

Supporting a child through a bereavement

PRESENTED BY: DR EVE GRIFFITHS

WOLVERHAMPTON OUTREACH SERVICE





Can't stop crying

Anger

Sadness

Out of control

Can't eat or sleep

Constant replay

Guilt

Can't cry

Can't concentrate

Emotions are all over the place



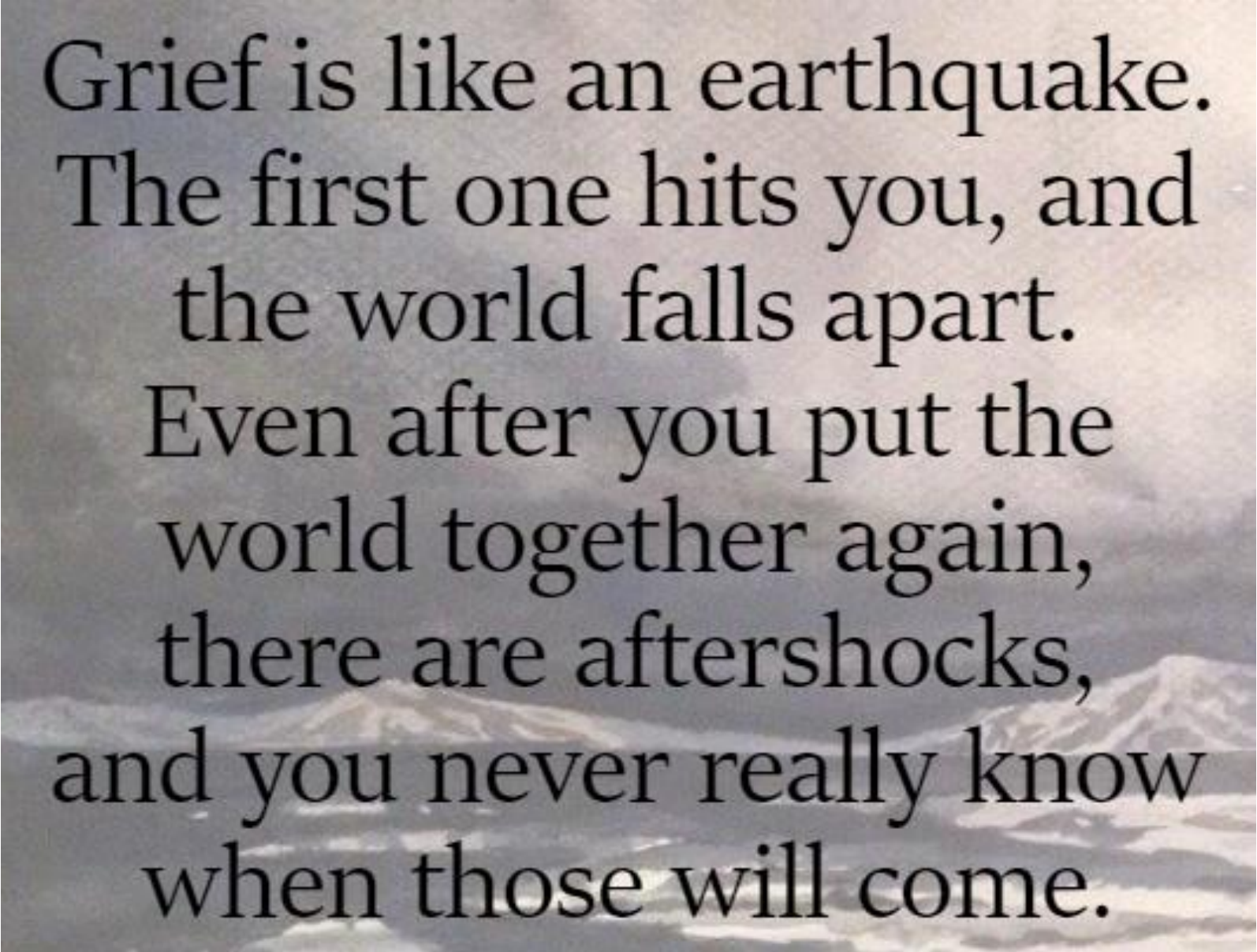
- Lack of response
- Alternating play and sadness
- Quiet and withdrawn
- Mood swings
- Difficulty concentrating
- Regression
- Aggression
- Purposefully destructive behaviours
- Deceptive
- ‘Very good’
- Risky behaviours

Allison (2001): Bereavement stages

- Shock, numbness, denial.
- Despair, turmoil and acute grieving. Can include anger, guilt, anxiety, fear, panic, depression, pain, appetite disturbance, breathlessness, illness, increased need for sleep, sleeplessness, hyperactivity, nightmares, regression, loss of skills.
- Recovery, including acceptance, resolution of grief, when the bereaved can think of the deceased with less pain or anger and can recall the times they had together in a positive way

Supportive and truthful

- With the right support from family and school, the majority of children will not need other professional support.
- Although it is our instinct to ‘protect’ children from difficult conversations, this can make things worse.
- Be honest and open in an age-appropriate way.
- Answer questions. Expect child to be literal and check their understanding.
- Some children will feel responsible for the death of a loved one. Be ready to support them in understanding that this is not the case.



Grief is like an earthquake.
The first one hits you, and
the world falls apart.
Even after you put the
world together again,
there are aftershocks,
and you never really know
when those will come.

Validate all emotions



Recognise that all children grieve differently.

They need to know that this is ok
Place no expectations on how they 'should' grieve.

Expect swings in behaviour.

Accept the emotion presented as genuine.

Before the return to school

- Agree with parents what to tell the class.
- Make contact with the child and express sadness for their loss.
- Plan for upset and agree this with the child.
- Make sure that expectations are realistic.
- Prepare the class.
- Identify emotionally available adult



Early stages of return

- Stick to routines
- Consider therapeutic support
- Provide the child with a memory book / box
- Teach the child about the stages of grief



Denial



Anger



Bargaining



Depression



Acceptance



Died
Gone to sleep
Passed away

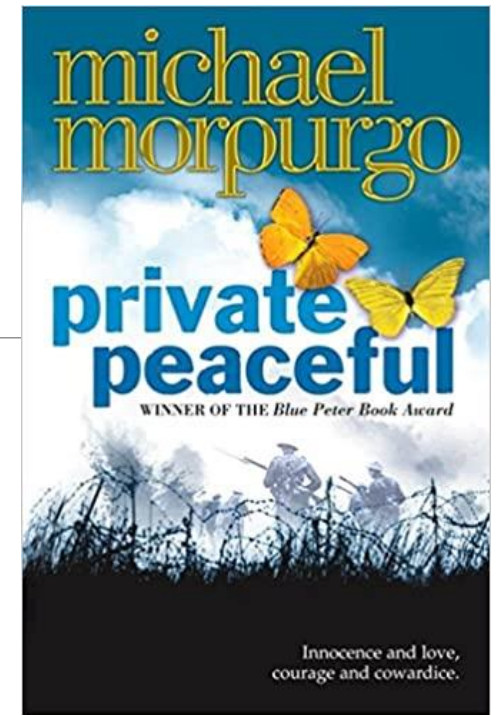
DO USE



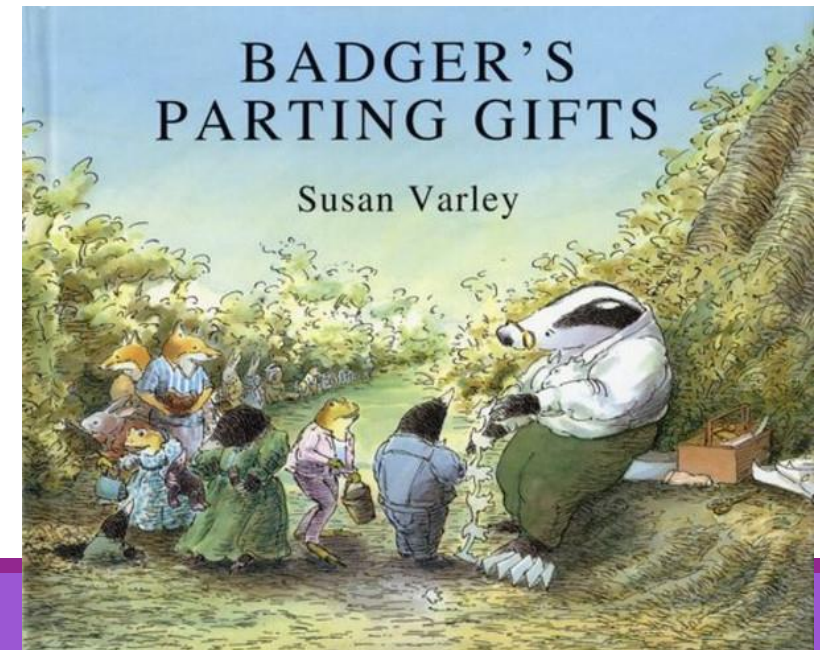
DO NOT USE



Supporting in the classroom



Create a topic based on the theme of 'memories'. Find out about things other people remember, read books from historical periods, interview people about their lived experiences and learn about the grief experienced by others.



Supporting in the classroom

Discuss the importance of crying.

- Look at images of a range of people crying.
- Discuss reasons why we might cry
- Teach what we can do to support someone who is crying.
- Teach empathy and listening skills



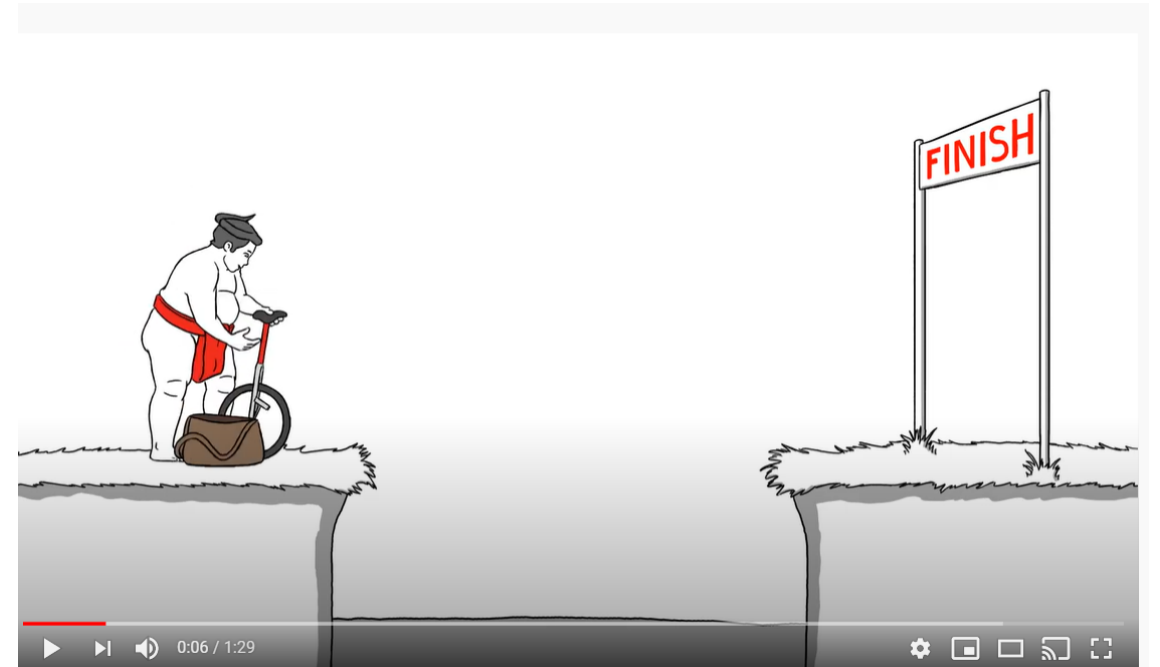
Supporting in the classroom...

- Art or drama activities that enable communication about feelings.
- Provide the class or group with opportunities to write or draw about 'special people I know or have known'.



Hippo Time is OK (SUMO)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Wz_WSy74sA





W.E.L.L.
Wellbeing and Emotional Literacy Leaders

Behaviour as communication...

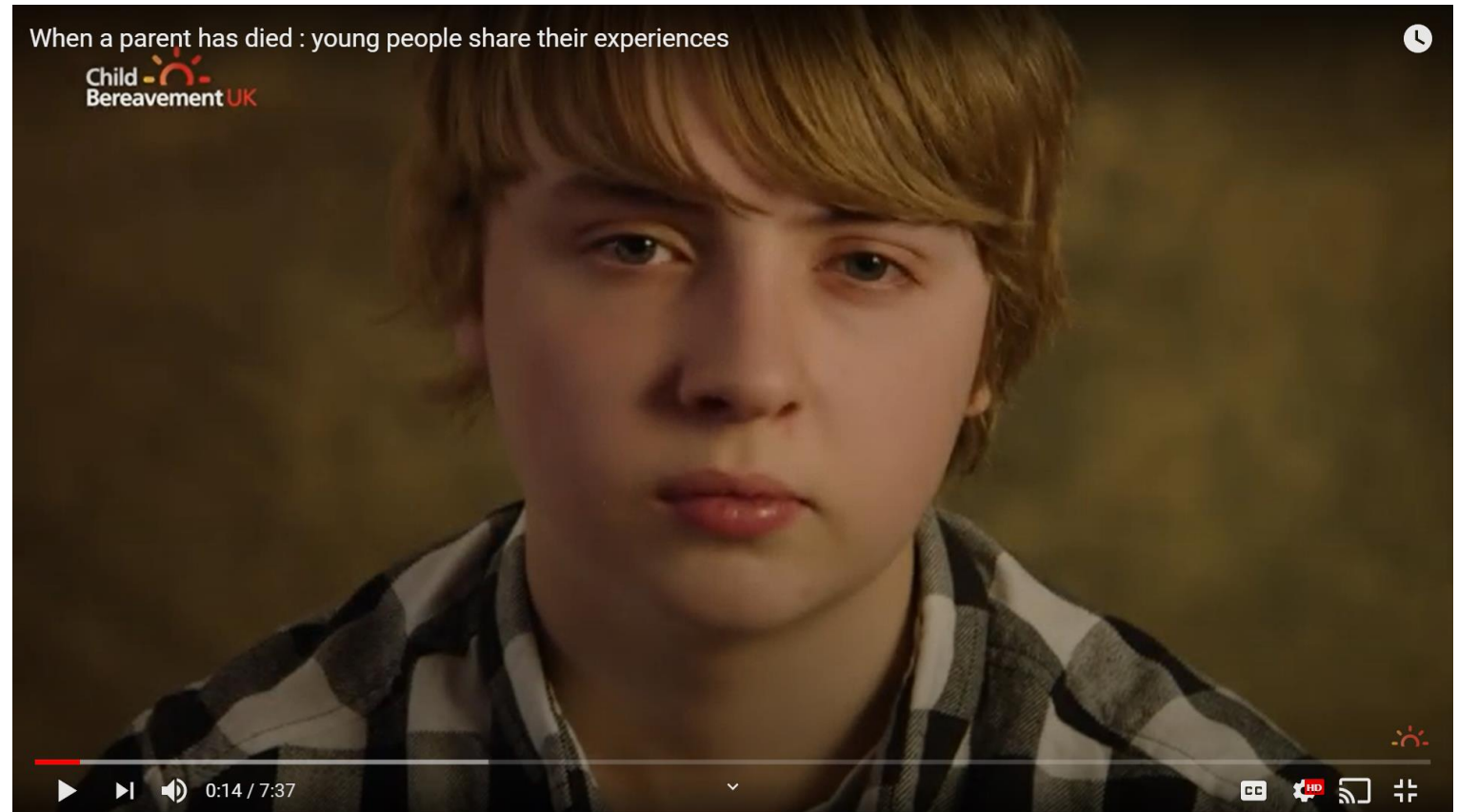
It is important to recognise that grief can manifest (even in adults) as anger or other negative behaviours.

As always, remember behaviour is communication and before you respond to a child's behaviour take a second to consider what they might be showing you through the things they are doing.

Keep boundaries clear and explain to the child that although anger can be caused by grief, hurting themselves or others is not ok. Support them in seeing the emotional trigger underneath the displayed behaviour.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=h-qFkRaPRYY



<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/support-for-schools/>



Supporting children through coronavirus

Information, advice and guidance on supporting bereaved children and young people during the coronavirus outbreak and our updated services and opening times.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

School support for bereaved pupils

We provide support for school professionals who are supporting a bereaved pupil.

**WINSTON'S
WISH WW**

Giving hope to grieving children

Thank you for your time

Please stay in touch:

egriffiths@pennfields.com

www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/outreach

