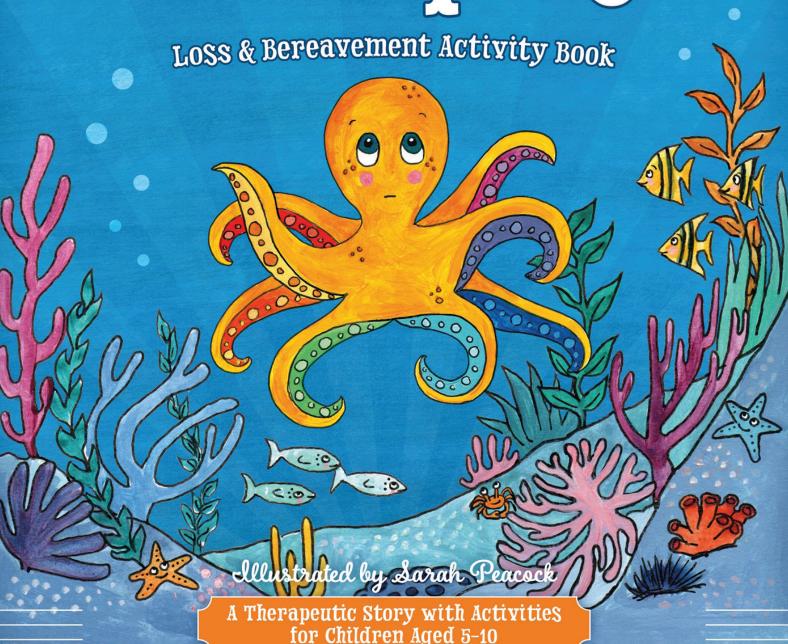


Olle octopus



Ollie the Octopus Loss and Bereavement Activity Book

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OTTO the OCCOPIES

Loss and Bereavement Activity Book

A Therapeutic Story with Activities for Children Aged 5-10

Dr. Karen Treisman Illustrated by Sarah Peacock



First published in Great Britain in 2021 by Jessica Kingsley Publishers An Hachette Company

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Acknowledgements

To all the amazing children, parents, and adults who have experienced loss, bereavement, and death. This book is inspired by you and created for you.

This book was written during the pandemic and so is also in honour of all of those who have experienced loss within or been impacted by that context.

To my bestie, Oli (Ollie the Octopus), an amazing inspirer, cheerleader, supporter, and more. I am so thankful for our friendship.

To Deirdre (Deedee the Dolphin), for your friendship, laughter, realness, support, and more. You are one in a million.

To Nicky (the Narwhal), thank you for everything you are and everything you do. I can't imagine my life without you.

To Kian (the Killer Whale) and Mika (the Manatee), it is beautiful to watch you grow and develop into gorgeous little boys.

And to my amazing family, who I love, adore, and am so grateful for.

To my Jessica Kingsley team, thank you for all your amazing work on all of my resources — this is a team effort and would not be possible without your hard work, belief, passion, and dedication.

Last but not least, thanks to Sarah Peacock, who brought my vision alive with the most colourful and stunning images, and did it with heart. You are brilliant! Thank you!

About this Workbook

Hello, my name is Karen, I am a clinical psychologist, and I am also the author of this workbook, alongside the colourful and brave Ollie the Octopus and his friends and family, Orson the Octopus, Orla the Octopus, Mika the Manatee, Kian the Killer Whale, Nicky the Narwhal, and Deedee the Dolphin. This workbook has helped loads of other children all around the world who have experienced a death of someone



they loved and who was very important in their life. You are not alone. This workbook is here to help you to:

- learn a bit more about grief and death, especially some of the common feelings, thoughts, and questions which you might have during this journey
- give you an opportunity to think a bit more about the person who died and about some of your worries, hopes, and feelings around them and your world without them
- find ways to say goodbye to the person while staying connected and keeping them close by in your heart and in your head
- find lots of new coping tools and ideas for things you can do if you are feeling worried, upset, frustrated, alone, stressed, too full up, and much more.

What is in this workbook?

- First, there is the illustrated story of Ollie the Octopus and his wonderful, helpful sea creature family and friends.
- Second, there are lots of fun activities for you to do around Ollie the Octopus, such as a colouring-in page, a word search, a quiz, and some special Ollie and under the sea inspired arts and craft ideas.
- Third, there are some activities and tips around learning a bit more about your different feelings in general, and your different feelings around the death of the person you cared about. The more we understand our feelings, we more we can find ways to respond to them, and work with them. This will include having time to ask and think about some questions which we have, or wished we could have asked, as well as exploring some of our grief triggers and reminders, like when we feel zapped or stung by a jellyfish.
- Fourth, there are loads of different activities for you to do to help you when the feelings seem too much or too big, to give your brain a break, and to change gears in your body.
- Then there are lots of different ideas and ways to honour, remember, and stay connected to the person who died different ways to keep them close by and in our hearts and heads, to stay connected by invisible seaweed, ribbon, beads, or pearls.
- There are also some exercises to help you think about the
 journey you have been on and are travelling and the other
 people around you who support you.
- Then at the end of your section, there is a certificate from Ollie the Octopus to celebrate you completing and working through this workbook!
- After your section, there is a whole section for the adult who
 is supporting you with this workbook. This gives them lots more
 ideas, games, and activities to help you. They will read their
 part first, so that they can help you along the way.

Things to remember when reading this workbook

- We know talking about death can be painful and difficult. So, take your time, there is no rush. You can do a little bit at a time, and work at a pace that feels right and comfortable for you.
- You don't need to go through each page in order! You and the
 adult reading with you can pick and choose what feels right for
 you at that time, and in that moment. You might want to come
 back to different activities throughout your journey or do
 them a few different times.
- The adult reading the workbook with you is there to help you along the way. Remember, you are not alone — as Ollie learned, this is a team effort.
- Different activities and ideas will work and fit differently. We
 are all unique and special in our own way. No two people are
 the same. So, you and the adult helping you can choose which
 ideas and activities suit you and which ones you want to try.
 You know what works best for you! That is why some activities
 will ask for the same thing but in different ways, so that you
 can choose.
- The most important bit is that you have fun with it be as creative and imaginative as you want! The sky is the limit! The worksheets provide some ideas, but you can tweak them or invent new ones which fit for you.

Positive vibes!

From Karen and Ollie the Octopus



The Story of OCTODIS





One of Ollie's favourite things to do was to splash, splish, splosh, and swim around the shipwrecks.

He did this with his two best friends, Kian the Killer Whale and Mika the Manatee, who were both gentle giants of the sea and also full of fun. Together they would explore all of the different hidden spots, hoping that they would find some secret buried treasures. They would have so many adventures down there, flipping, twisting, and diving.

Because Ollie was an octopus, he could do lots of tricks with his super stretchy eight arms and their many tentacles and suckers. He was like a gymnastics champion. Mika and Kian were not quite as bendy! His soft squishy body meant that Ollie could squeeze into the smallest nooks and crannies, which was very cool — it came in handy when he found himself in a tight spot and needed to hide. Ollie also had camouflage skin, which meant he was a lot of fun to play hide and seek with! Plus, octopuses can squirt blue ink, which meant that Ollie could make fantastic blue ink patterns in the sea!



After sea school, Ollie would glide home to his den, picking up seaweed on his way, looking for secret treasures, and chasing the fish through the colourful reef.

Some days, he would see his friends, Nicky the Narwhal and Deedee the Dolphin. When he saw them, he would wave and give them both a high five.

Nicky was a magical unicorn—like sea creature who radiated love and sparkles. She was also a great listener and a strong protector.

Deedee was very kind and much fun, always eager to play a game, and she loved to leap out of the water and do the coolest triple somersaults in the air! Deedee would make the biggest splashes with her rainbow tail as she landed back in the water.



When Ollie arrived home, he would be welcomed by his dad, Orson, and his mum, Orla, who gave him a big, squeezy, eight—armed hug and some scrumptious sea snacks. Orla and Orson would help Ollie with his schoolwork, play lots of games with him, and make him dinner before cosily tucking him in at bedtime. Orla and Orson made Ollie feel safe and loved. There was a lot of love in the air, and it helped that octopuses have three hearts! They were his whole world. They shielded him from the storms, and they were his biggest cheerleaders.



One day, sadly, things started to change.

Ollie's mum, Orla, became very ill. She could no longer do the things that she used to, like play with Ollie.

Sometimes, Ollie felt frustrated that she didn't do those things anymore. It was very sad for Ollie to see and he wished that she would get better, and that things would go back to how they were before.

As time went on, Orla started to look different — she became more and more unwell, and she had less and less energy. She didn't seem herself and things were changing and getting worse.

Orson, Orla, and the doctors did everything they could to get her better, but Orla was very seriously unwell. This wasn't the kind of illness that you can get better from, like a cold.

After some months, very sadly, Orla died.

Her heart stopped beating and she stopped breathing. She wasn't in pain anymore, but she was gone, and she wasn't coming back.



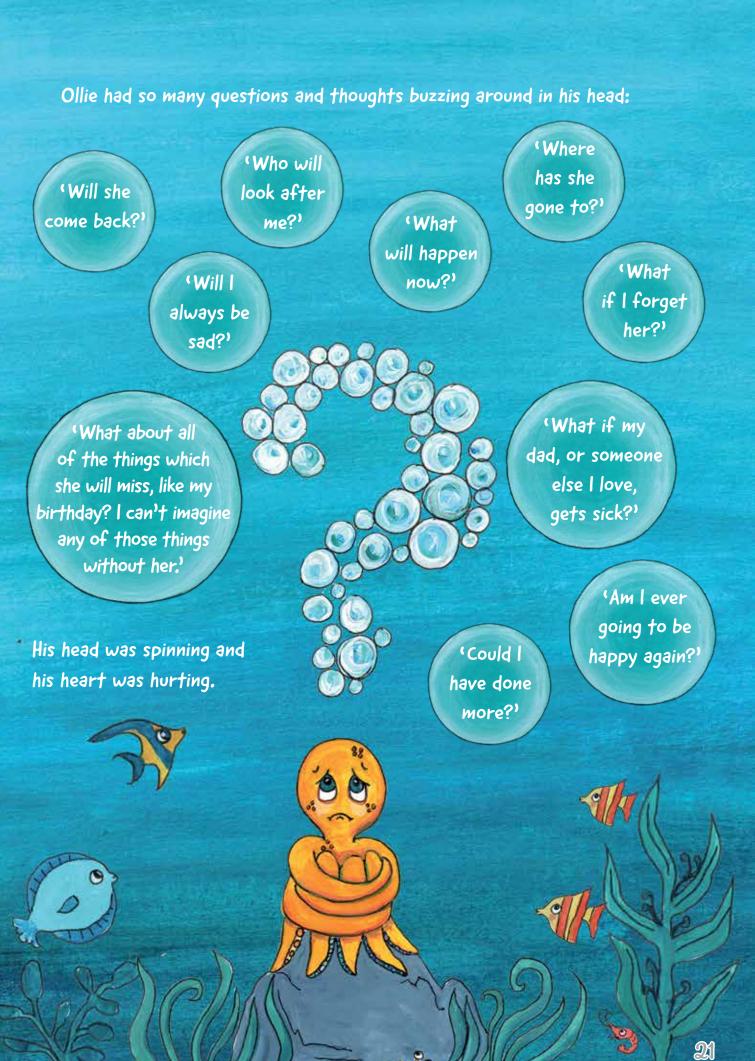
When Ollie found out, he felt he couldn't breathe, he couldn't think, he couldn't believe it.

It was like being stung by a jellyfish in the centre of his heart. 'How could this happen? It isn't fair! Why my mum?'

He had never felt sadness and pain like it, and he felt as if he could fill the whole sea with his tears.

Sometimes, he felt as if he was drowning, and the waves of all of the different feelings were swallowing him up and pulling him under the sea.

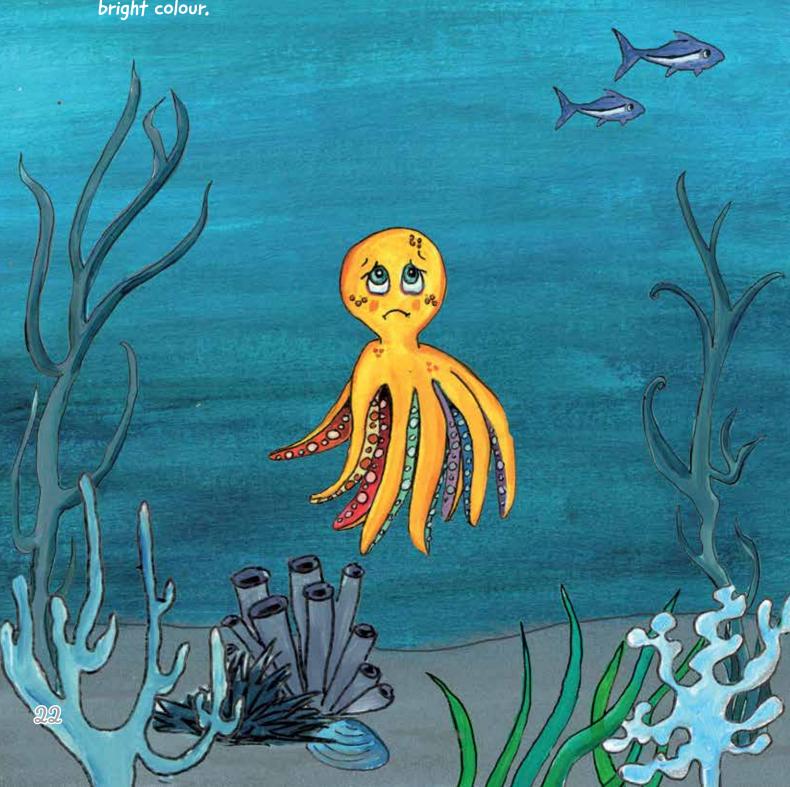




Orla had been Ollie's anchor. She made him feel safe. He felt as if everything he knew had changed and been turned upside down and inside out. Everything felt so different now.

He looked at the sea and it just didn't feel the same. It felt cold and empty. The coral looked dull and lifeless, and the stars were not shining brightly anymore.

Even Ollie's multi-coloured skin looked lighter and had lost some of its bright colour.



Ollie felt so lost and alone, even though he was still surrounded by his other family members, his friends and his teachers.

He missed his mum so much. He just wanted her back.

Ollie no longer wanted to look for treasures in the shipwrecks. He didn't care like he did before.

He didn't want to play — he didn't have the energy to wave or high five Deedee and Nicky. Sometimes, he felt as if the others didn't understand him because their parents were still alive.

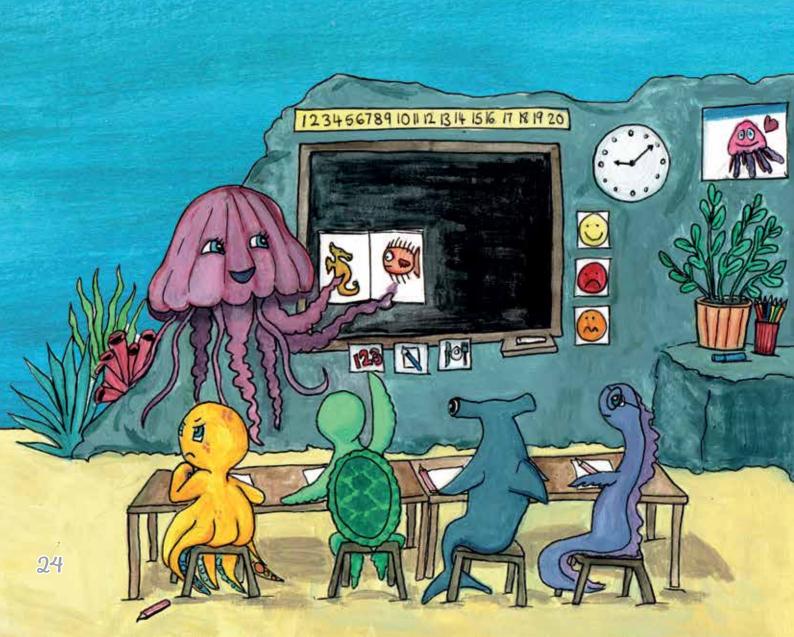
Sometimes, he felt his dad Orson was already so upset because he missed Orla that Ollie didn't want to make him even more upset, and so Ollie kept quiet and clammed—up his feelings — a bit like suctioning them in!



After Orla died, Ollie still went to sea school, but on some days he found it really difficult to concentrate. His mind felt foggy and sometimes he couldn't think.

At other times, all he could do was think about his mum! When he did this, everything else like maths or science seemed pointless and silly.

He just wanted his mum back and he wished that he could turn back the clock or have magical superpowers to bring her back to him.



Ollie also found it harder to fall asleep, and when he did, he would wake up in the night.

Sometimes he had nightmares, but other times all he wanted to do was to sleep all day as he felt so tired and zapped of energy.

Ollie hoped that when he did wake up, he would discover that it had all been a bad dream — that it hadn't really happened, and it wasn't real. But then he would wake up and realize that his mum still wasn't there, and he would feel so sad and hurt all over again.



Some days, Ollie felt so sad and on edge he was like a balloon ready to burst or an elastic band ready to snap. He would get upset and cry at the smallest things, like forgetting to take his pen to school, or running out of his favourite snacks.

He also felt angry and wanted to be left alone, so sometimes he squirted his special blue ink to keep his friends away from him.

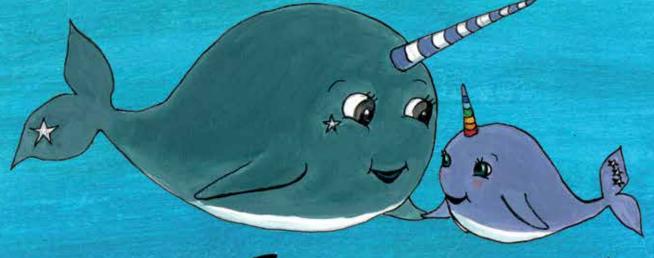


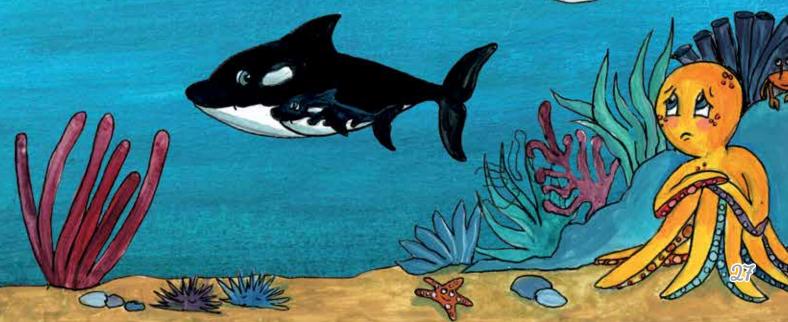


As time went on, there were loads of things that made missing his mum even harder for Ollie — like on his own birthday, or when he had a school play and Orla couldn't be there. Or when he smelt her perfume on someone else, or when he saw the fun his friends were having with their mums.

These reminders and memories could sting. It was a bit like being zapped by a jellyfish in his heart again. Ouchhhh!







Ollie's dad Orson was always there for him.

He hugged Ollie and let him cry and told him it was going to be okay and that it was normal to feel like this.

Orson said, 'This is so hard, and it is so unfair this has happened to us, but just remember you are so loved. Even though your mum is not physically here with us, she is still here in a different way, she is here in your heart and in your head.

'Wherever you go, wherever you are, your mum is inside you, cheering you on. She is in the stars, in the moon, in the coral, in the shells, in the drops of water in this sea, in your laugh, in your memories, and so much more. She is all around us and inside us.'



Orson carried on, 'I am still sad, but what has helped me is talking about my different feelings with friends who care and who I trust. I've also thought about ways to remember Mum. This helps me to feel close to her, as if a part of her is still here with me.

'It is okay to talk about how we feel, Ollie. We are in this together.'

After speaking to his dad, Ollie decided he felt brave enough to talk to his friends about some of his feelings.



So the next day, with Orson by his side supporting him, Ollie courageously shared some of what was happening to him with his friends.

He said, 'I have so many different feelings, it's hard to know where to start, but I guess sad is my biggest one at the moment. I am just so sad.'



Kian the Killer Whale chimed in, 'That is understandable, it is really sad, Ollie. It makes sense that you would feel like that. Other fish have told me that after they have had someone die, alongside sadness they have also felt frustrated and angry. I am not sure if you are experiencing those feelings as well?'

Ollie nodded, 'Yes, that's for sure, I am angry. It's not fair, why did this happen, why us? I want her back.'

Mika the Manatee, whose grandma had also died, said, 'I don't know about you, Ollie, but for me there are so many different feelings all whirling around at once. When my grandma died, on top of feeling sad and angry, I also felt so shocked. Almost as if I couldn't believe it had happened and that she was gone — one minute here and the next minute not here.'

Mika continued, 'Yeah, and as well as feeling shocked, sad, and angry, I also felt worried sometimes too. I had loads of questions whirling around my mind, like: Was she in pain before she died? Did I tell her I loved her enough times? And so many others!'

Ollie took a deep breath and agreed, 'Yes, I have a lot of those questions and some of those jitters in my jelly tummy too. It's nice to know I am not the only one to have these feelings.'

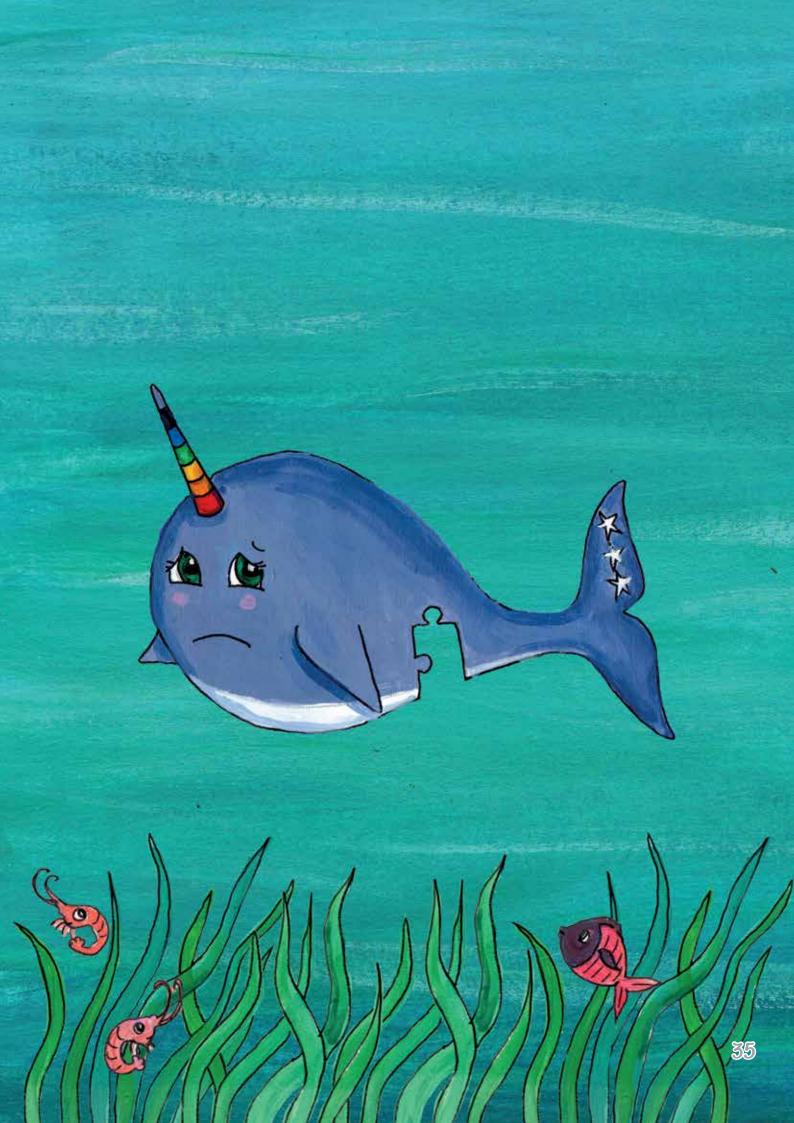


Nicky the Narwhal had been quietly thinking and then piped up, 'When my brother Natty died, I felt lots of those feelings too, but a big one for me was that I felt very alone. We were always together, and I used to go to him for so many things — he was my number one. So, when he died, I felt as if I'd lost a piece of me.'

Ollie looked upset and said, 'Yep, I feel as if one of my arms is missing, which also makes me feel off balance and a bit wonky. And I also feel alone because I don't think anyone else gets how I am feeling. I'm very young to have had a parent die.'

Kian the Killer Whale nodded, 'It's hard to feel like that, Ollie. I am so sorry this has happened. I haven't had someone die. So, you're right, I don't know how it feels, that's why I need to listen and learn what it is like for you, and also about what I can do to help you. I guess we are all different, and different things will help us at different times.'





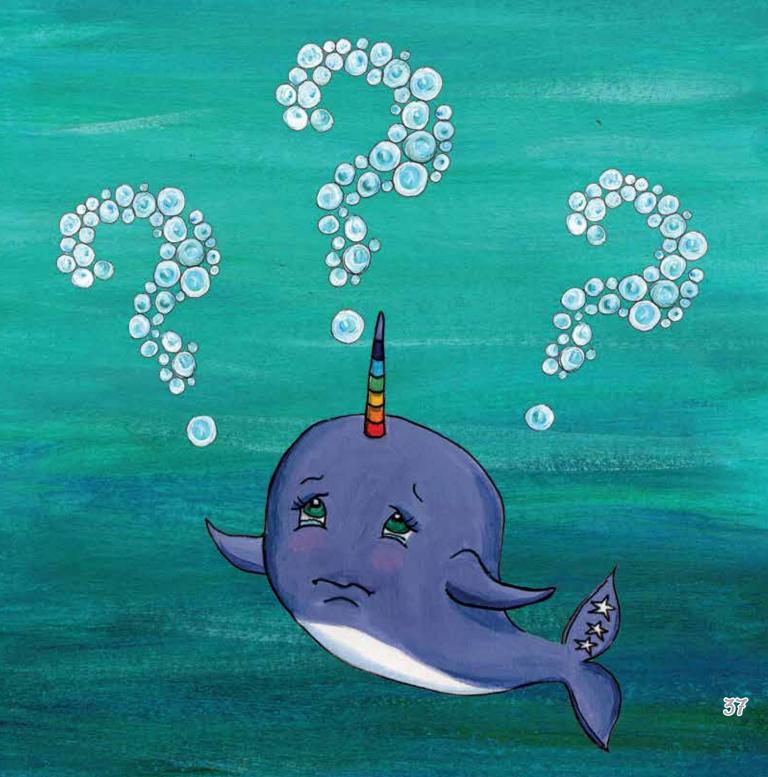
Deedee the Dolphin nodded and said, 'Yeah, Nicky, I was very close to Natty as well. He was wonderful and is so missed, but for me on some days it just hurts too much, so I try to cope with it a bit differently. I almost close off my feelings so that I can't feel anything. Like nothingness.

'It's like being numb or frozen — as if I am surrounded by an ice block or stuck inside a bubble separating me from my feelings and sometimes the rest of the world. I guess that is a kind of loneliness too.'



Nicky the Narwhal said, 'Yeah, I get that, it's understandable. I have had that too, Deedee. It's nice to know I am not the only one who can feel like that. I am trying to let some of that ice melt now, but it takes time.

'I guess the other big feeling I have, Ollie, which can be hard to say out loud, is that sometimes I feel guilty, and I blame myself. Could I have done more to help? What if I had been there to stop the accident from happening? That is hard and also confusing.'





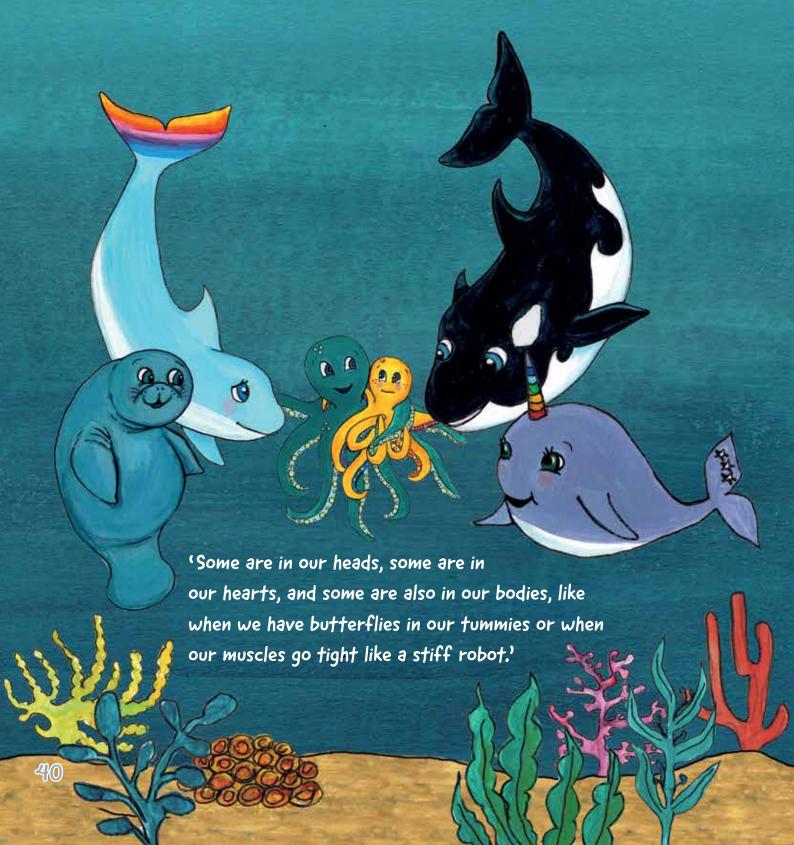
Ollie looked reassured and said, 'I have some of that too, Nicky, but I hadn't figured out the word for it: guilt. I can also feel guilty, especially when I am smiling, laughing, or having fun because I feel that I should be sad, and I want my mum to know that I miss her. Because she can't laugh, I feel bad that I still can laugh.'

Orson nodded, 'I know it is difficult, but it is okay to feel however you feel. You know how in a rainbow there are lots of different colours? Well, it is the same inside us — we can have lots of mixed feelings swirling around all at the same time. One feeling doesn't take away from the other feeling. We can be a bit sad and a bit happy at the same time, or we can be excited about something while also being worried about it.

'Plus, your mum loved nothing more than seeing you be you — she loved all of your colours, and the shades within them, just as I do!'

Orson said, 'I am so pleased that we could talk about our feelings — after all, sharing is caring. We all have feelings, Ollie, and that is why you are not alone in this.

'I want you to know and to remember that these feelings might come and go, like rising and falling waves, and with time they will change even more. They might be in all sorts of shapes and sizes.

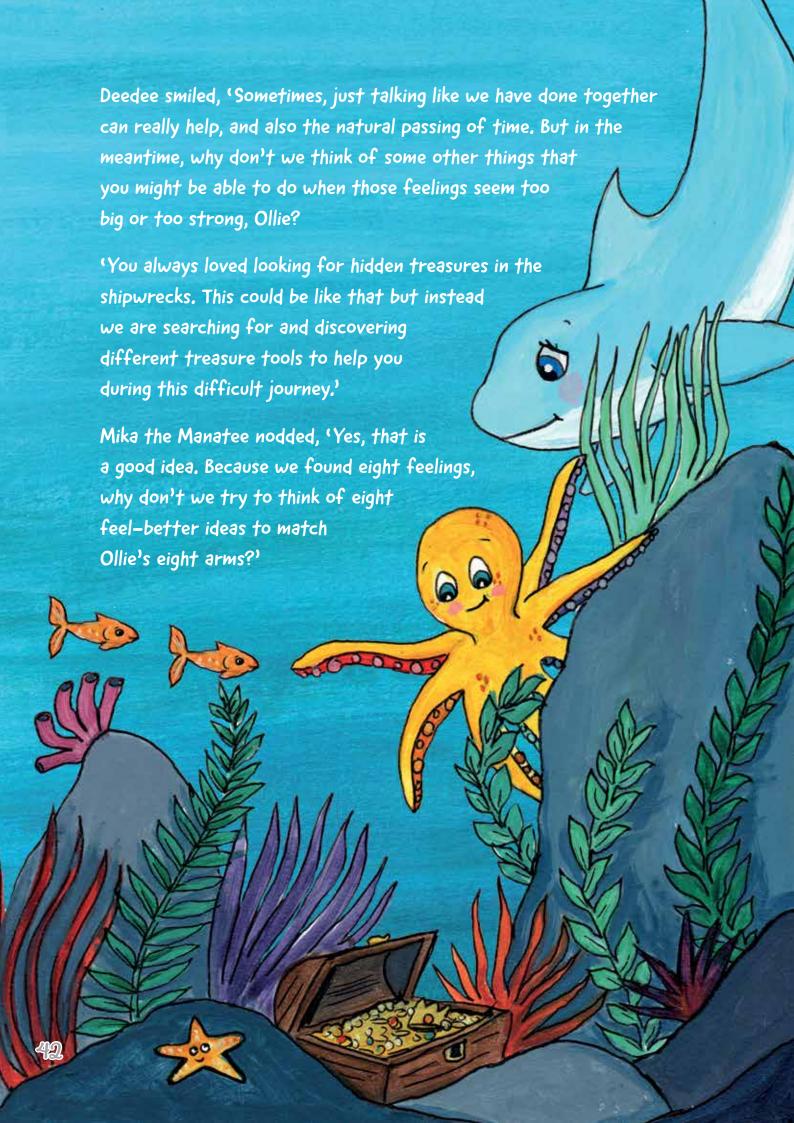


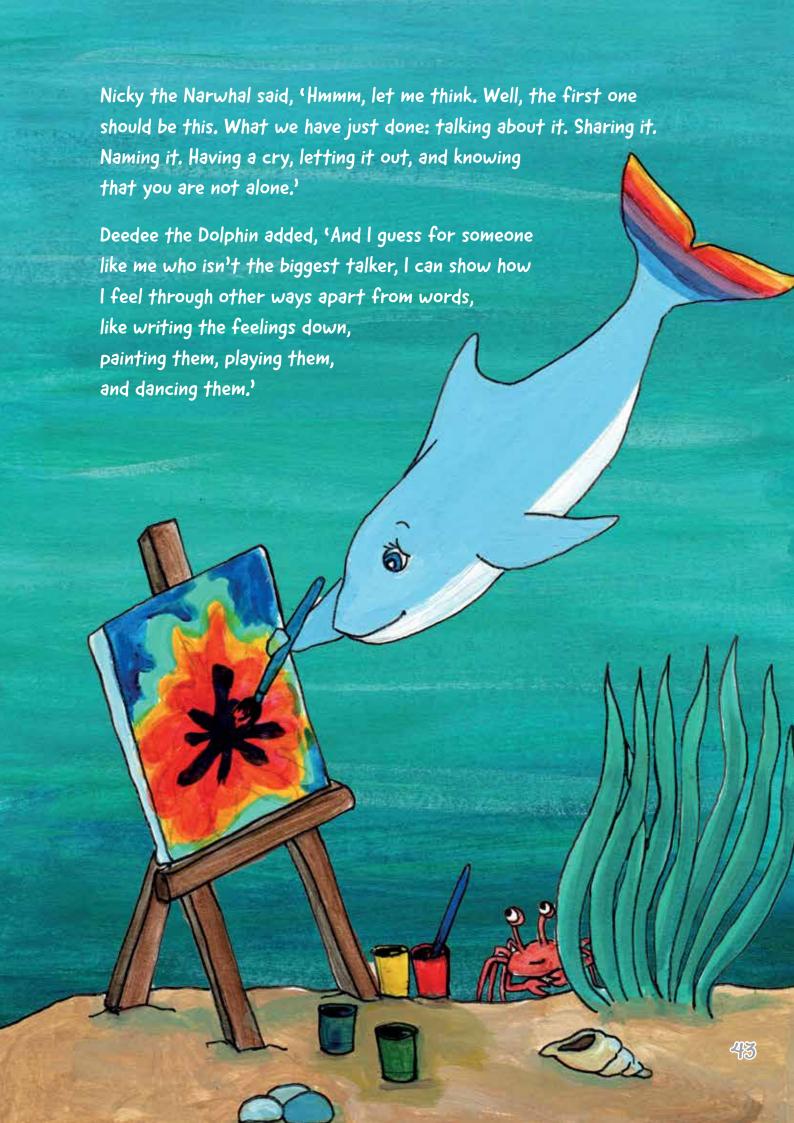
Kian the Killer Whale smiled, 'I bet there are many more feelings that we haven't said, and we can keep adding to these with time and more talking. I have just realized something pretty cool. You know I like counting — well, we named eight different feelings, just like the eight different arms you have, Ollie!'

'Wow! That is a lot of feelings and a lot of arms,' Deedee the Dolphin grinned.

Ollie laughed, 'Yep, they help me to do all sorts of juggling, dancing, multitasking, and twisting.'

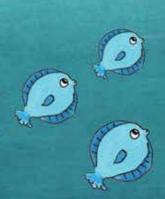






Nicky shared, 'Yep, I like that. I guess another one which helped me when my brother Natty the Narwhal died was finding ways to still remember him.' 'How did you do that?' Kian the Killer Whale curiously asked.

'Well, I talk to Natty whenever I want to and share with him my news. I also have a special candle which I light at certain times to remember him, and I have my favourite photo of him next to my bed.'



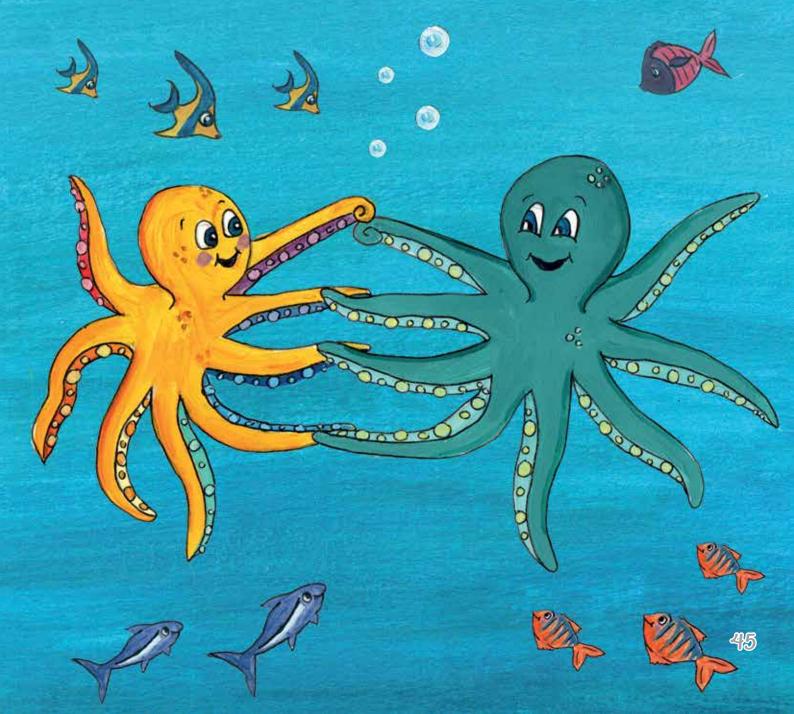
Mika the Manatee added, 'Yes, I have similar things for my grandma. I have a pillowcase decorated with photos of her which I lie my head on, and I have her special perfume sprayed on my blanket. I also named a star after her, so every night I look up at the star, I remember her, and I feel that she is looking at the same star as me, or maybe even that she is the star.'



'Those are lovely ideas. I think we could try some of them if you wanted to, Ollie. No pressure though, it is up to you,' Orson said.

He added, 'I have thought of another one to add to our list. I think having some daily routines has helped us as well. Having things that keep us going and which have stayed the same and not changed since Mum died. Like getting up at the same time in the morning. Brushing our teeth. Getting dressed and all of that. And I guess we have also added and created some new rituals, like kissing a picture of Mum every night and doing our special handshake before bed.'

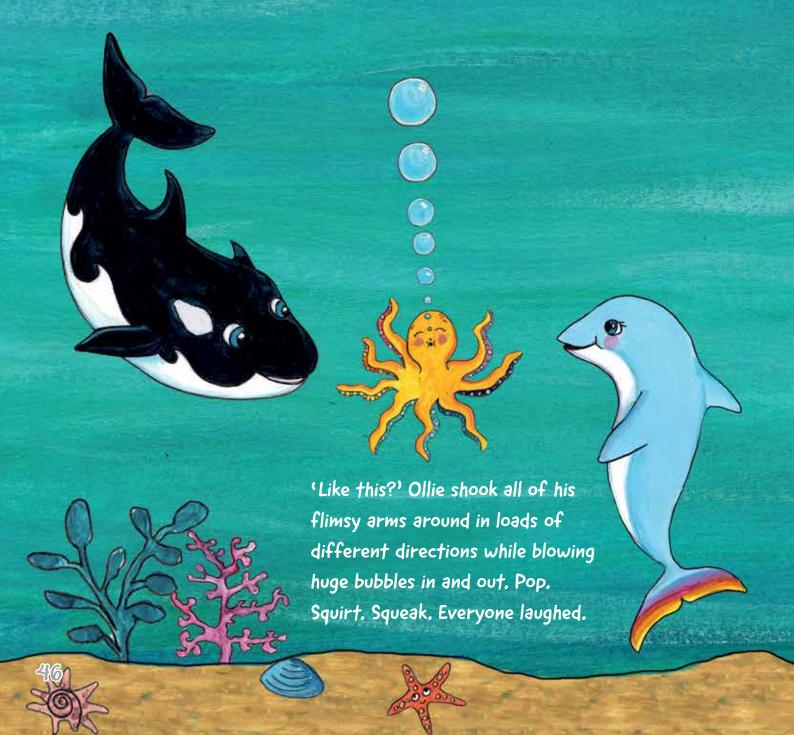
'It is a pretty cool handshake, Dad,' Ollie smiled.



Deedee the Dolphin added, 'Ooh, handshakes sound fun. I just thought of another treasure tool to add to our collection. This is like a shipwreck — the more you look for treasures, the more likely you are to find them.

'When I am tense and full—up with feelings, I like finding a way to release them. I do this by moving, twisting, turning, dancing, shaking—it out, and stretching my whole body. I also find deep breathing exercises helpful. I can make very cool and big bubbles when doing them, which I find calming.

'Ollie, you are so bendy, I bet you would be great at those body moves with your eight arms. After all, you are the gymnastics champion!'



Orson squeezed Ollie tightly and shared, 'I can think of another treasure tool. Sometimes, reminding yourself to be kind, gentle, and loving to yourself is so important, Ollie. You can also give other people or yourself a hug and a squeeze. After all, with all these arms, we are champion huggers and squeezers!'



Orson smiled and said, 'As we are talking about hugs, I have a great idea, Ollie, which builds on that. Let's make a special "take what you need jar". This is when we fill a jar with tokens of things you might want or need, like a hug, some energy, love, or whatever else, and then you can choose a token and take it with you as a reminder or give it to us as a way to tell us what you need.'

Orson added, 'Ummm, let me think. I will start today, as I need some luck and some adventure because I am going to join the under the sea race of the year!'



Nicky the Narwhal piped up, 'That's cool! I think we could all do with a token jar. Continuing with our treasure tools, one which helps me is that when it feels too much, I just try and remember to take each day as it comes. One swimming stroke at a time. I also find slowing things down, just looking around me and focusing on what I can see, hear, feel, smell, and taste, in that moment, can bring me some peace.

'Like right now, if I pause and truly notice, I can see the beautiful coral, I can hear the swishing of the waves, I can feel my body floating in the water and the little fishes tickling me as they swim past, and I can smell the salt in the air.

'This helps to focus my head and stop the thoughts whizzing around so fast. Mika should know, as manatees are so good at gliding gracefully and soaking it all in!'



Ollie shared, 'Wowee, those are good ideas! Lots to think about and to try out. That is seven ideas! Should we try to think of one more to get to eight so that we can match my arms?

'Hmmm, maybe the eighth idea is about carrying on finding ways to really remember my mum and to keep her close to me — imagining her or remembering her hugging me, kissing me, believing in me, and giving me advice.

'I could ask myself, what would Mum say to me? What is Mum thinking or doing? How would Mum make me feel? And then I can breathe and soak Mum inside my heart and head.'



Kian the Killer Whale nodded, 'I love that. That is wonderful to connect with your mum. It is as if you are always tied together and connected by invisible seaweed or a string of pearls. She has one side of it, and you have the other side.



'Maybe, when you feel that you need your mum even more, and you want to feel close to her, you can wrap it around your finger and tie a knot in it, and you can know that your mum is doing the same thing.'

Deedee the Dolphin squealed, 'Yeah, who needs to find a shipwreck, when inside your heart and inside your head you have a whole treasure trove of memories, special pieces of your mum, and magical moments with her? That is what I call being rich in love.'

Mika the Manatee proudly said, 'Ooh, I love the invisible seaweed and pearls idea. I guess we are all connected together as well. Look what we did — wow, we came up with eight treasure tools!'

Taking each day as it comes and focusing on the moment.

Showing how
we feel through
art, music, dance,
movement, or
writing.

Talking about it and letting it out.

Doing old and new routines.

CREATIVE CONTINUESS KINDIVESS KINDIVESS

Practising breathing and movement exercises.

Finding ways to feel connected and tied to that person.

Being kind to ourselves and remembering that it is okay.

Finding things which remind us of that person.

Ollie smiled, 'I know this is going to be hard and it's not going to go away, but now I also know that I am not alone, and that although it's often difficult and sad, there are some things that I can say and do which might help me.'

Orson added, 'It is a journey, Ollie. It takes time. We will go through ups and downs and twists and turns, but as we have done in the past, we will ride the waves together.'



Ollie nodded, 'Yes, maybe we can do more than ride; maybe we can even surf some waves too! I might even do some of my gymnastic tricks on the way. Plus, I am not riding the waves alone, I have all of you by my side, and my invisible seaweed and string of pearls tightly tied on. Now my arms and my suckers are full of feel-better ideas, and my three hearts are full of treasures and memories.'



As time went on, with the help of Kian, Mika, Nicky, Deedee, and Orson, Ollie tried out the treasure tools at his own pace, and also discovered new ones on his ongoing journey. In time, Ollie noticed that his bright colours started to return to his skin. The stars were twinkling brighter and were so beautiful. The coral was sparkling like gold, the sea was singing, and the water was warming up like a relaxing bath.

Ollie was ready to explore and go on some more exciting adventures deep in the sea and maybe even find some new shipwrecks. And what made it even more special was that now he knew that wherever he swam, whenever he needed her, his mum was always in his heart and in his head. She was travelling with him, cheering him on, and staying connected to him by invisible seaweed and a string of pearls.





Fun Facts, Activities, and Craft Ideas

Ten Fun Facts about Octopuses



- I. Octopuses have three hearts!
- 2. Octopuses have soft bodies and they can make themselves so small that they can fit into the tiniest places, like narrow pipes and small holes.
- 3. Octopuses have blue blood.
- 4. Octopuses like to make dens on the seabed using rocks.
- 5. When octopuses are scared or under attack, they will shoot a dark liquid, sometimes called ink, at the thing that scares them.
- 6. Octopuses can change their colour to match their surroundings, like being camouflaged.
- 7. Octopuses are fast swimmers, but they often prefer to crawl slowly along the sea bottom.
- 8. Octopuses are carnivores, which means they eat meat, including clams, lobsters, and even sharks.
- 9. Octopuses' arms are lined with hundreds of suckers called tentacles.
- 10. Two-thirds of an octopus's neurons (nerve cells) are in their arms, not their head. So, they can, for example, solve a problem like opening a shellfish while the rest of the octopus is busy doing something else.

Are there any other facts which you can find out and add? What about facts about dolphins, manatees, narwhals, and killer whales?

Discussion Questions

Here are some extra questions about the story of Ollie and the themes within the story. Talk with the adult supporting you with this workbook about these questions. You might like to pick one or two questions; you can skip or pass others. There is no rush, take your time to think about them. There are no right or wrong answers. You might find it useful to do some activities about the question and your answer.

- I. Who is your favourite character from the story, and why?
- 2. What are the colours of Ollie the Octopus? If you were an octopus, what colours would you be?
- 3. What was your favourite part of the story, and why?
- 4. What was your worst or most difficult part of the story, and why?
- 5. What feelings, thoughts, sensations in your body or images did you have when reading the story? (If you want to, you can use several of the activities in this workbook to support you with these.)
- 6. People can die for different reasons. In the story, Orla died because she became seriously unwell. Natty died because of an accident. Mika's grandma died because of old age. How did the person you are doing this workbook about die? What is your understanding about that?
- 7. Ollie had so many different questions. Some of these were: 'How could this happen? Why her?' 'Will she come back?' 'Who will look after me?' 'What will happen now?' 'Where has she gone to?' 'Could I have done more?' 'What if I forget her?' 'What if my dad or someone else I love gets sick?' 'Am I going to ever be happy again?' 'Will I always be sad?' 'What about all of the things which she will miss, like my birthday?' Do you have any of these questions? Or any other questions? (Activity 22 can support you to write these down or to draw them.) Do you have any answers or advice which you would say to Ollie about his questions?
- 8. After Orla died, Ollie saw lots of changes. For example, he didn't want to find hidden treasures, he didn't want to play, he didn't concentrate the same way in sea school. Have you seen changes? If so, what have these been? (Activity 23.)

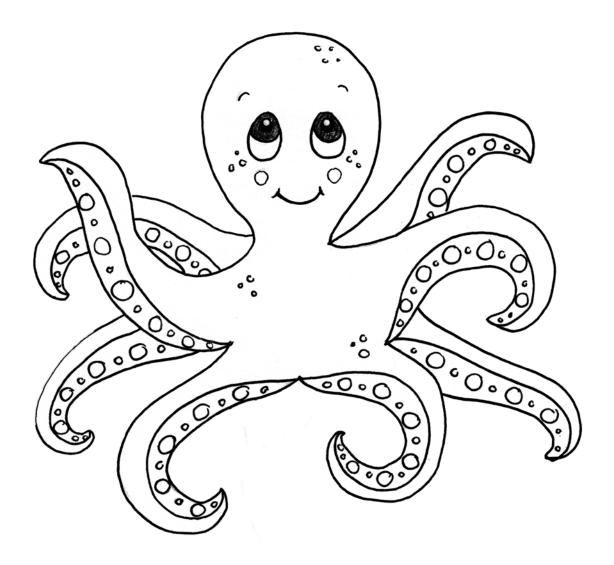
- 9. Ollie and his friends spoke about eight different feelings to match Ollie's eight tentacles. Which have you felt? Which would you change or add? (Activities 8—15.)
- 10. What did Ollie learn in the story about feelings? What did Orson and the other sea creatures show and teach him about feelings?
- II. Ollie shared how some things could make his pain worse and be difficult reminders, and how he would sometimes feel zapped by a jellyfish. Does this happen to you or other people around you? Which things make you feel zapped by a jellyfish? (See Activities 26—29 to have some more conversations about these.)
- 12. Ollie had a close relationship with Orla. He said she made him feel safe and loved. We know that we can have different types of relationships with people. What was your relationship like with the person who died? How did they make you feel? If you were going to describe your relationship in three words, which three words would you choose? What were the parts which you loved and the parts you found more difficult about the person and the relationship? Sometimes relationships can hurt and be mixed with different feelings, and there can be parts of people which we don't like or agree with (see Box 7 in the adult guide for more on this).
- 13. Ollie and his friends learned eight coping tools which have you tried? Which might you try? Which might you like? Which don't you like? What would you add? (See Activities 30—41 for a whole treasure trove of coping tools.)
- 14. Ollie felt rich with love and memories of Orla. Are there memories and feelings you can hold on to and remember about the person who died? (Activities 42—49 give you lots of creative ways of holding on to these special memories and moments.)
- 15. Ollie and Orla were connected by invisible seaweed and a string of pearls. Orla was always in his heart and in his head. Are there ways in which you can feel connected to the person in your life who died? How can you keep them in your heart and in your head? (Activities 47 and 48 give you lots of creative ways of feeling connected to the person and keeping them in your heart.)

- 16. Ollie learned that he had lots of other sea creatures around him who loved and cared for him. They are his life cheerleaders and supporters. Who are your life supporters and cheerleaders? (Activity 38 gives you lots of creative ways of connecting with and remembering your life cheerleaders and supporters.)
- 17. Ollie learned to ride some of the waves. What do you think he learned so that he could do this? What helps you to ride the waves?
- 18. What things, if any, in the story, do you feel are similar to your own experiences, and what things do you feel are different?
- 19. What, if anything, would you add or change about the story?
- 20.At the end, we learned that Ollie was feeling ready to go on new adventures. What adventures do you think Ollie might go on now? (You could write your own story, comic, or poem about this.)
- 21. If you were going to add another character to the story, who would they be? What would they look like, say, and do?

Ollie the Octopus Colouring-In

Colour in your very own Ollie the Octopus. (You might also like to add different words or pictures to Ollie's legs, e.g. different feelings/hopes/people/memories/coping strategies.) You can also buy your own Ollie soft toy through www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk or eBay.





Ollie the Octopus Word Search

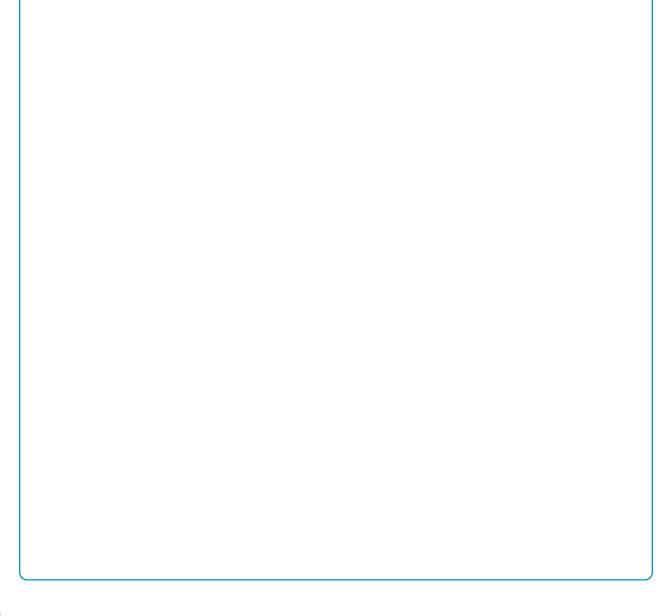


M	F	J	F	S	L	F	Q	R	1	Y	C	1	Q	M
В	X	X	0	E	U	N	C	Z	G	0	T	N	Р	1
G	Z	В	L	S	M	Ρ	Н	N	N	Y	D	٧	S	X
U	T	٧	R	Q	X	Ε	0	N	٧	Ε	R	1	C	Н
H	1	D	U	Ε	٧	Т	E	Т	E	S	A	S	W	V
Y	E	Ε	L	A	A	C	R	W	C	F	Ε	1	R	G
M	D	K	W	D	Т	Т	Α	A	N	0	R	В	K	Н
Ε	1	C	N	Ε	A	Ε	Н	K	E	Z	K	L	D	C
M	0	0	D	Ε	S	S	Q	Ε	Y	Н	G	Ε	M	G
0	В	Н	D	0	L	Ρ	Н	1	N	D	A	J	D	L
R	F	S	N	S	A	S	E	M	1	Т	Y	L	Α	X
Y	Z	U	٧	I	0	Ε	L	Н	Н	P	R	N	E	Н
Ε	R	U	S	Α	Ε	R	Т	0	S	Н	C	L	Н	S
V	В	В	K	M	В	D	Y	В	٧	C	Z	Т	X	U
Ε	0	M	Н	G	Р	S	В	C	Ε	Ε	В	V	Н	В

BREATHE	HEART	RICH
CONNECTED	HUG	SAD
DEATH	INVISIBLE	SEAWEED
DOLPHIN	LOVE	SHOCKED
GRIEF	MEMORY	SOAK
HEAD	OCTOPUS	TIED

Me and the People in My Life as Sea Creatures

Which sea creature is your favourite, and why? If you were a sea creature, which one would you be, and why? What would you look like, sound like, and do? What colours would you be or what patterns would you have? Where would you live? What would it be like? What different sea creatures would your friends, teachers, and family be, and why? Draw, sculpt, make, or write your answers below. (Use a different piece of paper if you need more space.)



Arts and Crafts - Bringing Ollie the Octopus to Life!

The next few pages will show some ideas for bringing Ollie to life and some other under the sea inspired sea creature crafts. You can be as creative as you like. These are just ideas — there are loads more ways and you can find which you prefer. Also, you can mix and match, for example you can use the cupcake case for a face but the paper chain idea for Ollie's arms. I would love to see what you create (via Facebook, Twitter, or email at karen@ safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk). You could also make some of Ollie's friends like Nicky the Narwhal or Deedee the Dolphin.

Gem, sticker, or diamanté Ollie using a cupcake case or a cupboard egg

Use some orange/yellow card to cut out Ollie's eight arms. Then decorate these with gems, or with anything else you prefer, such as buttons, stickers, pipe cleaners, felt pens. In the example below left, a cupcake case has been used to draw Ollie's face on and then this is added to the middle of the diamanté arms; in the example on the right, Ollie is made with a cardboard egg which has been coloured orange and then his face has been drawn on to it.





Foam-ball Ollie the Octopus

Make the Ollies below by using paper/card to cut out the eight arms. Then decorate each arm with different items such as cereal, pom poms, beads, stickers, and pipe cleaners. Choose whatever you like, or mix and match. In the Ollie on the left-hand side, a large polystyrene circle has been coloured

in and used as his face. Ollie's face can be made with all sorts of different materials, for example the one on the right has a coloured-in paper plate for his face.





Toilet roll Ollie the Octopus

Use a toilet roll and paint it to be Ollie's colour, adding in his face. Then carefully using scissors, cut some slits at the bottom to make his eight arms. Colour them in and decorate them. They can be slightly bent so that they are spread out and support Ollie to stand.



Paper chain and ribbon Ollie the Octopus

Use a paper plate for Ollie's face (see picture on left below; this could be the egg, made out of cardboard, or a cupcake case). Then make his arms out of paper chains in all the different colours. Cut strips of card in equal sizes — each strip you cut makes a link. Make the first link by bending it to be a circle and stick it together with glue, tape, or a stapler. Then thread the next piece of paper through the centre of the loop and tape the two sides together, and so on. The second Ollie on the right can be made by cutting out his head from paper/card and then getting different coloured ribbons and sticking them on to make his multi-coloured arms.





Folded paper or bubble wrap Ollie the Octopus

Here are some other ideas for Ollie's legs and tentacles. The Ollie in the photo below on the left can be made by using different coloured card. Cut the card into eight strips of the same size. Fold each strip of card back, then forward and back and forward. Once the folding is finished, open it up. The folds will give it a crinkled movement look, and then the strips can be attached to Ollie's head. The Ollie below and on the right is super fun to make! Get a piece of bubble wrap and put quite thick blotches of paint all around it, ideally different colours, and however many you want. Then take a piece of paper or card and press it against the bubble wrap with paint on it like a stamp. Try not to wiggle the paper round as this will blur some of the colours together. After a few seconds, take the paper/card off the bubble wrap; you will notice that the paper has lots of bubble shapes in different colours on it, as in the photo. The bubble wrap also will have lots of different colours on it. Leave the paper and the bubble wrap to dry. You then can use the paper, the bubble wrap, or both, and cut out Ollie's eight arms and attach them to the head of your choice.





Adding words, ideas, thoughts, and feelings to any of the above

You can use the octopus template in Activities 3 or 56, or you can make one of the above creations but add words to them. For example, eight different feelings, eight different coping tools, eight different



memories, eight different hopes, or eight different special people. There are so many different possibilities.

Under the sea arts and crafts

There are so many fun and creative activities which you can do with an under the sea theme. The sky is the limit! But here are some ideas which you might like to do, with some other suggestions as well. Feel free to send these to me or tag me in your creations, as I love to see them and to be a part of your journey.

Shells

Decorate, draw on, or paint some shells using felt pens, paint, stickers, tissue paper, beads, and so on. You can decorate these shells with some lovely patterns, or maybe with different positive self—talk and messages such as 'I am strong', 'I am loved'. You can also decorate them with different feelings, such as 'Happy', or different coping tools, such as 'Breathe'. You can also write the



names down of all your favourite people and all the people who are your life cheerleaders (see Activity 38). There are so many ways to decorate them, using different memories, different hopes and wishes, and many more!

Under the sea world

You can make your very own under the sea world. You can paint, draw, sculpt, and so on. It can be in sand, using bubble wrap, tissue paper, pebbles, and so much more. The photo you can see to the right used pom poms, pipe cleaners, shells, and lots of under the sea miniatures. Some other ways of making your own under



the sea world are shown below. If you wish, you can also make your very own shipwreck.





As in the above images, these are other ways of making your very own under the sea world. To make the one on the left (above), get two paper plates. Paint the bottom plate a dark blue and add some stars to it. Then cut out some wave shapes in the top plate and paint it a lighter blue to represent the sea. The top plate is then glued on to the bottom plate. You can also decorate these with sand, stickers, miniatures, drawings, and much more.

Try making a sea world from an empty egg box (see above right). You could also use the lid as well if you wanted. Paint the egg box in blues and colours like the sea, and then fill it with sea items, stickers, or creations which you have made.

You can also make and decorate your very own sea creatures. This could be a whale, a dolphin, a fish, or whatever you like. The image on the right is a fish cut—out (you can also make your own) which has been decorated with diamantés and felt pens.



I hope you have fun making all these creations! You might like to try making Orson the Octopus, Orla the Octopus, Nicky the Narwhal, Deedee the Dolphin, Kian the Killer Whale, or Mika the Manatee.



Part 2 Learning About Different Feelings, Thoughts, and Sensations, Including Grief and LOSS

How to use this workbook

This workbook is filled with different activities, questions, ideas, and worksheets. There is no right or wrong way to go through it. Each person is unique and is on their own journey. Take your time to look through the different ideas and see which one you might like to go through, or to try out. They are designed to be helpful but there are also options, so that you can choose which one fits and makes the most sense to you. For example, when thinking about the grief reminders and triggers, there is the jellyfish worksheet, the remote—control worksheet, the hand worksheet, and the bug worksheet. These are all asking the same thing, but you might be drawn to different ones. So, you can either choose one, or you might like to do more than one. This is because we can notice different things each time we do something again. You might also like to use the idea and concept, in this case 'triggers', to make and design your own activity. Be as creative as you like. This is your experience and your choice.

Remember, there is no rush. Take your time. You can come back to activities, you can repeat them at a different time, you can think about them, you can skip them, and so on. Grief and death are hard things to talk about and this workbook is here to support and help you, but you are in charge, and you can go at your own pace. Some worksheets might take a few minutes and others you could spend days on!

The workbook is also written in an order which might work and make sense, but feel free to look through the different pages and choose where you want to start. It doesn't need to be in order, and you are not expected to complete all of the worksheets unless you want to.

This workbook will start with some important messages about grief and loss, and go on to give lots of different exercises around some of the feelings, thoughts, and sensations in our body which we might have around grief and loss (Activities 7—20). There are also more ideas to build on this in the adult guide at the back of this workbook. The adult supporting should read their section first!

There are also some worksheets to think about some of the things which you might miss, some of the things which are different and changed, and some of the questions which you may wish you could ask (Activity 22). There are also some worksheets on thinking about your relationship with

the person who died, as well as some of the triggers and times which can make their death feel harder (Activities 26—29).

Then there are some ideas and tools for when the feelings are too much, such as breathing activities, using a sensory box, shaking it out, drawing on love from your life cheerleaders, and much more (Activities 30-41).

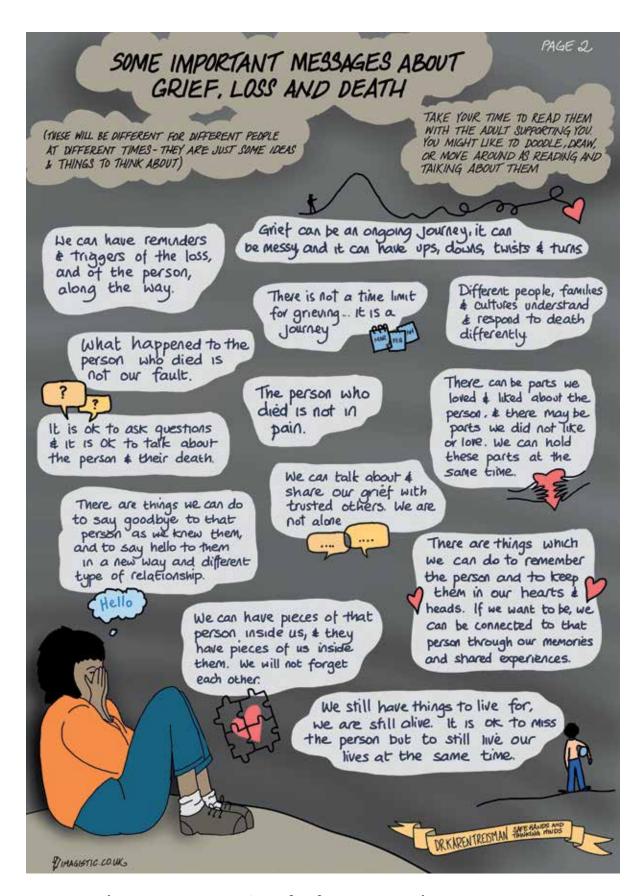
Then there are loads of ideas and different ways to remember and hold on to the positive times and memories and moments with that person and to keep connected to them (Activities 42—49).

Following these are some worksheets to think about time and what lessons have been learned and to consider the treasure tools which you have learned (Activities 55—59).

Finally, there is a certificate to honour and celebrate your completion of the workbook (Activity 60). This is followed by the adult guide.

Important Messages about Grief, Loss, and Death





These worksheets provide a lot of information. Take your time to read them, think about them, and revisit them. You might want to highlight/circle/underline them, point to them, talk about one in greater detail,

cut them out, and so on. There can be hard messages to understand or to take in, so it is okay to do activities, take brain breaks, and ask as many questions as you want.

What other key messages do you or people around you think there are? Which others would you add? Are there ones in the above worksheets that you agree with? Or disagree with? Are there ones you would like to learn more about or have questions about? It is okay to have differing beliefs and thoughts (and expected that this will be the case).

You might like to make a poster of a few of these key messages as a reminder. Lots of them are expanded on further in the different activities in this workbook. The adult supporting you might keep on reminding you of some of them.

The next few pages provide activities for you to talk and learn more about the different feelings you are having. Some people like to do the relaxing activities first. You and the adult you are doing this workbook with can decide.

Some Feelings, Physical Sensations, Responses, and Questions Around Death, Grief, Loss, Bereavement

The next three images can be helpful to name some of the things you might be feeling or experiencing; and those people around you might be feeling or experiencing. You might like to talk about them, point to them, colour them in, circle them, and so on. This might include which you feel speak to you and which don't (similarities and differences). You might also want to take some of the feelings you feel and use them in Activities 9—15. It might just be helpful to know you are not alone and it is okay to feel however you feel.

SOME FEELINGS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS RESPONSES AND QUESTIONS AROUND DEATH, GRIEF, LOSS, BEREAVEMENT SICK CONFUSED SHOCKED **EMPTY** REGRET ALONE SAD ANGER HOPELESS PANKKED ROBBED GUILTY NOTHING STIKK WORRIED, FEARFUL FULLUP YEARNING LONGING OVERWHELMED

DR KAREN TREISMAN - SAFE HANDS, THINKING MINDS

SOME FEELINGS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS RESPONSES AND QUESTIONS AROUND DEATH, GRIEF, LOSS, BEREAVEMENT





81

SOME FEELINGS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS RESPONSES AND QUESTIONS AROUND DEATH, GRIEF, LOSS, BEREAVEMENT



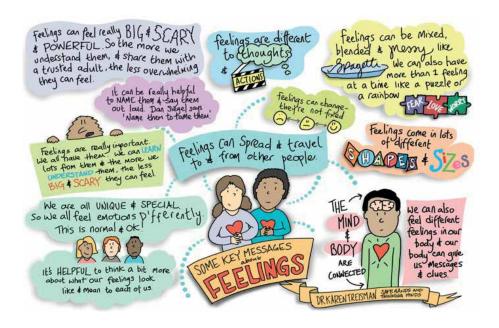


Which others would you add? Which feel the strongest and most relevant to you and those around you? Which don't fit for you?

Introduction to the next few feelings-based worksheets

Talking, showing, and naming our feelings can be helpful. It is important to know we are not alone and that other people who have experienced grief can have these feelings too. It can also be helpful to think about how people around us — like our family members — are feeling or showing their grief differently. Sometimes, for some people, showing, drawing, or writing down feelings can be easier than saying them out loud. These next few pages give you different ways and ideas for talking about your feelings about your day, your life, your world, the person, the death itself — whatever you want. You might like to do one activity, more than once, or all of them — it is up to you. You might want to come back to them at different times in your journey or at different parts of the workbook. As shared before, there are no right or wrong, good or bad feelings. They are all okay.

Remember all of the messages about feelings and grief and that you can have more than one feeling at the same time. Here is an image of some key messages about feelings for you to think about, learn about, disagree with, and much more!



Mixed and blended feelings: remember that you can have more than one feeling about the same thing. You can talk about this or you might like to show these mixed and blended feelings as a patchwork, stained glass, a puzzle, a fruit bowl, a rainbow, a soup, or a spaghetti of feelings — or another thing if you prefer.

My World/Day from My Eyes

You might like to talk about, describe, write, make a collage, or draw what your day or world is like from your eyes. You could also take photos to explore this.



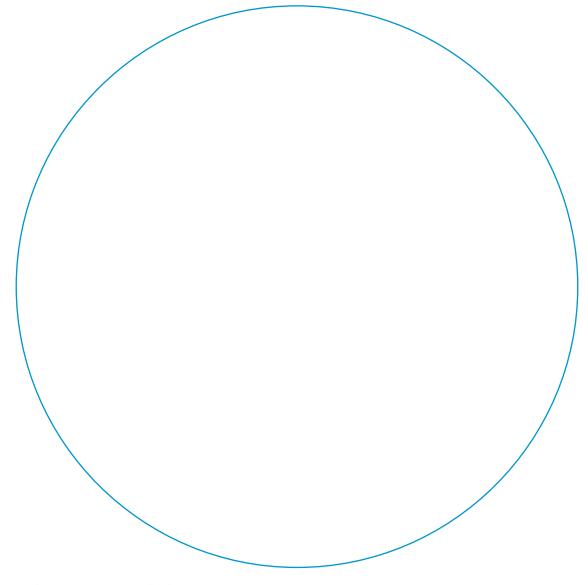
Feelings Wheel

You might prefer to call this a Feelings Pie, Pizza, Doughnut, or Cake — you choose!

Split the circle into different slices; each slice can represent a different feeling (as in the photo). Each slice can be a different shape, size,

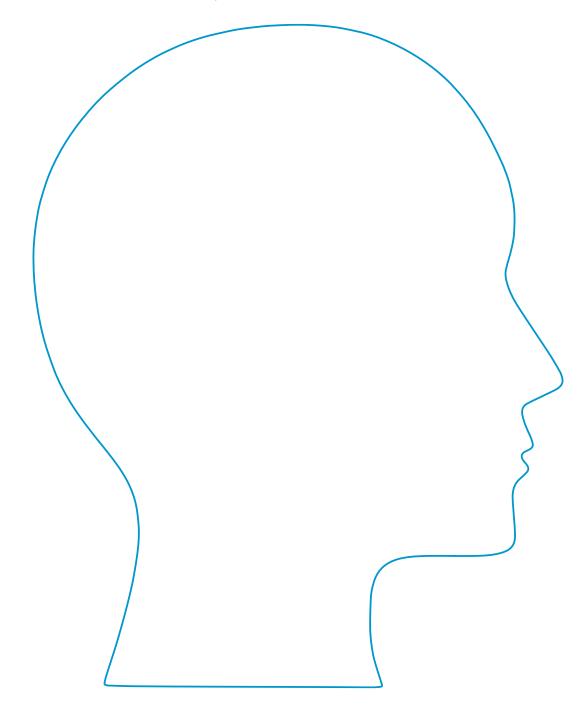
colour, pattern, and so on. You can also decorate it with materials and items. You might make a feelings wheel to show how you are feeling in general: 'Today I feel..', or it could be about something more specific: 'How I feel about my mum dying', 'How I feel about talking to you', or 'How I feel about my first Christmas without my dad.'





Head of Thoughts and Feelings

Draw or write in or around the head your feelings and/or thoughts. These could be in different shapes, sizes, or colours. They could be positive, negative, or all the shades in between. They could also be ones in the past, present, and future. They could be your feelings and thoughts or you imagining someone else's thoughts and feelings. Some creative ways for those who want to make a piece of art from this exercise follow.



Activity 11 continued

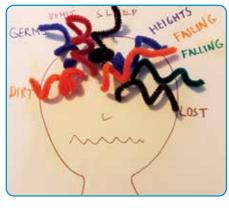
Creative extensions

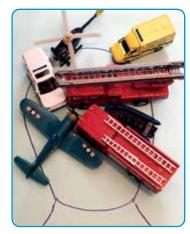
Sometimes, using arts and crafts can help us understand and show our feelings more, while being creative and having fun. So, for example, here are some other ways in which you could show or share your feelings. Have a look through them and share with the adult supporting you which you would like to try; or maybe looking at them will inspire you to have some more ideas. There is no right or wrong way with these. It is about the journey and the process, not about the piece of art itself.

For example, take the thoughts and feelings head exercise on the previous page. You could draw or write on the worksheet, or instead, or in addition, you could try some of the following ideas:

- Write your thoughts, feelings, worries, hopes, and so forth on a 3D polystyrene head. This could also be someone else's thoughts, feelings, hopes, and worries, such as a friend, a teacher, a parent, or a character from a book.
- Write the different thoughts and feelings down on or around ribbons, pipe cleaners, string, or spaghetti.
- Use different items or miniatures to represent different feelings and thoughts, such as the traffic in your head.
- Write them on or around a mirror.
- Write them on a doodle or muslin doll.
- · Write them on or around a photo of you, someone else, or on an item.











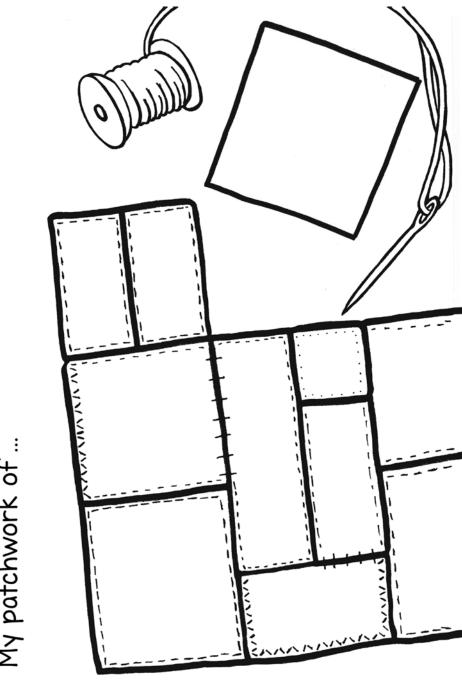


What other ideas do you have?

Some more worksheets for expressing your feelings in different ways so that you have a choice of options follow.

Patchwork of Feelings

Write or draw some of your different feelings and thoughts on or around the patchwork. They could be a different shape, colour, texture, or size. Each patch might have a story behind it. You could also use this worksheet to show different aspects of the person who has died, or of your personality, and of what is important to you. You could also do these using puzzle pieces, or a puzzle person (Activity 49).



My patchwork of ...

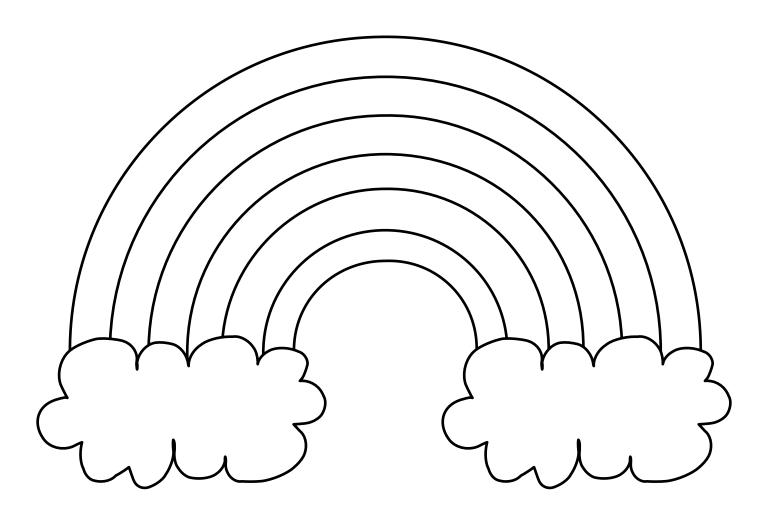
My Bag of Feelings

Draw or write the different feelings which you have about something in the bag. You might like to choose different shapes, colours, sizes, or items. If you like, you can choose a name or title for the feelings and for the bag. You might like to think about how these feelings feel in the bag, how they change, what makes them bigger, smaller, heavier, lighter, and so on. There can be 'positive', 'negative', and all the shades in between. You might prefer to make or draw a rucksack, a jar, a handbag, and so on.

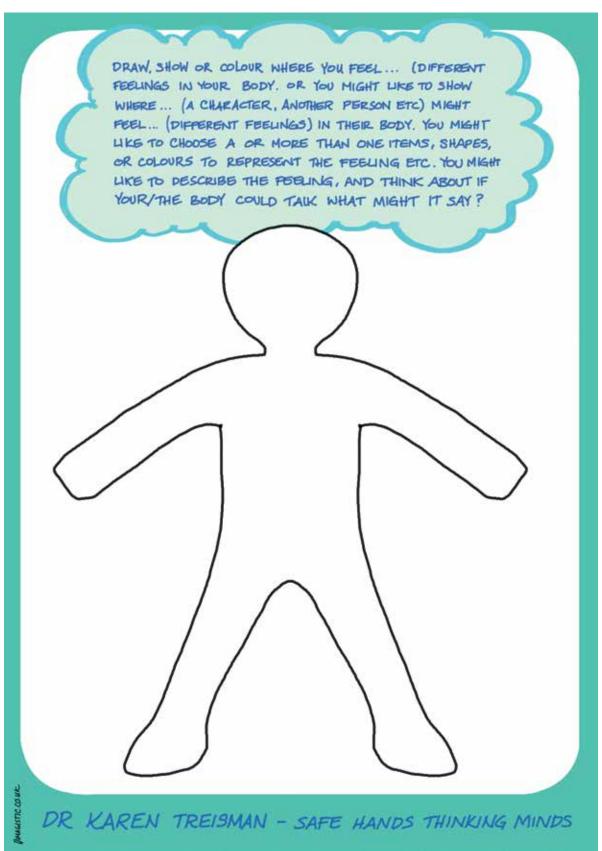


My Rainbow of Feelings and Thoughts

There is no right or wrong here. You might like to write or draw on the rays or around the rainbow the different feelings and thoughts you have. You might like to choose a different colour for the different feelings. Think about what things make the colours brighter or duller. When does the sun come out? What makes it rain? What do the clouds represent?



Where Do I Feel Different Feelings in My Body?



Activities 12-15 continued and expanded on

Other creative ways of talking about feelings

There are even more ideas in the adult section of this workbook.

As said before, it can be really helpful and fun to express ourselves in different ways using different mediums. This also helps us to add different layers to what we are talking about. Sometimes, it can be easier to show or express ourselves through art than through words. Also, sometimes seeing how we feel as separate from ourselves can be helpful and can give us some space from our feelings, and allow us to understand and make sense of them a bit more. Sometimes, this can give us a sparkle or lightbulb moment. It can also give us something to point to or talk about. It can help us find words to put to our big, and at times tricky, feelings.

These are just ideas. Please look through and think which one/s you might like to try, which you don't like, and which you might add.

Patchwork of feelings

You have the worksheet in Activity 12 but you might either like to draw a patchwork or make it out of materials, feelings cards, and fabrics. You can also do this as a puzzle of feelings.





Sand/coloured salt in a jar

This is where each colour can represent a different feeling. You can make different layers of the different feelings using coloured sand or you can make your own using salt and chalk or food colouring. You can also choose the size, for example the biggest layer for the biggest, most strongly felt feeling. You might also like to shake them around to think about mixed feelings.



Lego or Jenga blocks

This is where you can show your different feelings by showing how many Jenga or Lego blocks represent that feeling. You might also like to choose a colour to represent the



feeling. Some people like to label the different pieces with that feeling or an image which represents that feeling.



Feelings cards and props

(See my Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Sentence Completion and Feelings Cards.) Looking at different feelings cards can help us choose and talk about our feelings and other people's feelings. We can also use feelings emojis, stamps, monsters, and cubes. Use different items to talk about



feelings — either make them or buy them. We can also use these items to bring some of the activities alive, so that instead of a bag of feelings (Activity 13), we can fill a box with feelings monsters/items/cards/stones, and so on.

Make feelings pizzas, cakes, and biscuits, or write feelings on things like paper plates, hard boiled eggs, or balloons.





Some common feelings after a loss and death are sadness, anger, and worry (among so many others, as shared in Activity 8). These next few worksheets give you some ways to understand and talk a bit more about these feelings. They also have some questions that may be helpful to think about. You might just pick one or two of these — don't feel you have to answer all of them.

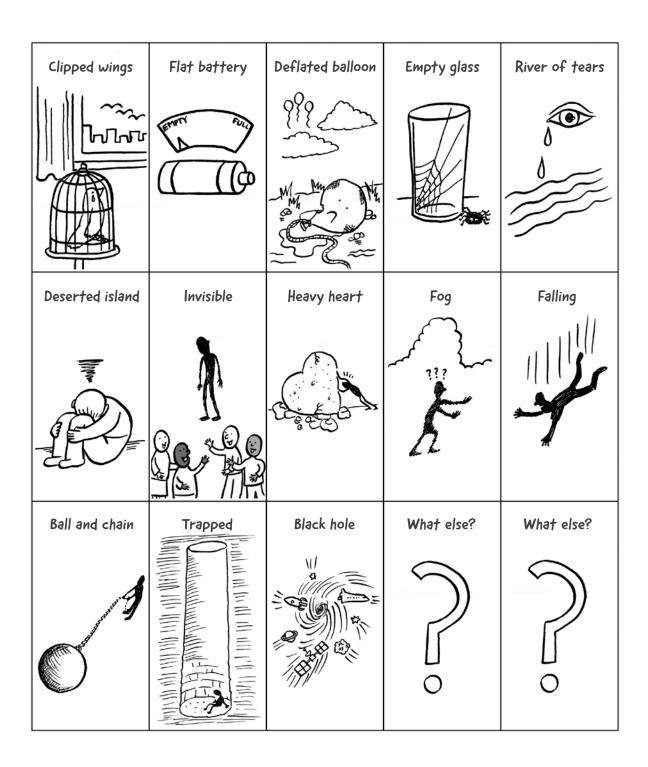
These can be discussed, cut out, circled, coloured, ticked, and so on. Ways of expanding on them are shared in the adult section. Choose which one is relevant and think carefully about the timing. (For a range of other resources about feelings, see my books *Presley the Pug* and *A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Sentence Completion and Feelings Cards.*)

Sadness is...

The feeling of 'sadness' is like...

If I gave the 'sadness' a name I would call it...

I would describe the 'sadness' as being like...



Here are some sentences which you might look at to explore at your own pace and over time about 'sadness'. Replace 'sadness' with your own choice of name.

- I. If the 'sadness' was a colour it would be ...
- 2. If the 'sadness' was a shape it would be...
- 3. If the 'sadness' was an animal it would be...
- 4. If the 'sadness' was a tree, flower, or something from nature it would be...
- 5. If the 'sadness' was a type of weather it would be...
- 6. If the 'sadness' was an object/item/metaphor it would be...
- 7. If the 'sadness' could talk it would say... (what would its voice sound like?)
- 8. I feel the 'sadness' in my body in my...
- 9. The 'sadness' stops me from...
- 10. The 'sadness' helps me...
- II. Without the 'sadness' I would ...
- 12. If the 'sadness' disappeared I would miss...
- 13. Other people who the 'sadness' visits are...
- 14. ...makes the 'sadness' much bigger.
- 15. ...makes the 'sadness' smaller.
- 16. The 'sadness' changes when...or has changed because...
- 17. I am stronger and bigger than the 'sadness' when...
- 18. Any other thoughts or comments...

This can be enhanced using the 7E model as well (explained in the adult section). These questions can be adapted and applied to different types of emotions too.

Answers can also be drawn, made, sculpted, painted, made into a collage, written about, and much more (the adult section explains this further).

Anger is...

The feeling of 'anger' is like...

If I gave the 'anger' a name I would call it...

I would describe the 'anger' as being like...

Avalanche	Volcano	Fire	Shark	Lion hunting
		A STAN	ounder the second	
Boiling blood	Banging drum	Tidal wave	Monster	Dragon
Thunder and lightning	Adrenaline rush	Spiked ball	Red mist	What else?
		TO B	₹\$\	

Here are some sentences about 'anger'. Replace 'anger' with your own choice of name for that feeling — what would you call it? Be as creative as you wish.

These feelings become much less scary, confusing, and powerful when we understand them a bit more, and when we separate them from ourselves.

- I. If the 'anger' was a colour it would be...
- 2. If the 'anger' was a shape it would be...
- 3. If the 'anger' was an animal it would be...
- 4. If the 'anger' was a tree, flower, or something from nature it would be...
- 5. If the 'anger' was a type of weather it would be...
- 6. If the 'anger' was an object/item/metaphor it would be...
- 7. If the 'anger' could talk it would say... (what would its voice sound like?)
- 8. I feel the 'anger' in my body in my...
- 9. The 'anger' stops me from...
- 10. The 'anger' helps me...
- II. The 'anger' is my friend when...
- 12. Without the 'anger' I would...
- 13. If the 'anger' disappeared, I would miss...
- 14. The 'anger' first visited when...
- 15. The good things about the 'anger' are...
- 16. ...makes the 'anger' much bigger.
- 17. ...makes the 'anger' smaller.
- 18. The 'anger' changes when...or has changed because...
- 19. I am stronger and bigger than the 'anger' when...
- 20. Any other thoughts or comments...

You can try some of the creative examples in the sadness activity here. For example, draw, sculpt, make a collage, mould, act out, write a poem/story/comic/play of your answers. What things make the anger visit? What does the anger look like/feel like? (This is expanded on in the adult section.)

Worry is...

The feeling of 'worry/anxiety/fear' is like...

If I gave the 'worry/anxiety/fear' a name I would call it...

I would describe the 'worry/anxiety/fear' as being like...

Butterflies in stomach	Wobbly jelly	Tornado	Thoughts whirling like a washing machine	Bursting pipe (under pressure)
Being strangled	Ant on somebody's shoe	Racing heart	Runaway train	Lost in a maze
Trapped	Feeling tiny	Heavy load	Mr Stretchy (pulled in different directions)	What else?

Here are some sentences about 'worry/anxiety/fear'. You can replace 'worry/fear/anxiety' with your own choice of name — be as creative as you wish!

These feelings become much less scary, confusing, and powerful when we understand them a bit more, and when we separate them from ourselves.

- I. If the 'worry/fear/anxiety' was a colour it would be...
- 2. If the 'worry/fear/anxiety' was a shape it would be...
- 3. If the 'worry/fear/anxiety' was an animal it would be...
- 4. If the 'worry/fear/anxiety' was a flower, a tree, a type of weather, or something from nature it would be...
- 5. If the 'worry/fear/anxiety' was an object/item/metaphor it would be...
- 6. If the 'worry/fear/anxiety' could talk it would say... (what would its voice sound like?)
- 7. I feel the 'worry/fear/anxiety' in my body in my...
- 8. The 'worry/fear/anxiety' first started visiting me when...
- 9. The 'worry/fear/anxiety' stops me from...
- 10. The 'worry/fear/anxiety' helps me and is my friend when ...
- II. Without the 'worry/fear/anxiety' I would...
- 12. If the 'worry/fear/anxiety' disappeared I would miss...
- 13. ...makes the 'worry/fear/anxiety' much bigger.
- 14. ...makes the 'worry/fear/anxiety' smaller.
- 15. A time I felt the 'worry/fear/anxiety' really strongly was when...
- 16. I am stronger and bigger than the 'worry/fear/anxiety' when...
- 17. Any other thoughts or comments...

You can then draw, sculpt, mould, paint, make a collage, write a poem/ story/song/comic about your answers!

Other Feelings

As we have shared, the experience of loss and having someone important to us die can bring so many different feelings, like a puzzle, a rainbow, or a patchwork. We have looked a little bit more at anger, sadness, and worry. Now, you might like to take another feeling, like loneliness, guilt, shame, blame, shock, or whichever else fits, and think about the different words, images, items, and so on that that feeling would be. For example, if it were a shape, a colour, an animal, a type of weather, what would it be?

The feeling of ... is like ...

If I gave the ... a name it would be called ...

I would describe ... as being and feeling like ...

•		
		What else?
		.,,,,,

Some more specific feelings and experiences around grief and loss

Now having thought about some of the different feelings and responses, the next few pages will give you some more activities to think a little bit further about the feelings, questions, sensations, and triggers around the death itself. You can use the feelings activities, like the sand, the emojis, the cards, the patchwork, and so on, and apply them to these



activities. As said many times, this can be difficult to do, so take your time, take breaks, and have items around you which help you to feel as comfortable as possible. You might like to do some regulating and relaxing activities as described in Activities 30—41 before, during, and after, as a support. Remember that you can revisit the activities at different stages during your journey. These activities, when done at a time when you are ready, and with a safe and trusted adult, can help you to express, make sense of, and put words to your experiences. They can help you understand them a bit more and have some time to process them and feel them in a safe way.



You might like to colour in, talk about, or add other thoughts or feelings to the above image of Ollie.

Grief and Loss Metaphors and Meaning

(See the supporting information on the next few pages.)

GRIEF, LOSS, DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT

WHAT DO THESE FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES LOOK LIKE, FEEL LIKE, AND MEAN TO YOU?

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THEM? WHAT WOULD YOU CALL THEM?









































DR KARENTREISMAN SAFE HANDS AND DE PRINCIPAL P

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Activity 20 continued

(This section must be read and supported by an adult. Ideas to optimize this worksheet and expand on it are shared in the adult guide.)

Take your time to look at the worksheet above. It can be helpful to put words to some of your big and confusing feelings. You might also find it helpful to circle, highlight, underline, or colour in the ones which make sense for you. You might also find it useful to think about other people around you and what they might be feeling. There are no right or wrong answers. The 'what else?' box is super important so that you can add ones which we haven't included or thought about.

The below sentences, with the help of an adult, may support you to think about this, including the 'what else?' box. There are also lots of ways of bringing these ideas alive through art, dance, poetry, music, and so on. These are explained further in the adult guide.

- 1. If the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' was a colour it would be...
- 2. If the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' was a shape it would be...
- 3. If the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' was an animal it would be...
- 4. If the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' was a tree, flower, or something from nature it would be...
- 5. If the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' was an object/item/metaphor it would be...
- 6. If the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' could talk it would say...(what would its voice sound like?)
- 7. The 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' feels the strongest in my body in my...
- 8. The 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' stops me from...
- 9. The 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' helps me/reminds me...
- 10. Without the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' I would...
- II. If the feelings I have from the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' disappeared I would miss...
- 12. ...makes the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' much bigger, louder, and more painful. What are the triggers and hotspots around this? (For example, if the black hole is chosen, what makes the black hole bigger,

- darker, deeper; and what makes it smaller or less deep; and/or what brings some colour into it?)
- 13. ...makes the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' smaller and more manageable.
- 14. Over time, the 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' has changed by...My journey with it has been...I have learned about myself that...

Some Sentence Completions about Death and Grief



Sometimes, it can be hard to find the words, or an open question can feel too big and too much. So, completing these sentences can help us to think a bit more about our feelings, thoughts, and experiences. There are no right or wrong answers. You might want to do one, a few, or all of them. You can say or signal pass or skip to any of them if you don't feel ready to answer or do not want to. Take your time, and remember that you can come back to them and think about them. They are just some ideas and you can add more to them. They can also be made into a game like Jenga or you can use a different coloured button or pipe cleaner for each question. You can also draw, sculpt, write about, or make something around your answers, if you want to think about your answers a bit more. Some examples will follow. The previous pages and images can also support you in having some ideas around this. If you are doing this with a family member, they might like to share their answers too. You could also answer these for your toy or through a puppet. (Some of these can be found in my Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Sentence Completion and Feelings Cards).

- I. I would describe death/grief as...
- 2. The things I really miss are...
- 3. The thing I think the most about is...
- 4. The things I try not to think about are...
- 5. The things that make me the saddest are...
- 6. The things that make me the most worried are...
- 7. The things that make me the most angry or frustrated are...
- 8. A sad/hard/happy/frustrating/exhausting day is when...
- 9. When I am feeling...(the feeling), I...
- 10. If someone could truly see inside me, they would see...
- II. The things that have changed are...(see Activity 23).
- 12. The things that have stayed the same are...
- 13. The biggest difference between then and now is...
- 14. If I could go back in time, I wish I had...

- 15. If I could be someone else for the day, I would be...
- 16. The biggest question I have is...(Activity 22).
- 17. My most precious and treasured memories with...(the person who has died) are...(Activities 42–49).
- 18. The things that help me feel close to them are...
- 19. The things that help me are...(Activities 30-41 and 55-59).
- 20. The people who are there for me are... (Activity 38).
- 21. The things that give me the most hope are...
- 22. The things that still make me happy/smile/laugh are...

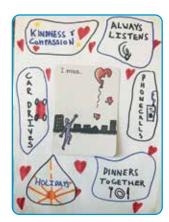
You might like to take one of these sentences and turn your answer into a song, a poem, a collage, a sculpture, a rap, a painting, a dance. Here are some examples.



A sculpture using miniatures to represent the answer to: 'The biggest difference between then and now is...'



A drawing to show the answer to: 'If I could go back in time, I wish I had..'



A drawing using my sentence completion cards to represent the answer to 'I miss..'



A memory box which has been made in response to the sentence: 'My most precious and treasured memories with... (the person who has died) are...'

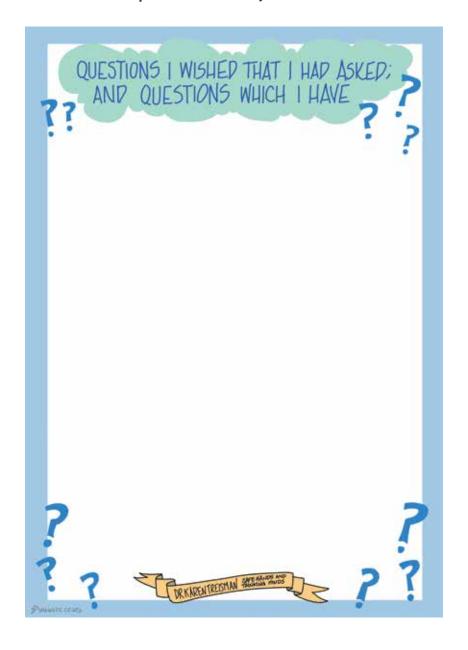


A drawing using pipe cleaners to expand on the sentence: 'The things that make me the most worried/sad are..'

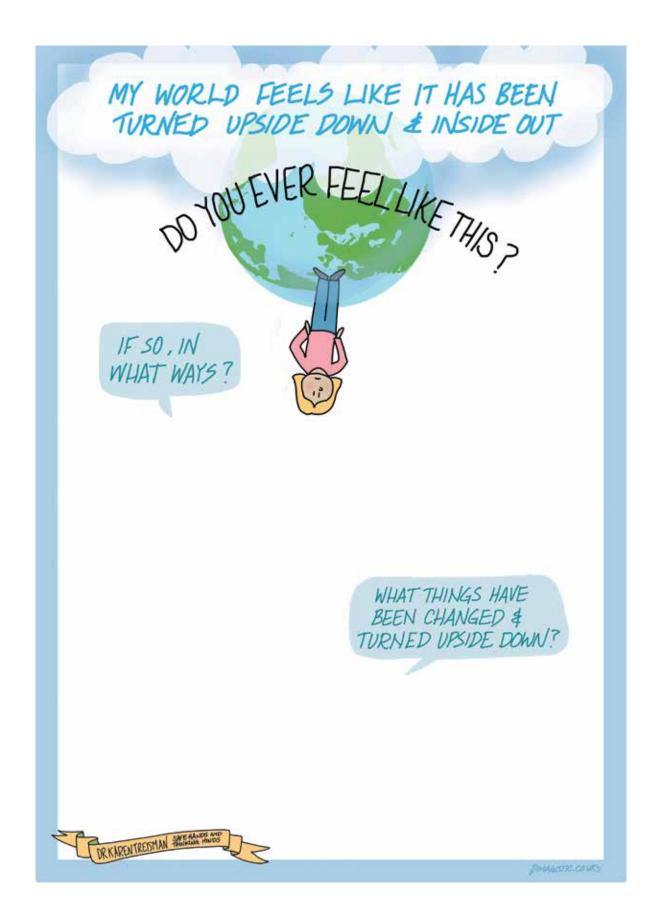
Questions, Questions, and More Questions

Ollie had so many different questions, and some of these were: How could this happen? It isn't fair! Why her? Will she come back?' 'Who will look after me?' 'What will happen now?' 'Where has she gone to?' 'Could I have done more?' 'What if I forget her?' 'What if my dad or someone else I love gets sick?' 'Am I going to ever be happy again?' 'Will I always be sad?' 'What about all of the things which she will miss, like my birthday?'

Do you have any of these questions? Or any other questions? Do you have any answers or advice which you would give to Ollie about these questions? How do these questions make you feel?



Things That Have Changed



Things That Have Stayed the Same

THE THINGS WHICH HAVEN'T CHANGED AND THE THINGS WHICH ARE THE SAME AND WHICH I STILL HAVE DRKARENTREISMAN THINKING MUDS

Where is the Person Now?

(As with all of the activities in this workbook, this is optional, and will not be relevant for all.)

Lots of us have questions about where the person who has died has travelled to, or where they have gone to. This might be the same or different for their body, their mind, their spirit, and their soul. People have different cultural, spiritual, religious, personal, and family ideas, beliefs, and thoughts about this; and there are no right or wrong answers. If you would like to, talk to the person you are doing this workbook with about where you think the person who has died has gone to, where you want them to have gone to, and what you think it might look or be like where they are. You might like to draw or write down your thoughts below. Some people like to visualize that person there happy, safe, and not in pain. What do you think they are doing and saying? Who might they be there with?

Triggers, Reminders, and Trickier Times

As Ollie and his friends shared, there can be times and things which happen along the way and throughout our journey which can make us feel the person's death more and which can make us think about them or the loss of them more. These can be happy and positive reminders, which make us feel closer to the person, and also they can be painful ones — and they can be both at the same time! At these times, we can fall or trip down a memory time hole (Hobday, 2001) to that place of grief or loss. It is like turning the clock backwards.

Some of the experiences and situations which children have shared as being possible grief reminders and triggers are listed here. These may or may not be the same for you. We all can be impacted and moved by things differently. Here are just some examples:

- Smells such as the person's perfume, or the washing powder they used on their clothes.
- Music or a specific song.
- · Someone who looks or sounds like the person who died.
- Someone who has the same name as the person who died, or someone who uses the same 'nickname' or words to you that the person who died said or used.
- Seeing something which the person who died had, like the same car, or a same item of clothing, or piece of jewellery.
- Autobiographical triggers such as certain dates like a birthday, an anniversary, Mother's/Father's Day, Valentine's Day, festivities like Christmas, Ramadan, Yom Kippur.
- Certain times of year, like summer or when it snows. It might be that it was that person's favourite time of year, or we might have certain memories attached to it, or it might be the time of year when they died, or their birthday.
- Big milestones and important times such as a first sleepover, first day at school, a school play, learning a new skill.
- When something big happens such as falling ill, winning a competition,

- getting some good news, a world event like the pandemic, starting one's periods.
- Events at school like parents' evening, sports day, plays, outings.
- Certain storylines or themes in books, lessons, TV programmes, and films — for example, about death, about that person's role, about family, about sickness.
- Relational triggers such as seeing other people with their family members having fun.
- Hearing other people complain, moan, or talk negatively about a family member.
- Other people's questions, comments, facial expressions, or words which can be hurtful, insensitive, harsh.
- Feelings or emotion triggers when something happens that makes us feel an emotion we have had before. It sends us down a memory time hole to those feelings which maybe we felt about that person dying or about them. For example, when we feel sad, frustrated, let down, alone, forgotten. This can happen in other situations but makes us think about that person or our feelings around their death. Then our feelings about the current situation can be all tangled up with past feelings and situations.

What else would you add?

In the next few worksheets, you can write some of these grief triggers or prickly parts down, draw them, act them out, talk about them, and so on. There is a jellyfish, a button, a multi-layered triggers worksheet, and a bug me worksheet. You can choose which one you want to do, or do more than one. There are options so that you can find what interests or works for you best. Remember to be as creative as you like — you can always take the idea and design and make your own worksheet.

Knowing about grief triggers can help us prepare a bit more and know a little about what to expect. Knowing some of these also means that we can share and tell other people about them, if we want to, and also understand why we might have the feelings and responses that we do. Knowing a bit more also means that our feelings make more sense and we don't feel as if they are coming from nowhere. We can also then use some of our treasure coping tools before, during, and after them to make them more manageable (Activities 30–41). These triggers can change, and we can also discover new ones along the way. So, it is helpful to notice them and become aware of them and to look for clues. Be curious with ourselves and our responses. We can also keep adding and reviewing them. It is a bit like being a feelings detective or an archaeologist.

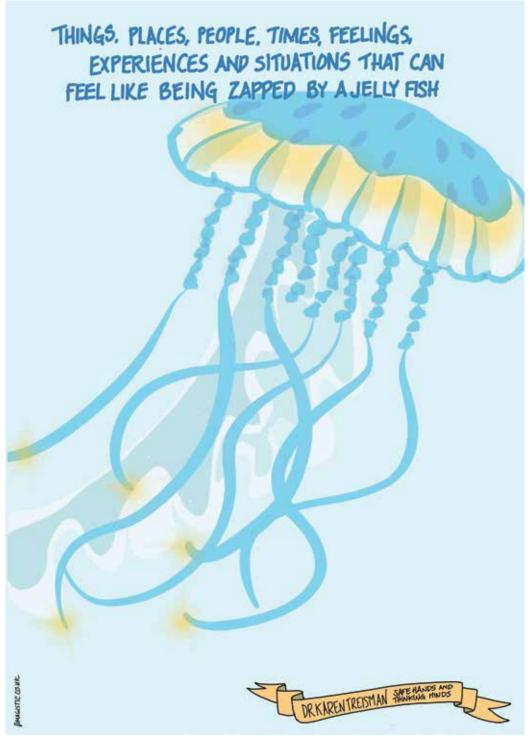
It can also be very helpful to think about things which are tricky from a sensory perspective, like the things we see, hear, smell, and so on, as well as the people, places, words, and situations.

You can think about these and write them down or draw them in the next activities. You can also bring these to life in a three-dimensional way, for example by using a remote control, using bugs and writing around them, or making a jellyfish and writing things on their legs.

Feeling Zapped by a Jellyfish

What sorts of things, people, places, times, feelings, and situations make you feel like you are being zapped by a jellyfish?

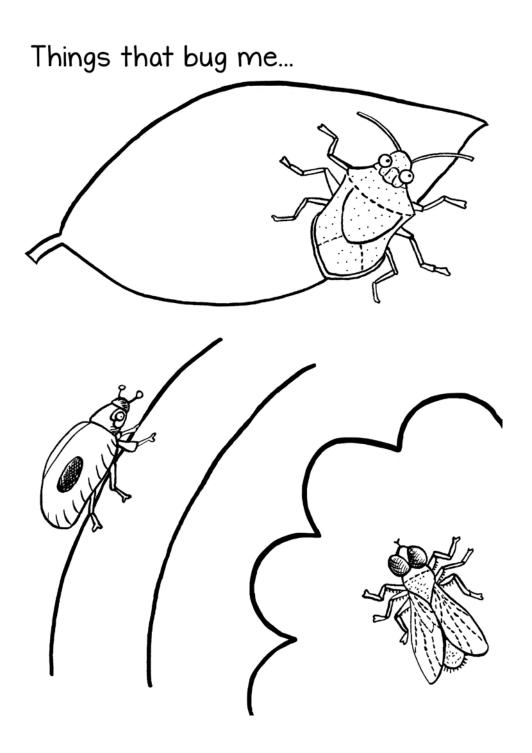
Draw, write, doodle, or make a collage of these on the worksheet below. You may also want to use a bigger piece of paper or make an arts and crafts jellyfish and write them on that.



What Bugs Me and Gets Under My Skin?

What sorts of things, people, places, times, feelings, and situations can bug me and get under my skin?

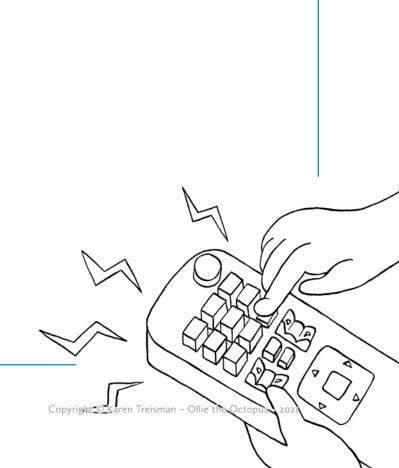
Draw, write, doodle, or make a collage of these on the worksheet below. You may also want to use a bigger piece of paper or use miniature/sticker/puppet bugs.



What Pushes My Buttons?

What sorts of things, people, places, times, feelings, and situations can push my buttons?

Draw, write, doodle, or make a collage of these on the worksheet below. You may also want to use a bigger piece of paper or use actual buttons or remote controls.



Some Coping, Grounding, and Regulating Tools

Treasure tools to use when the grief feels too much and you need a brain break

Now we have explored some of the different feelings, thoughts, and sensations that we can experience after a death, including some of the painful triggers which we can be faced with, the next few pages will give you a huge range of ideas and explain them in a bit more detail. Look at them and see which you might do already, which take your interest, and which aren't for you.

First, it is important to say there is no right or wrong, good or bad. Different ones will work for different people at different times. There is no one-size-fits-all. You need to be a detective and explorer and find out what works best for you — and ideally have a few options so that you have some choice. There are some creative ones, some sensory ones, some physical ones, some mind/cognitive ones, and so on. You might need more than one at certain times.

Second, practise these tools and ideas and do them regularly. The more you practise them, the more they become natural, and your brain and body will remember them. This is called muscle memory. If you just do them once or twice, it is hard to remember them. The brain is like a muscle — you make it strong by exercising and using it. Try to take your brain to the tool gym as much as you can.

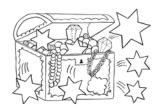
Third, keep a record of what works, what doesn't, and what you might need to do to improve it. Sometimes, if it isn't working as well, you just need to tweak it. You can write these down in your coping plan in Activity 55.

Fourth, these are just a few ideas. There are thousands of others. So, feel free to choose and find others that work for you. Speak to people about what they do, look on the internet, read books. Keep on adding to your treasure box of tools.

Even better, if you can, practise and do these with other people, such as the person supporting you to go through this workbook.

The ideas are not presented in a particular order. There are a lot, so take your time. Circle them. Highlight them. Pop a post—it or bookmark in the page. Make a reminder note. That way, at the end you can look back at your top ones. Then start with one, practise it lots, and then go on to the next.

My Sensory Box







This is where you take a box — a jar, container, or bag if you prefer — and decorate the outside with images, photos, wrapping paper, cards, quotes, materials (e.g. silk, velvet, bubble wrap) that make you feel happy, safe, relaxed, loved, and so on (see photo on the left above). Then inside you put items or reminders of things which make you feel happy, calm, safe, loved, and so on (see photo on the right above). This is things which you like to:

- see/look at (e.g. photos, pictures, cards, letters, positive self-talk messages, reminder cards, a favourite item or toy, a drawing, a worry doll, a guardian angel miniature, a grounding stone)
- hear/listen to (e.g. a song, a rain stick, a seashell, a mindfulness bell)
- taste/eat (e.g. food, chewing gum, lip balm, bubbles, something to chew)
- smell (e.g. oils, aroma doh, a candle, incense, a nice smelling toy, flowers, hand lotion)
- do/touch (e.g. a stress ball, a tangle, a squishy toy, playdough, a kaleidoscope, a snow globe, a puzzle, a Rubik's cube, a nice piece of material, a grounding stone, colouring-in items, a glitter stick, items from nature).

You can buy or find the items; or even better make your own. Activity 31, which follows this one, can support you to think about the different sensory things you might find calming. It can help you think about different things to put into the box or to make for it. They might be the

actual thing, for example if you love playdough, you can put playdough in the box. However, they might also be abstract, but if you love stroking a dog, you can't put a dog in a box, so you put pictures or photos of a dog, or a square of material that feels like that dog, or a soft toy that feels like that dog, and so on. If you love snow, you might want to put in a snow globe, or make snowflake art, or have photos of snow or you in the snow. You can watch a video of me explaining the sensory box and showing different items at www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk.

You can use this box when having tricky conversations, when feeling a bit full up, when needing a boost, in between activities, before bed, or whenever you feel you need something a bit extra. You can also use this box while going through this worksheet, or before you feel you might be faced with one of your grief triggers.

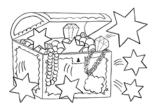
My Sensory and Soothing Hand

Draw around your hand or draw a hand. On or around it, write about all of the things which make you feel happy, calm, relaxed, nourished, and so on. Start with things you can see, hear, smell, do, touch, feel, and taste. Then you might like to add other things like people, places, situations, movements, and so on.





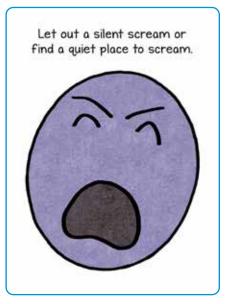
Treasure Tools for Releasing Feelings and Sensations



Sometimes we just need to let out how we feel. There are loads of ways to do this (the images are taken from A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Grounding, Soothing, Coping and Regulating Cards).







Here are some ways:

- Saying it out loud either to yourself or with someone you trust (sharing
 is caring). As Dan Siegel, a well-known psychologist, says, you have to
 'name it to tame it'.
- Letting out a big silent scream or, if you are in a safe place to do so, letting out a loud scream. You can also make or decorate your very own scream box.
- Wringing out a wet towel and squeezing out as much water as possible.
- Shaking it out. Try standing really straight and stiff, like a robot or a soldier, and then really shake, wobble, and jiggle your body around. Some people like to do this to music or a rhyme. You can either do your whole body or you can start from your feet and work your way up, or vice versa.

- Ripping up paper, magazines, or newspapers, or squashing and squeezing them into a ball.
- Banging (safely) a cushion or a soft doll.
- Squeezing and releasing a stress ball, playdough, or a squishy ball. To make this work even more, try to change the hand in which you hold the stress ball. For example, pass the ball from the left to the right hand, back and forth. You can also do this motion while walking around a room or moving from left to right. This left—to—right movement can be very calming and can help the left side of your brain talk and connect with the right side of your brain. You can buy a stress ball, or you can make your own using a balloon and some beans, rice, or flour. To make a stress ball even more calming, you might like to add a calming scent to it, such as lavender (we all have different smells we like), or decorate it with calming images, stickers, with fabric pens, and so on. You might also want to use the stress ball when listening to calming music or looking at a calming image. This means you are using more than one sense, which can help you to feel calmer.
- Making a sensory bottle or a volcano and shaking it up and down.
 Sometimes, it can help to breathe, say a mantra, or listen to music while doing this. Sensory bottles can be made in so many different ways, with things like glitter, coloured dye, pasta, rice, and so much more.
 There are endless suggestions online. Sometimes, it can be nice to make different ones with different materials and colours for different needs and feelings.
- Dancing how you feel by choreographing a dance, or moving to a song which represents how you are feeling. You might also like to write a song or a rap, or say the words of a song which means something to you out loud. Music can be very powerful, it can change your mood, inspire you, take you in a time machine back to a memory, and much more.







You can also write down how you feel (the next activity will explain this more).

These are just some ideas. Which do you like? Not like? What other ideas do you have or what other things do you do? Some more breathing, relaxation, creative, and sensory ideas will follow.



Writing Your Thoughts, Feelings, Hopes, and Worries Down

Why can writing things down or drawing be helpful? (The following are just some reasons, but remember that there are many more.)

Everyone is unique, but sometimes, when things are in our head, they can feel messy, heavy, and confusing. They can also go around and around our heads and our bodies like a whirlpool, a hamster wheel, or like clothes in a tumble dryer. They can also feel part of us, and as if we are the only one who can feel them, so they can make us feel alone and overwhelmed.

To help us, it can be useful to write or draw our thoughts and feelings down. This might be through drawing, doodling, painting, and so on, or through writing them in a list, in a letter, in a poem, a rap, a comic strip, a story, or a newspaper article. Whatever works for you and whatever feels right for you. Sometimes, doing this in more than one way can be helpful.

Writing it down can help, as when we 'name it we can tame it', as psychologist Dan Siegel says. It can also give us some space and distance from our thoughts and feelings, so that they are not inside us, so we can look at them, share them if we want to, and think about ways to respond to them. We can see that we are bigger and more in control than what is written on the paper. This can also help us sometimes see things differently, learn something new, and connect the dots. For a bit of time, it can be like taking the clothes out of the tumble dryer or taking out the plug in the whirlpool. It also gives us something to share with other people who can help and support us. The adults reading this workbook might also have some tools and ideas to help you — they might like to share what supports them when they are feeling worried, stuck, and sad.

Once you have written your feelings down, you might like to keep the piece of paper or you might like to get rid of it in some way, which can be a nice way to release things as well. Here are some ideas:



Have a special feeling, worries, or thoughts diary, notepad, or journal where you write things down or doodle about them.









Feed them or give them to a feelings monster, feelings eater, or feelings keeper. There are ones which you can buy. (I have my very own pocket toys which I have made, available from www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk — Neon the Ninja, Binnie the Baboon, Presley the Pug, Cleo the Croc, Gilly the Giraffe, and Ollie the Octopus.) You might also like to make your own worry monsters using things like cereal boxes, pipe cleaners, or socks (there is no right or wrong way). You can also make a feelings or thoughts friend out of different materials.







Buy or make a thoughts and feelings (you can choose a different name) box, locker, safe, dustbin, or jar where you lock up or put them away.



Take the piece of paper you have drawn or written on and rip it up, scribble on it, scrunch it up, throw it away, bury it, or safely burn it.



Write your thoughts in sand or on an etch-a-sketch and then rub them out.



Write your thoughts and feelings on a small piece of toilet paper and then flush it down the toilet.





Write your thoughts and feelings on stones and then put the stones away or throw them in water and replace them with calming and happy stones.



Write your thoughts and feelings down and put them inside a balloon or write on the outside of the balloon and let the balloon go. You could do this with a lantern as well.



Write them down on a piece of paper, put the paper in a bottle, and release the bottle into a lake, a river, or a sea.





Write things down on a label, think about them, and take them off. Or see them outside your head, like on a polystyrene head (see Activity II). Here are some other ways of talking about your thoughts and feelings and sharing them:

- Make or create a feelings friend who you talk to and share things with.
- Have a thoughts and feelings plaque or keyring which you talk to and voice your concerns.
- Have feelings dolls or friends which you can talk to.

These are just some ideas, there are many others. Which do you like? Not like? Want to add?

Hug or Take What You Need Jar/Bag



Sometimes, making (or having those people around you make) a hug or a take what you need jar or bag can be really helpful. There is no

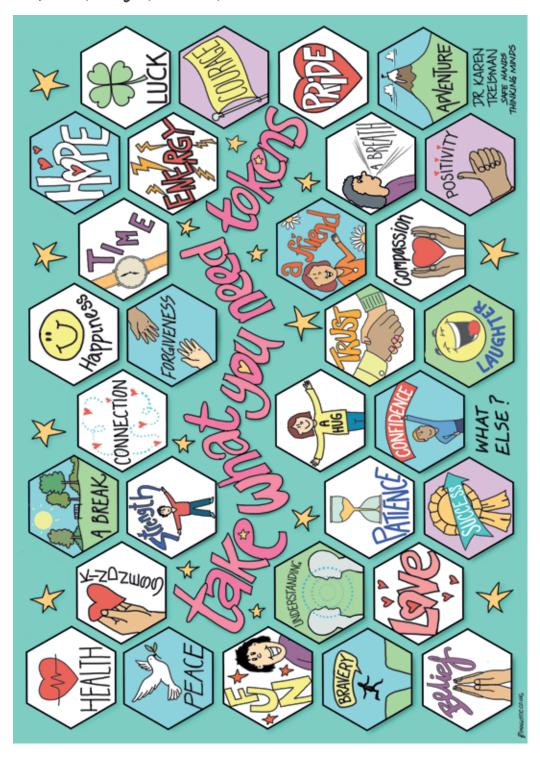
right or wrong way to do this and different people will like to do it in different ways, but in essence, a hug jar is where you fill a jar with lots of hugs (this can be from wood, cut—out pictures with hugging arms from paper or cardboard, or images and pictures of hugs), and then you can take them out when you need them. It can be even better if you really think about what it is like to receive and feel that hug, and soak it in.



Similarly, a take what you need jar is when you take what you need that day or for that moment, like love, a hug, energy, or fun. These can be on stones, cards, stickers, wooden shapes, magnets, and so on. As you take one, you look at it, breathe it in, and keep it with you. This can be things in general, or things from the person who died. You might like to have separate ones or mix them together in one jar. Activity 35 has some of these drawn out if you would like to use them. You can photocopy them and cut them out, or you can make your own.

Take What You Need Tokens

Here are some tokens. You can point to them, share what you need, give them to others, look at them as a reminder, breathe them in, or keep them with you. You can cut them out and use them as they are, or you might like to add them to a jar, box, or bag. Equally, you could stick them on to wooden pieces, badges, a board, or labels.



Some Relaxation, Mindfulness, Yoga, and Breathing Exercises

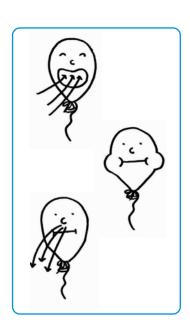


Sometimes, when we want to feel calmer during the day, or before bed, it can be really helpful to do some calming exercises: breathing, relaxation, and mindfulness. These exercises can give us a brain and body break, especially when we are feeling full—up, tense, and tangled in our feelings. There are lots of different ones, but here are some which you can try out, and then you can choose your favourite ones. Take your time as you go through them, and see if you can try them out, and practise them (with the help of an adult). I've also designed a pack of cards for grounding, soothing, coping, and regulating activities which you can purchase and these will give you plenty more ideas.

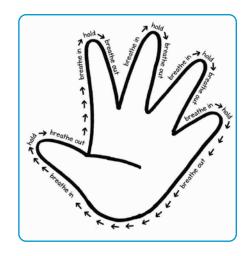
Breathing

It is really helpful to learn how to take deep, slow, and intentional breaths—these can refuel you, give you something else to focus on, and slow down some of the noise which can be in your head. Some fun ways of doing this include the following (start small and choose one to try first):

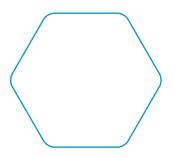
Imagine that you are breathing in deeply before getting ready to blow up a balloon, and then exhaling and blowing deeply lots of air into the balloon to fill it and blow it up. Try breathing in while thinking about all of the good and happy things in your life, and then breathe out all of the bad, worrying, upsetting things. Instead of a balloon, you might like to pretend that you are like a train, blowing steam, or blowing out birthday candles on a cake, or the seed head of a dandelion!

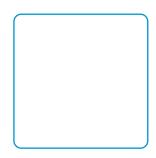


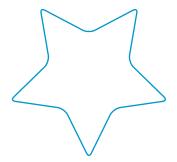
Hand breathing: try holding out your hand. Trace and move a finger around your hand and breathe in through your mouth each time you move upwards along a finger, then out through your nose each time you move back down again. You can also swap around, and breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth. (There is a video of me showing you how to do this at www. safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk.)



You can also do the above breathing with lots of different shapes, for example going up and down, breathing in and out, as you follow the shapes below.







Choose a relaxing, soothing, calming, and warm colour, shape, or sound (you can choose more than one if you prefer). Breathe in and imagine that the colour, shape, or sound is travelling gently around your body: from your feet to your head and spreading all around, including the whole left side of your body and the whole right side of your body.



Which colour, shape, or sound might you choose? How does it feel as it travels up and around your body?

Another trick to help with breathing is to rest a soft toy on your tummy and then slowly breathe in and then out. Watch the toy rising and falling with each breath. This can be your breathing buddy.



You might also like to make your very own mindful magic wand or breathing creature by taking a toilet roll or kitchen roll, decorating it, and then

sticking some colourful strips of tissue paper inside it. This can then be used to blow into, and to practise your deep breathing.



Take a moment and try one or more of these. Which ones do you like? What do you notice?

Stretching and moving

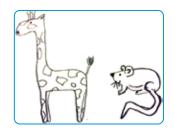
Stretching and shaking out your body can be a great way to move around and release some of your tension. Here are some of my other favourite ways of doing this:

Practise stretching your whole body. Go through each body part in order, and tense and relax each of your muscles: your feet, calves, tummy, shoulders, arms, fists, face, and so on. So, for example, with your fists, you would tense them and squeeze them really tightly like a boxer and then open up and

them really tightly like a boxer, and then open up and stretch them out and relax your hands. Try and do this two or three times. You can also add shaking it out as well.



Make yourself teeny tiny, like a curled-up mouse or a snail, and then stretch to be really high and tall, like a giraffe or a tree.



Make your body stiff, solid, and tensed, like a metal robot or a frozen ice block, and then really relax your body and make it floppy, flimsy, and light, like a soft ragdoll or jelly.



Make yourself wriggle around like a caterpillar, and then grow and change into a butterfly with outspread wings.



You might want to find a movement that helps you to feel calm and soothed. Some common ones include crawling, hanging, rocking, and balancing. Some people find it helpful to exert some pressure and weight, for example by pushing your hands up against a flat wall, through a hug, or through safely using a weighted blanket or another weighted item.



You might like to try some soothing, fun, and stretching yoga poses as shown here.



Take a moment and try one or more of these. Which ones do you like? What do you notice?

Guided imagery

Guided imagery is a super cool mind-body technique that can help you to relax your mind and body. This is where, like with the special place, you can travel to a happy thought, moment, or feeling in your mind — like a mind retreat or a head spa. Everyone will have different ones which they like, but here are just a few ideas to get you started. Imagine that you are:

- floating on a cloud
- riding on the back of a unicorn or horse

- drifting in a hot air balloon
- swimming with dolphins
- · walking on a beach
- being hugged by a tree
- wrapped in a warm snuggly blanket
- flying and gliding through the air
- floating in warm water or the sea
- walking through a secret garden
- watching the sun rise or set.



When you think of one of these, it can be really useful to think about your senses. What can you see, hear, smell, do, taste, feel? If your body could talk, what would it say? It can also help once you choose one of these to have a reminder, such as for the beach one, holding a shell, looking at a picture of a beach, or listening to the sound of the ocean. You can also make a song, rap, or poem about it, draw a picture, or make a reminder like a beach keyring, diary cover, or pencil case. See my *Presley the Pug* book for the story and activities around these types of themes.

Take a moment and try one or more of these. Which ones do you like? What do you notice?

Mindfulness and grounding

Mindfulness sounds complicated and seems a big word, but it's a simple technique that involves trying to be still and quiet and think about what's going on for you and in your world in the present moment — thinking about your feelings, how your body feels, and what your thoughts are.

This can help you to really notice and take in your environment, your surroundings. Being mindful involves focusing on all your different senses. It's like being a superhero with zoomed—in vision — what can you smell, hear, see, taste, and touch around you?

For example, if you go out on a walk, try to notice the leaves on your journey — are there a lot of



them? What colours, shapes, and sizes are they? Feel their texture, listen to the sound they make when you tread on them, and watch how they float down from trees and rustle in the wind.

You might also want to look around you and really pay attention and zoom in, like having superpowers, to what you can feel, see, hear, notice, touch.



You can also set yourself a list, for example look for something soft, look for something that is

brown, look for something that is round. It is a bit like playing I—Spy. This can help you to focus on something else and to be in the moment. When you find the items, try and really look at and notice them. What colour are they? What shape are they? Are they soft/hard/shiny/smooth? What temperature are they?

You could also fill a box with pom poms or cotton wool balls, and slowly count how many there are, and then calmly take each one out, breathing

deeply in and out and noticing and looking at it — what is its shape, what colour is it, how does it feel? This is sometimes called a calm counting box.



Which is your favourite relaxation activity so far?
Why is it your favourite? What did you notice happened to your body and mind when you did it?

Do you or the adult reading this with you have other ideas which you would like to try? Some more treasure tools for coping will follow.

Talking to the Person Who Has Died



Some people find it helpful to talk to the person who has died. It can make them feel close to them, and to imagine what they would say or do. Some people do this wherever they are, others choose to do this at a certain time (such as on the person's birthday or before bed), and others direct their words to a photo or an item belonging to that person. Others might write a letter to them or keep a jar or a box or a diary where they put things that they wish they could say to them. We can also do this with other people, like characters from our favourite books or TV programmes. We can then think about and imagine: What advice would they give to us? How would they make us feel? What would they do? How can we borrow some hope, strength, courage, love, or wisdom from them?

Sometimes, it can help to draw, write, or make a piece of art about what they say or do, or how they make us feel.

It can also be helpful to write notes or letters to or for the person. A template for this is available in Activity 52.

Another very helpful activity and treasure tool can be thinking about all of the people around and within us who are there to support us, cheer us on, and care about us. This exercise is explained next.

Your Very Own Team of Life Cheerleaders, Supporters, and Special Helpers



Ollie the Octopus had some help, care, love, and support from Orson, Kian, Mika, Nicky, and Deedee, which was really helpful and important. After experiencing a death, it can feel that we are alone. We can be worried and scared about who to turn to and who will be there for us. So, it is important to spend some time thinking about who is in our team. These are the people who can be there for us when we need them to be, to celebrate the great



times, and to support us when things are feeling harder. These are people we can turn to, look to for guidance, and ask for help from. These are also people we can learn from. This includes those people who have died and who are no longer physically with us. Just because they are not physically with us does not mean they are not still with us in a different form — in our hearts, in our heads, and in our memories. As Ollie showed us, he was always connected to Orla when he wanted to be, by invisible seaweed, ribbon, or a pearl of strings.

- Who are your life cheerleaders, supporters, inspirers, and motivators? (They can be real, alive, dead, people we know, people we have just heard about or seen on TV, superheroes, pets, and so on. You can add to this list as time goes on and as you think of more people). Write a list of their names or draw who they are. Who from this list can you talk to?
- What kind and caring words have your team of supporters and cheerleaders said or would they say to you? How do you look from their

eyes? What do they like, appreciate, admire, love, and notice about you? And vice versa? What do they do to support you and make you feel good? How do they make you feel? You might like to also write a list of times when they have supported you, and what different qualities they have.

Once you have written down the names and some of the qualities and words of wisdom, it can be helpful and fun to make a piece of art, such as a drawing, a sand world, or a sculpture, to show to all those who support you. You can put yourself in the centre or alongside them, whichever you prefer.

When you are feeling sad, alone, or worried, you can look at this piece of art and remember that you are not alone. You have a whole team around you who believe in you and care about you, and who are there for you — people who are in your heart and in your head; people you are connected to by invisible seaweed, ribbon, pearls, beads, and string.

This also means that whatever worry, problem, or situation you are facing, there is a whole team supporting you! In a game of tug of war, the 'problem' has no chance!

This can also be helpful when you are about to do something, such as act in a school play, or do a test, or go on a sleepover. If you are feeling alone or need a bit more support, you can look at this and remember you are not alone and can draw on all those people around you. You can breathe and soak them in and imagine them there with you. You can take them into your head and heart.

You can create any piece of art — there is no right or wrong way — but here are some ideas to give you some inspiration! There are lots of ideas, so you can choose one that suits you best. You might like to do a few different ones. These use paper dolls, collage, miniatures, stickers, sand, a lifeboat, and a safety net to show people's life cheerleaders, supporters, and helpers.

Some of these ideas can also be done specifically about the person who has died so that you can remember them and feel them close by.

Octopus of options

Think about all the different people you can go to and connect with (including in your mind and heart). Write each person down on a different octopus leg.



Photo blanket, pillow, wallpaper, or item of clothing

Create a photo blanket, pillow, wallpaper, or item of clothing. This can have lots of photos of all of the people in your life who love and support you. Or you can use fabric pens to draw these people and illustrate the good things they have said to you or things that remind you of them on a blanket, pillow, canvas, and so on.



Or you might like to make a collage, poster, or painting of all the people around you who love, support, and cheer you on.

Eco map and circle of support

Use stickers, shapes, buttons, miniatures, or puppets to show the people around you who are there supporting you and cheering you on.

Put yourself in the middle, and then choose who will be around you and what item, colour, or shape they will be.







Keyring people

Make, design, or draw keyring people, stickers, or badges of the people who are there with you, supporting and caring for you and cheering you on. You could also use other items such as magnets, badges, or brooches.



Sand art

Choose different colours of sand, salt, or glitter to represent all the special people who support you. For example, someone might decide that their mum is red, and their grandpa is blue. Fill the jar or container up with those different coloured sands to remind you that those people are always with you. You can add things like glitter, pebbles, and flowers to the sand art too. You can also make sand art keyrings, so that you can carry a reminder of your special people wherever you go.



Lifeboat

Use a toy lifeboat to show the people who are around you supporting and keeping your lifeboat afloat. You can also draw or make a lifeboat using pipe cleaners, lollipop sticks, a cereal box, and playdough — be as creative



as you like. Talk about what anchors you, how you weather the storms, and what is in and on your life vest (e.g. what people, things, and tools keep you safe and afloat, what tools you have and use).

Cheerleaders

Draw, paint, or make all of your life cheerleaders. These are the people who are around you, supporting you and cheering you on. You can also write what sort of things they cheer and tell you, and how it makes you feel when you hear those things.



Safety net

Draw, make, or sculpt all of the people who are holding you up in a safety net, making sure you don't fall and are supported and helped back up if you do fall. These are the people who keep you safe and protected.



Paper dolls or paper chains

Make or draw paper dolls or paper chains to represent all the different people who are around you, cheering and supporting you.



Take some time to write down and/or make a piece of art of all your life cheerleaders, supporters, helpers, and friends. You might want to use a bigger piece of paper or make something three—dimensional, as in the ideas above. Take your time. You can make more than one, and you can keep adding to it and changing it.

Which one, if any, of the above do you like? Which, if any, might you try? Do you have any other ideas of different ways to show your team of cheerleaders and supporters?

Re-Connecting to What Makes You Feel Good and Happy

When you are feeling sad, alone, worried, it can be important and useful to sit with these feelings for some time, and allow yourself to just be. It is okay to feel however you feel. It is understandable. Death is painful and sad, and many more feelings. But then, sometimes, you can feel too much to stay in those feelings for too long. It can be helpful to also think about all of the things that make you feel good and happy too, and to soak and breathe these things in, just to give yourself a different feeling. These are moments, memories, feelings, and experiences which you can travel back to or anchor on to. This might be moments or things about the person who died, or nothing about them. You might like to do some activities to help you remember these times. For example:

- Make a list, a collage, or a drawing of what makes you feel happy. This
 could be things or items; weather; shapes or colours; images or sights;
 smells; sounds including music and songs; things to do like activities or
 things to touch or feel; people; times or situations; things to eat, taste,
 or do with your mouth; words, etc.
- Write these things down in a song, a rap, a comic, a story, or a poem.
- Complete these sentences and then make collages, or themed art, about 'Happiness is...', 'The things that make me happy are...', 'I am happiest when...', 'Things that make me smile and feel good are...'
- Create a happy box or poster showing lots of things which make you feel good and happy. Rather than the word 'happy', you might prefer a different word, such as joyful, good, excited, beaming.

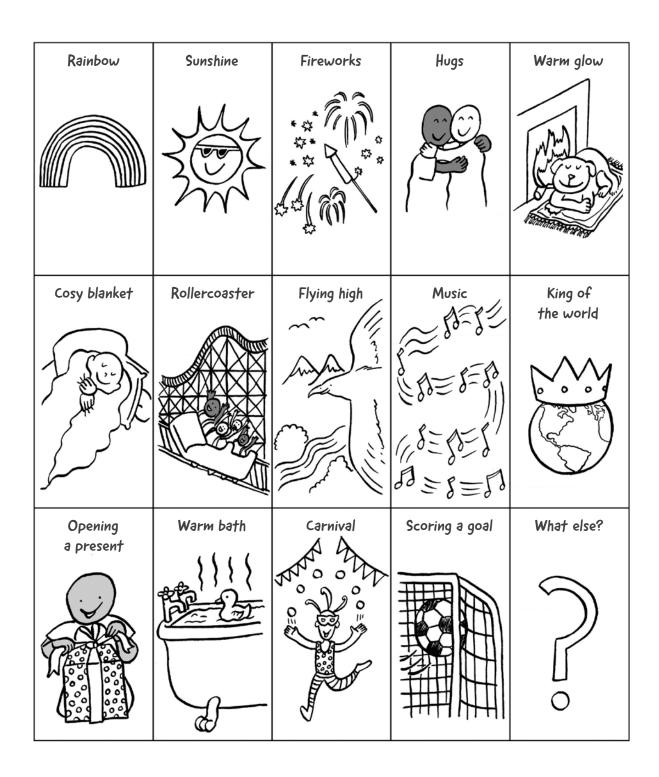
The next worksheet will support you to think about what happiness looks like and feels like to you. This is helpful, as happiness means different things to different people. This also supports you to think about some of the things that can make you feel happy and loved, and to draw on them. After that, there will be lots of activities to support you in thinking about some of these happy moments and memories in more detail.

Happiness is...

The feeling of 'happiness/joy/excitement' is like...

If I gave the 'happiness/joy/excitement' a name I would call it...

I would describe the 'happiness/joy/excitement' as being like...



Inner Comforter, Inspirer, and Supporter

Like with the cheerleader's activities in Activity 38, you can also, or instead, think about different people/things/creatures inside you or around you on whom you can draw for support and strength. You can be connected to these beings and feelings through an invisible string, ribbon, pearl, or bead. Think about what or who you draw hope, happiness, kindness, and wisdom from. The next worksheets give you some ideas of things you can do around this.

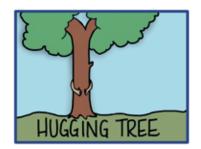
DRAWING ON, SURROUNDING MYSELF, AND SOAKING IN HOPE, COMPASSION, KINDNESS WISDOM, STRENGTH, CARE, WARMTH AND LOVE















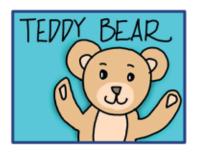


















DR KAREN TREISMAN - SAFE HANDS THINKING MINDS

DRAWING ON, SURROUNDING MYSELF, AND SOAKING IN HOPE, COMPASSION, KINDNESS WISDOM, STRENGTH, CARE, WARMTH AND LOVE

































Activity 41 continued

Take some time to look at the above worksheets. There are lots of different choices, and a 'what else?' box for you to make up your own ones. You might like to choose one or more of the pictures. This is about thinking of a thing, a creature, a colour, a shape, a being, a person, a feeling that makes you feel safe, loved, and hopeful. It is something or someone from whom you can borrow hope, kindness, strength, compassion, and happiness, and soak in and breathe in those feelings. This might be some of your life cheerleaders or something or someone different (you can have more than one). Some of the below questions might help. There is no right or wrong, and take your time.

- I. If the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' were a colour or shape they would be...(you might want to choose different ones for the different feelings).
- 2. If the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' were an animal they would be...
- 3. If the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' were a creature, a superhero, or a being they would be...
- 4. If the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' were a tree, flower, or something from nature they would be...
- 5. If the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' were an object/item/metaphor they would be...
- 6. If the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' could talk they would say...(what would their voice sound like? What advice would they give?)
- 7. The feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' feel the strongest in my body in my...
- 8. When I think of the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' they make me feel...
- 9. When I imagine the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' around me and breathe them in, I feel...I hear...I smell...I can touch or feel...I can taste...

- 10. If the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' were my best friends they would say...! would feel...
- II. If the feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' were my constant travel companions and always with me I would have...and feel...
- 12. These feelings of 'hope, love, kindness, compassion, wisdom, protection, warmth, and love' are inside me because...
- 13. I can anchor on to them when...
- 14. I can soak them in and breathe them in by...

Bringing your choice alive through arts and crafts

You might like to bring these images and concepts alive! For example, if you choose a unicorn which makes you feel hopeful, you might like to think about what the unicorn's name is, what they do, what they are like, how they make you feel, how they sound, how they look, what they would say if they could talk or sing, and so on.

To remind you of the magic of this unicorn, you can use it during the various activities. You can draw a picture of the unicorn, have a soft toy unicorn with you, make a keyring of the unicorn, have a feel-good unicorn poster, and so on. You can also use it when you are doing things like relaxation exercises, imagining that the unicorn is with you, hugging you and supporting you. You can also do things like draw your special unicorn and around it write down lots of your happy thoughts and memories. Be as creative as you like. There is no right or wrong way to do this!

Once you've decided some that you like, try adding them to your daily plan. This should include when and where you are going to try them, and being curious about whether and how they help. Remember the more you practise, the more your brain will remember them, and the easier they will become.



Having looked at some of our feelings, including those around death, and learned some new coping and regulating activities, we are now going to look at some activities and ways to remember the person and to keep them close and connected to us.





Part 4 Remembering and Staying Connected to the Person who has Died

Holding on to special moments

The next few activities are ways to remember the person who has died. You can choose the ones which you want to fill in to capture the special memories, moments, parts of them, and experiences which you had together. This isn't just about them — you can also add ones that you have had with other people and on your own. These are memories that you want to hold on to, stay connected to, and remember. They are precious and will stay in your heart and in your head.



You can also travel back to them in your mind and in your heart when you want to soak them in a little bit. There are lots of different options over the next few pages so that you can choose the ones that suit you, or come up with some yourself.

Following this, there are also lots of activities to help you remember and honour that person and keep them close by.

Magical Moments and Memories Magnet

These are the moments which we want to hold on to, stick to, and keep close. You can write down, draw, make a collage, or use a real-life magnet with labels to capture these memories, experiences, and moments.



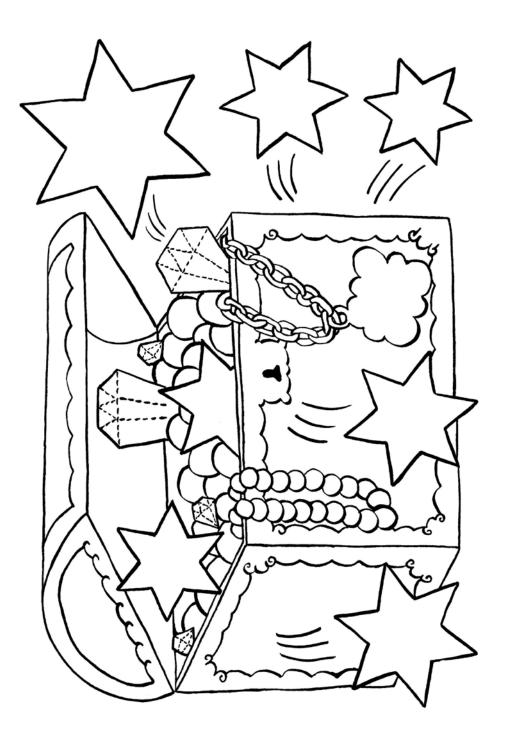
Relational Gifts, Memories, and Presents They Gave Me

These are the moments, memories, presents, or gifts which we want to hold on to, remember, and keep close. They can be relational gifts, like the gift of love or fun, or actual gifts. Write down, draw, make a collage, or make your own presents or boxes with labels to capture these memories, experiences, and moments.



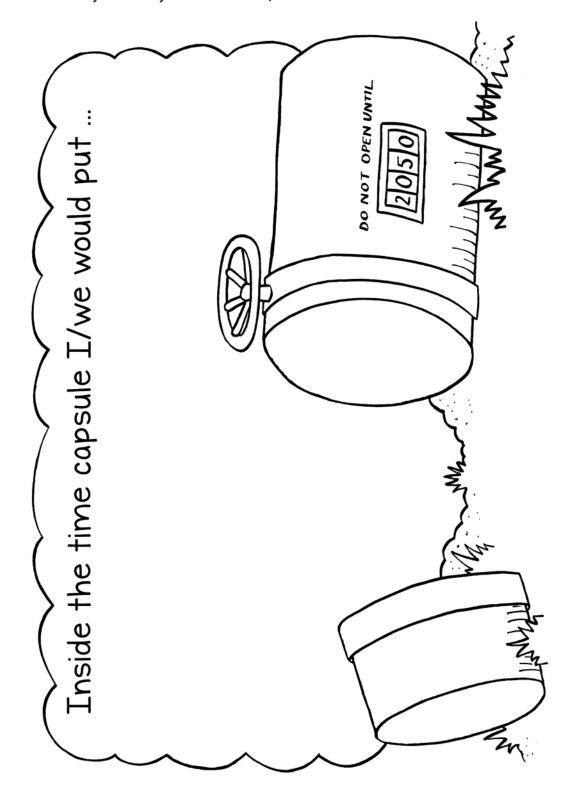
Our Treasure Box of Memories and Moments

These are the precious moments, memories, treasures, and gems which we want to hold on to, remember, and keep close. They can be relational gems, like the gift of kindness or honesty, or actual gems, like a favourite item. You can write down, draw, make a collage, or make or fill your own treasure box to capture these memories, experiences, and moments.



Time Capsule

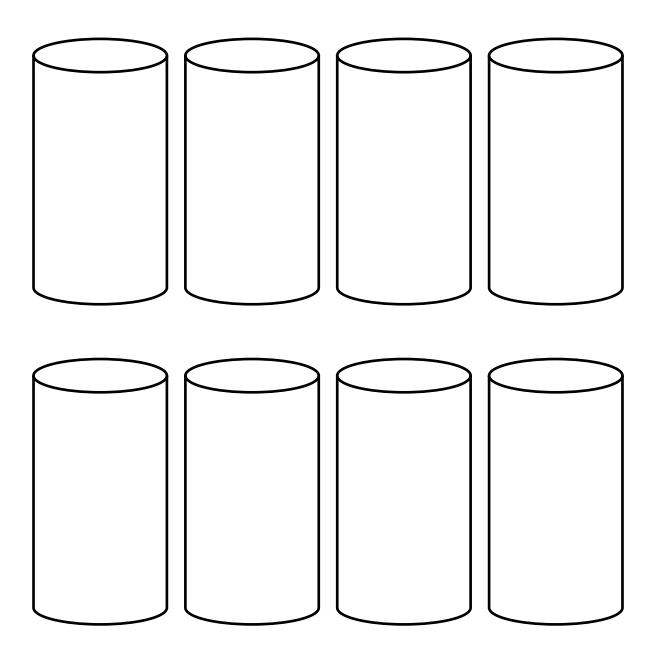
You can write down, draw, or make a collage of the memories, experiences, and moments which you want to remember and hold on to — or you might like to make your very own time capsule.



Bottling-Up Special Moments

Like taking a mind snapshot, or soaking in an important moment, imagine you could bottle up your special memories, experiences, or moments. Which ones would you bottle up and why? Write or draw on the bottles below, and try and give each one a label. If you prefer, you can make, label, and fill actual bottles.

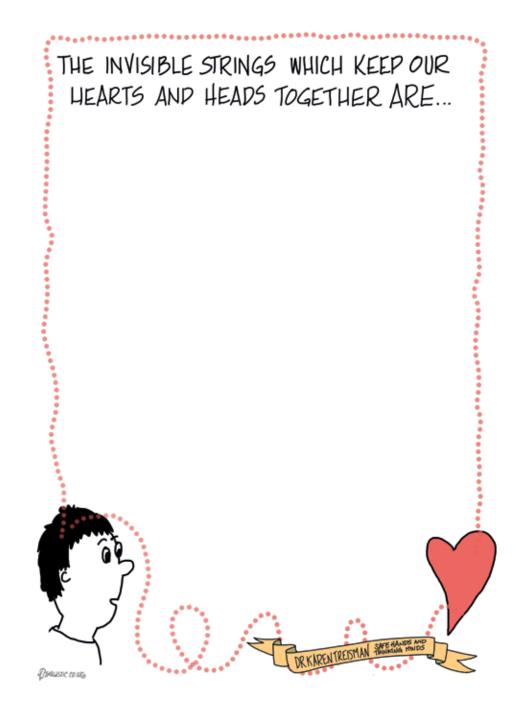
Try and remember and hold on to all the details — the smells, sounds, tastes, feelings, movements, and more — of each memory and moment.



Invisible String

Instead of string, you might prefer to think about beads, ribbon, seaweed, or pearls which tie you together and keep you connected.

Write down or draw the different qualities, things, memories, moments, feelings, and experiences which keep you connected to the person who has died. Remember that pieces of them are within you, and pieces of you are within them.



Me and My ... are Tied and Connected Together

Use the box at the bottom of the page to draw or write about yourself and the person you are connected to and tied together with. You might also like to write down the things that keep you connected, such as string, seaweed, beads, pearls, ribbon, or whichever connector you would like. You might also prefer to make something more creative to show this connection, like these examples below.



Being connected by gems, ribbon, and pearls.



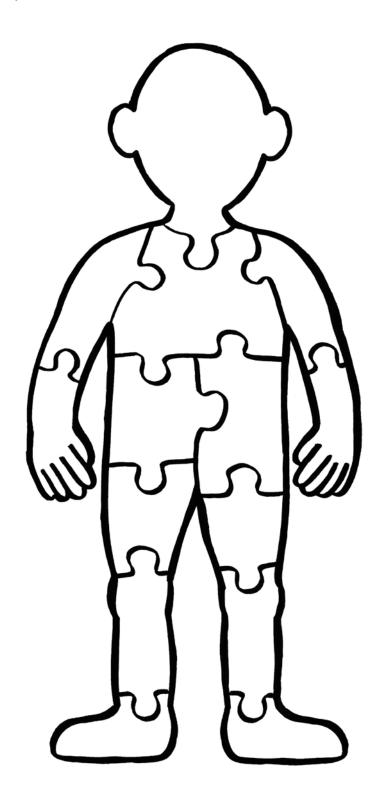
Being connected to the people I love using drawing and photos.



Being connected by pipe cleaners.

Different Parts and Pieces of that Person

You can colour, write, draw, or make a collage of all the different pieces and parts of that person which you want to remember, and which are important to you. This can also be different parts of their personality.



Other ideas for holding on to those special moments

Sometimes, if we do these exercises a few times, in different ways and with someone we trust and feel good with, it can help the special moments feel even stronger, more memorable, and real.

Remember, it is about taking your brain to the memory gym. You can do this with the person supporting you, or as an activity with other people, such as your family, or in a grief group.







- Keep a sparkle diary or feel-good moments diary, or write these down and pop them into a sparkle moments bottle, a container, or a jar (see photo on the left above).
- If you liked the treasure box activity (Activity 44) and wanted to go a step further, have a special box, treasure trove, or a jewellery box in which you can put things every day/week/month which have happened and which can make you feel good. You can then look at this when you need a boost or a pick-me-up. I use mine all the time!
- Also, if you liked the bottling-up idea (Activity 46), fill actual bottles with miniatures, or colours, or pictures, or sand to bring the memories and times alive, or you can decorate the bottles with labels of those things.
- If you liked the gifts and presents worksheet (Activity 43), bring this to life by making these things and wrapping them up as presents. Alternatively, fill a chocolate box with labels of all of those special times, or make a cake and think of it filled with all those memories and love (see photo on the right above).
- If you like the magnet idea (Activity 42), get a large magnet and write on and around it all the things that you want to stick and stay with you. You might also prefer to do this with Velcro or glue (see photo in the middle above).

• Do these activities on things like stars, rainbows, planets, or on photo items, many of which are scattered around this book, such as a photo blanket, photo collage, and photo bowl.

Which idea is your favourite? Which, if any, do you want to try? What other ideas do you have?

Ways to remember the person who has died

We know that it can be painful and hard to think about the person who has died, and that sometimes it can sting, but at other times we want to feel them close to us, we want to remember them, we want them around us, and we want to draw on their love, advice, energy, and much more. We want to keep them in our hearts and in our heads.

- There are no right or wrong ways to do this, and different people will do this at different times and in different ways. There is no rush. But if and when you are ready, here are some ideas to help you. You might like to come up with ideas that are special and unique to you. Some of these suggestions we have already spoken about in other sections of this workbook, but we will share them again as a reminder.
- Take your time to read them with the adult supporting you and think about which ones you might like to try, and which you wouldn't. Keep a note so that you remember. There are lots of ideas, so that you can choose what is best for you.







- Talk to the person or write things down that you want to tell them.

 This might include writing them a letter (Activity 52). This could also be filling a jar or box of all of those messages or memories.
- Talk about the person to the people around you; ask questions about them (Activity 22) and think back and remember all the special memories and moments you had with them (Activities 42—49). There might also be a particular smell, like their perfume, or a type of cooking or a particular song, or a particular place that you want to use or visit to think about that person.
- Look at photos of them or watch videos which feature them. You might want to create a video of that person or make a scrapbook about them.
- Make a special photo frame or keyring for their picture. You could also put a photo in the middle of a piece of paper and write all the things which you loved about that person around it (Activity 53).
- Come up with a name acronym, where for each letter of their name you write something about that person, or something they liked, or a part of their personality. For example, Gill. G Generous, and always gave me great presents. My favourite was my paw patrol collection. I Interesting. I loved hearing her stories of travelling, especially when she was younger and went to Africa. L Laughter. She has the best and funniest laugh, with a little snort in it. Another L Love. I loved her and she loved me.
- You might like to do this with who the person was: DAD, GRANDPA, MUM (Activity 51). You could also make their name out of things they liked, or out of items and objects like those you find in nature, or pasta.
- Make a doll which looks like them or decorate the doll with all of your favourite things about that person — or make a keyring of that person or a reminder of them.
- Make a blanket, pillow, teddy, or a different item with photos of that
 person or their clothes. For example, either make a pillow using fabric
 pens of different pictures and memories with that person, or have it
 designed by a shop using lots of photos of that person. You could have
 one made with different pieces of their clothes (if you have these and
 are able to).

- Name a star after that person.
- Name or plant a tree or plant after that person.
- If you have space, decorate a stone for that person and put it in the garden, or somewhere special to you.



- Light a candle to remember or to think about the person who has died. This could be on their birthday or on other important days. Some people like to do this more regularly, like once a week. They then can have some time to think about the person. To make this even more special, make or design your own candles. You can either make your own candle holder and decorate it with wood or glass pens, or you can buy a candle-making kit and decorate the wax on the candles themselves. Some people do this but with a flower vase or another item.
- Make a memory and keepsake box which you can fill with special items from that person. This can be whatever you like but could include things like cards, photos, items of theirs, things you collected together. You might like to decorate the outside of the box. This is where you can put all the things which you treasure (and will fit) in one place. Use Activity 50 to think about what you might like to put in your memory box. The box can be a shoe box, a jewellery box, a tin, a bought box, or anything

- you choose. You can also put things in it that you made during this workbook or beyond.
- Decorate hearts, stars, or another shape with things which you miss and love about that person, and keep them in a jar, a bag, or your memory box. If you celebrate Christmas, you could make an ornament to hang on the tree for that person. Or make bunting to decorate a room, which you could have up all year round.
- Put up a plaque or a sign in that person's name, for example on a bench in a park. Or give money to a charity in that person's name.
- Make or get a piece of jewellery that reminds you of that person. For example, each string or bead can represent a different memory or part of that person, so that when you are wearing it, they are with you.
 Some lovely pieces of jewellery can be made where that person's name, handprint, or photo is put on them.
- Talk about the person using coloured sand (or make your own with salt and chalk). Each colour can represent a different memory with that person, or a different part of their personality, or the things you loved/liked about them. Fill a jar or a bottle or a keyring with the sand. You could put other things in with the sand, such as glitter, a flower, a special stone, or a miniature reminder.









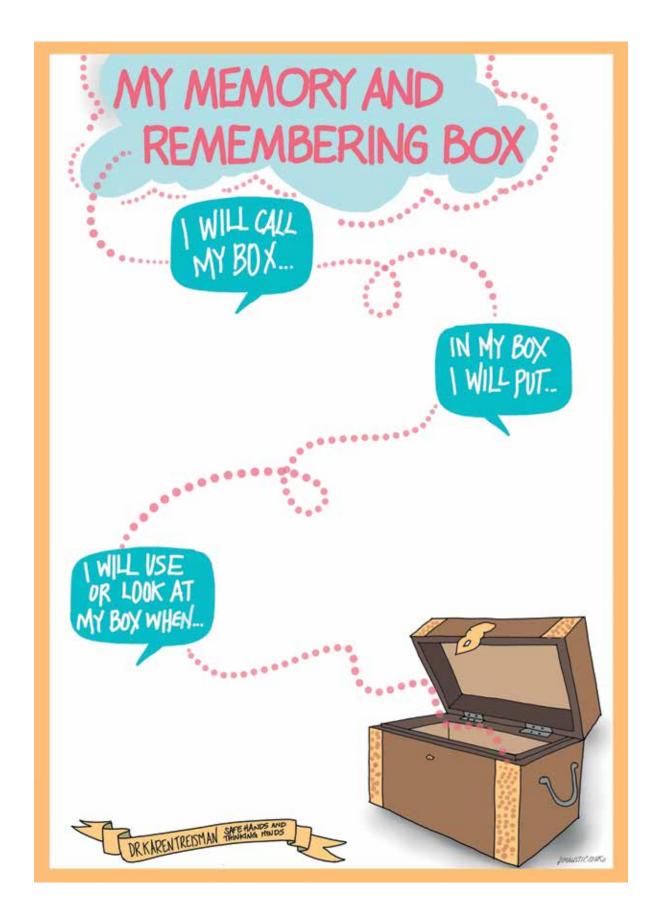




There are lots of ideas here. Which, if any, have you done already? Which, if any, might you like to try or suggest to someone else? If there are ones you might like to try, where and when would you like to do this? Who with? What do you need to help you? What do you need to feel comfortable and supported to do them? Do you have any worries or apprehensions about doing them? Do you have another idea that isn't included?

The next activities will give you some templates to support some of the above ideas.

My Memory and Remembering Box



Name Acronym

As shared above, you can write down the name of the person who died and make up a name acronym with the letters (this could be their first name, middle name, last name, nickname, or their relationship to you, like grandma or mum).

Once you have written their name down, try and think of a word/quality/talent/skill/thing/memory/ part of that person to go with the first letter of their name. It can be more than one thing if you



want. For example, as shown in the picture, for the name Kate, K-K ind, A-Affectionate, T-Trustworthy, and E-Energetic were chosen. Or for Dad: D-Dogs; his favourite was a pug. A-America was a favourite holiday. D-Doughnuts. I loved it when we went to the cinema and he got me a doughnut as a treat.

It can also be a good idea to get some help with this. Ask your family, friends, teachers, and so on.

If you like you can then draw a picture, poster, sign, piece of art showing their name acronym. Other things to do with their name include:

- Making their name using items from nature or from different materials, such as stones, twigs, leaves, grass, flowers, feathers, pebbles, bark, pinecones, shells, conkers, buttons, stickers, glitter, pom poms, feathers.
- Making their name using pasta pieces, rice, dry beans, and so on.
- Making their name out of beads, ribbons, miniature toys, and so on.

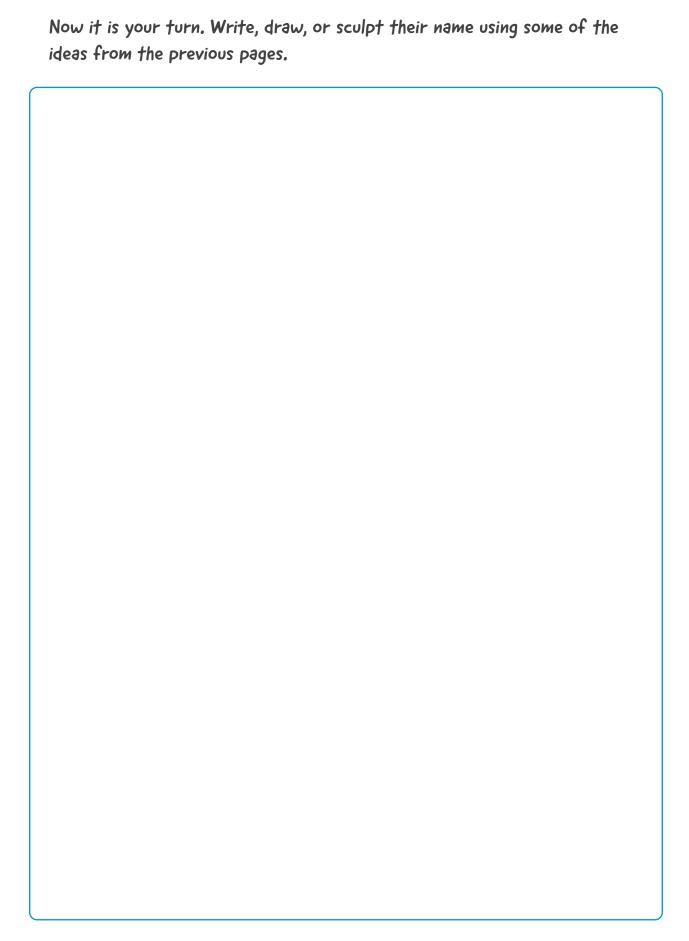




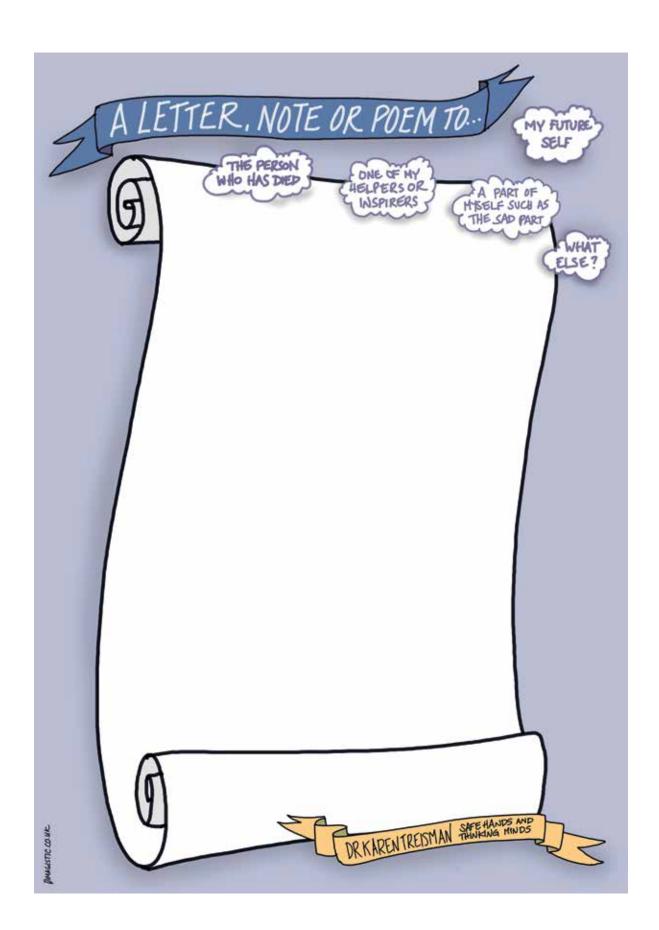
- Thinking of words that start with the letters of their name. For
 example, A apple, ant, atlas, art, antelope, air, alligator, astronaut,
 aeroplane, arrow, avocado, arm.
- Thinking of things which you like doing or seeing that go with the letter of their name.
 For example, B — bowling, ballet, bike, bathing, brushing my hair.



Activity 51 continued



A Letter, Note, or Poem to...



All About the Person who has Died

Choose a photo or draw a picture of the person who has died. All around

the photo or drawing, write down, draw, or stick things about them, their likes, their hobbies, their smell, and so on. Also, you might want to add things about your relationship and your time with them, like the things they did and said, the things you want to hold on to about them.

Saying Goodbye

Saying goodbye can mean different things to different people. Some people see it as a 'goodbye for now' or a 'see you later'. Some people think it is a goodbye to one type of relationship and a hello to another type of relationship.

We have spoken about some ways in which you can remember and soak in the person who has died, and many of these are also in a way saying goodbye. Other people will want something a bit more formal.

Some people will go to funerals or to cremation ceremonies and other people won't. This can be an opportunity for some to start saying goodbye. Saying goodbye can take time and be an ongoing journey.

Again, there is no right or wrong and you need to find what works for you, with the help of those people around you, and you might want to do this more than once. Some ideas for saying goodbye include:

- Have a memorial ceremony. This is where you can say goodbye to the person. You might have photos, songs, videos, stories of the person. Some people do this with friends and families. Some have lots of different ceremonies. Some do this with just one or two special people, or with their toys. If you like, you could write a poem, a song, or a few words, or draw a picture for or of the person.
- Use things like their memory box or candle, or things we shared in Activities 42-53 to say goodbye.
- Choose flowers or a special item and put it somewhere special and important to them. When in this place, you might like to say something or do something to say goodbye.
- Write down messages to the person and release them into the sky in a balloon or a lantern.
- Write messages in a bottle and let the bottle go in some water.

These are just a few ideas. Have you done any of these? Are there any that you might like to try or ones that you don't want to do? If you do want to try one of these, how would you like to do it, who with, and when? (It is important to take your time and to have things around you which can help you, so that you are not alone.) What others would you add?

Reflecting on Our Journey and What We Have Learned

Treasure Coping Tools

We have shared so many different coping treasure tools, from breathing exercises, to making a memory box, to having a sensory box, to a memory candle, to creating sparkling magical moments, and many more! These next few pages will give you an opportunity to think about which are your favourites, which you are going to do, which are helpful, which you are going to try, which you don't like, which you might add, and so on!



Ollie had eight coping tools to match his eight legs. How many will you have?

Remember, it is super important to practise, practise, practise so that the ideas go into your muscle memory. This means that you too will be rich with treasure tools! The more you take time to write them down and to talk about them, the more you will remember them.

It can also be helpful to think about when they might be helpful, when they might be less helpful, who to do them with, what makes a difference, and how you feel before them, during them, and after them. The adult going through this book can support you in thinking about that. There is also an octopus worksheet which you can draw and write on, or you can make your own. You can also use the treasure box worksheet in Activity 44 to talk about a treasure box of tools, or the patchwork in Activity 12 to talk about a patchwork of possibilities. You could also make or draw a hand of hope or a protective palm. You might also have a different idea. You can also bring these alive through making three-dimensional versions like in the photos below:



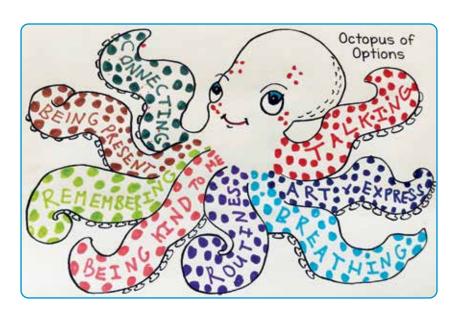
Treasure box of tools.



My protective palm or hand of hope.



A chain of tools.



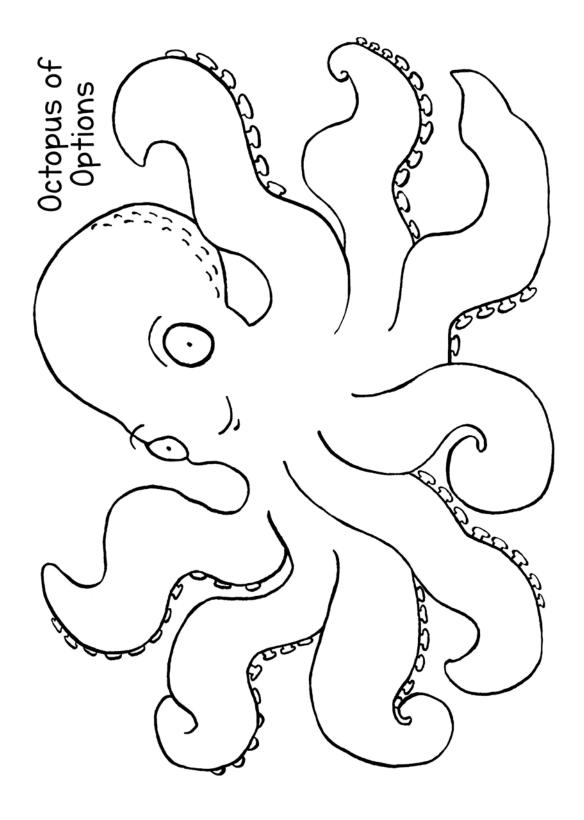
My octopus of options.



My tower of tools.

Octopus of Options

Write, label, or draw some of the different coping tools and treasures on the octopus's arms — this shows you your octopus of options.



Activity 57

Journey of Grief and Loss

As we have seen throughout this workbook, grief over someone dying is an ongoing journey. It can be a rollercoaster, it can feel like a long road, or like riding the waves. Throughout the journey, there can be different ups and downs, highs and lows. We can also learn a lot of different things about ourselves and about other people. We can see our thoughts, feelings, understanding, and our lives shift and change. Grief and death can be so painful and difficult. It can be great to remember that you are strong, brave, and special — and that you have

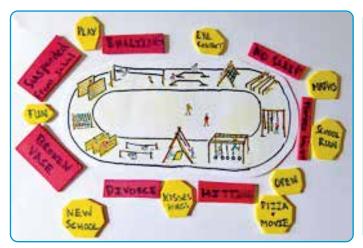


overcome and are continuing to overcome and navigate some big feelings and situations. So, it can be useful to take some time to think about this journey. This might be an activity you come back to over and over again throughout the months and years. First, with the help of the adults who support you, and who know you best, write down a list of these things. You can keep on adding things to this list. Then you can draw, sculpt, mould, or write down all of the different things which you have overcome, navigated, conquered, and made it through. Take some time to think about what changes there have been, what you have learned, what obstacles you have navigated through, and how different you feel.

- To help you think about your journey, take a big roll of paper and spread it across a floor or pin it to a wall. You could think of your journey as a river, a road, a path, a rollercoaster, snakes and ladders, and so on.
- Get a piece of paper and divide it three ways, or you can use three separate pieces of paper. Mark them with: then, now, the future. You can then write, draw, or make a collage of how things were, how things are now, and how you hope things will be in the future.

 Make this even more creative and fun by showing what you have overcome and navigated through by using things like mountains, an obstacle course, a maze, riding the waves. You can sculpt, draw, make a collage, or write about navigating these.

Below are some ideas, and the worksheets which follow can support you in this.



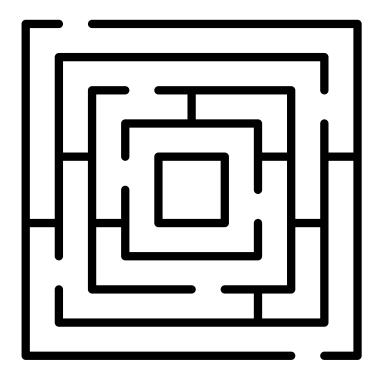


My Journey and the Lessons I have Learned



Ollie the Octopus Maze

You have learned so many different things in this workbook and gained so many new skills. See if you can find your way through this grief maze with Ollie the Octopus.





Activity 60 Certificate





Part 6 Guide for Adults

Introduction

Please read this adult section first before going through the workbook or the story with the child.

This book is intended to give you lots of ideas and strategies in order to support children (and your own/surrounding adults) in their experience of grief and death. This includes making sense and processing some of the aspects of the loss and having some tangible tools to turn to when feeling dysregulated and overwhelmed, as well as having practical and meaningful ways of remembering, honouring, and keeping connected to the person who has died. If you would like some more interactive learning experiences to support you on this journey, there is my online grief and loss module, which can be found at www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk.

Frequently asked questions about this book

WHO SHOULD USE THIS BOOK, AND WHY?

This activity book is intended to be used by someone who has a positive and safe relationship with the child, such as a parent, caregiver, therapist, educational professional, social worker, or residential worker. It has been created alongside parents, carers, and children, so has very much been led and influenced by their ideas and voices. This book is likely to have something for everyone who has experienced a bereavement. It is about supporting children to make sense of and process a difficult experience, and attempts to be proactive in offering them some internal and external coping strategies for their grief journey.

While it is written by a clinical psychologist, and is therapeutic in nature, it is important to note that it is not a substitute for therapy, or for a formal clinical intervention. Should the need for a formal intervention be indicated, you are advised to seek professional advice. As you read certain activities, you will have a sense of whether they are suitable for the child you are supporting, or whether they feel too complex. Only do what you and the child feel comfortable doing.

WHAT TYPES OF GRIEF, DEATH, AND LOSS IS THIS BOOK APPROPRIATE FOR?

In the story, Ollie the Octopus experienced the loss of his mother through an illness, Nicky the Narwhal experienced the death of her brother through an accident, and Mika the Manatee experienced the loss of his grandmother through old age/health issues. These were intentionally shared to highlight some of the different relationships the grief might be referring to. Of course, this can be extended to the death of a friend, a baby during pregnancy, a teacher, a friend, a pet, and so on.

This book has relevance to all experiences of death and bereavement. However, it does *not* specifically refer to or address some of the more complicated forms of bereavement, for example through suicide or murder. While there will certainly be some activities that will be useful and relevant in this context, they will need to be carefully thought about and adapted, and it is likely that some other specific resources may be useful in conjunction with this workbook. Moreover, again while many activities will be useful and can be successfully and powerfully adapted, this

workbook and story is not specifically referring to other losses, such as the loss of home, or losses experienced during family separation or divorce, or the losses of moving into foster care. This workbook is primarily focused on the experience of a death, and is for those children who are impacted by the death of a loved one.

DO I NEED TO FOLLOW THE WORKBOOK IN ORDER, AND DO WE NEED TO COMPLETE ALL OF THE PAGES AND ACTIVITIES?

It is important to remember that while this book has been written with an order and sequence in mind, based on what sequence has often been useful for many children who have experienced a bereavement, it is not intended to be offered as a step-by-step programme or to be followed page by page. Some children might skip a bunch of exercises, only do one or two activities, or only find one section helpful. Others might find it fun and useful to go through each activity. For example, some children will already have lots of regulating and relaxation techniques that they have learned, so they might skip that section, whereas others won't, and this will be a real priority. You might feel that you need to start with the regulating activities, because the child struggles to stay sitting down and to be in a place to listen, or you might do this at a later stage. This is why it is important for the supporting adult to read through this book first and to familiarize themselves with it, as well as knowing the individual child. Think about your aims, the quality of the relationship, where the child is at emotionally and in their needs and journey, what the priorities are. This means that the activities can be selected and photocopied should you not wish to have the whole workbook present. This will also vary depending on the child's age (social, emotional, developmental, and chronological), stage, interests, cognitive ability, learning needs, your relationship with them, the context, and so on. This will also be impacted by how much the child is struggling with the death. The more they are struggling, the more intervention they are likely to need. If they are doing relatively well (make sure this isn't just camouflaged), don't overwhelm or flood them with unnecessary direct work.

Each worksheet can be expanded on and enriched in so many ways, so my advice is that it is better to do fewer activities and worksheets in a really meaningful way than to rush through multiple ones. The aim is to support the child to connect, share, name, process, and integrate their feelings and experiences. These activities can also be used throughout the child's journey, and so may be useful to refer to or keep in mind for a later stage or when those questions or needs emerge. I hope you find these ideas helpful and creative.

WHAT TIME PERIOD SHOULD I DO THIS WORKBOOK IN? HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?

This is tricky to answer as it will really depend on the child and their needs, the relationships and protective factors which surround them, their presentation of grief, and the context. In essence, one worksheet, if done simply, could take 30 minutes to an hour; however, if done therapeutically and expanded on and enriched, it could take weeks. The idea of this book, and why there are so many options, is that it can follow the child throughout their journey. So, they might be able to dip in and out, or return to certain sections. This said, as it is a tricky topic, we do not want

to rush children or do a quick activity in between lessons, for example. We want to give them lead-up time, make sure they are in a thinking and calm place, can do the activity, and have enough time to reflect, end, and regulate again.

And as new questions emerge, or they go through new stages, or feel more able to talk, you might go back to the workbook. The idea is to not rush; it is about quality, not quantity. If being used as part of a grief group or within therapy as part of the sessions, you would be looking at a minimum of eight sessions but ideally many more.

WHAT IF I ONLY WANT TO READ THE STORY AND NOT DO THE WORKBOOK, OR USE THE WORKBOOK AND NOT THE STORY?

Although this book has been written to have both complementary parts, the story and the workbook, some children will simply benefit from the story of Ollie the Octopus as a standalone item, and it will be helpful and powerful in itself, as many reading books and stories are. There are some very poignant and useful questions shared in Activity 2, which could be a whole intervention in itself. Some people may choose to simply read the story as it is, or instead to create their own tailor-made activities. Others may benefit from trying one or two of the included activities; while others, particularly where the child is experiencing frequent feelings of worry, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and stress, will most likely find benefit in doing the majority of the activities, in addition to other supplementary tasks and interventions. Similarly, many of the activities in the workbook can be used as standalone sessions, and are applicable to adolescents and to adults, so they can be very helpfully used without the story. There is no right or wrong method, and the timing is crucial here too. For this reason, some pages in this book have been designed to be photocopiable, so that, if you wish, you can select the suitable activities and give them to the child separately or stapled together to make their own personalized book. This also means that the same activity can be used several times to target different situations or stages.

With this in mind, before you start the activity book, it can be helpful to ask them some questions about Ollie and gain an understanding of their grasp of the story and the more general topics covered around grief and loss. This sets the scene and gives you an initial understanding as to where the child is at, and also helps you to give them reasons as to why you are going through the activity book with them, and why it might be helpful.

THE STORY IS QUITE LONG FOR A CHILDREN'S STORY. DO WE NEED TO READ IT IN ONE GO?

In short, no. The story covers a range of painful experiences and powerful and emotive feelings, as well as key topics and themes. It is intended to plant some seeds and stimulate some responses and to be a springboard for further discussion. Therefore, there is a lot of richness within in, which makes it slightly longer than a typical children's story. This is also because it is therapeutic in nature. This said, some children will tolerate the whole story read in one session. However, this is by no means necessary.

Some children will want or need it read in bite-size chunks. Others will need or

want just one section to be explored or gone over a few times. There is no right and wrong way. Some children will need the book repeated several times at different stages. Others will have a sentence read and then paused for questions, comments, or linked to worksheets. Some will prefer it to be recorded and listened to rather than read. It is about knowing the individual child and being flexible and responsive.

With some children, you can stop and start. For example, you can talk about a relaxation strategy in the story, and you might want to stop and teach them it or practise it together; others won't want to interrupt the flow of the story.

WHY IS THERE A STORY? WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR AND BENEFITS OF THIS?

There is a story for a range of reasons. First, stories are child friendly, engaging, and accessible. They support a relational, shared, and connecting experience with another person. Reading with tones of voice, facial expressions, joint attention, and closeness can be comforting in itself. Stories can open up discussions and thoughts in a safer and unthreatening way. Having a character which is separate to the child can allow them to feel less exposed, on the spot, and to have some emotional distance from it. In much the same way, talking about other people or characters in TV shows and films can be easier than talking about oneself! Stories also allow themes to be introduced that support the child, showing them that they are not alone, and that there are other people/characters who feel like them. They can recognize parts of themselves in the characters, but also be supported to see some of the differences. A story is also intended to bring some fun, playfulness, and colour to a difficult topic.

This said, the workbook and worksheets can be used without the story being read, and many are applicable to older children, teens, and adults.

IT IS A TOUGH TOPIC, SO HOW DO I MAKE READING THE STORY AND DOING THE ACTIVITIES AS COMFORTABLE AND REGULATING AS POSSIBLE?

The story can be powerful and painful for the child listening to it and for the adult reading it. Therefore, being attentive and sensitive to the child's cues and needs is important. Give them a pre-warning that the book is about Ollie's mother dying and that there might be parts that are sad and hard to hear, but that you are there with them, it is okay to feel however they feel and you are doing it together, and

that there are lots of things Ollie does and says which may help. Give them permissive messages about letting you know if it is too much or if they need a break. It can also help some children to make the arts and crafts versions of Ollie before the story (Activity 6), so that they are excited and familiar with him. Or you can purchase the Ollie the Octopus character (from www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk or eBay) and hug him as you are reading.



Other things can be done to ensure that the child is in a calm and thinking space. For example, have a transitional item or a comforter with them, think about the lighting in the room and make it as soothing and calming as possible, make sure

that they are not hungry or thirsty, and pick your time carefully. Some children will need a regulating activity before, during, or after, or need a brain break – such as a colouring-in exercise, singing, listening to calming music, a breathing exercise, blowing bubbles, a relaxation exercise. Some ways of doing this are shared in Activities 30–41. Others might like to have things with them while reading to help them feel comforted and calm, like their sensory box (Activity 30), a weighted blanket, a stress ball, or a glitter stick.

It is very important that the adult reading the book is calm and regulated themselves. So, thinking about being prepared, reading it beforehand, and getting into the right zone will be very helpful and have a significant impact on the overall feel and climate created. Remember, children are sponges and emotions can spread and be contagious. The child needs to feel that they are held in safe hands, thinking minds, and regulated bodies by the supported adult. There are sections on the reader's own wellbeing and regulation later in this adult guide which expand on these.

WHY ARE THERE SOME ACTIVITIES WHICH ASK THE SAME THING IN A DIFFERENT WAY? AND WHY ARE THERE IDEAS WHICH INCLUDE THREE-DIMENSIONAL OPTIONS?

As you will notice throughout the book, there are some worksheets and sections which ask the same thing differently. For example, when talking about grief reminders, triggers, and hotspots, there is the jellyfish worksheet, the bug worksheet, and the remote-control worksheet (Activities 27–29); or for exploring positive memories and experiences, there are options from a magical magnet, to a treasure box, to relational gifts, to a time capsule, and so on (Activities 42–45). This has been done intentionally to accommodate the huge range of children and adults who will be reading this book. This, again, is to offer diversity and choice, and to acknowledge the uniqueness of each child. There is not a one-size-fits-all or a cookie-cutter approach.

Together, you and the child you are supporting can choose which exercises are the most appealing and relevant to them. It is overwhelming to do all of them, so try to be selective and tailor them; but it is why it is helpful for you to familiarize yourself with the options first. This variety is also about having more than one way to explore the same concept. For some children, this allows them to repeat the information in a different way, which can support processing of the information and for it to go into their muscle memory. So, exploring magical moments by doing the time capsule and the magnet supports them to process and sink the information in more than if you just did one – each time there can be more embedding and more sense-making opportunities. It also can keep it engaging and give options to expand on throughout their journey.

It is also acknowledged that children often learn and process best when making and doing things rather than just listening. By giving ideas to make and create things, the intention is that the child has fun, is creative, and has tangible items to look at and to remember. Also, creating something can give us perspective and we can notice and discover new things about it, both in the process of doing it and from the piece itself. It can also give that sense of distance and supports us

to externalize it, which can allow a fresh perspective and different way of viewing the problem/thoughts/feelings. The idea is also that often these creations are made with another person or people so that this also gives the child a relational experience, one of joy and connection, which is hugely important for the child. Moreover, three-dimensional projects are often more memorable. They also involve being active and doing, which can give the child a positive experience of being unstuck and moving around, and this can help with regulation, left- and right-brain activation, and much more.

CAN THE CHILD DO THE WORKBOOK ALONE?

This story and workbook cover a range of emotive and potentially painful themes. Therefore, it is intended that the child is supported to go through the story and workbook with an adult. The adult can offer them a supportive, containing, and safe experience, and it conveys the message that the child is not alone. This allows the adult to expand on the activities, and to respond to questions, as well as naming some common feelings. That is why it is very important to read this adult section first to support them optimally. This said, of course there is variety on an individual basis and we need to be led by the child. There may be some sections or activities which the child wishes to do on their own, or where the adult has started the process, like introducing the idea of a memory box, but then the child wants to decorate it alone. However, this must be done with care.

DO THE ACTIVITIES IN THIS WORKBOOK NEED TO BE DONE DIRECTLY WITH THE CHILD BY THE ADULT?

In short, no. These activities are designed to be done with the child; however, they can also be used in a range of other ways. They can be used indirectly to support the adults around the child to gain understanding, insight, and empathy – the carers, the parents, the teachers, the social worker, and so on. As well as providing tangible tools to respond to the child, the activities can also be used to give ideas about how to engage the child and things to be mindful about saying or not saying. They can also be used in training, supervision, and consultancy. For example, if the reader is a social worker, they might be offering support to a foster carer to carry out the work; or if the reader is a therapist, they might be supporting a youth worker to carry out the work.

Tips on reading this section



- Pick your moment to read this section ideally one when you are in a good thinking space, and not being distracted.
- Take your time, as they are all big concepts. You might want to read one section at a time.
- Be kind to yourself. Parenting or supporting a hurt and grieving child is a mammoth and complex task – even more so if the reader and supporter has also experienced a loss.
- Circle, underline, or highlight key points.
- Try and reflect on the questions asked the more we have a clear sense and

- understanding, the more we can help a child have more understanding and clarity. They will give you lots of ideas and tips for how to support the child with the activities. You can also anticipate and plan for potential obstacles and questions you may face.
- Revisit the sections (after all, repetition is key for remembering, learning, and processing, and each time you will notice, read, and think about something different).
- Make a poster, a crib sheet, a refrigerator note, a collage, a chart of the key points, and put it in your own words. This can support you in processing the material, allowing you to see it in a more visual way, and to make it fit for you.
- Keep a diary or record of which activities you are going to try to do/are already doing/want to think about.

Please note, these are not presented in order of importance.

What will be covered in this adult guide?

- Some common feelings, sensations, questions, and behaviours that we might see in children who have experienced a death of a loved one.
- Factors that might influence how a child responds to the death of a loved one.
- Spotlight on cultural considerations and cultural humility around death and dying.
- Factors that might make death and grieving more complex.
- Different developmental stages, children's understanding of death, and different responses and reactions we might see.
- Examples of things to say and not say about death and coping after a death, including when telling someone that a person has died.
- Extra tips for responding to tricky questions.
- A journey and a process making opportunities to feel safe to speak and share
- Attending a funeral, cremation, or other ceremony.
- A spotlight on whether the person who is dying is able to be part of the process.
- Ways of being, therapeutic qualities, and things to hold in mind to support children with grief and with the activities in this workbook (including hope, name it to tame it (Siegel and Bryson, 2011), connection before correction (Hughes, 2011), and much more,
- Spotlight on our own relationship with loss, death, grief, endings, and goodbyes.
- · Spotlight on our own wellbeing and wellness.
- Our own regulation and ability to be a regulator.
- Expansions on talking about feelings and the exercises in this workbook.
- Spotlight on children who retreat or bottle-up their feelings.
- When the child did not have a good relationship with the person.

Common responses, feelings, and body sensations related to grief



Experiencing a bereavement at any age can be incredibly painful, difficult, confusing, and hurtful, and many other feelings. This is particularly the case for children who generally don't have a concept of death, don't have the same cognitive framework to make sense and process the situation, and don't have the same coping resources – and even more so if the person who has died has been significant in their lives.

There are so many different feelings, sensations, and experiences which children and adults may go through during and after a bereavement, and throughout their lives. These images are by no means exhaustive or prescriptive but give a sense of some of those experiences. Full-page versions are available in Activity 8. Some reflective questions and expanding points follow.





REFLECTION QUESTIONS AND POINTS TO CONSIDER

• Take some time to think about these different responses. Which resonate for you as a reader, and from your experiences? Which seem as if they might be relevant for the child you are supporting? What might it be like to experience these? How can we see the world from the child's shoes and eyes (Activity 9)? Hold in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all, and each one of these feelings can be explored, enriched, and expressed. They will be unique in the way they are experienced and the meaning-making and sense-making for that specific child (for example, see Activities 15–20).

- How can we name and acknowledge these feelings or hold them in mind for the child?
- How might the child know they are not alone, and that their feelings are understandable and valid?
- How does knowing some of these feelings and experiences support us to stay connected to empathy, particularly at times when we might be seeing certain surface behaviours? What is that behaviour communicating? What is that behaviour camouflaging? If the behaviour could talk, what would it say? Who is the child behind the behaviour?
- What others would the child/you add? What is the child/you showing? What
 is the child/you keeping inside? What might the child think other people
 around them are thinking and feeling?
- What activities or tools in the workbook might be the most appropriate given their experience? For example, a child experiencing more tummy aches and headaches is likely to need different things from a child whose feelings are expressed as guilt, and so on.

Factors that might influence how the child responds to grief

As is shared above but is really important to re-emphasize and to expand on further, every young person is unique within a unique context, and the person reading this book is unique. There is not a cookie-cutter approach or a recipe-book way of doing things or understanding grief. Grief is messy, changeable, multi-layered, tangled, and variable. Some of the factors which may impact on how the young person experiences the death are described here (this is by no means an exhaustive or prescriptive list):

- Their age and stage not just their chronological age but also their emotional, social, and developmental age and stage.
- Their relationship to the person, their feelings about them, and the role that person played in their life. (See Box 7 for more on the complicated feelings around this.)
- The type and nature of death and the circumstances around it.
- Whether the death was expected or not.
- Their understanding about the death and about the concept of dying.
- Their religious, spiritual, cultural, and familiar discourses and narratives around dying, expressions of feelings, coping, and so on.
- Their interactions and time spent with the person before they died.
- Their sense-making and meaning-making about the death, themselves, others, and their world for example, their beliefs, assumptions, expectations, cognitive frameworks, including self-blame, guilt, and shame.
- · Their feelings about the death and about health.
- The support system around the child, including relationships, their school, access to support services, and so on.
- Other people's responses, support, wellbeing, and reactions.
- Other protective and buffering factors in the child's life.

- Their strengths, skills, resources, and protective qualities.
- Their interests, passions, hobbies, motivators, and so on. (This is less so about the death but will impact how you adapt the work and make it as engaging and appropriate for the child as possible.)
- Their experience of prior losses, and if the death occurred in the context of other major losses or changes, such as moving to a new house, starting school, parental divorce, war.
- The context of other traumas and distressing experiences, such as abuse, bullying, poverty, racism, neglect, court involvement, war, homelessness.
- Their temperament and unique attributes.
- Their learning style.
- Their learning needs and cognitive abilities, including learning difficulties and disabilities, and neurodevelopmental needs.
- · Their physical needs.
- Access to rituals, routines, and structures which support the child, for example not being able to do rituals due to a pandemic, or being in a different country, or having complications around the person's death that need further examination.

Take some time to reflect and think about which of the above resonate with you. What reflections and discoveries do you have? What else would you add to this list? What is unique about the child you are supporting, and about their context and relationships? What might you need to take into account or be mindful of? What do you not know yet about the above, and might need to explore further?

How might you adapt the worksheets and activities to meet the child's needs, interests, age, and so on?

Some of these are expanded on further in the following box texts.

Box 1: Spotlight on cultural considerations and cultural humility around death and dying

As previously discussed, it is important to hold in mind cultural considerations and to respond with cultural humility. This is not about 'cultural competence', as I don't believe we can be competent in someone else's culture, but it is about being reflective, open, and curious. As practitioners supporting a child, we must be mindful and respectful of the cultural narratives, practices, and responses around death, caring, and health. This includes holding in mind how our own biases, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes can colour these, judge these, over-identify with them, and so on (see Box 4 on our own relationship to death and dying). This can also be a tapestry interwoven with different members of the family or the community's differing beliefs and traditions. There isn't a one-size-fits-all and there are so many nuances and layers within people/families/communities' cultural expressions, traditions, and emphasis. Therefore, each person will be unique within the cultural context. It is crucial to be considerate and sensitive towards these cultural contexts, and also

to be mindful of assumptions. For example, don't assume someone practises a certain way or that their culture is important to them because of how they look, and likewise, don't assume that it isn't important because these things are less known or visible. There are also the added layers of spirituality, legacy, intergenerational patterns, and traditions to consider.

Some ways in which death and dying might be influenced by culture are as follows (this list is by no means exhaustive or prescriptive):

- Different mourning periods and timeframes, including different timeframes in moving the body. This can extend to how long, for example, prayers go on, when the headstone is placed at the grave, how long people wear certain clothes.
- Different rules around the body, for example the body not being left alone, no eating around the body, the body being covered, having the eyes closed, specific cleansing rituals. There can also be different beliefs around who can move and attend to the body, such as a person of a particular religion or role, or only a man.
- Different beliefs about where the body/soul/spirit goes to after death or after the burial, cremation, or other means of laying the body to rest.
- Different beliefs about the afterlife, for example reincarnation, hell, heaven, karma.
- Different views, rules, and laws about organ donation.
- Different narratives about why people might die and the reasons for this, and about the importance of a peaceful death. For example, some buddhists believe that a person's state of mind as they die is very important so that they can find a happy state of rebirth when they pass away. There can also be other beliefs around death being a punishment, or a gift, death being when someone is out of sync, and so on. Within this, there can be very different cultural narratives around certain deaths, such as those from HIV/AIDS, suicide, murder, honour-based violence, or an overdose.
- Different clothing, garments, or outfits to be worn by the person who has died, and also by the mourners. This can also depend on the gender, the family order, the tribal group, and so on.
- Different beliefs about what happens if one is not able to do these rituals, for example being stuck, not being laid to rest, will haunt others, be in conflict. This can be particularly difficult where rituals are not able to be done due to circumstances such as a pandemic, the practices being illegal in that country, being separated in different countries, not having the financial means or the necessary resources or equipment to carry out the rituals.
- Different rituals for the people mourning or celebrating the person who has died, for example eating certain foods, fasting, shaving one's head, saying a particular prayer, cleansing the body with a particular oil or liquid, chanting, saying specific prayers, burying the person with the head facing a particular direction, like towards Mecca.
- Different expectations around the expression of emotions towards the death, for example wailing, not showing distress, laughing. This can extend

- to different expressions of emotion in other contexts, such as when one feels sad, lonely, happy.
- Different levels of openness, planning for, talking about, and discussing death and dying and wider responses and emotions.
- Different expectations about the burial or cremation, for example drinking, dancing, and rejoicing versus mourning and wearing black, and all the shades in between.
- Different expectations around money, such as a very simple funeral versus an almost wedding-like affair. Also, different rules, beliefs, values, and expectations around inheritance, existing money, and property.
- Differences in the type of coffin and gravestone, or the urn used. For example, when I was in Ghana I visited and saw the use of *adebuu adekai* (fantasy coffins). These coffins are supposed to represent a significant element in the person's life, and could include symbolic representations of the person's occupation (a boat for a fisherman), cherished items, or an unfulfilled dream (burying a woman in a coffin made to look like an aeroplane for her expressed interest to travel by air but meeting her death before she was able to accomplish this feat).
- Expectations about family changes, for example marrying the brother of one's dead husband, or moving back in with the family of origin, or making custody or living arrangements for children.
- Different family and community experiences of death and how common it is, for example when the mortality rate is high. This also varies across families and cultures in terms of when someone is classed as 'unwell', 'old', 'disabled', and so on.
- Different expectations of presents or responses from other people to the family of the person who has died, for example certain phrases, certain types of presents, donations of money, types of food.

Are there others you would add? How comfortable do you feel exploring and discussing these? Which, if any of these, apply to you or others you know?

Box 2: Factors that might make death and grieving more complex

Grief and loss, as we've said many times, can be complex and multi-layered but are unique for each person and within their unique context. This said, from the literature and from my clinical and personal experience, there are some factors which seem to make loss or grief more complex. Of course, this doesn't mean that if these occur it will be 'worse' or if these aren't present it will be 'better', but they are some elements to hold in mind, and reflect on, and be considerate of. It may be that aspects of this workbook are helpful but that some more specific or specialist resources or sources of support are needed, depending on the impact. Some of the factors below will be expanded on and some will just be listed as food for thought (this is by no means an exhaustive or prescriptive list).

Suicide or a drug overdose: This can be a very difficult experience and a hard

and painful concept for children and adults to process, make sense of, and understand. It can also be surrounded by all sorts of tangled feelings, such as guilt, blame, betrayal, rejection, shame, shock, confusion. It touches the core of some key emotions like desperation, hopelessness, what ifs, abandonment, anger, hurt, and so on. It also can surface and create so many painful questions and fears such as 'Did they not love me?', 'Was I not enough?', 'Will I do the same thing?', 'Did I drive them to it?', 'Is it my fault?', 'Were they too weak?', 'Could I have done more to help?', 'Did they really want to die? Did they know that it was final? Maybe it was just a cry for help?' Suicide can be further complicated by insurance, medical, forensic, and legal investigations needing to take place. This can add to the delay, heightened emotions, and the unknown, with additional new people involved, and questions being asked

Moreover, there can be some horrible and distressing images which people are left with of the person dying by suicide, even more so if they found them or have been told graphic details. Suicide can also be soaked in secrecy and in other people's insensitive or judgemental responses or questions, including wider negative discourses and narratives in society and how suicide can be portrayed in the media.

Although there is no right and wrong way to address this, and it is an individual preference, generally I, and many other people in the field, talk of 'died by suicide' as opposed to 'committed suicide', as the word 'committed' can have lots of associations to crimes, including being wrapped up in blame. It is important that the child is told that the person died by suicide. Although this is an incredibly painful thing to hear and complex to understand, this allows the child the words to start to make sense of their experience and connect the puzzle pieces. It is also about the child not finding out from other people, from the media, or when they are older and start researching or asking more questions. This later discovery can lead to resentment, confusion, and feeling betrayed or out of the loop. The child may question their trust in the people who are still alive and in their world. Also, and importantly, children are intuitive and learn through watching and soaking in their environment. Therefore, they often will pick up when there is an elephant in the room and they can try to make sense of this using their own imagination, which can be worse than the reality. Finding out the truth later can also lead to a delayed grieving process, and may convey messages around silence and secrecy (although, of course, this generally comes from a good place of wanting to protect the child). There are many specialist websites, books, and videos which support you specifically to talk about suicide with a child.

Murder: When someone has been murdered, many of the feelings related to suicide apply, as well as other feelings such as injustice, unfairness, shock, fear, anger, revenge, hatred, feeling unsafe, horror. This similarly can also have wider media and court implications which can compound the loss. As with suicide, there can also be some horrible images, sensations, visions, and questions around someone being murdered. There can be a range of additional complicating factors, for example if the person was murdered

by someone the child knew, such as their other parent; if the murder was by a person in authority; if the child saw the person being murdered. This experience can understandably also influence, shape, and shift people's beliefs about themselves, others, and the world. They may feel that 'others are dangerous', 'the world is a scary, unfair place', 'I am unsafe', and so on. As with suicide and depending on the child and their support and needs, this scenario is likely to need some more specialist resources and explanations. However, many of the worksheets in this workbook can be creatively applied and used.

- War/military/in the line of duty (e.g. the police, firefighter): This can be complex for numerous reasons, including being separated at the time, so not able to say goodbye, and having less recent memories of the person; suffering from shock and disbelief; not knowing details of the person's death and so having lots of unanswered questions; having to deal with the associated legal, media, and financial processes. The bereaved may also have mixed feelings about the person's job or choice of role, have heard scary stories or have worries about what happened and how the person felt at the time of their death, and thoughts around whether it could have been avoided. They may feel anger at the people/country they feel were responsible for their loved one's death.
- Shock/sudden: Death can be sudden, when the person is in an accident or a fire, is murdered, has a heart attack, becomes very unwell quickly. One minute everything is okay and the next moment everything has changed. This can be hard to process, accept, and make sense of. It can also create a sense of unpredictability and fear, a feeling that things are fragile and can be easily changed or uprooted. There is no time for the child to say goodbye, prepare for the death, ask questions, and so on. This shock or suddenness can also extend to when the death goes against common discourses, for example that it is older people who are unwell who die, but then a child or teenager dies, or someone has a late miscarriage or stillborn child.
- Complex relationship with the person: This is a really crucial aspect that is often not explored and discussed, and as a trauma specialist is one that I often see in practice. People often assume that someone is sad when a person dies and talks about the positive aspects of that person. But for some people, the person who died was hurtful, neglectful, even abusive, and the relationship may have been frictional, fractured, abusive, estranged, and so on. Some people might have unfinished business and unresolved feelings; others may feel relief or feelings of revenge or karma. For some, there will be a complex picture and a mix of many feelings which can be difficult to make sense of, such as disappointment at not being able to resolve the relationship, or mourning for the relationship they wish they had had or for the parts or memories they did appreciate. There may be aspects such as sadness and a range of feelings about the person, for example, not being sent to prison or not having to be confronted about their actions. Some people may feel guilty or confused at their responses, such as being sad even though the person had caused them harm or they had wished them dead; or

- the opposite, feeling as if they should feel more when they don't and all the shades in between. This can also be hard to name and articulate and also be exacerbated by dominant discourses and narratives around how one should feel and grieve. See Box 7 for more on this topic. This book focuses on Ollie and Orla having a close relationship, but this may not be the case for some children who experience a bereavement.
- Argument or hurtful words before: If someone had an argument with the person or said hurtful things before the person died, it can haunt or hover over them afterwards. It could be things like 'I hate you', 'You're not my dad', 'You're mean', 'I'd be better off without you', 'I wish you'd leave me alone', 'I wish you would die', 'I wouldn't care if something happened to you', 'Everything is your fault.' This can also include actions like slamming the door, walking away from an argument, putting down the phone, or cancelling a plan. Children can have feelings of guilt, blame, responsibility, and regret. For some people, this can lead to feeling that it was their fault and they caused the person to die. For some children, this can manifest in all sorts of ways, such as being scared to talk, becoming mute, seeking constant reassurance, feeling less able to show anger again, creating rituals to protect themselves and others, and various other responses.
- Context of other losses including refugee/asylum/care/previous losses such as in a fire: For a child who has already experienced numerous other losses, this adds yet another loss to their lives. For example, this includes children in the care system or who have been adopted, those who have already had a personal bereavement, and children who are asylum-seekers or refugees. The new loss can feel even weightier, a culmination, yet another example of how unfair and difficult life is, another deprivation, and so on. This can also take people down memory time holes back to those other losses. If those losses were painful, unprocessed, or raw, the current loss can also understandably get tangled up with the past ones.
- Other people's responses: Other people's responses can be painful and can
 worsen the experience of the death for example, people pretending it
 hasn't happened and brushing it under the carpet, asking probing, intrusive,
 or insensitive questions, lacking empathy or compassion, being judgemental,
 invalidating or minimizing the loss, telling children to do things like man up
 (discussed in later sections). This is why education about responses to grief is
 so crucial, as well as ensuring that the child has a positive team around them.
- Resulting in major changes: Sometimes a death results in major changes in the child's life, such as having to move to a new house, moving to a new country, living with a different person, changing schools, having a change in lifestyle.
- Learning disabilities: When the person has learning disabilities, this can exacerbate the situation if they don't understand where the dead person is, why they have gone, and why they are not coming back. They can become distressed and confused, particularly if the person who died was the main caregiver. They also can ask repeatedly where the person is, and feel forgotten. For those who are non-verbal or who can't articulate how they are

- feeling, or where support isn't offered, this can be further complicated, as there can be an assumption that they are okay or that they will get over it or forget about it. Their feelings can be minimized and trivialized. They might communicate distress through their behaviours and other expressed needs. This also might result in major changes such as having to move houses.
- Blame/involved in some way: It can be extremely complicated when the child was or feels that they were involved in some way in the person's death. For example, the parent was driving to their school play when the accident happened, or their mother died during their birth, or they fell into the river and the parent saved them but couldn't save themselves.
- Disenfranchised grief: This is grief that people experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, socially validated, or publicly mourned, or when the loss isn't seen as worthy of grief. For example, when the relationship is stigmatized (e.g. an ex-partner in an extra-marital affair), when the mechanism of death is stigmatized (e.g. death from suicide or overdose), when the person grieving is not recognized as a griever (e.g. co-workers or ex-partners), and when the way someone is grieving is stigmatized (extreme grief responses). This can also be the grief when a child is removed by social services, the grief of a foster carer when a child moves on, the grief following an abortion, or the grief of someone's personality and presence changing, in the context of dementia, and so on.
- Person being in pain and suffering: It can be very painful and difficult if the child watched the person they loved deteriorate, be in pain, and suffer. This can leave horrible images and fears for the child, as well as ongoing questions about whether they are still in pain or if that is how everyone dies, or if that is what it means to get sick. This can contaminate some of the child's memories of the person before they were unwell, and so can make it even more important to hold on to the positive memories and the essence of the person. It can also have ripple effects on those around the person as those caring for the dying person might have been contending with many different struggles and feelings, and so their relationship with the child, time with them, or responses to them might have changed or been impacted.
- Not able to do one's relied-on rituals and routines: If for a variety of reasons the child and family are not able to carry out the 'usual' routines and rituals around the death, this can make things feel harder and more unresolved. Examples might include, during the Covid-19 pandemic, people not being able to attend funerals, or see and hug wider networks of family and friends. This might also be due to investigations or proceedings, practices being illegal in that country, being in another country to where the person died, not having financial means to carry out the rituals or access to the necessary equipment, and so on. There may be disputes in the family, including different beliefs and opinions around the death and how the person's body should be laid to rest. This can create additional tensions and stressors, as well as fears, depending on the belief system around things like unfinished business, being unresolved, being stuck, and so on.
- Lack of support and/or resources: For a variety of reasons, there may be few

support systems or resources in place for the child, including limited access to therapy if needed, an unsupportive school placement, family members who are not particularly supportive, or being in a socially isolated situation. This lack of support and a team around the child can be an additional risk factor.

- Trauma and abuse: Grief and loss can be exacerbated and can compound other struggles if the child is already experiencing abuse and trauma, such as physical abuse, domestic violence, neglect, and sexual abuse, or if the child has experienced a lack of safety, security, and containment in their attachment and bonding experience with their primary carer. This also applies if the child is experiencing other forms of oppression, discrimination, and stigma in their life; and is already being bullied or excluded. The feelings can be reinforced further if the child already has, for example, difficulties with regulating their emotions, feelings of loneliness, feelings of abandonment, and a limited repertoire of protective factors and people.
- Health anxiety and generalized anxiety: If the child already has concerns around health and anxieties around their body and illness, and then someone close to them becomes unwell, this can exacerbate and reinforce those fears. Also, if the child already has fears that the world is unsafe and then the person is in an accident or murdered, again this can highlight and deepen those worries.
- Same genetic condition: It can be complex when more than one family member or the parent and the child have the same genetic condition and so the parent or family member's death increases the child's own sense of fear, vulnerability, and hopelessness.

What else would you add? Do any of these apply to the child you are supporting or to your own experience of grief?

Different developmental stages, children's understanding of death, and different responses and reactions which we might see

It is very important to hold in mind that different children will understand and make sense of death in very different ways. For many children, this will be their first experience of death, and it will not be a concept that they know or understand. This can be further complicated by things on TV, in books, and in computer games, when characters can come back alive, are rescued, transform into a new character, and so on. Many children will have magical thinking and believe that the person will come back. Added to this, children at some ages and stages do not have the concept of permanence or of things being final or forever. This is often captured when a child breaks a toy and struggles to comprehend how it cannot be fixed; or when they squish or step on an ant or on an insect and then they want it to come back to life and move again; or they believe they can make someone feel better by saying abracadabra, or by using their doctor's kit or calling their toy ambulance.

Young children generally operate in a more 'me' space than older children and

adults – they relate things more understandably to themselves and their needs due to their developmental stage, and they don't have as much access to alternative perspectives and to a wider context. This is one of the reasons why children will often ask when something happens, such as a divorce or a death, if it was their fault, if they were to blame, or if they could have done something different or helped more. It can be further complicated if there are things which reinforce this.

Another common response is that children can become increasingly worried about something else happening to another loved one or themselves. They can fear that other people will get sick or die or leave them (e.g. Will I die? Will my mum now die? Will I be left behind? That person coughed, are they going to die?). This can show itself in a range of different ways, including asking for regular reassurance, increasing in anxiety around separation (needing more attention and wanting to be close), struggling more at night-time, becoming more hypervigilant about their and other people's bodies (e.g. when they cough). Moreover, some children's pain will manifest in physical sensations such as tummy aches, headaches, rashes, fatigue, and tense muscles. Other children might show this through their physical movements, such as rocking, clumsiness, or staying in the foetal position.

At the other end of spectrum (and some children understandably will oscillate between the two extremes), some children become much more worried about relying on other people in their life because of the fear of them leaving or abandoning them (e.g. 'I can't invest myself because people leave me', 'It is too painful to go through this again'). They can therefore feel worried to let themselves love or be close, and so find ways (often not consciously) to protect themselves from further loss and pain. So, this can show itself through rejection, being overly independent, not wanting or asking for help, wanting to do everything themselves, shutting others or themselves away, retreating, isolating, not investing in relationships in the same way – and in some cases through pushing-away behaviours like verbal or physical aggression. We can see some young people become more focused and attached to items such as their video games or toys, as they can feel safer and less emotionally heavy.

Following a bereavement, children can also appear socially, emotionally, and developmentally older or younger than their chronological age. For example, children might regress and appear younger. If they were previously potty trained, they might suddenly start wetting themselves, or they might want to be fed by an adult. These children can also present as being more attention-needing and connection-seeking (not attention-seeking) than previously. Alternatively, we can also see children who go into a place of independence, relying only on themselves and needing to be responsible and look after themselves and grow up quickly.

Another important element of how children can respond following a death is that they dip in and out of their grief. For example, they might seem fine one minute and not the next. They can be crying and very upset, then moments later be happily playing and laughing. This is a natural and expected way in which children grieve. In these times, we need to follow the child's lead, while also creating safe spaces and opportunities for them to process and express how they feel (this will be expanded on in the following sections). It is also worth mentioning that in some children we might see big responses to seemingly small things, such as not getting

the snack they want, or their pencil breaking. Of course, this can be part of typical child development, but also, we can sometimes see their pain and expressions of distress showing in those times. Children can also take their lead from the responses of the people around them, and so are very much watching and noticing other people's reactions and messages about grief.

A child might also ask about the person and their whereabouts over and over again and require patience and repetition from the person they are asking. It is important that they feel they can ask and talk about the person, and it gives their mind time to process and let the information soak in. It can be difficult for the other adults to be reminded and have to talk about it repeatedly, when they are in pain too, and processing the death themselves. This is the child's way of trying to connect the dots and put the puzzle pieces together, but also their concept of time and sometimes their ability to be able to retain and remember information is different from an adult's. So, for example, an hour can feel much longer to a child, or they can wake up from a nap and think it is the next day, as they haven't quite grasped time and orientation skills.

Some children may seem indifferent and either act 'normally' or respond in a very matter-of-fact manner. Again, this is another way to process the information, particularly if the person was key to the child's life (we need to remember that our relationship to the person might be very different from the child's). There are many reasons for this. For example, some might have gone into shutdown, avoidance, or dissociation mode (too painful to think about/in shock/overwhelmed); some might not understand the gravity of what has happened; others might be trying to protect their other parent; and others might not have known the person that well.

Children also can have concerns and worries which may not occur to adults, or may be different from adults' worries, so we need to explore these and get a sense of what the child is thinking. Try to shrink yourself to be like the child. Be mindful about making assumptions. Many of the worksheets can support you and the child with this.

With the above in mind, some of the sections that follow will discuss ways of supporting children and responding to questions. However, it is crucial to give age-appropriate, clear, honest, and straightforward explanations. These can be added to depending on the child's questions and as the child gets older. It is important within this to check the child's understanding and to leave space for questions and queries. Some things to say or be mindful about not saying are shared in the following section.

Examples of things to say and not say about death

It's important to say first that there is no right or wrong or formulaic way of responding in these situations. It will depend on the child, the adult, the context, their age and stage, their questions, their prior experience, and so on.

Before we look at some examples, it feels important to acknowledge that we all do the best we can do and there is no such thing as perfect or a cookie-cutter approach or answer. These tips are not to shame or upset people or make people feel that they can't say anything, but rather to support the reader to stop, think,

and reflect. We are all human. And if these things have already been said, think about how to apologize, take ownership, and perhaps offer another narrative. This is why it can also be helpful to practise, role-play, and share these with other people around you. We are all learning together, so be kind to yourself and those around you – even more so if you too have experienced a bereavement and are coping with and processing this loss yourself. Moreover, many of these things have been engrained in societal and family responses to grief, and so they can be hard to go against the grain.

THE PERSON WHO HAS DIED IS IN THE BATH/IS ON HOLIDAY/IS SICK/WENT AWAY/WENT TO SLEEP FOR A LONG TIME/WAS OLD

Although with the best of intentions we try to find ways to explain death in the most palatable and pain-free way, it can lead to more confusion and questions, as well as contributing to some worrying leaps in thinking. For example, if the person went on holiday or went to sleep for a long time, the child might associate sleep and holidays with death and something scary, which can lead to them fearing those things. This is the same, for example, when we say they were sick. I used this in the story for Ollie as I wanted it to be general, so that the reader can explore more. However, we don't want a child to think that if they get sick with a cold, for example, or if another family member gets sick with a cold, they will die. So, in cases like this, it can be helpful to name the illness, like cancer, with a brief explanation, including the severity. It can also be important to explain that there are different types of cancer, so, again, if someone else has cancer the child doesn't automatically assume that the person will die too. Similarly, to a child age five years old, a ten-year-old seems old to them and way bigger. So, if we are talking about old age, we need to reassure them about that.

USING AND EXPLAINING THE WORDS 'DEATH AND DYING'

If the child doesn't have the words 'death' or 'dying', it can get complicated when other children around them use those words. They may feel lied to, not trusted, kept out of the loop, confused, and so on. This can also impact on them feeling as if they can't trust the people who are still there with them to be honest and truthful. This can lead to confusion and resentment. They need to be allowed to start grieving and to have words to put to their experience. So, where possible, it is important to use the words 'death', 'dying', and 'dead'. This extends to things like saying died by suicide, or from cancer, or that the person was in a serious car accident and they died. The child's understanding of this can be checked and explored, and they might need it explained several times. Some people find it helpful to use the comparison of when an insect or pet has died, or if there has been a character who has died, such as Mufasa in the *Lion King* or Bambi's mother.

This is why, as in Ollie's story, it can be important to give an explanation such as that their heart stopped beating, they stopped breathing, and they are dead; they are not hurt or in pain, and they won't be coming back. Some children will also find it useful to hear things like 'they can't move, eat, drink, talk', and so on. The amount of detail will vary depending on the child's age, but again if it were cancer, or an accident, or a heart attack, they should know this. This said, they do not

need the graphic or traumatic details. For example, telling a child the injuries the person sustained and how they looked is unlikely to be helpful at that time. This is similar if there has been a suicide or a murder. The child needs to know, but they do not need graphic details and sensationalized language; they can be given enough information for them to start putting the pieces together and to know the truth but not to be exposed to scary words or images. With age, more information is likely to be sought and shared. It is also important to check what their understanding is and to give them space to ask questions. Some children might find it easier to write these questions down or to ask them to a toy or through a puppet. Others will do this through stories, such as Ollie the Octopus.

HOW TO GIVE CHILDREN A GENTLE WARNING WHEN DELIVERING THE NEWS THAT SOMEONE HAS DIED – AND SOME QUESTIONS WHICH THEY MIGHT ASK

We will discuss several ways of being with and supporting children when talking about feelings, and this will be expanded on in further sections. However, with regards to sharing the news when someone has died, it is important to set the scene and to give the child a bit of a warning that some news is coming. For example, you could say 'I have something very sad to tell you' or 'I am so sorry, but I have some difficult and painful news', while also reminding them that they are not alone, that you are there for them, and that it is okay to feel however they feel. Think carefully about where you tell them (in a private and a safe place) and when, so that they have some time to start letting the news sink in (albeit this is an ongoing process). This might also include having things around them, such as their favourite toy or their comforting blanket.

Some of the common questions children ask can be explored and responded to where appropriate. However, it is important that the child knows that it was not their fault, that they couldn't have done anything to change it, they are not alone, they are loved, the person is not suffering or in pain, and the person is not coming back. These can be gently, slowly, and sensitively shared. They can be discussed through the various activities in this workbook. They also can be helpfully explored by using some distancing tools, for example 'Some children have asked/felt/said...', 'If I were you, I might be thinking...', or through using stories, characters, puppets, and miniatures to talk about the themes and experiences from a third person narrative: 'Ollie might have been feeling sad because...', 'I wonder what your bear thinks about...'

Children may have very clear concerns which may be different from those of adults or the things that adults assume, such as 'Will I need to leave my house?', 'Who will cook for me?', 'Who will come to my school play next week?', 'Will we be poor?', 'Was it because I shouted at them?' They can also focus on things which adults might think of as 'small', for example 'Will I still be able to go swimming?', 'Grandpa said he had a present for me', 'We were supposed to be going to Pizza Hut at the weekend.' The more you understand what the child is thinking from their perspective and their eyes, the more you can respond to them and fill in the gaps. It is a bit like connecting the dots or filling in the puzzle pieces. Activity 22 and the questions Ollie expresses can support this further.

Be mindful about making assumptions, for example when talking about things

like funerals or cremations. Children may not have heard these words before and they are likely to be unfamiliar concepts, so it is likely you need to explain what they are, and possibly a few times. You also need to give plenty of space and reassure the child that it is okay to ask questions. This is expanded on in the following sections.

Within this, it is okay to say, 'I don't know', 'I am not sure', 'Let me have a think', 'Let's think together', 'That is a good question', 'I wish we knew.' It is okay to model not knowing and to give yourself time to think and make sense of things before feeling the pressure to give an answer.

Telling a child about a death and delivering such painful news is likely to be very difficult. So, as the adult, please think about where your support will come from. What will you do to practise and prepare beforehand? How can you reflect on what their responses might be? How can you think about your responses to certain questions? Where will you tell them this information? What should they have with them and who? What will you do afterwards to regulate and look after yourself?

CULTURAL, SOCIETAL, AND FAMILY PRESSURES AND NARRATIVES: 'MAN UP', 'YOU NEED TO LOOK AFTER YOUR MUMMY NOW', AND 'YOU ARE THE MAN OF THE HOUSE NOW'

There are various parenting and cultural styles, beliefs, and assumptions wrapped up in this; however, it is important to be mindful about the messages that a child is given and the pressures that are put on them with comments and statements like 'You are the man of the house', 'Man up', 'Big boys don't cry', 'You need to be good as that is what Mummy would have wanted.' Just take a moment to think about what messages these give to a child about being a child, asking for help, showing vulnerability, being able to show a range of feelings, and so on. This can also feed into giving messages to the child about guilt and shame, such as if they misbehave their parent will not be happy and will be disappointed in them, or that they have to be perfect, or that they need to live their life for someone. This is the same as saying things like 'They would want you to be happy.' While this may well be true and helpful at times, it is about making it more tentative, open, and permissive. This is because we want the child to feel that they can also be sad, scared, worried, human, and so on. So, it might be more helpful to say things like (in your own words) 'Your mummy loved you so much, she would want you to be happy. It is okay to be happy, but I also understand, and I think she would too, that this is sad and sometimes you can also feel sad. It is okay to feel however you feel, and I am here with you in all these feelings.'

Similarly, comments and statements like 'You need to look after your mummy as she is so sad', while possibly giving children a sense of agency and control by suggesting that they can do something to help, can put a lot of pressure on them to put others' needs before their own, and to take responsibility for their mother's feelings and happiness. This pressure can extend to well-meaning comments such as 'You are all she has now', 'She is living for you.' This can lead to some children feeling as if they have to always be happy, smiling, and good, and not add or upset or worsen their parent's feelings. Some children learn to deny, minimize, or hide their feelings, and other things that are going on in their lives, to protect their other parent. They can become 'parentified' and there can be role reversal, where they

are doing the caring. So, it is important for the child to know that they can show their feelings and ask for help, and that there are things they can do to help but that someone else's wellbeing is not dependent on them, and they are not responsible for it.

TALKING ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE

If you are not the parent (e.g. you are the teacher, social worker, therapist), you need to be very mindful of what the child has been told about where the person has gone and what happens after death. There are huge cultural variations about this (explored in Box 1), for example heaven, hell, reincarnation, soul separated, a ghost, an angel, a star, and many more. Make sure you have clarity about what the child has been told so that you do not confuse or give them mixed messages. For parents who have told the child a particular narrative, it is important to think about how to explain this to them, and how to respond to certain questions they might have, or to other people's responses which might be different.

COMMENTS SUCH AS 'YOU'LL GET OVER IT'

Be mindful about comments such as 'You'll get over it/We need to just move on/ Forget it/Don't worry about it/Don't think about it/It could be worse.' These can be very minimizing, invalidating, and shutting down of feelings. It can also feed into children feeling guilty for feeling how they do, or imply that there is an end point in their grief. While you can talk about it being a journey, time being a healer for some people, and be as supportive and reassuring as you can, do not try to talk someone out of how they are feeling. This can push a child's feelings under the surface, which means they can often bubble up and spill over in other ways, at different times. These comments often come from other people and through other people's responses, so if the child is able to understand it can be useful to name and prepare the child for these comments beforehand. They can still be painful but this will give them a buffer. This extends to supporting children to have a narrative about what to say when other people ask questions about the person, or their death, and when it comes up at school.

Extra tips for responding to tricky questions

Of course, this will vary depending on the question, the child, the relationship, and the context, and this list is by no means exhaustive or prescriptive. Many of these tips are shared above and will also be built on in further sections.

- Check you have understood the child's question. Where has it come from? What do they mean? What do they know? Be careful of making assumptions that you know what they are saying. Ask them to say a little more or show you with toys, drawings, and so on.
- Show your appreciation and thanks for the child asking the question (verbally and non-verbally). You want them to feel they can always ask you questions.
- Try to shrink yourself to be like the child. What might it look like and feel

- like from their eyes and world? From their age and stage? From their life experiences, cognitive stage, and frame of reference?
- Validate, normalize, and empathize. This is expanded on in the next sections.
 It is crucial that the child feels you are there for them and with them, that
 their feelings are valid and important and that they are not alone, that no
 question is silly. If you don't know the answer, it's important to validate how
 frustrating and difficult it can be to not have an answer.
- Repeat the question and be emotionally and physically present to show that
 you are actively interested and truly listening to them. Hearing it back can
 be helpful as well. Sometimes, it is useful to think about what answers they
 have or think there might be, what they have heard, been told, and so on.
- Name and say out loud that it is a tricky question/an important question. For example, say something like 'It is so hard to understand and to get our heads round. I am an adult and find it confusing, so I can imagine how confusing it must be for you.'
- Try and break down the answer if possible. Use simple and accessible language. Where possible, refer to something that they know and can hook on to, such as something they have learned about in school, seen on TV, in one of their games. It is much easier for them to understand when it is relevant to them and they have something to anchor to.
- Be honest and transparent in an age-appropriate way.
- Where possible, use visuals and props, for example drawing things, showing videos, acting it out with toys. It can be helpful to do this a few different ways to find one that fits.
- If you don't know, say that you don't know. If you won't be able to know, say this. Say something like 'I am so sorry, I wish I knew, it is a really good question. It is so hard and frustrating not knowing. If I knew I would tell you. It is understandable to feel... When you have those feelings you can...' You might like to do some of the exercises in the book about the feelings around not knowing.
- Sometimes, just saying the question about the not knowing bit out loud or drawing it can make it feel less overwhelming. You can also normalize it by saying that there are other people who might have that same question as well. Again, this helps children to feel they are not alone. You might also like to think about how to release some of the tension, sadness, frustration of not knowing through practising the regulating and relaxing activities (Activities 30–41).
- If you can find out, be honest and transparent that you will do your best to find out or will have a think about it. Try not to feel pressurized to give an answer on the spot. Write it down and memorize it so that they don't think you have forgotten it or are dismissing them. Then take some time to find out, think about how to explain it, talk to others, and then revisit it.
- It can be helpful, if appropriate, to think about some things which you do know, to fill in as many blanks as possible and connect the dots, or to come up with some possibilities: 'Let's think about this together.' You can draw or write these down. This can help the child have a sense of control.

 Unless there is a very clear piece of information, it is useful to share how there isn't a right or wrong answer, and that different people believe different things.

A journey and a process – making opportunities to feel safe to speak and share

As shared previously, grief is an ongoing journey. There is no final destination or end point. While we know that time can be a healer for some people and that we can learn different ways of coping with and responding to the loss of that person, we also know that there can be stings, or, as in the story, jellyfish zaps, along the way which open up the wounds, deepen the pain, resurface feelings, or exacerbate present ones. So, these are important to plan and prepare for and to think about. If children expect them and are able to name them and think of ways to respond to them, this will support them. Activities 26–29 can support them with this and show the types of things that can be grief triggers.

Additionally, as children develop and grow older, it is likely that new questions will be asked or will brew in their heads, and new situations will arise around the bereavement, with new needs. For example, the child may want to know more details about the person's sickness or treatment, more about the person's life or personality, but will also come across things like books or movies with themes of death, or have things like a school dance, or start their period, or have Mother's Day.

There is a fine balance between saying too much, constantly talking about the person, flooding them, rushing them, and pushing them into a place when they are not ready, and avoiding the conversation, not talking about the person, brushing it under the carpet, ignoring it, and positioning it as a taboo, unspoken topic. It can be likened a bit to fishing. We need to create the right conditions – set things up, be ready and open for it, but also be willing to be patient and try again.

Therefore, supporting the child is about making a safe space and creating opportunities to discuss and explore themes throughout their journey, knowing that they might need different things at different times. It is a bit like starting with a puzzle of four pieces and with each stage there might be more and more pieces added. That is also why this book is so full, so that you can revisit or start new activities at different times, or revisit ones already done but from a different perspective or when at a different stage. The child needs to know that they can open up and talk and be given opportunities and space. Sometimes, where appropriate, it can be helpful to name this dilemma: 'I am really mindful of not pushing you, but also of not ignoring things. What do you think?', 'How would I know if things were more difficult? What do you need?', 'If you were me, what would you do or want to ask?', 'I just want to let you know, it is on your terms but I am here', 'I might just check in but I understand if you want to say no, or not yet.' Some children find it easier if they have a cue word, or a signal card, or an item they can hold to communicate when they want to talk. This is also about watching and noticing for their cues and listening for when there might be an opening but not jumping on it so that it feels like a dog with a bone.

The journey also is important to hold in mind, as many children might have a delayed response, might only start grieving at a later date, might find that the death and pain resurfaces for a range of reasons, might change their response depending on their understanding of death and families changing, and so on.

Attending a funeral, cremation, or other ceremony

Many people ask about whether a child should attend a funeral, cremation, or other type of ceremony. There is no right or wrong answer and this will of course depend on a range of factors, including the age and stage of the child, their relationship to the person, the support system they have around them, and so on. That said, there can be benefits of attending one of these, in terms of giving the child an opportunity to say goodbye, seeing that they



are not alone, and having some time to process the finality. If it is decided that the child should attend, here are some questions and tips to hold in mind:

- If possible, has the child had a choice about whether they attend or not?
- Has the child had a clear explanation about what will happen, when, and where? I often use miniatures or dolls (as in the photo above) to act out what to expect. Alternatively, or in addition, pictures, video clips, and stories can support this explanation. Remember that concepts such as a coffin will most likely be new to a child or may have associations with things like vampire movies. So, they need clear and simple explanations, for example 'A coffin is a large chest/box that we have chosen and the body gets put inside it.' You might go on to explain what the person is wearing and why, and how they will be lowered into the ground. Depending on your beliefs, there can be lovely explanations around being with nature and surrounded by flowers. Some children like to think that the person isn't alone, so might find it useful to think that there are other people buried around them, or that there are people who check in and look after the grave. The child might ask questions about whether the person will be scared or in pain, or what happens if they are scared of the dark or want to come out. These may need to be named and explained.
- Has there been thought about who will accompany the child? Where they
 will sit? Where they will go afterwards? What will happen should they need
 to leave mid-way or become very upset? Are there comforting items which
 they can take with them? Has this been discussed with them, if they are able
 to have this conversation?
- Are there ways for them to be involved if they would like to be? Examples
 might include things like choosing a song, writing a poem or speech, making
 or giving an item to go with the person, choosing the wording if there is a
 grave, choosing the flowers, choosing the photo, choosing the outfit the
 person wears.

 This will need to be sensitively thought about, but for some children having some photos of the day, and some reminders such as the information people were given, can be a useful thing to add to a memory box, to revisit in future conversations, and to have when they are older.

Children who choose not to go to the ceremony, are too young, or it isn't appropriate for them can still be supported to be involved in the above ways, as well as having items and momentoes for a future date. It is likely to still be useful for them to know what is happening and who was there. It is also important to think about what they will do on that day if they know that it is taking place, and who will look after them. They also might like to have their own memorial day or ceremony, whether it is with friends, family, or their toys. They also might like to do a range of the memory activities (Activities 42–54).

Depending on the child and context, they may like to be involved in spreading the person's ashes or having them somewhere close by, like in a necklace or a jar. Similarly, they may want to visit the gravestone and have some time there. Some children will want to do this regularly, others may want to hold a ceremony there, like reading poems, giving them a teddy, letting go of balloons, and so on.

Box 3: Spotlight on whether the person who is dying is able to be part of the preparation process

When the person dying knows that they are dying (e.g. when they have a terminal illness), there might be some time to support the child in the process. This said, this is understandably a very emotive thing to do, and needs to be done with care and sensitivity, and the person dying needs to be supported, and only do what they feel able to do. I have had the honour of being involved in this process with several children and their parents and it has been painful and difficult but also beautiful, healing, and powerful. Both parties expressed huge richness and gratitude at being able to do this, and I was able to see how helpful this time and the activities after the person had died were for the child's processing ability. The following list provides some tips and ideas. As with everything in this workbook, they need to be tailored and thought about regarding age and suitability for the child. Some children might benefit from one or two of the ideas, others might do many of them. Again, this will depend on the relationship, the time they have, and their ability and openness for doing this type of work. As a psychologist, I supported the families mentioned above directly on their journey, which added an additional therapeutic component. I had sessions with the person dying, sessions with the child, sessions with the people who would be caring for the child after the person died, and then sessions together. There are lots of different ways of doing this.

Make a legacy video. This is where the child or supporting adults write down
lots of different questions to ask the person who is dying about their life,
stories, messages, interests, hopes, memories, and so on. This is particularly
great if it is relevant for the child and the relationship, and includes things

like the child's birth story, why their name was chosen, funny stories, their favourite memories. This is recorded and can be watched and listened to throughout their lives. The person making the video might also show photos and talk about the stories behind them, and hold up and share special items. These can then be given to the child or kept for them.

- Similarly, together make a video or slide show of pictures and video clips, talking through the memories of each one, giving them names.
- Create a shared scrapbook and memory box filled with items to treasure (Activity 50). They might also fill and make a treasure box or a time capsule.
- Make items and do projects together, such as those in Activities 42–54. Also make items which will support the child, like the jar of hugs/token box (Activity 34), or their own stress ball, or a sensory box (Activity 30). You can also make sensory items together, like a perfume or creating a recipe.
- Write letters to the child or make videos or audio recordings. For example, their hopes and wishes for the child, their first day of school, on their wedding day, on a day when they are sad, and so on.
- Choose pictures together to make personalized picture items, like a photo blanket or pillow (Activity 38). These can also be decorated with messages, pictures, handprints, and so on.
- Choose items of clothes together which can be made into a new item such as a pillow, a patchwork blanket, a teddy.
- Make handprint art such as on pieces of jewellery.
- Take photos together and make more pictures and videos of that time together.
- Record their voice in audio messages, or in reading their favourite story, or in narrated letters, or in a recordable message teddy or toy.
- Explain concepts to them like the invisible seaweed/string/beads/pearls and reiterate and reinforce it. They can draw a picture of this, actually tie it from one to the other, make the beads.
- Read together the story of Ollie the Octopus and talk about the themes and feelings in it.
- Do things together like choosing a star and naming it, or planting a tree.
- Give permissive messages around things like it not being the child's fault, that the person dying won't be in pain, that they will be okay, that they want the child to be able to be happy when they are happy, that they are in the child's heart and head, and will always remember them, and so on. Talk with them about how they might feel, what might be the same, what might be different.
- Go through with them all of the people whom they have around them to support them and care about them, and why you think they are good people to have around. Use Activity 38.
- Remind the child of all the things that are loved and appreciated about them, and all the things the person dying is grateful for. Make a piece of art, letter, or video of all the things they love about the person and what the best memories which they will cherish are.
- If there is a clear narrative which the person wants, for example in the stars,

in the moon, in heaven, in the earth, share and explain this. It would be even better if this could be written down or recorded.

- Plant or make something together like a tree, or name a star.
- Identify some symbolic items, depending on the relationship, such as an anchor bracelet to talk about being anchored, or a guardian angel, or a miniature horse for a shared love of horse riding.
- Practise some of the regulating activities together like the hand breathing, safe place exercise, and shaking it out. Not only does this give the child a relational memory to hold on to, but it also reinforces that it can be useful. You might like to video or photograph these.

Which might you like to try or have tried already? What others can you think of or would you like to add? What do you need to hold in mind, think about, and prepare for before doing this?

Ways of being, therapeutic qualities, and things to hold in mind to support children with grief and with the activities in this workbook

These are skills, qualities, and ways of being which should underpin and be present while reading the story and carrying out the activities. These should help you to anchor on to and relate to the activities in the workbook and refer to them depending on what the child says about them. As we know, the worksheets are useful tools, but the way they are presented and the way the child feels are hugely important factors.

RELATIONSHIP FIRST AND GETTING TO KNOW THE CHILD

Talking about and working with grief can be a very personal, painful, and multi-layered experience. Therefore, the child needs to feel that the person they are doing this workbook with is someone they feel comfortable with, can trust, are safe with, feel understood by, and so on. They need to feel heard, listened to, important, seen, valued, and connected. They need someone who is going to be there with them to ride the storm, and also to empathize with what they are going through. They need them to be someone who will validate and acknowledge what they are going through, someone who will be a co-regulator when they are dysregulated. The child also needs to feel able to ask questions, share feelings, and show vulnerability. It's useful to hold in mind what the activist and poet Maya Angelou says: 'People will forget what you do, people will forget what you say, but people will never forget how you made them feel.'

So how do you want that child to feel? What messages do you want them to leave with?

It is important to think about who is best placed to do some of this exploring with the child. This might be more than one person. This might be a parent, a carer, a relative, a professional. If it is someone who isn't very familiar with the child, it is hugely important that time, energy, and effort is put in to get to know that child, and that the adult doesn't dive in without putting in the relationship-building time.

What makes them tick? What makes them sparkle? What do they like doing? What is important to them? How do they show their feelings? What gets under their skin? How do they show when things are too much? What helps to soothe and calm them?

Some relationship-building, all about me, and engaging activities are crucial first. The relationship is the greatest treasure and so that bit is the foundation from which everything else grows. It cannot be skipped or short changed. We cannot jump in and talk about grief, and probably one of the most painful things that has happened to a child, without spending time warming the context, getting to know them, and establishing rapport. There needs to be an emphasis on establishing safety and trust. Many of my other books focus on establishing safety and getting to know the child, such as *Gilly the Giraffe*, *Presley the Pug*, and *A Therapeutic Treasure Box for Working with Children and Adolescents with Developmental Trauma*.

If the person doing this work knows the child well, this becomes a bit easier, so then the focus is on both how to support the child to feel comfortable and safe, and how to stay regulated oneself. This will be explored further.

ALL FEELINGS ARE OKAY AND WELCOMED

As explored previously, grief is personal and unique to that person. There is likely to be a range of feelings and these may come and go in different shapes and sizes and in different intensities, like moving waves. This also means they can come and they can go, they can shift, and they can change. (See Activity 8 for more messages about feelings and Activity 7 for key messages around grief.)

Therefore, it is very important to give permissive messages verbally and non-verbally (with our body language and facial expressions) about how it is okay to feel however they feel, and that their feelings are their feelings. Feelings can be sat with, tolerated, and bared witness to; the child can share their feelings, while the person will be with them, hear them, and listen to them. There is something so powerful about someone just truly being with someone and listening – truly showing empathy. This includes not needing to fix or make things better, but just sitting and being with the person and saying things like 'I am so sorry this has happened', 'I feel so sad with you', 'I am hearing how difficult this is for you', 'As you are talking I can see how much pain you are in.' Just letting that person know things like 'I am here for you, you matter, I hear you, I'm so sorry you are going through that, and you are not alone.' This can also be hugely relieving for the adult supporting as there is no pressure to come up with answers or a solution, but rather just to be with and feel with the child.

NAME IT TO TAME IT

Building on the above, often once we put a name to something, it takes some of the air out of it, and makes it feel less overwhelming and scary. It can help to connect some of the dots and validate how we might be feeling. A useful phrase which supports the idea of naming, talking about, and acknowledging feelings is by psychologist Daniel Siegel, who says you have to 'name it to tame it'. For example, when you are in a situation and you feel anxious, have you noticed how saying it out loud to someone who cares, or sharing how you are feeling with someone else, can often offer some relief?

We don't want to tell someone how they are feeling, because we don't know how they are feeling – we don't have an emotional x-ray into someone's mind – but we can be curious, and interested. This can be conveyed through statements such as:

- 'I wonder if you are feeling...'
- 'I would also feel...if...'
- 'I'm not surprised you are feeling...when...'
- 'When my heart is beating fast like a drum, it often is telling me... I'm not sure if you think yours is telling you something similar?'
- 'I am not sure but...'
- 'Some people say...'
- 'There is a lot of difference. How is it for you?'
- 'There is no right or wrong...'
- 'If I were in your shoes, I might feel...'

Again, 'naming it to tame it' and finding words and images to organize and make sense of feelings in a safe and palatable way is the premise of a lot of the activities in this book.

This also means that sometimes to support children we need to scaffold or give options because an open question or a blank piece of paper can feel overwhelming. This is why having prompts, like the story in this book, the feelings worksheets, feelings cards, feelings dice, feeling words, can support the child to have some ideas and things to anchor on to. They can be a springboard for further reflection and thinking; this includes seeing what the children doesn't choose and using statements like 'I wonder if...', 'Some thoughts other children have said are..., I am not sure if it is the same or different for you?', 'If you were to guess how...is feeling, what might you say?'

It is important to hold in mind the child's *emotional dictionary*. If the child doesn't understand or know different words for expressing their feelings, then we often need to go back a few steps and spend some time teaching and talking about these. It is difficult to identify how you might be feeling if you don't have the word or don't know what it means.

For some suggestions for ideas to support children who clam up, or bottle-up their feelings, see Box 6.

BEING CURIOUS AND NOT MAKING ASSUMPTIONS

Building on the above, having curiosity, compassion, understanding, and empathy is about all people feeling seen, heard, noticed, valued, listened to, and that they are important. Within this, they need to know that their feelings, concerns, worries, hopes, and experiences are validated, heard, witnessed, honoured, and acknowledged, and are not minimized, pathologized, or judged. For example, in Brene Brown's video clip of the difference between empathy and sympathy (found on YouTube), she talks about the tendency for people to try and 'silverline' things, and to say things like 'at least': for instance, after a miscarriage, 'At least you can get pregnant', or when one child is struggling, 'At least your other child is doing well',

or when someone has marriage difficulties, 'At least you are married.' This type of response, although generally well meaning, can discount, overshadow, minimize, and invalidate a person's experience. This is about the person being an expert of their own experience, and the importance of taking a 'not knowing' curious stance. We are not in their minds and we do not know how they are feeling or experiencing something, so we need to be curious and leave space for possibilities and learning. This also supports them to think, discover, and make meaning, and be mindful of statements like 'I know exactly how you feel.'

An example of the importance of curiosity and openness to another person's meaning-making and sense-making is when we think about a feeling such as 'sadness'. What sad means and looks like to one child might mean and feel very different to someone else, and yet so often we take short-cuts and assume we know or have a strong sense of what someone else feels or is saying when they describe themselves or others as 'sad', or we use our own lens, explanations, and experiences to assess it. For example, one child might say they are 2 out of 5 on a scale of how sad they are (o being the least sad and 5 being the most sad), and 2 is great for them as they are usually a o; for another child, 2 is terrible for them as they are usually a 5 – and there are all the nuances and shades within this.

Similarly, for one child, sadness might come out as anger, whereas, for another child, it might show itself as worry, and for another as hopelessness. One child might choose to describe sad as being like the colour blue, but to another child, blue is their happy and calming colour. Moreover, what sadness has been constructed as, and how, and the discourses around it in the child's family, society, and culture will influence these ideas and assumptions as well. The essence of this concept and example is that we are not in someone else's mind, we do not have mind-reading superpowers, and so we need to be curious to understand what things mean, look like, and feel like from that person's unique perspective, and within their wider context (e.g. from their eyes and shoes). Therefore, where appropriate, we can gently ask, be curious, open, and tentative, and learn with humility. This is also about allowing space for mixed and blended feelings, about which there will be more in the following section. This uniqueness is also why this workbook provides so many choices of metaphors (including 'what else?' options) and different types of worksheets to allow for variety and choice.

A lack of curiosity can happen a lot around death and loss. For example, we might assume someone is sad, when they are relieved; or assume someone really misses the person, when they had a complicated relationship with them; or assume someone sees it as final, when they see it as just a shift in the relationship; or assume time is a healer but for that child it feels harder or more triggering. So, keeping open, asking, and checking, and leaving room for possibilities is recommended.

BLENDED AND MIXED FEELINGS

As said previously, grief can be a very tangled and messy experience, similar to the relationships which we can have with people. So, generally, children benefit from learning that they can have a whole range of feelings, not just positive or negative ones, but a whole mix and blend of different feelings, and that sometimes these feelings can come at the same time, and in all shapes, colours, and sizes (see page

83 on key messages about feelings). For example, someone might feel hugely relieved that the person they love is no longer in pain, but really sad because they miss them; or they might be super excited for Christmas but so disappointed and

hurt that their mum can't be there with them; or they might really miss parts of their dad's personality, but not other parts. It can be useful to use metaphors to explain this to children, such as the mix and blend of rainbows, patchworks, puzzles, fruit salad, soup, paint, stained glass, mosaics, or grains of sand. There are many worksheets in this book to support you with these discussions as well.



MIND-BODY LINKS

As we know, feelings and grief can be felt and held in our bodies. Our bodies often give us all sorts of cues, signals, and signs, so it is very helpful to support children to connect with their bodies, listen to their bodies, and link different feelings which they have, where appropriate, to their bodies. This is also important as children's feelings can spill out through their bodies, and they can feel quite shocked, confused, hypervigilant, disconnected (and many more things) about their bodies. In the context of death and sickness, they can also think



more about their and other people's bodies (e.g. feeling vulnerable, worried about getting sick, what happens to the body after death). Therefore, it is helpful to teach children how to notice and differentiate feelings and sensations. There are lots of ways we can support this connection, for example through physical movement, relaxation exercises, yoga, eating, and body-mapping exercises (these are peppered throughout the story and this workbook). However, another way to support children developing this mind-body link awareness is to offer them verbal support. For example (these are not prescriptive or exhaustive and are just intended to give a flavour):

- 'I wonder if you are feeling butterflies in your tummy? These can be telling us... What do you think yours are telling you?'
- 'I notice that your hands are tensing and you're breathing a bit fast.'
- 'Sometimes, when I'm scared, my heart beats so fast, like a runaway train or a beating drum. Have you noticed yours doing something similar?'
- 'I wonder if your body could talk, what it would say...?'
- 'When you say you are feeling jittery, where in your body do you notice that jittery feeling?'
- 'How does the ... [feeling] show itself in your body?'
- 'As you just spoke, I noticed that I felt a heaviness in my heart.'

Activities 8, 15, and 20 can support you with this, as well as the various regulating exercises in Activities 30–41.

SHARING IS CARING

Social support and caring adults are huge buffering and protective factors for children. Children need to have people with whom they feel safe and able to share their feelings and emotions, so that they are not holding on to them on their own. They need to have people they can turn to, who care, listen, and can ride the wave with them. Children need to feel that they are not alone and that they have life cheerleaders and a team around them rooting for them and supporting them (see Activity 38). They also need their pain and experiences named, sat with, and witnessed by other safe and trusting adults.

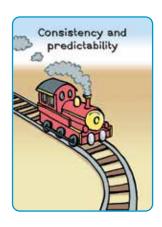
I often use the metaphor of a heavy box. If you are holding a heavy box it feels heavy and hard and can knock you off balance, and if you have things in your way you are more likely to trip over them or bump into them. However, if you have some people with you sharing the load of the box, it is likely to feel lighter and more manageable, and they might help you spot or manoeuvre past what is in your way, or even move things to clear a safer path. They also might be there to share the experience of how tricky it was to carry the box, which validates it even more. Ad-



ditionally, they might help you to look inside the box and distribute some of the contents. Activity 38 has some creative and powerful ways to support children to think about who is around them and who their life cheerleaders and supporters are. Another reason why this workbook suggests that activities are done together with an adult is to reinforce the message that the child is not alone.

ROUTINES AND RITUALS - PREDICTABILITY, CONSISTENCY, ANCHORS, AND LIMIT-SETTING

Often in the context of grief, things can feel so different, so confusing, and so changed (although of course every child is different). Within this, children can feel powerless, helpless, and out of control around what has happened, their role within it, and what is coming next. They also might feel as if the world has been uprooted or they are on unknown, uncertain, and fragile ground. After a bereavement, they may also be full up with questions and worries about what is going to happen, about their day, their life, who is there for them, and so on. This can mean that their minds and bodies are holding and processing a lot.



For these reasons, it can be really helpful to give children as much predictability and consistency as possible. This doesn't mean rigidly sticking to or enforcing things, but, where possible and appropriate, keeping some things as consistent as possible for them. It is about giving children some anchors to hold on to, and

providing a sense of security. It is also about showing them that there are some things that they can rely on and which haven't changed (see Activity 24). This might be their homework, bedtime routine, and their activities and outings. It also is about reducing their sense of the unknown and their anxiety, so that they can focus more on what is in front of them. Visual timetables and checklists can also help to convey this information.

This said, if the person who has died was a major part of the child's routine, such as a parent, this needs to be acknowledged and named (as shared in the previous sections on talk-



ing about feelings and loss), and some new rituals and routines might need to be created. This might be a similar routine but done differently, such as a new bedtime ritual or a new morning greeting. This also might mean incorporating new routines about the person who has died into the child's life – forming a 'new' relationship with the person who died, saying goodbye in one way and hello in another. Again, these will vary, but could be things like taking flowers to the grave, if there is a grave, or kissing a picture of them good night each night, or saying a prayer for them, or looking up at the stars. Ask yourself these questions:

- What rituals and rules are in place already? Is the child aware of these?
- Which have stayed the same and can be consistent?
- Which have had to change and have these been discussed and named?
- Which new ones could be introduced? Can the child be involved or lead on these?
- What else can be done to increase the child's sense of consistency, predictability, security, and safety?

Within this, having set limits, boundaries, and discipline is still important. Of course, when the child has experienced a bereavement, it is expected that they will be distressed and that we may see this in their behaviours. They need understanding, compassion, and empathy, as shared above and throughout this workbook. However, this doesn't mean that limits and boundaries should not still be put in place. These are important for the child to feel secure, to know that you care, and to support them in having some sort of structure and emotional containment.

These will differ depending on the situation. If you are not the person usually setting the boundaries, then the relationship needs to be established first and you need to tread carefully and sensitively. There is an important and useful tool from Daniel Hughes's dyadic developmental psychotherapy approach to take note of here, which is 'connection before correction'. This is about connecting with the child, their perspective, their feelings, their position, and acknowledging and validating these first, before correcting their behaviour. This is also about discipline, not punishment, teaching the child and giving them a learning experience, not shaming or hurting them. For example, if a child throws a chair, instead of just saying 'Don't you throw the chair' in an angry voice, you might say, in a firm but calm and controlled voice, something like 'I am not surprised you are feeling frustrated/

sad/upset. It isn't fair that your mum can't be here right now. It's horrible, and I'm so sorry, but it is not okay to throw chairs.' Then it is about giving alternatives: 'You can show your frustration by...' Of course, this is easier said than done, especially in the heat of the moment, which is why we need to be kind and forgiving to ourselves, as well as working and prioritizing our own regulation and wellbeing, which will be expanded on in further sections.

Practising, reflecting, and preparing can really help, but we all will make mistakes and we are all human, and that is okay. So, if we say or do something that we wished we hadn't, we can own this, apologize, and say so to the child. This shows the child that it is okay to be human, that we all are learning, and that it is okay to say sorry and to take some responsibility, and that things can be moved on from: 'I am sorry I overreacted', 'If I could go back in time I would...', 'I am going to try and do this again', 'Wow, my emotions got the better of me, and having had some time to breathe and think, I have decided...', 'I wish I had communicated that in a different way', 'That wasn't my intention to hurt you.'

AGENCY AND MASTERY

Similarly, in the context of grief, children often feel powerless, helpless, and out of control, and their world can seem as if it has been turned upside down and inside out (Activity 23). They can often blame themselves and feel that it is their fault. Therefore, it is important to find ways to show the child that they can positively effect change, and that their opinion is important, listened to, and valued – and that there are things that they can control, choose, and make a difference to. This might range from making a choice about what to eat or how to decorate their room, through to discussing their response to certain feelings, keeping certain routines the same, and having some age-appropriate responsibility.

KEEPING THE CHILD IN YOUR MIND

It is important to show the child that they are valued, noticed, and truly seen, and that you keep them in your mind, and in your heart. Again, this is even more important in the context of grief, as the child might feel forgotten, like a burden,



not important, abandoned, lost, alone, deprived, invisible, and so on. If the person who died was one of their main cheerleaders, they might also feel that they are no longer thought about or cared for. Although they might have lots of people checking-in right at the beginning in the days and weeks after the person has died, this can tail off and fade as time goes on. Showing them that they have been kept in mind can be done in lots of different ways, including:

- Having regular check-ins.
- Spending quality time together.
- Showing them that you are truly listening (with your whole mind and body),
 and that their thoughts, feelings, perspective, and opinions matter.
- Remembering things that they said to you/things they want and like/things

they are interested in. This is like being their memory bank: 'I was thinking of you because...', 'You were on my mind when...', 'I know you said...so I made/bought...', 'That reminded me of when you said...'

- Noticing, naming, and supporting them when they are absent or not seeming like themselves. This includes being tuned into their mood and signals, and naming and responding sensitively to their feelings.
- Making an effort to see things from their perspective or through their eyes.

There are also some lovely symbols and items which can convey the message that they are on your mind, such as giving them some string, pearls, beads, or a golden thread (Activity 47) to show that you are always connected and tied together, or a mini brain to show that they are always on your mind.

Other ideas include: writing loving post-it notes and putting them in the child's school box/sticking them on their mirror or sending them a 'hug' or 'positive vibes' in the post, or having an item of theirs/a photo/a piece of jewellery that they made that you carry with you or wear.

We can also do things like putting a stamp or a drawing, like a little heart or star, on their hand and on your hand to show you are connected; or getting some moulding clay and leaving your/their fingerprint in it.

HOLDING HOPE AND FOCUSING ON ADVERSARIAL GROWTH

Death can be very painful and sad, so it is crucial to be able to name, acknowledge, and validate emotions, and make space for the tricky and prickly feelings. However, it is also important to not lose sight of the positives, of the hope, of the sparkle moments, and of the laughter within life. While we need to be careful to not be all candy floss and rainbows, children still need to be able to live, to be happy, to be themselves, to hold on to a future, and enjoy the good times. This can be supported on lots of levels. Some ideas follow but this is by no means an exhaustive or prescriptive list:

- Remembering all the happy and beautiful memories of the person who has died and staying connected to these and anchoring on to them. Activities 42–49 will help you with loads of different ways of doing this. This can, of course, also be hard and painful, so it relates to being able to hold more than one feeling at the same time, and thinking carefully about timing.
- Being able to laugh, have fun, and play. Not only does this offer light relief and is a major stress buffer, but it also gives the child hope that they will and can be happy again and have fun and feel more than sadness and pain. It also gives them a positive memory bank to anchor on to and creates relationships in which they feel safer and more trusting. As in the story of Ollie, children can feel that the person would want them to be sad, or that if the person who has died can't laugh then they shouldn't be able to either. So it is important that they know that you can have both feelings at the same time, and that one doesn't discount or take away from the other. This can be done through games, playful parenting, outings, shared activities, songs, movies, jokes, and so on.

- Supporting the child and surrounding adults to hold on to, notice, and magnify the sparkle moments, to soak them in, breathe them in, and anchor on to them. They can be like a beacon of hope among a storm. Some ways of doing this are shared in Activities 38–49.
- We also know that through grief there is pain and hurt and much more but there can also be adversarial growth, development, and important lessons learned, and that these things can improve and change over time and throughout one's journey. It is important to notice and acknowledge this and it will hopefully give the child a sense of their survivorship and inner strength, which can support them in navigating future life struggles and losses. See Activity 57.

Box 4: Spotlight on our own relationship with loss, death, grief, endings, and goodbyes

Grief, loss, endings, and goodbyes are things that most adults have experienced throughout their lives, in different capacities, for example through death, a miscarriage, a relationship ending, divorce, a friendship ending, leaving a country, a child leaving home, loss or change of a job, separation of sorts, loss or change of health, someone changing due to an illness such as dementia.

Therefore, most of us will have our own relationship to loss, endings, goodbyes, and death, with our own history, experiences, associations, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions. Moreover, some of these will be coloured by our wider context, such as our familial and cultural beliefs, discourses, and narratives around death, endings, goodbyes, and losses. This might differ for death, compared to divorce or relationship separation, or compared to the loss of a job, and so on.

However, it is important to spend time alone, or ideally with a trusted person (including in therapy or supervision), to reflect and explore these. This is important for the following reasons:

- Our beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes can colour how we view and respond to the child. For example, think about how the following example beliefs or assumptions could impact how you might understand, respond, explain things, and view the child and their situation, including your potential facial gestures, responses, questions, body language, empathy levels, and judgement: 'What doesn't kill you makes you stronger', 'Everything happens for a reason', 'Good people go to heaven', 'She was so old, that is life', 'Suicide is an easy way out, it's cowardly', 'Talking doesn't help', 'We mustn't air our dirty laundry', 'Best let sleeping dogs lie.' These are just examples to give a flavour and some food for thought.
- Our own experiences can also colour how we respond to a child in other ways. For example, if our usual coping and survival response when in a place of pain, threat, or fear is to shut down, go into flight mode, or blame ourselves, this might resurface or be triggered when we are supporting the child, but also can be pushed on to the child. So, for example, if a teacher is talking

to a child about the loss of their mother, this might catapult the teacher back to their own experiences with their mother, or to their experiences with loss and death. If this teacher often copes by avoiding and not talking about feelings, or saying everything is okay and brushing things under the carpet, this can filter in to how they make the child feel, or how they might not be able to make space for the child to open up or express themselves.

Think about what messages the child is picking up, feeling, receiving, and hearing from those around them. Is there space for the child to have their own meaning-making and sense-making and not be twinned with the adult they are talking to?

- There can be similarities but also differences in the child's and our own experiences. It is important to be mindful of over-identifying or projecting. This can also lead to us assuming that we know what the child is going through, which can shut down opportunities for the child's own meaning-making and sense-making, and the curiosity process. It can lead to conversations being constricting instead of enriching. For example, an aunty might assume that they know the child's biggest worry, or how they feel, that it was how they felt when they were a child and experienced a bereavement, or how they feel about a death now. They might think that what worked for them will work for the child, as opposed to seeing the uniqueness of the child and their experiences, feelings, and own healing journey. They might also put their own worries and fears on to the child, or respond to them as if those are their main worries, instead of being curious about what is most important to the child. While it can be very useful to have similar experiences to share and to give us some understanding and empathy, it is important to remember that each person's experience is unique.
- Talking about grief and loss can be very painful. To be someone the child is able to talk to and feel psychologically held by and who grounds, soothes, and anchors them, we need to be able to stay as regulated and grounded as possible ourselves. This will be discussed further in the section around our own regulation. However, if someone has not prepared, and done some of this exploration, it is easy to become dysregulated, overwhelmed, and triggered. This is not only difficult for the adult and for their wellbeing but also likely to transmit on to the child and contaminate their space and journey. Our feelings can be contagious, and children can soak them in, and easily pick up on them. Moreover, if the person is dysregulated, the child may feel that they need to protect and look after them by keeping things inside and minimizing their own needs. This is even more problematic if it is something the child has had to do in the past.
- We need to have space to process our own loss and to reflect on our own relationship with grief, otherwise it can become tangled with the child's own grief, and talking with the child or connecting with the child's pain (showing empathy) can resurface our own losses. We can then fall down a memory time hole (Hobday, 2001) and can be once again, or in a new way, overwhelmed, flooded, and revisited by our grief experience.

The following questions may support you or the adults around the child to reflect on their own experience of loss and goodbyes. Understandably, these can be difficult, so please take your time, think about your own wellbeing, and be kind to yourself.

- What is your relationship to, experience with, and history of loss, endings, goodbyes, and death (personal and professional)? What are some of your memories of these?
- What are some of the associations, sensations, feelings, and messages which you have around loss, endings, goodbyes, and death? What are some of your own beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions about death, grief, and loss? It might be helpful to think of images, body sensations, textures, colours, smells, thoughts, feelings, and so on which capture this. You might like to use some of the activities in this book for your own reflection. You could also do things like make a collage, a word dump, or a feelings wheel.
- How might these have been coloured by your wider context, such as your familial, community, and cultural beliefs, discourses, narratives?
- What lessons and messages did you hear, feel, learn, take from your surroundings about loss, death, grieving, mourning, endings?
- How might this change or apply to some more complicating factors, for example if the person who died had abused the person, or if the death was through suicide, or if the person had declined medical treatment, or if it was from a drunk driving incident?
- How will you know if you are being triggered or pulled down a time hole? (This can happen easily, as we are all human.) What are some of your triggers and hotspots? (See Activities 26–29.)
- What will you do to support yourself? What helps you to regulate? (See the following section on our own wellbeing.)

Spotlight on our own wellbeing and wellness

Parenting or supporting a child through a bereavement can be painful, sad, exhausting, heartbreaking, confusing, triggering, dysregulating, overwhelming, and many other feelings. (Which others would you add?) As shared above, this can be even harder if these conversations, responses, experiences, behaviours push our own buttons, hotspots, and prickly parts (we are all human, so we all have some of these), including our own experiences of loss and death. This fits with the following powerful statement: 'The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water and expecting not to get wet' (Remen, 1996).

This can be exacerbated further by having to witness the child's distress and pain, and, in essence, be soaked in their emotions – and even more so if the person supporting the child has also experienced the same loss, for example the child's parent and the parent's partner. This can also be further compounded by feelings of powerlessness and helplessness, of not being able to bring the person back or

make things better for the child. Understandably, within this, the person can be overwhelmed with their own grief, as well as wide-reaching worries about the longer-term impact on the child, how they will cope with events and milestones without the person who has died, changes in circumstances regarding money, school, child care, housing, and so on.

Being faced with these emotions and the consequences of a bereavement can make some of us feel like an elastic band being stretched, pushed, and pulled, until



we are so close to snapping, or actually do snap. This can come out in so many different ways – exhaustion, feeling not good enough, frustration, sadness, shutting down, rejecting others, chaos/disorganization, anxiety, anger, and so on. These feelings can understandably, at times, constrict and restrict our rational thinking, and we can find it much harder to be our best selves. This can also make us feel more depleted and full up, our window of tolerance might be narrower, and our plate might feel fuller. Therefore, our reactions and responses tend to be more emotionally driven and heightened.

In these moments or stages, we can feel more negatively about situations, and about the child, and we can also be harsher towards and more critical of ourselves, the child, and others. We might also overreact, blow things out of proportion, snap more easily, or take things more personally. We can also go the other way (or all of the shades in between), for example by distancing ourselves, switching off, putting walls up, blocking things out, pulling away, retreating into our shell. These responses can be very much like the survival, protective, and coping modes that children use when they are in pain and distress, feeling dysregulated, overwhelmed, and unsafe.

We might then also feel bad, guilty, and not good enough for responding in this way, which can feed our critical voice and reinforce the cycle. Therefore, we need to find ways to be kind and forgiving of ourselves, as well as ways to release, vent, and offload our feelings and sensations. In order to care for others, something or someone needs to care and replenish us, whether this is through therapy, support groups, friends, family, activities, and so on.

Do any of these feel familiar or resonate? Which others would you add? You
might like to complete or reflect on some of the feelings, fears, and worries
worksheets in this book. They can be as useful for you and other adults as
they are for children.

We might also find that we or others do the opposite, trying to overcompensate for the child and make everything 'perfect', and doing things like 'giving in' or feeling as if we have to be there all the time. We put our own needs aside to support the child.

For some practical ways of supporting your own wellbeing and regulation, while acknowledging that there is no right way, and that everyone is different and it is a personal thing, see my book A Therapeutic Treasure Box for Working with Children and Adolescents with Developmental Trauma, and A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Grounding, Soothing, Coping, and Regulating Cards for some illustrated strategies.

Moreover, many of the worksheets and tools in this book can be powerfully applied to ourselves or the adults around the child, particularly those in Activities 30–41.

Given that the relationship is the superglue ingredient, and the platform from which everything else reparative and healing grows, and that social support is such a buffering and protective factor for children, we need to prioritize our own emotional wellbeing particularly, as we need the energy, motivation, and fuel to keep going among difficult situations and emotions. Our own wellbeing shouldn't be viewed as a luxury, or seen as an add-on feature, but should be seen as paramount, essential, expected, and routine, in the same way that something like brushing our teeth is. This is expanded on in the next section.

Our own regulation and ability to be a regulator

With the above in mind, although extremely difficult, and with the acknowledgement that we are all human, we need to try as much as possible to find ways to stay regulated, calm, reflective, and grounded ourselves. Having some tools and processes for doing this is so important, as children are like sponges – they are so impressionable. They are looking to us and other adults around them to understand what is okay,

what isn't okay, what they should feel, and how to cope with those feelings. They need to experience, have modelled, and be shown positive ways of expressing, communicating, and responding to different emotions and arousal states, including being mindful of our body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions. As the saying goes, 'The way we treat them teaches them.' We need to model the model.



Therefore, as much as possible, we need to try and find ways (or find people who can support us) to be the rainbow in the child's storm, and to not get pulled in as deeply, as often, or as quickly to the emotional quicksand or an emotional cyclone. Emotions are contagious, and they feed each other, so where possible, we need to try



and set a different climate. This is similar to when a baby is crying and very distressed, and we know that one of the most effective ways to support the baby and to not escalate the situation is to stay calm in our body, with our breathing, with our tone of voice. We can still name their emotions and be empathetic to their needs, without becoming dysregulated ourselves and hooked in. It is the same with older children. As parenting specialist L.R. Knost says, they need us to set the tone and the rhythm, and to bring the calm and connection in, not to add to the chaos.

I often speak about when a child has a limbic hijack or takeover moment (the limbic system is the emotional and fear centre in our brains; it is also where the amygdala is located). As the adults, where possible, we need to be the limbic whisperers. We need to try to find ways to steady ourselves and in doing so steady the children.



This is about co-regulation. This is where an adult uses their own regulation, voice,

tone, words, body, breathing, and so on to support a child to learn how to recognize, respond, modulate, and express their emotions and their arousal states. This is key as this co-regulation process (togetherness and being shown and taught) supports a child in gaining the skills needed to be able to self-regulate. As shown in the Ollie story, it is about riding and navigating the waves together, giving them tools to know how to surf, explaining the way the waves might work, helping them with preparation and planning, being there when they fall, and also being there to cheer when they get through it.

Box 5: Practical activities and reflective exercises on wellbeing and regulation

Modelling the model

What do we want the child to learn from us about valuing themselves, caring for themselves, being kind to themselves? What do we want them to see, notice, and learn? What messages and lessons do we want to teach them about feelings, about caring for themselves, about grief and loss?

Blocks, barriers, and benefits

Consider these questions:

- If we keep filling a child's glass up with water, or their bowl up with fruit, how is ours going to get replenished, and by who?
- What can we offer to others, if our glass or fruit bowl is depleted or empty?
- What do they say on an aeroplane about putting your own oxygen mask on before putting on a child's mask?
- · How can you be there for others, without leaving yourself behind?
- How can you light a child's fire if yours is burned out?

Think about what your own wellbeing means to you.

- Why do you think looking after yourself is important?
- What are some of the hazards for you of cumulative stacked-up stress?
- What do you look like, feel like, act like when you are stressed or depleted? How do others know when this is the case?
- What do you look like, feel like, act like when you are at your best? How do others know when this is the case?

Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle or fold it in half (you may prefer to make a collage, a sculpt, a sand tray representation, a mould). On one side of the paper, draw your happiest and best self, and on the other side, draw your 'worst' and most full-up stressed self. Take some time to reflect on, and ideally talk to someone you trust about, what you notice, are interested in, and are surprised by. Also, think about what factors contribute to either side, what signs and indicators to be aware of on both sides, and what you could do to spend more time in your happiest and best self.

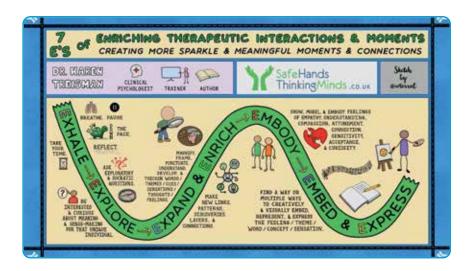
- How does it feel to care for yourself?
- Do you experience any guilt over taking time to care for yourself? What does 'the guilt' say to you?
- Where on a scale of o to 10, with o being very poor, almost non-existent, and 10 being excellent all the time, would you place yourself on how well you take care of yourself? What makes this easier?
- What blocks and barriers are there to you taking this time?
- If you were to describe these blocks and barriers, what would they look/ feel/sound like? If the blocks and barriers were an item/type of weather/ creature/colour, what would they be?
- How does it feel when the blocks and barriers are there, compared to when they are less visible?
- What do the blocks and barriers stop you from doing/achieving/feeling? (Write down, sculpt, make a collage, or draw your answers.)
- What could you do today that your future self would thank you for? (Write down, sculpt, make a collage, or draw your answers.)
- What advice would you give to a friend or a loved one who said they didn't
 make time for themselves or they felt guilty or selfish about taking some for
 themselves?

Expansions for talking about feelings and the exercises in this workbook

As shared in the introduction of this adult guide, the activities in this book can be used as they are and as standalone exercises or conversation starters. Their suitability needs to be reflected on, as well as the confidence, comfort, skillset, and knowledge of the person facilitating the activity. So, some people will just do the activities as they are, but others, such as those working more therapeutically, will want to expand on and enrich them, and deepen the discussion. In these cases, optimally you could spend a long time on one activity, making it rich, layered, and meaningful. This supports the child to do some more meaning-making, sense-making, and processing. It also helps the activities to be more fun, memorable, and playful, as well as making them stick more.

I have created the 7E model to support this process. This is a way of doing an activity and expanding on and enriching it. Some examples will follow. This said, there are a few things to be mindful of with regards to the 7E model. It is intentionally made as a curved up and down line to represent how it is not formulaic and doesn't move from A to B to C; it can go back and forwards, diagonally, and up and down, organically. Similarly, depending on the person, the relationship, and the context, some people will only do one E on the model and will be there for a long time, while others might do all the E's in a few moments. Some situations and people will require one of the E's more than the others. You wouldn't use the 7E model for every conversation or feeling because it would be too timely or too intense. So, it is about picking your moment and the area you want to focus on. This should be linked to your goals and aims. If you are trying to support a child to

increase their confidence, you should magnify and strengthen things they say or do, or the emotions they identify which are aligned with this goal. If you are working on expressing their feelings of anger, you should focus on this, and so on.



The 7E model is briefly explained here as an introduction. This is by no means exhaustive or prescriptive but is intended to give a flavour. Examples linked to activities in this workbook follow.

E – Exhale: This is about slowing the pace down, pausing, steadying the process, bringing the calm, exhaling, and taking your time. This can include breathing and regulating yourself and the child (through breath and regulating activities, including tone, feeling, and voice), as well as connecting, and focusing on being present and attuned in the moment. This can also mean not rushing the activity or the conversation – so, for example, enriching a conversation, a theme, a feeling, a word, or a point, rather than rushing through it or viewing it as a tick-box exercise. For instance, you could choose one activity in the workbook and take your time to really reflect and think about it rather than trying to do loads in one session. This is also about taking a mindful moment and focusing on reflecting instead of reacting. If the child is talking about lots of things in one go and sharing a flurry of information, support them to pause, think, exhale, and reflect.

E – Explore, Expand, and Enrich: These three E's are about being interested, being curious, and being open – asking expanding and open questions and doing activities to really thicken the narrative, to add more layers to it, to flesh it out. These E's are really about expanding and enriching the topic, like adding colours, textures, angles, shading, and layers to a painting. It is also about seeing different perspectives of the painting, such as the difference of focusing in on one part, looking at it really closely, as opposed to what it looks like upside down, from a distance, or at an angle. It is about asking questions and opening up conversations which support learning more about what the child says, feels, means, and thinks. Ask questions which open doors, which help make links, discoveries, patterns, and connections. This is about supporting the child's meaning- and sense-making, and thinking about the images,

sensations, words, and feelings associated with what they say. It is important here to take a position of curiosity, and a position of 'not knowing', as this respects and appreciates the child/parent/person as the 'expert of their own experiences'.

E – Embody: This is about truly being with the child, being present and emotionally available. This is about the child feeling heard, valued, validated, and listened to. The child should feel this, not just be told this – they need to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. It is about moving from knowing, to feeling, to being, and to doing. The listener uses their whole body and whole brain and embodies the qualities and the feelings which the person needs. As Maya Angelou says, 'People will forget what you do, people will forget what you say, but people will never forget how you made them feel.'

E - Embed and Express: These go hand in hand. Embedding is about truly exploring, processing, and talking about something repeatedly in different ways, so that it is remembered. Through multiple ways of processing it, it goes into the child's muscle memory, and this also means that it isn't tokenistic or a one-off. This extends to when teaching a child something like a breathing technique; doing it once isn't sufficient, as it isn't going to be embedded and learned and they aren't going to remember it or meaningfully find a way to infuse it into their daily life. Therefore, they need to do, in this instance, the breathing exercise, over and over again, so that it goes into their muscle memory. They need time to practise it, reflect on it, revisit it, and apply it to their daily life. Similarly, when talking about an important topic, rarely is one conversation sufficient. If you compare this to teaching a child subtraction or addition, they need to hear about it multiple times, often have it explained in lots of different ways, practise it, and repeat it many times before they can grasp it. It is also about finding a teaching methodology that is tailored to that child's way of learning which makes it stick and make sense. This also applies to the tools in this book.

So, 'Express' is about not just working at the cognitive level and purely using words but taking the child's answer, question, response, and experience and transforming it into art, music, writing, drama, an item, and so on. It is therefore important to give the child numerous different visual, tangible, creative, and expressive ways to process, remember, and communicate. Making these ideas more expressive and creative has lots of benefits. Here are just a few:

- When working with children and adolescents, it is crucial to make therapy and interactions more playful, interesting, interactive, and fun, in order to increase engagement and accessibility, and to lessen the likelihood of the child feeling put on the spot or threatened. Creative techniques and play are more universal, and, therefore, tend to be more familiar and less intimidating to children. Expressive means also allow the child and the person supporting to have a project or task to focus on, which naturally creates some distance, space, and externalization, which can make the feelings or memories less overwhelming, and supports the child to feel less exposed.
- · Creative and expressive techniques can helpfully work across language,

- learning, and cultural borders, which can increase their accessibility, and their reach.
- Creative and expressive techniques can take into account many different types of learning and engaging styles. Therefore, by embedding concepts in multiple ways, the likelihood of the concepts making sense, being absorbed, being remembered, and being internalized is increased. It also gives more opportunities for the concepts and metaphors to be tailored, individualized, and played with in a way that fits. For example, externalizing and talking about butterflies in one's tummy may be helpful, but drawing butterflies in one's tummy, and labelling them with the different worry names, making a body map of what it feels like with and without the butterflies in one's tummy, watching videos of butterflies, sticking labels of the different worries in the shapes of butterflies in one's tummy, playing and acting-out butterflies in one's tummy, and using a butterfly puppet are likely to embed this concept further and enrich the discussions around it. Other examples of using the expanding, exhaling, and embedding concepts with the activities in this book will follow.
- If these creative and expressive strategies are done within the context of a safe regulating relationship, they not only provide the child with rich relational memories which can then be internalized, but also offer the child a reparative, healing, and positive relational experience. The creative tool may be the tangible outcome, but it is the relational quality and interaction that surrounds the process that is the true magic.
- Trauma, stress, pain, and distress are often encoded in sensory modes, through pictures, sounds, smells, sensations, images, and so on, so it makes sense when addressing trauma and difficult memories to work at a creative and sensory level (e.g. visual, kinaesthetic, tactile, olfactory, affective, and auditory), where children can engage all of their senses in a relational, safe, contained, and connected way; and through a whole-body-brain connection. After all, multi-sensory experiences have a multi-sensory impact, and therefore require multi-sensory approaches.
- Studies have shown that trauma and toxic stress can impact the communication between the left and the right brain. Creative techniques address this by utilizing both sides of the brain, and support the important healing processes of connecting, linking, and integrating. They enable communication between the left and the right brain, the past, present, and future, the mind and the body, thoughts and feelings, and the bottom and the top of the brain. Creative activities also support the engagement of the child's sensory, motor, limbic/emotional, and arousal systems, as well as soothing the lower parts of their brain, releasing tension to help with self-regulation, and activating their relaxation responses.
- Children often do not have the language or the emotional vocabulary to describe, name, or make sense of their experiences, so creative activities can also be helpful in accessing far more than just words, and can promote a whole-brain-body approach. As the saying goes: 'a picture paints a thousand words'. Often a picture can give a window into a child's emotional landscape,

and into their inner world. It can allow the unspoken or the unspeakable to be given a voice.

- The loss and pain have also often contributed to the child being or feeling powerless, helpless, and out of control. This sense of powerlessness can be responded to through creative means. Creative techniques can support the child to have some mastery and control over both the process and the finished product. They can support the child to be their own author of their story, the painter of their own canvas.
- Creative expressions can also provide the child with something concrete which they can take home, destroy, feel bigger than, and have control over.
- Creative expressions can create both a physical and metaphorical container
 for the child, but also act as a transitional object, which they can adapt and
 take into their everyday life and use after the sessions/therapy/interactions
 come to an end.
- Creative means also are a concrete and visual representation of the work done, and the journey travelled. They can be a powerful visual journey and tracking system of the changes and discoveries which have been made. For example, each time the child does a feelings wheel we can see which feelings have changed (Activity 10).
- Last, but by no means least, having concrete creations can also support and be added to other tools and strategies, such as their sensory box (Activity 30) or their octopus of options (Activity 56).

Some examples of using the E's follow. You can apply these concepts and ideas to the numerous activities throughout this workbook. They also demonstrate how to deepen the activities should you wish to. Of course, these will differ depending on the context, relationship, environment, and so on, and are just intended to give a flavour and a sense of what is possible.

EXAMPLE 1: THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS HEAD (SEE ACTIVITY 11)

This exercise can be done just as it is, or it could be expanded on and enriched. For example:

- thoughts that day/month
- thoughts in general (e.g. about a death)
- thoughts about a specific thing (e.g. Mum not being there on their first day of school)
- thoughts before/during/after an incident or a situation
- · 'positive and negative' thoughts
- perspective taking: 'my mum's thoughts' or 'what my teacher might be feeling and thinking'.



The child can share the different thoughts and feelings in different shapes, colours, patterns, and so on. The child could write down or draw these thoughts and feelings, or this could be done using the images in Activity 11, on an interactive

polystyrene head, on a mirror, on a doll, using miniatures, and so on. Each thought or feeling could be expanded on if you wanted. For instance, if a child said they felt sad, Activity 16 could be used. Or if the child said 'I miss my mum', there are so many opportunities to expand on and enrich this. They could, for example, turn this feeling into a collage, a poem, a rap, a sculpture. They might want to go on to explore some of the things they miss about their mum and ways to remember them, as in Activities 42–49. Depending on the statement and on the qualifications of the facilitator, they might, if needed and appropriate, want to use cognitive behavioural therapy, eye movement desensitization reprocessing therapy, imagery re-scripting on the thought/sensation/feeling. The possibilities go on and on.

EXAMPLE 2: HAPPINESS/INNER COMFORTER WORKSHEET

This relates to Activity 41. If the child chooses a cheerleader, they could be supported to think about who the cheerleaders are, how they make them feel, what they are saying/cheering, what they look like/sound like, and so on. They could also be supported to think about when they might need them, how they could help, what they look like from their eyes, and how listening to them might help. They then might like to find ways to draw, sculpt, write about, or make a visual representation of their cheerleaders (some creative ideas are shown in Activity 38). They could also be supported to 'breathe' the cheerleaders and good vibes in, so, for example, integrating them into relaxation and breathing techniques (Activity 36) or creating an image which they put into a sensory box.

If the child chose a superhero, they could be supported to think about what the superhero says, does, looks likes, sounds like, and how they make them feel. They could also be supported to think about the superhero's powers, advice, and so on. The child could come up with their own superhero pose or handshake. They could also make a superhero cape with reminder words on it, or a cuff or mask. These are just a few of the possibilities.

EXAMPLE 3: RELAXATION EXERCISE - HAND BREATHING

You can simply select and teach the hand breathing as described in Activity 36, or if you want to embed and enrich, consider some of the following ideas:

- Practise it daily so that it goes into their muscle memory integrate it into their daily routine, like brushing their teeth.
- Get the child to draw around their hand or other people's hands or use hand cut-outs to go over and over the exercise.
- Make a plaster of Paris hand mould or a hand puppet.
- Go through the psychoeducation as to why hand breathing is helpful, so that they understand the rationale.
- Think about ways to optimize the hand breathing, such as adding another sensory system by using a calming scent, applying hand cream, listening to calming music, and so on.
- Get the reminder card from my Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Grounding, Soothing, Coping, and Regulating Cards, or make one and put it on a keyring, or in their sensory box, their school locker, their pencil case, or their diary.

- Make a rhyme, poem, or mantra about the hand breathing.
- Make a video of them/you/both of you and watch it regularly.

This is just to give you a flavour of how you can take an activity and expand and enrich it to make it even more meaningful.

EXAMPLE 4: REMEMBERING THAT PERSON (ACTIVITIES 42-49)

Another example of an expanding and enriching activity is when a child shares memories or sparkle moments with the person who died. It can be powerful just to name, list, and talk about these. However, if you wish to expand this further, here are a few ideas:

- Validate, empathize, and name the feelings, including mourning the loss of not having that person alive and with them. All of the therapeutic ways of being discussed at the beginning of the adults' section can be applied, as well as the feelings pages and strategies.
- Ask interested and expanding questions. Of course, this needs to be well paced and not a barrage of questions but to give you a flavour, if a child says 'I miss going horse riding with my mum on a Sunday', a few options (by no means exhaustive or prescriptive) would be to say: 'Can you tell me about going horse riding with your mum?', 'What did you do when there?', 'What did you feel when you were there?', 'What did you like about it?', 'How long had you been going for?', 'What horse did you ride?', 'What did you do before and after horse riding?', 'What did you mum think about it?'
- Add more in-depth feeling and sensory questions such as: 'What different feelings did you have when you were horse riding?', 'Where did you feel them in your body?', 'What did you smell/see/hear/taste/touch when you were there?'
- Ask if they want to express those moments, for example through making a photo collage, a poem, a video montage, a horse keyring.
- Integrate this moment into relaxation exercises, such as them travelling back there when they need a mindful moment or a brain break.
- Suggest that the child writes down all the different times or memories of horse riding, or widen this so that they do it around a horse-riding photo or on a horse cut-out.
- Suggest that they have a horse cuddly toy or decorate a photo frame of this memory.
- Suggest that they can talk about these memories and incorporate them in the activities about being connected to the person who has died by an invisible string, or holding people in their hearts and heads.

The list goes on and will vary depending on the situation, the context, the relationship, and the child.

EXAMPLE 5: THE GRIEF AND LOSS IMAGE (ACTIVITY 20)



Some children and adults might find this worksheet helpful just to see and share some common experiences around grief and loss. It can be a useful way to acknowledge, name, and identify experiences, for the child to have the adult show empathy towards them, reflect on their feelings, and validate them.

It can also be a springboard or scaffold for further discussion. Having some options allows children and adults to create a safe space to explore and discuss things, and the child can feel that they are not alone and that their feelings are okay and shared. It can also give others who have not experienced the death some insight, empathy, and understanding into what the child might be experiencing and living through, as they can connect with some of the images.

The worksheet can also support some interesting discussions about which emotions the child may or may not feel, and how these might change on different days, at different times, depending on the context. These can be powerful ways of enriching the discussion, and to expand on understanding. It also might support discussions about perspective-taking, for a child to share how, for example, their

parent or sibling might be feeling or experiencing the grief, or how they think their parent or sibling thinks they feel.

Some statements which you might look at (at the child's own pace and over time) to explore 'grief/loss/death/bereavement' (replace with your own choice of name) are shared in Activity 20, so please refer to those. There is scope for building on questions such as: If the grief/loss/death/bereavement was a thing, an item, a type of weather, something in nature, an animal, a colour, what would it be? What would it say if it could talk? When you feel the grief in your body where do you feel it? Each answer the child gives could be drawn, spoken about, and explored – some examples follow.

If, for example, the child says their grief is the colour blue, you might ask, what type of blue? What makes the blue darker or lighter, stronger or lighter? Is it also a shape? They might be supported to draw the blue and watch how it changes and grows. You could ask where they feel the blue in their body, what it feels like, if the blue could talk what would it say, and so on. You could support them to integrate the blue into relaxation and breathing exercises, and so on. In addition to this, you could explore what colour hope or happiness is and when that can visit or be mixed with blue. They might be supported to draw, make a collage, write about, or make something about the blueness.

Another example is that if a child says that their feeling of 'grief/loss/death/ bereavement' is like a 'rollercoaster', they could sculpt, mould, draw, paint, write about it (e.g. a rap, poem, comic, song, in a diary) or make a 'rollercoaster'. This can help to describe it, externalize it, and give them a visual of it, which can support the process and understanding of it, as well as communicating and putting words to it. Similarly, the child might be encouraged to act out using physical movement, puppets, masks, or a sand tray exercise to explore the 'rollercoaster' further. Then questions (depending on the context and skillset) can be asked to explore, expand, and enrich, such as: What is the name of the 'rollercoaster'? What does the 'rollercoaster' sound like? If the 'rollercoaster' could talk, what would it say? What have been the ups and downs, twists and turns of the 'rollercoaster'? How does the 'rollercoaster' make you feel? Additionally, the metaphor can be played with according to the need; for example, the fairground, the ground itself, the controller, the handlebars, and so on can be symbolically discussed. You might also like to use different ways to reduce or change the rollercoaster as discussed, for example change the story, make it black and white, slow it down, have the control pad, draw the rollercoaster, and rip up or shred the paper.

Another example is that if the child chooses 'the black hole' as their feeling, you can support them to draw or make the black hole. Talk about how it feels, where they can feel it, what makes it bigger and smaller, other times they have felt the black hole. They might like to draw or write about the black hole. This can be expanded on, for example, by writing words, thoughts, and feelings around the black hole, by making or drawing ways to get out of the black hole, or by each week/time creatively expressing the black hole and showing the journey and how the black hole changes in size and shape.

This could be tied to so many different ideas, such as a broken heart, matched with the vase or heart activities, and so on.

The 'what else?' can also be a powerful addition to allow the child to come up with their own ideas and creations. Similarly, they might like an image but not the words, or like the words but not the image, so they can create and discuss their own ideas and make adaptations and new suggestions.



Grief is externalized as fire, anger, and an exploding volcano.



A child chooses and shares what made them cry and feel full of tears, writing these in tears.



The black hole when the child started the workbook, the black hole in the middle of the workbook, and the black hole towards the end of the workbook.



Grief has made the child heartbroken, expressed through art.



EXAMPLE 6: ACTIVITY 16 ON THE FEELING OF SADNESS



While the above example is about expressing the experience of grief and loss or missing a loved one, this can also be done for a feeling like happiness, anger, sadness. This example takes sadness but this exercise can be applied to any feeling. Once a metaphor/name/item/object has been chosen and discussed in detail, it can be helpfully embedded and expanded on by carrying out related expressive and creative activities.

For example, if a child says that their feeling of 'sadness' is like a 'dark cloud', they might sculpt, mould, draw, paint, or make the 'dark cloud'. Similarly, the child might be encouraged to act it out using physical movement, puppets, masks, or a sand tray exercise to explore the 'dark cloud' further.

You could add to Activity 16 by including questions such as: What is the name of the 'dark cloud'? What does the 'dark cloud' sound like? If the 'dark cloud' could talk, what would it say? Where do you feel the 'dark cloud' in your body? What makes the 'dark cloud' stronger? What overshadows or moves the 'dark cloud'? When did the 'dark cloud' first visit? Additionally, the metaphor can be played with according

to the need; for example, the rain, other clouds, wind, sun, storms, rainbows, thunder can be symbolically discussed.

EXAMPLE 7: STATEMENTS LIKE 'I WANT TO BE HAPPY' AND 'I WANT TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED GRIEF'

Enriching and expanding can also be applied to statements. For example, if a child say, 'I want to be happy', after acknowledging what they have said and listening, you might ask gently and curiously (not in a barrage of questions) something like the following:

- Wow, what does happiness look like and mean to you?
- When you imagine yourself being happy, what would be different or what would you see?
- When you imagine yourself being happy, how would you feel in your head and in your body? How would you and others know you were happy?
- Can you think of times when you were happy?
- If happiness was an item/type of weather/colour/thing, what would it be?
- What different thoughts, feelings, people, places, senses make the happiness visit?
- What makes the happiness stronger and bigger?

They might then draw, make a collage, or write about happiness or their body when happy (Activity 39).

The same sort of questions can apply if a child says something like 'I want to help other people who have experienced grief', or any similar statement. So often we let these moments pass by. If a child has said this and previously has had low self-esteem, for example, this is something you might want to expand and hook on to. For example:

- · Wow, so what would helping look like?
- What has really helped you that you would like to share?
- If you could go back and talk to yourself a few months ago, what would you say?
- What lessons and advice would you want to teach others?
- How would it make you feel to know that you helped people?
- When you imagine yourself helping people, what would you see, notice, feel like?
- If I were to speak to people who you have helped, what would you like them to say about you?
- Can you think of times where people's help has really made a difference to you? What did you learn and what did it feel like?
- · Can you think of times when you have helped others?
- Who would be impressed/appreciative/not surprised that you are helping others?
- What does that say about you that you want to help others?

 Who are your life cheerleaders and what would it feel like being someone else's life cheerleader?

Each of these could be unpicked, explored further, drawn, written about, made into a collage, and so on.

Box 6: Spotlight on children who retreat or bottle-up their feelings

Some children understandably will bottle-up and clam up when asked about the grief or death of their loved ones, or about a range of feelings. They might retreat and struggle to share or talk about how they feel. This can be for a range of reasons:

- · Feeling it is too scary and overwhelming to talk about.
- Guilt about what happened when they did talk (e.g. an argument before the person died).
- · Being a shy or more reserved child.
- Feeling so full up and having a fear of bursting and of everything spilling out (e.g. the fear that once you start you can't stop).
- · Feeling that no one else gets it, understands, or cares.
- Feeling unsafe to open up to other people (e.g. not trusting the relationship).
- Not being able to find the words or not having the words (e.g. speech and language difficulties, a young age, limited emotional vocabulary).
- Still feeling confused or in shock. This can include it not feeling real, and there can be a fear that talking about it can make it real.
- The concept being too abstract and hard to comprehend or grasp.
- Feeling that talking or sharing doesn't help or is not accepted or welcomed (this can often be taught through family and cultural messages), or that there is no point because the person can't come back.
- Experiencing or feeling in the past that their feelings were not heard, listened to, or important.
- Having learned in the past that talking had a catastrophic or scary response (e.g. people shouting, shaming, humiliating, having an extreme reaction), or being marinated in an atmosphere of silence and secrecy.
- Protecting others from their sadness, pain, or vulnerability (e.g. not wanting
 to make their mum sadder by talking about their dad or wanting to look
 after their mum). They might not want to be seen as a burden or further
 contribute to someone's distress (e.g. 'I am making things worse; things are
 hard enough already').
- Having watched and learned from other people around them who avoid or bottle-up things (e.g. being around adults who brush things under the carpet and don't talk about feelings).
- Community, family, and culture discouraging, negatively responding to, or dismissing talking about how you feel, including saying things like: 'We don't air our dirty laundry', 'What goes on behind closed doors stays behind closed

- doors', 'Big boys don't cry', 'Man up', 'Talking doesn't help, so there is no point', 'We need to be strong for each other.'
- In a trauma context, having had their feelings humiliated, belittled, used against them as weapons, and so having learned that it is better to be silent, still, and self-reliant.

It could be a combination of these, or none of them, as each child is unique - these just give a flavour.

So, most importantly, it is about being curious: Why might the child find it tricky to talk about things? What might they be worried about/apprehensive about/stuck with? Do they feel safe and able to talk? What have they learned previously about talking and sharing? What responses have they had from other people? What might their fears be about sharing, opening up, and talking? Thinking and reflecting on these is important because our approach and strategy should match with the answers to questions like these. We need to honour and respect the reasons why fences were put up and be in a place to support the child before expecting them to take the fences down.

Another important point to hold in mind is that not everyone is a talker and needs or wants to talk, and that different people have different paces and styles. So, if we are trying to get them to talk, is that for us or for them? Are they processing things in another way? Are they ready to talk? What are the advantages and disadvantages of them talking? Do they need more time? Or a different medium/person/forum to express themselves?

Also, a lot of it might be about the relationship and the context. Do they feel able, comfortable, and safe to talk to that person? Are they worried about the response they will get? Are they trying to protect that person? What messages have they learned from around them about sharing and talking? Are there qualities that they need in order to feel able to talk? Is the environment calming and regulating? And so on.

So, the above are all things to carefully consider. We do not want to force or push children to talk. However, this said, it is also about making safe spaces for them to feel they can if they want to, and to understand some of the benefits of talking. Some ways which can support this are as follows (although there is no right or wrong or one-size-fits-all approach):

• Give permissive messages about talking and sharing. Make space for the child to talk when they are ready, and acknowledge and validate why they might not feel ready to talk and that they are entitled to feel however they feel. For example: 'I understand why it can be tricky to talk about...', 'Other children have said they haven't wanted to talk because of... I don't know if that fits for you', 'Are there things you would like to talk about? It can be another topic?', 'Are there things I can do to support you?', 'There is no right or wrong way. I want you to know I am here, and you are not alone. When you are ready, even just to dip your toe in, we can do that', 'I will check in and I am here for you, but I know it is hard, so I will be led by you. I am not going anywhere.' This is similar to going fishing – sometimes we have to wait a

- while and keep on trying, but it is also about being prepared, ready, hopeful, and choosing optimal conditions and equipment.
- Tread gently and carefully. Some children just need to be approached in a
 more subtle, drip-feeding way. If they have a metaphorical brick wall up, we
 don't want to bulldoze the wall down, but to find a small hole or make a
 little chip. So just take it in small steps, perhaps when in the car, doing the
 washing up, or referring to something on TV.
- Explore their apprehensions and worries around opening up and talking, and validate and collaboratively problem-solve around these. Get them to think about ideas which could increase their comfort for doing this. This can be optimized by bringing in what some other children might feel or say who have experienced grief. You can also use some speech bubbles, video clips, or some of the worksheets in this book to support what they may or may not be feeling, including the messages around feelings and grief and loss.
- Use metaphors and child-friendly non-shaming and normalizing examples for talking about retreating or holding things in, like a clam, a tortoise, a bubble, a drawbridge. Build on this using pictures, miniatures, and puppets.
- Use some distancing techniques, such as saying, 'Some other children have said...', 'In *Ollie the Octopus...*' Encourage them to express how they feel using items such as masks, puppets, worry dolls, worry diaries. For some, it can be easier talking about their favourite bear or through a puppet than directly.
- Encourage the child to talk in the third person talking about their friend, family member, a character in a story if they find it easier. It can also be helpful to watch movies or video clips and talk about the characters and the themes covered. This distancing can feel much less overwhelming, exposing, and personal. This can extend to texting, typing, or writing things down for some children (for others it is the opposite), as this can feel easier than saying it out loud.
- Think carefully about the environment and make it as safe and regulating
 as possible. As shared previously, think about the room itself, including the
 time, the items in it, the privacy, the temperature. Sometimes, the small
 touches can make a big difference.
- Find ways that feel less intense and require less direct eye contact or feeling stuck in a chair, like talking when playing a game, or doing the washing, or in a car. You could add an activity, such as walking and talking, or passing a balloon back and forth, or colouring-in, or standing on a balance board.
- Do something to make the space feel more regulating, such as starting with breathing exercises, shaking it out, dancing, and using a sensory box. Extend this to bring playfulness in the more the child has fun and laughs, the more relaxed they will feel, and laughter is a big stress buffer.
- Give them space, with just small check-ins to remind them that you are there and that the offer doesn't expire and isn't conditional (of course, this is harder if in a short-term therapy space).
- Give opportunities for support without talking about it so directly, such
 as using feelings and sentence completion cards/words (see A Therapeutic
 Treasure Deck of Sentence Completion and Feelings Cards), feelings monsters,

feelings stamps; giving them a diary to write letters in; leaving a worry doll with them; giving them a worksheet to point to or colour in. This scaffolding can be hugely beneficial and can give children a platform on which to begin conversations.

- Give children a different medium to express how they are feeling, such as art, clay, sand, dance, drama, making a collage.
- Ask them about something that feels less threatening, more comfortable, and easier to answer, like homework, or Peppa Pig, or their best friend, then delve into the deeper stuff. This supports them to gain confidence and to feel more eased in. The more able they are to engage in those conversations, the more they will be able to progress to other ones.
- Encourage the child to think about how they can talk in little bits rather than in a large chunk. Sometimes, I use the balloon metaphor, where I get them to blow into a balloon, and each time they think of something upsetting or worrying, they keep on blowing and eventually it pops (of course this needs to be done safely and with warnings). Then I get them to do it again but each time they talk/draw/write the worries or thoughts down to release some of the air so that it never gets too full. I liken this to talking and letting little bits out. In a similar way, you can shake and fizz a can of fizzy drink.
- Let the child be the 'boss', so that they get to choose what they want to talk about and can ask the questions and take the lead. Often, I will say things like 'If you were in my shoes, what questions wold you ask?', 'Or I have three different questions in my head, one is..., one is..., and the third is... Which one would you like me to ask?', 'You have told me three things that happened this week. Which would you want to talk about?'
- Give the child a card or a signal so that they can indicate when they have had enough; for example, 'I need a brain break', 'You've gone too far', 'Let's change the topic.'

This is by no means an exhaustive or prescriptive list. What else would you add?

Box 7: When the child did not have a good relationship with the person

As shared previously, it is recommended that for some situations and relationships that have been complex and complicated, other resources in addition to this one may be needed, including, in some cases, therapeutic interventions. So, this is by no means a one-size-fits-all or comprehensive list, but gives a flavour of what can help in this situation.

- Don't assume you know what the child feels or what their relationship was with the person. Be curious, ask them, and be interested. Leave space for a mixed range of feelings. Use the messages about feelings and the sections in this adult guide about ways to support this process.
- Talk to the child about holding and feeling blended and mixed feelings.

- Validate and bear witness to their feelings and pain. Show empathy and compassion. Don't minimize or disqualify their pain. Children need to know it is okay to feel however they feel. For example: 'I am so sorry you are going through this', 'I am not surprised you are feeling...', 'It is understandable and makes sense that you feel...', 'If I were in your shoes, I might feel that way as well, you are not alone', 'These are big feelings to have. Thank you for sharing them with me, I am with you', 'Hearing you talk I can feel the pain in my heart, and that might be giving me a clue or little flavour of what you are holding.'
- Remember that sometimes children can feel guilty or that they shouldn't mourn, or they shouldn't care. At other times, other people might invalidate the loss, by saying that the child had never met their uncle, or they were scared of their mum, or they were always fighting anyway. It is so important that the child feels that it is okay to feel any way which they do and that these are valid and important feelings. Sometimes, in fact, these losses can be harder because they feel so unfinished, messy, and complex. The metaphors for blended feelings talked about in this workbook, such as the puzzle, spaghetti, patchwork, tapestry, stained glass, soup, and fruit salad, can be helpful here.
- Use the feelings activities in this workbook to support the child to express their feelings and to externalize them: 'anger', 'guilt', 'regret', and so on.
- Support them to mourn for the person that they wished they had had in their life, for example the father they wished they had had but didn't have.
 Various activities can be used for this. They might want to extend this to the wishes and hopes they had about the relationship and still have. You can explore these creatively with props like a wishing well, a wish bone, a dreamcatcher, a genie, a wishing wizard.
- Support them to mourn for the parts of that person which they did like or love, or the memories which they did have, and talk about holding different blended and mixed feelings about different parts and at different times.
 Some children find it helpful to separate the person from the behaviour, or the person from their difficulties, such as drugs or alcohol.
- Support the child to mourn for the loss of things being changed, resolved, or improving, for example improving the relationship, or the person going to trial for abuse, or reconnecting with each other, or disclosing what the person did. Sometimes, in addition, being able to say these things out loud, or write a letter to the person, or talk to others who knew them can support the child to say some of the things which were unspoken.
- Show them that they are not alone and talk through other people's experience around complicated relationships and bereavement. Being part of a group, reading books about this, watching videos, or meeting others can support this.
- Remind them of all the other people around them who are there for them. The cheerleader exercises (Activity 38) will be helpful with this.
- Help them to find other ways to express how they feel, through art, writing,

- music, play, and so on. This includes being able to share, write down, or express any questions that they have.
- Depending on the situation and if appropriate, help the child to hold and anchor on to some of the positives of the relationship.
- Use the regulating exercises of Activities 30–41 for children who seem full up with pain, frustration, sadness, loss (e.g. breathing exercises, silent scream, happy memories, sensory box, take what you need tokens).
- Help to prepare them for other people's potentially insensitive responses.
 This doesn't mean they won't hurt or be offensive, but that they won't come from left field and the child can be supported to have a response.
- If they share things the person did, make sure that their feelings about this are validated and give a clear, non-neutral response that it was not okay.
- Think about what the child can and can't control.
- Help the child to find a way which feels right for them to say goodbye or mark the person's death.

There are numerous more, but these provide some food for thought.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your journey. I am thinking of you, cheering you on, and sending positive vibes and thoughts your way.

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Neon the Ninja Activity Book for Children who Struggle with Sleep and Nightmares

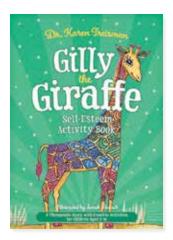
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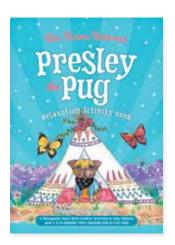
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Gilly lacks confidence because she looks a bit different to the other animals, with a long neck and a black tongue! Sometimes they even laugh at her. Is it possible to be different and cool?

This activity book combines a colourfully illustrated story about Gilly the Giraffe to help start conversations and tons of activities for children to explore the themes of the story! The activities are accompanied by extensive advice and practical strategies for parents, carers, and professionals on how to help children aged 5–10 boost their self-esteem and confidence.



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Like all dogs, Presley the Pug loves to play, run, and snuggle up under his warm blanket. But sometimes, Presley gets so excited that his feelings like anger, stress, or worry take over. Luckily, his canine friends are here to help!

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A Therapeutic Story with Creative and CBT Activities to Help Children Aged 5-10 Who Worry

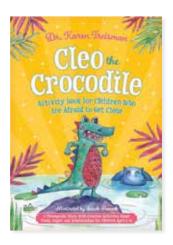
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Binnie is a creative and energetic baboon, who bounces around the lush green mountains of Rwanda in East Africa. Binnie often feels worried and stressed and these worries often get in her way!

This therapeutic activity book includes a story about Binnie the Baboon, with a focus on worry and anxiety. This is followed by loads of creative activities and photocopiable worksheets helping children understand, navigate, and reduce these worries. Also included is advice and practical strategies for parents, carers, and professionals on how to support children aged 5–10 experiencing feelings of anxiety.



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Dr. Karen Treisman

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Cleo the Crocodile had to leave the swamp because a hippo who was supposed to take care of him hurt him. How will Cleo find a new safe home and friends he can trust?

This activity book combines a colourfully illustrated therapeutic story about Cleo the Crocodile to help start conversations, which is followed by creative activities and photocopiable worksheets for children to explore issues relating to attachment, relationships, rejection, anger, and trust. The activities are accompanied by advice and practical strategies for parents, carers, and professionals on how to help children aged 5–10 who have experienced trauma.

Also available!

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