

Bereavement



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Purpose

To help to understand and manage feelings of loss.

To recognise that feelings will change over time.

To learn that many of the world religions believe in an afterlife.

Entrance of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow introducing the concept of 'Bereavement' for the pupils to enter assembly to (10 minutes)

Introduction

For every plant, animal and human, there is a cycle to life which starts with being born and ends with death. On one hand, this makes common sense. Clearly the world cannot support more and more people or animals occupying the earth and using its resources without a similar number dying and not needing those resources anymore.

But logic doesn't help us when we are the ones losing a friend or relative.

Just because this is inevitable and necessary it doesn't stop the event being incredibly sad.

Grief is a good and natural response to losing someone or something important. There is no 'right way' to feel, act or grieve. We are all different and therefore we all cope in different ways.

Bereavement is not only connected to the death of a friend or member of the family. We can also have these feelings over the loss of a pet, a family splitting up, having to move a long distance and other things we will miss permanently.



The Five Stages of Grieving

Stage 1 Denial

At first, we can't quite take in what is happening. Surely this can't happen to me? It can't be true! I'm going to wake up and find that this was all a dream.

The feeling in this stage is often one of numbness, of shock.

Stage 2 Anger

Why is this happening to me? It's not fair! Why can't it be someone else?

The feeling of anger is often linked with helplessness because there is nothing that can be done to stop the death or loss.

Stage 3 Bargaining

Many people, especially those who believe in God, move into a stage of bargaining. What if.....? I will take their place.....If only? If you change this I will live a good life forever!

Stage 4 Depression

For most people, this stage of sadness can be quite lengthy. It often comes after the funeral or loss, once all of the immediate activities surrounding the death have settled down and others have gone back to their normal lives.

There can be a deep sadness; a sense of loneliness and this can result in sleeplessness, loss of appetite, feelings of guilt and blame and a sense that you will never again feel happy and enjoy life.

Like all the previous stages—this passes with time.



Stage 5 Acceptance

Eventually this stage comes to us all. Time does heal and although we never forget our loved one, we find ourselves starting to move forward. Slowly we resume our old lives, find happiness in new things, begin to laugh and realise that this is how our departed loved one would want us to feel.

We celebrate the times and the memories we shared and we start to make new memories without them.



Though I Am Dead

Though I am dead grieve not for me with tears
think not of death with sorrowing and tears;
I am so near that every tear you shed
touches and tortures me, though you think me dead.

But when you laugh and sing in glad delight,
my soul is lifted upward to the light.

Laugh and be glad for all that life is giving
And I, though dead, will share your joy in living.



What is Death?

Death is nothing at all.

I have only slipped away into the next room.

I am I and you are you.

Whatever we were to each other, that we still are.

Call me by an old familiar name.

Speak to me in the easy way which you always used.

Put no difference in your tone.

Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed

At the little jokes we enjoyed together.

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.

Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.

Let it be spoken without affect,

Without the trace of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.

It is the same that it ever was.

There is absolutely unbroken continuity.

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?

I am waiting for you , for an interval,

Somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well.



How to Help the Grieving Process

A. It's okay to feel exactly how you are feeling. No one grieves in exactly the same way as someone else.

B. How long will I feel like this? There is no specific time scale for feelings, however, the old saying is indeed true 'Time heals' and these feelings will eventually pass.

C. Speak with others. Sometimes you do not want to talk with relatives because you are concerned that you might upset them more. This is usually untrue and others who mourn want to talk about their loss. However it is sometimes easier to talk with friends or a member of staff at school. You might even consider speaking with a trained counsellor.

D. Try to get out walking, exercising or doing some other activity.

E. Celebrate the life of the loved one that you have lost and learn to be thankful for the time you had together.



Views on the Afterlife

Most world religions believe in an afterlife—that our souls go on to a new adventure after this world, one without suffering or sadness and where we will meet our loved ones again in a happier place.

I Am Standing Upon The Seashore

I am standing upon the seashore.
A ship at my side spreads her white
sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean.

She is an object of beauty and strength.
I stand and watch her until at length
she hangs like a speck of white cloud
just where the sea and sky come
to mingle with each other.

Then, someone at my side says;
"There, she is gone!"

"Gone where?"
Gone from my sight. That is all.
She is just as large in mast and hull
and spar as she was when she left my side
and she is just as able to bear her
load of living freight to her destined port.
Her diminished size is in me, not in her.



And just at the moment when someone
at my side says, "There, she is gone!"
There are other eyes watching her coming,
and other voices ready to take up the glad shout;
"Here she comes!"
And that is dying. An horizon and just the limit of our sight.

Lift us up, O Lord, that we may see further.

It is sometimes helpful to imagine what a passed loved one would have wanted for us.

Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glint on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you wake in the morning hush,
I am the swift, uplifting rush

Of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft starlight at night.

Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.
(Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there, I did not die!)



Quotations from Different Beliefs and Religions

'When it comes time to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled with fear of death, so that when their time comes, they weep and pray for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way. Sing your death song and die like a hero going home.'

Tecumseh, Shawnee Indian Chief

'Life is a great sunrise. I do not see why death should not be an even greater one.'

Vladimir Nobokov, Russian Orthodox

' Death is not extinguishing the light; it is only putting it out because the dawn has come.'

Rabindranath Tagore, Hindu

' Even death is not to be feared by one who has lived wisely.'

Buddha, Buddhist

'For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.'

Khalil Gibran, Catholic/Sufi Muslim

**'When you are born , you cry and the world rejoices.
When you die, you rejoice and the world cries.'**

Buddhist saying

'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have eternal life.'

John 3:16, Christian



The Bible Says:

Jesus said: 'Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself so that where I am, you may be also.'

[John 14: 1-3](#)

Let's Pray:

Dear God

Help those who have suffered a loss recently. Let them know that their feelings of sadness will fade with time and be replaced with happy memories.

Amen

Putting it into Practice:

Keep a book of remembrance in the class for pupils to be able to put in the names of loved ones or things that have passed.

Exit of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow reminding pupils of the key issues raised in the assembly about the concept of 'Bereavement' for the pupils to exit assembly to (10 minutes)



Collective Worship and Putting it into Practice for the Rest of the Week

Day 2

Dear God

Eternal rest give to them o Lord

And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace

Amen

Design a prayer garden for the school or in a space at home. What could go in it? How will we remember a loved one?

Day 3

Dear God

May the choirs of angels come to greet them

May they speed them to paradise.

May the lord enfold them in His Mercy,

May they find eternal life.

Amen

Buy some seeds or small plants or bulbs and let people who have a loved one who has passed plant one in memory of that person.

Next to the seed/plant stick in a lolly stick with the name of the pupil so that they can identify it as it blooms.



Day 4

Dear God

We pray for those who have lost loved ones and their homes through wars or natural disaster.

May they have relief from their grief in the difficult first days of their loss and in the months that follow.

Amen

Candles are often used to remind us of loved ones we have lost. Most churches have an altar where a candle can be lit and a prayer said for just a small donation.

Think about pupils asking if they can visit a church (perhaps on their way home) to light a candle in memory of a loss.

Day 5

Dear God

Remind us to give thanks and celebrate a person's life. To take time to pause and remember the many good things that they brought to us and delight in the memories that we have of them.

Remind us that it is good to talk about them and what they meant to us.

Make or buy a little notebook to write down and capture the memories you have of a loved one who has passed on. Build this up over years as old memories come back to you. Ask others in the family for their special memories to add to the book.

