

Child Bereavement Service



Grieving During COVID 19



The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our traditional ways of marking our grief. Our rituals often provide comfort and can involve a wake, funeral, burial or cremation with a gathering or meal after the funeral and perhaps a month's mind following. Our normal opportunities to share stories and memories of our loved one where we can laugh, cry and remember may not be possible. We *can* support ourselves and our children in different ways.

Grieving in a time of Social- Distancing

Unfortunately over coming weeks when we are all in isolation some families will experience the death of someone they know and or love. This may be related to COVID-19 but it may also be unconnected. In these exceptional times it may not be possible to receive comfort in our usual ways.

During these unusual times it will be natural to want to shield children when someone dies. However, it is important to support our children and young people and help to contain their big emotions. Talking and being as honest as we can, allows children and young people to feel involved and safe.

We know children and young people need age appropriate information. Although they will be upset, which you may find painful to watch they will be better able to cope knowing the truth.

Children's understanding of death will depend largely upon their developmental

stage. The following link will take you to a [guide based on chronological ages](#).

Saying goodbye

Sadly, as result of infection control families will not have the opportunity to spend time with someone who is dying or say goodbye in person.

Where it is possible maybe suggest to the children that you write your own book about favourite memories of time spent together. This may help your family capture some memories.



How to tell a child or young person that someone special has died from coronavirus

"I have something very sad and difficult to tell you. **** has died. Do you remember I told you they had coronavirus and that the doctors and nurses were doing everything they could to help them get better? Unfortunately, even though they tried really hard, their illness was too strong and their body could not get better. Their lungs stopped working and their heart stopped beating and they died."

Honest and direct language reduces confusion but gives the child or young person all the information that you have.

Funeral

If you are not able to view the body it can be difficult to accept the reality of the death.

Funerals will be very different during this time. We know that normal traditions cannot be facilitated.

Numbers attending funerals will be limited. Family may not be able to attend a funeral.

Suggestions

Talk to your funeral director for advice.

If only a couple of people from the same household can attend the funeral in person, they could take the children through what happened at the service on their return.

Some venues allow a live stream so that people at home can watch the funeral.

It may be that family members cannot be in the same location but want to be together for the funeral so you could consider a video call with each other.

Where possible photographs can be taken to show children and young people to help them understand what happens at a funeral. Photographs that are helpful include: the outside of the place where the funeral is being held; the hearse; the coffin (or equivalent); any flowers or decoration; the

interior of the venue (with permission).

Keepsakes from the funeral service can be very meaningful for children. For example, some flowers from the tributes to press and keep; a leaf from one of the trees in the grounds; a pebble from the surrounding area; the order of service.

Children can participate by contributing to some of the choices within the short ceremony. For example, they could choose a piece of music, select a poem, or suggest flowers.

Children could write and/or draw cards to be placed on or in the coffin or choose a toy or something meaningful to be placed with the person's body.

They could also write a tribute to the person who died which can be read by the person taking the service or by whoever is able to attend.

If these suggestions cannot be fulfilled you could set some time aside to have your own private goodbye and include some of the suggestions or hold a formal

or informal memorial at some future point.

Ways to support yourself

Doing the best you can at this time is all that your children and young people need! Take time to care for yourself.

Try to stay emotionally connected using text, email and messages as well as via social media as well as phone calls.

Allow yourself to feel even though it is painful.

Keep talking to those who are closest to you even if they physically far away. Try to phone someone each day.

Keep to routines such as mealtimes, getting up time and getting washed and dressed as well as bed time. Try to get into the garden for some fresh air.

Check in with your children and young people.

Understand that your children and young people dip in and out of their emotions quickly. They will set their own pace.

Allow children and young people to connect with other family, cousins as well as friends.

Limit the amount of news and social media you consume whilst feeling sad as it can enhance your feelings of distress.

Be tolerant and kind to yourself.

Useful Websites:

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childhoodbereavement.ie

www.cruse.org.uk

Barnardo's Child Bereavement Service

Advice line Number:

07867 372711

Currently available on Monday, Tuesday and Friday: 10am-1pm.

Email:

cbsreferrals@barnardos.org.uk



