



# TEACHER PACK FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

A resource to support bereaved parents and their children

[foreverstars.org](https://foreverstars.org)



## Teacher pack

Welcome to this invaluable resource thoughtfully compiled by bereaved parents and their children. Our aim is to provide educators with insights into the unique challenges faced by children who have lost a sibling during pregnancy or infancy. We want to shed light on how to support them and their families during this incredibly difficult time.

It's only natural to have concerns about saying the wrong thing when discussing such sensitive topics. Often, out of fear, we choose silence over potentially causing further pain. However, as educators, you understand the paramount importance of creating a nurturing and secure environment within the classroom. Children can truly flourish only when they feel seen and heard, and this holds especially true in the context of grief.

Once a child's grief is acknowledged, a powerful transformation takes place. They start to feel comfortable and safe enough to open up about their emotions, sharing what their grief journey feels like to them when they are ready. This resource is here to help you navigate that delicate path of understanding and support for grieving children.

***“Some things in life cannot be fixed, they can only be carried.” -Megan Divine***



## How do I help a child in my class who's sibling has died?

When a child in your class has experienced the loss of a sibling, it's crucial to approach this delicate situation with care and understanding.

Here are some thoughtful steps you can take to help a child cope with the loss of their sibling:

**Listen and Acknowledge:** Begin by creating a safe space where the child feels comfortable sharing their feelings. Allow them to express themselves at their own pace. Acknowledge their grief without judgment. “I am so very sorry your sibling has died, would you like to tell me their name?”

**Be Patient:** Grief is a deeply personal journey, and it unfolds differently for each child. Some may be vocal about their emotions, while others may be more reserved.

**Communicate:** Encourage open communication but avoid pressuring the child to talk about their feelings. Let them know that you're there to listen whenever they are ready to share.

**Offer Consistency:** Maintain a sense of routine and normalcy in the classroom. By offering them simple choices, it can give them a little bit of control back into a life which feels very much out of control.

**Empathise:** Show empathy by letting the child know that it's okay to feel a wide range of emotions, including sadness, anger, confusion, and even moments of happiness. Grief is complex, and all feelings are valid. What they show will not always match what they feel. Even a child who is behaving well may have difficult emotions underneath. Children may fix their facial expressions into a “mask” to help hide their feelings and ‘fit in’ at school.

**Provide Resources:** Familiarise yourself with resources available within your school or community for grieving children and their families. Share these resources with the family and offer guidance on accessing them. Please see our Bereavement Service Directory for a list of community resources.



**Coordinate with Parents:** Keep open lines of communication with the child's parents or caregivers. They can provide valuable insights into the child's needs and preferences during this time.

**Respect Privacy:** Respect the family's privacy and confidentiality. Avoid discussing the situation with other students unless given permission by the family.

**Encourage Peer Support:** If appropriate, foster peer support by sensitively informing the class/child's friend about the situation, emphasising the importance of kindness and empathy.

**Educate Yourself:** Educate yourself about childhood grief and its impacts. This knowledge will enable you to better understand and support the grieving child.





## Practical help

### Time out tray-

A tray of their own where you can offer different colouring/writing activities, so that they can take moments out of their school day whenever they are feeling too overwhelmed. Please find attached to our Teachers pack 'my sibling still' colouring and writing activity.

### Worry monster:

Using an envelope, create a 'worry' monster. Sometimes our children need a break from their grief; using the worry monster they can write their worries down and give them to the worry monster. Parents and caregivers can then take them out at the end of the day and they can talk about each one, if they wish.

### Downtime area:

Worden's work on the tasks of mourning should remind us that bereaved children might be exhausted by managing their grief. Feeling tired may well intensify these emotions, making it difficult for the child to cope at school. A bereaved child may welcome time out to have a rest if they are struggling.

### Pocket Comforter:

A child can carry in their pocket a soft piece of fabric, or a pebble/stone. Holding onto something can help them feel grounded and in control. It may also help the child to have something tangible to touch when feeling upset.

### Recommended books for your classroom:

Invisible String | My Sibling Still | The Dragon Fly Story | Feeling All My Grief



## How can I offer support to their family?

Keeping the child's parent up to date with how their child has found each day will be a great support and comfort to their families.

Teachers can also print the Bereavement Service Directory to hand to their families, as well as using it for their own reference.

*"Teachers are the most trustworthy people in our children's life; you're a constant and so important to our children. When my baby died, and my eldest was in school, I was so worried about how she was handling her grief. Together her teacher and I worked to put things in place for her whilst in school, and then her Teacher kept me updated with how she was doing day to day. To have that peace of mind was a weight off my shoulders in the early days of my grief and I will be forever grateful." - Forever Star volunteer.*

Thank you for taking the time to read our Teacher's pack, we hope it offers you the support you need. Please do feel free to contact us at any time with any further questions you may have.

We are happy to help.

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