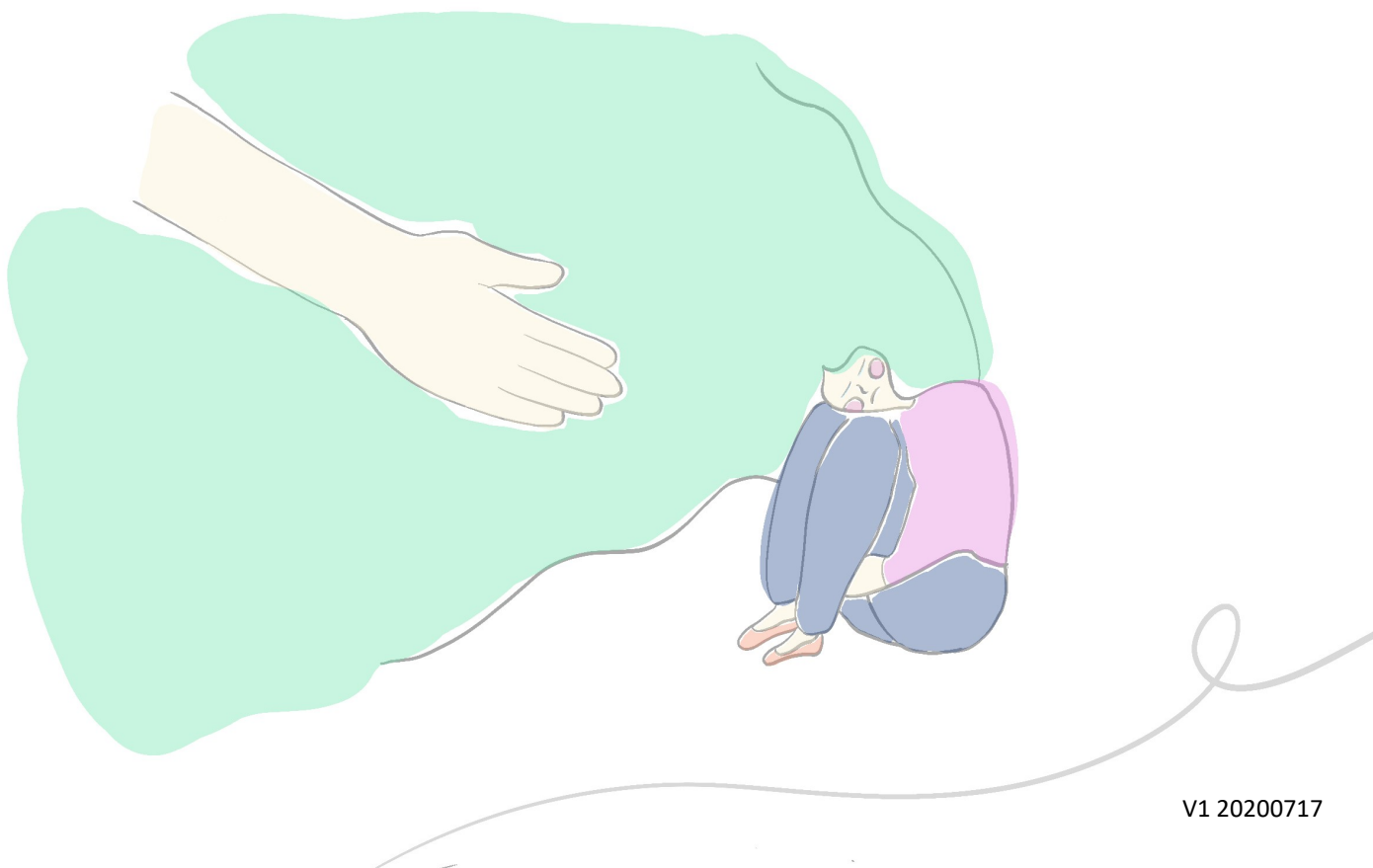




Lincolnshire Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

Healthy Minds Lincolnshire

Grief and Loss support pack
for child / young person



Contents

This booklet is for children and young people experiencing grief and loss. It contains lots of information and some activities you may find helpful.

Take a look at the different sections when you feel ready. You may want to look through this with someone close to you.

You do not have to read this information in one go and can put this booklet down and pick it up again as needed.

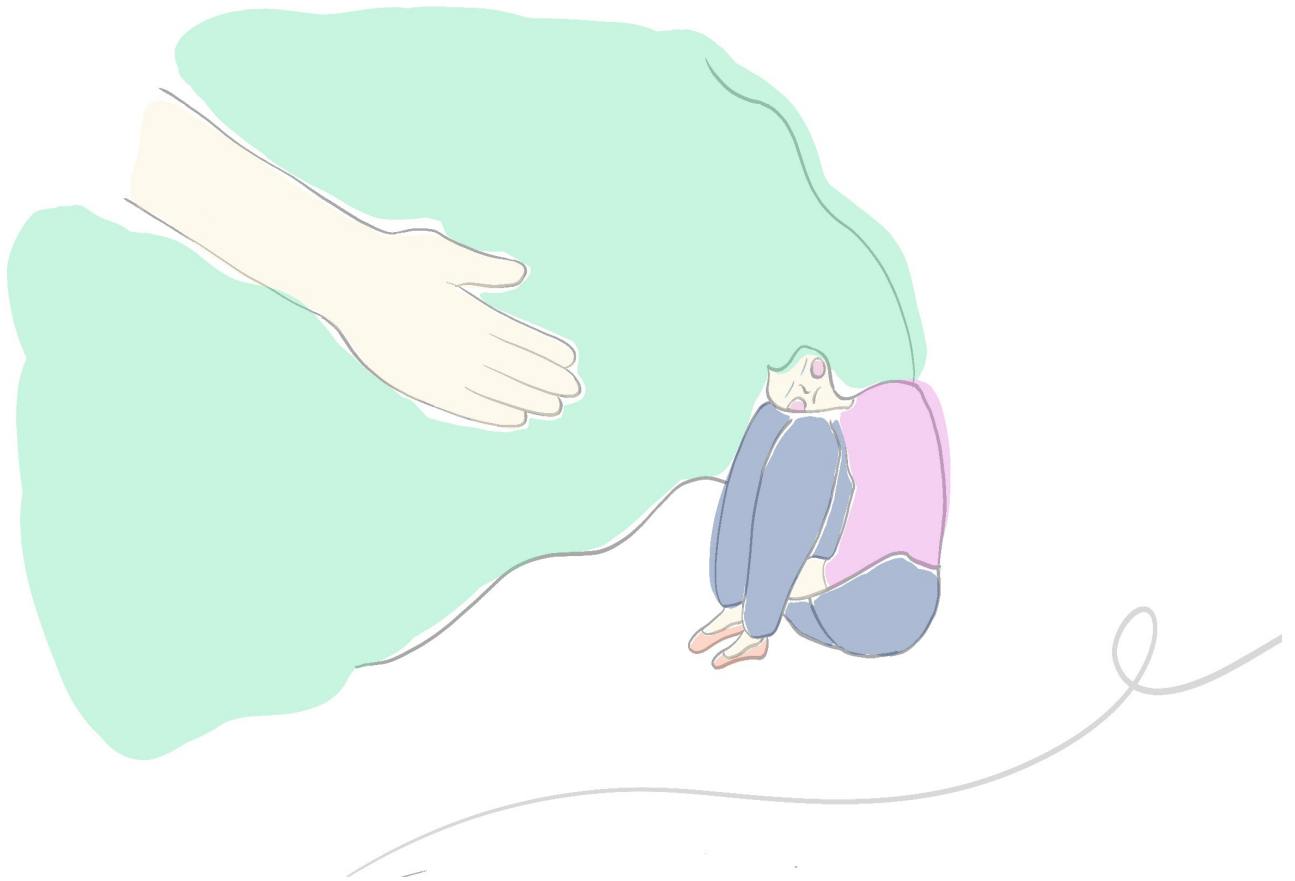
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Understanding Grief and Loss



Understanding Grief and Loss

Losing someone that we care about and the change that loss brings to our life can be really difficult. Grief is our individual response to this loss.

Everyone's experience of grief and loss is different; you might experience lots of different emotions that at times may feel overwhelming, or you might find that you do not feel anything at all. This can be described sometimes as "feeling numb."

These mixed and ever changing emotions are a natural reaction to loss and the grieving process. One thing to remember is that there is no set pattern when it comes to grieving and there is no right or wrong way to feel.

There are many different reasons that may lead to us feeling grief, such as;

- * The death of a member of our family
- * The death or loss of a pet
- * The death of a friend, a teacher or someone you knew at school
- * An illness of someone close to you
- * The loss of a relationship or friendship, like someone moving away or no longer being in your life as often as they had been.

Whatever the loss, when we are grieving we need time to accept and come to terms with this.

The way that we feel and the way that we cope can vary from person to person. Some people may find it helpful to be around people for example, whilst others may prefer to have some alone time.

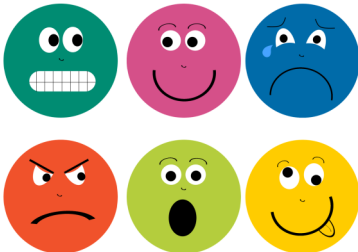
Grief can impact every part of our lives, such as our thoughts, our physical health, our emotions and our behaviour.



Grief can affect the way we think, we may struggle to concentrate, become forgetful or find it difficult to make decisions.



Grief can affect our physical health – this can lead to us getting headaches, having aches and pains or feeling sick.



If our emotions are affected, this can impact how we feel about the world around us, such as how we feel about our friends, family and school.



Grief can affect our behaviours, so we may argue more with other people, we might cry or we may find that we struggle to get to sleep or that we want to sleep more often.

Changes to be aware of

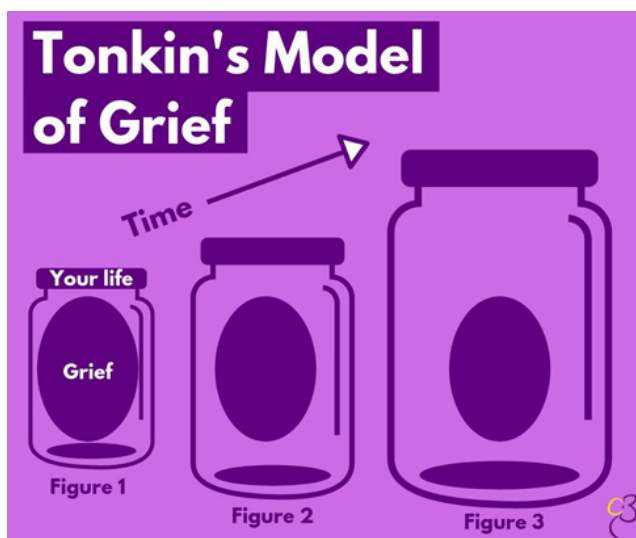
Sometimes we don't realise we're having a hard time or that we're struggling with our loss, but other people around us, such as parents/carers, teachers or friends may notice this and point it out to us. You may notice some changes, such as:

- * Changes in your sleep or eating patterns. This can mean sleeping less/more or eating less/more.
- * Struggling with being separated from those close to you, such as a parent/carers.
- * Thinking more about the deceased person and wishing you could be with them again.
- * A lack of interest in playing with friends
- * Changes in grades at school
- * A loss of interest in activities that once excited you
- * Changes in behaviour, such as arguing more with others.

Noticing these changes in yourself, or having others point them out to you, can feel challenging or worrying. Later on in this booklet we discuss how you can talk to others about how you are feeling and there are also activities for you to try that can help with managing grief and loss.

Tonkin's Model of Grief

Lois Tonkin's theory of grief (below,) suggests that over time our grief stays the same but that our life begins to grow around it, making it feel easier to manage. With new experiences and new relationships, slowly the jar around our grief grows a little bigger, so eventually the grief does not feel as big and hard to cope with. The idea of growing around grief accepts that grief doesn't leave us, but at the same time this does not mean that we will always feel as sad as we do right now.



Picture from Cruse bereavement

Kubler-Ross 5 Stages of Grief

The Kubler-Ross Stages of Grief model explains what we may be feeling at different stages.

The different stages are **Denial**, **Anger**, **Bargaining**, **Depression** and finally **Acceptance**.

People move through the different stages at different times, so one person may feel acceptance of the loss, while another may still be feeling angry. Remember, we are all different.

One way to understand this is by looking at the popular Disney movie The Lion King, where the 5 Stages of Grief and Loss can be seen.



1. Denial – After the stampede Simba finds his dad, Mufasa, lying on the ground not moving. He initially is in denial that his dad has died and says, “Dad, come on, you’ve got to get up.”



2. Anger – When Nala finds Simba as a grown up, she asks him to come back and he becomes angry and defensive with her because he believes it is his fault his dad died (remember Uncle Scar telling Simba it's all his fault?) Simba is angry with his dad for leaving him and shouts at the sky, “You said you would always be there for me, but you’re not.”



3. Bargaining – Simba sees a figure of his dad in the sky and pleads for his dad to stay.

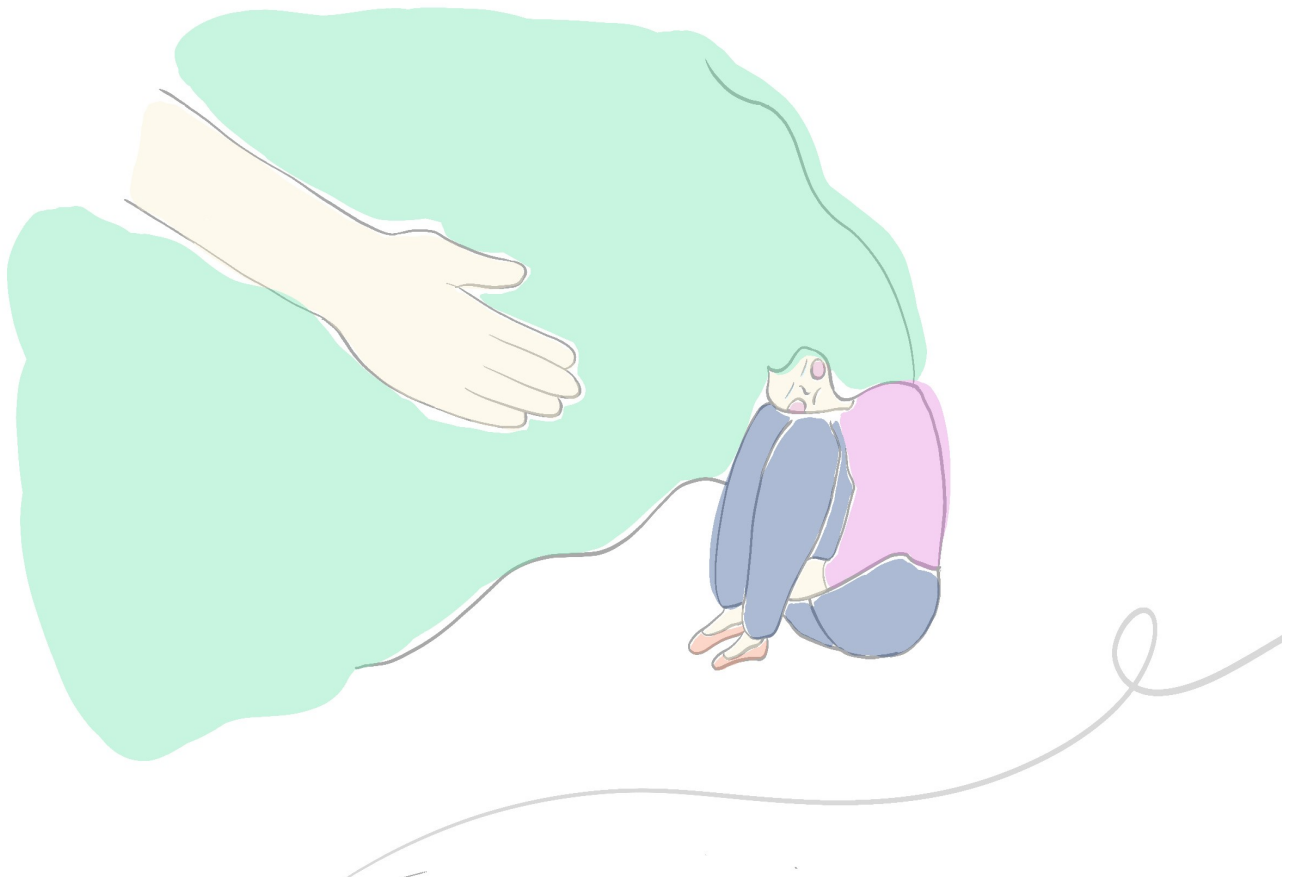


4. Depression – After Simba moves past bargaining, he looks down and says, “It’s me, it’s all my fault,” believing that he was responsible for the stampede. He feels a great sadness and emptiness from his loss.



5. Acceptance – Simba realises the truth – that his Uncle Scar killed his father. Simba accepts his rightful place as king and his father's death. In the final scene he has moved forward with his grief and stands on the top of Pride Rock with Nala and their new born cub.

Talking about a loss



Talking about a loss

Talking to others about your grief and loss may feel tough or a bit scary. If the person you have lost was also close to your parents/carers/friends, you may feel worried about talking to them in case you upset them.

Remember the Kubler-Ross model in the previous section and that others around you may be in different places with their grief and loss journey. It's ok to talk about your loss, but try to not feel too disheartened if you feel ready to talk, but those close to you do not. If others around you aren't ready to talk, it may be helpful to speak to someone you can trust who is not in your immediate family or circle of friends, such as a teacher or school counsellor.

If you don't feel ready or able to talk out loud about how you're feeling, you may find it helpful to draw or write your feelings. If you want to share this with others around you, you can share your letter or picture with them. There are some activities for doing this later on in this booklet.

Talking to others about their loss

If a friend or family member wants to talk through their loss and how they are feeling, this may seem a bit daunting.

Often, people are worried about saying or doing the right things and not making the situation worse.

There are some things you can do help....

- * **Listen without interrupting** Try to listen to your friend or family member without interrupting. As they're talking, lots of thoughts or questions might pop into your head, but try to just listen to what they're saying and wait for them to finish speaking. Sometimes people don't want solutions to what they need to do next, they just need to talk through how they're feeling.
- * **Face them and make eye contact** This shows that you are listening and are interested in what they have to say.
- * **Use validation** A great example of validation can be found in a video clip of the film Inside Out, which you can watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT6FdhKriB8>

Alternatively, you can type 'inside out validation clip' into a search engine and find the YouTube video in the search results.

There is more about validation next....

Using validation

Validation is the recognition that a person or their feelings or opinions are valid and worth while. Here are some examples of phrases you may wish to say to someone who has come to speak with you about their loss.

- * I hear what you're saying
- * I have felt the same way before
- * It's ok to feel like this
- * That must be really difficult for you

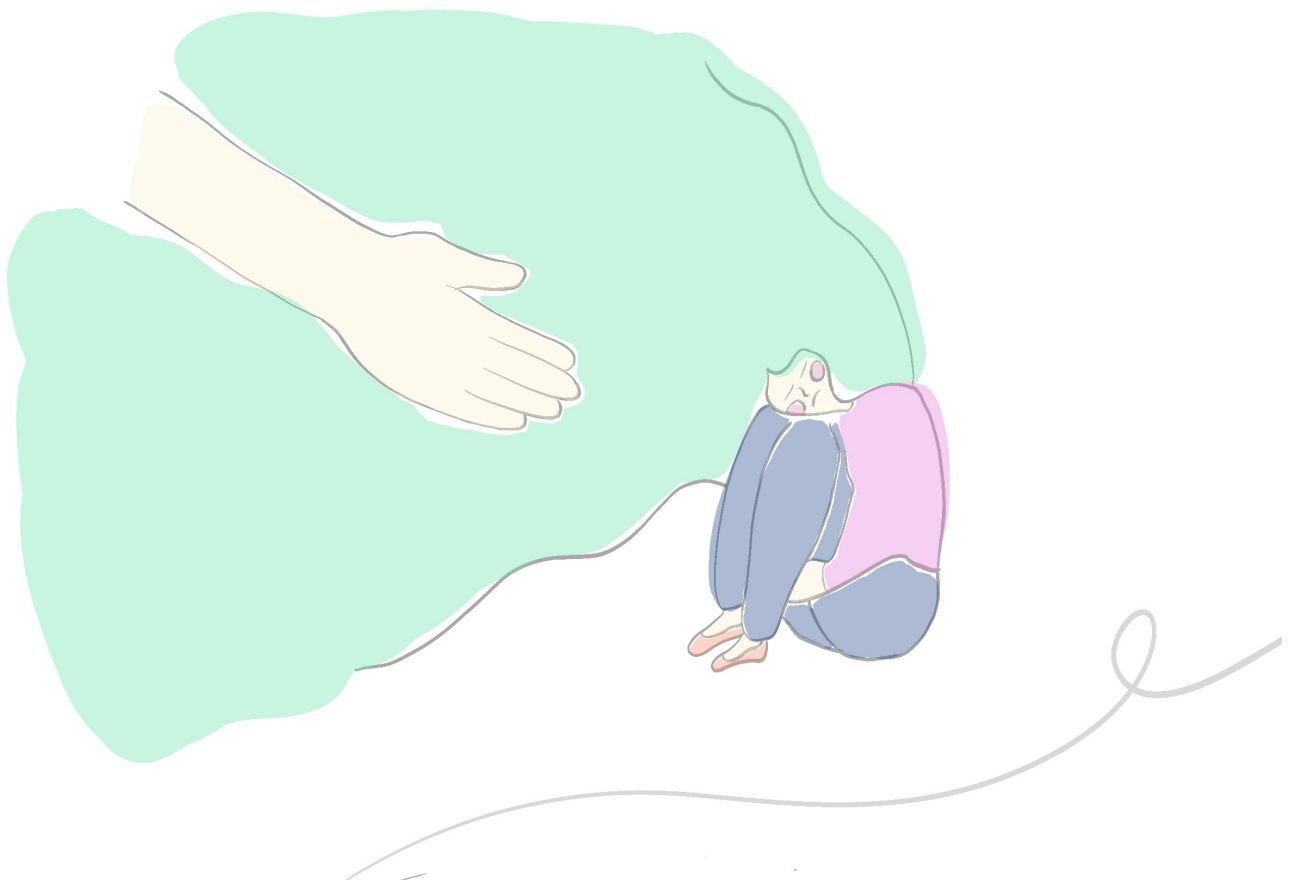
Occasionally people may ask what the other person thinks they should do and you are unlikely to have the answers or be able to help with this. If someone asks what you think they should do, where they can go for help, or if you are also struggling with a loss and don't feel able to help someone else right now, you could use validation by saying,

"I can see this is really important to you," and then explore who else they could talk to, such as a teacher or another trusted adult.

Remember, you can be a listening ear to a friend or loved one who is experiencing a loss, but it is not your responsibility to try and make things better for the other person or to have solutions for what might help. Sometimes it is enough for people to say how they feel and "get this off their chest." If they need more support or you are concerned about them, always speak to a trusted adult, such as a teacher or parent/carer.



Activities to support Grief and Loss



Activities to support Grief and Loss

These activities can be helpful if you are experiencing a loss, however if you have recently experienced the loss, you may not feel ready to explore activities just yet and are likely to need time to come to terms with your grief and how you are feeling.

Remember that we're all different in how we cope with our grief and different children/young people are likely to feel ready to look at coping strategies and activities at different times. If someone else close to you has started to try some of these activities, but you don't feel ready yet, that's ok and you can explore them when the time is right for you.



Memory Jar

Memory jars are a nice way to remember someone. They are made using natural materials, such as chalk. Chalk has been found to contain negative ions, which also provide soothing sensations. Follow the steps below to create your memory jar.

You will need:

A small jar (try not to pick one too big as you need to fill it!)

Table salt

Coloured chalk (powder paint works well if there is an allergy to chalk)

2x pieces of paper

Optional: Glitter and Cotton wool



Steps:

1. Write down some memories or words that remind you of the person/place you are creating your jar about.
2. Choose a colour to represent that memory/word from your chalks/paints/glitter available.
3. Take the plain piece of paper, and in the centre pour some salt (think about how much you may need for the jar, and how you wish to divide this between your chosen colours.)
4. Rub the salt with the coloured chalk. If using powder paint, mix this in well with the salt. While doing so, think about why this memory or word is special to you. You may wish to add some glitter.
5. Pour the salt/chalk/paint mix into your memory jar.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for each of your memories/words until your jar is full!
7. If you have cotton wool, you can place this on top of your chalk/salt mix in the jar to hold firmly in place.
8. Place the lid on your jar. Don't shake it if you do not want the colours to mix!
9. If you are making this with another person, talk about what memories/word each coloured layer represents.

Keep this somewhere you can see to remind yourself of the happy memories/words within the jar.

Memory Box



What is a memory box?

A memory box is a container that holds special things that belong to you and your loved one. The things in your memory box can help to remind you of happy times and nice memories.

Finding ways to remember the person who has died can be helpful in the grieving process. Some of the memories might make you laugh or cry, but that's ok, it is all part of the process of remembering the person who has died. Creating a memory box can make you feel emotional, sad or overwhelmed so you might find it useful to have a relative or friend help you.

Making the box

A memory box can be as simple or elaborate as you like. You could use an old shoe box, a biscuit or sweets tin or a gift box. You could cover it with wallpaper or decorate the box with photos, stickers, pictures or drawings.

What goes into a memory box?

Before you decide what to put in your box, you may find it helpful to think about your different types of memories. For example:

- * A special time you shared together
- * Something you both enjoyed or laughed about
- * A memory that gives you some comfort

Some ideas



- * Spray some of a loved one's perfume or aftershave onto a tissue or small toy
- * Include photographs of you and your loved one together
- * Add your favourite music onto a USB memory stick so you can listen to this
- * Use anything that has a personal story attached to it, such as jewellery, birthday cards you received from your loved one, or tickets from places you visited together that hold special memories.



Comic Strip

Drawing a comic strip is another way to help you relax and remember happy times with your loved one.

Show off your art skills and have a go at making one below.

Writing a letter

Sometimes it can feel hard talking to others about how we feel, or we may not feel comfortable sharing our feelings out loud. Writing down our thoughts and feelings when we feel sad, ripping this up and throwing it away and then focussing on something that makes us feel happy can help us to feel better.

You may also wish to use this space to write a letter to the person you have lost, or to those closest to you to explain your feelings if you do not feel able to say this out loud.



Padded Hearts

If you have an item of your loved one's clothing you could cut out and sew a simple padded heart as a reminder of them. You could hang it by your bed on your bag – or wherever you would find it helpful.

Making a padded heart

1. To make a heart you will need a piece of fabric such as a top or a shirt.
2. Cut out a heart from paper to use as a template. Fold your fabric in two and cut out a square of fabric that is a bit bigger than your heart template. Put the heart template on your fabric and draw around it, you can use a pen or a pencil.
3. Using a simple running stitch, stitch around the heart, leaving a gap so you can stuff it. You could use cotton wool, the insides of an old pillow or even an old odd sock.
4. After you have stuffed it, finish sewing it up, you can then carefully cut around the padded heart, taking care not to snip the stitches. Sew a piece of ribbon at the top of the heart to make a loop.



Idea - You could spray a little of your loved one's perfume/aftershave or a scent that you find comforting to the heart.



Other resources

Books

Crossley, D. Illustrated by Sheppard, K. (2000) Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: your activity book to help when someone has died.

Rosen, M. & Blake, Q. (2004) Michael Rosen's Sad Book (Understanding deep sorrow after Loss)

Dr Coombes, Sharie. (2020) Letting Go! Mindful Kids: An activity book for children who need support through experiences of loss, change, disappointment and grief - Mindful Kids

Websites

www.cruse.org.uk Helpline, online chat and information about bereavement.

www.hopeagain.org.uk The support service for young people offered by Cruse.

www.childbereavementuk.org Helpline, online chat, email and information around loss.

www.winstonswish.org Support for bereaved children, young people, their families, and the professionals who support them.

www.themix.org.uk Support for under 25s with a range of challenging issues.

www.lcgl.org.uk Lincolnshire Centre for Grief and Loss. Website with further support guides and advice.

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you need urgent help text YM to 85258.

www.kooth.com Counselling forum, online information where young people can speak also with trained counsellor.

Lincolnshire Here4You 01522 309120

Joint Healthy Minds Lincolnshire and CAMHS advice line. – available Mon- Fri 09.30 – 16.30

Alternatively, please visit our website www.lpft.nhs.uk/young-people where you can find useful information and self-help advice.