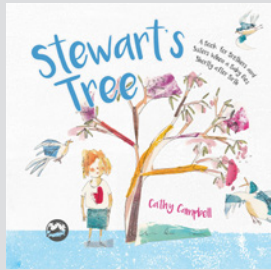


is to ensure that all children have access to support when experiencing death, and this is a very useful resource for use in schools and by carers. ■

Janet Dowling

Cruse Bereavement Care Volunteer



Stewart's Tree

Written and illustrated by
Cathy Campbell

London: Jessica Kingsley
2018
978-1785923999

This is an attractively illustrated book for very young children, three years and older, which deals with the painful and sensitive situation of the death of a baby brother or sister just after birth. There is very little literature available aimed specifically at young children who are bereaved in this way so in that respect it is a very welcome addition.

As with all books for this age group, there are more pictures than words, and adults reading the book to small children need to be able to extrapolate and wonder with the child about what is going on based on visual or verbal clues; 'What's happening here?', 'Do you remember when we were in the hospital?' and so on. Although there is a short section at the back with edited extracts from a Sands (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity) publication, I could imagine grieving parents, stunned by grief as they often are, might overlook that; it might have been better to put that information at the beginning.

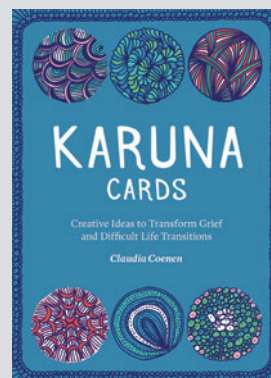
Quite a lot of space is devoted to the often misunderstood idea of 'losing' the baby and this is good. I think other unhelpful but commonly used expressions could have been incorporated however - 'going to sleep' being the obvious example. Children at three or four cannot understand the permanency of death and this isn't really addressed either which is a shame. I really liked the idea of a cot as a spaceship and the illustration is lovely; that seems an inspired choice. Equally good is the description of how Stewart wasn't strong enough to live outside of Mummy's tummy which avoids later worries the surviving sibling may have of being ill or catching something. Explaining death through the loss of senses is usually helpful for young children and this is done well, as is the message he will never be forgotten. The 'd' word is used once, which is helpful, but perhaps could have been used more often

or in other forms - 'died' and so on. The link to confusion about what happens is implied well (Why are all these cards arriving? Why are people bringing soup?) but I feel could have been made more explicit.

Indeed the most obvious absence is the lack of reference to any feelings, either from the parents or relatives or from the child's point of view and I think this is a real drawback. The illustrations could really have been used well here to show the range of feelings but they are rather neutral or ambiguous. Small children really need to be helped with giving words to the feelings they will observe in others and feel in themselves. Neither is there a reference to a funeral or where his body is now. In that respect the book might need to be complemented with other publications. ■

Judy Debenham

Candle Child Bereavement Service, St Christopher's Hospice



Karuna Cards: creative ideas to transform grief and difficult life transitions

Author: Claudia Coenen
Illustrator: Kate McHale

London: Jessica Kingsley
2017
Pages: 52 cards in a box
978-1-78592-780-5

The Karuna Cards are a set of 52 prompt cards for exploring thoughts and feelings about grief and other difficulties in life. 'Karuna' is a Sanskrit word that my online Yogapedia dictionary tells me is normally translated into English as 'compassion' – but an action-based kind of compassion rather than the pity or sadness associated with the English word. It's the action based aspect that is emphasised in the use of these cards.

Developed by a certified grief counsellor in the USA, each card focuses on one aspect of grief/transitions and suggests different creative ways to respond. The card contents are influenced by both Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Mindfulness. For example, one card instructs the reader to 'Stand straight, gently, with your legs hip width apart' and then gives some breathing exercises, whilst another suggests when in nature to notice what animals appear and listening to the minutiae of nature before writing down personal reflections. A third invites the reader to make a list of what they can do when they are feeling down and to use it as an action list when the time comes, whilst another asks about