

## What does grief feel like?

Some people say grief can feel like:

**Ocean waves:** Sometimes the waves or our feelings and emotions are really big and come crashing down and can knock us of our feet. At other times they may be gentler and creep up on us at a slower pace and then gently roll away again.

**A rollercoaster:** Our feelings and emotions go up and down, twist and turn and can make us feel dizzy and our tummies flutter.

**Sunshine and rain:** A day may start happy, fun and sunny and then all of a sudden you may feel sad, nervous or worried. The skies darken and it starts to rain. After awhile the dark clouds begin to drift away and the sun comes back out again.

Showing feelings and emotions is ok, no one has to be strong all the time, rainy days happen and sometimes we just need to cry. Don't be afraid to let emotions out.

When rainy days happen it's good to find something comforting to do. This could be curling up under a blanket, a hug, watching a favourite film, reading a favourite book, eating ice cream.

## Help and support

### Child Bereavement UK

Offers help for children and young people aged 25 years and under, their parents and families to help rebuild their lives when a child or young person is grieving.

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

Helpline: 0800 02 888 40

### Grief Talk / Grief Encounter

Offers support, information and advice for adults, children and young people and a chat line to talk about their grief.

[www.griefencounter.org.uk/grieffalk/](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk/grieffalk/)

Call: 0808 802 0111

### Winston's Wish

Offers practical support for bereaved families, children and young people.

[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

### Whiston Hospital

Warrington Road, Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR  
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

### St Helens Hospital

Marshall's Cross Road, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3DA  
Telephone: 01744 26633

### Newton Hospital

Bradlegh Road, Newton-le-Willows, WA12 8RB  
Telephone: 0151 290 4834

### Southport Hospital

Town Lane, Kew, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 6PN  
Telephone: 01704 547 471

### Ormskirk Hospital

Dicconson Way, Wigan Road, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2AZ  
Telephone: 01695 577 111

[www.merseywestlancs.nhs.uk](http://www.merseywestlancs.nhs.uk)

**NHS**

**Mersey and West Lancashire  
Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Trust



# A Child's Grief Information Leaflet

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format  
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،  
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کنند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formie,  
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,  
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe  
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră.

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتسبيق  
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

**Author:** Bereavement Coordinator  
**Department:** Specialist Palliative Care  
**Document Number:** MWL2817  
**Version:** 001  
**Review Date:** 30/11/2028

## Talking to children

Talking to children and young people about death and dying may be one of the most difficult conversations you will have.

It is natural to try and protect children from painful experiences but children know when something is wrong.

They can live with and through tough times if they have the information and support, they need and feel included. It's not knowing that can cause distress and their imagination may be far worse than the actual truth.

It is therefore important to tell a child of any age as soon as possible when someone important in their lives is dying or has died.

The most important thing to do is provide lots of reassurance and allow time together for comfort, support and any questions they may ask.

A child's understanding will depend on age, maturity and previous experiences. Child Bereavement UK has information that can help you understand these differences.

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

Children and young people tend to show feelings with behaviours rather than words, and they absorb and process information in different ways at different ages.

## Try to

Tell the truth about what is happening as soon as possible and be prepared for different emotions. Being open and honest about your own emotions can help your child learn how to grieve.

Use the words dying and died. Many people find this uncomfortable so may use words like 'lost', or 'gone to a better place'. These can be confusing and worrying for a child, "if grandad is lost why don't we go and find him?", and "why has mum gone to a better place?".

Share information a little at a time to gauge how much they understand. You will know what else to say by the questions they ask.

Answer questions honestly and say "I don't know" if asked a question you are unable to answer. The important thing is that they feel they can ask questions and are listened too.

Tell them about plans for the days ahead, and where possible include them in decisions. Preparing them for the future can help them to feel safe and secure.

Prepare to talk about thoughts and feelings over the next few days, weeks and months and how life may be without the person who has died. Ask questions and help build memories.

## What to expect

Grief can effect their mood, behaviour and how they spend time with family and friends. At times it can feel overwhelming and out of character.

Children in particular show their feelings with behaviours. They may want to be silent and spend time alone, they may show signs of distress or anger, they may become very protective, ask lots of questions or appear not to be affected at all.

Be patient and let them know you are there for them. There is no right or wrong way to grieve and children tend to jump in and out of their grief. At times they may feel totally absorbed by their grief and at others appear to carry on with life as normal.

We may worry that talking about the person who has died may be upsetting or as time goes by a child may begin to forget somethings. Sharing stories and memories can be a great source of comfort and shows just how important the person who has died has been in your lives.

Children need consistency so try not to change daily routines, encourage them to keep up with school work, social activities and friends.