

Supporting Children with remembrance and bereavement at Christmas

Christmas can be an immensely painful time when someone important has died. With potential 'trigger points' everywhere – from TV advertising to poignant pieces of music and personalised cards – you and your family may find it difficult to cope with your grief at Christmas.

While grief never fully goes away, there will be times when emotions are much more heightened than others, and when the sense of loss can feel greater. Christmas – the season which celebrates love and family time – is most certainly one of these times. It doesn't matter whether your special person or pet died a few weeks, months or years ago, children may struggle to cope with grief at Christmas.

Ways to remember someone at Christmas

- 1) Some families like to continue old family traditions, whereas others choose to create a new family tradition
- 2) Mark the memory of the person that has died by doing something special.
- 3) Visit the grave or the place where the ashes were scattered and place a Christmas card there.
- 4) Ask friends and family to write special messages to your loved one on star-shaped cut-outs and hang these up on ribbon around the home or on a tree.
- 5) Ask other people for their memories of the person who died and begin to compile their 'life story'.
- 6) You could choose to eat their favourite meal.
- 7) Listen to their favourite music, or their favourite Christmas music.
- 8) Make and bake salt dough shapes to hang on the tree. You could decorate them with things important to the person who died.
- 9) On Christmas Day itself, remember to look after yourself, if things become a bit too much, you could always find a way to take a breather. Give yourself permission to not be ok and, equally, to have fun and smile.

Explaining Loss to Children

Death can be a difficult concept for children to understand, particularly for younger children. We need to show them the difference between dead and alive and using nature can be a useful way to do this. Sometimes using the concept of nature and plants dying can be more visual and clearer for children to understand.



If you or your family need any further support around loss and bereavement, please feel free to contact the CVPS Safeguarding Team or email: safeguarding@chipstead.croydon.sch.uk

Ways to cope with grief at Christmas

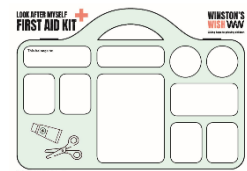
- 1) Try and be sensitive to everyone's needs as everyone in the family will have different ways of grieving
- 2) Give children (and yourself) permission to look forward to and enjoy Christmas, to smile and have fun
- 3) Also give yourself permission to not be ok
- 4) Make space to remember that someone is missing and it's natural to miss them
- 5) Talk as a family about how you are all feeling about Christmas
- 6) Decide together what you would like to do to remember your important person (see our ideas below)
- 7) Make plans but also give yourself permission to change your mind
- 8) Be kind to yourself and if things become too much, find a way to take time out

Activities to help bereaved children:

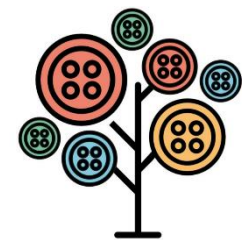
- Make a memory jar or box together and fill with pictures and memories of the loved person or pet.



- Create a First Aid Kit together. The kit will have words and images of what they need when they feel sad.



- Make a button tree to show all the people around us who care, love and support us. The loved person or pet can still feature on the tree as a special button.



- For a bereaved child, there will be many moments throughout the year when they particularly remember the person who has died. This could be that person's birthday, the anniversary of the day they died, Mother's or Father's Day, religious festivals... Making a note of these days on a Calendar of Memories can help children and those around them to be aware of these potentially difficult days and find a way to mark them.



- Create a beaded bracelet. Each band can represent a different memory or happy thought about the loved on.

