

# REVIEWS

## VIDEOS

### Not Too Young To Grieve

Alison Steadman (narrator)



Ipswich, Suffolk, UK:  
Concord Video  
2005, 15 mins  
£40.00 (also available as a  
DVD, £40.00)

The intended audience for this animated video (or DVD) is parents, carers, nursery workers and others working with families and bereaved children. It is accompanied by a resource booklet offering further information.

For professionals, the film offers an enlightening look into the world of grieving toddlers and babies. It would make an informative training tool, offering wide-ranging opportunities for discussion. Using 10 imaginary stories, it guides the viewer through many of the scenarios involving bereaved under-fives with which parents and main carers struggle. Each story is very short so no time is available to acknowledge that real life for bereaved families is often more complicated than represented here. However, a knowledgeable trainer could address this.

For bereaved parents, the film offers user-friendly explanations of the often bewildering reactions and behaviours of the grieving under fives, and gives examples of practical ideas that might help. The supportive, non-judgemental presentation is to be applauded and parents will appreciate the implied message that just about doing OK is enough. Coping with their personal grief, whilst addressing change within a shattered family structure and looking after very young children who are also grieving, is incredibly hard work. It is good to see extended family members and friends coming to the rescue in some of the scenarios, indicating that parents do not have to do it all on their own.

I am not always convinced that animation is the best technique to use when communicating around real life events. However, this production is enhanced by the stories clearly having been sourced from real life situations. The voice-over uses accessible language and does not overload the viewer with information. The objective is to 'transform the understanding of parents and professionals caring for children bereaved at a very early age' - a big task, but one this film certainly goes a long way to achieving.

Jill Adams

Schools Training and Support Coordinator, The Child Bereavement Trust

### A Death in the Lives of...

Childhood Bereavement Network



London: Childhood  
Bereavement Network  
2002, 18 mins  
£15.00 (also available as a  
DVD, £15.00)

This video aims to give 'a voice to bereaved young people' through a group interview with six teenagers attending a bereavement support service. Sections address what helped, what didn't help, what schools can do, and what the young people had learned. The video is perhaps rather sketchy in answering its own questions, but some of the interviews are moving and thought-provoking.

Chelsea, aged 14, reminds us of the importance of giving young people information. She had been told her grandfather was fine, but then realised the truth when she went to see him two days before he died: 'That just made me feel even more upset, to feel that they didn't trust me to tell me. It felt to me that they couldn't tell me, and I wanted to know'.

Luke, aged 14, knows that people who have not been bereaved may think you should soon 'get over it', but explains that this is not the case. 'It does take a long time...'. Roeland, 14, misses his dad: 'My dad was a part of me - when he died, there was an empty space. I find it hard, to deal with that empty space'. And Wayne recognises that you learn from the death of someone close to you: '[Before], say on the news, someone got shot, and they died... I wouldn't acknowledge it. But now I just feel sorry for their families'.

### It will be OK

Childhood Bereavement Network



London: Childhood  
Bereavement Network  
2004, 15 mins  
£17.50

This more recent video, also from the Childhood Bereavement Network, gave nine young people the opportunity to develop and direct a film to help their bereaved peers. Eight of the teenagers tell their stories on the video, and talk about how bereavement has affected them. The format lends itself more easily to a school or college setting than *A Death in the Lives of...* as each section could be used independently as a starting point for young

people, both bereaved and non-bereaved, to talk about the emotional and practical support that young people might need after a death.

Two stories seemed particularly poignant. Tasha, aged 14, talks about the death of her mother two years before, in a car crash. She tells us how helpful it was to talk to her cousins and her auntie about what had happened, and reassures other bereaved people: 'Nothing's wrong, your feelings aren't ever wrong'. Danni, also aged 14, speaks of the angry feelings she had after her dad committed suicide three years before. She was grateful to have had help from counsellors: 'I felt I could trust them', and she says bravely that you 'mustn't let it ruin your life. You have to remember the happy times'.

Hearing from young people themselves about their experiences of bereavement has a strong emotional impact, and this video could be a useful starting point for professional development for people working with teenagers. ●

Rose Griffiths

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## BOOKS

### When Someone Dies

Michelle Mansfield, Peter Auddland, Anita Evans



Cambridge, UK:  
Speaking Up  
2006, 23pp  
£4.99 pb

When people with intellectual disabilities are confronted with bereavement and loss, support is often varied and inconsistent. Resources for bereaved people in general are becoming more widely available, but appropriate information and support for those with a learning difficulty is still sadly lacking. This delightful book is sensitively crafted and is one of the best publications I have seen for this group.

Designed with the help of three people with intellectual disabilities, the book is presented in an accessible format, accompanied by simple line drawings in colour. After an introduction, four sections cover the issues 'when someone dies', 'emotions', 'what happens next' and 'when I die'. The accompanying pull-out 'mood chart' demonstrates the pendulum of feelings and emotions often associated with grief and is an excellent tool, easy to use and understand.

The authors address some difficult themes, such as beliefs surrounding death and making a will, in a

simple fashion and differentiate meaningfully between burials and cremations. The questions at the end of the book encourage the readers and associated carers to consider difficult issues from a practical perspective.

Priced reasonably, this book complements existing resources such as *When Mum Died* and *When Dad Died*. Individuals with an intellectual disability may look at and read it by themselves, or it could be used by friends, relatives and professional carers proactively (as part of educational preparation for loss and bereavement) or reactively (following a death). Bereavement supporters will find it helpful not only for clients with intellectual disabilities but also for groups who have difficulty with the concepts of death and bereavement, such as adults who have mental health issues or poor literacy levels, and children. ●

#### Sue Read

Senior Lecturer in Nursing and Midwifery

HOLLINS S, SIRELING L (2004). *When Mum Died/When Dad Died* (3rd edn). London: Gaskell/St Georges Hospital Medical School.

## Early Bereavement

### What Factors Influence Children's Responses to Death?

Karen Lowton, Irene J Higginson



London: National Council for Palliative Care, 2002  
12pp  
£10.00 pb  
ISBN 1 89891 535 0

Lowton and Higginson have packed a great deal into this brief paper. Written from within the framework of health service provision, the paper focuses on a wide selection of available research to explore the influences on children following bereavement and whether these can be relied on as indicators for the provision of intervention and/or outcomes for bereaved children.

As a practitioner working outside the medical profession, I was encouraged to find the Cascade of Events model had been chosen to explore these issues. This model places strong emphasis on the importance of holistic assessment that takes into account family and social functioning both before and after the death and, importantly, the wider social context of the bereaved child.

The paper is well laid out and broken down into easily accessible sections, with the complexity of factors influencing behavioural and emotional responses to bereavement highlighted throughout the paper and reflected in the headings. Gender,

the relationship to deceased, the type of death, communication and social environment are all explored, albeit briefly. Strongly implied in the paper is the importance for positive outcomes of the parent/carer's ability to support the bereaved child, particularly where a parent has died. In a section highlighting the sanitisation of bereavement, and the apparent lack of awareness of its impact in primary health care, the authors quote Rowling and Holland (the only quoted passage in the paper): a 'society that acknowledges grief will create a positive environment for constructing meaning'. Again I am encouraged in my practice to do what I can to reverse that trend by advocating greater public and professional awareness of bereavement issues.

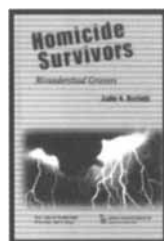
The authors tell us much of what we already know about research in this field – the difficulties in devising effective measurements that reflect the complexity, the process and the sensitivity of childhood bereavement; the limitations of many of the studies to date; the difficulties in timely research with a potentially vulnerable group at a time of likely distress and finally the lack of longitudinal studies of bereaved children from all social and economic backgrounds. Nonetheless, this is a useful overview of the complex nature of childhood bereavement and the difficulties in defining indicators for intervention and for likely outcomes. The clear leaning towards a social, rather than medical, model of assessment and understanding of childhood bereavement is to be welcomed. ●

#### Simon Eedle

Deputy Children's Service Manager, Barnardo's Orchard Service

ROWLING L, HOLLAND J (2000). Grief and school communities: the impact of social context, a comparison between Australia and England. *Death Studies* 2000; 24: 35-50.

## Homicide Survivors Misunderstood Grievors



Judie A Bucholz  
Amityville, NY, USA:  
Baywood  
2002, 188pp  
\$38.95 hb  
ISBN: 0 89503 268 6

Bucholz is an American homicide survivor who is also a professor of human organisational systems and well qualified to explain and criticise the judicial system and the society in which the homicides took place. She relies on case studies of 13 survivors and a balanced review of the recent literature on bereavement to provide us with a vivid picture of these 'misunderstood grievors'.

Anger is the most natural response to a death by murder and we should not be surprised if it is

directed at the killer and all associated with him or her. Indeed, from the survivor's point of view the legal process often seems biased in favour of the killer; police seem not to care for the feelings of the bereaved family who may themselves be under suspicion, and friends and neighbours, who keep their distance, add to the victim's sense of being 'victimised by society'. This book is a plea for understanding and the case studies provide us with much food for thought.

The critique is focused on the USA social and judicial system and, although much of it is relevant to other societies, would have benefited from examining some of these. For instance, in the UK, the metropolitan police's family liaison officers are now being trained to provide emotional support to the victims of violent crime and the whole system of coroner's courts is being made more supportive. But, however sensitive these professionals may be, they are not in a position to provide long-term support and need to work closely with major UK charities, Cruse Bereavement Care, Victim Support and the self-help group Support after Murder and Manslaughter.

Other books on the topic of bereavement by homicide are few. They include Redmond's *Surviving When Someone You Loved was Murdered*, Conrad's *When a Child has been Murdered* and *When Father Kills Mother* by Hendriks, Black and Kaplan. Redmond is a family therapist and her work is based on her experience with 300 American homicide survivors who took part in her own form of systematic group therapy, details of which are given. She too finds much to criticise in the American legal system. Conrad, is an American reporter whose daughter was murdered and who benefited from the self-help group, Compassionate Friends. She confines herself to the grief of parents who have lost a child by murder. Hendriks, Black and Kaplan are British child psychiatrists who have focused on the special problems that arise for the surviving children when one parent kills the other. Inevitably judicial issues arise, including painful questions of custody and access.

Each of these books is well-written and has its own strengths; although there is some overlap between them, this is not sufficient to deter this reviewer from recommending them all. ●

#### Colin Murray Parkes

Consultant Psychiatrist

CONRAD BH (1998). *When a Child Has Been Murdered: Ways You Can Help the Grieving Parents*. Baywood, Amityville, NY.

HENDRIKS JH, BLACK D, KAPLAN T (1993). *When Father Kills Mother: Guiding Children through Trauma and Grief*. London/New York: Routledge.

REDMOND LM (1989). *Surviving When Someone You Love Was Murdered: A Professional's Guide To Group Therapy for Families and Friends of Murder Victims*. Clearwater, FL, USA: Psychological Consultation and Education Services.