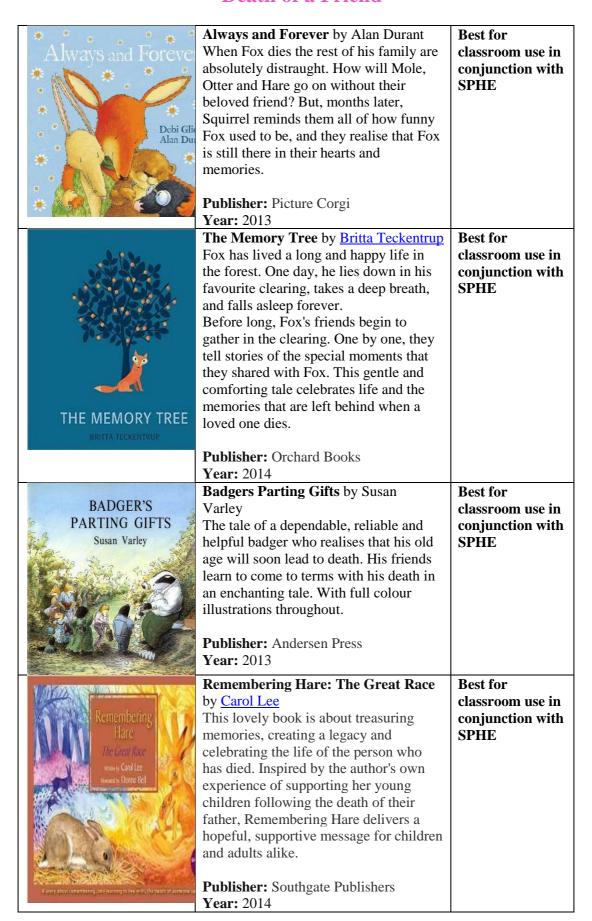
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley

**Publishers Year:** 2006

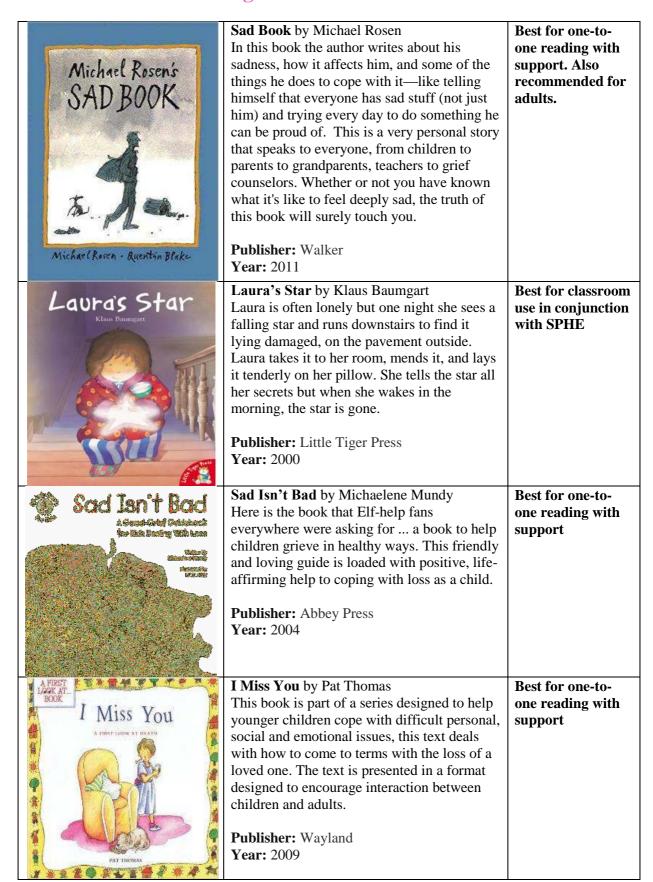
### **Death of a Sibling**

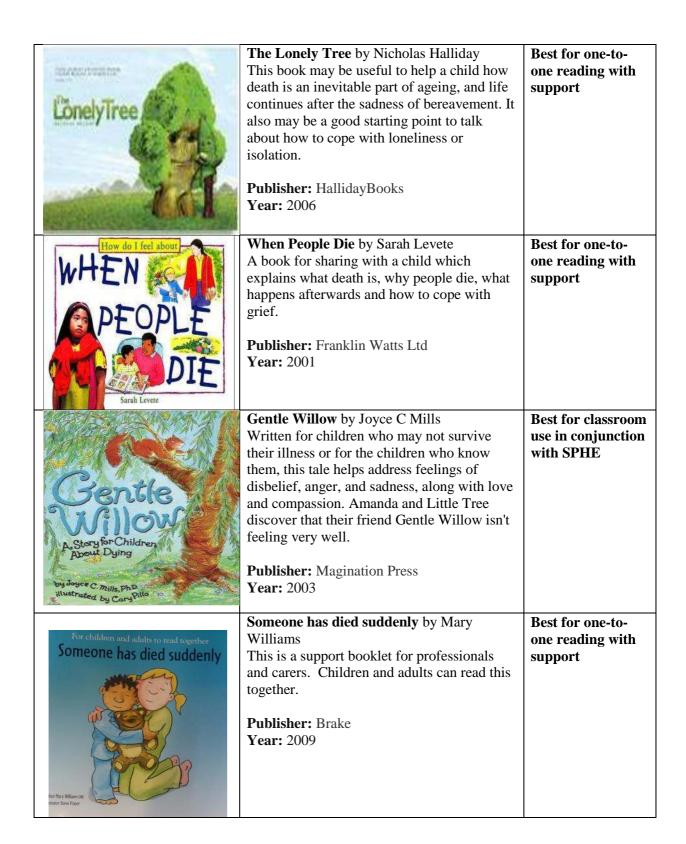
I miss my sister	I miss my Sister by Sarah Courtauld The beautiful and expressive colour illustrations help to guide the child through the different emotions they may encounter following the death of a sibling, as well as the different categories of grief over a period of time.  Publisher: Child Bereavement Charity Year: 2009	Best for one-to- one reading with support
GOOdbye  Baby  Cameron's story  Gillian Criffiths  Copyrightlikikilijiv Lindray MacLeod	Goodbye Baby: Cameron's Story by Gillian Griffiths This book provides comfort, understanding and reassurance for young children who have been affected by miscarriage in the family.	Best for one-to- one reading with support
We had an angel instead.	Publisher: St Andrew Press Year: 2010  We Were Gonna Have a Baby, But We Had an Angel Instead by Pat Schwiebert Addresses the issues that children may face over the loss of an unborn child and also gives parents practical and sensitive advice to help their children cope with the death.  Publisher: Grief Watch Year: 2007	Best for one-to- one reading with support

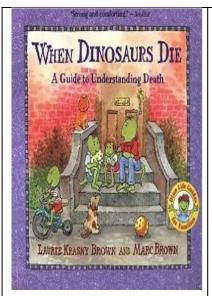
### Death of a Friend



### **Discussing Death with Children**







#### When Dinosaurs Die by Laurie Krasny **Brown**

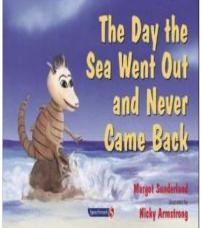
No one can really understand death but to children, the passing away of a loved one can be especially perplexing and troublesome. This is true whether the loss is a classmate, friend, family member or pet. Here to offer advice and reassurance from some very wise dinosaurs. This succinct and thorough guide helps dispel the mystery and negative connotations associated with death, providing answers to some of the most-often asked questions and also explores the feelings we may have regarding the death of a loved one and the ways to remember someone after he or she has died.

Best for one-toone reading with support

**Publisher:** Little, Brown Books for Young

Readers **Year:** 1998

Best for one-to-



### The Day the Sea Went out and Never Came Back by Margot Sunderland

Eric is a sand dragon who loves the sea very much. Each day, he watches it going out and coming back. His sea is beautiful indeed to him. But one day, the sea goes out and does not come back. Eric waits and waits, but it does not come back. Soon, he realises that his memories of his precious sea are like a special kind of treasure in his mind, a treasure he will never lose.

one reading with support

Publisher: Speechmark Publishing Ltd **Year:** 2003

# The Froq who Longed for the Moon to Smile

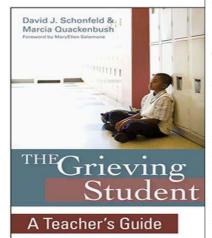
#### The Frog Who Longed for the Moon to Smile by Margot Sunderland

This is a story for children who yearn for someone they love. Frog is very much in love with the moon because she once smiled at him. So now he spends all his time dreaming about her. He waits and waits for her to smile at him again. One day a wise and friendly crow helps frog to see how he is wasting his life away. All the time he has been facing the place of very little, he's had his back to the place of plenty.

Publisher: Speechmark Publishing Ltd **Year:** 2001



### **Further Reading for Teachers**

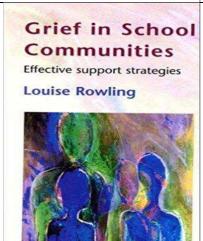


**The Grieving Student** by David Schonfeld & Marcia Quakenbush

Throughout the book, powerful vignettes and examples give teachers a vivid inside look at what their students may be feeling and how an educator's words and actions can make a difference. And because teachers may struggle with their own emotions as they help their students, the book shows them how to manage a wide range of feelings, from discomfort with discussing death to personal identification with the child's loss.

Publisher: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.

**Year:** 2010



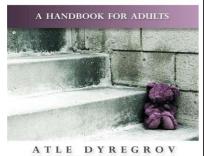
### **Grief in School Communities: Effective Support Strategies** by Louise Rowling

This book is an essential guide for all members of a school community and other professionals who need to know how to be supportive in times of crisis - including social workers, psychologists and bereavement specialists. The book is firmly based on theory, research and practiceWithin this comprehensive approach attention is given to the needs and experiences of personnel - teachers, students, school leaders, parents; as well as school policies and programs and links with outside services.

**Publisher:** Open University Press

**Year:** 2003



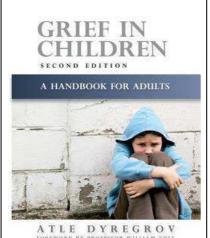


**Grief in Young Children: A Handbook for Adults** by Atle Dyregrov

This book is essential reading for parents, carers, counsellors and teachers, and is complemented by the companion volume Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults, Second Edition, which caters for school-age children, also written by Atle Dyregrov and published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

**Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publishers

**Year:** 2008

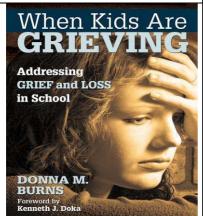


#### **Grief in Children** by Atle Dyregrov

Whether a child experiences the death of a parent, sibling, other relation or friend, or of a classmate or teacher, it is important for those caring for bereaved children to know how to respond appropriately to the child's needs. This book deals with a range of common physical and psychological responses and describes the methods of approaching grief in children that have been shown to work best. The author provides guidance on how loss and bereavement should be handled at school, explains when it is appropriate to involve expert professional help and discusses the value of bereavement groups for children and support for caregivers.

Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd

**Year:** 2008

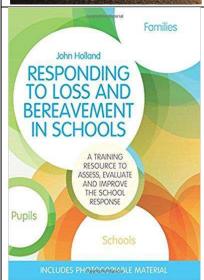


### When kids are grieving: Addressing grief and loss in schools by Donna M. Burns

This primer on loss and grief helps educators and counsellors understand and respond to the extraordinary challenges that children and adolescents may face when dealing with loss and grief. The book explains how children and adolescents are affected by various forms of loss.

**Publisher:** Skyhorse Publishing

Year: 2014 (Reprint)

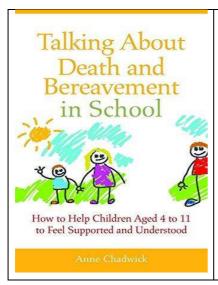


### **Responding to Loss and Bereavement in Schools** by John Holland

This practical resource provides everything you need to enable your school to provide the best possible support for pupils and staff who have suffered a loss or bereavement. The book includes a school 'audit' to allow full assessment and evaluation of your school's current bereavement provision, and a full set of photocopiable training exercises for in-school staff bereavement training. It considers the important and unique role the school can play in supporting bereaved pupils and staff, and provides valuable guidance on how to create a school bereavement policy.

**Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publishers

**Year:** 2016



### Talking About Death and Bereavement in School: How to Help Children Aged 4 to 11 to Feel Supported and Understood by Ann Chadwick

Children experiencing bereavement are often confused, unprepared, and in need of help and support from those around them. It is important that school teachers and staff know how to respond to bereavement and how they can best help the child. This short, easy to read book offers simple but important advice and guidance for school teachers and staff on what to do when a child is grieving. It also stresses the importance of teaching the facts of death to children and includes ideas on how to incorporate this into lessons.

Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

**Year:** 2011