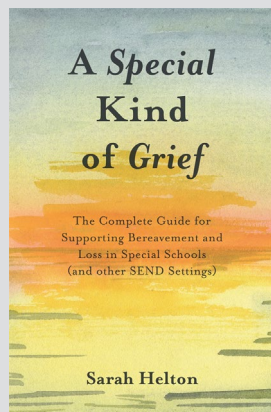


Being challenged about some of the intrinsic tenets of the death awareness movement can only enrich our understanding. And although I disagree with some of his portrayals of the death movement, and would challenge and confront many of the intrinsic tenets of *his* position, I will be recommending this book to many. I would certainly recommend it to counsellors and medical practitioners working with grief and loss in relation to death. I would also suggest it is essential reading for trainings in counselling and nursing work with dying and bereavement.

Death is such a potent and complex phenomenon that in our modern culture sociological critical thinking needs to be part of any meaningful contemporary conversation about death - despite that it might also lead to heated arguments! But dialogue between differing views and languages is how understanding evolves. Even though critical thinking is inevitably lacking in some vital aspects of our comprehension of death and dying, Walter is right, it has not been sufficiently brought into the conversation. I hope his book will to some extent remedy this. ■

Anne Geraghty

Author of 'Death, the Last God: A Modern Book of the Dead'



A special kind of grief: the complete guide for supporting bereavement and loss in special schools and other SEND settings

Sarah Helton

2017

London: Jessica Kingsley

Pages: 180

ISBN: 978 1 78592 273 2

'A special kind of grief' is a very thorough approach to death, bereavement, grief and loss for people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) written by a SEND trainer and consultant with over 20 years experience in the UK and US. It opens with the statistic that from the moment that a child enters a special school until the day they leave, they could have experienced one death per year for each school year, thus 12 in their short lifetime. This is more than the mainstream population will have experienced, and not counting any bereavement they might have had in their own family situations. This book aims to support the schools in identifying the issues that they will have to address when deaths occur and how to acknowledge the grief in a meaningful way. This is from the point where the death has happened and

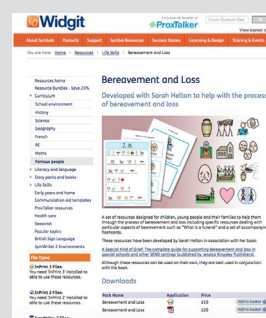
the community of staff, pupils and wider community need to be informed, to looking in detail on the effect on the pupils and the staff, along with practical suggestions for managing the school environment and developing appropriate policies.

Helton covers some of the theoretical ground about how grief affects children of different ages and different cognitive levels—including a table that provides a useful overview of the child's understanding, and typical reactions and behaviours. The behaviours of grieving children are addressed and highlight the needs of the non-verbal child who might be overlooked because their withdrawal doesn't register as a behavioural challenge. There is a comprehensive chapter on ways to support grieving children, which includes the use of Widgit symbols (see accompanying review) and guidance on talking with the children as well as 'things not to say'. The author gives practical advice about talking about funerals, cremations and burials, and addresses other forms of grief and loss including changing schools or even the death of a fictional character on a TV show. The impact on staff is often overlooked, and she provides ways staff can be supported as well as outline policies for the school.

It's a very comprehensive book, an easy read with many checklists and highlighting of areas to be addressed in schools. For the grief counsellor it provides a guide to the issues for SEND children (and adults) which need to be incorporated into their practice. Like many publications that identify the nuts and bolts of a situation, this book would also be useful for mainstream schools to check against their own processes and procedures. ■

Janet Dowling

Cruse Bereavement Care Volunteer



Bereavement and loss symbol resource pack

Sarah Helton

2017

Available from Widgit at <https://www.widgit.com/resources/lifefskills/personal-social/bereavement/index.htm>

This resource pack has been designed to complement the chapter on 'Ways to support grieving children' in Helton's 'A special kind of grief; the complete guide for supporting bereavement and loss in special schools and other SEND settings'. However, it can also be used as a stand alone resource.

Widgit symbols are line drawings in a schematic structure for supporting literacy. If you are not familiar with them I highly recommend visiting the widgit website and downloading the free 28 page pdf www.widgit.com/about-symbols/booklets/widgit_what_we_do.pdf. Individuals with special educational needs and young children in the early developmental stages of literacy can have their communication skills and understanding greatly improved by the use of Widgit symbols. Widgit symbols are a pictorial representation of the word - they are a clear and simple structured language, ideal for communication and learning.

The 'Bereavement and Loss Symbol Resource Pack' pack is a set of resources designed for children, young people and their families to help them through the process of bereavement and grief including specific resources dealing with particular aspects of bereavement such as 'What is a funeral', 'The emotions of grief' and a set of accompanying flashcards. For example - the flashcards have a series of 'alive and dead' symbols. These are plain line drawings. 'Dead' shows a stick person in a coffin. 'Alive' is a stick person shining. 'Live' is a red heart. 'Death' is a red heart with a red line through it. A stick person waving its arms with a red line through him is 'body not working', and the side profile of a face with a red line through the eyes indicates 'won't see them again'. There are simple oval faces which show sad, angry, confused, cross and a range of other emotions. These can be used to support people

with special needs to be able to indicate their questions, or express their feelings. The set I was given comes with white faces, but the website suggests that the resource sets can be customised to reflect other skin tones. Other flashcards include comfort, emotions of loss and grief, and all forms of grief and loss.

The resource cards are more complex, and require the client to be familiar both with making sentences with symbols, and with the meanings of the symbols. There are about eight written sentences per page, for example, 'you are sad because XXX is dead', or 'we won't be able to see XXX body'. Each written sentence has six to eight linked symbols above.

If you are in a setting that uses symbols, then this will come as a welcome resource for working with clients who are bereaved. If you are not in such a setting, but have been asked to work with someone with SEND, it is best to consult with the regular support staff how familiar the client is with symbols. In either case, Helton's 'A special kind of grief' has some positive suggestions for working with clients using the symbols. Potentially they could also be useful in a mainstream setting with young children, or where people have limited English, and with people with dementia, although I have not necessarily used Widgit symbols in those settings. ■

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