

**CORONAVIRUS
GRIEVING THE
LOSS OF A LOVED
ONE DURING
LOCKDOWN**

Dear parent/carer

During this time children and young people are already experiencing a great deal of uncertainty, confusion and anxiety about what is happening in the world around them.

Routine has been disrupted, friends are unreachable, school has moved into the home and relatives can't be hugged. Our lives can feel very isolated and the unknown can cause anxiety. Activities which usually help us unwind, relax and cope are likely to be unavailable. Therefore, emotions are often fragile and volatile and we can exhibit behaviours that may appear uncharacteristic. Our resilience to take on challenges is weaker because we feel emotionally fragile and therefore reactions to negative words or events can be more extreme.

Very sadly, throughout this period of lockdown people are losing loved ones. While the death of someone we care about is always a difficult experience, the extra restrictions in place at the current time have bigger implications. In some ways, this can restrict our process of grieving.

Young people grieve in different ways and it is a very individual process. They need to be given the opportunity to grieve, in whatever manner suits them. As their brains are still developing, and as they are still learning how to deal with feelings such as fear and despair, grief can be a hugely unsettling and confusing time. This can feel like a threat to our well-being as for some children, especially younger ones, their instinct will be to try and hide from reality. This is a protective mechanism, allowing them to temporarily divert their attention from the loss. This may look like they are avoiding the bereavement, but actually young people often don't have the emotional capacity to deal with and focus on grief for long periods of time. This should not be perceived as them being unbothered about the loss and it is important that adults do not force a child to address and talk about the death when they are not ready to.

If the child has not seen the person who has passed away during lockdown, it may be harder for them to really acknowledge that they have gone. Their normal routine and structure have gone and in many ways the child is living in their own bubble in their home. It may feel to them that 'real' life is on hold. Therefore until this routine returns, their grief may be delayed. For example, if they would have usually gone for tea at Nan's after school, only when they return to school and realise that they cannot go to Nan's may the loss actually be apparent and eventually acknowledged.

Another painful element of grieving during lockdown is that the chance to say goodbye in person may have been taken from us. If your child wants to talk, perhaps ask them what they would have said or get them to write a letter to their loved one. Other activities that may help them say goodbye include creating a memory box, visiting a favourite place or sharing favourite stories of time spent together.

It is important to talk to your child using language appropriate for their age and development. Try to be honest with them. Avoid using metaphors such as 'they've gone to sleep' as this can cause anxiety in the longer term. If they have questions, try to be specific yet appropriate. Think about what they need to know and what they don't. Allow yourself to grieve with them as this will allow them to feel safe and secure in displaying their emotions. Understand children will grieve at their own pace and their emotions will come and go. Just make sure you are there for them when they need you.

Importantly, allow yourself time to grieve. Give yourself the opportunity to process your loss. Keep in emotional contact with friends and family as much as possible. Be outdoors daily and allow your own emotions to be felt, don't shut them away.

Remember, we are all doing the best we can under circumstances never seen before. Be proud of yourselves as we emerge from lockdown and embrace a new sense of normal.

Take care.

The Unravel Team

The logo for 'unravel' is written in a lowercase, rounded, teal-colored font. The letters are connected and have a soft, hand-drawn appearance.

Experts in children & young people's
emotional well-being

Supporting you on behalf of your child's school



EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS OFTEN EXHIBITED DURING GRIEF

- Anger
- Appetite changes
- Poor sleep
- Bed wetting (younger children)
- Denial
- Depression
- Acceptance
- Inappropriate responses
- Fear and anxiety
- Withdrawal
- Guilt

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Listen when they are ready to talk
- Give them time to process
- Be patient with their response
- Reassure them
- Be respectful of their response
- Let them know that it is okay to be angry but that they need to vent this in safe ways
- Encourage them to keep active with hobbies, schoolwork and connecting with friends
- Participate in activities which help remember their loved ones
- Let them know their feelings are important
- Talk openly and appropriately with them, answering their questions
- Understand that their grief may look different to yours



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**TOGETHER WE CAN
BEAT IT**

**Please keep yourselves
and your children safe**

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