

Supporting suddenly
bereaved children
and young people

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

Gillian McMahon
helpline officer



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Road Safety Week



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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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Supporting suddenly bereaved children and young people

For adults and children to read together
Someone has died in a road crash

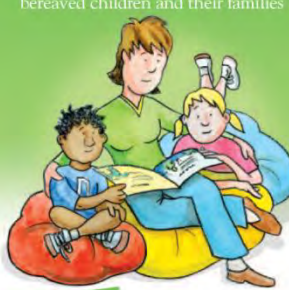



Written Mary Williams OBE
 Illustrated Steve Fraser


Produced by

 www.brake.org.uk

BrakeCare helpline 0845 603 8570

Someone has died in a road crash
 A guide for professionals caring for bereaved children and their families




Produced by

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Separately
 Fentons Solicitors LLP

Helpline 0845 603 8570

For children and adults to read together
Someone has died suddenly





Author Mary Williams OBE
 Illustrator Steve Fraser


Produced by
 
 Supporting people after sudden death

Visit www.suddendeath.org

Helping suddenly bereaved children
 Your guide to using the book 'Someone has died suddenly'



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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 tissue!

Simon's top tip:
Cry on someone's shoulder when you have a hug. Sometimes getting some hugs, a strong one or someone playing 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 blub. You can cry any time you like, whenever you like. Sometimes I didn't feel like crying, and that was OK too.

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

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

Common feeling 2 I'M REALLY ANGRY

Sometimes I would feel really angry. 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 play with me. They couldn't take me to my favourite somebody else died, instead of them?

One day when I felt really angry I had on my favourite toy. Luckily it could be washed 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 else I was 'hacked' was very sad and I was letting out my feelings. I felt better afterwards, but a bit better.

Lucy's top tip:
Cushion rage is more sensible than hitting another person or hitting something hard or screaming yourself. If you ever feel you want to do something, take it out on a cushion or pillow instead, and tell someone you trust how angry you feel. Exercise can help you feel better too.

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 no-one understood how I was feeling 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 I had happy face but I felt 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 hear about their experiences. See page 40 for websites. It can also help to read other books about when a special person dies.

Lucy's top tip:
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 used to be 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 would happen when I actually happened. I thought that I was my fault. I thought they had died because I had imagined them dying. This is nonsense and I don't think it any more.

Simon's top tip:
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 said, or did, made your special person die. It wasn't your fault.

Common feeling 5 THINGS THAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY

Sometimes other people might say stuff 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 not. They are really stupid.

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 you-one can make you forget them or the fact they've died.

Lucy's top tip:
Some people who don't know you very well might say 'I wish you were dead' when they don't know how you feel at all. Say 'I'm 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 'do you want 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 we moved ahead introduced me to a new hobby - motor racing climbing. I have lots of fun doing it and it's something I 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 great. 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.uk/shop



Supporting suddenly
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Brake support for road crash victims

Online – info, guidance and support literature
at www.brake.org.uk, click on victim help

Helpline – 0845 603 8570 (10am-4pm
weekdays) or 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 (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



Cheryl's story

