

Supporting suddenly bereaved children and young people

# Introduction to Brake's work supporting suddenly bereaved children and young people

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## Sudden death is devastating

It tears apart families, leaving children without a mum, dad or sibling, parents without a child, or individuals without a partner. There is no time to prepare or say goodbye. Life is changed forever.



## Join Sudden



Sudden helps professionals support people bereaved by sudden death. Join our free mailing list for global research, news, events and updates.

Join now

## What we do...

We understand that people bereaved by sudden death suffer terribly - whether it's through a road crash, suicide, disaster, war, accident, or undiagnosed medical reasons. They are often left isolated, bewildered and traumatised and need specialist support to help them cope and move forwards with their lives.

Sudden is a global charitable initiative sharing best practice, research and resources among professionals and carers who work with suddenly bereaved people. Through this, we aim to help ease the suffering of people bereaved by any kind of sudden death.

We do this by offering:

- free quarterly bulletins for professionals
- online guidance and research papers

## Events



Seminars and training for professionals working with people bereaved by sudden death. Join our free mailing list for updates.

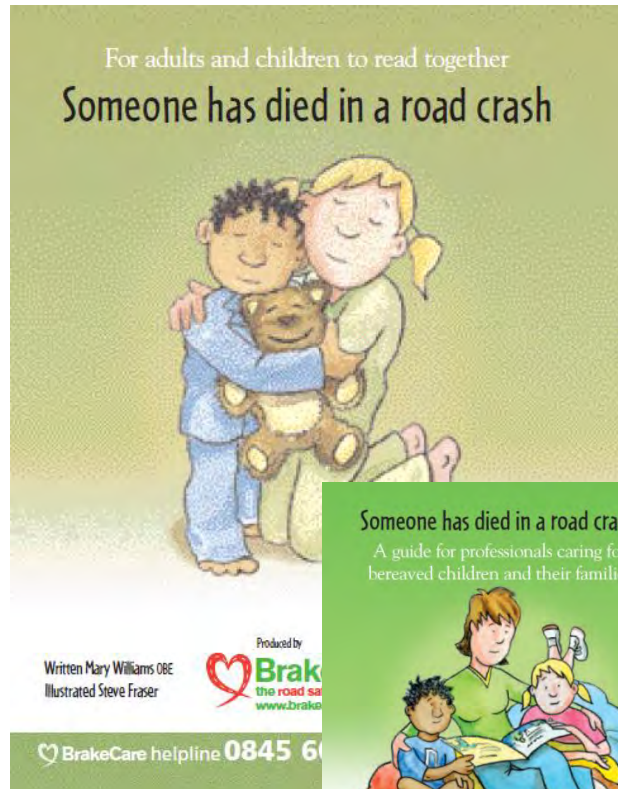


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**Common feeling 1 I WANT TO CRY**

It's good to cry. Crying is the most natural thing to do when you feel really sad. Some people think it's silly or pathetic. It isn't! Crying helps and helps when my dad died. I cried at the funeral, I cried at school and I cried at bed time. Even when I'm in the shower - that's a good place to cry because you don't need a towel!

**Don't's tip up:**  
Cry on someone's shoulder when you have a hug. Sometimes getting some hugs at a sleepover or when you play your favourite music can help as well.

Sometimes I would try not to cry. I would bottle up my feelings and pretend I was alright, but it never made me feel better. It was much better to blubber. This can cry any time you like, whenever you like. Sometimes I didn't feel like crying, and that was OK too.

**Do's tip up:**  
After you stop crying have a big glass of your favourite drink to replace the liquid you have lost and maybe a chocolate or biscuit to give you some energy. It will make you feel a bit better.

When my mum and my sister died, my dad cried a lot too. I'd never seen him cry before, but then I understood he was as great as me and I was OK for him to cry too.

What do you like to do after you have been crying?

**Common feeling 2 I'M REALLY ANGRY**

Sometimes I would feel really grumpy. I was really mad that my mum and sister had died. I was really cross that they weren't there any more. They couldn't talk to me, why wasn't somebody else dead, instead of them?

One day when I felt really angry I had to go to my favourite toy. Luckily I could be mended afterwards. After that, I used to hit cushions instead. I called it cushion rage. The cushions got a bit squishy but it didn't matter and it made me feel better.

When I felt angry I would jump up and down and shout and scream, but that was OK. Everyone knew I was because I was very sad and I was letting out my feelings. I felt fine afterwards, but a bit better.

**Do's tip up:**  
Cushion rage is more sensible than hitting another person or hitting something hard or being angry. If you ever think you want to do something, like a car on a collision or a pillow fight, and tell someone you trust how angry you feel. Someone can help you feel better still.

What do you want to do when you feel angry?

**Common feeling 4 I FEEL ALONE**

Feeling lonely is horrible. But you aren't alone. There are lots of people who want to help you and can help you feel better.

I felt that so, one understood their own feelings and they wouldn't be able to help me feel better. I felt different to all the other children at my school. What you have to remember is this - other people can't always tell how you are feeling just by looking at you. Sometimes that happens and I feel miserable inside.

When I didn't want to talk I used to visit some websites that are for children whose special people have died. You can chat to other children and tell them how you are feeling. Then they can help you feel a bit better and not alone.

**Do's tip up:**  
The best thing is to talk to someone you trust and tell them how you are feeling. Then they can help you feel a bit better and not alone.

Sometimes I thought I was the only person in the whole world who was so sad. Then I remembered that a girl in my class at school had been to a funeral last year. I talked to her and now we are friends. She understands how I feel.

Do you feel lonely sometimes?  
Is there anyone you want to talk to?  
Has anyone been kind or unkind to you?

**Common feeling 3 IT WAS MY FAULT**

When someone dies, the people who love them sometimes worry that it was their fault.

When my mum and sister were alive, I used to worry that they might die. I even worried that they would be killed in a road crash. I was really scared. I thought that if water was real I thought they had died because I had imagined them doing this to someone and I don't think it any more.

**Do's tip up:**  
Sometimes I think "if only" if only I had stopped us getting in the car that day. Then I remember that I couldn't have known we were going to crash. It isn't my fault they died.

Once, when my dad was alive, I had a fight with him. I said "I wish you were dead!" I didn't mean it, but when he died, I thought I was my fault. That's stupid though. You can't wish someone dead. Now by remembering the nice things said to my dad and the fun things we had together.

Nothing you thought, or did, or said, made your special person die. It wasn't your fault.

**Common feeling 5 THINGS THAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY**

Sometimes other people might say dumb things to you because they don't understand about death or how you are feeling.

For example, some adults think that children don't understand death. So they say things like "your special person has gone to sleep". Or "I'm sorry you have lost your special person". You know they aren't helping or less. They are really dumb.

Sometimes adults say things like "you've got to be strong" or "you're the man or woman of the house now". This is really silly. It's important to grieve and you are still a child and need to be looked after.

Some people don't understand that grieving takes a long time. They say things like "you'll get over it" or "don't think about it". It's normal to be happy again, but you'll never forget your special person and no-one can make you forget them or the fact they've died.

**Do's tip up:**  
Some people who don't know you very well might say "have you felt" when the dead have how you feel at all. They're trying to help.

Has anybody said anything silly to you?  
Who understands how you feel?

**Common feeling 6 I JUST DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING ANY MORE**

When we are really sad, it's difficult to have any get up and go.

When I was asked "if I wanted to go to the park I used to answer 'No, sorry my get-up-and-go got up-and-went!' I just didn't want to do anything. There didn't seem any point because I was so sad. Then my friend Ahmed introduced me to a new hobby - motor rock climbing. I have lots of fun doing it and it's something really look forward to every week.

After my dad died, I didn't even want to go to school. I just couldn't be bothered. I didn't want to talk to my friends because I didn't think they would understand how terrible I felt. But one of my teachers was really kind. She talked to me and let me take time out of lessons when I was feeling upset. I got better and started enjoying school again.



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- Helps understand emotions and feelings
- Provides straightforward advice on how to cope and who can help
- Funded by Mazars Charitable Trust
- Order from [www.brake.org](http://www.brake.org).



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## Brake support for road crash victims

**Online** – info, guidance and support literature  
at [www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk), click on victim help

**Helpline** – 0845 603 8570 (10am-4pm  
weekdays) or [helpline@brake.org.uk](mailto:helpline@brake.org.uk)



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## Other sources of support and info:

- Child Bereavement UK
- Childhood Bereavement Network
- Grief Encounter
- [hopeagain.org.uk](http://hopeagain.org.uk) (Cruse)
- Rainbows GB
- Winston's Wish
  
- SAMM (murder and manslaughter)
- Victim Support's Homicide Service
- Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide
  
- Local and regional child bereavement services



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# Thank you



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