

## Remembering

Grief is not about forgetting the person who has died, but about finding ways to remember them. Remembering can aid the grieving process. When someone dies, our feelings for them and memories of them stay alive and active inside us. Therefore, finding ways of expressing our memories is important.

When you lose someone important in your life, you may worry that you will forget important or happy memories of them. This fear is very common. By creating ways of remembering such as the ones suggested here, these memories can become something physical that you can hold on to for the future. This is as helpful for children as it is for adults.

There is no right way or wrong way of remembering. However you choose to remember the person that died, do not put pressure on yourself to make a perfect item or memory activity. The process is a personal expression for the special person in your life who has died but who lives on in your memories.

### The funeral

The funeral is a way of saying goodbye and is also an occasion to look back on and to remember. A funeral service no longer needs to follow a fixed format. You can create a ceremony that really expresses the spirit of the person who has died. Take time to consider the options. Whatever you decide, the memory of a beautiful service that felt right will bring you comfort in the future. A funeral director, a non-religious celebrant, or your faith or community leaders can give guidance on different kinds of ceremony and funeral options.

### Visiting the grave

If there is a grave or other form of remembrance site, some people find it helpful go there to set aside time to think about the person that died and nothing else. They may find that telling the person their news, expressing feelings to them and bringing flowers or other gifts becomes an important part of mourning. Some people also find it useful to go to the grave on special occasions such as anniversaries or on birthdays.

## A memory box

You can make or buy a box in which to put special items. These could include letters or cards from friends or dried flowers from the funeral. You could also put into the box treasured things which belonged to the person who has died such as letters, pictures, personal items or clothing.

Ready-made memory boxes may have sections for different keepsakes and a section for a photograph of the person. You can purchase memory boxes from Child Bereavement UK. These are available in different colours and can be decorated (see Resources section).

## Memory jars and memory books

A 'memory jar' is any container that can be left plain or decorated. Children and the whole family can write down their memories on pieces of paper and then 'post' them into the jar so that they are captured and not forgotten. At a later date, it can be comforting to pull out a piece of paper and re-discover that memory.

Creating a book in memory of the person who has died can be helpful when grieving. You could include photographs, poems, letters or your own thoughts. Some families choose to do this together, which helps them to talk together about the person who has died and share memories that become special to the whole family. You could make it yourself, or there are websites online which can help you create your remembrance book. In the future, the book can help you remember the person that died and think about the special times you had together.

Two memory books for early years and primary school age children are available from Child Bereavement UK: 'Remembering' and 'Someone I know has died'.

## A journal

Writing a journal, or diary, about how you're feeling can be useful in many ways. Writing and putting your feelings into words can help to release some of your pain and put into words any worries you have. Later, you can look back on how you felt and realise that however bad it was, you have managed to keep going. That knowledge may help you to feel that whatever you are going through now will also pass. Some people sketch, others write down memories, pour out feelings, or do a combination of all of these. It is up to you how you express your feelings. You may choose to fill your journal with something entirely original.

## Artwork

If you like sewing, stitching a sampler and framing it can be a lovely way to remember someone. Or you could draw or paint a picture and frame it. You do not have to be 'good' at art – one simple idea is to weave pieces of felt or ribbons in the colours that remind you of the person. Making anything in memory of the person who has died can connect you to them and give you something to treasure.

## A candle

Lighting a candle and reading a special prayer or poem can be a simple but powerful way of marking an anniversary or special day.

## A special walk

Some families find it helpful to create their own remembrance walk. It may involve walking through the person's favourite park or woodland. You could create little signs along the walk, with pictures of the person, or a poem or saying. You could then invite anyone who may want to join you, so a group of people can take part in the special remembrance walk. The walk could perhaps take place on the anniversary of the person's death or around their birthday.

## Planting trees or shrubs

Some people plant a tree or a shrub and have a plaque or sign set up beside it as a way of remembering. Choose a hardy shrub or tree and make sure you plant it in a place that you will always be able to visit. If you have no place of your own to plant a tree, you may be able to get permission to plant one in a park or other public area.

## Remembrance services

Many organisations like Child Bereavement UK, Cruse and Sands (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity) hold national annual memorial services. Some hospitals and hospices also hold a remembrance ceremony each year.

You can organise your own service, or attend one arranged by an organisation connected with the person who has died. These services are usually very much appreciated. There is something deeply moving about a group of people from different backgrounds, and with different stories, coming together in one place to remember the special people in their lives.

## Resources and further reading

Other Child Bereavement UK information sheets you may find helpful:

*How we grieve, Helping yourself through grief, How children and young people grieve*  
[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

The following resources are available from Child Bereavement UK [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

Further resources and/or references are available from Child Bereavement UK, upon request

### Memory Folder

A5 card folder with spaces for important information about a baby who has died, including an insert for hand and footprints, and a small bag for hair or special item.

### Memory Box

Rigid board box with attached lid with strong magnetic closures and ribbon ties. Strong and durable, and ideal for decoration to create a unique, personalised keepsake item. Size: 30 cm W, 30 cm L, 9 cm D (comes flat-packed, size 30 cm x 46.5 cm x 8 mm). Available in different colours.

### Remembering

Dianne Leutner

Workbook for children when someone important to them has died. Sensitively illustrated, it will help a child to talk about memories and make some sense of how they are feeling.

### Someone I Know Has Died

Trish Phillips

This activity book is designed to be used with adult help by very young children who need assistance to understand what being dead means, what we do, and how we might feel when someone dies. Some pages are interactive in ways familiar to children.