

Normal reactions to a traumatic event

Following any distressing event it is quite normal to experience a range of reactions. Each person will respond in her/his own way. Students may show **some** of the following:

- Not being able to concentrate or want to do school work or make decisions
- Avoiding places, people or objects which remind them of the incident
- Physical effects such as feeling unwell, headaches, listlessness or over activity
- Nightmares, irritability
- Feelings of guilt and/or responsibility
- Difficulty in accepting the events of how they have been affected by them e.g. Appearing over brave
- Changes in personality e.g. feeling depressed or isolated, becoming irritable or angry
- Needing to go over and over the incident which can test the patience of those closest

These reactions are all common responses and are usually short-lived, e.g. Up to four weeks. The majority of people will get over the experience with the support of family, friends and school

How to help your pupils

A traumatic event often leaves people feeling confused and unsettled, it is therefore very important to consider the following strategies

- Listen to and try to understand your pupil's views of the event
- Give attention, reassurance and say things simply
- Allow your pupils to talk about the event and express their feeling – give them reassurance and permission to feel upset
- Check children's understanding of the event
- Answer pupil's questions as truthfully as possible
- Maintain daily routines both at home and at school
- Encourage healthy eating, exercise and rest
- Encourage resumption of social activities e.g. clubs
- Let children know that their reactions are as might be expected
- It can help to recall happy memories

Useful book references

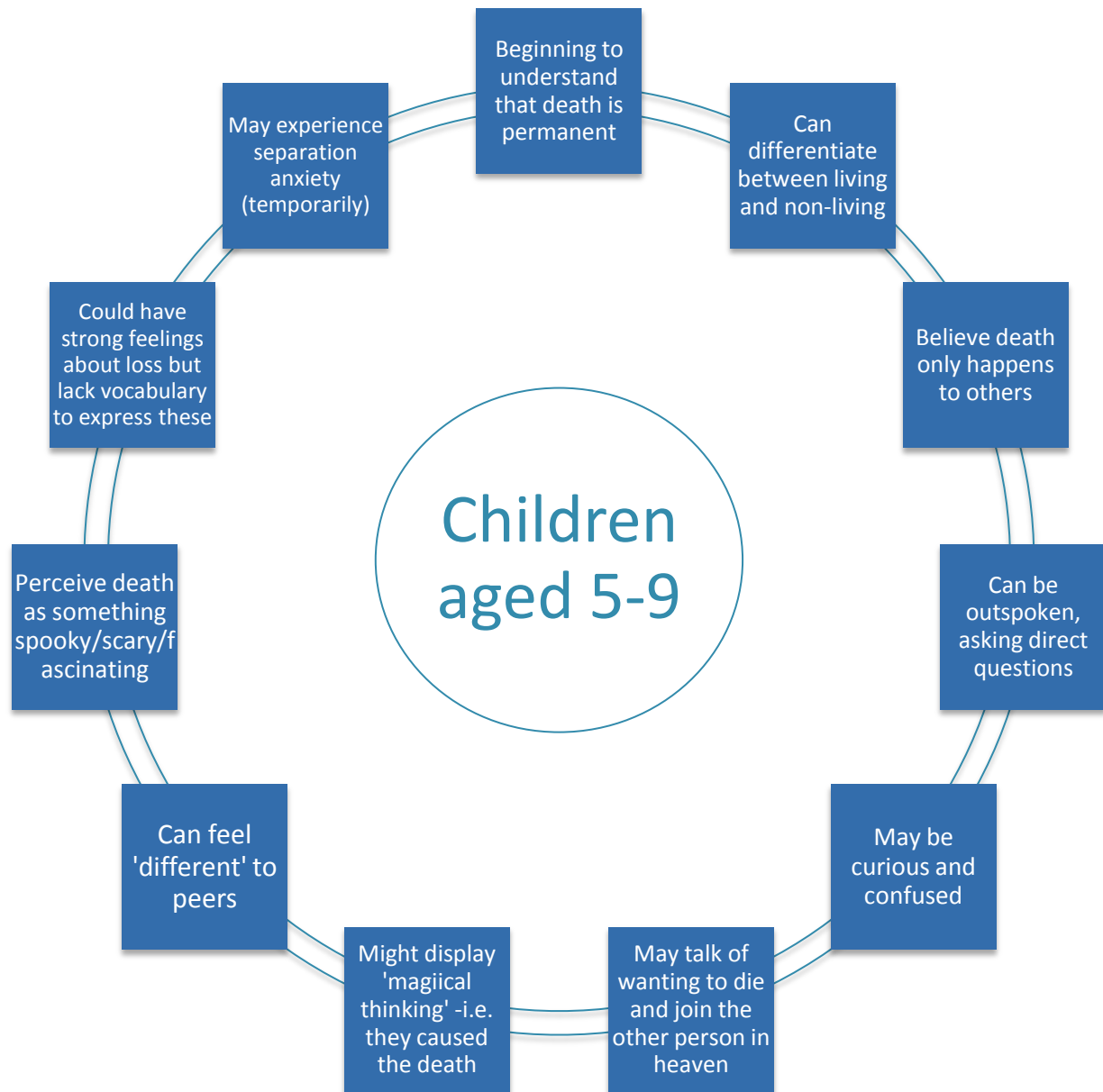
Durant, A. (2004). *Always and forever*. London: Picture Corgi.

Gilbert, I. (2010). *The little book of bereavement for schools*. London: Crown publishing Ltd.

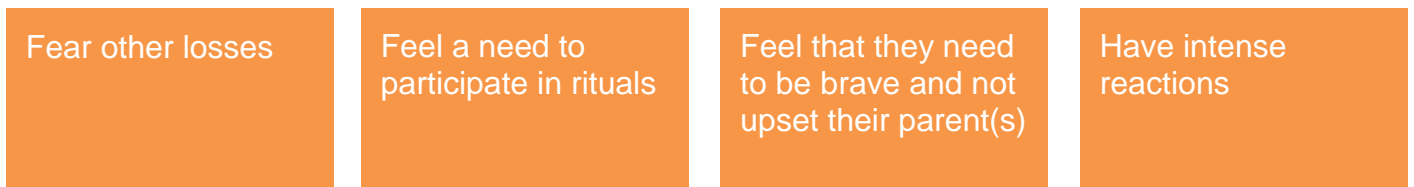
Ironside, V. (1996). *The huge bag of worries*. London: Hodder.

Stokes, J. & Crossley, D. (2008). *A child's grief. Supporting a child when someone in their family has died*. Winstons wish.

Understanding a grieving child



Whilst children **aged 9-11** may experience some of the above, they may also:



Useful Contacts

Winston's Wish
the charity for bereaved children

www.winstonswish.org.uk
Helpline: 08452 03 04 05

Cruse Bereavement Care

www.cruse.org.uk
Helpline: 0844 477 9400
0808 808 1677 (for young people)