

Helping Children Grieve



The following short list contains a few books for young children about death. We recommend reading any book yourself before sharing it with your child. Remember, there is no set agenda for grieving; everyone has different needs and can handle different steps at different times. Follow your child's lead, be gentle and keep it simple.

It can help to take a step back from the actual loss—read about an animal instead of a friend, a leaf instead of a pet, etc. And sometimes sharing old bedtime or family favorites can be the most comforting of all.

Death of a Friend or Animal

Bahr, Mary. If Nathan Were Here Explores the grief of a young boy whose best friend has died.

Brown, Margaret Wise Harris The Dead Bird When they find a dead bird outside, a group of children bury it in the woods, sing a song to it, and put flowers on the grave.

Chichester Clark, Emma. Up in Heaven A tender story that deals with the death of a pet dog in a heartfelt and reassuring way for younger children.

Cohn, Janice. I Had a Friend Named Peter: Talking to Children about the Death of a Friend When Betsy learns about the death of a friend, her parents and kindergarten teacher answer questions about dying, funerals, and the burial process.

Demas, Corinne. Saying Goodbye to Lulu A touching story about a young girl who must say goodbye to her beloved, aged dog.

Fox, Mem Tough Boris Although he is a very tough pirate, Boris von der Borch cries when his parrot dies.

Harris, Robie. Goodbye, Mousie A young boy grieves the loss of his dear pet mouse.

Hill, Frances. The Bug Cemetery A bug is one thing, but how do you mourn a special friend? A reassuring look at the cycles of life.

Puttock, Simon A Story for Hippo Hippo and Monkey are best, best, best friends; when the wise old Hippo dies, Monkey is very sad until Chameleon helps him remember the stories he and Hippo shared.

Rogers, Fred. When a Pet Dies Explores the feelings of frustration, sadness, and loneliness that a youngster may feel when a pet dies.

Smith, Maggie. Desser, the Best Ever Cat By telling her cat's story and remembering him well, a girl finds a way to keep him alive in her heart.

Books about Death in General

Brown, Laurene When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death Explains in simple language the feelings people may have regarding the death of a loved one and the ways to honor the memory of someone who has died.

Buscaglia, Leo The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life For All Ages As Freddie experiences the changing seasons along with his companion leaves, he learns about the delicate balance between life and death.

Romain, Trevor What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? Describes the overwhelming emotions involved in dealing with the death of a loved one and discusses how to cope with such a situation. Also available as a DVD.

Stein, Sara Bonnett. About Dying: An Open Family Book for Parents and Children Together Black & White photographs and simple text explain the meaning of death to a child; an adult can read an accompanying text with more details about developmental stages, handling the child's questions and any resulting discussions.

Rosen, Michael. Michael Rosen's Sad Book A man tells about all the emotions that accompany his sadness over the death of his son, and how he tries to cope. For older children or adults.

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