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Student Wellbeing Resource

Bereavement

UPDATED
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Bereavement

Overview

Most young people will have been bereaved of someone close to them (a parent, sibling, grandparent, friend, teacher) by the time they are 16. Many will cope well with their loss, but all will need the support of those around them. Depending on many factors including who has died, how they died, what their relationship with the person who has died was like, as well as how their family show emotions and communicate about the death, young people will have very different reactions to the death of someone they knew.

Other factors that can contribute are how supportive people around them are, and if they have the capacity to understand what has happened. Children tend to move through many emotions and reactions very quickly; it is sometimes described as 'puddle jumping'

Resources

- <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/> a website designed especially for bereavement in children. Has resources for schools, for the young person and for parents/carers.
- <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> a website for young people to use.
- <http://childbereavementuk.org/young-people/> a website for child bereavement that has resources for schools, young people and parents/carers.
- www.winstonswish.org.uk charity for bereaved children, specialist provider of support for children bereaved through homicide and suicide freephone national helpline 08088 020 021.

(while adults may wade through rivers of grief or become stuck in oceans of distress). It is natural for them to be extremely upset at one minute and then wanting to know what is for tea; it does not mean they are not distressed by what has happened.

Bereavement is common but can be hugely life changing and extremely distressing. It's important that everyone around the young person who is grieving is supportive and understanding. This means potentially telling others (e.g. teachers and the young person's friends) about the young person's situation so they can be sensitive to their needs and offer support if needed.

Key Facts

- Up to 70% schools have a bereaved pupil on roll at any one time.
- 1 in 29 young people are dealing with the death of a parent or sibling.
- One in sixteen 5 to 16-year-olds had experienced the death of a friend
- 5 -16 year-olds who have experienced bereavement are approximately one and-a-half times more likely than other children to be diagnosed with 'any' mental disorder (2005)
- Bereavement by suicide increases the risk of the young person considering and attempting suicide

Best Practice

- Children and young people will have different understandings about death according to their age and developmental stage, all children will be affected in some way by a bereavement in the family. Not speaking about it, seeking to 'protect' children by not involving them can mean that their imaginings and the sense they make of it can be harmful.
- A bereaved young person may appear to be grieving like an adult but they are not an adult and should be treated as a young person.
- The bereaved young person shouldn't be burdened with tasks that a responsible adult can undertake. Being asked to 'look after' a surviving parent etc. isn't helpful.
- Grieving young people may prefer to speak with their friends or people outside of the immediate family about the death, this should be supported. Some young people feel isolated or 'different' from their friends, a support group may help, or a supportive mentor in school.
- Due to the developmental changes a young person will be undergoing, the emotions related to the death of someone close may be very intense. They may need support to express how they are feeling and the emotions they are encountering. Offer useful ways to express these feelings, so that they don't harm themselves or others. They may need a 'time out' space, a supportive mentor in School.
- If a young person is self-medicating or self-harming, very withdrawn or engaging in serious risk taking behaviour as a response to their grief, professional help/advice should be sought.
- A young person will be very vulnerable after bereavement and need someone to talk to about how they are feeling, so that any potentially harmful relationships or situations can be identified and dealt with appropriately. Safe Boundaries are vital to young people at this time.
- Grief is a normal and ultimately helpful response to loss, but complicated grief is harmful and the young person will need support.
- Suicide may create feelings of guilt or anger wondering if they or someone else is responsible, they may feel abandoned, the emotional cost to the family will impact on the young person and they may feel burdened. The child or young person may experience post-traumatic stress symptoms either from witnessing or imagining the death, professional support will be needed.
- After suicide it is best if children are told and their questions answered honestly but in a helpful way. If family members can't do this a trusted adult may be able to help.

Bereavement

Local Offers and Providers

Provider	What they offer	Cost	Contact details
Kooth	Online counselling support for 11-18 year olds in Sheffield.	Free	Register online: www.kooth.com
CRUSE	All age bereavement counselling.	Free	10 Carver St, Sheffield S1 4FS 0114 249 3328 sheffield@cruse.org.uk
Samaritans	DEAL (Developing Emotional Awareness and Listening) is a free resource for teachers and other educational professionals designed to help develop resilience in young people. Lesson plans, activities, hand-outs, audio-visual resources, teachers' notes and staff training materials can all be accessed and downloaded at any time from Samaritans website. Postvention support- practical support following bereavement by suicide.	Free	272 Queens Road, Sheffield S2 4DL - 0114 276 7277 www.samaritans.org/deal
Education Psychology Service	Sheffield EPS has a range of useful material some of which is used to support staff and young people following a suicide. Often a useful first step after first contact with the school is to share these resources with the Head Teacher. EPs might then typically visit the school and work with the senior leadership team to listen to their concerns and offer advice in relation to practical matters such as telling the school community and supporting the staff and young people.	Free	Each school will have the details for contacting the EPS in their own Critical Incident Procedures.
Golddigger Trust	Golddigger Trust is a Sheffield based Charity, offering a variety of wellbeing projects, both within the school environment, and extra-curricular activities within the community, for young people aged 11-19. Services include: 1:1 Mentoring – Bespoke, flexible programmes of mentoring for students addressing specific needs identified. Minimum 6 sessions (usual course approx. 8-14 sessions). Students accessing Golddigger Trust services via school can also access additional free services outside of school hours, including drop in youth clubs, sexual health clinic, sports and music sessions and online support.	Cost varies based on service and available charitable funding, contact for most up to date costings. Community based services are free, accessed by community referral (MAST, CAMHS, Self-referral etc). There is no charge to young people.	0114 327 1191 Golddigger Trust Centre For Young People, 10 Psalter Lane, Sheffield, S11 8YN info@golddiggertrust.co.uk www.golddiggertrust.co.uk