

Glasgow City
HSCP
Health and Social Care Partnership

A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT



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THE IMPACT OF LOSS, GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

Loss is the experience of being deprived of some-one or something of value

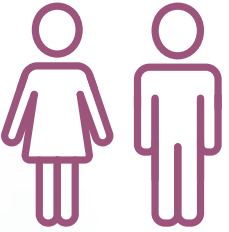
Grief is what you feel; the reaction you have to any loss in your life

Bereavement is what happens to you

Mourning is what you do to express your loss

Many children and young people will experience bereavement, through the loss of a parent, sibling, grandparent or friend. Children can also face the loss of a loved animal or pet which can be as significant for them as losing a relative or friend.

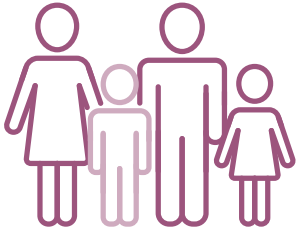
However, loss is wider than experiencing a bereavement. Events like divorce, parental imprisonment and illness are all examples of loss and negative change that can produce a grief reaction.



41,000
children in the UK lose a parent before the age of 18.



Every 22 minutes
on average, a parent dies in the UK.



1 in 29
children and young people have experienced the death of a parent or sibling – that's at least one in every classroom.



41%
of young offenders experienced bereavement as a child.



6,507
suicides in the UK in 2018 – many of these may be parents or siblings leaving behind bereaved children.
(Taken from Winston's Wish)

During bereavement, children and young people can experience a great number of emotions, including sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt, fear, denial, disbelief and confusion. With the right help and support, most children and young people will not require professional help or a 'bereavement expert'. Instead, they need the care and the understanding of familiar and trusted adults. Use the nurturing principles to guide you when working with children and young people who are experiencing loss and bereavement.

What Schools can do?

Preparing for loss and bereavement

The purpose of this resource is to support school staff to feel more confident and equipped when helping a child or young person through a period of bereavement, loss and change



Normality

For the majority of CYP whose life has been turned upside down the routines of school can give a sense of normality. Everything else may have fallen apart but school and the people within it can offer a sense of security and continuity.



Relief from Grief

Often, school can provide relief from an emotionally charged atmosphere at home. They may feel overwhelmed by a grieving family or find it hard to cope if there is a stream of visitors expressing their own grief.



An Outlet for Grief

When a parent or sibling has died, CYP can sometimes try spare their surviving parent by hiding their own grief and appearing to be ok. School is often seen as somewhere safe to express this grief.



Remember

You might feel reluctant to initiate what you perceive to be painful conversations due to a fear of making things worse. However, children and young people are clear about the benefits of support and communication around bereavement and loss in schools. Speak to your SMT regarding referral or further support.



What Schools can do?

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A Listening Ear

Family members struggling to deal with their own grief can overlook children. For a child who wishes to, school staff can provide an opportunity to talk about what has happened with a familiar and trusted adult in relative peace and calm.

The Opportunity to be a Child

Even when deeply sad, children still need to be children. School offers the chance to play, laugh, sing and generally just be a child without feeling guilty.



General Support

Systems should be in place to keep in contact with home. Discuss concerns but also successes. Grieving CYP can display altered behaviours in different situations. Good communication will help provide a more realistic picture of how the child is coping.



Remember

Take care of yourself

Talking to a child or young person about the death of someone close may be among the hardest things a teacher will ever have to do. Do what you can to support the child, without expecting too much from yourself and speak to someone if you need support.



HOW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE GRIEVE

Given the complex and varied needs of children and young people, it is difficult to gauge how the loss will affect them as individuals. However, the developmental age of a child does have a direct impact on their level of understanding, and it is useful to have some knowledge of what death means to children at various stages in their development. Children at various stages of development respond to grief differently. Their response is also influenced by the behaviour and support of the adults around them.



HELPING A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON WHO IS GRIEVING

How a child or young person understands and reacts to the death of someone close varies with age. Teachers can help a child cope with the loss by having several simple, direct conversations and supporting the child or young person to express his or her feelings in a healthy way.

Children grieve differently from adults. Most children do not experience the sustained intense emotions experienced by adults. Children may show their sadness only occasionally and for brief periods, or may complain of physical discomfort, such as having a sore tummy or head, rather than expressing sadness. A child's grief comes and goes, and a child may experience it in a new way as he or she grows older or passes a developmental milestone, such as starting school. Even into adulthood, events such as graduating from university may trigger renewed grief.



HOW CHILDREN CAN UNDERSTAND DEATH A DIFFERENT AGES

Children at different stages of development have different understandings of death. Development influences the way children react to a loss and the type of support they need. This is important for children and young people where there are differences between a child's chronological age and their developmental age. Children's reactions are also influenced by other factors, including personality, previous experiences with death, and support available from family members. Note that children do not move abruptly from one stage of development to the next and that characteristics from each stage may overlap



INFANTS (BIRTH TO TWO YEARS)

At this stage of development children are not able to understand about death, but will experience the loss as a separation from someone to whom they may have an attachment. Due to limited ability to communicate verbally, children may express this loss in other ways. This can include becoming withdrawn, crying and so on. The emotional state of people around them may also have an adverse effect. Normality and routine are very important at this age and stage.

Key Points at this age

- Have no understanding of death.
- Are aware of separation and will grieve the absence of a parent or carer.
- May react to the absence of a parent or carer with increased crying, decreased responsiveness, and changes in eating or sleeping.
- May keep looking or asking for a missing parent or carer and wait for him or her to return.
- Are most affected by the sadness of surviving parent(s) and carer(s).

PRE-SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN (2-5 YEARS OLD)

At this stage of development children believe that death is reversible. They may also be convinced that it was something that they said or did which caused the person to die. Abstract concepts are not easily grasped, and so it is important that the child is spoken to in very concrete terms. In order to make sense of what has happened children at this age may often ask the same questions over and over again.

Key points at this age

- Are curious about death and believe death is temporary or reversible.
- May see death as something like sleeping—the person is dead but only in a limited way and may continue to breathe or eat after death.
- Are characterized by 'magical thinking' and understand the world as a mix of reality and fantasy.
- Are naturally egocentric and see themselves as the cause of events around them.
- Often feel guilty and believe that they are responsible for the death of a loved one, perhaps because they were 'bad' or wished the person would 'go away'.
- May think that they can make the deceased come back if they are good enough.
- Will worry about who will take care of them and about being abandoned.
- Are still greatly affected by the sadness of surviving family members.
- Cannot put their feelings into words and instead react to loss through behaviours such as irritability, aggression, physical symptoms, difficulty sleeping, or regression (such as bed-wetting or thumb-sucking).

PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (6-12 YEARS OLD)

Children begin to develop the understanding that death is irreversible and something that happens eventually to all living things. Death may be regarded as something that is a bit 'spooky', and they may display what seems to be an unhealthy curiosity in the more morbid aspects of the death. Children at this age may complain of headaches, a sore tummy or other ailments. These are referred to as 'somatic' complaints and are generally physical manifestations of emotional pain. Behaviour may change, but it is important to encourage children at this age to express their feelings and understand that what they are feeling is perfectly natural.

Key points at this age

- Understand that death is final, but see it as something that happens only to other people.
- May think of death as a person or a spirit, like a ghost, angel, or a skeleton.
- Understand that death is universal, unavoidable, and will happen to them (around age 10).
- Are often interested in the specific details of death and what happens to the body after death.
- May experience a range of emotions including guilt, anger, shame, anxiety, sadness, and worry about their own death.
- Continue to have difficulty expressing their feelings and may react through behaviours such as school avoidance, poor performance in school, aggression, physical symptoms, withdrawal from friends, and regression.
- Still worry about who will take care of them and will likely experience insecurity, clinginess, and fear of abandonment.
- May still worry that they are to blame for the death.

ADOLESCENTS AND TEENAGERS

At this stage of development, young people are developing their own ideas about who they are and what is important to them in their lives. They are more aware of their future. Death may cause them to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life, or they may not want to reflect, and hide their feelings. As adults our job is to let them know that we are there if they need to talk, or that we can find someone else to help if necessary. Although the grieving process at this age is much like adults, teenagers are still developing emotionally, and need support. By now young people are much more aware of the finality of death, and the impact that the death has had on them. The death of someone important may make them feel different, at the very time that they want to be the same as everyone else. They are aware of the longer term impact of their loss, when future milestones will not be shared with the person who has died. Relationships with others are becoming increasingly important, and any loss can lead to feelings of anger or severe distress.

Key points at this age

- Have an adult understanding of the concept of death, but do not have the experiences, coping skills, or behaviour of an adult.
- May 'act out' in anger or show impulsive or reckless behaviours, such as substance misuse or fighting in school.
- May experience a wide range of emotions, but not know how to handle them or feel comfortable expressing them.
- The reality of death contradicts a teenager's view of himself or herself as invincible, and teenagers may question their faith or their understanding of the world.
- Developmental issues of independence and separation from parents can interfere with the ability to receive support from adult family members.
- Coping strategies may create tension with family members, as adolescents may cope by spending more time with friends or by withdrawing from the family to be alone.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DECEASED

The grieving process of the child is more intense when the relationship between the child and the person who died was close. For instance, the death of a parent or a sibling has a much greater impact than the death of a grandparent whom the child rarely saw. Beyond the immediate sadness, the significant influence of a parent or sibling on the ongoing development of a child means the effect of his or her death will be felt repeatedly as the child grows up. The death of a parent or other close family member also directly changes the child's day-to-day life. Family routines and roles change, such as a surviving parent having to return to work and spend less time at home. These changes represent significant losses and add to children's overall grief.

HOW DOES CHILDREN'S GRIEF DIFFER FROM ADULTS?

1. Due to the stage of their cognitive development they can struggle to understand that death is irreversible, that it happens to everyone and that it can't be stopped
2. Children have a limited capacity to tolerate emotional pain; they manage this by having a 'short sadness span'
3. Children's acute feelings of loss may occur in bursts over several years
4. Their ability to express their grief verbally can be limited
5. Children are sensitive to appearing different from their peers
6. Play can provide an opportunity for children to express their various feelings

(Webb, 2010)

SUPPORTING THE RETURN TO SCHOOL

Teachers dealing with loss and bereavement issues in schools should use this guide in conjunction with the information provided in chapter 3 Managing Critical Incidents document. This document is located in GoGlasgow.

When the bereaved child or young person returns to school

It is important to ask the family how they would like the school community to be informed about the death. Some children feel anxious about everyone knowing, and instead would just like their close friends to know.

There may also be some sensitive issues around how the person died and what the family would like to be shared. Where possible, speak to the family directly and ask their views, to ensure information about the death is shared most sensitively and appropriately.

Approaches may differ slightly; however, it is important for the key worker, class teacher, year head or pastoral care teacher to acknowledge to the child what has happened. This will have been discussed with parents or carers prior to child returning to school.

On their first day back at school

(Extract from Winston's Wish)

1. Welcome them back

A simple way of helping a bereaved child return to school is if their class teacher and maybe a friend meet them outside the classroom. It can be daunting to walk back into a classroom on your own

2. Speak to the rest of the class

It is also helpful if the child can be present when the class teacher simply reminds the class what has been happening and gives them a few prompts for action. For example:

"We have Alfie back with us today. As you know, Alfie's mum died last week. She had been ill for a long time but it's still a huge shock for Alfie and his dad. Alfie has asked me to say that he's really grateful for all the kind messages people have been sending him but it's still a bit hard for him to

talk about it. So, do include him in stuff but also give him a bit of space to find his feet, ok?"

3. Be sensitive to changes in their behaviour

It is normal for bereaved children to find it difficult to concentrate after someone has died. They may also become overwhelmed and then 'jump' back to laughing with a friend. They may want everything to be as normal as possible. Or they may need people to acknowledge regularly that things have changed forever.

4. Be aware of any other bereaved children in your school

When a child is bereaved and the school community becomes aware, it can be difficult for other children who have previously been bereaved. It may re-awaken their own grief or prompt new questions. It is helpful if staff can be alert to all those who have been bereaved.

Things to consider:

- Do not be afraid to use the words dead or death "I was very sorry to hear of the death of your..."
- Children and young people need honesty. Although sometimes difficult, it is better to answer awkward questions truthfully.
- Recognise the full tragedy for the child. Do not try to comfort with comments such as "at least it is not as bad as..." You might think this is helpful, it is not.
- Reassure them that they are not responsible. If this is an issue (it may not be for all children and young people), reassure them that the death was not their fault.

Whether a pupil is returning to school quickly or after a period of absence, staff should ensure that there are systems in place to support them, for example:

- Time out cards – special cards giving the young person permission to leave the class when feeling overwhelmed or emotional. Young people often feel embarrassed about showing their emotions and do not want to cry in front of their peers. By offering time out, the young person can express their grief away from the classroom.
- Support the young person to express their grief if appropriate.
- Access to a quiet space for time out and reflection if required.
- More intensive support from pastoral care staff
- Access to a school counsellor, if there is one, and/or local services as appropriate.
- Grief is a very personal experience, every child and young person will experience it differently. Give them space to deal with their feelings in their own way.

As time passes

(Extract from Child Bereavement Charity and a Secondary School Policy)

- Be prepared to listen, again and again and again.
- Give bereaved pupils time. It may be many months before they can fully cope with the pressures of school work. Remember that they will be grieving for life and the loss will always be with them.
- Offer tailor made support if required, for example, Seasons for Growth or by referring into a local service provider.

- Be aware of important dates such as the anniversary of the death, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and so on.

The Bereavement Charter for Children and Adults in Scotland, launched in April 2020, provides a set of statements which describe how we can support a person or a group of people experiencing bereavement.

The statements are:

IN SCOTLAND, PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN BEREAVED SHOULD:

- be treated with compassion, empathy and kindness
- have their wishes, choices and beliefs listened to, considered and respected by all

SCOTLAND SHOULD BE A PLACE WHERE:

- grief, bereavement and death are recognised as a natural part of life
- there is an open culture which is supportive of people having the opportunity to grieve
- accessing support (including emotional, practical, financial, social, and spiritual) is seen as a right
- efforts are made to ensure that adequate bereavement support is accessible for everyone
- people have space and time to grieve
- it is recognised that bereavement might affect all aspects of a person's life (e.g. relationships, school, workplace)

IN SCOTLAND, PEOPLE ARE SUPPORTIVE OF FRIENDS, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN BEREAVED, WHICH MEANS THAT:

- people's needs and grief reactions are recognised and acknowledged as being different at different times
- grief and bereavement can begin before death and can be lifelong
- people who have been bereaved should feel supported to talk about the person who has died if they wish to
- bereavement and grieving can be experienced by the whole community and not just by individuals
- there is help to know where to refer or signpost people to for additional support

The Charter is designed to help us understand the importance of bereavement support and what that support needs to look like. It is important to accept that every death is unique and that the way we each come to terms with a death is individual. The Charter and Guidance attempts to describe what good bereavement support can look like and what difference it can make.

For more information, please see <https://www.scottishcare.org/bereavement/>

Finally, the impact of the pandemic has meant that all children and young people have had to return to school after a period of absence.

Below is an extract from Winston's Wish which details some of the effects this may have on children and young people.

Loss, Grief and Bereavement During COVID -19

The coronavirus pandemic has brought about a period of enormous change and uncertainty. Children and young people experienced the sudden and unexpected closure of schools with little opportunity to say goodbye to friends and teachers. They have had to adapt to a new way of life very quickly.

Returning to school will also be a period of change and uncertainty for children and young people. They may have different start and break times, they may be kept in small groups, they may not be able to socialise with their friends or use school equipment and resources as before. They may have a different teacher and teaching assistants or be in a different classroom. They may have to wear masks and have regular COVID tests.

Schools can provide a familiar routine, a sense of community and something that is a secure and constant in children and young people's lives. When this is disrupted it can be very unsettling, especially for bereaved children and young people.

A settling back in period and time for reconnection will be needed. It may take time for children to get back into a routine and to adjust to life back at school. Families will need to find their 'new normal'.

For children who continued to go to school throughout lockdown, the return of other children will present a big change for them too. They may have got used to school being quieter, with smaller groups and less focus on academic work. These children will also need support in preparing for this change.

SUPPORTING BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS FOR THOSE WITH ASNS

Children with Additional Support Needs (ASNs) can experience additional barriers to having their grief recognised and supported.

These include:

Cognitive barriers

- Remember to consider the developmental age of the child and young person to help you understand their reaction to the bereavement or loss.
- It doesn't have to be about getting the child/young person to understand the finality and permanence of death: children and young people will understand the differences in their environment through smells, sounds and touch.

Physical

- Remember to break down physical barriers when you speak to a child or young person about death. Children and young people who are upset may want to be comforted through touch and/or physical contact. This may mean that they need time out of their equipment.
- There may be a regression in terms of skills like eating, dressing and speaking. This is normal as the child or young person focuses on experiencing their grief.

Medical

- You may feel that the child or young person has enough to cope with their physical health. Ensure that you take the time to listen to their views.
- Perhaps the person who died had the same medical condition as another child or young person. Working with parents and the information they have shared with their child or young person is crucial.

Emotional

- Some children or young people may struggle to articulate how they are feeling. Additional processing time and being available for questions can help with this.
- Any emotions that are expressed during a bereavement or loss are valid, no matter how unconventional they may appear.

Sensory

- Sensory barriers can often be reasons for why children and young people do not attend funerals. See if these are barriers that you can overcome.

How can you communicate a loss or bereavement?

Intensive interaction

- Mirror the sounds and movements that they are making in order to help support with expressing their emotions.

Objects of reference

- These can be used alongside a photo of the deceased to increase the child's awareness of who we are speaking about. Comfort and reassurance can be found from tactile objects, such as a blanket sprayed with their perfume.
- Objects of reference can be used at a whole school level to let the wider school community know there has been a death. These can be displayed in the reception for a short period.

Switches

- You can have a switch that indicates that the child or young person is feeling sad or that they want to talk about the loss or bereavement.

Symbols, PECS and PODD books

- Ensure that once items are introduced to a child or young person that they are not removed as they may revisit these items.
- If certain words are not in their vocabulary then they would need to be introduced first.

Things to consider when talking to a person with ASNs about someone who has died

- Having a picture of the person who died.
- The environment and physical positioning of you and the child or young person – is side by side better than face to face?
- Use real words like death and dying. You may need to reiterate that a person has died several times or deliver information bit by bit.
- Do they understand what the term dead means? You can explain using phrases like, 'the body has stopped working' or 'it means they don't need to eat/drink/breathe anymore'.
- Emphasise the remaining attachments and key adults that the child or young person has.
- Whether you can link it to prior experiences like a pet dying or losing a favourite toy.

What about life-limiting illnesses?

Some children and young people that we work with may have life-limiting illnesses. This term covers any illness that cannot be cured and that you are likely to die from.

Parents need to decide what information to share with their child and the language that would like to be used. In turn, school staff would need to work within the parameters of this information. Open communication will be key here, particularly if the child or young person begins to ask more questions or their condition begins to deteriorate.

School can provide an environment where hope can be fostered and where learning can be strengths based and focused upon what the child or young person can do. Choice and control should be offered as much as possible about the type of care and education that they receive.

Some things to remember...

- You as a parent or member of staff may also be grieving. Remember to manage your own grief by using your support networks and giving yourself time and space to process your own thoughts and feelings.
- One way children and young people learn to manage their emotions is by watching others. Try to be a good grief role model. This may mean modelling how to grieve and explicitly teaching them about the emotions experienced when grieving.
- You may see increased incidents of separation anxiety after a loss and bereavement. This is entirely normal. Try to reassure and be patient when explaining to them where you are going and for how long. Remember, when we are stressed it can become harder to understand verbal language. Make sure to use your child's preferred mode of communication to explain to them what is happening.
- Children and young people may become very distressed during times of loss and bereavement. Finding positive ways to help them express their anger and frustration can help. This can include: throwing objects at a target, popping bubble-wrap, running or using messy play.

BEREAVEMENT THROUGH SUICIDE AND TRAUMATIC DEATHS

Why is suicide and traumatic death different?

Bereavement by suicide shares the same characteristics as other bereavements. However, there are some differing factors. Understanding these differences can be helpful when supporting a child or young person.

This is also true for traumatic death which includes death by accident, illness, terrorism, murder, manslaughter or suicide. The feelings associated with traumatic death might be similar however, each individual is different and will experience things differently to others experiencing the same loss and bereavement. The way in which the person died will also have an impact on individual responses and the feelings they experience. Each person's experience of grief is unique.

Death by suicide is usually sudden and unexpected and can often be a violent or traumatic. This can mean that those bereaved often experience feelings of shock, anger and sometimes guilt, shame and self-blame, as well as their feelings of loss, grief and bereavement. Be aware that the relationship that the child or young person had with the person who died may change or be viewed differently due to the suicide. When considering past memories there may be a different meaning-making process that needs to occur to account for this change.

Families might also face uncomfortable questions or judgement from their peers or local communities which can be difficult to navigate and leave them feeling frightened or with a loss of control. They might sometimes feel like their bereavement isn't acknowledged by other people. This is often as a result of stigma, a misunderstanding of suicide, or sometimes just because people don't know what to say. People can experience disenfranchised grief – where their loss is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publically mourned or supported by others around them. There is an infographic included within this resource explaining this in more detail, you can access it [here](#).

Children and young people may also experience physical reactions to their loss. This may include: pain or tightness in different parts of their body, stomach pains, nausea, diarrhoea, sleeplessness and lack of concentration. They might not feel any of these things and may take some time to show their feelings.

There are a number of risk factors for children and young people bereaved by suicide or traumatic death which could lead to them experiencing complicated grief. It's important to stay engaged with the child or young person and look out for signs of complicated or disenfranchised grief as it might mean that they will require additional and targeted support. An infographic with more information on complicated grief has been included within this resource you can access it by clicking [here](#).

How to discuss suicide with children and young people

It is natural to want to protect children and young people and it may be tempting to share another explanation for the person's death other than suicide. However, often a child or young person will hear the truth from other sources, particularly in relation to a suicide and traumatic death which often become public knowledge and may be discussed by their peers or local community. It is preferred that the news and circumstances of a death is delivered by a parent, carer or trusted adult rather than from another source. It also gives the opportunity for that person to reassure the child or young person and to provide comfort.

It is important to be honest and consistent and it can be helpful to have a simple story that can be re-told and allow the child or young person time to understand what has happened. It is important to use words that they will understand and to ask what their thoughts are on what you have told them to make sure that they understand.

Winston's Wish recommend 5 stages for telling a child or young person about death by suicide:

1. Explaining the person has died
2. Giving simple details about how they died
3. Saying that the person has decided to take their own life
4. Providing a more detailed explanation of how the person died

5. Exploring possible reasons why the person decided to kill themselves

Children and young people should be encouraged to ask questions. It is OK if you don't have the answer to these questions, however, they will help you understand how the young person is feeling. Not answering questions will not stop the young person from worrying about them and so it is best to be honest and remain consistent with your responses. You should offer reassurance to the child or young person and make sure that they know they could not have done anything to change the outcome and that the death was not their fault. Young people might look to place blame for a suicide death, it is important to explain that death by suicide is often a result of many contributing factors.

Some young people may use social media as a way of continuing bonds with their loved ones by posting comments on their profiles and using it as an opportunity to take care of unfinished business with private messaging. Online communities can offer support and understanding from peers and can be a healthy way of coping with feelings of loss, grief and bereavement. There is more information about peer help and social media included later in this document.

What can you do?

Some children and young people will be eager to come back to school as it is often a stable and familiar environment for them and allows them to come back to their normal routine in some way. This may be especially true if the suicide occurred at home.

However, this is not always the case. Some children and young people may feel anxious or upset about returning to school. They may feel like they will be missing things at home or they might be worried about getting upset or talking about their loss with their peers and/or teachers.

It is important for families and the child's school to communicate during this time to ensure consistent stories and language are used when speaking with the child but also to meet the child or young person's needs and to understand what they are comfortable with. This may change as the child or young person moves through their grief. It may also help for teachers to prepare the child or young person's classmates before their return as it is often a comfort to hear kind words or understanding from their peers.

PEER HELP AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Most children and young people now grow up in a world where their 'online' and 'offline' lives are essentially seamless. This means that for many young people, it will be natural to turn to social media and digital spaces for peer support and to cope with the impact of loss, grief and bereavement.

Talking about how you feel helps us to cope with the impact of loss, grief and bereavement. Children and young people experiencing loss and bereavement can be deeply sad but they still need to be children and young people. Being around their peer can help provide a relief from grief and it is important that they have the opportunity to talk to their peer about how they are feeling. Social media can provide a platform for children and young people to do this in a comfortable space for them. Some children and young people may find it easier to express their feelings and reach out to others using social media rather than in person. It also provides an opportunity to reach out to friends and family who don't live nearby. It can provide an outlet for continuing to talk about and remember a loved one, continuing their bond.

The Continuing Bonds Theory emphasizes that death ends a life, not a relationship. Those who are bereaved remain psychologically and emotionally connected to the deceased; their connection can develop and change over time, continuing their relationship. Connections provide solace, comfort and support which eases the transition from past to future. Social media can be used as a platform to continue their bond by checking in on their profile, sending them messages both private and public, sharing past 'memories' and photos and marking special dates.

Sharing thoughts and feelings on social media is similar to journaling, allowing people to express and validate their feelings. This can help a child or young person to understand the feelings they are experiencing. It allows an opportunity to seek support from a broader network of people, including friends made online and peer who have had a similar experience. There are a number of dedicated support groups, pages and networks online where young people can seek healthy support. Social media and the internet can be useful for children and young people to find out more about their loss, grief or bereavement and it is important they are aware of reliable sources for that information. It is also important children and young people are aware not all information they read online is accurate or true.

When posting and sharing online, it is important to remember that social media is a public platform; everyone can see what you share online and you can't take it back. Memories, special dates and anniversaries can be particularly difficult, notifications may appear when you are not ready for them and children and young people may feel pressured to mark these occasions by posting messages, photos and comments about their loved

one and their feelings. It is only natural to worry what others might think if you don't mark these occasions and it is important to remind children and young people that it is OK to remain private about their grief online.

Sharing news of a death online can have an impact on people's response and their feelings. Some may find it shocking to see the news of a death on their news feed or shared by friends and might feel isolated or unsupported when receiving the news. However, others might prefer to hear about a death in this way as it allows them time to digest the information and to be upset away from others before talking about their feelings and their loss. Children and young people should be reassured that it is OK to feel this way and supported to discuss those feelings and emotions. It is important to be mindful of others reactions to the news of a death and consider what it might mean for others before posting information online.

Online platforms and relationships can be difficult to manage and it's not always easy to judge what is right for you in a virtual environment. It's OK to change your mind; people's feelings change as they move through grief and while you once found social media helpful, you may not always. It is important that children and young people are supported to stay safe online, particularly when discussing loss, grief, bereavement and suicide and to fully understand what it will mean for them and others both in the short term and long term.

Staying safe online

The way in which we talk about loss, grief and bereavement online is important, including; social media, online forums and private messaging with peers. Talking about loss safely online can provide peer support and encourage people to seek help. Talking about suicide safely online can reduce the risks of suicidal feelings and behaviours for some people and may encourage people to seek support. Some things to consider and discuss with children and young people when posting about loss online include:

- Why are you posting?
 - How will sharing this post make you feel?
 - What do you hope to achieve by sharing your experience? Do you want to raise awareness or are you looking for support? Are there more effective ways of achieving those things?

- Who will see your post?
- How will your post affect your friends, family and peers?
- How might people respond to your post? Are you able to cope with communication from a wide range of people at this time?
- Use sensitive language
 - Consider who might see your post, are you comfortable with everyone reading the information you will share?
 - Consider the responses people might have, these could be both positive and negative
 - If discussing suicide or traumatic death, you might want to include a trigger warning. You should not include any details about the death in your posts.
- Be mindful of how you talk about those who have died
 - It's possible not everyone is aware of the person's death and it's important to consider how others might react to the news that the person has died.
 - When talking about those who have died by suicide, it is important to mention that their death was preventable and not something that they achieved or that is desirable e.g. "they are in a better place".
- Think about how often you post
 - Posting regularly can be stressful for both yourself and others and might have a negative impact on your wellbeing
- Be careful about what you post or share
 - Remember what you post or share online can stay there forever, even once deleted. This includes private messages too. People can easily

screenshot posts and messages and take screen recordings of videos, stories and live streams for wider sharing at any time.

- Remember that posts can go viral. You might not think this would happen to your post, but it is possible. When a post goes viral, it can reach a lot of people very quickly.
- Posting about your own feelings and experiences may lead to other reaching out to you for support or to share their own experiences. It's important to think about how you would feel about that and if you feel ready to offer peer support to others. You might want to be aware of support available you can share with them and encourage others to seek support from reliable sources such as The Samaritans, Lifelink Scotland, Childline or Winstons Wish.
- Share messages of hope and positive stories
 - Positive stories about overcoming challenges and moving through grief can normalise feelings of loss and encourage others to seek help and support if they need it. It is also important to recognise your own positive feelings and celebrate your achievements and resilience.

The Samaritans have shared a lot of useful information on posting safely online on their website, you can read more [here](#).

CASE STUDIES

A SCHOOL'S RESPONSE

Katy's story

Adapted from Winston's Wish

This is an example of good practice from a primary school that may be helpful to share to support staff development when there is a sudden bereavement in a school.

In this example Katy's Father died suddenly.

It raises some of the stages and issues that may prove helpful in managing the impact of death on your community or school setting. It makes some assumptions, including that Katy returns to school after a few days rather than the same morning, and so you may wish to adapt this to suit your context when being used as part of a staff development session.



This was one school's response; your journey will be your own but there will be some similarities and some useful things to consider.



- The school is informed of the death on Monday morning. Katy and her family are consulted on how the rest of the school will learn about the death.
- Katy's class teacher, Mr Sharples is informed.
- The rest of the staff are informed. It is discussed whether each class teacher will tell their class or if the headteacher will visit all the classes to tell what has happened to Katy's family. This would be determined by who actually knows Katy in the other

classes or if she has relatives attending the school – it may not be appropriate for the whole school to know about Katy's situation. A decision like this should be made by the school's Senior Management Team.

- A quick reminder of any other child in the school who has been previously bereaved is given to teachers to prepare them to offer additional support if required.
- If considered appropriate, a letter is produced for everyone/the class in the school to take home to their parents, outlining what has happened along with additional information on some possible reactions and responses that children may show.
- School staff are made aware of, and shown how to access, supporting documents, such as: [Managing Critical Incidents, Education Services](#),
- A letter of condolence is sent to Katy's family



THE MEDIUM
TERM

Before Katy returns
to school

- The school stays in touch with the family to find out what Katy's wants to happen on her return to school. It may be that Katy wants to tell the whole class what has happened or that she would prefer Mr Sharples to say something simple to acknowledge her return. Katy decides she wants to say something herself.
 - Staff are kept informed and encouraged to acknowledge the death to and with Katy.
 - They are encouraged to talk with their class about how Katy and her family may be feeling and how they will support her on her return. A simple form of words such as 'I am really sorry to hear about your father's death, Katy' is suggested for those who are unsure of what to say.
- Katy's own class and group of friends might have an additional session focusing on feelings connected with loss and grief. You can get some ideas for lesson plans [here](#).
 - Mr. Sharples is waiting when she arrives and they have some time together. During this time, he will check that Katy is still happy with their plans for her return to class.
 - Katy and her teacher identify a Key Adult for her. She is told that she can dip in and out of lessons whenever she needs to for the next few days and can seek out her chosen supporter. This may be her class teacher, the school secretary or one of the other teachers.
 - Katy and her teacher rejoin the rest of the class. Katy tries to tell people what has happened but gets a little upset. Her teacher gently finishes the account, giving the class as much information that Katy's family are comfortable being shared about the death.
 - Both Katy and Mr. Sharples make the point that she wants people to talk to her about what has happened and to understand that she will cry sometimes.
 - Time is set aside at the end of the day for Katy to spend a little more time with Mr. Sharples checking out how things have been during the day, any changes she would like to make for the next day (where possible) and agreeing a plan for the following morning. Maybe a group of Katy's friends could wait outside and walk in with her.



- In partnership with the family, it is agreed how the school will mark the funeral. It may be that some staff attend and some friends of Katy's. Other members of the school may wish to contribute memories of Katy's father.
- Mr Sharples, in agreement with the rest of the staff arranges a system of support for Katy whenever the pressure of grief builds up. For example, you may consider a 'team around the child' approach where a team of safe and trusted adults are identified to support Katy with her agreement, and she has scheduled time with supportive adults or can seek them out if needed. Adhering to the Nurture principles would also benefit Katy during this period. More information on Nurture can be

found [here](#).

- The school ensures that Katy's family knows about any local and national child bereavement services. A full resource list can be found [here](#).
- Mr Sharples compiles a 'calendar of memories' – noting any dates that will be especially sensitive for Katy – the anniversary of the death, her father's birthday, Fathers Day, and so on. This calendar can follow her through the school and a note is made that this information will pass at transition to the secondary school next year.
- All those who teach Katy have a heightened sensitivity to issues that may affect her –for example, consider the circumstances around the death, and the nature of proposed learning contexts to ensure Katy is not unnecessarily upset.
- The school continue to assess and plan to meet any of Katy's additional support needs in line with [Glasgow's Every Child is Included and Supported Policy and staged intervention framework](#).



Sadly, a much loved and valued member of our teaching staff died in tragic circumstances. Her death was sudden, unexpected and had a profound impact of the whole school community.

Immediate response

Our immediate priority was to ensure that the appropriate information was shared and that initial support was put in place as quickly as possible.

The news of her death came while the school was on holiday, just a few days before Christmas. Due to the circumstances surrounding her death, it was essential that friends and colleagues were told of her passing as soon as possible to avoid them hearing this news through media sources.

As headteacher, I took on the responsibility of contacting all members of staff on the evening of her death. Staff very quickly began to contact each other and this was the starting point of the school community coming together to support each other on their journey.

Information about the evening's events was shared with the Director of Education and the Media Office. In the coming days they remained in contact with me and I was able to update them of developments in terms of the wellbeing of the family and staff, the concerns I had in relation to the school's return and our response to media interest. This helped to co-ordinate the events of the days ahead and provided valuable advice and support for me as headteacher as well as to the whole school community.

Naturally, initial support for colleagues, friends and pupils came from within the school community with everyone, including family members, coming together over the next few days in the local church. This immediate need to be together provided a great sense of comfort. This was to be

the main means of support over the coming days, weeks and months.

The school quickly became a focal point for the community. The grounds were made available for children, families and friends to lay flowers, poems and gifts. This allowed the wider community to pay their respects and come together to remember their teacher over the first few weeks.

Messages of condolence, flowers and cards were sent to the school by colleagues and schools from across the city and beyond. This was welcomed by all and gave the school community the feeling that they were supported in their grief.

The return to school

In the days prior to the school re-opening, staff were eager to come together in the school to begin to plan for the return. The school's link Educational Psychologist provided support to staff and pupils and staff made use of the Loss and Bereavement support documents for guidance. Staff agreed that despite their feelings of personal loss the needs of the children should come first as the school re-opened as planned.

Most staff attended the funeral with the support of local schools and individual teachers within the community. On the same day, a 'Remember Our Teacher Day' was held in the school with children engaged in a range of enjoyable activities which allowed them to celebrate and share the memories of their teacher. Staff reassured the children and made them aware that they were to share their feelings about what had happened with staff when they were ready.

During the following week a formal Remembrance Day Service led by the Archbishop was held in the school for children and staff. The Service was not attended by others from outside the school. This shared decision showed the school's need to mark the loss of a much-loved member of staff within the privacy and safety of their own environment.

Following consultation with family, staff and school pupils, an agreement was reached to gather the flowers, cards and gifts from the school grounds and place them in a remembrance album.

Ongoing Support

A few months later, staff gathered again with the family for an intimate Remembrance Service supported by the local parish priest, in a place of quiet reflection. Staff continued to provide ongoing support for each other, making themselves available to each other as and when needed.

Children were encouraged to talk about how they felt and parents often spoke of the impact of the loss on their children. Staff were aware of the importance of remaining open and supportive to our children and families.

Always Remembering

In memory of our teacher, a new play area was created in the infant area of the school using the theme of 'Going on a Bear Hunt'. This continues to be enjoyed by children in the school today.

A plaque and photograph of our teacher was placed in the foyer of the school. Children often looked at her picture, asked questions and chatted about her. This ensured that her name was mentioned often, and that memories were shared with both children in the school and visitors to the school.

An annual 'Carols by Candlelight' is held in her memory each year. This is attended by her family and the school community and has become a peaceful and uplifting celebration.

Finally

The most important learning from our experience is that it is important to listen, be respectful and respond indistinctively to those around you. Everyone's journey is very individual and not time limited. This was an unspoken understanding within our school community.

RESOURCE SECTION

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Book	Goodbye Mousie	Robbie H. Harris	This beautifully illustrated picture book can help to provide young children with a starting point to discuss what happens after someone dies and the different feelings one may have. ISBN 978-0689871344	Amazon
Book	Goodbye Mog	Judith Kerr	A gentle introduction to the subjects of grief and bereavement. ISBN: 9780007149698	Amazon
Book	The Elephant in The Room	Amanda Edwards	Whimsical illustrations and rhyming verses of positive strategies for coping with grief and loss. ISBN: 1492793248	Amazon
Book	I Miss You: A First Look at Death	Pat Thomas	This bright and colourful picture book very simple talks about life and death. An excellent educational book, which could be used as a starting point for discussion. ISBN: 978 – 0764117640	Amazon
Book	When Uncle Bob Died	Althea	Suitable for very young children, this book tells the story of what happened and how Miffy felt and coped when Grandma died. ISBN: 978-1405219013	Amazon

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Book	Dear Grandma Bunny	Dick Bruna	This book is a very useful and informative introduction for any adult who is supporting a child through bereavement. ISBN 13: 978-0953912360	Winston's Wish
Book	Heaven	Nicholas Allan	A picture book which explores the impact of death on a young person. ISBN 978- 0099488149	Amazon
App	Lilies	Winston's Wish	An app that allows children to share memories and stories of those they have lost.	https://www.liliesgriefsupport.weebly.com/
App	Apart of me	Child Bereavement UK	A mobile gaming app developed to provide children with strength and resilience when someone is dying or has died.	https://www.apartofme.app/
Website	Teach Early Years	The Teach Co	Website aimed at providing useful information for teachers, including lesson plans and articles about the pandemic.	https://www.teachearlyyears.com/
YouTube clip	How to avoid becoming a lizard	David Murray	Helpful advice, given by young children, aimed to help young people who are feeling stressed or anxious.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1oolOMoFts
YouTube clip	Belly Breathing	David Murray	Helpful advice, provided by young people, on actions which can help overcome feelings of stress.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mb0g-z9g8eQ

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Teacher resources	The Story of the Oyster and the Butterfly: The Corona Virus and Me	Ana M Gomez	The resource has been created to help children deal with their feelings of worry, fear, and anxiety. Read the story, print the pages, and talk with your children about coronavirus and what we need to do to stay healthy and protect our friends and family.	https://www.tinyurl.com/y38r62km
Teacher resources	Q is for Quarantine: the ABCs of Coronavirus		Colouring book aimed at raising awareness of the pandemic.	https://www.tinyurl.com/y5x6yqcz
Primary Resources				
Book	Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge (Picture Puffin)	Fox Mem	Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge is a small boy who has a big name - and that's why he likes Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper because she has too. So when he finds Miss Nancy has lost her memory, Wilfrid determines to discover what memories are so he can find it for her. SBN-10 : 0140505865	Amazon
Book	The Invisible String	Patrice Karst	This book describes the connections between people, even at a distance. There is an on line reading of the book: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cO2LBBtAI ISBN-10 : 031648623X	Amazon

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Book	Coronavirus: A Book for Covid 19	Elizabeth Jenner	Helps to answer questions about COVID -19 with illustrations to help and support the information provided. ISBN: 9781839942518 Audio book: https://www.nosycrow.com/blog/actor-hugh-bonneville-to-voice-audio-for-nosy-crows-coronavirus-book-for-children/	https://www.nosycrow.com/product/coronavirus-a-book-for-children-about-covid-19/
Book/ web resource	My Hero Is You	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	Free PDF resource which can be downloaded. Aimed at younger children, to help them understand the pandemic. "My Hero is You" is a book written for children around the world affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. "My Hero is You" should be read by a parent, caregiver or teacher alongside a child or a small group of children.	https://www.tinyurl.com/yxxm4x9q
Book	Drop Dead	Barbette Cole	A humorous book with comic-like pictures about life, that emphasises the normally and inevitability of dying. ISBN-10 : 0679883584	Amazon
Book	Michael Rosen's SAD BOOK	Michael Rosen	Large illustrations and small snippets of text. Strong and emotive story about death. ISBN 13: 978-1406313161	Amazon

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Apps	Smiles and Tears	Nelsons Journey	Support for children and young people aged 0 – 17yrs who have experienced the death of a significant person in their life. It provides an interactive tool to record memories, send gifts and write thoughts, feelings and emotions	https://www.apps.apple.com/gb/app/smiles-tears/id965830012
App	Apart of me	Ben & Louis	When someone you love dies, it can feel like everything has turned upside down. But you're not alone. Apart of Me is a beautiful world, built to guide you through your darkest moments.	https://www.apartofme.app
Website	How to be Harry's Friend	Story read by Gavin Mitchell of Still Game	This is a story made by the BBC and read by Gavin Mitchell of Still Game about a young boy called Isaac can help his friend Harry when his mum dies	https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0824x6v
Whole School/ teacher resources	Good Grief – exploring feelings, loss and death with under 11's	B. Ward	Very comprehensive, gives information, guidance and full of ideas for classroom activities (also separate book for over 11s). ISBN 13: 978 – 1853023248	Amazon
Whole School/ teacher resources	Then, Now and Always.	Stokes	This guide for supporting children as they journey through grief includes a section on enabling a school community to respond positively to a death. ISBN 13: 978 - 0953912353	Amazon
Teachers resource book	A Teacher's Handbook of Death	Jackson & Colwell	Offers ideas for including death and bereavement in the curriculum. ISBN 13: 978 – 1843100157	Amazon

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Secondary Resources				
Books	Running on Empty	S. E Durrant & Rob Biddulph	A beautiful book about false starts and emotional journeys, with hope as the ultimate finishing line. ISBN-10 : 0857637401	Nosy crow
Book	The Many Worlds of Albie Bright	Christopher Edge	A novel about discover, life and death. ISBN: 9780857636041	Nosy crow
Book	Grief Encounter	S. Gilbert	A workbook which encourages conversations between adults and bereaved children. Ideas to encourage communication and provide support. ISBN 13: 978-0954843403	Child Bereavement Charity
Book	The Invisible String	Patrice Karst	A children's book that describes the connections between people, even at a distance. ISBN-10 : 031648623X	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cO2LBBtAI
Internet resource	Beyond Words: a guide for families and children	Beyond Words	An on-line downloadable resource to help guide children and families on the corona virus.	

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Podcast	Help2makesense	Winston's Wish	Podcasts share the stories of people that have experienced a death. Whether it is a young person talking about how they came to terms with their grief or the Winston's Wish team sharing their advice for bereaved families.	https://www.help2makesense.org/podcast/
Podcast	Saying goodbye: Do we need to talk about death?	Yasmin Evans: The Co op	Podcast exploring grief and loss.	https://www.coop.co.uk/podcast
App	Greif: Support for young people	Child Bereavement Centre	This app has been created by leading bereavement charity Child Bereavement UK and the bereaved young people we work with. It is for 11-25-year olds who have been bereaved of someone important to them. It can also be used by friends, teachers, parents and professionals who would like to know how to support bereaved young people.	https://www.tinyurl.com/y4mczvp8
Apps	Mood mission	Mood mission	When you tell Mood Mission how you're feeling, it gives you a tailored list of five simple, quick, effective, evidence-based missions to improve your mood.	https://www.moodmission.com/
Internet resource	When People Die	University of Dundee	Stories from Young People is a comic that tells numerous stories about death and resilience from a group of young people.	https://www.tinyurl.com/y3dlxc6y
Websites	Mind	Mind	This resource provides information on bereavement, where to go for support, and suggestions for helping yourself and others through grief.	https://www.tinyurl.com/y5hprgr3

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Whole School/ teacher resources	Letting Go	Sharie Coombs	The encouraging and simple activities and exercises tackle the feelings associated with grief, bereavement and family separation; children will enjoy using their creativity to combat negative feelings and work out how to cope with these emotions through writing, colouring, doodling and drawing.	Amazon
WSR	Bereavement. Developing the Curriculum and pastoral support	Job & Francis	Using case studies and drawing on best practice, this resource aims to help those working in schools address death, dying and bereavement from a pastoral care and educational perspective. It provides lesson ideas for how to achieve this through the curriculum. ISBN 13: 978-1904787143	Child Bereavement Charity
WSR	A Resource Bank on Loss and Grief 'it's hurts'	M. Harvey	Includes guidelines on facilitating sessions around loss and grief with 11 photocopiable activities, brief information about the nature of loss and grief and its impact on young people. Good for PSHE. ISBN: 978-090795064	Child Bereavement Charity
Workbook / teacher resource	Grief Encounter	S. Gilbert	A workbook to encourage conversations between adults and bereaved children. Hands on, user friendly, with many ideas to encourage communication and provide support. ISBN 13: 978-0954843403	Child Bereavement Charity

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Resources appropriate to children and young people with additional support needs.				
Book	When mum died When dad died	Shelia Hollins and Lester Sireling	Simple pictures and a direct approach to death which can suit ASN students.	Child Bereavement Charity
Book	The Invisible String	Patricia Karst	Simple approach to overcoming the fear of loneliness. Reminding children that we are loved beyond anything we can imagine. Read aloud: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlUxXexjhYI	Amazon
Book	Grandpa	J. Burningham	A simple picture book which can elicit a discussion with students about how they feel	Amazon
Book	Remembering	Dianne Leuthuer	Part book/ part scrap book created to help keep a child's memories alive after the loss of someone special and to give children a place to return to whenever they wish.	Amazon
Book	Finding a way through when someone close has died	Mood and Whittaker	A workbook that was written by young people who have experienced death of someone close. They offer advice based on their own experience.	Amazon
Book	When someone very special dies	M. Heegard	A simple workbook designed to be used by a bereaved child with adult help to understand the feelings they may have.	Child Bereavement Charity

Type/ format	Title	Author	Description	Source
Book	Greif Encounter	S. Gilbert	A workbook to encourage conversations between adults and bereaved children.	Child Bereavement Charity
Book	Always and forever	A.Durrant	A story book which enforces the fact that the person who has gone is still in our hearts and that memories will last forever.	Amazon
Website	Bereavement support for children with SEND	Winston's Wish	Internet resources with lots of information and guidance on how to support young people who have additional support needs during following from a loss and bereavement.	https://www.instonswish.org/supporting-children-with-send/
Website	Resources for families supporting children and young people with additional support needs.	NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde	The support page provides links to information which can explain rights and access to services during this time, there are also links to organisations which may be adapting their services to you offer further support.	https://www.tinyurl.com/yvowlnk
Website	Mentally Healthy Schools	Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families	Internet resource to provide help and guidance following from loss and bereavement.	https://www.tinyurl.com/y3d7aq3a

OFFICIAL Additional Websites:

<https://www.includem.org/about-projects/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/>

<https://www.dyingmatters.org/page/resources-coping-bereavement>

<https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>

<https://scottishcare.org/bereavement/>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/glasgow>

<http://www.seasonsforgrowth.org.uk/>

<https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Additional support during COVID

Strategy for processing emotional disturbance for frontline staff:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpPeQq4kxo4>

If feeling overwhelmed - for parents and carers to support children

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xH3nkWj7IU>