



Parents' Information Pack

School Advice from National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

It is understandable that your son/daughter may be feeling very upset at this time. This is a normal response when a young person experiences a sudden and traumatic death. Most young people recover over time. However, if you are very concerned about your son/daughter please take them to your family doctor and ask the doctor to make referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Clonmel.

If you cannot access your local GP after hours, please take him/her to the nearest Accident and Emergency where they can be seen by a doctor who will decide on the best course of action.

Upon return to school on the 9th of April, if you have concerns regarding your son/daughter, please contact the school and let us know. We will contact NEPS if needed.

CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING AND REACTION TO DEATH ACCORDING TO AGE

(This may be used with various groups and individuals)

Children's understanding and reaction to death will depend on their age and their developmental stage. The following are guides only as children will differ in their reactions and grasp of events for a range of reasons other than age alone.

AGES 0 – 2 YEARS

- Infants do not understand the meaning of death
- They may display anxiety when separated from a loved one
- They may appear upset, subdued and uninterested in their surroundings.

AGES 2 – 5 YEARS

- No understanding of the permanency of death
- May search for the missing person from a loved one
- May feel responsible for the death in some way
- May become apathetic and depressed
- May regress to an earlier stage of development e.g. thumb sucking, bedwetting, tantrums or may become clingy
- May develop fears of going to sleep
- May worry that other loved ones may die.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Continuity of normal routine e.g. mealtimes and bedtime
- Offer physical comfort
- Explain the death in clear, simple language, using words like "dead" and "died" - Do not use terms like "gone to sleep" or "passed away"
- You may need to repeat the same information again and again
- Permit them to ask questions and be consistent in your answers
- Reassure them that they had nothing to do with the death and of the wellbeing of other family members.

AGES 5 – 9 YEARS

- Beginning to realise the permanency of death, but their idea of life after death is still vague
- May have concerns about how the deceased is feeling or what he/she is thinking in the grave
- May have a lot of questions about aspects of the death e.g. how the person died, what they looked like, the funeral, heaven, coffins
- The reaction of their peers is important, they may feel 'different' to them
- Their peers may be awkward about the death and avoid contact
- They may become the target of bullying.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Encourage the child to talk and cry about the deceased if they wish to, otherwise respect their silence
- Answer questions and provide as much factual information about the death as possible
- Reassure them that thinking and feeling ceases after death
- Be vigilant in relation to bullying.

AGES 9 – 12 YEARS

- Understand the finality and universality of death
- Awareness of their own mortality and may worry about their own death
- May display psychosomatic symptoms i.e. physical complaints like tummy aches
- May wish to stay at home close to parents
- May display anger.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Dispel fears about their own health or the health of other loved ones by offering reassurance
- Encourage them to go to school
- Allow them to express their anger, offering appropriate ways to do so.

ADOLESCENTS

- Fully understand the finality, universality and inevitability of death. Their experience of death is similar to adults
- May have a range of feelings: guilt, regret, anger, loneliness etc.
- Death adds to the already confused array of emotions experienced by adolescents
- May appear to not care about the death
- May seek support outside of the family.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Offer them time to listen
- Allow them to express their grief in their own way
- Be prepared for mood swings
- Don't feel left out if they seem to value their friends more than their parents
- Children's use of social media should be monitored and supported by parents.

If parents are grieving themselves, they may be emotionally unable to support their other children. In this instance, another supportive adult in the child's life, e.g. other family members, friends, neighbours may need to offer emotional support.

It should be remembered that for children with special educational needs, their understanding of what has happened will be in line with their developmental age.

STAGES OF GRIEF

(This may be used with various groups and individuals)

Grief is a normal, healthy and predictable response to loss. Although there are distinct phases in the grieving process, people go through these stages in different sequences and at different paces. Generally the grieving process in adults is thought to take about two years, while with children and adolescents it may be over a more extended time-frame with different issues arising as they go through developmental milestones.

Denial, numbness, shock (up to 6 weeks)

- Death of the person may be denied
- Emerging feelings may be suppressed
- Refusal to talk about the death
- Bereaved keeps very busy to avoid thinking about the death
- Bereaved may show signs of confusion and forget everyday routines
- Children in shock may display either silent withdrawal or outbursts of crying.

Acute grief/searching and longing for deceased (6 weeks to 4 months)

- Acute sadness – crying
- Physical pangs of pain including loss of appetite and disturbed sleep
- Emotional pain accompanied by dejection, hopelessness, lack of concentration
- Fears of life after death, nightmares, ghosts
- Disorganisation
- Strong guilt feelings and questioning of self and others, particularly in the case of a sudden death
- Feelings of anger at the departed for leaving them
- Bereaved may reject offers to comfort them.

Adaptation to life without the deceased (6 months to 18 months)

- People begin to adjust to their lives without the person who is gone
- Sense of isolation
- Fearful of forgetting the deceased
- Less crying and irritability
- Exacerbation of existing personality problems. Children with low self-esteem may be at a greater risk of emotional/behavioural difficulties.

Normalisation of life

- Getting on with life
- Returned sense of humour and play
- Able to participate emotionally in new relationships
- Changed relationship with the deceased – able to think of the deceased without pain
- Reduction in physical/emotional symptoms
- Less guilt.

HOW TO COPE WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS

- Reach out – people do care
- Talk to your friends, family and teachers - talking is the most healing medicine
- Remember you are normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself as crazy or mad
- It is acceptable to cry
- It is acceptable to smile
- If your feelings and reactions seem different from those of your friends, remember everyone reacts differently
- When the stress level is high there is a temptation to try to numb the feelings perhaps with alcohol and drugs, this complicates matters rather than bringing relief
- Some people find that writing or drawing is helpful. What about writing a note or letter to the family of the person who died or the person themselves?
- Spend time with people who have a positive influence on you
- Make as many daily decisions as possible. This will give you a feeling of control over your life, e.g. if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them, even if you're not sure
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time and become less painful
- Make a special effort to take care of yourself during this time. Try to get some extra sleep, eat nutritious foods and get some exercise, even if it is just a walk
- Sticking to your "normal" routine helps. Structure your time – keep busy
- Take time out – go for a cycle or kick a football
- Provide some balance to the negative things that have gone on by doing something special or fun for yourself. Think about something that makes you feel good. Then make it happen – like going to the cinema, listening to music, calling a friend, etc. Laughter is good medicine. Watch a funny movie or play a silly game with younger children to lighten your spirits
- Use of social media can help but do not rely on it as your only source of support
- Useful websites: www.spunout.ie; www.youth.ie; www.reachout.com.au

Above all, realise that what you are experiencing is normal following a traumatic event. Be understanding of yourself and others.

REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Following the recent sad event, you may now be experiencing some strong emotional or physical reactions. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel but here is a list of difficulties that people sometimes experience following such an event.

FEELINGS

Fear	Insecurity
Guilt	Mood swings
Shame	Shock
Regret	Yearning
Anger	Numbness
Tearfulness	Confusion
Loneliness	Isolation
Anxiety	

BEHAVIOURAL

Nightmares
 Social withdrawal
 Over reliance on use of social media
 Irritability
 Loss of concentration/forgetfulness
 Physical/Verbal aggression
 Misuse of drugs, including alcohol

PHYSICAL

Tiredness
 Sleeplessness
 Headaches
 Stomach problems - Bowel/Bladder problems
 Loss or increase in appetite

THOUGHTS

Disbelief
 Denial
 Sense of unreality
 Preoccupation with images of the event/person

WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME

Children do not need to be taught how to grieve. They will do it naturally and in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide a safe atmosphere, permission and example to do so.

- Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they are having are normal
- Pay extra attention, spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse". People are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help them
- Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual selves in time
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. by drawing, taking exercise, or talking
- Help them to understand that defiance, aggression and risk behaviour is a way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and or fear they are feeling
- When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back
- If you are out for a long time, telephone and reassure them
- Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting, thumb sucking, or the need for a night light
- Share your own experience of being frightened of something and getting through it
- If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person who died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen
- Work with the school support services and other available services
- As well as advising your child about appropriate use of social media, monitor their use, particularly during this vulnerable time. Useful website: www.webwise.ie

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (PARENTS)

The following is a summary of questions frequently asked by parents after a critical incident.

Q. This incident has upset my daughter/son. As there are many rumours circulating, I would like to know what really happened. How can I find that information?

A. The school will inform students and parents of the core details of the incident insofar as they are known. It sometimes takes some time for the true facts to emerge. In the meantime, it is important to stick to the facts as known. Discourage rumour or gossip as it is often incorrect and can be distressing for the families and friends of those involved. Information on social media is not reliable and always needs to be checked.

Q. Will help be available to the students in the school?

A. This will depend on the particular situation. The school will usually put a plan in place for supporting students. This support may include classroom discussion, small group discussion or individual support for students who need it. If there is particular concern about your son or daughter, you will be informed.

Q. How can I help my child?

A. You are the natural support for your child. He/she may want to discuss their feelings and thoughts with you. You can help by listening carefully. You should tell them it is ok to feel the way they do, that people react in many different ways and that they should talk rather than bottle things up. Advise on and monitor safe use of social media.

Q. How long will the grief last?

A. There is no quick answer to this. It varies from individual to individual and according to circumstances. It will also be affected by the closeness of the child to the event or to person who died. Memories of other bereavements may also be brought up by the incident. Be patient and understanding. It can take time.

Q. Since the incident occurred my child has difficulty in sleeping, complains of headaches etc. Can I be sure these are related to the incident?

A. Grief can affect one physically as well as emotionally and these and other symptoms may be part of a grief reaction. If they persist, consult a doctor for a check-up.

Q. If my child remains very upset what should I do?

A. If your child remains distressed after a period of six weeks or so, he/she may need additional support, but there is no fixed rule about the length of the grieving process. If you are very concerned at any point, it is best to seek more help through your GP/HSE Services.

Q. In what ways are adolescents different from other children?

A. During adolescence there are a lot of changes going on for young people and some may feel confused about themselves and the world around them. Grief tends to heighten these feelings and increase the confusion. At this time, too, the individual may look more to friends than to family for support and comfort. Don't feel rejected by this. Just be available to listen when they need to talk and make sure they know you are there for them when they need you.

SUPPORT SERVICES

<u>CLONMEL GARDA STATION</u>	<p>Emmet Street, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary E91 H799 0526177640</p>
<u>CARRICK-ON-SUIR GARDA STATION</u>	<p>Greenside South, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary E32 WP60. 051642040 <u>STGH</u> 052-6177000</p>
<u>CAREDOC</u>	<p>1850 334 999 Flanagan, Dr. John Castle Street Medical Centre, 3 Castle Street Carrick-on-Suir Co. Tipperary (051) 640527 Downey, Dr. John Pearse Square, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary (051) 640 542 Roche-Nagle, Dr Richard Ballyhest House, Rathgormack Co. Tipperary (051) 646 003 Roche-Nagle, Dr James A. Ballyhest House, Rathgormack, Co. Waterford (051) 646 003 Roche-Nagle, Dr Kathleen A Ballyhest House, Rathgormack,. Co. Waterford (051) 646 003</p>
<u>CAMHS Clonmel</u>	<p>Tel: (052) 6177281 The Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Services are currently based at 34 Queen St., Clonmel. Tel: (052) 29774. Referrals to the service are via Family Doctor</p>
<u>CAMHS Waterford:</u>	<p>Tel: (051) 842146</p>

SUPPORT SERVICES

	<p>Contact Details: University Hospital Waterford, Dunmore Road, Waterford</p>
<u>PIETA HOUSE SOUTH EAST</u>	<p>20 Waterside Waterford City Waterford</p> <p>Phone: 051-858510 (Contact Person: Centre Manager - Michael O'Brien)</p> <p>Opening Hours: Monday- Thurs 9am to 9pm Friday: 9am to 5pm Saturday: 10am to 2pm Email: mary@pieta.ie</p>
<u>THE SAMARITANS</u>	<p>1850 609090 / 116 123 Address: 16 Beau St, Waterford</p> <p>Phone: (051) 872 114 Address: 2, Abbeybridge, Dean St, Gardens, Kilkenny</p> <p>Phone: (056) 776 5554 Email: jo@samaritans.ie</p>
<u>PARENTLINE:</u>	1890 9272777/ www.parentline.ie
<u>TEENLINE:</u>	1800 833 634/ www.teenline.ie
<u>CHILDLINE:</u>	1800 66 66 66 OR text TALK TO 50101
<u>SQUASHY COUCH</u>	<p>Parnell Street, Waterford</p> <p>Telephone: 051 859001</p>
<u>AWARE:</u>	1800 80 48 48 or 01-676 6166
<u>ST. BRIGID'S RESOURCE CENTRE</u> (Links with Yellow Road)	<p>Opening Hours: Monday to Thursday 9am – 9.30pm Friday 9am – 5pm 37 Lower Yellow Road, Waterford.</p> <p>Tel: 051 – 375261</p> <p>Opening Hours:</p>

SUPPORT SERVICES

	<p>Monday to Thursday 9am – 9.30pm Friday 9am – 5pm 37 Lower Yellow Road, Waterford. Tel: 051 – 375261 <u>Address:</u> Kickham Lodge, Kickham Street, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary <u>Phone:</u> (052) 612 9143</p>
<u>RAINBOWS</u>	<p>Clonmel Community Resource Centre (Contact person: Naomi Burke) Telephone: 052-6129143</p>
<u>NANO NAGLE COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE</u>	<p>Greenside, Carrick-on-Suir Telephone: 051- 642418</p>
<u>FOROIGE</u>	<p>16 Kickham Street, Carrick-on-Suir Carrickbeg Community Centre, Carrick-on-Suir Telephone: 086-3848160(Sheridan Brady) 086-8331886 (Siobhan Clifford) 086-0479851 (Daryl Walsh) 086-0299048 (Sarah Dunleavy)</p>
<u>EDGE YOUTH DIVERSION PROJECT</u>	<p>Youth Resource Centre, 56 New Street, Carrick-on-Suir Telephone: 086-8589873/086- 7703302</p>
<u>BARNARDOS:(Clonmel)</u>	<p>Contact: Carol McDonnell Telephone: 052-6170750</p>