



# 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](mailto:info@guysgift.co.uk)



# Parents advice to support your child

## Explaining a Death to Children

### Helpful points for parents and carers

Guy's Gift works throughout Coventry and Warwickshire supporting children and young people who are affected by bereavement.

For advice and guidance or to make a referral please contact us on **0845 467 3035** or email [info@guysgift.co.uk](mailto:info@guysgift.co.uk).

**Loss happens to children of all ages – it does not wait for them to be old enough to understand.**

**You cannot protect your children from grief. You can help them express their feelings and help them feel secure.**

**Allowing them to express their feelings is helping them develop healthy coping skills for the future.**

These are some general guidelines that many people find useful.

### Children need:

- To be heard
- Honesty – don't be afraid to tackle difficult questions.  
(Talk to Guy's Gift if you need support)
- Opportunities to remember – be mindful of special days such as anniversaries, birthdays or even the time of year
- Space – to express emotions
- Permission – its OK to laugh as well as grieve
- Reassurance – its normal to experience emotions

### Remember:

- Children react in different and individual ways to the news that someone they know has died. Parents and carers can help children by being aware and ready to help when necessary. We all want to do the best for our children and for them to be happy. We hope these points are helpful.
- A child's understanding of death changes with age and development. They may revisit the subject as their life experiences and understanding grow.
- Everybody in the family may feel different things and different times. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and everyone's time frame may be different.

- Try to use language that is both understandable and correct. Children are literal and some terms can be unhelpfully confusing or misunderstood. For example, if something is 'lost' it can usually be found, so why are we not looking for.....?
- Maintaining a normal routine and activities is good
- It is important not to omit people or difficult topics from normal activities and conversations
- Openness and honesty helps. Be ready to answer question if they arise as best you can. It is fine to say "I don't know" if that is the case and will let children know that it is alright to talk about things and that some questions do not have satisfactory answers. If they feel able to talk to you and ask questions they will feel included. We all know that if we understand only a part of a story the rest tends to be imagined to fill in the gaps. This can be scarier than the actual facts.
- Children may not feel they want to talk about it. That is ok too.
- While it is not necessary for young children to know all the details of a death immediately, we should be mindful that they may hear details from other people, the news or the playground. It is important that they are told a truthful account by someone they know and trust.
- Talk about the bereavement in a way that they can understand, taking into account age and maturity and providing opportunities to ask questions and to talk about it. Children need time to process information and this is why they often repeat question and ask for retellings.
- Children need to be able to 'make sense' of what has happened. Being able to talk about the person who died can help to build a 'story' that is understandable to them. This can take time and may develop as they mature. Sharing books can be a nice way of understanding