

# Coronavirus

## Educational Psychology Service

### Supporting young people to cope with bereavement during Covid-19

Some people will have experienced the death of a loved one. This may be related or unrelated to Covid19. The experience of death will be different at this time due to the social distancing measures in place.

Young people's understanding of death will vary depending on their age and stage of development (see Nurture UK).

People react in a variety of ways to grief. There is no right or wrong way to feel. The process of grief has many different stages. How a person reacts and the support they require at each stage will vary. Adults can support young people with grief. Some suggestions for use at home and in school are given below:

- Give honest and appropriate information about what has happened.
- Use words like "death" and "dying" rather than more abstract ideas like "gone to sleep". These terms can be confusing for young people.
- Provide routines and structure. This provides a sense of security and reassurance that life continues.
- Provide opportunities to talk about grief and the person who has died whilst engaged in other activities (e.g. drawing, baking).
- You may notice that the young person requires supports they have moved on from (e.g. leaving a light on a night. This is likely to be a temporary reassurance).
- Provide reassurance that people usually die when they are "very, very, very sick" or "very, very, very old". Repeating "very" reinforces that people tend to have a long life. Remembering that young people can think adults over 30 years are very, very old.
- Don't make promises you can't keep (e.g. that family members will not get Covid-19). Talk about what we can do to keep everyone safe. Focus on the positive (e.g. the majority of people with Covid19 will make a full recovery and not require any medical support).
- Talking about your own emotions to model being honest about how you are feeling and what you think may help you feel better.
- There are things you can do to remember the life of the person who has died:
  - *Make a photo album (this can be done on computer if you don't have physical photos)*
  - *Write a poem*
  - *Plant a tree/flower*
  - *Make a donation to charity*

### Some useful resources:

- **Nurture UK:**
  - [https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/cumbria/fsd/files/nurture\\_uk\\_bereavement\\_box-booklet-cov19-edition-2020-web.pdf](https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/cumbria/fsd/files/nurture_uk_bereavement_box-booklet-cov19-edition-2020-web.pdf)
- **Childhood Bereavement Network:**
  - <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>
- **Child Bereavement UK:**
  - <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children>
- **The Invisible String (2018)** a book by Patrica Karst & Joanne Lew Vrieftthoff
- **The Elephant's Tea Party** (free resource)
  - <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/elephants-tea-party#:~:text=The%20Elephant%27s%20Tea%20Party%20is%20a%20free%20initiative,them%20for%20bereavement%2C%20now%20and%20in%20later%20life.>