

# Supporting Families through bereavement during lockdown

"Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort."

2 Corinthians 1:7



# Helping bereaved families through the time of isolation & lockdown

It is an unfortunate fact, that whilst we are all apart, many of our school families will be touched with great sadness and loss as those they love die, due to the Corona virus. This can be a difficult time as we long to be a part of comforting them and helping those children to have a sense of normality to their day and we are unable to do that.

As schools, we can be ready to share practical advice that may help parents in addressing bereavement and grief with their children, whilst struggling with it themselves. The Childhood Bereavement Network website is a useful base that signposts to other resources that are specifically tailored to this current pandemic (hyperlinks are at the end of this document.)

Many schools will go above and beyond with expressions of love for their school families, however, for us as church schools, we may also want to help children and families as they grapple with what this means from a Christian faith perspective – many will be questioning a loving God in the face of suffering and pain, some will wonder how this all fits in with the God that we talk about in school and during Collective Worship.

Here are some points that may be helpful to share:

## Admit that the question of suffering is not easily answered.

Admit that no one can fully answer the question of why God allows pain and suffering in the world as well as to the poor and homeless. The Bible describes this problem as one of God's mysteries, in **Colossians 1:24-27**, St Paul believed his suffering would help others understand the word of God, for Job, his suffering helped him to get closer to God...<https://bibleproject.com/explore/job>

We trust by faith that he knows what he's doing and that one day in heaven he will explain everything.



## Explain that God grieves too.

Explain that Jesus wept for those who are suffering. In **Matthew 23:37**, Jesus looked over the city of Jerusalem, considered all the suffering that was soon to come, and his heart broke.

In **John 11:35** Lazarus was dead and Jesus wept as he saw Lazarus' friends and loved ones mourning his death.

(Jesus wept – Daniel Bonnell)

## Help them understand that we live in a world that has fallen – turned away from God.

Looking at the big picture of the Bible, (maybe using Understanding Christianity from RE in school) remind the children that we live in a fallen world (**Genesis 3:1-6**) which is, at the moment, controlled by Satan but that God keeps safe his followers (**1 John 5:18-19**). Satan is the one who initiates most of our pain and suffering (**Job** chapters one and two). Only time will tell why God allows Satan the freedom to bring destruction and pain to so many. The Bible teaches Satan causes much of the suffering in our world, Jesus has promised he will eventually judge and bring justice for the pain caused to others.



## Remind them that God has a plan, though it may be hard for us to see.



Explain how “hook rugs” portray gorgeous pictures and designs on the front side. However, all sorts of knots and strings are jumbled up on the back side. On earth, we see the backside of the rug with all the straggly pieces of yarn. God is looking at the front side of the rug.

While we can’t always see what God is doing, we can trust that he is at work with a plan which will one day be revealed just like embroidered beauty (**Romans 8:28**).

## Remind them that Jesus will one day make everything right.

**Hope** is a Christian value that many schools have as core, Jesus promised that he will come again and bring justice and healing for all those who suffered while living on the earth and trusted in him (**Revelation 6:9-11 and 20:1-6**). We’re told in the Bible that Heaven is a wonderful place. For Christians, the ultimate healing from suffering is to be with Jesus in heaven (**Philippians 1:23-25**). Remind them that Jesus has promised to wipe away all tears from our eyes (**Revelation 21:4**).



<https://request.org.uk/> is a website that shares articles about what Christians believe about suffering, death etc which may be of use.

Prayer spaces in schools have developed some of their resources to be created in the home, and a number of these will create a safe and quiet space where children can talk to God – it may help to do something familiar – especially if this is something you would do in school.

<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/prayer-spaces-at-home>

The 'empty chair' is a particularly poignant prayer space – that allows a space, inside or out, to go and pray or to remember. "In this safe space we need to be able to both hold the pain, name it, grieve it and move on from it." 'Journeying Through Bereavement in Schools' ~ Ian Terry, (Grove books)



It can feel hard to pray when we are grieving but is also a time when we can receive comfort from God. Books like 'The Prayer Experiment notebook' are filled with ideas to help pray – one idea is a 'thank you jar' which can easily be adapted– an empty jam jar that can be filled with strips of paper on which are things that we are thankful for as we remember our loved one – they can be added to as memories

flood back. Each time we pray, we can use a strip of paper to begin the prayer and open up a conversation with God.

There are many more activities that can be adapted for children to do to help through the process of grieving at home in CDBE Bereavement support pack. In isolation, if appropriate children could share a photo of these with the school via whichever channels you are using to keep communications open – it would be encouraging to know that their teacher / Head Teacher were remembering them in prayer too, or were able to offer words of comfort in response.

The church of England's going4growth webpage also offers links and downloads for families that will help them work through this within a Christian context

[http://www.going4growth.com/growth\\_in\\_skills\\_and\\_knowledge/pastoral-care/bereavement\\_resources](http://www.going4growth.com/growth_in_skills_and_knowledge/pastoral-care/bereavement_resources)

### Online resources from the Childhood Bereavement Network

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>

The Childhood Bereavement Network has collated a series of helpful resources to support families as they live through anxious times, either through illness or

bereavement and grief, in what can be isolating circumstances. Some of the key guidance signposted are these useful documents by Winston's Wish:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people/>

This page shares advice on how to talk about covid-19 with children in an honest but clear way that helps them to understand the seriousness of this disease.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-children-young-people-serious-illness/>

Should a family member become seriously ill with this disease, this page gives guidance on how to break this news to younger members of the family – again, in an honest way, that doesn't give false promises.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

This is a particularly useful guidance document that helps parents to talk openly about the death of a loved one due to this virus – and shares potential responses from the child, reassuring parents that this kind of reaction is normal.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

Some really practical advice around the issue of funerals during this time ~ there's a good suggestion of how family and friends can help children get to know their loved one in a way that many do during a eulogy at a funeral.