

Additional Resources on Childhood Traumatic Grief

Books for Children and Teens

This list includes some of the many books available for children and teens who are dealing with traumatic grief. The list is organized by age group

Please note that all product descriptions are based on information provided by the publisher or manufacturer, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the NCTSN. Inclusion on this site is not an endorsement of any product by the NCTSN.

Preschool and Early Grades

Aliki, (1979). *The two of them*. New York: Greenwillow Books. (Ages 4-8)

A touching story that follows a grandfather and his granddaughter from her birth until his death. It describes their shared happy experiences and how they lovingly care for each other.

Brisson, P. (2006). *I remember Miss Perry*. New York: Penguin (Ages 5-8)

When a caring teacher dies others in the school help the students deal with their grief. The book presents the need to address feelings associated with the death.

Brown, L. K., & Brown, M. (1998). *When dinosaurs die: A guide to understanding death*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. (Ages 4-8)

This book uses dinosaurs as the characters to answer different questions about death and grief. Rather than tell a story, it educates children in a friendly and engaging format.

Buscaglia, L. F. (1982). *The fall of Freddie the leaf: A story of life for all ages*. Thorofare, NJ: C.B. Slack Inc. (Ages 6-10)

Using photographs of real trees and leaves, the book tells the story of a leaf named Freddie and his journey from shading people as part of a tree to dying. It uses the metaphor and cycle of nature's seasons to describe death.

Cantrell, B. (2008). *Good-bye, Baby Max*. Austin, TX: Bridgeway Books. (Ages 4-8)

Touching illustrated story about a baby chick in a classroom who does not survive. Simple, clear language providing a good jumping off point for more in depth discussion as needed.

Cohen, C. K., Heiney, J. T., & Gordon, M. J. (1997). *Daddy's promise*. Bloomfield Hills, MI: Promise Publications. (Ages 4-8)

This book covers the basics about death and answers a child's simple questions about such things as what happens and where do people go when they die.

de Paola, T. A. (2000). *Nana upstairs and Nana downstairs*. New York: Putnam Books. (Ages 3-7)

This classic book tells the story of a 4 year old who visits his grandmother and great grandmother. It sensitively and honestly presents the idea of keeping memories alive after the death of his great grandmother.

Harris, R. H. (2001). *Goodbye, Mousie*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books. (Ages 4-8)

A story describes the range of emotions a young boy goes through when he discovers his pet mouse has died.

Holden, L. D. (1989). *Gran-Gran's best trick*. New York: Magination Press. (Ages 5 and up)

The story starts by saying Gran Gran has cancer and then shortly goes on to say that he is not getting better, he is not himself. It gives realistic appropriate information about his getting worse, going to the hospital and dying. It also talks about the things that happen (e.g. funeral with casket) and the feelings that go with them, including talking about being sad, being reminded about him, then going on to remembering good things. There are nice black and white illustrations for this story book. Has page of advice for adults.

Holmes, M. M., & Mudlaff, S. J., & Pillo, C. (2000). *A terrible thing happened: A story for children who have witnessed violence or trauma*. Washington, DC: Magination. (Ages 4-8)

The author uses a raccoon to present issues related to an unidentified "terrible thing" that has happened. It discusses and normalizes the various reactions following what could be a traumatic event.

Kaplow, J. & Pincus, D., & Spiegel, B. (2007). *Samantha Jane's missing smile: A story about coping with the loss of a parent*. Washington, DC: Magination. (Ages 4-8)

Samantha Jane learns to live following the death of her father. The book deals sensitively with a range of issues including worries about her mother and guilt about being happy again.

Mellonie, B., & Ingen, R. (1983). *Lifetimes: A beautiful way to explain death to children*. New York: Bantam. (Ages 3-8)

Lovely realistic illustrations of nature to describe the cycle of life for living things. It has simple effective text describing the lifetime of things such as butterflies, but also says that people only live a certain amount of time. It says they often die when old but can die at other times

Miles, M., & Parnall, P. (2000). *Annie and the old one*. New York: Little Brown. (Ages 7 and up)

Annie, a young Navajo girl confronts the impending death of her grandmother. Not wanting her to die, Annie tries to prevent it with attempts to delay the finish of a rug which is to accompany the death. The cycle and meaning of life and death is presented within a helpful cultural context.

Mills, J. C. (1993). *Gentle willow: A story for children about dying*. New York: Magination Press. (Ages 4-8)

Story with real animals (e.g. squirrel and moths that turn into butterflies) and a willow tree that dies. Good use of using nature as a metaphor for people and directly discussing that some things get sick or old and die. Has page of advice for adult.

Mundy, W., & Alley, R. W. (1998). *Sad isn't bad: A good-grief guidebook for kids dealing with loss*. Elf-help books. St. Meinrad, Indiana: One Caring Place, Abbey Press. (Ages 5-10)

Different topics/issues/questions are presented on separate pages, it covers both how it feels and what to do e.g.: "It's Okay to Cry", "It's Not Your Fault", "It's Good to Share Your Feelings", "Where is Your Loved One Now". Also includes page of suggestions for parents/caregivers.

Spelman, C., & Friedman, J. (1996). *After Charlotte's mom died*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Co. (Ages 5-7)

Six year old Charlotte has various reactions to her mother's death that include fears about her father. The book talks about a father and daughter's grief as well how a therapist helps Charlotte cope with her feelings.

Thomas, P., & Harker, L. (2001). *I miss you: A first look at death*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series. (Ages 4-8)

A simple picture book that begins, "every day someone is born and everyday someone dies". It deals directly with the death of significant person and the various things that happen e.g. funeral, getting sad, having memories. It provides a straightforward, developmentally-appropriate discussion of death, without metaphors or character. There is a section at the end with general information and advice for parents.

Varley, S. (1984). *Badger's parting gifts*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books. (Ages 4-8)

Using various woodland creatures as characters, the book describes their special relationships and feelings when their friend Badger dies.

Viorst, J., & Blegvad, E. (1987). *The tenth good thing about Barney*. New York: Aladdin Books. (Ages 4-7)

Following the death of pet cat, the book takes the complex topic of death and explains it through a simple story about what happens when something living dies, grief related feelings, and making memories.

Wunsch, J. L., & Keating, P.T. (1995). *After the funeral*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press. (Ages 4-8)

Talks honestly about the various feelings young children have following the death of someone special.

Middle Grades

Buck, P. S. (1976). *The big wave*. New York: Harper Collins. (Ages 9-12)

The story of two childhood friends. The family of one friend dies in a tidal wave and he comes to live with his friend. The book takes readers through their journey as they learn about life and compassion.

Cleaver, B., & Cleaver, V. (1989). *Where the lilies bloom*. NY: Harper & Row. (Ages 9-12)

Following the death of her father, Mary keeps her promise to keep her siblings together. They struggle and cope with their emotions and the harsh winter environment to survive.

The Dougy Center. (2002) *After a murder: A workbook for grieving kids*. Portland, OR: The Dougy Center for Grieving Children. (Ages 9-12)

This straightforward and sensitive book uses a mixture of children's drawings, quotes, factual information, and interactive questions to talk directly to children about a murder.

The Dougy Center. (2001) *After a suicide: An activity book for grieving kids*. Portland, OR: The Dougy Center for Grieving Children. (Ages 9-12).

This hands-on, interactive workbook allows children who have been exposed to a suicide to learn from other grieving kids. The workbook includes drawing activities, puzzles, stories, advice from other kids and helpful suggestions for how to navigate the grief process after a suicide death.

Goldman, L. (2005). *Children also grieve: Talking about death and healing*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. (Ages 9-12)

This book is meant to be used by a child with an adult. Its four different sections deal with different aspects of grief using a family pet dog as a narrator. Suggested questions and fill in the blank pages are interspersed throughout as well as a section for adults about children's grief

Moser, A., & Melton, D. (1996). *Don't despair on Thursdays: The children's grief-management book*. Kansas City, MO: Landmark Editions. (Ages 9-12)

A practical book for children to use with adults discussing ways to cope with grief-related feelings.

Paterson, K. (1977). *Bridge to Terabithia*. New York: Crowell. (Ages 9 and up)

Jess and Leslie are classmates and neighbors who forge a friendship that includes venturing to a special place in the woods. Leslie dies in an accident and the book tackles Jess's complicated grief feelings for his friend.

Porterfield, K. M. (1996). *Straight talk about post-traumatic stress disorder: Coping with the aftermath of trauma*. New York: Facts on File. (Ages 13 and up)

Presents information about posttraumatic stress disorder and coping in language suitable for those who are young teenagers and older. It provides examples and helps normalize trauma responses.

Romain, T., & Verdick, E. (1999). *What on earth do you do when someone dies?* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. (Ages 9-12)

The book answers questions children have about death in a straightforward and sensitive manner.

Rubel, B. (2009). *But I didn't say goodbye: Helping children and families after a suicide*. Kendall Park, NJ: Griefwork Center. (Ages 8 and up)

This book tackles the difficult situation of death by suicide. It covers five years in the life of grieving family as told from the point of view of a boy who was 10 when his father dies. It would be helpful reading for both child and caregiver suicide survivors.

Salloum, A. (1998). *Reactions: A workbook to help young people who are experiencing trauma and grief*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corp. (Ages 8 and up)

The book presents information about both grief and trauma to help youth of various ages. Available at <http://www.centering.org/index.php?page=book&id=100&pid=600>.

Smith, D. B. (1973). *A taste of blackberries*. New York: Crowell. (Ages 7-12)

The story deals with the tragic death of a friend and the survivor's feelings of guilt and questions about enjoying life again without a special friend.

Stickney, D. (2009). *Water bugs & dragonflies: Explaining death to young children*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press. (Ages 6 and up)

The process of life and death are described via the life cycle of a dragonfly. A spiritual concept of death is also included.

White, E. B. (1952). *Charlotte's web*. New York: Harper. (Ages 9-12)

Wilbur the pig and Charlotte the spider become friends at the farm where they live. Their friendship grows as does Charlotte's attempt to save her friend from his destiny.

High School and Beyond

Agee, J. (1957). *A death in the family*. New York:: McDowell, Obolensky. (Ages 13 and up)

Pulitzer prize winning novel about a family in the aftermath of the death of a father in a car accident.

Fitzgerald, H. (2002) *The grieving teen: A guide for teenagers and their friends*. NY: Simon & Schuster. (Ages 13 and up)

A book that answers and addresses contemporary issues about death in language geared to teens. A variety of topics are covered including AIDS and posttraumatic stress disorders. It also gives suggestions for coping.

Gray, A., Gordon, J., & Sullivan, N. (2001). *Stories for a teen's heart. Book 3*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers. (Ages 13 and up)

Part of a series, the book talks directly to teens through stories about real life situations, and addresses a variety of challenges and issues.

Grollman, E. (1993). *Straight talk about death for teenagers: How to cope with losing someone you love*. Boston: Beacon Press. (Ages 13 and up)

This book is a place for teens to go for honest, direct answers to questions they have but may be afraid or hesitant to ask.

Gunther, J. (1949). *Death be not proud: A memoir*. New York: Harper. (Ages 13 and up)

The autobiographical book describes the experiences of family struggling with the diagnosis and death of their teenage son from a brain tumor.

Rawls, W. (1996). *Where the red fern grows*. New York: Yearling. (Ages 9-12)

The story of a boy who trains two beloved dogs and takes them through various adventures. However, various life lessons ensue including the death of one dog. The title comes from the Native American belief that a red fern will grow over the grave of his dog.

Traisman, E. (2003). *Fire in my heart, ice in my veins: A journal for teenagers*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corp. (Ages 12 and up)

This book is done in a journal format; asking questions, describing possible feelings, and promoting written expression in order to understand and cope with grief.

Wolfelt, A. D. (2001). *Healing your grieving heart for teens: 100 practical ideas*. Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press. (Ages 12 and up)

A helpful and practical guide specifically geared to teens. Educates teens about grief and normalizes what they are going through. Includes useful tips for managing a range of feelings.