Books for Families: Dealing with Loss, Healing with Love

Children’s literature abounds with stories of loss and recovery. Often a theme of struggle or separation allows family members to relate a plot to their own challenges. While there are many books available today about issues of loss, illness, death and grief, there is no one perfect book to suggest. Guidelines and lists follow. Most titles are available at local libraries and bookstores. Others are available through the internet.

Guidelines for adults:
Do review the book first before sharing it with a child.
Remember that the specific relationship involving a death does not need to be the same as the family’s loss. Stories about animals may provide a more comfortable exploration of feelings for younger children.
Browse for books to reflect your own cultural or family values. Many books have religious themes. Use books about other cultures to increase awareness and sensitivity.
Choose books which younger children can understand. Often older siblings, teens, and adults will enjoy these stories, too.
Read the books together. Reveal your own feelings about the characters and story.
Leave books around the home so that children may return to them in their own time and at their own pace.
Re-read favorites.

For additional support or information, contact the Children’s Services Coordinator at 508-358-3000 x244.
Books about Coping with Life-Threatening Illness

For children:


Brack, Pat and Ben Brack. *Moms Don’t Get Sick*. Melius Publishing Corporation, 1990. (mother’s and son’s descriptions of the impact of her cancer diagnosis)


Jukes, Mavis. *I’ll See You in My Dreams*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. (girl’s visit to ill uncle)


For adults:


**Books for Adults about Helping Children Heal**


Books for Children Dealing with a Death


Thomas, Pat. **I Miss You: A First Look at Death.** Barron’s, 2000.


Books for Children after the Death of a Mother

For younger readers:


For older readers:


Carter, Forrest. **The Education of Little Tree**. University of New Mexico Press, 1976. (Cherokee orphan’s story/mature readers)

Creech, Sharon. **Walk Two Moons**. Harper Trophy, 1996. (novel)

Douglas, Kirk. **The Broken Mirror**. Simon & Schuster, 1997. (young narrator is family’s only survivor of Nazi concentration camp)


Greenfield, Eloise. **Nathaniel Talking**. BlackButterfly Children’s Group, 1993. (boy’s use of rap to express his grief)


MacLachlan, Patricia. **Sarah, Plain and Tall**. Harper Trophy, 1987. (novel)


(novel/mature readers)


**Books for Children after the Death of a Father**

For younger readers:


Holmes, Margaret M. *Sam’s Dad Died: A Child’s Book of Hope through Grief*. Centering Corporation, 2005.


For older readers:


Books for Children after the Death of a Sibling

For younger readers:


Richter, Elizabeth. Losing Someone You Love: When a Brother or Sister Dies. Putnam’s Sons, 1986. (suggested for ages 8 and up)


Simon, Jack. **This Book Is For All Kids, But Especially For My Sister Libby. Libby Died.** Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2002. (five-year-old author narrates about younger sister)

Turner, Barbara J. **A Little Bit of Rob.** Albert Whitman & Co., 1996. (grief after death of older brother)


For older readers:


Conrad, Pam. **My Daniel.** HarperTrophy, 1989. (adult sister’s memories of brother)


Douglas, Kirk. **The Broken Mirror.** Simon & Schuster, 1997. (young narrator is family’s only survivor of Nazi concentration camp)


Lowry, Lois. **A Summer to Die.** Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977. (younger sister’s account of illness and death of teen sister)


Rapp, Adam. **Under the Wolf, Under the Dog.** Candlewick Press, 2004. (novel, teen’s struggle with mother’s terminal cancer and brother’s
suicide)

Thesman, Jean. *Calling The Swan*. Viking, 2000. (younger sister struggles after the disappearance of older sister)

**Books for Children after the Death of a Grandparent or Great-grandparent**

For younger readers:

Alexander, Alesia K. *A Mural for Mamita*. Centering Corporation, 2002. (grandmother/Mexican customs)


McLaughlin, Kirsten. **The Memory Box.** Centering Corporation, 2001. (grandfather)

Miles, Miska. **Annie and the Old One.** Little, Brown and Co., 1971. (grandmother)

Nobisso, Josephine. **Grandma’s Scrapbook.** Gingerbread House, 1990. (grandmother)

Nobisso, Josephine. **Grandpa Loved.** Gingerbread House, 1989. (grandfather)


Ross, Kent and Alice. **Cemetery Quilt.** Houghton Mifflin, 1995. (grandfather)

Russo, Marisabina. **Grandpa Abe.** Greenwillow, 1996. (step-grandfather)


Santucci, Barbara. **Anna’s Corn.** Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2002. (grandfather)

Shriver, Maria. **What’s Heaven?** St. Martin’s Press, 1999. (great-grandmother)

Thomas, Jane Resh. **Saying Good-bye to Grandma.** Clarion Books, 1988. (grandmother)

Willner-Pardo, Gina. **Hunting Grandma’s Treasures**. Clarion Books, 1996. (grandmother)

Woodson, Jacqueline. **Sweet, Sweet Memory**. Hyperion Books, 2000. (grandfather)


Zebrowski, Marianne. **Babka’s Serenade**. Centering Corporation, 2002. (grandmother)

For older readers:


Henges, Kevin. **Sun and Spoon**. Puffin, 1998. (grandmother)


Books for Children after the Death of a Pet


Varley, Susan. **Badger’s Parting Gifts**. Lothrop Lee & Shepard, 1984. (grief of animals)


White, E. B. **Charlotte’s Web**. Harper, 1952. (inevitability of death for all animals)


Wittbold, Maureen. **Mending Peter’s Heart**. Portunus Publishing Co., 1995. (dog)

Young, Jim. **When the Whale Came to My Town**. Knopf Publishing, 1974. (whale)

**Books for Teenagers**


Blume, Judy. **Tiger Eyes**. Dell, 1981. (death of father from violence)


Greenfield, Eloise. **Nathaniel Talking**. BlackButterfly Children’s Group, 1993. (boy’s use of rap to express his grief after mother’s death)


Henges, Kevin. **Sun and Spoon**. Puffin, 1998. (death of grandmother)


Lowry, Lois. **A Summer to Die**. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977. (younger sister’s account of illness and death of teen sister)


Offner, Rose. *Journal to the Soul for Teenagers*. Celestial Arts, 1999. (creative arts journal)


Stone, Miriam. **At The End of Words: A Daughter’s Memoir.** Candlewick Press, 2003. (author’s journal during mother’s illness and after her death)

Thesman, Jean. **Calling The Swan.** Viking, 2000. (younger sister struggles after the disappearance of older sister)


White, Ruth. **Belle Prater’s Boy.** Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1996. (suicide of father)


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**Books for Children about Aunts/Uncles**


MacGregor. “**Why Do People Die?**” Citadel Press, 1999. (uncle’s death prompts gentle explanation of death)


Norton, Yuri. **Dear Uncle Dave.** Northlight Studio Press, 1993. (uncle/suicide)


### Books for Children after Death of a Family Friend


Hemery, Kathleen Maresh. **Sunflower Promise**. Centering Corporation, 2005. (death of best friend)

### Books for Children who Love Elders


dePaola, Tomie. **Now One Foot, Now The Other**. G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1981. (grandfather’s recovery after stroke)

Fox, Mem. **Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge**. Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 1989. (memory issues of elder friend)


Wahl, Jan. **A Gift for Miss Milo**. Ten Speed Press, 1990. (girl remembers her grandmother’s friend)


**Books for Children coping with Family Issues**


Curtis, Jamie Lee. **Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born**. Joanna Cotler Books, 1996. (adoption)

DiCamillo, Kate. **Because of Winn-Dixie**. Candlewick Press, 2000. (daughter copes with absence of mother)


Daly, Niki. **My Dad**. Simon & Schuster, 1995. (father’s alcoholism)


Penn, Audrey. **The Kissing Hand.** Child & Family Press, 1993. (separation anxiety)

Ransom, Candice F. **We’re Growing Together.** Bradbury Press, 1993. (girl’s adjustment to stepfather)

### Books for Children about Feelings

Berry, Joy. **Let’s Talk About Feeling Afraid.** Scholastic, 1995. (general fears)

Clifton, Lucille. **One of the Problems of Everett Anderson.** Henry Holt and Company, 2001. (fear of friend’s being physically abused)


Holmes, Margaret M. **A Terrible Thing Happened.** Magination Press, 2000. (anxiety)


Keckler, Ben. **From Here to There.** Eagle Creek Publications, 2005. (feelings/soul/religion)


### Books for Children about Wonder and Resilience

Banks, Kate. *A Gift from the Sea.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001. (found treasures)


London, Jonathan. **Into This Night We Are Rising.** Viking, 1993. (dreams)

Magsamen, Sandra. **When I Grow Up I Want To Be Me.** Scholastic, Inc., 2002. (self-esteem)

