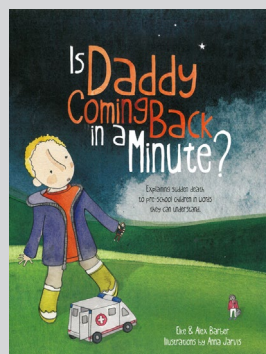


The protagonist, Alex, is now four years old and has some more questions about what has happened to his Daddy's body. This takes the reader straight into a scenario that is very typical with small, bereaved children, the need to both answer again and amplify earlier questions, and to use straightforward language. Alex wonders what happened to Daddy's arms and legs if his body was in the coffin - a logical question for a four year old. His Mum explains what the 'wooden box' is called and pre-empted the explanation of a cremation by reminding Alex that a dead body cannot feel, move or breathe. This is important information for a child whose ability to understand what happens after death is still limited. The word 'burned' is not avoided and nor are 'ashes'. The explanation of a burial and what happens to the body afterwards is similarly sensitive yet direct and honest. It reminds us that often the difficulties with such explanations lie with the adults rather than the children and there is no need to be squeamish. Alex thinks it is 'really cool' that a dead body is reabsorbed back into the earth. When the time comes to spread the ashes, his mother explains carefully what they are doing and how this does not mean their Daddy will be forgotten. Keeping some of the ashes for the children in a bottle allows them to feel a real connection with their Dad.

This is such a good book for so many reasons. Whilst there are several books which help explain death, there are very few which deal so comprehensively with the fine detail of what needs to be told to children. The use of clear, respectful, honest and age-appropriate language is modelled by Alex's Mum, as is the way she shows her feelings. The oscillations of grief when Alex has his birthday party, the sharing and showing sadness together as a family, and the importance of maintaining a 'continuing bond' with Dad are all found in the research on childhood bereavement. The book ends with the same message as the previous one: *'It's okay to be sad but it's okay to be happy too.'* Anyone who works with small children or who knows a small bereaved child should read this. ■

Judy Debenham

Candle Child Bereavement Service, St. Christopher's Hospice



Is Daddy coming back in a minute?: explaining (sudden) death in words very young children can understand

Elke and Alex Barber

London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley
2016
40pp
£10.99
ISBN: 978 1 78592 106 3

This book is written for very young children (3+) and uses the real story of 3 year old Alex whose Daddy dies from a heart attack while he and Alex are having a 'boys' weekend' away together. It would be perfect to read aloud with a small child. The book was nominated for the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals' Kate Greenaway Medal in 2014 and this is the third edition.

It is a lovely book - from the 'pin up notes' from the writers and funders at the beginning, in which they remember people who have died in their families, to the 'update' notes and photos of Alex with his Dad at the end. It reminds us that death is not just a story in a book but happens to 'real' people too.

The language used is the language of small children and the font, with its use of upper case, 'handwritten' style and different sizes, is very natural and easy to read. The illustrations by Anna Jarvis are clear, with the kind of detail that small children love to spot. I wish the illustrations of the people reflected a greater ethnic diversity; the fact they are presumably true to life need not have precluded that in my opinion.

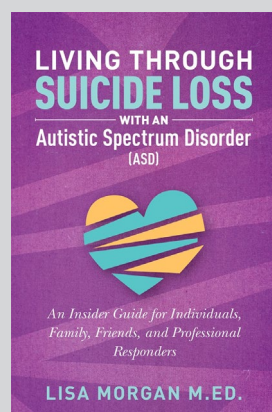
The special bond between Alex and his Dad is evoked at the start and the story unfolds in the chronological way that is often part of the recounting of a death. En route, Alex's questions and worries are addressed.

These are very typical of a small child. There is the frequent need for: further clarification, 'But where is he?'; indignation, 'But I don't want Daddy to be a star!'; the need for clear explanations of a heart attack and why his body could not be fixed; reassurance that there was nothing Alex could have done to change the outcome; who would look after him if his Mum could not; and how sadness resurfaces at birthdays and special times. The inevitability of death for everyone is not avoided but is given with lots of reassurance. I was glad that the 'd' word was mentioned and the funeral was also covered (although the words 'funeral' and 'coffin' are not mentioned which I think is a slight

omission). Throughout the book, love, sadness and grieving together are entwined, and the final message of: *'It's okay to be sad but it's okay to be happy too'* gives the message I think all child bereavement practitioners would want to give a grieving child. ■

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Living through suicide loss with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD): an insider guide for individuals, family, friends, and professional responders

Lisa Morgan

London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley
2017
140pp
£13.99
ISBN: 978 1 78592 729 4

There are very few books available addressing bereavement amongst those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and this one stands alone in specifically addressing the impact of suicide amongst this population. The author provides a personal account of her experiences as an individual with ASD following the suicide of her husband. Written just 11 months following the death, she recounts events firstly from a practical viewpoint detailing what happened but helpfully also providing accompanying sections giving insights into her

idiosyncratic understanding of proceedings and how this might differ from the neurotypical population. The book is addressed to readers with ASD and highlights the impact of problems with communication, sensory sensitivities, anxiety and other difficulties commonly experienced by those with ASD, considering how these complicate the consequences of a suicide. In particular, she addresses the very social nature of a suicide and the hurdles this affords those with ASD in managing relationships and the emotional aftermath.

There is an emphasis on the added burden resulting from others' lack of understanding of the nature of ASD, but the author obligingly identifies ways in which others might best support someone with ASD who has been bereaved through suicide. She also suggests ways in which those with ASD might best equip themselves to manage the after effects following the suicide of someone close.

Whilst considering aspects likely to be common to those with ASD, such as difficulties managing eye contact, physical contact and communication, the author is careful to emphasise the very individual nature of grief. This book does not aim to be prescriptive in any way but more provides an account of the author's own feelings, and explanations for those feelings, which will aid others' understanding of how those with ASD might respond following a suicide.

Similar to Debra Lipsky's (2013) book in that it provides an ASD view of bereavement, Lisa Morgan's book is an easy, yet informative read that resonates with current theoretical understandings of the experience of ASD with respect to bereavement. ■

Dr Katie Koehler

Clinical Psychologist and Deputy Director of Bereavement Services and Education at Child Bereavement UK

Lipsky D (2013). *How people with autism grieve and how to help: an insider handbook*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.