

## WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Children's reactions to death vary. Some have reactions that are short-lived. Others have more severe and long-lasting reactions.

If you are concerned about a child, talk to the child's class teacher or the Headteacher, who may involve the school's Educational Psychologist.

Alternatively a range of services are available through the child's GP.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

Child Bereavement Charity  
[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)  
Tel: 01494 446648

Cruse Bereavement Care  
[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)  
Tel: 01494 722515

Winston's Wish  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)  
Tel: 0845 20 30 40 5

## Contact

Educational Psychology Service  
County Hall  
AYLESBURY  
HP20 1UZ

Educational Psychology Service  
Council Offices  
King George V Road  
AMERSHAM  
HP6 5BY

Phone: 01296 383219 / 01494 732187

Fax: 01296 382818 / 01494 732776

Email: [eps@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:eps@buckscc.gov.uk)

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact:  
Communications Development team,  
County Hall, AYLESBURY HP20 1UZ  
Email: [schoolsweb@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsweb@buckscc.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01296 387742

Services for Children and Young People in Buckinghamshire



# Helping children cope when someone has died

**EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY  
SERVICE**



This leaflet is intended to remind you of the possible range of feelings and reactions children may experience following a bereavement.

Because children often do not have the same understanding as adults they may have more difficulty talking about their feelings. However, the following responses are normal:

**Shock** - a child may be very quiet or they may cry uncontrollably

**Denial** - even though they know the person has died, they may think that the person will return

**Searching** - they may worry about losing other people

**Anger** - towards the people around them or the person who has died

**Anxiety** - about things they may or may not have done, or said, to the deceased person

**Guilt** - they may feel that in some way they caused the death or let the person down

**Confusion** - about what has happened to the dead person

Children may show their feelings through behaviour rather than words:-

- Behaving as a younger child (this is known as regression).
- Becoming naughty or aggressive.
- Becoming very withdrawn
- Sleep disturbance including bad dreams, fear of being alone or fear of the dark.
- Wanting to be with their parents, or a trusted adult, at all times.
- Difficulty concentrating, especially at school.
- Changes in appetite or eating habits.
- Fears for their own safety, or for the safety of family or friends.
- Reluctance to talk.
- Becoming easily upset.
- Unwillingness to go to school.

**All of these can be normal reactions to a distressing event. They may last for some time. They can emerge later, unexpectedly, or be triggered by other events in a child's life.**

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Do try to answer questions as honestly and openly as you can.

Do continue to do the things that you normally do. Familiar routines provide security.

Do be patient and calm (as far as you can)

Do be available to listen if children want to talk about their feelings

Do provide additional reassurance and sensitive support

Do treat children in the usual way

Do allow children to move through their own individual process of grieving

Do seek support for yourself if you need it

Don't use words that the child cannot understand

Don't discourage the emotions of shock or grief

Don't become upset if children do not want to talk about their feelings

Don't be too protective