

## Bereavement Books and Resources for Special Schools

Bereavement affects everyone and children and young people with special educational needs and disability are no different. Books can be a useful tool to aid communication but helping these children may present issues that mainstream literature does not address. The following are suggestions that may assist children and young people with learning difficulties to understand difficult concepts such as the permanence of death, to have some knowledge of bereavement rituals, and to help them make sense of confusing feelings.

### **Helping Children Think About Bereavement**

#### **Heather Butler**

This fun story and related short activities are presented as four lesson plans including one for pupils with learning difficulties. It helps pupils develop resilience and coping skills should someone they know die.

### **When Dad Died / When Mum Died**

#### **Sheila Hollins**

Both books take an honest and straightforward approach to death and grief in the family. The pictures tell of the death of a parent in a simple but moving way. When Dad Died illustrates a cremation. When Mum Died shows a burial. The approach is non-denominational.

### **When Someone Very Special Dies**

#### **Marge Heegaard**

A simple workbook that could be adapted for use with children and young people who have special educational needs. With adult help, users are invited to illustrate and personalise their loss. It also encourages the identification of support systems and personal strengths.

### **Let's Talk About Death**

#### **Down's Syndrome Scotland**

A booklet with photos about death and funerals for young people and adults who have a learning disability. Includes text on why people die, what happens at funerals and possible grief reactions.

### **When Somebody Dies**

#### **Hollins, Dowling and Blackman**

Using pictures, the book tells the story of Mary who is very upset when someone she loves dies. She is encouraged by a friend to go to regular bereavement counselling sessions, which help her to feel less sad. John also loses someone he is close to. He is given comfort and companionship by friends and is shown learning to cope better with life.

### **Lifetimes**

#### **Bryan Mellonie**

A pet... a friend... or a relative dies, and it must be explained to a child. This sensitive book is a useful tool in explaining to children that death is a part of life and that eventually all living things reach the end of their own special lifetimes.

## **Autism and Loss**

### **Jessica Kingsley**

People with autism often experience difficulty in understanding and expressing their emotions and react to losses in different ways or in ways that carers do not understand. In order to provide effective support, carers need to have the understanding, the skills and appropriate resources to work through these emotional reactions with them. Autism and Loss is a complete resource that covers a variety of kinds of loss, including bereavement, loss of friends or staff, loss of home or possessions and loss of health. It includes a wealth of fact sheets and practical tools that provide formal and informal carers with authoritative, tried and tested guidance.

## **Brief Interventions with Bereaved Children**

### **Barbara Monroe and Frances Kraus**

A useful resource with lots of practical ideas. Chapter 9 is titled 'Loss for Children with Learning Disability'. This explains how children with learning disabilities understand death and how they are likely to communicate feelings with behaviour rather than words.

## **Understanding Death and Illness and What They Teach About Life: An Interactive Guide for people with Autism or Asperger's, and their loved ones**

### **Catherine Faherty**

The author offers detailed, concrete explanations about illness, dying, life after death, losing a pet, and numerous other issues. Her descriptions are written with such care; even caregivers will be comforted by her words.

## **How to break bad news to people with intellectual disabilities - A guide for Professionals and Carers**

### **Irene Tuffrey Wijne**

## **How People with Autism Grieve, and How to Help: An Insider Handbook**

### **Deborah Lipsky**

This book explores how people with autism feel and express the loss of a loved one and how they process and come to terms with their feelings of grief. Includes clear instructions on how best to support someone with autism through the grieving process, how to prepare them for bad news and how to involve them in the funeral or wake.

## **References**

Child Bereavement UK – [www.childbereavementu.org](http://www.childbereavementu.org)

Barnardo's Northern Ireland - [www.barnardos.org.uk/childbereavementservice](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/childbereavementservice)

Winston's Wish - [www.wintsonswish.org.uk](http://www.wintsonswish.org.uk)

National Autistic Society [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

