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. Upon finishing a book, explore together alternative options. Ask, “What would you have done?” Use the book as a tool for family discussion of a difficult topic. 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:


Blake, Claire, Eliza Blanchard & Kathy Parkinson. The Paper Chain. Health Press, 1998. (family’s adjustment to mom’s diagnosis)


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)

Keckler, Ben. My Friend, Matilda. Eagle Creek Publications, 2006. (dog’s friendship to boy with life-threatening illness)


Stepanek, Mattie J. T. **Journey through Heartsongs.** Hyperion, 2001. (poetry)


Winthrop, Elizabeth. **Promises.** Clarion Books, 2000. (girl’s struggle with mom’s diagnosis)

Yaffe, Rita Sacks. **Once Upon a Hopeful Night.** Oncology Nursing Society, 1998. (story of mother’s gentle informing children of her diagnosis)

For adults:


**Books for Adults about Helping Children Heal**


### Books for Children Dealing with a Death


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)

Ferber, Brenda A. **Julia’s Kitchen.** Farrar, Straus Giroux, 2006. (grief after deaths of mother & sister in house fire)

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

Hoffman, Alice. **Green Angel.** Scholastic Press, 2003. (science fiction novel)


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)


For older readers:


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)


Mazer, Norma. **After the Rain.** William Morrow, 1987. (grandfather)

Thomas, Karen. **Changing of the Guard.** Harper and Row, 1986. (grandfather)
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)
MacLachlan, Patricia. **Sarah, Plain and Tall.** Harper Trophy, 1987. (novel, death of mother)


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


Rylant, Cynthia. **Missing May.** Orchard Books, 1992. (aunt’s death)


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)


**Books for Children about Aunts/Uncles**


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


**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)


**Books for Children coping with Family Issues**


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**


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

