

My friend has died



A children's guide: following the death of a friend

If your child has sadly had to face the death of a friend, then this booklet is designed to help you talk with your child about what has happened.

It was written to offer support in a simple clear way, that can help children as they adjust to life without a friend. It can also be used as a basis to encourage discussion and any questions they may have. It may also help them to voice their feelings.

The booklet was written and edited by Dr Jennifer Kelly, General Practitioner, and founder of the Grace Kelly Childhood Cancer Trust. It was illustrated by Angus Jorgen Olsen. Our thanks go to Angus for his wonderful illustrations.

Thank you also to Dr Bob Phillips (Honorary Consultant in Paediatric Oncology, LHTT), Ann Chalmers (Chief Executive, Child Bereavement UK), Dr Finella Craig (Consultant in Paediatric Palliative Medicine, GOSH) Rachel Cook (Bereavement Lead, GOSH), Dr Laura Roe (Consultant Paediatrician with a special interest in oncology and palliative care, UHNM), Dr Ann Rowland (Clinical Advisor, Child Bereavement UK) and Dr Carole Martin (Clinical Psychologist, UHNM) for their useful suggestions and the peer review of this resource. Also, to Mrs Sarah Hext for her help as a parent reviewer and as founder of the Harvey Hext Trust - A Siblings Wish.



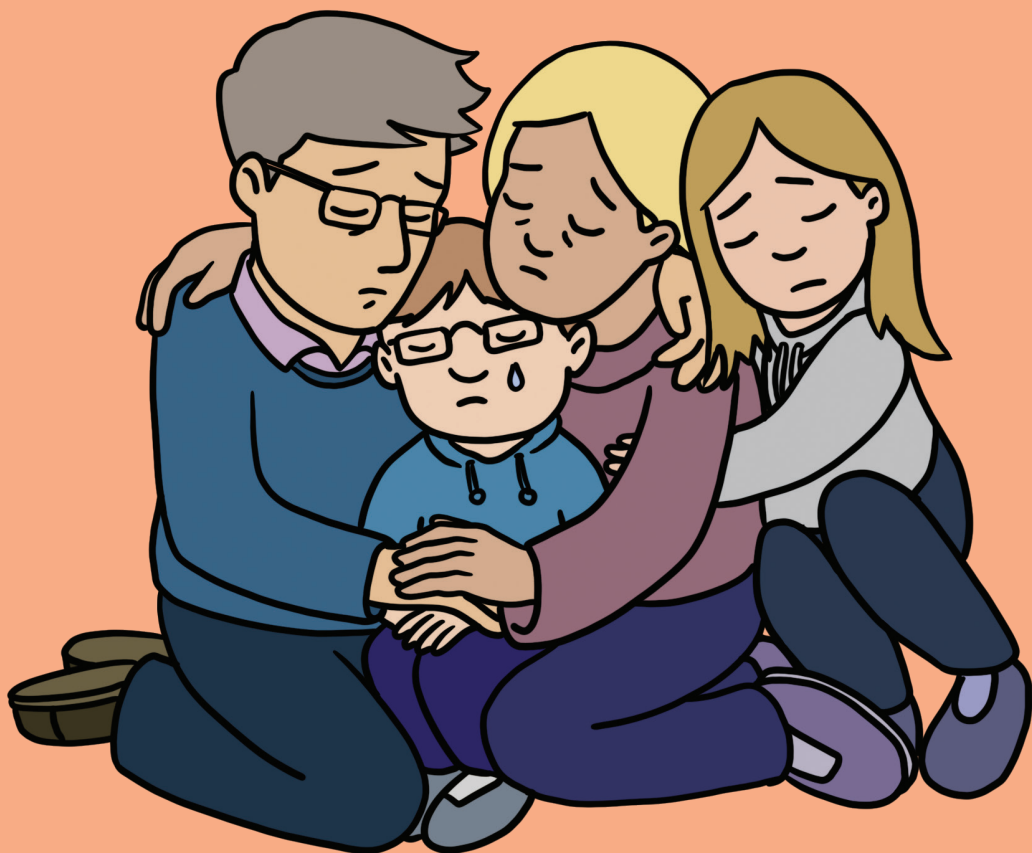
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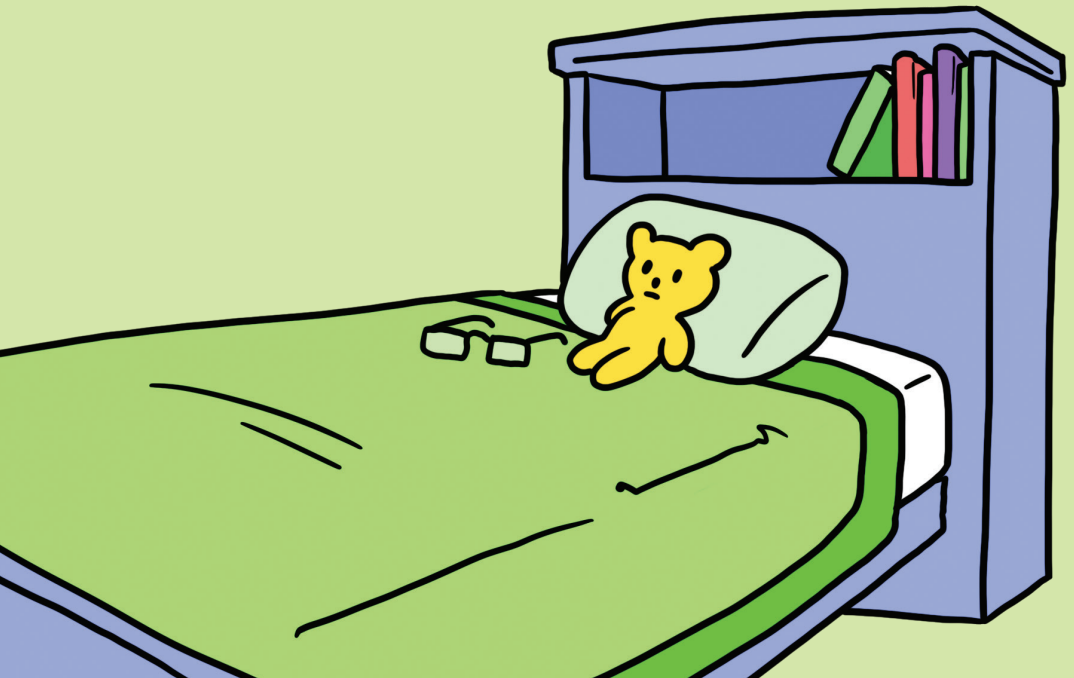
I have a friend.



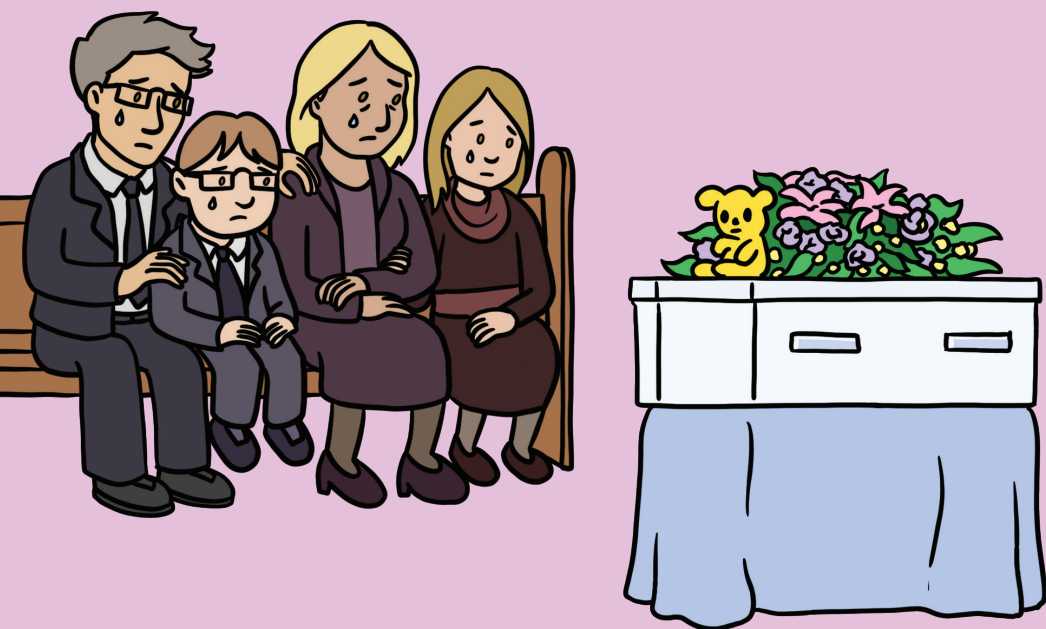
**But not long ago,
my friend died.**



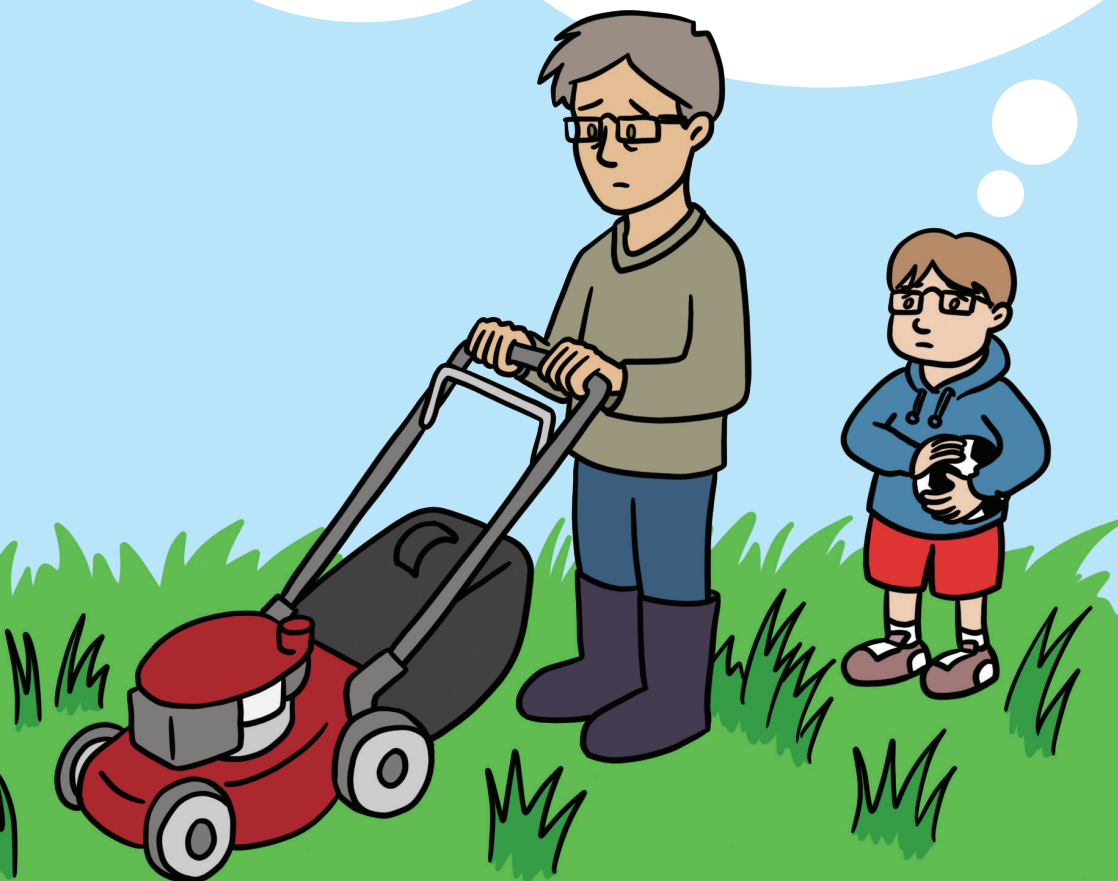
When someone dies, they stop breathing and their heart does not beat anymore. It is different to being asleep.



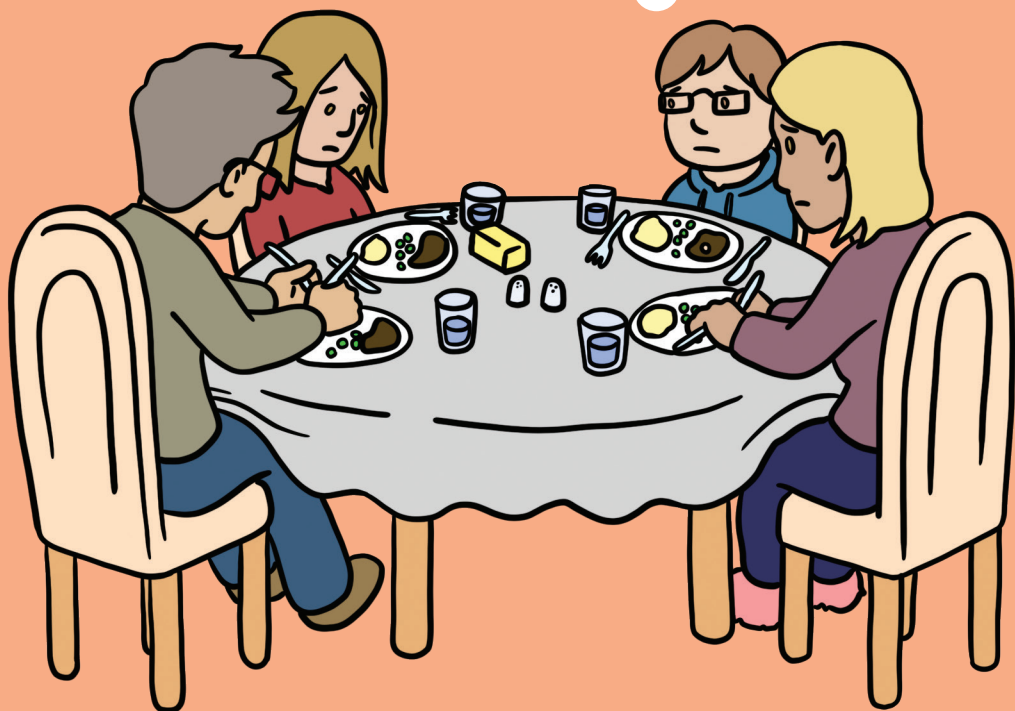
There was a funeral, and lots of people that loved them came. They said they were coming to say goodbye.



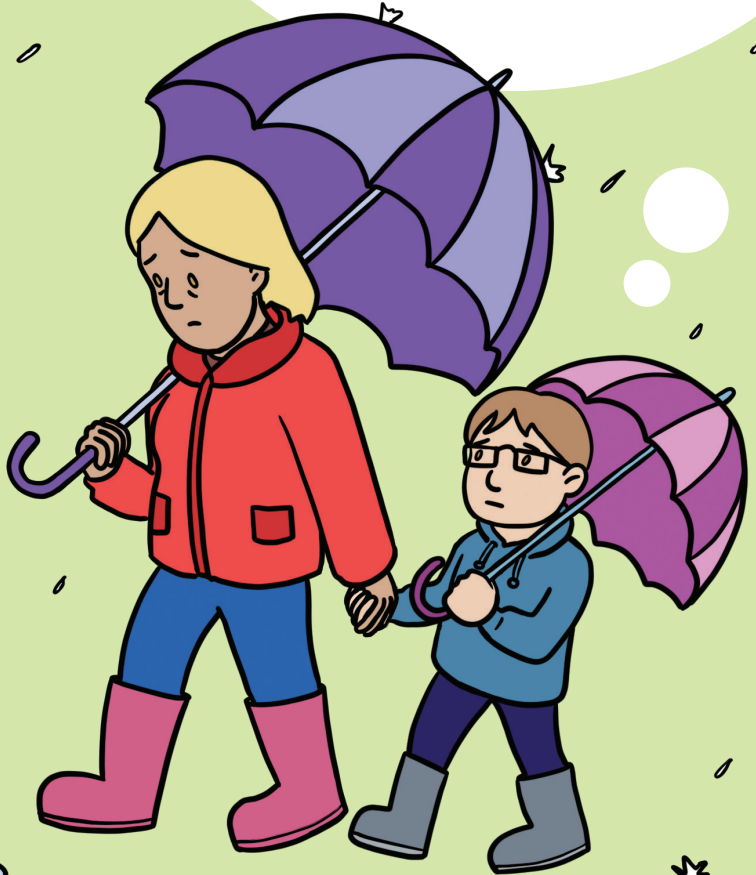
My friend has died so they cannot come back and visit, and I can't play with them. This makes me feel sad.



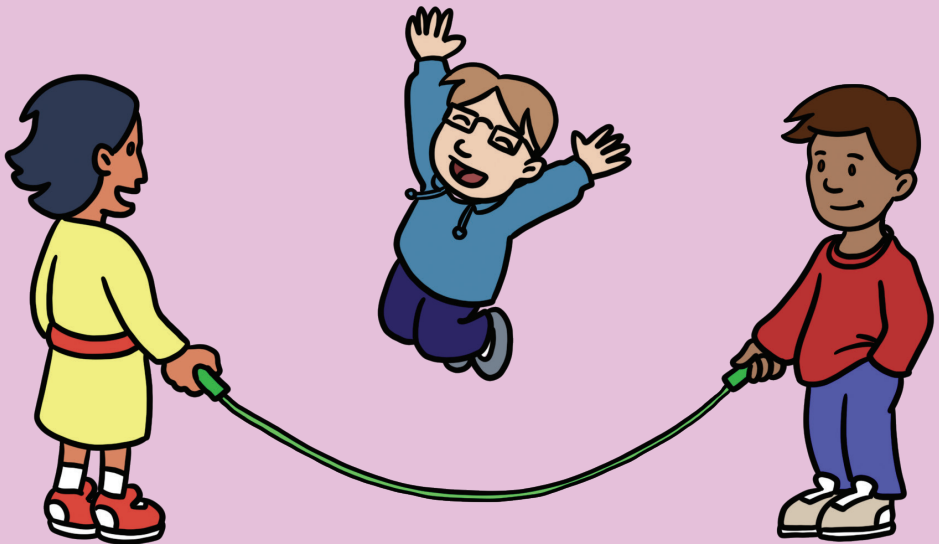
**It is not the same without
my friend here and this
makes me feel strange.
I miss my friend.**



**We are sad, but it
is nobody's fault.**



Although I am sad my friend died, it is still okay to smile and have fun when I want to.



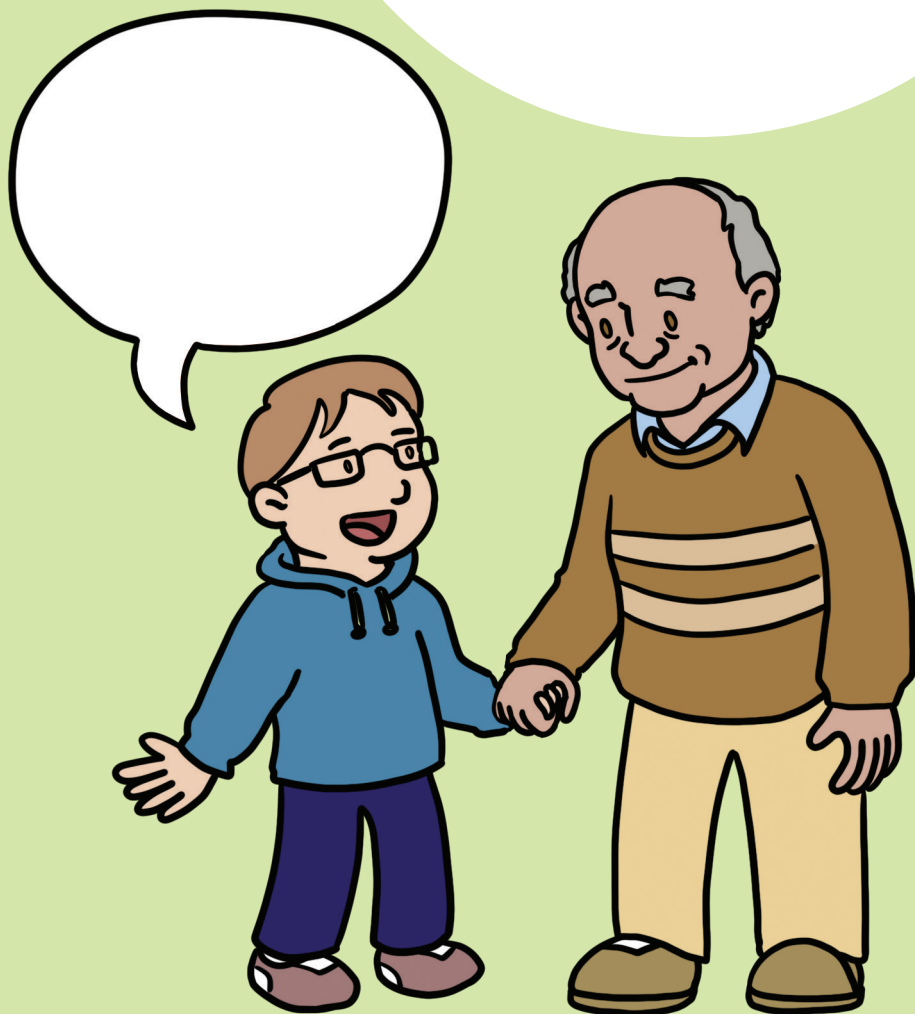
Sometimes it is hard to think about it all, so I find it easier to play and forget for a little while.



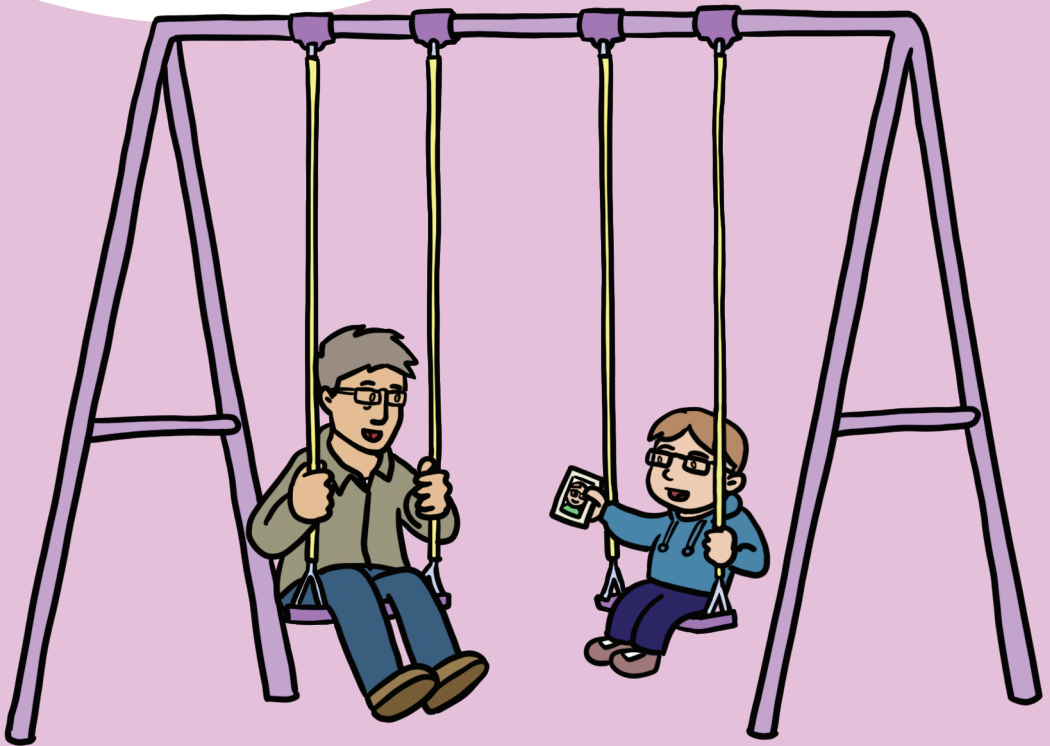
**When I feel sad or angry,
it can help by talking to
someone special or a
grown-up who I trust.**



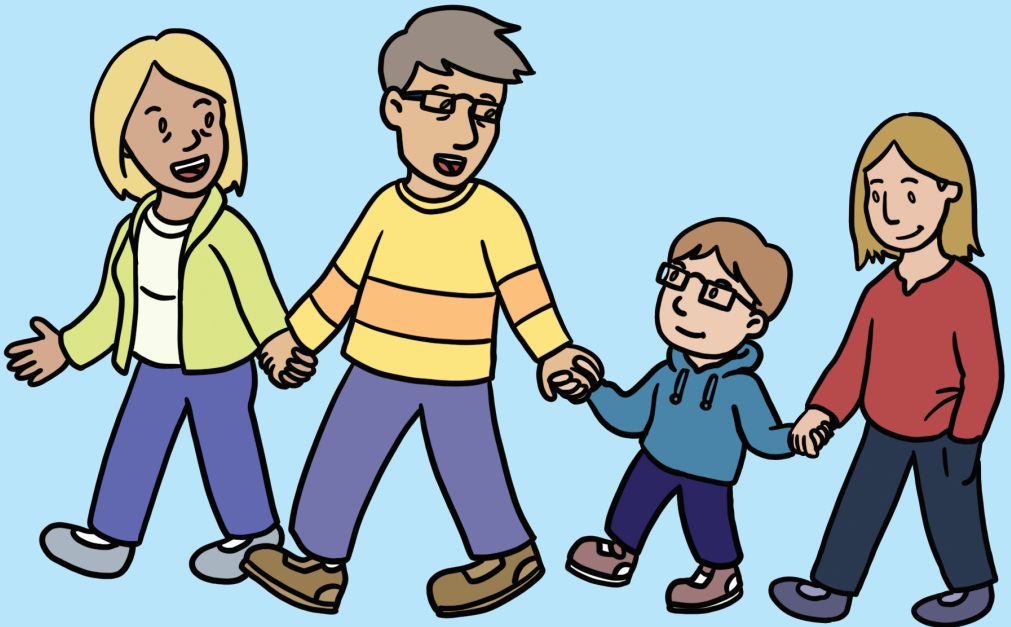
**When it feels right, I like
to talk about my friend
and remember them.**



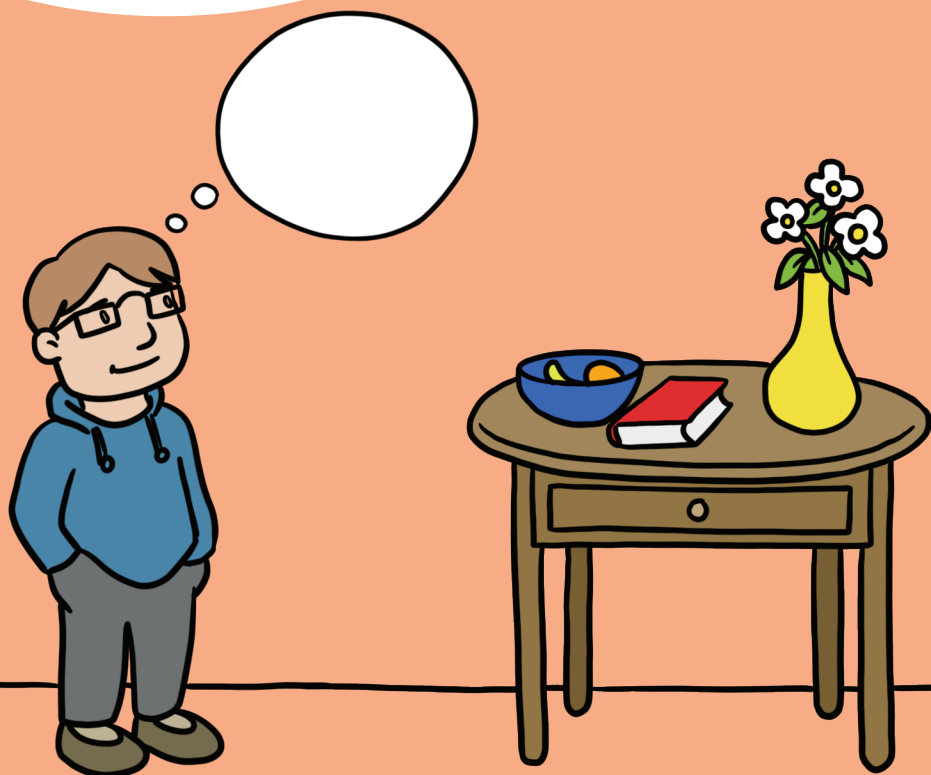
**We can remember my friend
by looking at pictures, talking
about things they liked or by
going to a special place
to think.**



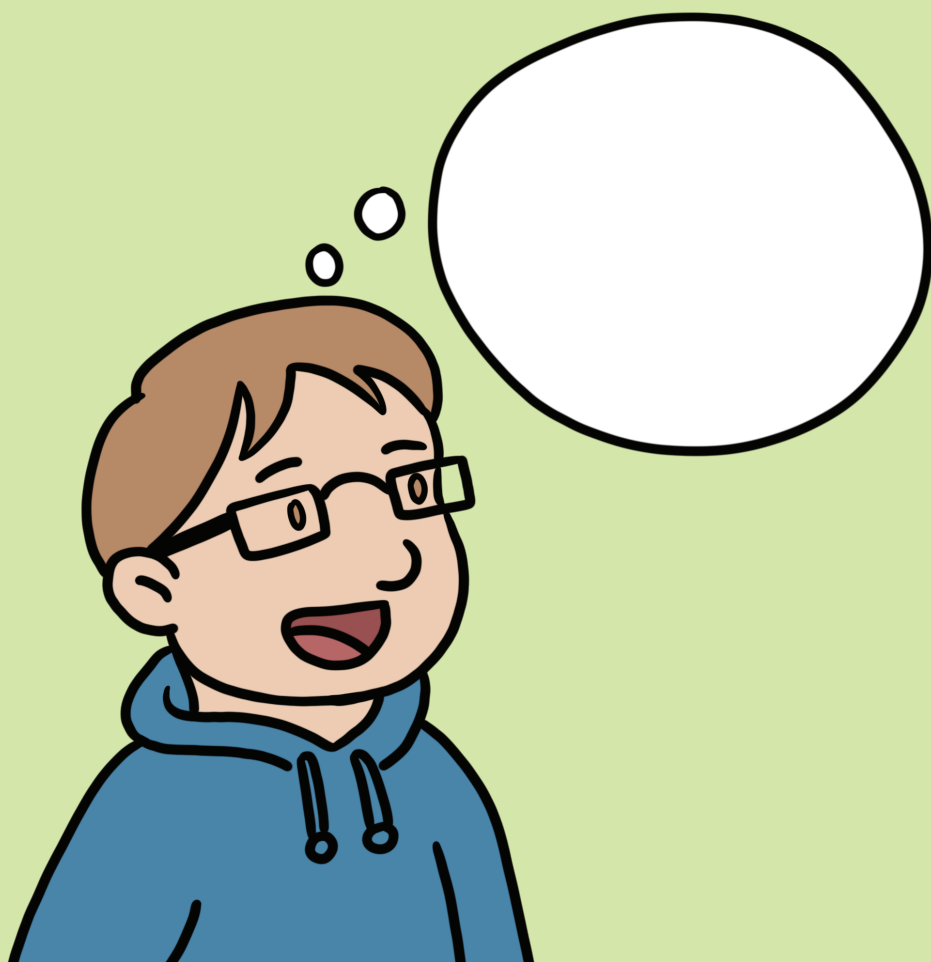
**My family look after me
and love me very much
even though they are
feeling sad too.**



**I will always remember
my friend. I will never
forget them.**



**How do you remember
your friend?**



Useful Advice

When talking to a bereaved child, it is important to be as honest and as open as possible and to remember that children grieve in a different way to adults. Everyone grieves in an individual way.

When someone dies, try to avoid saying that they have *gone to sleep*, *gone* or *passed away*. These phrases can lead to confusion as to what has happened or may result in children becoming fearful of falling asleep or seeing other people sleeping. It is best to keep it simple and to say that a person has sadly died.

Encourage them to show their emotions and express their feelings and frequently reassure them that they are still loved. Talk to them about who they can rely on and talk to and explain it is okay to cry and not cry. It is often useful to tell your child that their friend's death was not their fault in any way.

Follow familiar routines where possible as this can help them feel more secure. It is also important to try and communicate with your child's nursery, school or childcare setting about what has happened and to discuss what your child has been told. This can help them to understand the best way of supporting your child if they were to become distressed.

If your child or you are struggling, please see your General Practitioner or support worker to find out about the extra support that is available for you locally.

Resources and support available

If you feel that either you or your child needs more support, here are some useful points of contact.

Child Bereavement UK

Helpline 0800 02 888 40

www.childbereavementuk.org (including LiveChat)

support@childbereavementuk.org

Child Death helpline

0800 282 986 (0808 800 6019 from a mobile)

Childhood Bereavement Network (this is the hub for people supporting bereaved children giving links to national and local sources of support).

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Grace Kelly Childhood Cancer Trust

For more bereavement resources, useful links and practical advice, please see:

www.gkcct.org/bereavement





The Grace Kelly Childhood Cancer Trust is a UK based children's cancer charity that concentrates on funding research and providing support for children with rare childhood cancers. We also work to provide education on the signs and symptoms of childhood cancer and how it may present.

For more information on our work and the publications we have produced, please see our website.

www.gkcct.org



Registered charity number 1167783

The Harvey Hext Trust - A Siblings Wish, is a UK based charity that supplies bereaved children with bespoke, personalised, wooden memory boxes.

For more information please see our website.

www.asiblingswish.com



Registered charity 1168844

