

Welcome to this week's SMRT safeguarding update...

WAKE UP WEDNESDAY

National Grief Awareness Week (02.12.24 – 06.12.24)

This week is National Grief Awareness Week, an event which aims to raise awareness of grief and the impact it has on us. Mental Health UK define grief as an emotional pain or sadness and natural reaction to the loss of someone or something important. Grief and bereavement are experiences we must all face at some point in our lives, and whilst they may contribute to us to feeling alone, it is important to recognise how we can come together and process these emotions in a healthy way.

Grief and bereavement affect everyone differently. It is a highly personal experience that can be complex and unpredictable. It is typically experienced immediately after the loss of a loved one but can also be delayed and then experienced or become reawakened by triggering experiences such as the anniversary of a passing, familiar sounds, sights or smells, or by events that were shared with the one that has passed, such as Christmas or birthdays.

The Good Grief Trust has put forward 'Shine a Light' as the theme for this year's awareness week, hoping to promote the large number of outstanding bereavement services in the UK. One such service tailored specifically to young people is Winston's Wish. Winston's Wish is a charity that provides children, teenagers and young adults with advice and support, but also supports adults, schools and healthcare professionals in caring for those impacted by bereavement.

Winston's Wish offers immediate, on-demand bereavement support across different modalities. If you know a child or young person that may benefit from this service, please refer them to the following:

- **Telephone** – speak with a bereavement support working by calling 08088 020 021 between 8am and 8pm (Monday – Friday)
- **Email** – ask@winstonwish.org, or alternatively fill out the [contact form](#) on the Winston's Wish website
- **Live-chat** – visit the [Winston's Wish website](#) and click the blue 'Chat with us' button at the bottom right of the screen
- **Text** – text WW to 85258

Whilst some children and young people may benefit from anonymous support, it is also important that trusted adults are able to help children and young people cope with grief. With that in mind, The National College have put together a guide with ***Tips for Supporting Children in Dealing with Grief***. This can be found at the end of this document or as a separate attachment.

School Chaplain's reflections: What does the Bible say about grief?

We all have known at some point in our lives the reality of grief. Grief looks, feels and presents differently in all of us, at different times. It is our emotional response to significant loss.

Grief, often without warning, can prompt a whole array of emotions. C.S. Lewis once shared 'I sat with my anger long enough until she told me her real name was grief.' Lewis captures how grief can often take us into territory unknown. It can cause us to challenge our world views and wrestle with our trust in God.

Faith does not become obsolete or irrelevant in our times of sorrow or hardship. Faith offers us a comforting, fervent hope even in the hardest of days. It can lift our eyes to see beyond darkness and focus on a dawning light. Hope can be found in the assurance that God is with us, loving us, walking alongside us amid our suffering. The bible speaks often into the reality of grief. Jesus taught in Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted". Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted, and he saves those whose spirits have been crushed."

The Bible also encourages us to recognise those who walk with us through hard times. Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn". Do not walk through grief alone but find comfort in those who journey this life with you. With them, we can navigate through the stormiest of days. During this Christmas time, where grief may surface, look out for churches offering services and prayer spaces for those who find Christmas difficult, whether remembering a loved one or finding things tough for any reason.

Here is a short prayer:

God of compassion, when I feel lost in my grief, hold me to your heart.

God of gentleness, in those moments when life is dark, keep me close to you.

God of comfort, when I am overcome with sadness, shelter me under your wings.

Ever-faithful God, help me to find reassurance and hope in these words of hope to all your people -
"Because you are precious to me, because I love you, there is no need to be afraid, for I am with you."

Amen.

Tips for Supporting Children in DEALING WITH GRIEF

It's important that trusted adults feel able to help children and young people cope with grief – particularly at the moment, when we are a nation mourning the loss of a public figure who was treasured by so many. Children are seeing bereavement and sadness being featured heavily in the national news and in their favourite online spaces, and hearing it being talked about extensively among families and in the community. How can we help them in processing this healthily?

1 UNDERSTAND WHAT GRIEF IS

Grief is emotional distress which is a normal response to the death of someone close, well known or admired. It may feel overwhelming – especially for young people – and is often accompanied by feelings of shock, disbelief, anger or fear. These emotions may also mean that sleep, eating and our relationships with others could be affected.

2 MEET THE CHILD 'WHERE THEY ARE'

This could be a child's first experience of grief and loss – or conversely, they may have already encountered it several times. Make sure that any conversations you have with them, and the support that you give, are led by their experiences and their understanding of death – and in the context of their religious or community beliefs.

3 EXPLAIN CLEARLY WHAT DEATH IS

It may often feel uncomfortable, but it's healthier to actually use the words "dead", "death" or "died". Abstract explanations of death can frequently create even more confusion – particularly for younger children, who are still trying to grasp this complex (and possibly unfamiliar) concept.

4 BE PREPARED FOR QUESTIONS

On subjects such as this – especially when it involves a person who's well known to them – children and young people often have lots of questions, all at once. Sometimes, new queries about the issue will occur to them weeks after the event. Be ready to answer their questions as honestly as you can, using language that's appropriate for their age.

5 FIND WAYS TO REMEMBER THEM

It can help to talk to about the person who's died, even if that individual wasn't personally involved in the child's own life – such as a significant public figure, for instance. You and your child can discuss what that person meant to you, celebrate the things they achieved or go to a place where they can be remembered.

6 ENCOURAGE COPING STRATEGIES

You can help a child or young person to identify what their usual positive ways of coping are when they have overwhelming feelings. For example, do they find that talking with someone, drawing, going for a walk or listening to music help when they're feeling upset? These same activities could form an important part of the grieving process.

7 REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

If a child or young person is struggling with grief to the extent that it's impacting on their everyday life, there are lots of expert organisations that you could reach out to for further help. Samaritans provides a listening ear for anyone in emotional distress; The Mix offers specialist support to people under 25; and Winston's Wish deals specifically with helping young people who are grieving.

SAMARITANS:
116 123

WWW.THEMIX.ORG.UK/GET-SUPPORT
0808 808 4994

WINSTON'S WISH:
08088 020 021

Meet Our Expert

Anna Bateman is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department for Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.



The National College®

As always, if you have any immediate concerns about safeguarding issues, students, or the school site, please get in touch via:

safeguarding@smrt.bristol.sch.uk