Someone Who knows the Child Really Well

Grief is confusing. It's completely natural for parents to worry about their children and want to protect them, the best thing is to give them honest, age-appropriate information about a death. Someone who knows the child really well should break the news. Children understand the world through other people; family primarily, but also carers, teachers, extended family, and friends. Support and information from all these people is vital. See www.childhoodbereavement.ie for additional information

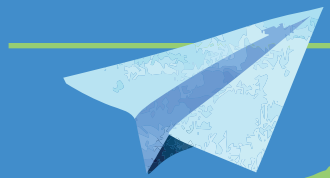
TEARS – A Guide for Carers

- Talk – tell them the truth, have open honest conversations using clear language they can understand
- Explain things in a way that they understand no matter how young
- Acknowledge their feelings –and encourage them to ask questions to help understand and cope with emotions
- Reassure them and be prepared to repeat the information until they can fully get their head around things
- Support yourself - you can't mind them if you don't mind yourself

If an adult or family member could benefit from talking to someone, contact the **Bereavement Support Line** on **1800 80 70 77** a national freephone service available from 10am to 1pm, Monday to Friday.

The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network (ICBN) is a hub for those working with bereaved children and young people throughout Ireland.

- Support professionals in delivering a high quality, appropriate and accessible bereavement services for children and young people who are bereaved
- Signpost families and carers to a directory of bereavement services available throughout Ireland
- Inform the general public about issues related to childhood loss and bereavement
- Advocate for bereaved children, young people and their families



Contact Information:

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The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network

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Teachers

www.childhoodbereavement.ie

Introduction

When a bereaved child returns to school, it is important that the school climate is supportive and understanding of their needs. Bereavement can impact the emotional and social well-being of the child, and on their ability to concentrate and conduct their studies. Most grieving pupils do not need a bereavement expert, just the support of people who are around them.

Teachers and school staff are in a unique position to support children in their class or school community who have been bereaved.

School and its routine provide stability, security, continuity and above all a familiar structure. Routine is important to a child whose world might be in turmoil due to significant change and loss in the family following a death.

Teachers, you, yourselves are the best and most effective resource to children and young people in this situation

Listen with Eyes, Ears & Heart.

Teachers can make a real difference to bereaved pupils by acknowledging their loss and by offering opportunities for them to talk about their experiences if they want to. Teachers can listen and respond to the spoken and often unspoken messages children may send.

How can you help?

- Before they return to class a teacher could ask "What would you like to happen?" Some children may want to slip back into a class without any undue notice or attention being focused on them. Others may be relieved by a public acknowledgement. Others may want to know what has been said to the class.
- Acknowledge what happened. Create a time to say " I am sorry that ……has died".
- Explain and acknowledge that you are there to help at this difficult time, that you understand that they may need additional help to catch up with work or to get school work completed etc. Watch out for those children who go to the other extreme and over work or over study.
- Give Reassurance – bereaved children can lose their sense of trust and confidence in their world and may display heightened anxiety levels even in relation to very ordinary issues (break time, schoolwork, and friends). Self-esteem can be diminished. Be patient and reassuring.

Visit our website for further information and resources

- Remembering, can be so important for a child's grieving. Be sensitive to allow and create opportunities to remember during different time of the school year and/or during the day-to-day classroom discussions/activities.
- Maintain a flexibility and understanding over the long term, life has changed. Adapting to loss will take considerable time. For many, it is a lifelong process as a child grows and develops through the developmental stages.
- Inform and empower yourself on key aspects of children's grief and the importance of their stage of development in relation to the bereavement.
- Every child's response will be different. Draw on your understanding of the child, often it is through your observations that you will know when to be there.
- Be watchful, alert and sensitive to changes in behaviour/emotions/ needs. Children often don't know or understand what is happening to them or why they are feeling the way that they do, often they do not have the language to express how they are feeling.

When to be concerned:

- When a child shows persistent anxiety about the loss and it impacts on their day to day functioning.
- When a child is persistently aggressive
- When a child socially withdraws from friends and activities for continued length of time
- When a child carries self- blame and guilt about the death
- Self-harming and or suicidal behaviour