

## Sources of Immediate Help

The local Social Work Department

Your family doctor

Your religious leader

## Further Help or Advice

The Compassionate Friends

National Helpline 0117 953 9639

Mon-Fri office hours. Answerphone at other times.

Cruse

Provide help for the bereaved through counselling information and support.

Edinburgh 0131 229 6275

Scottish HQ 0131 551 1511

National Helpline 0181 332 7227

This document is available on request in Braille, tape, large print, various computer formats, and community languages. Please contact ITS on 0131 242 8181 and quote ref 02265. For additional English copies please contact 0131 469 3012.

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如果需要翻译这份单张成为你的社区语言,请电爱丁堡传译及翻译服务,电话: 0131 242 8181, 档案编号: 02265.

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## When Something Terrible Happens

A Guide for Parents

عندما يقع حادث مشؤوم

دليل للوالدين

যখন ভয়ানক কিছু হয়  
মাবাবাদের জন্য নির্দেশাবলী

當發生了嚴重的事情時  
給家長的指引

جب کوئی ناگوار واقعہ پیش آتا ہے

والدین کیلئے ایک رہنما کتابچہ

## When Something Terrible Happens

Children and young people vary markedly in their reactions to a distressing incident. Some, at least on the surface, hardly appear to react at all, whereas others might show very visible signs of distress. Sometimes children don't know how to react because they don't fully understand what has happened in their life.

The following advice is to help you to understand and support your child in coping with a stressful event.

Although children of varying ages do have differences in their reactions, there are some common factors.

- Share information in ways that your child will understand.
- Give time, attention and listen to your child.
- Allow your child the opportunity to participate in rituals.

## Emotional Reactions to a Stressful Situation

Fear	Anxiety
Guilt	Sadness
Anger	Denial
Withdrawal	Regression

The above are all normal reactions. The way in which children make sense of death and grief is related to their stage of development.

4–7 years: death is still seen as reversible. Children may also see a terrible event as a punishment or believe it was 'their fault'.

Reactions can include nightmares, sleeping and/or eating disturbances, violent play.

7–11 years: this is a difficult transition period. Children want to see death as reversible but are beginning to understand it as final. Death may still be viewed as punishment.

Behaviour may include immature reactions or outwardly difficult behaviour.

11–18 years: young people at this stage usually have an adult concept of death.

Reactions may include anger, depression and non-compliance.

## Ways to Help

How you react as a parent can make a difference to how your child reacts.

Parents are, after all, role models to their children.

- Maintain usual routine as far as possible.
- Be honest. Answer questions as truthfully as you can, and try to find brief and simple answers that they can understand.
- Listen, try to understand what your child is saying and just as importantly, what they are not saying.

- Don't wait until your child starts to cry before giving them a hug. Physical contact is extremely important at this time and sometimes says a lot more than words.
- Talk in a language your child can understand. Don't use terms like 'gone to sleep', 'resting', 'gone away' to explain death. This can cause further confusion and anxiety.
- Allow your child to be silent, but don't discourage expressions of emotion. Let them know it's OK to cry.
- Don't force your child to take part in anything if they don't want to.
- Let your child know it's OK to laugh and have fun as well as to grieve.
- Explain the situation to someone in your child's school.

## Books that can be Helpful

*How Do I Feel About When People Die*  
Sarah Levene, Franklin Watts 2001  
ISBN 0749640936

*When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death*  
Laurie Krasny Brown, Little Brown and Company 1998  
ISBN 0316119555

*Grandad and Me*  
Dee Shulman, Red Fox 1993  
ISBN 0099874504

*I Feel Sad*  
Brian Moses, Hodder Wayland 1994  
ISBN 0750214066