

Books and resources – early years

The suggestions below are suitable to use with very young children to introduce the life cycle including the end of life, or to use when someone they know has died. Children under five may not fully understand the concept of death but will be very aware that something important has happened. They need simple and honest explanations, possibly repeated many times. The books below will help with this.

General books

***I Miss My Sister* by Sarah Courtauld**

A young girl's sister has died and the impact on her and her family is sensitively illustrated with minimum text. Designed to be shared with an adult, it will help to start conversations, answer questions and allay any fears.

***Missing Mummy* by Rebecca Cobb**

Beautifully illustrated and with moments of wonderful warmth, this is a touching, honest and helpful book about the death of a parent. With minimum text, it touches on some of the worries and fears that a young child may have after a death, offering reassurance and hope.

***I Miss You: a First Look at Death* by Pat Thomas**

This helps children understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have. It briefly covers a range of issues such as why people die, how you may feel when someone dies and what happens afterwards. A good one to use to introduce the subject.

***Goodbye Mousie* by Robie H Harris**

The story of a young boy dealing with the death of his pet mouse is handled with the sure touch of an author familiar with children's tender emotions. Simply told by the boy, in a matter-of-fact tone with a dash of humour, he recounts his reactions to the death of his pet mouse.

***When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death* by Laurence Krasny Brown and Marc Brown**

The authors explain in simple language the feelings people may have regarding the death of a loved one and the ways to honour the memory of someone who has died.

***Granpa* by John Burningham**

This award-winning book is a beautifully written tale about the close and imaginative relationship between a little girl and her Granpa. The last page is an illustration of Granpa's empty chair with the little girl beside it looking very thoughtful. No explanation is offered but his death is implied. This non-directive approach enables the book to be used for a variety of situations.

Pre-bereavement

***My Brother and Me* by Sarah Courtauld**

This pre-bereavement book is designed to help children understand how they and the rest of their family might feel when someone in that family is seriously ill. It offers opportunities to share concerns and fears and ways to manage difficult feelings such as jealousy. Age 4-10 but could be used with younger children.

Sudden death

Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute? By Elke Barber and Alex Barber

Alex is only three when his father suffers a heart attack. All on his own, Alex manages to get help but his beloved Daddy dies at the scene. This is a good book to explain sudden death to pre-school children using words and illustrations they will understand.

Death of a baby

We were gonna have a baby, but we had an angel instead by Pat Schwiebert

For age two upwards. A children's book told from a young child's perspective about the excitement and dreams of a coming baby, and the disappointment and sadness of a miscarriage. Beautiful ink and watercolour illustrations.

Goodbye baby – Cameron's Story by Gillain Griffiths

Cameron cannot understand why his brother died and he gets angry. He creates a special scrapbook so that he will not forget his brother. Written by the author to help her 3-year-old son understand what a miscarriage is.

All Shining in the Spring by Siobhan Parkinson

Matthew is looking forward to the new baby but there is bad news, the baby is not growing properly and will not live after it is born.

Workbook for pupils to use

Someone I know Has Died by Trish Phillips

This activity book is designed to be used with adult help by very young children who need assistance to understand what being dead means, what we do, and how we might feel when someone dies. Some pages are interactive in ways familiar to children.

Religion

Pip and the edge of Heaven by Elizabeth Liddle

Pip is very young when he first asks his mother a question about Heaven. His mother encourages him to think through an answer of his own. Together, Pip and his mother try to find their own answers to many more questions about Heaven. As Pip grows older, his questions and answers begin to show a more mature understanding. By the time Pip is almost five years old, he and his mother have come to a view of love, God and Heaven that is both simple yet sophisticated, endearing yet profound. This book is perfect for encouraging children to formulate and answer questions about life, death, love, God and Heaven.

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Available from Child Bereavement UK's online shop

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