

Dear Parent/Carer,



We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Jess Train, one of our year 10 students who was a much loved and popular member of our school community. Our heartfelt condolences go to her family and friends at this time.

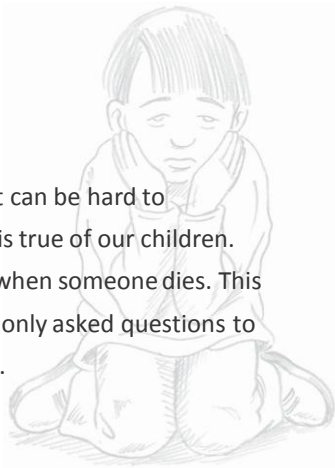
We have offered specialist support and counselling for students in school and will continue to offer support for as long as is needed.

We are also trying to extend the support to all families in our community who may be affected by the tragic news and **we are inviting all parents and their children to a drop in session at our school on Sunday 2 May between 11am and 1pm**. This option allows parents and students to share their thoughts and visit the area of school we have set aside for messages students have written. There will also be many school staff volunteers who will be pleased to talk to you.

This leaflet contains information and advice from professionals on how parents can support their children if they are affected by loss and bereavement. We are very aware that every student will react differently to the news.

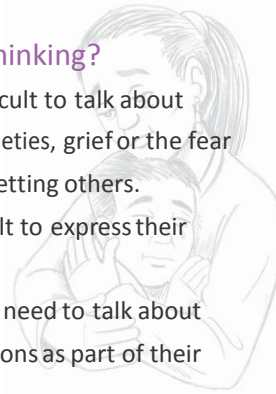
### How do I support my child when someone dies?

If someone close to you dies, it can be hard to know how to cope. The same is true of our children. There is no right way to react when someone dies. This leaflet will answer some commonly asked questions to help you to support your child.



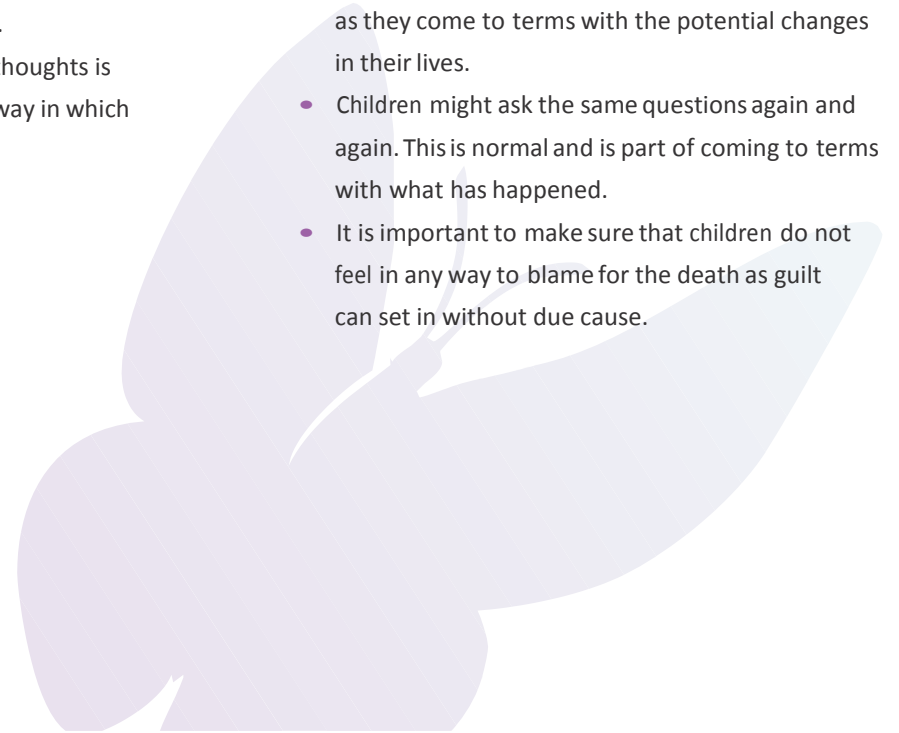
### What might my child be thinking?

- Adults can often find it difficult to talk about death due to their own anxieties, grief or the fear of getting it wrong and upsetting others.
- Some children find it difficult to express their feelings, but cope very well.
- Some children may find the need to talk about their feelings and ask questions as part of their natural curiosity about life.
- Religious beliefs may be comforting for some children, but do not erase the loss, nor give reasons as to why the person was taken away.
- Explanations are important, but children may need to ask the same questions over and over again, e.g. “Why did it happen?”, “When is he coming back?” or “Where has she gone?”  
It can take some children a long time to accept what has happened and understand that someone they were close to is not coming back.
- Listening to the child’s questions and thoughts is vitally important and the most useful way in which adults can help a child.



### How might my child respond?

- Children respond in different ways according to their age and experiences. Give them time and allow them to grieve in their own way and at their own pace. Very young children will still be aware that people close to them have gone, so it is important to maintain a sense of security for the child. Try to minimise disruptions within the family setting.
- Keeping the memories of the dead person alive in the young child’s mind will help him to understand the loss at a later stage in his life.
- As children develop a more mature understanding of death and dying, they are likely to become more curious about the cause of death, and then have a need for questions to be answered.
- They may become withdrawn, have emotional outbursts or regress, behaving like a younger child as they come to terms with the potential changes in their lives.
- Children might ask the same questions again and again. This is normal and is part of coming to terms with what has happened.
- It is important to make sure that children do not feel in any way to blame for the death as guilt can set in without due cause.



## Too big to cry?

- Some older children may feel that they should hide their emotions and it is important that they know that it is normal and natural to feel upset and to want to cry.

## How might you help?

- Talking about the person who has died can help both adults and children, but neither should be encouraged to talk about their feelings until they feel they are ready.
- Shock can cause sleepless nights or bad dreams. Lots of comforting and attention will help to alleviate these.
- Keep to the usual routines. This can be very reassuring for your child and help to rebuild the security they may have lost.
- Explain to children that you understand how they are feeling and are there for them if they need to talk. If you are busy at the time, make an arrangement to talk to them later.
- Don't tell children not to be sad as this is all part of the grieving process
- Crying can be a good and natural way of releasing anger and grief. Let children know that it is OK to cry and to see you cry and to know that you are grieving too.
- Eventually, even though they may feel distraught and lonely, children will accept that the person has gone and with the help of precious memories, begin to 'let go'.
- It is a good idea to keep in touch with the child's school.
- You may also need someone to talk to through the difficult times.

## Online Social Networking

The internet brings opportunities which no generation of children have enjoyed before. Many of our students have written comments and shared their thoughts on Facebook pages and other online sites. Taking advantage of the opportunities which new technology provides is becoming increasingly necessary for anyone who wants to play a full part in society. Although we block most of these sites in school we are fully aware that students find this way of expressing themselves and sharing with one another a great comfort. As with any area of life there are also risks and the advice we have given to students who have set up these sites is to ensure they have them as "closed" communities and that they report and remove any inappropriate comments asap if they occur.

Our advice to parents is to go online with your children and read through comments and other content together and discuss what they might want to add before they do so.

## For further information

Childline: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

0800 11 11

NSPCC: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

0800 800 5000

CRUSE Bereavement Care:

[www.crusebereavement.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavement.org.uk)

01325 355554

Childnet International

[www.childnet-int.org](http://www.childnet-int.org)



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