



Guy's Gift

**Support for children and young people
in Coventry and Warwickshire**

• bereavement • change • loss • separation

Call **0845 467 3035** or email info@guysgift.co.uk



Anticipatory Grief

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School can play an important role in supporting a child who has a member of their family with a life threatening or terminal illness.

- It can be useful to liaise with other professionals or agencies. It ensures that you are informed of developments and that you are in a position to support the child appropriately.
- It may be difficult for the child to function well in school. Communications with the family assist staff to make appropriate allowances.
- It may be helpful for staff to discuss with the family what information should be shared. This can help both pupils and staff.
- If the child knows that an appropriate, named person knows the situation and is available for quiet time they can feel less isolated.

Self Care:

- Don't underestimate the emotional demands experienced by those supporting a family at this time.
- It is only natural to want to make things better. It is not about taking away the pain but working through the emotions to help them adapt to the loss.
- This can create stress for the staff in the following ways
 - They may be grieving themselves.
 - Previous personal losses may resurface.
 - Not everyone is comfortable talking about emotions.
 - Watch for signs of burnout or stress. (Anxiety, feelings of helplessness, guilt...).
 - Let staff know who they can talk to about their own emotions.
 - It can be difficult for staff to request support for themselves and can be perceived as a sign of weakness or not coping. If support is a matter of course for everyone it is easier for individuals to access their person needs. Most people will be the best judge of what they need for themselves.

It is helpful to talk things through as much as possible with individuals and in staff meetings. Remind staff that sometimes it is helpful for children to talk to someone detached from their normal routine and situation, especially if the grieving is difficult or prolonged.

Guy's Gift can be accessed at any time to support in this way. Don't underestimate the length of the grieving process. There is no time frame to grieving.

After the Death

- Gather as much information as possible about the circumstances.
- Contact the child/family prior to their return to school. Discuss how they want their peers to be informed and how they would like to be treated.
- Inform all members of staff, individually or in groups.
- Discuss with the child's peers - about the death and how they could express their sympathy.
- Provide extra support for close friends.
- Prepare children who are attending the funeral. (advice is available from Guy's Gift if needed)
- Consider if school should be closed or open on the day of the funeral.

Informing children and young people

- Identify those with close relationships and inform them in a separate group.
- Inform the rest of the children in small groups. If you are a large school, think about which children might need to be included in this.
- Give children the opportunity to express their feelings. Respect those who may not want to do this.
- Provide accurate and appropriate information according to the age and understanding of the children.
- Even if the news is difficult, it is best to give it, since incomplete or inaccurate information can lead to rumours or children will imagine and fill gaps for themselves.
- Ease anxiety by giving information about what will be happening next.
- Check that any children absent are informed.
- Let children know who they can talk to.
- Remember that each child's reaction will be different.
- Be aware of faith and cultural identity. Spiritual values, belief, race and cultural heritage will affect the grieving process.