

# Bereavement Support



## A poem

We know that what has happened makes you really, really sad  
And sometimes you will find that you are really, really mad,  
And everything ahead looks really, really bad...that's normal.

Everyone wants to change all this and really wish they could.  
They don't know what to say to you and you think they should.  
So tell them how you are feeling, they really wish you would,  
We're sure...You'll see.

Your world has changed forever; it's very sad, but true.  
And we know people you don't, who want to help you through.  
So will you spend some time with them? And see what they can do...To help

Stephanie Scotts



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## Background of Simon Says

Simon Stanley was a 37 year old teacher from Southampton when he died from cancer. His wife Sally found there was no bereavement support locally for their two small children. Their experiences led to the establishment of "Simon Says" as a registered charity.

Research has shown that the Stanleys' experience is not unique and there is a wider need to provide resources and information to children, parents and professionals who work with children and young people eg: teachers, health professionals. It is estimated that approximately 7500 children of school age (5 - 16 yrs) in Hampshire have a parent or sibling who dies<sup>1</sup>. This number does not include the death of other close relatives or friends.

Simon Says was registered as a charity in 2001 with a formal launch in 2002.

Patrons of Simon Says: Sally Taylor, MBE  
Sally Stanley, MSc MInstLM  
Matthew Hayes, DM FRCS (Urol)

<sup>1</sup> Source: Child Bereavement Network

## What does Simon Says offer?

The death of someone important can have a traumatic effect on a child or young person. However, with appropriate support and information, children and young people understand what has happened and are able to rebuild their lives.

Whether the death was sudden or expected, Simon Says works in practical and creative ways to support children and young people in Hampshire when an important person in their life has died or is dying. We do this by:

- Running a telephone support line (023 8064 7550)
- Offering support groups for children (up to age 11 yrs)
- Offering support groups for young people (age 11 – 18 yrs)
- Providing written information and resources
- Recommending counsellors who specialise in child bereavement, if the need arises
- Offering support, training and advice to schools and those professionals working/supporting bereaved children

# A charter for bereaved children and young people

“A child can live through anything provided they are told the truth and allowed to share the natural feelings people have when they are suffering” Eda Le Shan.

Although each bereavement will be unique, bereaved children and young people have key needs:

## 1. Enough Information

Bereaved children/young people need answers to their questions. They need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it happened and what will happen now.

## 2. Being Involved

Bereaved children/young people should be asked if they want to help with important decisions that will affect them (such as planning the funeral, remembering anniversaries).

## 3. Family Involvement

Support for bereaved children/young people should include their parent(s). It should respect each child's confidentiality.

## 4. Meeting Others

Bereaved children/young people can be helped by meeting other children/young people who have had similar experiences.

## 5. Telling the Story

Bereaved children/young people have the right to tell their story. This may be through drawings, letters or puppets. The stories can be heard, read and seen by people important to the child/young person.

## 6. Expressing Feelings

Bereaved children/young people should feel comfortable showing all feelings that go with grief such as anger, sadness, guilt and anxiety. They may need help to find ways to do this.

## 7. Not to Blame

Young bereaved children often feel they are to blame for the death. They may need help to understand this is not true!

## 8. Established Routines

Bereaved children/young people should continue with interests and activities they have enjoyed if they choose.

## 9. School Response

Bereaved children/young people can benefit from a positive response from school or college.

## 10. Remembering

Bereaved children/young people have the right to remember the person who died for the rest of their lives. This may involve reliving memories so that the person becomes a comfortable part of the child's/young person's ongoing life story.

## What can grief feel like?

The death of a special person is always a shock – even if that person was suffering from a terminal illness and the death was expected. No amount of planning can actually prepare anyone for the death of someone they love, and the new reality of living a life without that person.

Because everyone is different, everyone including children experiences grief differently. It is important that the child understands this. Some people may cry a lot and some may not cry at all – it does not mean the person who is not crying is less sad than the person crying a lot – it simply means they are experiencing their grief differently. Other common feelings related to grief include anger, guilt, depression, disbelief, loneliness and relief. It is important to remember that there are no right and wrong feelings. As with many emotions grief is often a new feeling and for this reason can be a very scary experience. People will experience different feelings at different times.



# How much do children and young people understand?

## Younger children 0-8 years

- Children of this age don't know the name for what they are feeling. They just know that the world feels all different and horrible and their tummy feels funny and somehow it comes out as a tantrum in the supermarket.
- They may be clingier than usual, or more scared (of real things or pretend ones like giants and monsters).
- They may behave as though they are younger than they actually are - young children often seem to lose skills that they have mastered so they may go back to wetting themselves or waking often in the night.
- They may 'act out' the story of what happened to the person who died. They may have tummy aches or headaches or their toys may.
- Remember that a lot of the time they will behave as though nothing has happened. This is normal. They will remember too, but not all the time.

### *What can help:*

- Tell them about what they are feeling, comfort them, and help them to feel safe while making sure they know that having a tantrum, thumping their little brother or refusing to stay in bed is not OK.
- Help them to know that it is alright to feel sad, frightened, lonely – and that sometimes you feel that way too.
- Keep routines going, like bed times.
- Don't be afraid to say 'no' if that is what you would always have said in the past. You can add extra cuddles and reassurance, and be a bit flexible when you – or your child – need you to be.
- Make sure they understand what has happened. Use words that others are using (like dead) even if you think they are too young to understand them; they will hear them anyway and it will be reassuring to hear you say them.
- Talk about the person who has died, tell them stories about the person, and remind them what the person was like. Together you can create a memory store, to keep memories alive.
- Children are very supportive of each other; by attending a support group they will have the opportunity to meet others their age who have also been bereaved and they can share experiences and support each other.

## Older children 8-11 years

- At this age children may know what the feeling is called, but they may not connect it with the death of someone important.
- They are looking for reassurance, comfort and a sense that the adults are still in charge, as well as an acceptance that they too are suffering and struggling.
- Children of this age often try to comfort their parent; they may hide their own distress or act it out at school. They may be unusually well behaved or may show signs of unacceptable behaviour. They may be uncharacteristically clingy or behave as though they are younger than they really are.

### *What can help:*

- As with younger children, don't be afraid to say 'no' if that is what you would always have said in the past. You can add extra cuddles and reassurance, and be a bit flexible when you – or your child – need you to be.
- Drawing and making things together is a great way to talk about difficult things.
- Remember that at this age, like the younger ones, a lot of the time they will behave as though nothing has happened. This is normal. They will remember too, but not all the time.
- Make sure they understand what has happened. Remember that their understanding will mature as they grow older. Therefore they will ask different questions and will be able to understand and make better sense of what has occurred. The answers you give to their questions will need to grow as their understanding grows.
- Talk about the person who has died; share stories about him/her, encourage children of this age to make a storyboard picturing events prior/during/after the death, make a memory store together to keep memories alive.
- Children are very supportive of each other; by attending a support group they will have the opportunity to meet others their age that have also lost someone important in their life and they can share experiences and support each other.

### *Teenagers*

- Life is full of very complicated feelings if you are a teenager and trying to deal with bereavement just adds to the complications.
- The main thing to remember is that 12-18 year olds tend to be very unpredictable – one minute they are looking after you very nicely and the next they are slamming out of the house in a temper. They may seem to be inconsolable until their phone goes and then they seem to be able to chat happily to a friend.
- Friends and the outside world are very important. You may feel they are given priority over your needs – it helps to try to make space for both. Teenagers can be wonderfully supportive of each other.
- Teenagers often take things very personally so it may feel deeply unfair that this thing has happened to them. Feeling hard done by can make people cross and aggressive. Acknowledging that it is not fair, that it is hard, will help.
- Teenagers may want to talk to you all the time – often in the middle of your night – or they may hardly acknowledge your presence. Try to talk when they are open to it – it will be appreciated. Try not to put pressure on them to confide in you – they may be more comfortable talking to others, but, do keep checking that they are OK.
- Sometimes talking is just too complicated and painful – you can keep communicating by leaving them a little note (like a post it on the fridge or their bedroom door), sending text messages, e-mail. Don't be put off by not getting a response – your effort will be appreciated, deep down.
- Teenagers are notorious for their risk taking behaviour – experimenting with drink, drugs, sex, and unacceptable behaviour. When they are trying to cope with a death in the family this may become more pronounced. As with younger children – try and keep to the old expectations while making some allowances.





*What can help:*

- Keeping the channels of communication open, whether directly or via text, notes or phone calls.
- Make sure your teenager knows what is going on; this may mean telling them more than once!
- Try to acknowledge their feelings and experience while recognising that some will be like yours and some will be different.
- Ask them for help when you need it without burdening them too much; sometimes teenagers feel that no one takes any notice of them and their nearly adult abilities.
- Try not to feel hurt if they choose to spend time with their friends rather than the family. Similarly if they seem to confide in others rather than you, try to be pleased that they are talking.
- Help them to keep themselves safe and reassure them that, in time, things will feel more back to 'normal'.
- Young people are very supportive of each other; by attending a support group they will have the opportunity to meet others who have shared a similar experience, but have learned to manage their loss, and this will provide a more positive perspective to the young person's future and will help to eliminate any guilt they might be feeling.
- For some young people, the death of someone important can tip them into really dangerous behaviour such as serious drug use, suicide attempts, selfharm, running away. Seek help as soon as you feel worried. Even if you can't get the young person to accept it, you need it for yourself.

## Questions children and young people may ask

Children and Young People can be unpredictable and they will not sit down and discuss a subject the way adults do. They will ask questions that may be difficult to answer, often out of the blue in a very direct way, giving you little or no time to think about a response. They may ask what it feels like to die, why their special person has died, what it's like inside a coffin or if it's dark in the ground. It is helpful to be prepared for questions like these, so a reaction doesn't upset the child and stop them from asking more questions.

### Some typical questions and possible responses:

#### Why do people die?

Explain that death is a natural part of life and everything that lives will eventually die. It is important to reassure them that all living things usually live a long and healthy life. Explain that death happens when things reach the end of their life when bodies wear out and stop working properly. The life cycle of plants, flowers and animals could be used to explain this.

#### Why has my 'special person' died?

It is important to be direct with children and young people, according to their age and understanding of death. Use simple language and avoid using terms to describe the person who has died as 'lost', 'gone' or 'passed away' as these are terms that younger children may find difficult to understand. Explaining that the person is dead or has died is honest and really helps to avoid any confusion.

#### Does dying hurt?

It's helpful to reassure children that dying doesn't usually hurt when someone has been ill for a long time as doctors are able to treat their pain and use medicines to take the pain away.

#### Why couldn't the doctors save my special person?

Explain that sometimes doctors aren't able to save every person but reassure them that everyone involved tried their very best to save them.

### Where do dead people go?

It's useful to ask the child their thoughts on this question before you answer. Explain that everyone has different thoughts and beliefs on this subject. Some people may want to imagine their loved ones as a star in the sky or as a beautiful butterfly. Other families will want to share their religious beliefs. The most important thing is to explain this subject in a way you and the child feels comfortable with.

### Will I see my special person again?

It is important to be honest about this as you wouldn't want to give a child false hope. Let them know they can see their loved one in their head any time they want to, and think about them. Explain that the person will always live on in their hearts because they loved them and they will always have their memories which no-one can take away. You may want to suggest your child keeps a special photograph of their loved one so they can look at it whenever they want to.

### Will I always feel sad?

Be honest – explain that they will probably always feel sad that their loved one has died, but they will not feel sad all the time. Explain to them that the sadness (grief) will come and go. Find something to compare it to, such as the sea – sometimes the sea will be calm with no waves and sometimes the sea will be very choppy with lots of big angry waves – and this is what sadness for a loved one who has died can feel like. It is important to let your child know that it is OK for them to be happy and to laugh – it would make their loved one happy to know they can still laugh and be happy.

### What happens to a body when someone dies?

Turn the question back to your child and ask what they think happens. This allows you to find out what they already think. You can let them know that when the special person dies their eyes will be shut and they will stop breathing and the body will feel cold. Reassure them that the special person is peaceful now and not in any pain or discomfort.

### Was it my fault?

NO! be absolutely clear about this. Explain that death is usually beyond anyone's control and it is just a very sad part of life.



## Stages of grief

We grieve after any sort of loss, but most powerfully after the death of someone we love. It is not just one feeling, but a range of different emotions which are felt most in the months, after the death. These various stages of grief often overlap and will present in different ways in different people. After this time although life is very different, most people manage to come to terms with their loss.

Children and young people have a different experience of time from that of adults, and may go through the stages of grief quite rapidly. In their early school years, children may feel responsible for the death of a close relative and so may need to be reassured. Young people may not speak of their grief for fear of adding extra burdens to the grown-ups around them. The grief of children and adolescents, and their need for mourning, should not be overlooked when a member of the family has died.

### Numbness

Particularly in the hours or days following the death, you feel simply stunned, as though you can't believe it has actually happened. You may feel like this even if the death had been expected.

### Agitated

After a few days the numbness usually wears off, and you may feel a sense of agitation, of pining or yearning for the dead person. You want somehow to find them, even though you know you can't. You find it difficult to relax, concentrate or sleep properly. You may dream, see fleeting visions or hear the voice of your loved one.

### Angry

You can feel very angry - towards doctors and nurses who did not prevent the death, towards friends and relatives who did not do enough, or even towards the person who has died because they have gone.

### Guilty

You may find yourself going over all the things you would have liked to have said or done. You may wonder if you could have prevented the death, even though death is usually beyond anyone's control.

### Relieved

You may feel relieved if your loved one has died after a painful or distressing illness. This feeling of relief is natural, understandable and very common.

## Sad

After the weeks of strong feelings, you may gradually become quietly sad and withdrawn. You feel less agitated but may experience more periods of depression. These can peak between four and six weeks later.

## Reflective

For several months, other people may see you as spending a lot of time just sitting, doing nothing. In fact, you are thinking about the person you have lost, going over in your mind your memories of the times you had together. This is a quiet, but essential part of coming to terms with the death.

## Becoming Whole

As time passes, the fierce pain of early bereavement fades, the sadness lifts and you start to think about other things and look to the future. Although the sense of having lost a part of yourself never goes away entirely, after some time you can feel whole again.

## Letting Go

The final phase of grieving is 'letting go' of the person who has died and start a new sort of life. Most recover from a major bereavement within one or two years, however it is important to remember that there is no 'standard' way of grieving. We are all individuals and have our own particular ways of grieving.

In some communities death is seen as just one step in the continuous cycle of life and death rather than as a 'full stop'. The rituals and ceremonies of mourning may be very public and demonstrative, or private and quiet. In some cultures the period of mourning is fixed, in others not. The feelings experienced by bereaved people in different cultures may be similar, but their ways of expressing them are very different.

## Grief that is unresolved

There are people who seem hardly to grieve at all. They do not cry at the funeral, avoid any mention of their loss and return to their normal life remarkably quickly. This is their normal way of dealing with loss and no harm results, but others may suffer from strange physical symptoms or repeated spells of depression over the following years. Some may not have the opportunity to grieve properly. The heavy demands of looking after a family or business may mean that there just isn't the time.

Some may start to grieve, but get stuck. The early sense of shock and disbelief just goes on and on. Years may pass and still the sufferer finds it hard to believe that the person they loved is dead. Others may carry on being unable to think of anything else, often making the room of the dead person into a kind of shrine to their memory.

Source: Royal College of Psychiatrists



## How bereavement can affect behaviour

When you and your children are trying to come to terms with the death of someone important, it is hard to know how to deal with difficult behaviour.

What is normal?.

It is normal for children and young people to be particularly good and particularly difficult in the days, weeks and months after the death of someone who was important to them. They may become quiet and withdrawn, or they may become extrovert and display unacceptable behaviour. They may be kind to you or they may seem furious all the time, behaving as though it is your fault. They may cling to you or they may ignore you, or, most commonly, a mixture of the two.

What helps?

- Remembering that children and young people grieve too

Remember that children also experience the turmoil, pain and confusion that happens when someone important dies. Unlike adults who cannot escape from this for a second, children are able to 'puddle jump', meaning that one moment they are feeling very upset and the next they are off playing and laughing – until they encounter the next puddle.

- Keeping a balance

Try to keep a balance between keeping things almost as they were before – if you never let the children do 'x' or 'y', don't let them do it now (unless there is a good reason of course!). If, for example, they always had a regular bed time, then you should keep to it. However, you may need to give them extra cuddles and reassurance around bed time, but don't think you have to drop all your old rules and customs. It is important to understand that they are struggling to manage all sorts of complicated feelings and worries, so they may get distracted, short tempered, angry, or aggressive. You won't want to let them hurt themselves or anyone else, so you will want to try to contain that behaviour while showing them that you understand why it is happening.

- Keep explaining

Try to ensure that they understand as fully as they can what happened and what is going to happen. When children worry it often is displayed by difficult behaviour. Children and young people overhear adults and put 2 and 2 together to make 17! Check that they have an understanding of the facts; their imagination can be worse than the facts, and keep checking that they are fully aware and understand what has happened and what is happening currently.

- Involving them

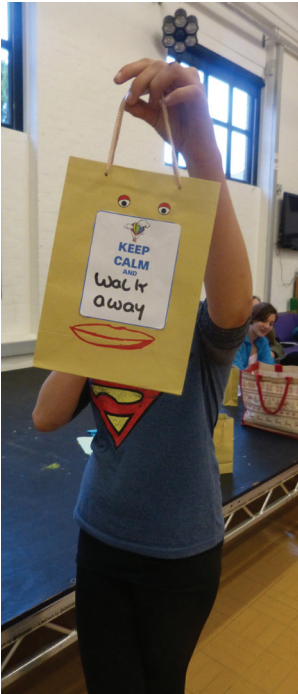
Try to involve your children as much as possible. One of the worst feelings is that of being left out or even shut out. Helping children/young people to anticipate what will happen and preparing them for difficult or possibly upsetting events means that they can be part of them. Sharing in what happens can help them.

- Keep talking

Talk about the person who has died. This can be hard, particularly as time goes on, but keep mentioning the person who died in an everyday way. Telling the children/young people the family stories about the person will enable them to keep having a real picture, a real sense of the person they are missing. The person who died may not always have been a hero – or the 'bad guy' – so it is important to remember both sorts of anecdotes.

# Controlling anger safely

Feeling angry is one of the common emotions felt after the death of someone special



There are two types of anger:

**Negative Anger:** Children and young people can lash out when angry and can hurt others; some bottle up their anger. Negative anger can lead to depression, anxiety and resentment.

**Positive Anger:** Its OK to feel angry providing that it does not make you hurt yourself or others, and it can be used to make positive changes.

**The 3 rules for handling anger:**

1. Do not hurt yourself
2. Do not hurt other people
3. Do not damage property

**Control Your Body**

- Keep your voice quiet and slow
- Breathe slowly, practice relaxation techniques
- Count to 10 or more, slowly
- Think before you react
- Is the anger really justified?

**Releasing Anger Safely**

- Hit a pillow or cushion
- Throw safe items into a container
- Go for a walk
- Throw stones into water
- Jump on old egg boxes
- Write/draw your feelings, tear them up and throw them away
- Tear up old newspapers
- Shout in a safe place
- Pretend to talk to the person who makes you angry

Remember it is healthy to let anger out in a safe way and once anger is expressed children and young people can begin to feel much better.

## Ideas for supporting bereaved children and young people

- Sharing time – make special time to share thoughts and feelings
- Draw Pictures – telling the story of what happened, showing feelings before, at the time and after the death
- On Mothers/Fathers Day - plant a shrub or bulbs in the garden or their favourite place; blow bubbles and send with your love in the wind
- Feelings Book – encourage children/young people to record their feelings by writing or drawing, throughout the day/weeks
- Special Trips – visit a place that holds special memories
- Write a Poem or Song
- Compile a CD of the special person's favourite music
- Make a Worry Bag/Envelope – children/young people write their worries on a piece of paper and put it into their bag or envelope. They can then talk about them with a chosen adult
- First Aid Kit – decorate a box and place items inside it that make the child/young person happy. Suggest shared memories are included that make them smile, and propose they go to it when they feel sad
- Time out Cards – make a card that tells a teacher or carer that they are feeling sad, so no words have to be spoken and awareness of their emotions are made clear
- Attend a Simon Says Support Group





# Simon Says support groups

Bereaved children and young people may find it difficult to ask questions or talk to their parents/carer for fear of upsetting them.

Support groups are a safe, supported and friendly environment for children and young people who are in various stages of grief. It can be very comforting for them to realise that other children and young people are experiencing similar emotions and they are not the only ones to have lost someone special.

## How to register for a group

Please contact us for the dates and locations of your nearest group and to register with us. You can either call the office during office hours or call our support line and leave a message with your name and number and one of our volunteers will call you back. Registration should take no more than 10 minutes. If you are coming to your first group, could we ask you to come along 15 minutes before the session to meet the team.

Children up to the age of 11 years can attend one of our groups with a parent or guardian. We also have a youth group for 11 to 17 years.

## What to expect - The Aims and Objectives of our group

- For children and their carers to meet others in a similar situation to them and know that they are not the only ones to have lost someone special.
- Those coming for the first time will have time with one of our trained volunteers who will reassure and welcome them to the group.
- Our groups are tailored around the needs of the families in a friendly and informal atmosphere.
- A typical session would run as follows:
  - Arrival - welcome - registration - introductions
  - Organised fun, varied theme based activities
  - Refreshments are offered giving adults and opportunity to talk about how their children are dealing with their bereavement and other issues which may have arisen.
- Past themes include: Happy memories, change, relationships, guilt, anger, stress, sadness, fears and worries.
- Children and young people take part in therapeutic activities e.g. Memory boxes, scrap books, decorated candles and coloured sand jars.
- These activities encourage children and young people to sit together and talk about their bereavement and related issues while busy with the activity.
- With this support the children will find it easier to talk about their feelings in the wider community.
- Those who attend the group can come along as and when they need to and for as long as they feel necessary (Until 18 yrs old).
- There is no charge.

## Young People's Support Groups

Young people say .... "No one listens"

Simon Says .... "We Will!"

### Who Attends?

Young people aged between 11yrs – 18yrs (young people may bring a friend/family member if it makes them feel more comfortable)

### What Goes on?:

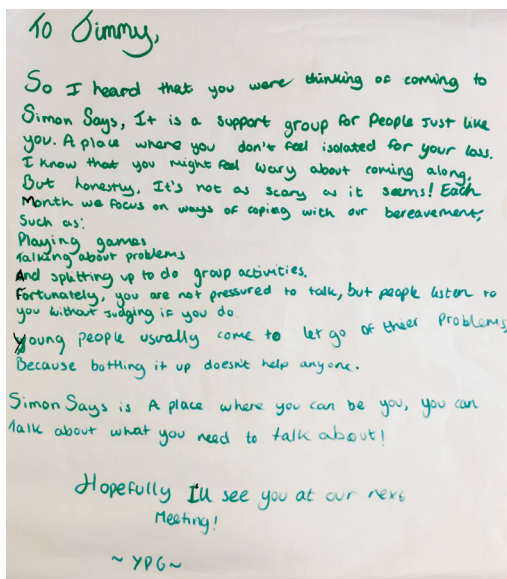
Support groups are tailored around the needs of the young people in a friendly and informal atmosphere offering:

- A place for young people to come and be themselves with others who are in the same position as them
- Opportunities to talk and be listened to
- Support and advice
- Fun and laughter (but it's ok to be sad too)
- Various activities to help with bereavement and share experiences

### Themes:

Groups follow a theme and include; memories, change, relationships, coping skills, guilt, anger, stress, sadness, bullying, fears and worries.

Please contact the Simon Says office for dates and locations of groups.



This letter was written by young people who have attended our young people's group (YPG).

## Storing memories

Children and young people value opportunities to feel close and connected to important people in their lives.

A memory store is not designed to give a child memories, but it is to help keep memories alive. It can also let a child know things that a person who is seriously ill may not be able to tell them in the future. It can also be a helpful record for a child who is too young to understand information, which they will come to cherish as they grow older.

The following is just a guide and can be adapted according to the needs of each family. It may be easier to record thoughts and ideas onto a CD/DVD.

### Memory Box

- Letters/notes handwritten ones are especially precious
- Photos don't be afraid to include those that show illness
- Stories about events that happened during the special person's life
- Items with a message eg 'this is a shell we found on a beach when you were 3'
- Favourite perfume/aftershave
- Audiotapes/answer phone messages voices are often forgotten
- Video/DVDs
- Newspaper clippings
- Favourite belongings eg football shirt, jewellery
- Tickets/memorabilia eg holiday tickets, concert, days out
- Achievements eg Medals/Trophies/Certificates

It is perfectly natural to feel there are times when children and young people will want to remember and to have times when it does not feel OK. A child's memory box reminds them that they are in control and can choose to share their stories (memories) with people they trust. As such, the box can symbolise a way for a parent and child/young person to have safe conversations and say things that may otherwise go unsaid for fear of upsetting each other.

Looking through the box can help with the process of grieving by bringing to mind the different aspects of the person who died – who they were, what they did or did not like, what they were good and not so good at, as well as the things that were important to them.



## Making a jar of memories

Children may like to make a coloured “Salt Sculpture” to help remember important things about the person who has died.

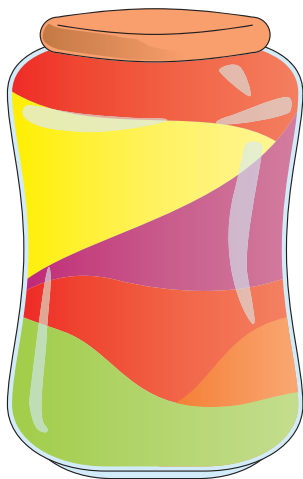
### You will need:

- A small jar with a lid and wide neck (e.g. baby food jar)
- Salt
- 5 coloured chalks
- 6 pieces of paper

Looking through the box can help with the process of grieving by bringing to mind the different aspects of the person who died – who they were, what they did or did not like, what they were good and not so good at, as well as the things that were important to them.

### What to do:

1. Fill your jar to the brim with salt. On one of the pieces of paper write down 5 things you remember about the person who died. These could be things you know they liked, something you enjoyed doing, perhaps somewhere you went together or what you remember about them as a person. Then choose a different colour to represent each memory and put a dot of that colour next to each memory.
2. Spread out 5 sheets of paper and divide the salt from the jar between them.
3. Then colour each pile of salt using one of the 5 chalks. Rub each chalk backwards and forwards into the salt. The salt will begin to take on the colour of the chalk. The harder you rub the brighter the coloured salt will become.
4. Carefully pick up each piece of paper and pour the coloured salts into your jar one at a time. (If you tilt your jar you can make waves of colour appear).
5. When all the colours have been added, hold the jar and tap it down on a work surface to settle the salt. Do not shake the jar unless you want to mix up all the colours. Then fill the remaining space with plain salt (right up to the top!) this is important and will stop the colours mixing.
6. Secure the lid firmly and use some sellotape to hold it in place. Try to keep your list of what the colours mean to you close by your jar. You may like to show other people your ‘jar of memories’. Can you think of a special place where you can put your jar?



## Making a life book

Here are some ideas on making a life book, to help a child/young person keep memories alive of someone who was important to them. It is designed to help a child/young person understand more about the person who has died and to give them information that they may find invaluable as they grow older

The contents could include some of the following:

- Information about the person's childhood – where they were born, their family, education
- The person's hobbies and interests as a child; any special achievements
- Where they went to school and what they did when they left school
- Their jobs/careers
- Interests and hobbies as a young adult
- How they met their partner; what they enjoyed doing together
- Information about the marriage; moving in together
- The person's good points eg really good at .....
- The person's not so good points eg not very good at .....
- Information about the birth of the child(ren)
- Relationships with the child(ren)
- The person's hopes and dreams
- Things that worried the person
- Information about the illness and treatment, or details of how the person died, including where the child(ren) were when it happened
- Information about when/if the person knew they were going to die
- Information about the death and the funeral
- Information about 'us' as a family without the person
- Things missed most, now that the person has died
- Things that are remembered about the person
- Favourites – holidays, special places, foods, sports, TV, films, books, perfume/aftershave etc

These headings are simply a guide and can be altered to suit the needs of your family. It may be easier to record thoughts and ideas onto a tape/CD/DVD. A close friend or family members may be able to help collect the information together.

## Let the school help

Inform your child's teacher what is happening. This will allow the teacher/school to help keep an eye on your child – providing additional support while your child is at school.

Teachers can be very supportive during this difficult time and some schools employ Emotional Support Workers or other staff who have had bereavement training in whom your child can confide. It can often be of great help to the child

affected by bereavement if people in their class/school know and understand a little about the situation they are going through.

It may be helpful for your child to have

'special time' during the school day where they can telephone their parent(s) to be reassured that they are still there. Constant reassurance during an unsettling time like this can be of great comfort to a child of any age.

# Funerals

This is often a subject that is avoided because it is painful and difficult to deal with at this already emotionally charged time. However, by discussing it together and making arrangements it will help those left behind not only to give the person who has died the goodbye they wanted, but also to celebrate their life.



Parents/carers have very different views on whether children and young people should see the body after death or attend the funeral, however children and young people do value the opportunity to choose. For them to make the right choice for themselves, it is important that they understand what is involved.

## Why It Can Help to See the Body and Attend the Funeral

Families will have different cultural and religious beliefs about seeing the person who has died and attending the funeral, but it can help a child / young person to:

- begin to say goodbye
- begin to accept the reality and finality of the death
- begin to understand what has happened
- be less scared
- feel part of what is happening
- share with others an important last memory about the person who died

## Seeing The Body

It is a good idea to liaise with the undertaker about visiting the body. In some instances the body may be marked or disfigured, and it is important to know before visiting the body if an affected area has been covered.

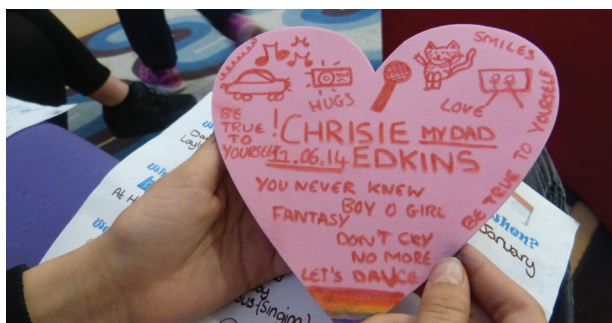
Here are some points which may help the child / young person decide on whether they would like to see the person after they have died:

- Assure them that they can change their minds at any time, even at the last minute
- Check that they are happy with the choice they've made – but not too often. Children and young people often want to please and may say what they think you want them to say
- Let them know, clearly and in detail, what to expect. Ideally from you or someone else who has already seen the body. Eg 'Your dad is lying in the coffin. You will see all of him because the lid isn't there. He's got his eyes closed and his skin's cold. He may feel rather hard, like a statue. If you would like to touch him you can, but only if you want to. I kissed his forehead which was what I wanted to do but it seemed strange that his skin was cold. So don't be surprised if it doesn't seem to be your dad'
- Give them choices about what they do when they enter the room – they can wait by the door, stroke a head or hand, and leave when they want to
- Children and young people often appreciate taking something with a special meaning to leave with the body, eg: a card they have made, or a shell from a favourite holiday or a picture

## Attending the funeral

If you are prepared to let your child make the choice of whether to attend the funeral, some things may help them decide:

- Assure them that they can change their minds – at any time
- Check that they are happy with the choice they've made – but not too often. Children / young people often want to please and may say what they think you want them to say
- Have someone available who the child / young person is close to and trusts (eg. a teacher / friend, who is not emotionally tied to the person who has died) who can be with the child / young person during the funeral. If the child / young person wishes to leave the service they can do so safely
- Provide clear and detailed information about what will happen at the funeral. This will involve explanations about the difference between, for example, burials and cremations
- Reassure them that it is all of the body of the person who has died that is being buried or cremated. Some younger children are confused and wonder what happens to the head, arms and legs



- Give reassurance that the person who has died can no longer feel anything, so they will not feel the flames nor will they be scared at being buried
- Offer clear and detailed explanations of what to expect from people at the funeral. Some children and young people can be shocked that people seem to have a party after someone has died; others are upset when people say 'How lovely to see you'. Explain that this doesn't mean that these people are happy that the person has died – they're just the sort of things that adults say. Equally, seeing adults in deep distress may alarm children but preparation beforehand will help them understand that this is a reasonable response to the huge thing that has happened
- Create opportunities to be involved. This may be in the planning of the funeral service. It may be through saying or reading or writing something about the person who has died. It may be through choosing a particular piece of music. They may wish for something special to be put in the coffin, for example, a picture or something linked to a memory
- Give plenty of reassurance that they can still be involved and participate in saying 'goodbye' even if they choose not to attend and that they won't be criticised if they don't go to the funeral

## Alternative 'goodbyes'

If it is not possible for the child / young person to attend the funeral, for whatever reason, there are other positive ways in which they can be involved. If the funeral happened some time ago and the young person regrets that they did not attend, it is never too late to have a memorial or other ceremony that includes them saying 'goodbye'. It could be linked to an important date eg date of their death, or birthday.

- Visit the grave or other special place, for example where the ashes were scattered
- Visit a place with special memories
- Create a special place of the child's / young person's choosing
- Visit a place that you went to regularly



Some of these ideas may make the occasion special:

- Hold a small ceremony with specially chosen music, poems and tributes
- Bring a picnic of the dead person's favourite food to share
- Prepare something to leave in the 'special place' – flowers, a laminated poem, or a toy
- Light a candle and share special memories with each other
- Start a collection of memories from family and friends of the person who has died



## Do's and don'ts for adults

- DO express your emotions and let your children share your grief
- DO make time for your own grief
- DO take every opportunity to review the experience
- DO allow yourself to be part of a group of people who care
- DO take time out to sleep, rest, think and be with your close family and friends
- DO express your needs clearly and honestly to the family, friends and officials
- DO try and keep your life as normal as possible after the acute grief
- DO let children and young people talk about their emotions and express themselves in games and drawings
- DO send your child(ren) back to school and let them keep up with their activities
- DO make sure that the child's teachers know what has happened
- DO drive more carefully
- DO be more careful around the home
- DON'T avoid talking about what has happened
- DON'T expect the memories to go away, the feelings will stay with you for a long time to come
- DON'T forget that children experience similar feelings but they may be displayed differently
- DON'T bottle up your feelings

## Suggested Book Lists

### Age 5 and under

#### Goodbye Mousie

By Robie H. Harris  
ISBN: 978-0689871344

#### Fred

By Posy Simmonds  
ISBN: 0099264129

#### The Sunshine Cat

By Miriam Moss  
ISBN: 9781841215679

#### Is Daddy Coming Back In a Minute?

By Elke Barber, Nov 2012

ISBN: 0957474504

#### Missing Mummy

By Rebecca Cobb, April 2012  
ISBN: 0230749518

#### Are You Sad Little Bear?

By Rachel Rivett  
May 2013 (reprint)  
ISBN: 9780745964300

#### Understanding...A Place In My Heart By Annette Aubry

2008 (Under 5s)  
ISBN: 9781848350045

#### Honey Bear Died

By Jennifer E Melvin, May 2011  
ISBN: 978-1613350218

#### Always and Forever

By Debi Gliori & Alan Durant  
ISBN: 978-0-552-56765-7

#### The Elephant in the Room

By Amanda Edwards & Leslie Ponciano  
ISBN: 9781492793243

\*Please note some of the books contain religious content.

### Age 5 - 8 years

#### Sad Isn't Bad

By Michaelene Mundy  
ISBN: 0870293214

#### When Dinosaurs Die

By Laurie Krasny  
ISBN: 0316119555

#### Badger's Parting Gifts

By Susan Varley, 2013  
ISBN: 0006643175

#### Muddles Puddles and Sunshine

By Diana Crossley  
ISBN: 1869890582

#### When Uncle Bob Died (Talking It Through)

By Althea  
ISBN: 9781903285084

#### The Heart and the Bottle

By Oliver Jeffers  
ISBN: 978-0007182343

#### The Scar

By Charlotte Moundlic  
ISBN: 978-1406344158

#### Beyond the Rough Rock

By Di Stubbs & Julie Stokes: Winston's Wish  
ISBN: 9780953912377

#### A Birthday Present for Daniel

By Juliet Rothman

ISBN: 9781573929462

#### What On Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?

By Trevor Romain  
ISBN13: 978-1-57542-055-4

#### When Your Grandparent Dies

By Victoria Ryan  
ISBN: 978-0-87029-364-1

#### The Elephant in the Room

By Amanda Edwards & Leslie Ponciano  
ISBN: 9781492793243

\*Please note some of the books contain religious content.

## Age 9 - 12 years

### Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children

By Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen  
ISBN: 1855617609

### Death: What's Happening?

By Karen Bryant-Mole  
ISBN: 0750213795

### When Someone Very Special Dies

By Marge Heegaard  
ISBN: 9780962050206

### Milly's Bug-Nut

By Jill Janey  
ISBN: 9780953912346

### Children Also Grieve

By Linda Goldman  
ISBN: 978-1843108085

### Her Mother's Face

By Roddy Doyle  
ISBN: 978-1407115818

### The Frog Ballet

By Amanda McCardie  
ISBN: 978-1856815338

### Beyond the Rough Rock

By Di Stubbs & Julie Stokes:  
Winston's Wish  
ISBN: 9780953912377

\*Please note some of the books contain religious content.

## Age 11 - 18 years

### Two Weeks with the Queen

By Morris Gleitzman  
ISBN: 014130300X

### Vicky Angel

By Jacqueline Wilson  
ISBN: 0440867800

### The Sunshine Cat

By Miriam Moss  
ISBN: 9781841215679

### My Sister Lives on the Mantlepiece

By Annabel Pitcher  
ISBN: 0316176893

### The Spying Game

By Pat Moon

ISBN: 1843622017

### The Charlie Barber Treatment

By Carole Lloyd  
ISBN: 0744514886

### The Lost Boys' Appreciation Society

By Alan Gibbons  
ISBN: 1842550950

### Straight Talk About Death

for Teenagers  
By Earl A. Grollman  
ISBN: 0785719873

### The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and their Friends

By Helen Fitzgerald  
ISBN: 978-0684868042

### When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens about Grieving

By Marilyn Gootman  
ISBN: 978-1575421704

### Healing Your Grieving Heart For Teens: 100 Practical Ideas - Simple Tips for Understanding and Expressing Your Grief

By Alan Wolfelt  
ISBN: 978-1-879651-23-4

### Beyond the Rough Rock

By Di Stubbs & Julie Stokes:  
Winston's Wish  
ISBN: 9780953912377

\*Please note some of the books contain religious content

## Leah's Poem

Dear Dad,

I know you probably can't hear me,  
Cause you're so far away,  
But I need to get my feelings out,  
So I'll say this anyway.

It's really hard to live without you,  
But I'm glad you're out of pain,  
We shared so many memories together,  
But I wish we could do it again.

I feel like I am a broken building,  
That needs to be fixed,  
And all of my feelings now,  
Are well and truly mixed.

Anger and Fear, Guilt and Sad,  
Happy and Regret, Confused and Mad.

But one day Simon Says came,  
And they helped me out alot,  
They put me back together,  
Cause they're builders and that's their job.

Whilst I was being fixed,  
I slowly looked around,  
And I could see other buildings,  
Falling to the ground.

I realised at that moment,  
I wasn't the only one in pain,  
But other buildings were suffering,  
And couldn't get up again.

They were just like me,  
When I lost you,  
And then the Simon Says builders,

Went and fixed them too.

Suddenly I realised,  
I was finally strong again,  
I could help o thers,  
Families and Friends.

I knew, even though I was fixed,  
I will never be the same,  
There is still a missing part of me,  
I will never get back again.

They are missing bricks of my building,  
That I will never forget,  
But I do get new bricks,  
That will help me, I bet.

But don't worry Dad,  
They will never replace you,  
But they help me get through things,  
Just like you would do.

What I'm trying to say is I love you Dad,  
And I won't forget you,  
You were one of the best things that has  
ever happened to me,

We were one and one makes two!  
I wanted to thank Simon Says,  
For helping me get through,  
I hope you have a happy birthday,  
I love you!!!

From Leah xxx

# Helpful websites

<a href="http://simonsays.org.uk">simonsays.org.uk</a>	Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support.
<a href="http://winstonswish.org.uk">winstonswish.org.uk</a>	Help for grieving children and their families.
<a href="http://childhoodbereavementuk.org">childhoodbereavementuk.org</a>	Childhood bereavement
<a href="http://hopeagain.org.uk">hopeagain.org.uk</a>	Specifically for young people aged 12-18. Information and interactive.
<a href="http://cruse.org.uk">cruse.org.uk</a>	All aspects of bereavement. Some information for children.
<a href="http://childline.org.uk">childline.org.uk</a>	Free national telephone helpline for children and young people. Information on bereavement.
<a href="http://griefencounter.com">griefencounter.com</a>	Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives after a death.
<a href="http://papyrus-uk.org">papyrus-uk.org</a>	Provides resources & support for those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers & young adults.
<a href="http://riprap.org.uk">riprap.org.uk</a>	Helps children who have a parent with cancer.
<a href="http://uk-sobs.org.uk">uk-sobs.org.uk</a>	Those who are left behind after a suicide can be helped by talking to others who have experienced a similar loss.
<a href="http://supportline.org.uk">supportline.org.uk</a>	Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.
<a href="http://teenissues.co.uk">teenissues.co.uk</a>	Internet based unique reference point for teenagers to find answers to commonly experienced issues.
<a href="http://tcfsiblingsupport.org.uk">tcfsiblingsupport.org.uk</a>	Support and information for siblings after a death. Pen-pal link for over 16's.
<a href="http://childbereavementuk.org">childbereavementuk.org</a>	Support, information & training when a baby or child dies, or when a child is bereaved.
<a href="http://seesaw.org.uk">seesaw.org.uk</a>	Grief support service for children and young people in Oxford. Support for schools.
<a href="http://mosaicfamilysupport.org">mosaicfamilysupport.org</a>	Individual, family and group bereavement support - Dorset.
<a href="http://daisysdream.org.uk">daisysdream.org.uk</a>	Child bereavement support - Berkshire.

Please see the Simon Says website for a list of useful books and up to date information. Follow us on:



Simon Says Child Bereavement Support



@SimonSaysCBS

## You are not alone

### #SupportingTheYoungThroughBereavement



## Can you help?

Simon Says relies on the donations and goodwill of organisations and individuals.

Only with continued contributions can Simon Says carry on making a positive difference to the lives of vulnerable children and young people.

If you would like to find out how you can help, please contact Simon Says.

Help Simon Says to make a difference.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you, to the wonderful volunteers and staff at Simon Says for their contributions to this resource.



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