

COVID-19: Dealing with bereavement and loss

COVID-19 has significantly changed everyone's lives and children and young people are having to accept missing out on important life events and get used to a new way of being.

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. You may experience all kinds of difficult and unexpected emotions, from shock or anger to disbelief, guilt, and profound sadness. The pain of grief can also disrupt your physical health, making it difficult to sleep, eat, or even think straight. These are normal reactions to loss and the more significant the loss, the more intense your grief will be.

At the moment children and young people might grieve after missing out on; doing their exams, attending school and seeing their friends, being able to attend their prom and being able to go outside freely. Whatever the loss, it's personal to the individual, and it is important that they don't feel ashamed about how they feel or believe that it's somehow only appropriate to grieve for certain things. Whatever the cause of the grief, though, there are healthy ways to cope with the pain that, in time, can ease your sadness and help you come to terms with your loss, find new meaning, and eventually move on with your life.

We have put together these resources to share how bereavement and loss may be affected by this pandemic. It covers some of the different situations and emotions people may have to deal with. We will be adding to and updating this information as the situation develops.

Talking to your children about Coronavirus

You may have already been faced with the challenge of talking with children and young people about Coronavirus and the evolving situation. Know that there are no right or wrong ways to talk to children and young people about such situations but the following may be helpful to know:

- **Talk about it:** Know that children and young people pick up on more than we may realise or, indeed, want to realise. Children and young people will usually know or find out if you are 'making things up'.
- **Make it understandable:** Use words and concepts that children and young people can understand. Think about how old the child and be developmentally pitched.
- **Acknowledge their worries and reassure them:** Let children and young people know that they can ask questions and it is important to you that they do. Remember that children and young people can personalise things – so they may worry about their own safety and that of others they know. This is quite normal. As you reassure them, be mindful too about not making promises but let them know that there are always people helping and doing a lot to help people who may feel poorly.

- **Managing your reactions:** Children and young people learn from their parents, carers and teachers. They will learn from how you react to news and also from what they hear and see when you are having conversations with others. Try to be calm and factual.

For more information:

- <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>
- <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/how-you-can-help/emergencies/coronavirus-uk-outbreak-facts>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/talking-to-children-about-feelings/>
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/talking-to-children>