



Lost for | words



ADVICE FOR CHILDREN ABOUT HOW TO COPE WITH GRIEF

Conceived and edited by Benjamin Brooks-Dutton



With one in 29 school age children in the UK (or one in every classroom) having been bereaved of a parent or sibling, this book – *Lost for Words: Advice for Children About How to Deal with Grief* – aims to help young people through grief.

The book – created to mark Children’s Grief Awareness Week 2019 – is made up of quotes, advice and corresponding emojis crowd-sourced exclusively from children bereaved from birth to late teenage years. Sincere thanks go to each and every person who shared their stories and contributed.

This book was conceived and edited by Benjamin Brooks-Dutton; author of the *Sunday Times* Bestseller *It’s Not Raining, Daddy, It’s Happy*; award-winning *Life as a Widower* blogger and chair of the Life Matters task force for bereaved families.

The Life Matters task force came together in April 2017 – in response to the drastic cuts to bereavement benefits – with the aim of improving the support available to bereaved families in the UK.

To get involved in Children’s Grief Awareness Week 2019, you can share your stories and advice using the hashtags #ChildrensGriefAwarenessWeek and #LostForWords.

For more information visit
www.childrensgriefawarenessweek.com



My son, Jackson, was just two years old when his mum died. I remember having absolutely no idea how to explain things to him and I was 33 at the time; I was the grown-up and even I was lost for words. How lost he must have felt when he could still barely talk.

What I've learned since is that some people think that children don't suffer as much as adults when someone dies. Anyone who has experienced the death of someone they love as a child, however, will understand that this simply isn't true. It's more likely that we just can't find the words to express ourselves or that we don't always feel safe enough to say them.

Children's Grief Awareness Week is all about helping people understand what bereavement is like for the younger generation and learning more about how we can help. We all find ourselves lost for words when someone dies. And that's why we have asked children who have been there - who are perhaps still there - to give us the words we need.

This e-book is the first of its kind: a collection of personal insights and advice for bereaved children by bereaved children. Lost words now found through the passage of time and with the benefit of experience.

This project also acknowledges how communication has changed. A generation ago, things were often worse. Many children never had the chance to speak out. A loved one would die, and they were never spoken of again. These days there are so many opportunities and new ways to express ourselves. When we are at a loss for what to say, we can now share our feelings online and in social media through pictures and emojis.

I remember before my son could really articulate how he felt through words, he would often send me emoji messages from his grandparents' phones. I realised that, even then, he was trying to share his feelings with me. And that's why all the advice in this book is accompanied by emojis chosen by the contributors themselves. This year we celebrate and encourage expressions of grief and hope in any form.

Seven years on since his mother's death, Jackson is now nine. He still communicates through emojis but he has now also found his own words, which he would like to offer as his own mini collection of advice to other bereaved children.

Think about the person you love



Do stuff for them even though they have gone, like making a cake for their birthday



Keep pictures of them on your wall



Write stories about them sometimes



Talk about them often



Have a memory bear made out of something the person you love used to wear. It's a nice way to keep them close to you



Meet other children who have lost someone they love



And please share [#LostForWords](#) with anyone you think it might help



With  from Benjamin & Jackson Brooks-Dutton.

LOST FOR WORDS



*Talk, talk, talk and keep the memory of
the deceased alive. It's so important.*

LAURA WAS 19 MONTHS OLD
WHEN HER DADDY DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Talk to people who you trust and maybe put some pictures up of them. Listen to some music that they liked and maybe ask your parents if you could have someone to talk to at school (like the school nurse).

GIL WAS SEVEN WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Be open and talk to people. They will
listen and help.*

RUDY WAS 14 WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It helps to talk to my dad because I know he is always around me. If I feel sad, I sing 'Three Little Birds' by Bob Marley and it makes me happy.

ARCHIE WAS SIX WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Never hold back from telling someone
how you feel. Your grief won't ever go
away, but it will get easier.*

SAM WAS FIVE WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*I look at photos and watch videos to help
remember my daddy and see that he
loves me.*

CAOIMHE WAS 15 MONTHS OLD
WHEN HER DADDY DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



I like to sing to Papa. He likes it when I sing 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' when I visit his stone.

STORM WAS TEN MONTHS OLD
WHEN HER DADDY DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Surround yourself with people you love
and do the things that make you happy.*

SAM WAS EIGHT WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It's ok to feel sad and happy at the same time.

HENRY WAS FOUR WHEN HIS DADDY DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



I feel like my dad is with me all the time. He is always looking after me and protecting me like a guardian angel.

JACK WAS ONE WHEN HIS DADDY DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



If you're feeling sad, talk to someone rather than letting it stay inside your head, so you don't get to the point where you can't take it.

JACK WAS SIX WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Although it's really hard, you can't let it shape the rest of your life in a negative way. Of course, it's okay to feel sad and miss the person but don't let it break you down.

CALLUM WAS TEN WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



We love to let off a balloon or two on all special occasions, so Daddy is always a part of the day.

FRASER WAS FIVE, HENRY WAS FOUR AND BOBBY WAS 20 MONTHS OLD WHEN THEIR DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Try not to be sad as your mummy or
daddy are watching over you and are
happy you are alive.*

ISLA WAS FOUR WEEKS OLD
WHEN HER DADDY DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*I felt lost and there were no words. But
don't lose hope. Eventually it will get better.*



LILIANA WAS EIGHT WHEN HER BROTHER DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Let yourself feel each emotion that comes your way. It's okay to feel the way you are feeling, and it helps you to learn how to deal and cope with the grief. These emotions are so strong, and you probably haven't ever felt anything like this before, which can be very overwhelming and daunting. You will never get over your grief, but you will learn to deal with it and accept it as a part of you. Each day does get easier and easier.

MEGAN WAS 14 WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It's ok to cry or be angry. Whatever you feel is okay because we are all different.

LOTTIE WAS SEVEN WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It won't change back, but it will get easier. Don't rush trying to heal.

SEAMUS WAS 13 WHEN HIS MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It's important to speak to someone you trust about how you feel.



BROOK WAS 13 WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Talk about all the good memories and let out your feelings. Crying isn't always a bad thing. It can even make you feel better.

FLOSSIE WAS FOUR WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*There are times when it consumes me.
Other times it is further from my thoughts.
Do whatever you need to do. Sometimes
I kiss her photo; sometimes I talk to her;
other times I pray to her or write her
name on a birthday card. It's all okay,
there is no right or wrong when you miss
someone you have lost.*

CAZ WAS THREE WHEN HER SISTER DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Create an outlet for your emotions – even if you're really angry. Write a blog, buy a notebook – whatever you feel like getting down, it can really help.

**GEORGIA WAS A TEENAGER
WHEN HER BROTHER DIED**

LOST FOR WORDS



It's ok to laugh and to be happy and smiley. It doesn't mean you miss them any less.



HEIDI WAS SIX WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Surround yourself with people whose life was influenced by the person who died and let their stories influence your life today.



ALEX WAS 14 WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*At significant moments in my life, I think
of my mum and I see her as my strength.
This gets me through a lot.*

ALECIA WAS TEN WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It was confusing and scary when my brother died. My family were so sad all the time and nothing seemed the same. I was worried that we would never be happy again or that something else bad was going to happen. But that wasn't true. Just because one person has died doesn't mean more bad things will happen, and it doesn't mean life will always be sad. My family are happy again! It's nice to remember my brother now. He's still part of the family. It takes time, but everything does get better.

ANNA WAS TEN WHEN HER BROTHER DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Talk about it. Talking about my mum after she died almost became a taboo in my family because no one wanted to upset anyone else. We actually became closer when we did talk, though. It was nice to put memories together. Now every year on her birthday we all meet up and celebrate her life. That was my dad's idea and I love that we do that. Also it gives us all a chance to get together once a year in everyone's busy lifestyles.

ELLA WAS 11 WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Try not to pretend it didn't happen because it can catch up with you later. Your friends don't necessarily know what to do or say, so they can sometimes treat you differently. But if you are honest and try to speak your feelings out loud it will break the awkward barrier down for everyone. Then you will be able to get the support you really need from your friends. After all, that's what friends are for.

It took me three years to open up to my friends properly and once I broke down that barrier, I felt a lot less alone and more like a normal kid again.

ABIGAIL WAS 13 WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Make an album or memory box of things
that can remind you of the person who died.*



MALENA WAS FIVE WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Treasure every day you have on earth
and love your family and friends as much
as humanly possible. Love is evergreen.*



KATIE WAS THREE WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Remember it's okay to keep talking about the person you've lost, even if the people around you don't always know how to respond. And hold on to your memories – sometimes they will make you cry; other times they will make you smile – but they will always keep a part of that person alive for you.



KAY WAS NINE WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It's natural to worry about the adults and other family members left behind, but it's not your responsibility to fix them or minimise their grief. It's okay to ask for and accept the care you need from them – and grieving together can provide some shelter from the storm for all of you.

CAT WAS SIX WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Over the years I've comforted myself by feeling my mum's presence within nature. A warm gentle breeze that catches me off guard, the beautiful field of crops near my house or even in the comforting smell of rain on the garden grass. She is held within nature's beauty for me now and this still makes the huge void in my life a little more bearable.

CLAIRE WAS FIVE WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Losing a parent is really shocking. At first you just can't face the reality. You will never forget the person you've lost, but eventually you will realise you can still have fun. I'm pretty sure whoever you lost would want that for you. In fact, I know it.

OSCAR WAS 11 WHEN HIS MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It's okay to not be okay. You will have good days and bad days but that's okay. Open up to friends, family or even a complete stranger about how you are feeling. Talking about your feelings makes you feel reassured that what you are experiencing is normal. Talking about the good times you had with the person who has died also keeps those memories alive.

LUCY WAS 16 WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Know that everything you're feeling is okay. There's no wrong or right in grief – just keep talking. Don't be afraid of upsetting anyone else. You are so important and people who love you will want you to seek comfort. Keep talking.

SOPHIE WAS NINE WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Don't worry about making grown-ups sad by talking about the person who has died. They are adults, they can cope.

CAROLINE WAS EIGHT WHEN
HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



When you're feeling alone, which I found happened a lot when I was lying in bed at night, talk out loud to the person who has died or perhaps write them a letter. It feels reassuring that, somehow they might just hear what you want to say.

EMMA WAS ELEVEN WHEN
HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Never bottle anything up. You never forget your loved ones and they are always with you. I still have bad days. But I always have the photos of my mum and videos to look back on. Counselling is also very good as it's often easier to talk to someone you don't know.

JADE WAS ELEVEN WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*It will seem like a cruel dream at first and
you'll live in a clouded world, but the
pain does ease.*

KIRSTY WAS 14 WHEN HER DAD DIED



Time. It's an incredible thing – it proves the impossible. It slowly untangles the anger, the emptiness, the screaming inside, the confusion, and, more than anything, the misplaced guilt every time you forget for a minute. It took years, but it happened. And it's ok now.

ROBBIE WAS 11 WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Don't let the death of someone you loved so dearly define you. Instead, let the person you become from coping with the loss of someone so dear to you be what defines you. Also, don't be afraid to open up a conversation about your loved one to friends or family. Go on, try it. It can be magical.

VICKY WAS 14 WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*My granny told me that my mum would
always be with me, watching me from the
brightest star in the sky.*

SARAH-JANE WAS NINE WHEN
HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Tend to the relationship just as you would with a living parent. It will grow and evolve as you do. My mum has been with me in everything I've ever done. Nothing can touch that bond.

PHOEBE WAS FOUR WHEN
HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Talk about the person you lost. You might not want to straightaway, but it will get easier.

MIKE WAS EIGHT WHEN HIS MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



There is no time limit on grief. Everyone takes different amounts of time to go through their loss.



TAYLOR WAS 15 WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Enjoy all of the things you used to do and places you used to visit with the person who has died, even if you were too young at the time to remember those moments.

CLAIRE WAS NINE WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Speak their name, as often as you want
or need. They will always be a huge part
of you.*

LINDA WAS NINE WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Don't be afraid to show your emotions.
All of them.*

SARAH WAS 13 WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Try to find a place to connect with other bereaved children of a similar age. Being part of a group where I wasn't different, and could share my feelings honestly, was the greatest healer for me.

JENNY WAS FIVE WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Learn that life is too short for petty squabbles. Out of the darkness and rain come rainbows.



ELAINE WAS 11 WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



You've been through the worst, and you can handle it – whatever life throws next, you've got this.



HONOR WAS 15 WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Keep a notebook to write down your feelings. It's something private that helps me digest my emotions better.

JOSH WAS 11 WHEN HIS DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*I wrote a poem about my dad. I've
always found writing things really helpful,
especially songs and poetry.*



PARYS WAS 11 WHEN HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



It's okay to cry and it's also okay not to cry. Talk to people you know you can trust.

INES, 12. HER DAD DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*I felt upset and alone when my mum died
but I knew there were people that could
help me.*

KACY, 11. HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Let your emotions out and maybe have someone you can talk to about your situation. Making things to remember your special person by is also helpful.

ZAHARA, 11. HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*Ask the person if they want to have a chat
before just bringing it up.*

GEORGE, 13. HIS MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



Please don't say, "You will get over it".



MELISSA WAS 11 WHEN HER MUM DIED

LOST FOR WORDS



*My mum is always with me because love
never dies.*



SHERAZ WAS 16 WHEN HER MUM DIED

For further support in dealing with family bereavement, please visit the websites of the following charities:



This project was created by the Life Matters task force – a coalition that calls for better support for bereaved families.

On behalf of the task force, we would like to thank all of the contributors who, for the benefit of others, have kindly shared their experiences of being bereaved as children. The advice included in this e-book was generously offered by bereaved families and children through organisations, charities and resources including Child Bereavement UK, Childhood Bereavement Network, Cruse Bereavement Care, the Dramatherapy Team at the Children’s Hospital at Home Team, Grief Encounter, Life as a Widower, Living On, Princess Alice Hospice, WAY Widowed and Young, Wiltshire Treehouse and Winston’s Wish.

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#LostForWords

