



BEYOND THE ROUGH ROCK

SUPPORTING A CHILD WHO HAS BEEN BEREAVED THROUGH SUICIDE

**WINSTON'S
WISH** 

Giving hope to grieving children

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"It was as if every single thing I was or I knew got thrown up in the air. Slowly things are coming back together but I'm still waiting for some pieces to land." Simon



Coping with a double blow

A death through suicide delivers a double blow to families – not only do they have to cope with a sudden, and often unexpected death, but they also have to deal with the way their relative has died. They may feel very alone in their grief but, sadly, more people are bereaved through suicide than most of us realise.

In the UK, on average, someone takes their own life every 80 minutes. Many of these will be the parents or siblings of children who are left overwhelmed and bewildered by what has happened. With around 6,000 suicides a year in the UK, the impact of suicide is immense. We estimate that 8 children a day, 3,000 children a year, are bereaved of a parent by suicide.

Winston's Wish, the charity for bereaved children, is the largest provider of services to bereaved families in the UK. This booklet is the result of our experience since 1992 in supporting hundreds of children and families bereaved by suicide. It is written for any family facing life after a death by suicide or for anyone who is trying to help a family in this situation. When working with bereaved families, we talk about moving 'beyond the rough rock' of sharp and painful memories and thoughts. (We talk more about this on page 26.) The challenge is to try and help children feel involved, and understand enough to reach a time when they remember the person's life more than the way they died.

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Winston's Wish



“People steer clear of us since she died. I keep going for Adam and try not to ask myself ‘what if?’” Neil

Why does bereavement by suicide differ from other types of bereavement?

Pressures and pain

The death of someone important can cause great grief and sadness, whatever the cause of death. However, families bereaved through suicide also have to face additional pressures and pain. You can often face agonising questions and intrusive public scrutiny at a time when you are feeling confused and vulnerable. Both adults and children may find that it can take them a long time to trust others again.

Grief with the volume turned up

If you have been bereaved through suicide, you will probably go through the shock, deep sadness and occasional anger felt by people bereaved in other ways. At the same time, you may also have to cope with extra emotions such as guilt, shame and self-blame. You may find yourself plagued by thoughts of ‘what if’ and ‘if only’. On top of everything else, parents can fear for the future mental health of their children. The feelings and emotions can be more painful and seem to last longer than with other causes of death. One person described it as “grief with the volume turned up”.

Impact on families

Because a death through suicide is one of the most painful and complicated forms of bereavement, families are left asking many unanswerable questions. They can feel isolated within their own community as a result of the stigma attached to this type of death. And individuals within families can be left isolated as permission to talk and share thoughts and feelings is not there. Each person is trying to protect the others from the pain, which can feel almost too much to bear.

Many families have difficulties being open about their thoughts and feelings after a bereavement through natural or accidental causes. With the added dimensions of secrecy, shame, guilt and distortion associated with bereavement through suicide, communication within families is further hindered. The result is individuals and families who feel alone in their grief and powerless to mobilise the support they need to negotiate the path ahead.

There will be differences for all members of the family depending on who dies. The death of a parent, or a brother or sister, or a partner or child will have a different impact on children and adults depending on what the relationship was. For example, it is particularly hard to parent a child through adolescence if their older brother or sister killed him or herself.

A note on language

Please note that we do not refer to 'committing suicide'. We have found that families can be distressed by this expression which has links back to a time when suicide was considered a criminal act. We prefer to refer to 'death by suicide' or that the deceased 'took their own life' or 'ended their life'. A child recently described his father's death by suicide as "dad made himself die".

"I hate it when people say my son 'committed suicide'. It makes it seem like he committed a crime. It wasn't like that at all." John



"Ten years ago my father killed himself with a shotgun, and I never got to ask him why." Anna



“For years we’d coped with his dreadful mood swings – one minute everything would be OK, the next he’d be smashing things. I admit when I first heard he’d died I thought ‘Thank God it’s all over’. Of course it wasn’t over, but I did feel relieved that none of us were in any danger any more.” Rachel

Feelings and thoughts

Numbness, shock and disbelief

“The day after, I was walking around as if nothing had happened. It couldn’t be real, could it? Surely I would wake up and find it was a dream?” Ayesha

By its very nature, suicide is often untimely, unexpected and may be violent. Sometimes a death through suicide comes out of a clear blue sky to those close to the person. Even if someone has said they plan to kill themselves or has attempted to do so before, the death will still come as a shock and it can be a long time before you can believe it is really true. However, the numbness at the beginning can protect you from feelings which may seem overpowering and may help you get through the early days when there is too much to cope with.

Guilt, anger and even relief

“I hate that she died like this and sometimes I hate her too.” Jay

Guilt and anger are common reactions in bereaved people but tend to be felt more intensely and for longer by relatives and friends of people who have killed themselves. You may feel guilt that you are alive and that you didn’t or, indeed, couldn’t prevent the suicide.

You may be angry for being hurt like this and being left behind to cope. You may find it impossible to ‘switch off’ the last conversation. This is difficult enough if your last conversation with the person seemed cheerful and normal; it is very hard if you are left with the memory of angry last words or a family row.

Some people may even feel a sense of relief, especially if there have been frequent suicide attempts or violence, or if your family life has been dominated by one emotional crisis after another. However, even this relief can be brief, and can be swamped by feelings of guilt for having felt relieved.

Rejection and betrayal

“We had gone through so much together and I’d given him so much support. Yet it’s as if I couldn’t have cared less – or as if he hadn’t.” Carol

Family members often feel rejected by someone who has killed themselves. You may be left asking yourself lots of questions, such as:

- Why did they do this to me?
- Did I fail them in any way?
- What have I and the children done to deserve this?

You may have devoted years to supporting a child or partner with depression and feel that all your loving care has been rejected. You may feel as if your love has also been rejected. One writer said “suicides put their skeletons in other people’s closets”.

Shame and blame

There seems to be a stigma associated with suicide, unlike other causes of death. You may feel that neighbours, work colleagues or even other members of the family are questioning the death in a way they never would if the death had been through cancer or heart failure. The legal framework that goes with the investigation and inquest can make families feel on trial. Relatives may be desperate to understand what has happened and, in trying to make sense of everything, they may try to put the blame on to someone other than the person who died. This is even harder if you are already blaming yourself. It is so important to remember that nothing anyone says or doesn’t say, or does or doesn’t do, can cause someone to die by suicide. In the same way, you cannot prevent someone from taking their own life.

One of the particularly hard feelings to cope with is shame. Adults often feel that there is a strong sense of shame attached to a death by suicide and they try to protect their children from this feeling. In fact, children do not experience shame in the same way as adults do when someone has killed themselves. They may well be blaming themselves, and possibly others, but shame is usually less of a burden for them.



“At the funeral I knew his mother was looking at me and thinking ‘this wouldn’t have happened if you hadn’t left him’. She didn’t know the half of it.” Pat



“Lots of people came to say goodbye to my mum. My tears stayed on the inside.” Anton

Trying to make sense of it

Suicide can seem like a totally meaningless act and those left behind are often desperate to understand more about why it happened. For some people, the list of questions is endless and the search for answers can become a big part of your life. The list of questions is often led by ‘why’.

- Why?
- Why did it happen?
- Why now, when they seemed so much better?
- Why didn’t they say anything?
- Did they really mean to die?
- Why did they do this to me?
- How could they do this to the children?
- What sort of person were they really?
- Did I really know them?
- What did I do wrong?
- How can I bring the children up alone?

Everyone connected to the person who has died will have their own beliefs about ‘why’. But all they have is their part of the picture; the person who died is the only one who knew how all the pieces of ‘why’ added up to a situation they could not bear any longer.

Searching for clues and answers

Many people point to events that have happened (such as redundancy, family break-up, relationship difficulties, exams, financial difficulties) and see these as the cause. What is more complicated, though, is the fact that many people are able to weather similar pressures without the despair that leads to suicide. Some people are more naturally resilient or have better mental health. Only the person who dies knew how all the ‘whys’ joined with all their feelings and thoughts and all their own emotional history to make suicide seem their only choice. ‘Final straws’ may weigh as much as an iron bar or be as light as a feather – only the person who died knew what their final straw was.

This search for clues – and the need to make sense of the answers – is probably one of the biggest challenges to face. In the end, it may be a case of accepting that there are things that will never be known. Some people find that it helps to settle on an answer they can live with; others find they can live with not knowing. Whichever way you choose, it is important at some time to end the search so that you can look forward – and move forward.

Saying goodbye

The funeral is an important and often daunting event for any bereaved family. You may have regrets that you couldn't stop the suicide but feel that the funeral is something positive you can do for the person who died. This can then become an opportunity to celebrate their life and achievements and so help to remember positive feelings about them rather than just concentrating on the way they died.

But in many cases the funeral comes too soon to be thought of as any kind of tribute and, instead, is overshadowed by strong feelings over the way in which the death happened. If this is the case, it may help to plan a memorial service at a later date.

Being in the public eye

Sadly, the death of a family member by suicide means that you will have little chance of grieving in private. As well as the funeral, families also have to face an inquest, which can be stressful. The full inquest may not be held until months later. This delay can be difficult for families; you may feel that you can't begin to grieve properly until the inquest has taken place. It can also be painful to have your family member discussed by strangers or referred to in newspapers; it can feel as if they are 'not yours' any more.

Talking about it

Death is still a difficult issue for many people to discuss and a death by suicide is probably one of the hardest things to explain or talk about. You may bump into someone you haven't seen for a long time at the supermarket and be asked how your partner is. A new teacher at your child's school might ask if your partner will be coming to see the school play. An acquaintance might ask "How did Sam get on with his exams?"

Thinking in advance about some answers to unexpected questions like these should make them easier to deal with.

- I'm sorry to say that he killed himself – we're still struggling to understand why.
- Anne felt she couldn't go on living any more and so decided to end it.
- Callum seems to have felt that suicide was his only choice, which is very painful to think about.

"It is amazing how often you need to explain that they have died – each time I dread the next bit when you are asked how they died. Even when I feel strong enough to explain what happened I need to be sure that the person listening can take it. There's often a painful silence and I end up trying to comfort them because they feel so tongue-tied." Rick



"When I told my friends how mum died I expected them to be embarrassed and not know what to say, but in fact they were really kind and it helped to know that they knew too." Charlotte

Explaining suicide to children and young people

Never too young to know

It is a natural reaction with any death to want to hide away from the outside world, but with a death from suicide you are much more likely to have to cope with outsiders such as the police, coroner and the media. It may be tempting to think up another explanation for the death or another description of the circumstances just to protect the children. But as the story of what has happened can quickly become public knowledge, it is generally best to try to be open and honest from the start. This can seem an almost impossible task – especially as you yourself will need time to adjust.

Media interest, police visits and overheard conversations can all lead to a child finding out the truth by accident or indeed finding out something that is not true. You will probably prefer that the children hear the news from you rather than from someone in the playground or Google. It will also give you a chance to reassure them that they are not to blame.

You will of course want to protect your children and to let them know they can trust you. Try to avoid secrets and also avoid unnecessary details. If at all possible, a parent is generally the best person to tell their child this difficult news. If you are just not able to do this, then please be with the children when someone else tells them.

Be honest and consistent

It can help even very young children to have a simple story that they can use to re-tell and slowly make sense of what has happened. Use words they understand. Always ask them what they think about what you have said to make sure that they have actually understood.

Events surrounding suicide can often become very confused. Facts may be changed to become more comfortable to live with – or to make them easier to explain. Try to be consistent in your explanations to the children, telling them honestly what you believe to be true.

It may be that you have already given your child a different explanation for the death than suicide. If this is the case, it is possible to go back and explain things again. You could try something like this:

You know I told you that Steve died and that he died from a heart attack? Well, I'd now like to tell you a bit more about it. When Steve died it was hard to explain exactly what happened and it was hard for me to think straight. But now I'd like to tell you more about how your brother died.

Older children may feel hurt to have been protected from the full facts before. In these circumstances it can help to say something like:

I have been impressed by how you've been coping since dad died and I think you're mature enough to know some more about what happened when he died.

Finding the right words

Our experience shows that there may be five stages involved in telling a child that someone has died by suicide. These five stages may happen in the space of minutes, hours, days, weeks, months or even years. The pace between the stages is often led by the child's needs and ability to understand. This, in turn, is affected by their age and developmental understanding. The pace will also be affected by the situation, for example the possibility of your child finding out what has happened from other sources or from older members of the family.

The five stages may be:

1. Explaining that the person has died.
2. Giving simple details about how they died.
3. Saying that the person decided to take their own life.
4. Providing a more detailed explanation of how the person died.
5. Exploring possible reasons why the person decided to kill themselves.

This process takes time. It needs to be handled with care, giving the children the chance to say how they are feeling. You may want to ask your child if they would like to know more details and then be guided by their response. If a child

says they don't want to hear more just now, they need to know that they can come back to you for more information. Then again, you may feel that your child cannot handle any more information at the moment. It is important then to tell your child that you will tell them more on another occasion – and to do this.

Our experience shows that if a child asks a question about what has happened, they are ready to hear the answer.

Now I've had some time to think, I want to tell you some more about how your sister died.



STAGE 1 – Explaining that the person has died

This is the stage when you explain gently and simply that someone has died.

I have something really sad to tell you. Mum died today.

STAGE 2 – Giving simple details about how they died

This is an opportunity to explain in general how or where the person died. This allows you to tell part of the story honestly but without giving some of the details which you may feel to be too much at this time. However, it is important to check out with the child what they understand and to find out if they want more information. As said earlier, if a child asks a question we believe they are ready to hear the answer. If they are not given information, they tend to fill in gaps themselves which can lead to difficulties and confusion later on.

You can start by telling the story of how the person died with simple details.

Daddy died up on the hill by the trees.

Mum died in the car.

Granny died because she took more of her tablets than she should have.

Jack died by the railway line.

Sally died because she got very badly burnt.

STAGE 3 – Saying that the person decided to take their own life

This is the stage when you need to explain that the person killed themselves. There are many explanations as people and their situations are so different. Here are some ideas of what you might say; you would need to adapt one to fit your situation.

If the suicide is completely unexpected

I have something I need to explain about how your brother died. People die for lots of different reasons – illnesses and accidents, and sometimes people hurt themselves and they die. Your brother did something very dangerous to himself which led to his death. When people do something like that they are often very confused or depressed – they think that killing themselves is the best thing to do. It was very unlike Will to think like that. It's so hard to believe that it's happened.



Daddy died up on the hill by the trees.

If the suicide comes after a period of depression

Sometimes people become very sad and down. It's not like the feeling you get when you can't have something you want. This sort of 'feeling down' goes on for a long time and all the problems and worries pile up on top of each other. It's a bit like when you build a tower out of bricks. When people feel like this, they might feel that nothing they or anyone else does can make the situation any better. If they carry on feeling like this – with more and more worries piling up on top of each other – they might think that life is not worth living and that it would be better if they were dead. In the end, one more worry may be just too much. The tower of bricks topples and falls over. Because dad was so confused and so depressed he probably thought we would be better off without him. I wish he hadn't thought this.

If the suicide comes after previous attempts linked to a history of mental ill health

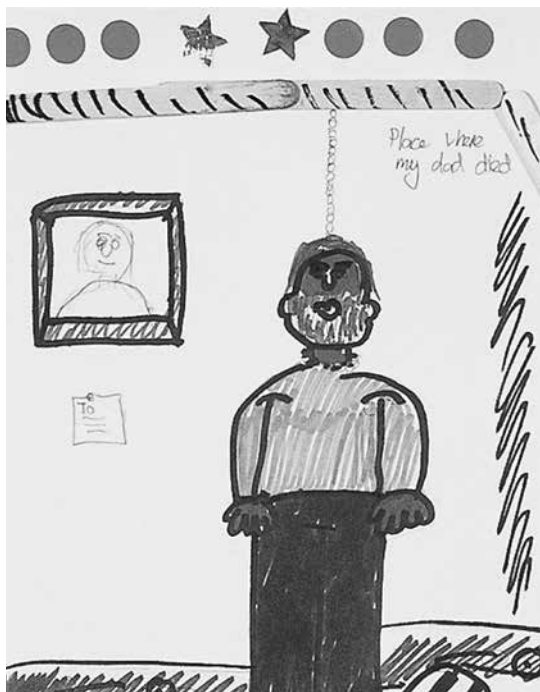
Mum did something very dangerous and this is why she died. Mum had been unwell for most of her life. It wasn't an illness like chicken pox, but an illness that changed the way she felt or thought about things. She thought life wasn't worth living any more, and no matter what anyone tried to do to help her, nothing worked. Mum felt so awful she decided she did not want to be alive any more. She decided she wanted to die. As you know, she had thought this before when she had to go to the hospital after taking all those tablets. That time, the doctor managed to sort her out. Today it was different and she died before the ambulance arrived. There was nothing anyone could do.

After your explanation, you might want to ask the child again if they want any more information. This is the time when you could introduce the word 'suicide'.

When people do something like this, they are often very sad and confused and think it is the best thing to do. It is called 'suicide' or 'ending your own life'.

When people do something like this, they are often very sad and confused and think it is the best thing to do. It is called 'suicide' or 'ending your own life'.





Sometimes a child or young person will find it easier to begin to tell their story by drawing a picture. Here a 13-year-old boy shows how he understands his father's death. He has included important details like a note pinned on the wall and a photograph of himself which his dad looked at just before his death.

STAGE 4 – Providing a more detailed explanation of how the person died

This is the point when you need to explain the method of suicide. This is probably the stage that people worry about the most, but if said gently, simply and factually it can help a child piece together what has happened. Here are some explanations for the more frequent methods.

Suicide by hanging

He went to a quiet place in the countryside and took a piece of rope with him. He climbed the tree and tied one end of the rope round his neck. Then he jumped. The rope pulled very tight around his neck and stopped him breathing. This is how he died.

Suicide by overdose

Normally tablets and medicines from the doctor are OK to take. But you only take as much medicine as the doctor tells you to. When you follow the right instructions, medicine can make you well if you are poorly. Grandma took too many tablets in one go. When you take too many tablets it is hard for your body to cope. It poisons your body and makes you so ill that you die. This is how grandma died.

Suicide by overdose and alcohol

The above explanation can be adapted as in:

... Grandma took too many tablets in one go and then she drank a lot of wine. When you take too many tablets and drink lots of alcohol together, it is hard for your body to cope.

Suicide by jumping in front of a train

Dad went down to the railway line and he decided to jump in front of a train when it was coming towards him. The train was coming very fast and it did not have time to stop. It hit dad. He was so badly injured when the train hit him that he died immediately.

Suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning

Alex drove off in the car and parked where not many people pass. He put a tube in the exhaust pipe of the car and put the other end of the tube into the car. Then, with the car engine running, he let the fumes from the exhaust go into the car. These fumes are poisonous and when you breathe a lot of them, you die. It isn't painful – he would have slowly become sleepy and eventually he died because his body couldn't live without oxygen.

Suicide by jumping

Sue went up to the top floor of the car park and jumped off. It was so high up that the fall from there hurt her very badly. When your body is hurt that much, you die and that's what happened to Sue.

Suicide by burning

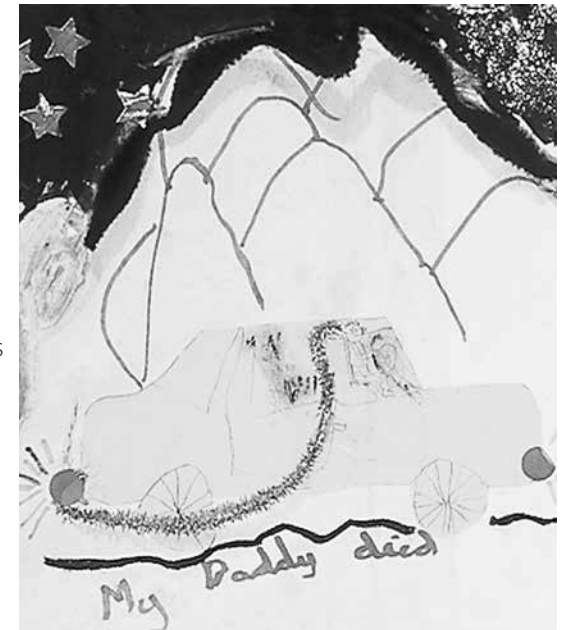
Mum got some petrol in a can and poured it onto herself and then set the petrol on fire. The petrol burnt her so badly that she died. Mum would have died very quickly and though it would probably have been painful, the doctors said it would only have hurt for a very short time before she died.

Other situations

There are of course many other ways to die by suicide such as drowning or shooting. The explanations given above can be adapted to fit other situations.

It is important to check what the child has understood after one of these explanations. They should feel informed without feeling too frightened.

If you would like any guidance on such explanations, please call the Winston's Wish free phone helpline on 08088 020 021.



An eight-year-old draws a picture of her understanding of her dad's death by carbon monoxide poisoning.

STAGE 5 – Exploring possible reasons why the person decided to kill themselves

Most family members ask themselves the question 'why'. Why did someone in their family decide to take their own life? Children and adults may wonder why they didn't realise things were so wrong or wonder if they could have done something to make things better. People often think they might have been able to prevent the death, but even if they had known that something was wrong, they probably still would not have been able to change the course of events.

If you know some of the reasons that may have contributed to the person's decision to take their own life, it can be helpful to share these with your child.

It will be important to your child to know that there was nothing s/he had done or said – or not done or not said – that made this happen. If it seems appropriate, it is also a time to reassure your child that the person who has died loved them and cared about them.

*I wish she hadn't done this.
But I know she didn't do it
because of anything you did
or said, or anything you didn't
do or didn't say.*

When there appears to be a specific reason such as financial problems or relationship difficulties

Dad had lots of worries. He had lost his job and he was worried about money. I think he felt he had let us down because he didn't have a job. He worried so much that he thought he would be better off dead and that it would be better for us too.

Mum was worried about what would happen after we had stopped living together. And I think she worried whether all the arguments were upsetting you. I never imagined she'd feel so bad that she would think of suicide.



When it appears to be an impetuous decision

That night your brother had got into trouble with the police because he had been caught drinking and driving. He knew he would have to go to court. I suppose he thought he would lose his job. He must have decided to kill himself on the way home that same night. Maybe the drink affected the way he was thinking.

When the person had little self-confidence

Mummy had lots of worries. Even as a young girl she never felt very good about herself. She used to think she wasn't good at what she was doing and that she could never be good enough. Sometimes when people feel like this for a long time, they decide to die to end the feeling.

When depression was a factor, leading to negative and irrational thoughts

Dad had been feeling very low for a very long time and he did not want to take medicine from the doctor. He kept hoping he'd feel better. He said in his note that he felt we'd be happier without him. If he hadn't been depressed, he would have realised that it's not true and maybe he would have been able to see a way through the illness.



“If he really loved me, why did he kill himself?” Bethany

When the reason is unknown

I really don't know why Jo decided to die. I suppose we will never know and that will be very difficult.

I know dad must have felt very upset and confused to do something like this. It isn't something he would have done easily. He must have thought there was no other way out for him. It was his decision at a time when he was feeling completely mixed up.



“In some ways, Jack seemed less bothered about the way his mother died. He asked me if she loved him and, if so, why did she do it? I felt weary having to explain it over and over again and again. Eventually he found a way of understanding about depression and now his questions are more about his mum as a person.” William

There is no set way to tell a child something as difficult as the fact that someone they know has decided to kill themselves. Breaking the task up into the five smaller steps mentioned earlier may help you feel more in control and you can pace the stages to suit your child. As we said at the start, with an older child you may travel through all five stages in the space of a single conversation; with a much younger child it might be years before you discuss the reasons behind the suicide.

Conversations like these will be difficult and upsetting for everyone but afterwards you'll probably feel relieved you were able to be honest and able to give your child a solid foundation of trust in you.

Answering difficult questions

Encourage children to ask questions. This will help you to find out what they are thinking and how they are dealing with the death. If you don't have an answer, it is fine to say you don't know and do reassure the child that it was not a silly question to ask. Sometimes it can help to think ahead about questions that might get asked and then practice answers you are comfortable with.

It might help to ask your family doctor to answer specific medical questions so that the whole family can understand why the person's actions made them die (for example, how exhaust fumes make you die) and also what sort of death it would have been. With a violent death, it is reasonable to assume that there would have been some pain or suffering. While it is difficult to talk about this, not talking does not stop a child worrying about it. Some reassurance that the death was quick, and any pain did not last long, can help children deal with difficult facts.

Sometimes children ask whether they could have done anything to change what happened or if it is their fault that the person died. This needs explaining because children often feel they have some sort of power over the people and events that matter to them.

Lots of us have wondered if we did something, or didn't do something, to make them want to kill themselves – we've worried that it might have been our fault. But if someone feels very down about things and decides to kill themselves, then they've made the choice about what they want to do. It's no-one else's fault – it's their decision. The sad thing is that sometimes people make that decision when they are feeling useless and don't like themselves much. I wish they'd realised they were important to us and didn't need to do this.

Sometimes, no matter how good we are or what things we say or do, if someone feels so bad that they want to kill themselves, there's nothing we can do to stop them.





Reassurance

The most important thing to stress is that the person did not die because they no longer loved their child.

Whatever mum was thinking, the one thing I know for sure is that she loved you with all her heart. She wasn't thinking straight or she would never have done anything to hurt you.

Children may worry about their other relatives doing the same thing.

I won't do the same thing. Like you, I have felt very, very upset and low since Jim died but I know that I will never decide to die like Jim. I know what it's like for those left behind after a suicide. At the moment, I still need to be sad and I will probably need to be sad and maybe angry for a long time. That doesn't mean I will kill myself.

"How do you tell a child their mum has died and that she decided to end it all? It didn't seem fair to burden her with it, but then again I thought, above all, she now needed to be able to trust me completely." Ed

Does suicide run in families?

One fear that all families share is whether other members of the family will also die by suicide.

The factors that can bring someone to the point of suicide are many. And only the individual who dies by suicide can know how the various factors weighed with them. What is important is that those bereaved by suicide receive the skilled help and support that will make it unlikely that they will make the same choices. It is important for all children to have their resilience strengthened and encouraged in order to make them less likely to experience mental ill health.

There is some evidence to show that knowing someone who has died by suicide may increase the chance of suicide attempts. This theory suggests that the previous suicide has lifted some of the taboo over the act. However, there is other evidence to show that the painful experience of being bereaved through suicide, along with receiving the appropriate help and support in journeying through the grief, can in fact protect someone from making their own attempt.

The role of schools

School plays a familiar, routine part in children's lives. After any death, many children want to get back to school because it gives them a sense of stability. Some will also see school as a place to forget what has happened for a few hours. Others will feel too anxious and sad to concentrate. Some will not want to go to school at all. This may be because they don't want to miss something important at home or because they want to be around if they are needed. Others may worry that they'll get upset and embarrassed in front of their friends. It is important that the school and all the teachers who come into contact with the child know what is happening so that they can understand when someone is struggling and be prepared to offer support.

Talking with the school will give you a chance to agree with them how to explain that someone important to your child has died, how to describe the nature of the death and how best to offer support.

You may want to consider the following:

- the age of your child and how much they understand about what has happened
- the likelihood of other children (or adults) at school knowing as much – or more – than your child does
- the way your child would like to describe what has happened
- helpful ways for peers and adults to offer support.

If, for example, your child knows that the death has been through suicide, but does not want to discuss this, you can prepare with them something along the lines of "Yes, my dad died. It's terrible and sad but I'd rather you didn't ask me any more about it right now. I may feel differently in a while". They will still appreciate kind words from peers and teachers such as "really sorry to hear about your dad". A teacher can be a great help in preparing a class or year group for the child's return to school.



"He was very distracted in class. I had no idea his mother had died – nor how. He never told us and I never thought to ask."

Tim, a teacher



“Sonal told me that when she was in her tutor group she decided to explain that her dad had died. I asked her ‘Did you say any more?’ ‘Yes, I said that he shot himself in the head with a gun. Everyone went quiet and said nothing.’ I asked ‘What did your teacher say?’ Sonal replied ‘Mrs Brooks said “Oh...” and then looked at the floor and then asked us if we’d finished the essay.” Rita

You may feel it is hard to talk to teachers about the death. But the more teachers know about what has happened, and what is happening at home, the more they can help. Some head teachers, but not all, will really understand the journey you are all on and will know what is required to make school a positive part of that journey. Some, however, will not. As a first step, you could ask them to read this booklet and then arrange to have a conversation such as this:

Thanks for seeing us all today, Mr Jordan. We wanted you to know that our family is in a really tough place right now. You may have heard that Sam’s father killed himself. It’s been a great shock and we are still reeling. We wanted you to be aware so you can give Sam the support he will need at school. He would really appreciate being able to ... [talk to a named teacher; take five minutes out when he feels overwhelmed; walk around the playground when it gets too much; or ...] Does that sound possible to you?

If you do happen to have an understanding head teacher then consider yourself lucky – but don’t expect it. Teachers are not immune to their own personal experiences which may leave them feeling awkward and unable to respond in a way you would find helpful. It doesn’t necessarily mean they

don’t care; it may just mean that they feel uncomfortable responding to a child’s emotional needs. Perhaps there is another teacher who could help.

Persevere with communication as the school really does need to understand the on-going pressures that your children will be facing.

At Winston’s Wish we regularly receive calls to our helpline from teachers who are keen to do the right thing but want to check out their approach, for example when planning activities around Father’s Day or Mother’s Day or when balancing understanding a child’s situation with the impact of their disruptive behaviour. Your child’s teacher may like to have our freephone helpline on 08088 020 021.

Making opportunities to talk

It can be difficult to find the opportunities to talk with your children; this can be particularly true if the death occurred some time ago. You could use opportunities provided by news events, stories, TV programmes or a further family death to talk more about the person who died. Try to visit the grave, garden of remembrance or other special place and talk about the person who died.

It can be even more difficult to talk about someone the children may not have known well or about someone who was challenging to live with. However, children still need to know what has happened in order to begin to understand how they are feeling and what has happened to their family.

Try to keep in contact with friends and family: it is easy to lose contact, especially if you feel people are still feeling guilty or blaming each other.

Children may raise the subject when you are least expecting it, but try to stay calm and take time to listen to what they are saying and asking.

Real memories

Not everyone who dies is loved by everyone all the time. Sometimes we can be fond of someone but hate their moods. Some people can behave in ways that are frightening, unkind or disloyal. Whether we loved a person or disliked them, we will grieve over their death. Similarly, family members react to a death in different ways: each will remember a different relationship with the person who died. If you had a difficult relationship, your grief is likely to be more complicated. Other people might think "They didn't get on so she'll soon get over it". But grief doesn't work that way. It is important that you and the children have the chance to remember honestly the person who died, not trying to make them perfect if they weren't.



"I used to watch dad doing the garden from the kitchen window. He loved being out there." Emma



“We miss him every day and talk about him all the time. And we’re doing OK. We’re a different family now.” Zoë

Looking ahead

Moving on

If someone has died by suicide, it can be hard to hold on to positive memories: unhappy or unpleasant feelings may block everything else. To move on, we need to be able to handle all sorts of memories: the ordinary, the difficult and the precious.

If you’ve lived through many years of unsettled family life before the death, it can take a long time before you can recapture good, positive memories of the person who died. You may feel that the act of suicide has blocked out, or even destroyed, everything that went on before – including happier times. If the death was violent, memories of how they died can simply wipe out good memories for a long time. Feelings about the death often have to be faced and worked through before other, more positive memories can return.

“I tortured myself with ‘if onlys’. I can’t hold myself responsible any longer. Of course I have regrets but I’ve finally managed to leave the guilt behind.” Peter

On pages 25 to 37 you will find many ideas to encourage children to remember the life of the person rather than their death.

“Now we can look at his photo and think about him as a person. He will always be part of our family – regardless of how he died.” Fiona

Facing the future

Suicide raises so many difficult questions and feelings that grieving can be complicated and it can be hard to look to the future with any optimism. Children and adults can be left wondering if there is something wrong with them for such a thing to have happened. Confidence can be dented by a sense of failure. For children, a belief in the future is very important. Try to plan small events they can look forward to. Praise and encourage children's achievements whenever you can as a way of reinforcing their belief in themselves.

A secure, consistent home life with support from good friends will also help. Don't be afraid to ask for help and it may be helpful for you and your children to meet others who have been through the same experience.

One parent, after meeting other parents in the same situation, said:

"I found it did help. We were all at different stages and cried on each other's shoulders." Jen

After meeting other children bereaved by suicide, one child told us:

"I was only eight when my dad did something to make himself die. He did it because he was badly depressed, but I still don't really understand why. It helped that other children in the group felt the same as me." Chris



"I was only eight when my dad did something to make himself die. He did it because he was badly depressed, but I still don't really understand why." Chris



“I don’t dream about him dying any more. I can live with his life and I can live with his death. I can go forward.” Sandra

Looking after yourself

You may get all the help and support you need from your family and friends. But complicated feelings may make you want to turn to those outside your immediate circle. You may find it helpful to ask others to read this booklet to give them some idea of what you are trying to cope with.

If, up till now, you have been the one who has had to cope – supporting the person who wanted to kill themselves and holding things together for the family – it can be hard to give up the coping role and acknowledge your own need for support.

Above all, be kind to yourself and give yourself time. It is hard to cope with any death, but the extra pain associated with a suicide probably means the healing will take longer. Letting go and moving forward does not mean forgetting.

Winston’s Wish has supported thousands of families who have somehow managed to piece their lives together again. All of them would have thought this impossible in the early weeks and months after the death, but they have found a balance between remembering the person who died and continuing to live their life.

Practical ways to support children

The activities on the following pages are designed to encourage children to remember the life of the person rather than their death. The first four have been written with instructions that can be followed by a child with the help of an adult.

Remembering good times, accepting tough times too: memory stones	26
Treasuring memories: memory box	28
Understanding what's happened: telling their story	30
Expressing emotions: feelings jar	32
Coping with separation	34
Night-time worries	36

Remembering good times, accepting tough times too: memory stones

A simple bag of three stones may be a useful way to have a really meaningful conversation with your children and help them to find a way of coping with all sorts of memories. Sometimes it can be hard to find a balance between the difficult memories which are often associated with a death by suicide and happier, more positive memories. The three different stones can be used to convey a message in a special and safe way.

The **smooth pebble** feels ordinary and fairly comfortable to hold in your hand. It is there to represent ordinary, everyday memories of the person who died.

He had cornflakes for breakfast every single day.

She couldn't bear to miss an episode of EastEnders.

The **rough rock** feels sharp and painful to hold. It is there to represent the memories of difficult and hard times and also memories of the way that the person died.

I remember some of the rows we had; we said some hurtful things to each other.

When I close my eyes I can still see the tree where he died.

Finally the **gemstone** feels precious, smooth and polished. It is there to bring back memories of the really special times spent with the person who died.

I'll never forget that day on the beach when he built me a boat out of sand. He couldn't stop laughing.

One day we dressed up in silly clothes and she let me wear her high heels.

The first two stones can usually be found in a garden or park. Gemstones can be found at craft or gift shops. Encourage your children to hold each stone in turn and give examples of memories and events that they would attach to the different stones. You can also share your own.

The secret is to try to find a way to hold the three stones in your hand – the rough alongside the precious and the ordinary – and to hold these three types of memories together in a way that they all find their place. The rough becomes no more important than the other two.

Using this simple bag of stones can help break the conspiracy of silence that sometimes creeps in when tough stuff happens in families. When having a tough day, the stones can also be a useful way to start a conversation: for example

Does the rough rock feel particularly sharp today?



Memory stones

YOU'LL NEED:

- A smooth ordinary pebble
- A rough sharp rock
- A shiny gemstone
- Somewhere to keep these stones

WHAT TO DO:

In every relationship we have, there are ordinary, difficult and special moments. Ordinary moments and memories may be that the person liked two sugars in their coffee, or always walked you to school. There will also be some feelings and memories that are difficult to think about – for example, when you first heard that someone had died – and these can hurt and feel painful. The special memories could be the holidays you have been on, watching films together or buying sweets on a Friday. This activity will help you to balance all these ordinary, difficult, and special moments and memories.

Step 1: Find somewhere to keep your stones. This could be a small bag or box.

Step 2: You will need three stones. One needs to be ordinary, smooth and round, like a pebble. The second needs to be a rough stone with sharp jagged edges. The third needs to be special, like a gemstone.

Step 3: Spend time holding each stone. First hold the ordinary smooth pebble. Think of some everyday thoughts or memories you have of the person who has died. Now hold the rough stone. Are there some memories or thoughts which are hard to think about and feel painful? Maybe there are things that you wish were different. Finally, hold the gemstone. Think of the special moments and times that you have shared together.

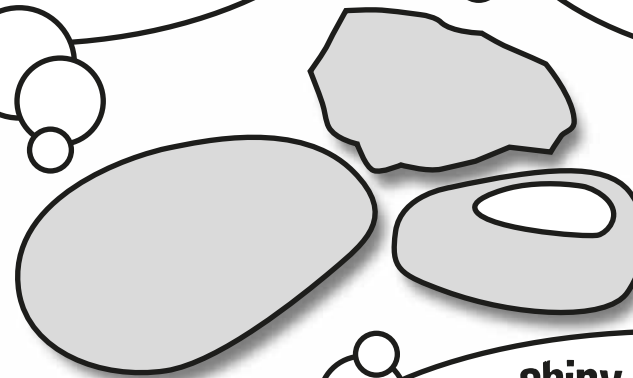
Step 4: Keep the stones together to remind you that different thoughts and memories can be held alongside one another.

smooth pebble

rough rock

shiny gemstone

MOST RELATIONSHIPS HAVE GOOD TIMES AND BAD TIMES. USE THESE STONES TO REPRESENT ALL YOUR DIFFERENT MEMORIES AND THOUGHTS. THINK MOST ABOUT THE ONES THAT HELP YOU TO FEEL CLOSE TO THE PERSON WHO HAS DIED.



Treasuring memories: memory box

Children and young people need help to build and hold on to positive memories. Sometimes it can help to keep special things connected with the person who died in a safe place, like a box, which children can add to whenever they want and can show to other people if they want to. You can use a shoe box or a biscuit tin or buy memory boxes specially made by Winston's Wish.

Depending on the age of the child or young person, this may be an activity they prefer to do alone or one they would prefer to do with an adult – a parent, grandparent or family friend. Those close to the child could add labels that prompt stories attached to the objects; these stories will mean a lot to children in the future.

All sorts of things can be collected that trigger memories of the person who died including tickets from places visited together, jewellery, cards, feathers found on a special walk, shells from a beach holiday, certificates and so on. A bottle of aftershave or perfume that a parent or sibling used can be included and the child encouraged to spray it on a soft toy or even themselves. Our sense of smell is one of the most powerful ways to access memories so this can evoke strong feelings of connection with their parent.



This is dad's aftershave. You like a drop or two on your pillow when you're missing him most.

We picked up this shell when we crept out and walked on the beach at midnight. Do you remember the toast and hot chocolate we had afterwards?

The story about dad getting stuck on the roof with Midge.

Memory box

YOU'LL NEED:

A box with a lid
Some things to remind you of the person who died

YOU COULD ALSO USE:

Tape
Glue
Pens
Things to personalise the outside of your box

WHAT TO DO:

In a memory box you can keep and treasure all kinds of things that remind you of the person who died. You can customise it to make it more personal, and fill it with photos, letters and objects that remind you of your experiences together.

Step 1: Find a box. It can be any type of box – it just has to be big enough for everything you want to keep in it.

Step 2: Decorate the box. You could use wrapping paper, pictures cut out of magazines, photos, stickers, shells or paints... be creative!

Step 3: Once the box is decorated, start filling it. You can put anything you want in it (as long as it will fit!) Check with other people in your family that it is OK with them for you to have things like photos and objects that belonged to the person. Below are a few ideas of some things that you could include – but don't stop there – there's loads more.

Ideas for things to put in your memory box

Photos	Postcards from holidays
CD of music	Jewellery
Perfume or aftershave	Items of clothing
Cards	Shells, cones, feathers
Letters	

Here are some ideas for things to put in your memory box:





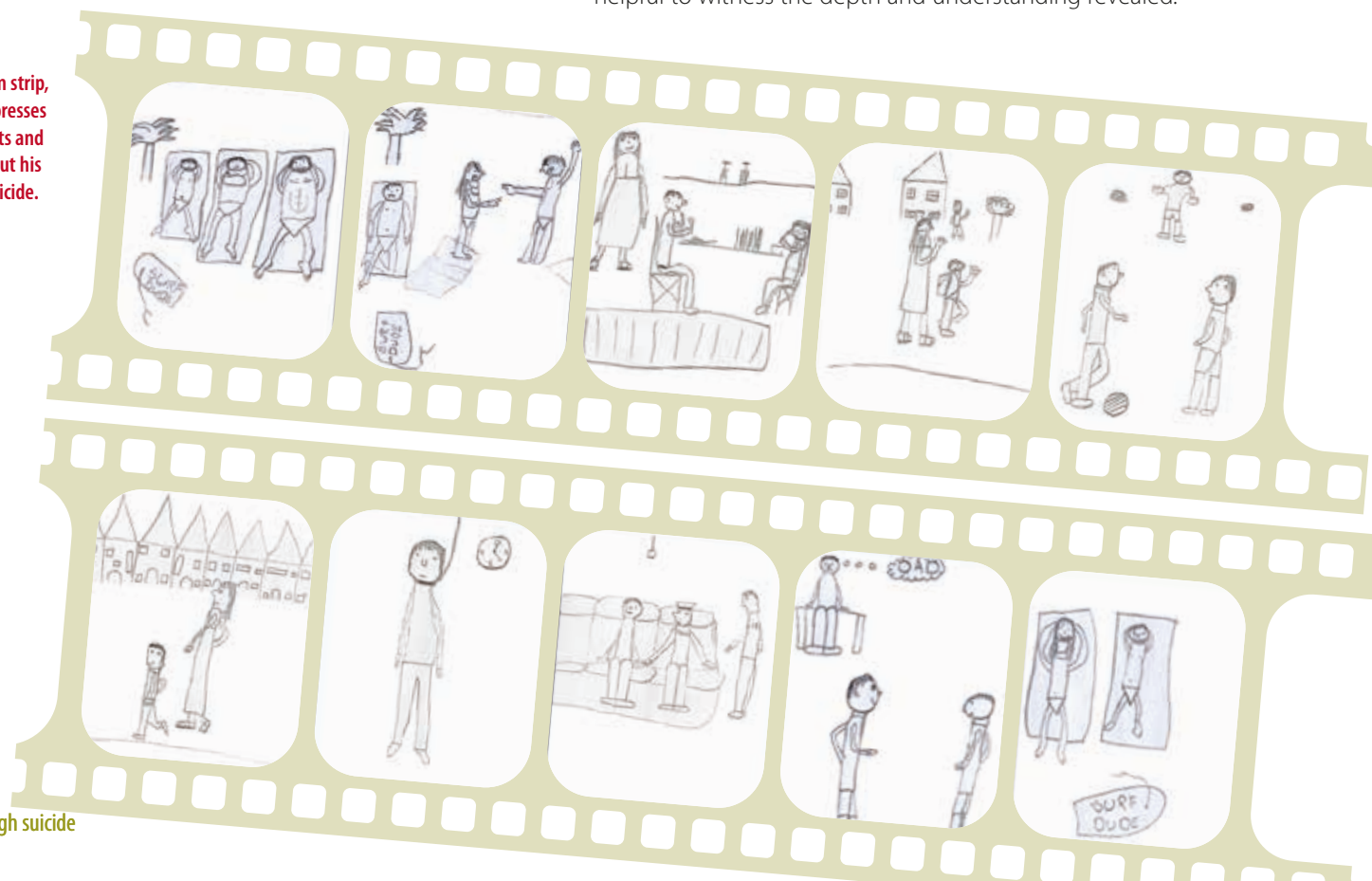
“From hearing them tell the story of the suicide and the effect on the family through the film strip, I realised that the children had reserves of strength and character that were amazing. Overnight it seemed to allow them to become more self-sufficient, have greater self-confidence and show me that we were in this together. I am so proud of them, and now they know that too!” Nisa

Understanding what’s happening: telling their story

Telling their story of what has happened in the family by drawing or writing it out on a ‘film strip’ is a creative way to understand the child’s world, while also feeding in accurate information. In this way, you can find out what a child knows (or believes is real) before telling them more information.

This activity often works best with someone outside the immediate family setting it up and prompting, with the children drawing or writing their words on the strip. Other adults can then come and listen, and respond to the children’s experience of the death. Many parents find it moving and helpful to witness the depth and understanding revealed.

In this film strip, a boy expresses his thoughts and feelings about his father’s suicide.



Telling your story

YOU'LL NEED:

Scissors
Coloured pens/pencils
Sticky tape

YOU COULD ALSO USE:

Photos
Glue

WHAT TO DO:

When someone important dies by suicide, you are likely to feel really upset and confused sometimes. It might often go round and round in your head, popping into your imagination at all sorts of moments. This activity helps you think about life before the suicide and then helps you show the journey for your family as you understand it. It helps you to take some control over when you 'view your story'.

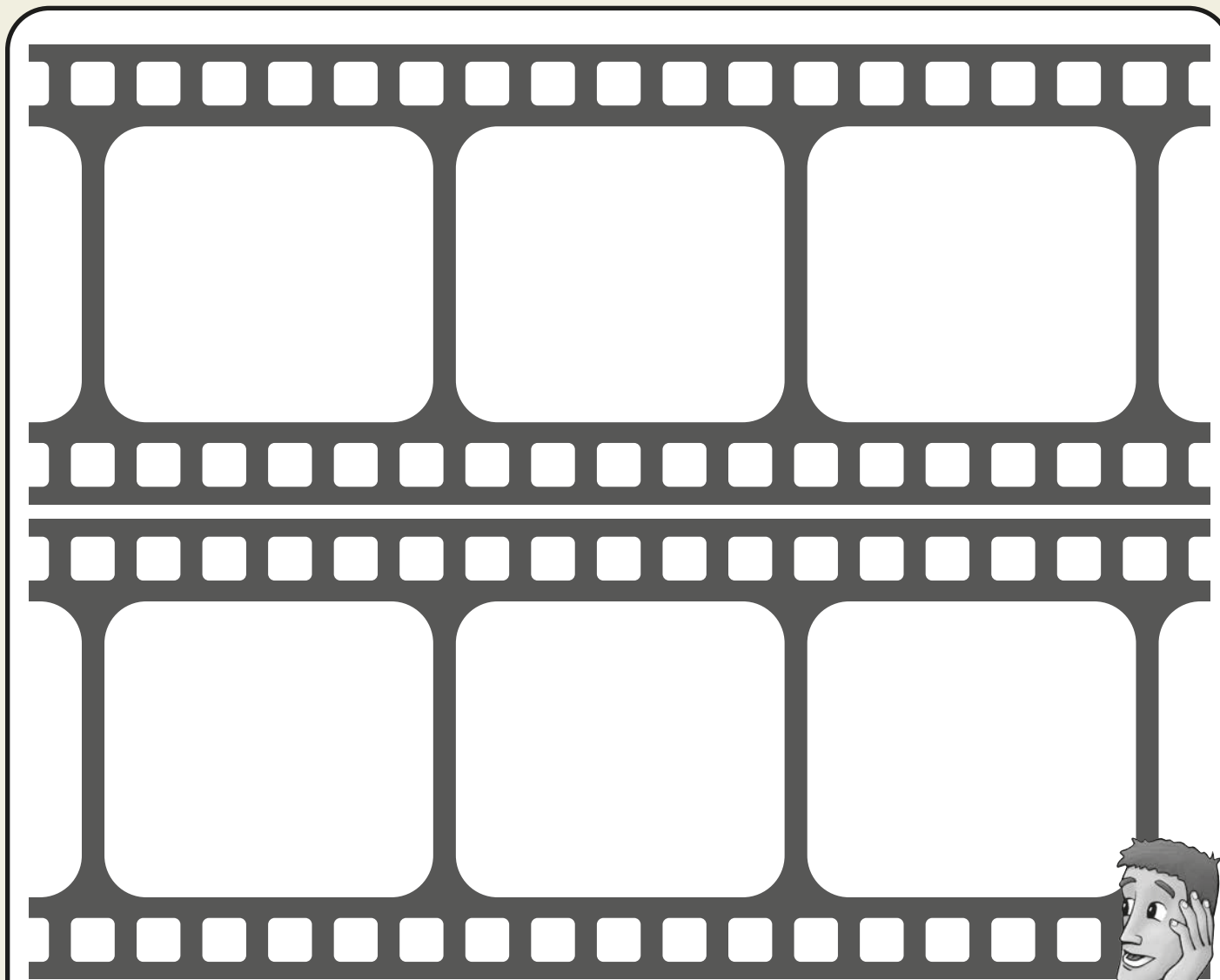
Step 1: Get some coloured pens and pencils and make a film strip. (You may need to copy this sheet a few times.) Stick the sheets together to form a long strip. Decide what you might include on this film strip. Think of it as a movie of how your life has changed since mum or dad, or your brother or sister died. Include all the important things that have happened to you.

Step 2: In the first frames write about or draw pictures of family life before the death, next show what happened when the person died and then what happened immediately afterwards.

You may want to include pictures or words. Include as much information as is comfortable, but make sure that you have a full story on your film strip. You may need to ask other people questions to get a full picture. Give equal space to each section of your story. Don't focus too much on one scene, or ignore another part.

Step 3: Use the last frames to show details of how life is now, who is important to you, what has changed and what the future might be.

Step 4: Roll up your film strip and keep it in a safe place. You could use it to help you tell your story to other people.



NOW YOU HAVE FINISHED TELLING YOUR STORY,
YOU CAN SHARE IT WITH OTHER PEOPLE.



Expressing emotions: feelings jar

If we do not acknowledge that a death has been by suicide, then we certainly cannot acknowledge the feelings that go with it. Some adults feel that as long as it is not given a name, or discussed, children will go on with their lives as though nothing has happened. Children need to understand that fear, love, anger, sadness – and a whole lot more – are all appropriate feelings when a person they care about has died by suicide.

This is a way to help families express and share their feelings.

Between you, choose five feelings that feel important: for example anger, love, fear, sadness and hope. Give each feeling a colour. Then ask for examples of what thoughts or situations trigger these feelings. Here are some examples of colours, feelings and thoughts from Harry, aged 14, whose mum killed herself by taking an overdose of tablets.

The idea of a jar with layers of coloured salt can also be used to represent memories. Different colours stand for different memories of the person who has died. Red may be the colour of her favourite earrings; blue may be the colour of the sea on a wonderful beach holiday; yellow may be the colour of the shawl she tucked around you when you were ill; green may be the colour that brings to mind her love of gardening; and pink may be the colour of her favourite flowers.



Anger "Why did my mum decide to die? It's not fair. I hate it. I feel angry when my mates discuss what their mum has been doing. They're lucky."

Love "I loved my mum, her smile, her hugs, her pasta bake and chocolate brownies."

Fear "I am very worried that dad will do the same. I feel scared when he gets upset."

Sadness "I feel sad when I think mum won't be here when I do my exams. Or when I get my first job."

Hope "I hope that mum knows that I still love her. I hope I never feel as low as she did that day."

Feelings jar

YOU'LL NEED:

A small clean jar with a screw-top lid
Packet of table salt

Coloured chalks or pastels
Cotton wool ball
Five pieces of A4 paper and one small piece of paper

WHAT TO DO:

Each different colour in your feelings jar will represent a thought or feeling that you have had since someone in your family died. Whether happy or sad, they are important feelings to you.

Step 1: Think about five feelings you have.

Step 2: Begin by thinking of one thought that goes with each of the five feelings. Write these down on the small piece of paper.

Step 3: Decide on a colour for each feeling and mark that colour next to the feeling on your paper.

Step 4: Fill a small jar right up to the brim with salt, making sure it is jammed full. This gives you the exact amount of salt needed. Then tip the salt out of the jar into five piles on the five pieces of paper. Each of these piles will represent a feeling, so you could make them equal in size, or if some feelings are more significant, put more salt in that pile.

Step 5: Pick a coloured chalk or pastel and start to rub it into one pile of salt. As you rub it in, the salt will begin to turn that colour. Keep rubbing in a circular motion until it is the colour you want – the longer you rub, the stronger the colour.

Step 6: Once you have coloured all five piles of salt, carefully tip them into the jar. You can do this in straight layers, or diagonal ones, in thin strips or large ones – it is up to you. Once you have finished, tap the jar gently to settle the contents and add more salt if necessary. Then put a cotton wool ball on top and screw the lid back on tightly. The cotton wool ball stops the colours from mixing up as it forms a good seal.

Step 7: Share your jar with someone you feel safe with; tell them what the colours mean to you.

Step 8: Decide where you will keep your jar to remind you of all your different feelings.

Feelings jar


write your name here →

	Colour	Feeling	Thought
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

colour the square →

write a thought here when you have this feeling →

write your feelings in this column →



DRAGGING A COCKTAIL STICK UP THE INSIDE OF THE JAR CREATES A GOOD EFFECT. EXPERIMENT FIRST AND SEE WHAT YOU COME UP WITH.



Coping with separation

After a death, a child can become very anxious about the well-being of their parent(s). They may find it very difficult to be apart, being afraid that something will happen when they are not there.

One idea to respond to this 'separation anxiety' is to create a physical link between the child and the parent(s). For example, you could give them two matching soft toys – one '**Big**' and one '**Small**', for example two cats, two dragons, two teddies, two rabbits. What matters is a difference in size, so, for an older child, 'Big' need not be large and 'Small' can be really tiny!

The idea is that the big one is the parental figure and stays with the child. Similarly the small one, representing the child, travels with the parent. It becomes a reminder of the continuing, caring presence – even when they are not together. It is a similar concept to a teddy or security blanket given to a baby.

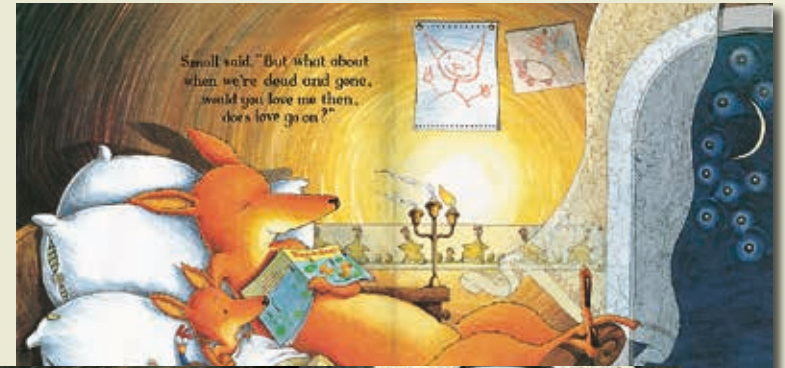
For younger children there is a book that can accompany this activity: *No Matter What* (see opposite) which talks about the characters 'Large' and 'Small'.

While you're at school, I will take 'Small' with me to work. Every time I look at him I will think of you. 'Small' helps me feel close to you. And 'Big' can go to school with you and when you look at him you'll know I'm thinking of you.



There are other ways to maintain connections when apart. For example, you could sew a kiss or other symbol discreetly inside a school jumper (for the child) and inside a pocket (for the parent) that can be pressed when a bit of comfort is required. Or everyone in the family can have a special coin, token or key ring or mobile phone 'charm' that symbolises the links between parents and children even when apart.

The beautifully illustrated book *No Matter What* by Debi Gliori (1999) tells the story of 'Large' (a parental figure portrayed as an animal) and 'Small' the inquisitive offspring who is finding it hard to know just how grumpy he can be before 'Large' will stop loving him. The book takes the child on a gentle yet magical adventure of unconditional love. It culminates in allowing 'Small' to ask perhaps the biggest question of all.



Reproduced with permission Debi Gliori, 1999. *No Matter What*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Night-time worries

Many children who feel burdened by thoughts that follow a death by suicide can find it difficult to get to sleep; others find they are frequently woken by nightmares. Such disruption to sleep is particularly likely in a child who clams up by day and says they are OK, when in fact they may be holding on to a lot of concerns. A regular and secure bedtime routine will certainly help as well as some of the following ideas.

Snuggle blanket

Even a boisterous child can feel more secure swaddled in a cosy 'snuggle blanket'.

Accompanied by a regular bedtime story, the blanket becomes a subtle way to reinforce security and love. It even works well for older children who may choose to personalise the blanket their own way.



Worry dolls

Some children are helped by 'worry dolls' – a small bag of tiny people who carry a child's worries during the night to help the child sleep and feel less burdened by their worries. These can be found in some Oxfam or gift shops, bought online or you could make your own. The child lays each worry doll on his or her pillow. They then pick them up, one at a time, and whisper a worry.

I am really worried that my mum will never stop crying. Please look after that worry for me.

Then, one by one, they are placed back in the drawstring bag and placed under the pillow. The idea is that the worry dolls carry the child's worries through the night and work out ways for the child to feel stronger. Their use helps the child to put aside the concerns that prevent them from sleeping. Most importantly, it also helps adults to understand and talk about things that may be troubling a child. Some children make worry fairies or superheroes using peg dolls.

I am really worried that my mum will never stop crying. Please look after that worry for me.



Dreamcatchers

The dreamcatcher is a Native American concept to protect the child while he or she sleeps. Folklore says that all the dreams and thoughts of the world flow over our head as we sleep. Bad dreams and thoughts are caught up in the web and only good dreams and thoughts filter down to the sleeping child through the feathers. Dreamcatchers can be bought online, in some gift shops, or you can make your own.

Hang the dreamcatcher above the child's bed and tell them the story, explaining how the web will capture the bad dreams. Help them believe that this may help with any nightmares or intrusive thoughts.

Beads woven into the web stand for 'heroes' or 'heroines' (real or imaginary) who can help keep the bad dreams away. Extra beads can be added for extra 'strength'. One child added beads representing Superman, Dr Who, David Beckham and his pet dog to his dreamcatcher as he felt he could trust these 'heroes' to overpower his feelings of helplessness and fear. Another child decided to put a sticker of his favourite team winning the FA Cup in the centre of the web.



Useful reading



A Child's Grief: Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family has Died

Julie Stokes and Diana Crossley

Winston's Wish, 2008

ISBN 978-0-9559539-0-3

This booklet aims to help families cope with the death of a family member and provides a range of ideas for families about how to support their children.



Help is at Hand: support after someone may have died by suicide

Public Health England, 2015

Available online or as download or can be ordered as hard copy from www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk

This guide, prepared with help from people bereaved by suicide, offers guidance, information and support following a death that may have been suicide.



Cry of Pain: Understanding Suicide and Self-harm

Mark Williams

Penguin, 1997

ISBN 0 14 02 5072 7

This book sensitively and thoughtfully considers why people kill themselves, offering a greater understanding of suicidal behaviour.



No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One

Carla Fine

Doubleday Books, 1997

ISBN 0 38548 018 0

The author shares her own story of the death of her husband by suicide and includes accounts from other families.



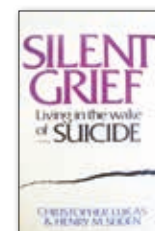
A Special Scar: The Experiences of People Bereaved by Suicide

Alison Wertheimer

Routledge, 1992

ISBN 0 41501 763 7

This book discusses suicide from an adult perspective and can be an invaluable resource for those helping children and families bereaved through suicide.



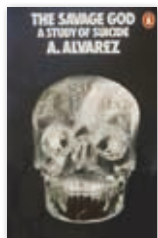
Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide

Christopher Lukas and Henry M Seiden

Jason Aronson Inc, 1987

ISBN 0 76570 056 5

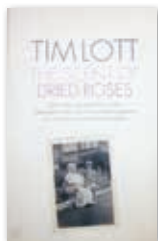
A 'survivor's guide' for those grieving the suicide of a family member, written by a 'survivor' of suicide and his doctor.



The Savage God: A Study of Suicide

A Alvarez
Penguin, 1974
ISBN 0 14003 747 0

A thorough study of historical, social and psychological perspectives on suicide that is also passionate, personal and readable.



The Scent of Dried Roses

Tim Lott
Penguin Books, 1997
ISBN 0 140 25084 0

An honest and searching account of the author's attempt to understand and accept his mother's suicide and his own depression.



Luna's Red Hat

Emmi Smid
Jessica Kingsley, 2015
ISBN 978 1 84905 629 8

Storybook for children 5-7 who have had a mother die by suicide.



The Little Flower Bulb

Eleanor Gormally
Veritas, 2011
ISBN 978 1 84730 260 1

Storybook for children aged 5 – 8 who have had a father die by suicide.



Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide

Kay Redfield Jamison
Picador, 2000
ISBN 0 74755 905 8

This account combines scientific research with personal stories.



“Sometimes she just goes inside herself and I don’t know what to say to her.” Mary

Sources of information and support

Winston’s Wish

Giving hope to grieving children.

Freephone helpline on 08088 020 021 - open Monday - Friday

9am to 5pm

E-mail: ask@winstonswish.org

www.winstonswish.org

Support after suicide

An online resource of information, guidance and support for anyone bereaved by suicide.

www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk

Samaritans

Confidential emotional support for anyone in a crisis
– 24 hours a day.

Phone: 116 123

E-mail: jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

Local self-help and support groups for those bereaved through suicide.

Helpline: 0844 561 6855

www.uk-sobs.org.uk

The Compassionate Friends

Support for bereaved parents who have lost a child of any age and from any circumstance.

Phone: 0845 123 2304

E-mail: info@tcf.org.uk

www.tcf.org.uk

PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide

PAPYRUS works to prevent young suicide and promote emotional wellbeing in young people. It listens to young people and their family and friends, especially suicide survivors.

Head Office: 01925 572 444

Helpline: 0800 068 41 41

Email: admin@papyrus-uk.org

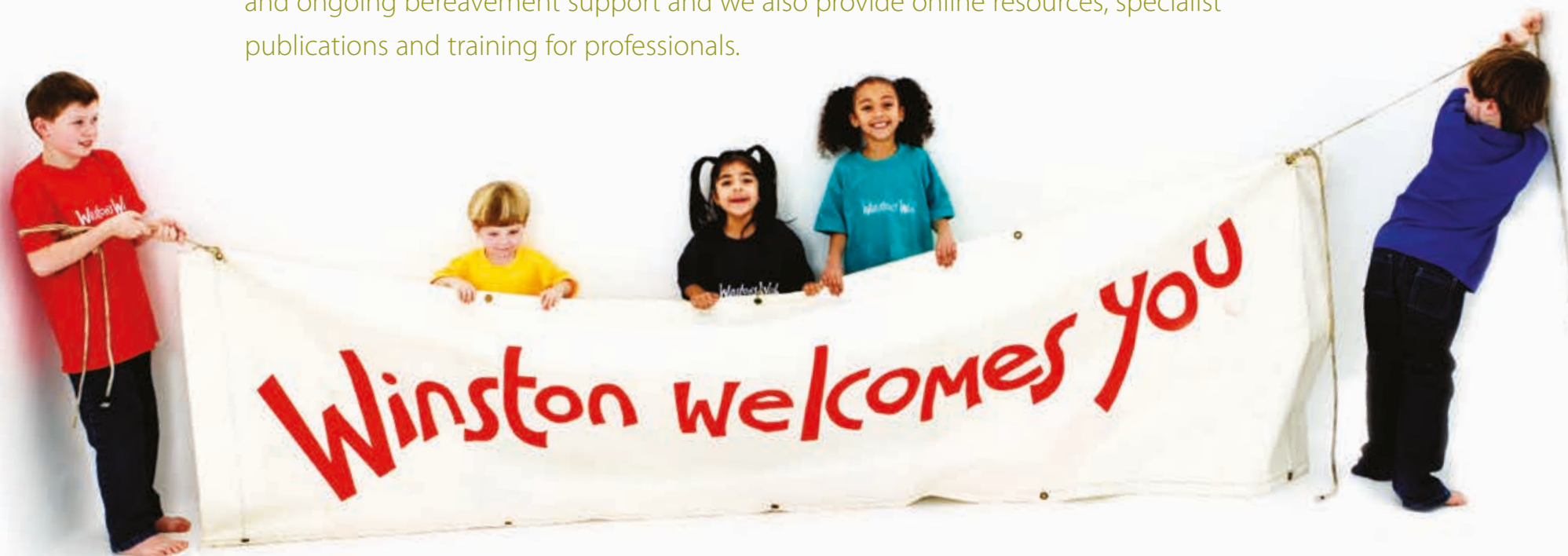
www.papyrus-uk.org

Winston's Wish

Winston's Wish was the UK's first childhood bereavement charity. We have been supporting bereaved children and young people since 1992 and we continue to lead the way in providing specialist childhood bereavement support services across the UK.

Winston's Wish provides emotional and practical bereavement support to children and young people (up to the age of 25) and those who care for them.

We are a specialist provider of support for children bereaved through suicide and for children with special educational needs or disabilities. Our expert teams offer one-off and ongoing bereavement support and we also provide online resources, specialist publications and training for professionals.



Explaining to a child that someone has died by suicide is one of the most difficult situations that a parent or carer might ever face.

This booklet offers practical advice for families in the immediate days and weeks when suicide has been the cause of death. It is aimed at giving parents and professionals the confidence to involve children in discussions about the nature of a death by suicide. The booklet includes practical activities for families as they begin to make sense of what has happened and start to look at ways in which the family can learn to cope and move forward.

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WE CANNOT SUPPORT BEREAVED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT.

BY PHONE:

To make a donation by phone using your card please call our fundraising team on **01242 515 157**

BY POST:

Please download our donation form from our website and send alongside a cheque to the address below. Cheques made payable to 'Winston's Wish'. Kindly post to: **Conway House, 31-33 Worcester Street, Gloucester GL1 3AJ**



Helpline: 08088 020 021 winstonswish.org

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