

## Is there anything we can do?

- ▮ If someone has died, is there anything you would have liked to say to them? You could write them a letter or send a card.
- ▮ You might like to collect together some special memories of them, such as photographs or letters or reminders of things you have done together. If you do not have a photograph perhaps you could draw a picture which will help to remind you of them.
- ▮ If they have died as a result of an accident you and your friends might like to think how you might help to prevent such a thing happening in the future.
- ▮ You might also need to think how you would like to be involved in any formal events such as funerals or memorial services that may be being planned.
- ▮ Sometimes following a sad or tragic death money is collected which is then used for a good cause or for a lasting memorial to the person. You might have some ideas about what could happen this time.
- ▮ Adults often send sympathy cards when someone dies. There is no reason why children should not do this as well.
- ▮ You are probably not the only person to be feeling sad and upset. Look after your friends, talk to anyone who is obviously upset, remember it helps to talk. If you don't know them very well tell a teacher that you think they may need help. Even if people don't feel like talking they will feel better for a friendly smile and a greeting.

## What do I have to do if I would like to talk to someone?

- ▮ Tell your tutor or ask the teacher who is organising the help in your school that you would like to join a support group.
- ▮ We will then arrange to see you in small groups.
- ▮ Usually children who have witnessed what happened are seen together, and we try to allow friends to come together also.
- ▮ If you really feel you cannot talk about what has happened you may be able to put your feelings into a story, a poem or a picture. You may want to do this as well as talking to someone.
- ▮ Talking about your experience will not stop you feeling sad about what has happened, nor will it make you forget the incident, but it will begin to help you feel better about it, and if you have been experiencing any of the symptoms of post traumatic stress, it will help them to go away.

### For more information/advice contact:

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## Talking to children about **Death and Loss** in school **Advice for pupils**



## Why does talking about it help?

If something is troubling you and someone listens to what you have to say in a sympathetic way and helps you to understand the problem, this is called counselling.

If something very frightening has happened to you, or if a close friend or family member has been badly hurt or killed, you may be experiencing traumatic stress.

Traumatic stress happens when your body's normal ways of coping are totally overwhelmed.

Serious accidents, such as road traffic accidents, or violent deaths such as murders, are like this. Everyone involved in these sorts of events will be likely to suffer some traumatic stress.

Traumatic stress is a very normal reaction to an extraordinary event. If people are not helped at the time they can develop an illness called post traumatic stress syndrome. Children can have this as well as adults, and so when children have had a very frightening experience, we offer to talk to them in a way that will help them to understand what has happened.

## What happens when you talk to us?

It is very important to sort out what has happened and how you feel about it if you are going to be able to be sad and grieve in a normal way after the event.

It is often difficult to talk to close friends and family because they are feeling very distressed and sad as well.

Crying can be a good thing, but it sometimes worries other people.

We know that if you are to begin to feel better and sort out your feelings you will need to talk about what has happened in quite a lot of detail.

We start by asking you to tell your story, or what you believe happened. We then ask you to say how you felt when it was all happening and afterwards.

Sometimes you may have misunderstood or not been told all or some of the things that have happened and just finding out the truth can help.

We also ask you to think what you would like to do next, and if you feel you will need to talk about this again.

## What sorts of things do children feel when they have post traumatic stress?

Nightmares (bad dreams)

Irritability (bad temper)

Flashbacks (pictures of the event suddenly coming back)

Feeling cross and angry with everyone

Behaving badly when you didn't really mean to

Feeling extremely afraid

Finding it very difficult to sleep at night

Feeling guilty, that it was all your fault

Finding it very difficult to concentrate on school work

Crying at the slightest thing