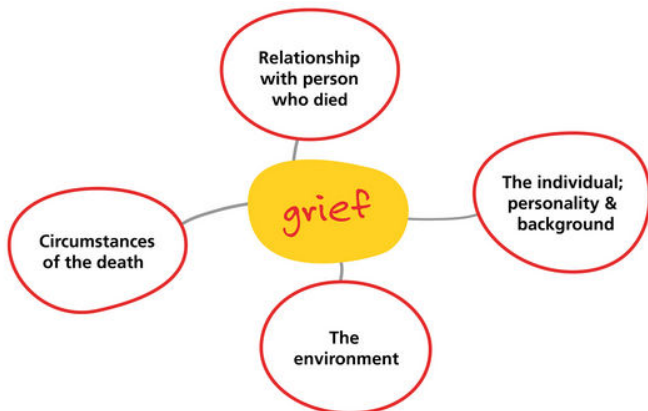


## ABINGDON FOUNDATION SAFEGUARDING BULLETIN ST24

### Supporting Bereaved Children

It is estimated that 1 in 29 children will have a parent or sibling die during their childhood and approximately 46,300 children (aged 0-17) are bereaved of a parent each year. Most children will not need professional help, but they will need the support of trusted adults around them. Schools play a vital role in helping children and their families through the grief process by offering stability, a sense of belonging and a network of support.

Children's understanding and response to death can vary depending on their age, stage of development and their circumstances. There is no correct way to grieve and every child's reaction will be unique and personal to them.



A child's response to a death will depend on:

**Circumstance** of the death

**Relationship** with the person who died

Their **personality and background**

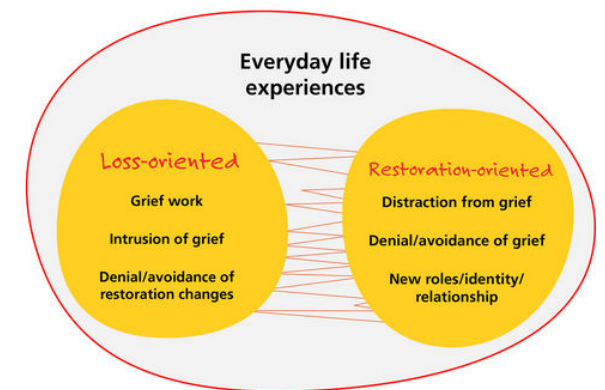
Their **environment**

**Changes** following the bereavement which can be felt as additional losses

Child Bereavement UK outlines 3 theories of grief that can be useful to understand how a child might process their loss:

#### The Dual Process Model (Stroebe and Shut 1999)

It is understood that many children oscillate between loss-oriented and restoration-oriented thoughts. This frequent and rapid 'puddle jumping' can sometimes be misunderstood by adults who might think that the child is unaffected.



Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut (1999)  
*The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement: Rationale and Description*, Death Studies 23:3 197-224

#### 4 Tasks of Mourning (Worden 2009)

This process of grief can include 4 main tasks according to Worden:

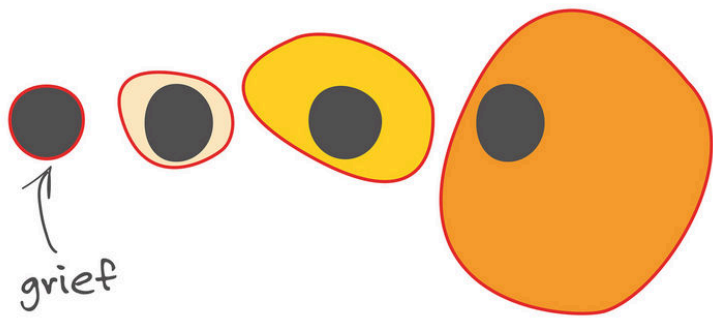
**Accepting** the reality of the loss

**Processing** the pain of grief

**Adjusting** to a world without the person who has died

**Connecting** with the person who has died whilst embarking on a new life.

There is no time limit for these tasks and young people may go back and forth between tasks, which can be exhausting for young people.



Lois Tonkin (1996)

## Growing Around Grief (Tonkin 1996)

This approach can be helpful to explore the ways in which life grows around someone's grief, as a young person goes on to have new experiences and enjoy their life.

## What can staff do to support a bereaved child?

Be explicit and using **concrete language** around death  
**Normalising** the variety of reactions to grief  
 Answer questions honestly and with **factual language**  
 Use **developmentally appropriate** resources  
 Be caring, supportive and kind while maintaining **appropriate boundaries**  
 Providing **emotional literacy support**

## What schools can do:

Have a clear bereavement policy.  
 Consider which staff member should be the central point of contact for the child and their family.  
 Maintain regular communication with the child and family.  
 Be respectful of religious and/or cultural beliefs.  
Support staff who are helping bereaved children.

## Resources for staff & parents

Abingdon School's Bereavement Policy  
PSHE lessons on loss & bereavement - Winston's Wish  
How to help your child understand bereavement and support them in their grief - BBC  
Supporting a bereaved pupil - Child Bereavement UK and LGfL  
Supporting adolescents - See Saw  
List of organisations supporting bereaved children & families - Oxfordshire County Council

## Organisations

Childhood Bereavement Network  
See Saw  
Child Bereavement UK (0800 0288840)  
UK Trauma Council  
Winston's Wish (08088 020 021)  
Hope Again  
Rowan's Hospice  
Simon Says  
Jigsaw  
Grief Encounter  
Cruse Bereavement Care Oxfordshire (01865 245398)



## Resources for young people

Living after loss - a grief guide for young people - See Saw  
Support for young people - Child Bereavement UK  
Crisis text messenger service - Winston's Wish  
Dealing with grief and loss - Young Minds  
Grief toolkit for young people - Talk Grief  
Support for young people - The Good Grief Trust  
Grief & loss journal prompts - Pooky Knightsmith  
Activities for young people - Winston's Wish

## Recommended books

See list of books for children, teens and adults here