



Recommended Book List for Bereaved Children

A rainbow baby story (Crystal A Falk and Kim S Roman 2015)

Helps parents open the lines of communication explaining the loss of a sibling through miscarriage, stillbirth or infant loss in a way that children can understand. What is a "Rainbow Baby?" A rainbow baby is a baby who is born after the mother has experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or infant loss. Most mental health care experts believe that death should be explained briefly but honestly to young children. The words we have chosen fall in line with that thinking.

(Ages 2 – 6) Chocolate Chipped (Shelly Gilbert and Vicky Baruch 2012)

Tells the unique story of a young boy named Charlie and his grieving over how dad's death. Chocolate Chipped can help adults to talk openly to children about the loss of a parent. It can be read by bereaved children to help them understand their own feelings and also by other children to help them appreciate what a friend is going through.

(Ages 4 to 12)

Cows on the Couch (Christine While and Julie Leiman Weaver 2015)

Perfect for every family struggling with cancer and explaining it to young children. Told honestly and gently by adorable cows, children and taken through the standard steps of cancer treatment from hair loss to surgery

(Ages 3 to 8)

Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine (Winston's Wish)

This activity book offers invaluable practical and sensitive support for bereaved younger children. Beautifully illustrated, it suggests a helpful series of activities and exercises accompanied by the friendly characters of Bee and Bear.

(Under 5's – up to age 11)

When Uncle Bob Died (Althea 2001.)

A simple book about a boy whose uncle dies from an illness. It explains the facts around death and explores some of the feelings people have.

(Under 5's)

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Waterbugs and Dragonflies: explaining death to young children (Doris Stickney 2002)

Uses the analogy of a waterbug transforming into a dragonfly to illustrate the idea of life after death. Written from a Christian viewpoint, children may need an adult to help understand the relevance of the story.

(Ages 5 – 7)

Are You Sad, Little Bear? A Book about Learning to Say Goodbye (Rachel Rivett 2013)

This picture book will help young children in times of bereavement, loss or change, gently exploring the reasons for saying goodbye and giving reassurance that goodbye doesn't mean the end of things.

(Under 5s - 7)

No Matter What (Debi Gliori 2002)

"I'm grim and grumpy," says Small to Large, "and I don't think you love me at all." But nothing could be further from the truth--and Large knows just how to reassure Small in this warm and tender story about a child's biggest worry and a parent's endless capacity for love.

(Under 5's)

Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute?: Explaining Sudden Death to Pre-School Children in Words They Can Understand (Elke Barber 2012)

Explains sudden death to very young children in a way they can understand for their age and stage of development. It's based on a true story, written by a parent after her 34 year old husband died very suddenly and unexpectedly and the conversations she had with her young son.

(Under 5's)

Goodbye Grandma (Melanie Walsh 2015)

When a little boy is told that his grandma has died, he isn't really sure what death means. In this reassuring lift-the-flap book with bold and colourful illustrations, he asks his mum important questions about death and bereavement. The book sensitively explores the issues surrounding death and bereavement from a child's perspective

(Ages 3 to 6 years)

Mummy's Lump (Gillian Forest and Sarah Garson)

This picture book covers talking about the difficult subject of cancer, from diagnosis, treatments and hair loss

(Ages 2 to 8)

Missing Mummy (Rebecca Cobb 2012)

Perfectly pitched text and evocative artwork explore the many emotions a bereaved child may experience, from anger to guilt and from sadness to bewilderment. And importantly, the book also focuses on the positive – the recognition that the child is still part of a family, and that his memories of his mother are to be treasured

(Ages 3 to 6 years)

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Rafi's Red Racing Car (Louise Moir)

This imaginative, compassionate book aims to help young children come to terms with the loss of a family member to suicide. Rafi's story explains what suicide is in a sensitive yet honest way, and helps children understand the many overwhelming emotions of grief

(Ages 3 to 8 years)

What happened to Daddy's Body (Elke & Alex Barber 2016)

Aims to help children to understand what happens to the body after someone has died. Through telling the true story of what happened to his daddy's body, we follow Alex as he learns about cremation, burial and spreading ashes. It also reiterates the message that when you have experienced the loss of a loved one, it is okay to be sad, but it is okay to be happy, too.

(Ages 3+)

We were going to have a baby, but we had an Angel instead (Pat Schwiebert 2003)

Created especially for children who are suffering the loss of their family's pregnancy.

(Under 5's)

Big Tree is sick (Nathalie Slosse 2017)

Describes the anger and emotion that many children encounter when a close relative or friend is diagnosed with a long-term illness, such as cancer. The story of Big Tree depicts how things are often out of your control and sets out effective strategies for dealing with them.

(Age 5+)

A Terrible thing Happened (Margaret M Holmes 2000)

After seeing the most terrible thing happen, Sherman Smith began to feel nervous for no reason, his stomach hurt, he had bad dreams, started to feel angry and do mean things which got him into trouble. This gently told story is for children who have witnessed any kind of violent or traumatic episode, including physical abuse, school or gang violence, accidents, murder, suicide and natural disasters such as floods or fire

(Ages 4 – 7)

The Invisible String (Patricia Kartst and Geoff Stevenson 2011)

An invisible String mad of love. That is where the story begins. A story that teaches of the tie that really binds. Parents feel the toy whenever kids give it and kids feel that tug comes right back. The invisible String reaches from heart to heart, whether it's a loved one far away or a parent in the next room, this delightful book illustrates a new way to cope with something all children and parents confront sooner or later, a child's fear of loneliness and separation

(Ages 4 to 8)

When Dinosaurs Die – A Guide to Understanding Death (Laurie Krasny Brown Marc Brown 1998)

No one can really understand death, but to children, the passing away of a loved one can be especially perplexing and troublesome. This succinct and thorough guide helps dispel the mystery and negative connotations associated with death, providing answers to some of the most often asked questions and also explores the feelings we may have regarding the death of a loved one, and ways to remember someone after he or she has died.

(ages 4 to 8)

When Something Terrible Happens (Marge Eaton Heegard 1991)

Helping Children learn to cope with grief by drawing out feelings

(ages 4 to 8)

A Place in My Heart (Annette Aubrey 2008)

A book to explore with children the difficult issue of bereavement, and helping them talk about their feelings. It allows small children to get to grips with upsetting and bewildering situations that might be affecting them or people around them.

(ages 4+)

My brother and me (Sarah Courtauld 2009)

The simple story deals with issues surrounding a sibling's serious illness, and stays in hospital, and how his brother copes with different emotions and feelings.

(Ages 4 – 10)

Tell me about Heaven Grandpa Rabbit (Jenny Album 2014)

A touching book that helps children come to terms with losing someone. At the beginning of the story Grandpa Rabbit had given Bradley a gift. At the end, this gift reappears and serves as a moving reminder that although the Grandpa he loves has left, in some ways, he will always be with him

(ages 4 to 7)

Badger's Parting Gifts (Susan Varley 1994)

A sensitively written honest approach to death for the young, told through a story of animals learning to remember their friend.

(Ages 5 - 7)

Always and Forever (Alan Durant 2004)

When Fox dies the rest of his family are absolutely distraught. How will Mole, Otter and Hare go on without their beloved friend? But, months later, Squirrel reminds them all of how funny Fox used to be, and they realise that Fox is still there in their hearts and memories.

(Ages 5 – 7)

The Huge bag of worries (Virginia Ironside 2011)

This book's focus is not on bereavement but encourages children to open up about their anxieties and worries.

(Ages 5 – 7)

The Copper Tree: Helping a Child Cope with Death and Loss (Hilary Robinson 2012)

Written with great care, touching sensitivity and humour The Copper Tree is about love and legacy and will help children understand that while sadness is an inevitable part of grief, death is not the end for what we leave behind can be everlasting.

(Ages 5 – 7)

Gentle Willow: A Story for Children about Dying (Joyce C Mills 2003)

Written for children who may not survive their illness or for the children who know them, this tale helps address feelings of disbelief, anger, and sadness, along with love and compassion.

(Ages 5 – 7)

What Does Dead Mean (Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas 2012)

Guides children gently through 17 of the 'big' questions they often ask about death and dying. Questions such as 'Is being dead like sleeping?', 'Why do people have to die?' and 'Where do dead people go?' are answered simply, truthfully and clearly to help adults explain to children what happens when someone dies.

(Ages 5 -7)

Samantha Jane's missing smile (Julie Kaplow and Donna Pincus 2007)

Since Samantha Jane's dad died, she has been sad and quiet, keeping to herself. One day, her neighbour Mrs. Cooper gently asks her about her missing smile, and Samantha Jane begins to open up about her grief, her worries, and her confusion. Samantha Jane's mother joins her daughter in Mrs. Cooper's garden, and helps her further with accepting and responding to her profound loss.

(Ages 5 – 7)

A Sky of Diamonds (Camille Gibbs)

When Mia learns that her mother has died, all the colour in her world changes to a dreary grey. She feels guilty, angry, sad and lost doesn't know what to do to feel better. Little by little, with the help of her Dad, Mia learns how to cope with her difficult feelings. In the end, Mia finds her own, very special way of coping. When she feels sad or lonely, she looks up to the stars. Full of practical strategies, this storybook addresses loss, grief and hope.

(Ages 5 – 9)

The Day the Sea went out and never came back - A story for children who have lost someone they love (Margot Sunderland 2003)

A story book for children who have lost someone they love. As the story goes on, Eric finds the courage to feel the full pain of his loss, instead of closing his heart.

(Ages 5 – 9)

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Someone has died suddenly/someone has died in a road (produced by “Brake”, the road safety charity)

A work book section full of activities that adults and children can do together in memory of the person who has died. The book comes with a free guide for adults, with advice on how to help suddenly bereaved children.

(Ages 5 – 11)

My grieving journey book (Donna Shavat)

A "hands-on" book filled with suggestions and activities to help children work through the grieving process to find healing.

(Ages 5-12)

Sad isn't Bad (Michaelene Mundy 2004)

Sad isn't Bad offers children a comforting, realistic look at loss loaded with positive life-affirming help for coping with loss as a child. it's a book that promotes honest and healthy grief and growth.

(Ages 4 to 12)

The elephant in the room (Amanda Edwards and Leslie Ponciano 2014)

A children's storybook with whimsical illustrations and rhyming verses of positive strategies for coping with grief and loss. The gender-neutral elephant character demonstrates the potential emotions that children may experience when faced with any type of loss such as death of a pet or a relative, a friend moving away, foster care, hospitalization, etc. It is recommended that the book be read daily, as needed, during traumatic events and that the adult wait patiently for the child to initiate a discussion.

(Ages 4 – 8)

I Miss my sister (Sarah Courtauld 2009)

The beautiful and expressive colour illustrations help to guide the child through the different emotions they may encounter following the death of a sibling, as well as the different categories of grief over a period of time.

(Ages 4 – 10)

The Heart and the Bottle (Oliver Jeffers 2010)

In this deeply moving story, Olivier Jeffers deals with the weighty themes of love and loss with an extraordinary lightness of touch and shows us, ultimately that there is always hope

(ages 5 to 8)

Nikki Has Cancer (Eileen Wheeler 2005)

Useful for adults and children together, this is about the impact of a diagnosis of childhood cancer can have on a sibling's life. However, the issues it covers are just as relevant for other long-term conditions.

(Ages 5 to 11)

Sad About Sammy (Tonya L Southwick 2014)

Attempts to assist parents find the words to ease their surviving children into the reality of sibling death

(Ages – young children up to 12)

A volcano in my tummy (Whitehouse and Pudney 1998)

Helping Children to Handle Anger. It presents a clear and effective approach to helping children and adults alike understand and deal constructively with children's anger. Using easy to understand yet rarely taught skills for anger management, the book offers engaging, well-organized activities which help to overcome the fear of children's anger which many adult caregivers experience

(Ages 6 – 13)

Luna's Red Hat – to help children cope with loss and suicide (Emmi Smid 2015)

Luna's Mum died one year ago and she still finds it difficult to understand why. She feels that it may have been her fault and worries that her Dad might leave her in the same way. Her Dad talks to her to explain what happened and together they think about all the happy memories they have of Mum. Designed as a tool to be read with children who have experienced the loss of a loved one by suicide.

(Age 6+)

Help Me Say Goodbye (Janis Sliverman 1998)

An art therapy and activity book to help children cope with the death of a special person. Includes exercises to address the questions and fears children may have

(Ages 6 to 12)

I wish I could hold your hand (Pat Palmer and Diane O'Quinn Burke 1994)

A best friend has moved away, Dad no longer lives with the family, a favourite relative or pet has died. This warm and comforting book gently helps the grieving child identify his or her feelings from denial and anger to guilt and sadness and learn to accept and deal with them

(Ages 6 to 12)

The Red Tree (Shaun Tan 2010)

A book about feelings – feelings that cannot always be simply expressed in words. It is a series of imaginary landscapes conjured up by the wizardry of the author's masterful and miraculous art. As a kind of fable, the Red Tree seeks to remind us that, though some bad feelings are inevitable, they are always tempered by hope.

(Ages 6 to 11)

What Happens When Someone Dies (Michaelene Mundy 2009)

A child's guide to death and funerals. Can you recall the first time you attended a funeral? The same questions and concerns you felt will undoubtedly be going through the minds of children you care for when they are first confronted with death and funerals

(Ages 6 to 9)

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What on earth do you do when someone dies (Trevor Romain 2003)

Trevor Romain knows, because it happened to him when his father died. This book can provide help through a painful time. In simple, honest words he describes the strong, confusing feelings there might be and suggest ways to feel better. He says it okay to cry, talk about the death, grieve... and go on with your life

(Ages 7+)

What Remembering Daddy (Maria Newfield 2014)

Remembering Daddy: a memory book provides questions to be answered by those who remember him, prompts for drawings and photographs, and quotes about loss and bereavement. A touching and wonderful way to help grieving children to remember their lost parent. Provides a lasting source of information and memories for children to cherish as they grow older. The book can be used by adults where the child is too young to remember their parent so that that memories can be stored for child when they get older

(Ages - for younger children up to aged 12)

Remembering Mummy (Maria Newfield 2014)

As remembering Daddy

(Ages for younger children up to aged 12)

What on earth do you do when someone dies? (Trevor Romain, Elizabeth Verdick 1999)

Describes the overwhelming emotions involved when a loved one dies, and discusses how to cope.

(Ages 7 – 11)

The Secret C. - Straight Talking About Cancer (Julie Stokes 2009)

Encourages open communication and questions about cancer within the family. Through pictures, captions and straightforward language, it explains how tumours are formed, what the various treatments are and how these may affect the person with cancer. It stresses the need to keep to family routines and, importantly, to still try and have fun.

(Ages 7 – 10)

The Broken Egg (Joe Sutherland 2010)

It's hard as an adult to process all the emotions that go along with the death of a baby, its even harder for little ones to understand. Hopefully this story can help brothers and sisters understand that we may not get to hold our little 'eggs' or bring them home with us, but that doesn't mean we can't love them and keep them with us forever in our hearts.

(Ages up to 8)

Milly's Bug Nut (Jill Janney – Winston's Wish)

Milly's Bug-Nut is the story of a family finding their way through bereavement and of Milly who finds an unexpected answer to her hearts of desire

(Ages 8 to 12 Years)

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When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness: Children Can Learn to Cope with Loss and Change (Drawing out Feelings) (Marge Eaton Heegard 1991)

This book will help families communicate and evaluate a child's understanding and feelings about family change while teaching basic concepts of illness and healthy coping skills

(ages 9 to 12)

Out of the Blue: Making Memories Last When Someone Has Died (Winston's Wish 2006)

This book has been written and designed specifically for teenagers with aim of supporting them through their bereavement using a range of activities.

(Age 11 – 14)

The Lost Boys' Appreciation Society (Alan Gibbons 2004)

A story book written for teenagers with compassion and flashes of humour about the loss of a parent and the difficulties in coming to terms with it

(Age 11 -14)

Wipe Out (Mimi Thebo 2003).

Explores eleven year Billy's grief, on the death of his mother, and his struggle in dealing with it, set against a colourful background of surfing.

(Age 11 – 14)

Vicky Angel (Jacqueline Wilson 2001)

After Vicky was run over and died, her best friend Jade is confused to find that Vicky is an even more distracting presence than when she was alive. Covers the power of friendship and the overwhelming feelings around a sudden death.

(Age 11 – 14)

You just don't understand (Winston's Wish)

This booklet aims to help understand what normal adolescent development is, and to recognise the additional problems teenagers may face if someone important dies during these years. Based on many years' experience of working with bereaved teenagers, families and professionals who support them, the information here will help you to consider how to respond to the individual needs of a bereaved teenager.

(Ages 12+)

Still Here with Me (Suzanne Sjoqvist 2006)

This book is a moving and thoughtful anthology of the experiences of thirty-one children and teenagers who have lost a parent. In their own words, children and young people of a variety of ages talk openly and honestly about losing their mother or father. The accounts cover a variety of circumstances in which a parent died, including death from cancer, heart attack and involvement in an accident. Taboo experiences, which are often avoided are also covered, including death through alcohol, natural disaster, war, suicide and domestic violence.

(Ages 12+)

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When a Friend Dies (Marilyn E Gootman 2012)

This may provide the help needed to cope with the sadness following the death of a friend. Let the genuine understanding, gentle advice and compassionate wisdom of the author guide you through the next few days, weeks or months. If you're a parent or teacher of a teen who has experienced a painful loss, this book is for you

(Ages 11+)

Straight talk about death for teenagers (Earl A Grollman 1993)

If you are a teenager whose friend or relative has died, this book was written for you. Earl A. Grollman, the award-winning author of "Living When a Loved One Has Died " explains what to expect when you lose someone you love.

(Ages 12 +)

A Child's Grief (Winston's Wish)

A very useful and informative introduction for any adult who is supporting a child through bereavement. It covers a variety of issues that may affect a child when a person close to them dies, both immediately and in the longer term

(All ages)

As Big as it gets – (Winston's Wish)

Support a child when a parent is seriously ill. This book provides a range of ideas for parents and carers so that they feel able to involve their children in what is happening. It also includes some suggestions about what parents might say to children and how to offer support.

(All Ages)

Beyond the Rough Rock (Winston's Wish)

Supporting a child who has been bereaved through suicide. Offers practical advice for families in the immediate days and weeks when suicide has been the cause of death.

All Ages

Hope Beyond the Headlines (Winston's Wish)

Supporting a child bereaved through murder or manslaughter. Offers practical advice for families in the immediate days, weeks and months following a murder

(All Ages)

The Family has been Informed (Winston's Wish)

Aims to be helpful to families and professionals who come into contact with children and young people from military families who have been bereaved. Also suggests practical ideals and describes the services that Winston's Wish can offer nationally.

(All Ages)

Grief Encounter Workbook

A workbook to encourage conversations with children, young people and adults about death. Grieving is hard work, especially for parents and children in deep grief. The upward spiral of grief replaces stages theory and allows time for people to adjust to the fact that someone special has died. The book is full of creative activities and offers incredible comfort to mourners old and young

(All Ages)