

# Children's Bereavement

Unlike adults, children dip in and out of grief. It can be intense but also can pass quickly, distracted by friends and activities. Each child in a family grieves differently due to their personality, age, gender and the relationship they had with the person who has died.

## What can help you to support a child who is grieving?

Children need age-appropriate information to help them understand – an adolescent's experience is very different from a five-year old.

Children grieve too – they feel the impact and may not have words to express it so it often shows in their behaviour.

It helps to keep things routine and stable as much as possible. Children will need time to express feelings – even anger, which can be an expression of deep hurt.



Most children will learn to move forward with their grief with the support of family and friends. It is important to acknowledge their loss – otherwise a child can feel excluded.

A small number of children who show persistent and concerning behaviours will require more specialised intervention. Look out for **persistent** anxiety about the loss and life in general, self-harming or suicidal behaviour.



Children's grief is not a once off occurrence but affects them at milestone times in life. As they mature so does their understanding, so they may revisit the loss over time.

In grief children often use play to ease the pain and to be distracted from how hard things are. Letting them know that they can talk and express emotions is important and helps model healthy coping.



For more information please contact:  
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**The Irish Childhood  
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