

**Providing evidence-based information about palliative care for everyone because death and dying will affect all of us.**

## Books to help kids understand death and grief

These are some recommended favourite books and resources from CareSearch staff for children. You can use them as starting point when talking to children about death and dying, how to cope with grief, and the importance of remembering loved ones who have died.

### Babies and Toddlers (0 - 4 years)

#### **Todd Parr (2015). The Goodbye Book**

Told through the eyes of a pet fish who has lost his companion, this brightly illustrated book tells a moving story about saying goodbye and the big feelings that children can have.

#### **Caron Levis (2016). Ida, Always**

This is a touching story of death and the importance of remembering as told through the eyes of Gus and Ida, two polar bears living in a city zoo.

#### **Margaret Wise Brown (2016). The Dead Bird**

An uncomplicated story of friends finding a bird lying motionless on the ground. After discovering that the bird had died, the children sing their farewells and bury the bird in the park.

#### **Jen Crowley (2015). Grandpa's Hat**

Grandpa's Hat is the story of Jennywren and all her favourite animals, who help her discover that although her Grandpa is gone, he doesn't have to be forgotten. Currently used as a resource for [National Association for Loss and Grief](#) (NSW)

#### **Brita Teckentrup (2014). The Memory Tree**

A moving tale celebrating the memories left behind when someone dies. When Fox dies, his friends continue celebrate his life by remembering all of the things that they did together when he was alive.

#### **[Beginnings and Endings episode on Playschool](#)**

(ABC iView)

This Play School episode celebrates new life, and reflects on the love we have for those who have died. There are times to play and have fun, and there are also times to be sad and treasure memories of people and pets that are missed.

#### **[Sesame Street in Communities - Helping Kids Grieve](#)**

This website is full of interactive activities and videos specifically designed for children aged 2-6 to help explore and express their emotions after someone has died. Resources include a Grief Toolkit providing tips, stories and guides to help families to move forward through stages of grief.



## Little kids (5 - 7 years)

### **Judith Kerr (2003). Goodbye Mog**

In this story, we join the Thomas family as they deal with the sad death of their wonderful pet Mog and welcome a new kitten to their family. This book provides a gentle introduction to the subjects of grief and bereavement, narrated by the one and only, Mog herself.



### **Pat Thomas (2001). I Miss You – A First Look at Death**

Providing examples of death (such as the loss of a grandparent or pet), this story helps younger children to come to terms with loss and the feelings that grief that are difficult to express.



### **Wolf Erlbuck (2007). Duck, Death and the Tulip**

This is a story a duck and her unlikely friend Death, whose constant companionship leads to open, thought-provoking discussions on life, death, the afterlife and the importance of accepting death as part of the cycle of life.

### **E.B. White (2006). Charlotte's Web**

A classic tale of friendship, love, death and the connections that make us human. Charlotte's Web tells of the firm friendship between a girl, rescued pig and a spider. This timeless story highlights the importance of friendship and the acceptance of death as part of living.

### **Mem Fox (2019). Tough Boris**

Tough guys need to cry, even tough guy pirates! Tough Boris tells of the importance of acknowledging emotions, acceptance of death and experiencing grief. All of these big emotions are experienced by a boy who stows away on Boris' pirate ship helps Boris when his beloved parrot dies.

### **Patrice Karst (2018). The Invisible String**

"The invisible string is the string that binds us as families together", says Liza and Jeremy's Mum who then explains that even when people are not here anymore, there is an invisible string that still binds us together. A story that explores love, separation and acceptance.

### **Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen (2005). Beginnings and Endings With Lifetimes in Between**

By posing and answering questions about life and death of everything that is alive, this story helps explain that dying is very much a part of living and is as important and remarkable as being born.



## Big Kids (8 – 12 years)

### **Patrick Ness (2011). A Monster Calls**

A dark but amusing fantasy tale of Connor and his ancient, wild backyard truth-seeking monster who has materialised from his subconscious as a result of dealing with the fear and anticipated grief of losing his mother to cancer. This story describes the impact that overwhelming feelings can have and the importance of taking these seriously.

### **Katherine Paterson (2006). Bridge to Terabithia**

Terabithia is a magical kingdom ruled by two close friends, Leslie and Jess, but when Leslie unexpectedly dies by accident, Jess is faced with dealing with feelings of guilt, sadness and loss. This story presents first-hand narratives of coping with death and experiencing grief from a child's point of view.

### **J.K. Rowling. The Harry Potter Series**

Harry Potter needs no introduction, a magical and fantastical adventure of the boy wizard and his friends as they grow up in the world of Hogwarts. All of seven of the Harry Potter adventures feature concepts of death as a part of life, acceptance of dying and grieving for those who have died. You may also [listen to J.K. Rowling speak about the how grief influenced her writings of Harry Potter](#) or perhaps to Beyond the Veil (Episode 23) [Podcast] on ['What Potter Can Teach Us About Life, Love, and Death'](#)

### **Tricia Irving (2001). When Tough Stuff Happens**

This activity book is for 7-12 year old children who are dealing with or facing difficult periods in their life. There are many different types of activities asking kids to find the words to help to talk about what is happening and express how they are feeling. You can order this book through [Skylight Trust New Zealand](#)

### **Winston's Wish Childhood Bereavement Podcast Series**

A UK based not-for-profit organisation, Winston's Wish, supports children and young people after the death of a parent or sibling. They have produced a series of five podcasts discussing practical after death support for children, including returning to school and the importance of talking about their feelings. These are all freely available on [Soundcloud](#) (website that provides free audio downloads to listen too and share).

### **Apart of Me [App – Game]**

This interactive game has been designed by grief experts in collaboration with young people experiencing grief. Children move through magical worlds guiding them through dark periods after death of a loved one. By working through real-world 'quests', kids can validate feelings or emotions whilst building to help to move on. The Apart of Me app is available for download in both the Apple App Store and Google Play stores.



## Teenagers (13 – 16 years)

### **Marc Zusak (2018). Bridge of Clay**

This story explores the impact of parental death on family bonds and the importance of brotherhood in maintaining a sense of normality in relation to the real, adult world, especially when faced with a sense of abandonment and heartbreak.

### **Margo Rabb (2007). Cures for Heartbreak**

Mia is 16, who with her sister and father must face life without their mother after dying of cancer. Facing this loss, Mia struggles to process her own grief, but eventually finds a way through the tough times by remembering her Mum and rediscovering enjoyment and excitement in her own life.

### **Jason Reynolds (2015). The Boy in the Black Suit**

Matt wears a black suit, partly because his mother died but mostly because he works part-time at a funeral home. Matt's story explores the importance of finding someone who can support you - showing you a way through the sad times and indeed, finding a friend who can understand what you are going through.

### **Molly Carlile (2010). Sometimes Life Sucks: When Someone You Love Dies**

A guide for teenagers to help navigate death, and the feelings of shock and grief. This book includes some valuable tips, stories, and advice to support adolescents during tough times.

### **Smiles and Tears**

#### **[App] - iOS App Store**

Smiles and Tears app has been developed to support all children and young people who have experienced death of a significant person in their lives. This app features interactive tools to help maintain connections and remembering the person who has died. Smiles and Tears app is only available for download from the App Store (Apple).

### **Cove**

#### **[App] - Available for download from Apple App Store and Google Play**

Cove app was developed by Humane Engineering as part of the End of Life group at the Institute for Global Health Innovation in the UK. This app allows teenagers to compose their own music as a way to healthily express their emotions whilst coping with loss or when experiencing grief. Cove is available for download in both Apple App store and from Google Play.

