

BOOKS
death, dying, grief & loss

FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS

curated by

SARAH GARVEY

by

THE MORNING

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

books about death, dying, grief & loss

SOMETHING HAPPENED: A BOOK FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED PREGNANCY LOSS BY CATHY BLANFORD

This beautifully illustrated, simple, clear story is designed to help a young child understand what has happened when there has been a pregnancy loss. The book addresses the sadness that a child experiences when the anticipated baby has died. The child's fears and feelings of guilt are addressed as well as other confusing feelings. Perhaps most important, the book includes the family's experience of going on with life while always remembering their baby. The child reading the book is left with a sense of reassurance that life continues and he is still a vital part of a loving family. Most pages include a box with words for parents. These words are there to help parents understand what their child might be experiencing and why the particular illustrations and text were chosen.

WHEN DINOSAURS DIE BY LAURIE AND MARC BROWN

Unlike many books on death for little ones, this one doesn't tell a story. Instead, it addresses children's fears and curiosity head-on, and in a largely secular fashion, by answering some very basic questions: "Why does someone die?" "What does dead mean?" Other questions deal with emotions, and there's a section about death customs. The forthright approach makes the subject seem less mysterious and provides kids with plenty to think about and discuss with their parents. It's the brightly colored artwork, however, that will really enable children to relax with the concept. The pictures are filled with homey clutter and familiar detail, and the activities of the appealingly quirky characters add a strong, comforting sense of what can only be called normalcy.

THE GOODBYE BOOK BY TODD PARR

Without ever mentioning the word death, Parr presents a story in his illustrations of a goldfish who is missing his green fish friend; a redheaded child and a black-and-white dog are also looking sad, and a photo of the missing fish is framed on the table. The text speaks directly to readers, moving from the opening sentence, "It's hard to say goodbye to someone," to an exploration of some of the varied feelings readers might have and how they play out in behaviors. The book manages to address many of the aspects of grief: you may not feel like eating or sleeping, or you may pretend it never happened. But eventually, you'll start to remember all the good times you shared with the one you are missing, though not all your days will be good. The goldfish is a good guide on the journey, with just enough anthropomorphizing for kids to identify with it but leaving some ambiguity so children going through many types of loss can relate.

THE FALL OF FREDDIE THE LEAF BY LEO BUSCAGLIA

This story by Leo Buscaglia is a warm, wonderfully wise and strikingly simple story about a leaf named Freddie. How Freddie and his companion leaves change with the passing seasons, finally falling to the ground with winter's snow, is an inspiring allegory illustrating the delicate balance between life and death. The Fall of Freddie the Leaf is a warm and thought-provoking story and both children and adults will be deeply touched by this inspiring book. This 20th anniversary edition of this beloved classic has helped thousands of people come to grips with life and death.

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THE NEXT PLACE BY WARREN HANSON

The Next Place is an inspirational journey of light and hope to a place where earthly hurts are left behind. An uncomplicated journey of awe and wonder to a destination without barriers. Lose yourself in the uplifting sense of comfort and serenity. Embrace the joyful spirit of oneness. Then pour yourself into the lives of those you love. The author's musings about heaven, or whatever you might call "the next place" that one inhabits after this life, are presented in arcs of text superimposed on tranquil collage illustrations. The overall sense is one of peace. No specific religious allusions are made.

A TERRIBLE THING HAPPENED BY MARGARET HOLMES

Sherman Smith saw the most terrible thing happen. At first he tried to forget about it, but soon something inside him started to bother him. He felt nervous for no reason. Sometimes his stomach hurt. He had bad dreams. And he started to feel angry and do mean things, which got him in trouble. Then he met Ms. Maple, who helped him talk about the terrible thing that he had tried to forget. Now Sherman is feeling much better. This gently told and tenderly illustrated story is for children who have witnessed any kind of violent or traumatic episode, including physical abuse, school or gang violence, accidents, homicide, suicide, and natural disasters such as floods or fire.

LIFETIMES BY ROBERT INGPEN, BRYAN MELLONIE

Lifetimes is a moving book for children of all ages. It allows an explanation of life and death in a sensitive, caring, beautiful way. Lifetimes tells us about beginnings, about endings, and about living in between. With large, wonderful illustrations, it tells about plants, animals, and people. It tells that dying is as much a part of living as being born. It helps us to remember. It helps us to understand.

TELL ME PAPA BY JOY AND MARVIN JOHNSON

Answers to questions children ask about death and dying, provides a gentle explanation for children about death and the funeral. Tells children about what happens when you die, explains the funeral, cremation and answers other questions honestly. Useful tool for parents and caregivers searching for the right words to say.

THE INVISIBLE STRING BY PATRICE KARST

Specifically written to address children's fear of being apart from the ones they love, The Invisible String delivers a particularly compelling message in today's uncertain times that though we may be separated from the ones we care for, whether through anger, or distance or even death, love is the unending connection that binds us all, and, by extension, ultimately binds every person on the planet to everyone else. Parents and children everywhere who are looking for reassurance and reaffirmation of the transcendent power of love, to bind, connect and comfort us through those inevitable times when life challenges us!

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GENTLE WILLOW BY JOYCE C. MILLS

Gentle Willow: A Story for Children About Dying was written for children who may not survive their illness. This comforting story will also help all children to deal with the death of friends, family members, or even pets. It is a loving and tender tale that addresses our feelings of sadness, love, disbelief, and anger. It provides children, and those who read the story with them, a transformational way of viewing death and dying. This profound story is ultimately one of joy and hope.

SAD ISN'T BAD BY MICHAELENE MUNDY

Loaded with positive, life-affirming advice for coping with loss as a child, this guide tells children what they need to know after a loss--that the world is still safe; life is good; and hurting hearts do mend. Written by a school counselor, this book helps comfort children facing of the worst and hardest kind of reality.

TEAR SOUP BY PAT SCHWIEBERT AND CHUCK DEKLYEN

Tear Soup is the story of Grandy, who has just suffered a big loss in her life. She blends emotions and memories into *Tear Soup* as a way to work through the healing and grieving process

WE WERE GONNA HAVE A BABY, BUT WE HAD AN ANGEL INSTEAD BY PAT SCHWIEBERT

A small boy gazes into an empty bassinet on the cover of this psychologically astute book, which helps children cope with prenatal death or stillbirth. The narrator briefly recalls how he had looked forward to having a sibling, imagining the two of them “building a fort and playing tricks on our parents,” and recalling how he had loved listening to the baby inside his mother. “But something happened,” he reports. “The baby died. Our baby is not going to live with us.” With admirable economy and sensitivity, Schwiebert touches on a broad range of feelings without intruding on those of readers. There’s no explicit discussion of angels or heaven, but, after the baby’s death is mentioned, Bills’s cartoon illustrations introduce the baby as a smiling, winged figure with a halo, invisible to the grief-stricken figures around him--readers can interpret this as they choose. Most useful of all may be the endnotes for parents, which provide insightful and practical suggestions on aiding similarly bereaved children.

THE SADDEST TIME BY NORMA SIMON

Norma Simon offers three stories to help children talk about death—an uncle with a terminal illness, a classmate killed in an accident, and a grandparent. Explains death as the inevitable end of life and provides three situations in which children experience powerful emotions when someone close has died.

THE EMPTY PLACE BY ROBERTA TEMES

When a nine-year-old boy’s beloved big sister dies, he is confused, angry and fearful. For the first time he must face the finality of death and the pain of loss. His parents, also grieving, seem distant, until a counselor teaches them all how to cope and heal. A boy describes the feelings of loss, fear, and guilt felt by himself and his friend Betsy after each of them experiences the death of a sibling.

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I MISS YOU: A FIRST LOOK AT DEATH BY PAT THOMAS

When a close friend or family member dies, it can be difficult for children to express their feelings. This book helps boys and girls understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have following a loved one's death. Titles in this sensitively presented series explore the dynamics of various relationships experienced by children of preschool through early school age. Kids are encouraged to understand personal feelings and social problems as a first step in dealing with them. Written by psychotherapist and counselor Pat Thomas, these books promote positive interaction among children, parents, and teachers. The story lines are simple and direct--easily accessible to younger children.

THE TENTH GOOD THING ABOUT BARNEY BY JUDITH VIORST

The little boy who is the narrator of this book has just had his pet cat Barney die. He can only think of nine good things about Barney, until the day after the funeral, when he spends the day in the garden with his father. The plot is extremely simple and the book depicts grief very well. *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* is an excellent springboard for families to discuss what they feel happens after we die. The book helps children put into words many questions that they might be too young to articulate, and helps parents answer them for him as best they can.

WHEN THE WIND STOPS BY CHARLOTTE ZOLOTOW

When a little boy asks this question at the end of a happy day, his mother explains that the wind does not stop--it blows away to make the trees dance somewhere else. Reassuringly, she tells him that nothing ever ends; it simply begins in another place or in another way. Rain goes back into the clouds to create new storms; waves fold back upon the sea to become new waves, and the day moves on to make way for the night, bringing the darkness and stars for the little boy to dream in. Charlotte Zolotow's lyrical prose and Stefano Vitale's rich illustrations make this a beautiful celebration of the cycle of life.

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YOUNG ADULTS

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THE GRIEVING TEEN: A GUIDE FOR TEENAGERS AND THEIR FRIENDS BY HELEN FITZGERALD

Although the circumstances surrounding a death are difficult to handle at any age, adolescence brings with it challenges and struggles that until now have been largely overlooked. But in this unique and compassionate guide, renowned grief counselor Helen Fitzgerald turns her attention to the special needs of adolescents struggling with loss and gives them the tools they need to work through their pain and grief. Writing not only about but also for teenagers, Fitzgerald adeptly covers the entire range of situations in which teens may find themselves grieving a death, whether the cause was old age, terminal illness, school violence, or suicide. She helps teens address the gamut of strong and difficult emotions they will experience and the new situations they will face, including family changes, issues with friends, problems at school, and the courage needed to move forward with one's own life. Using a clear and accessible format, Fitzgerald guides teens through everything from the sickbed to the funeral, from the first day back at school to the first anniversary of the death. Above all, she lets teens know that even in their darkest hour, they are not alone.

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT DEATH FOR TEENAGERS BY EARL GROLLMAN

Written by an insightful theologian/grief expert, this book opens with Terry Kettering's attention-grabbing poem, "The Elephant in the Room." Teens' grief, like Grollman suggests, is the huge (but unobserved) elephant - often overlooked or minimized. Addressing this gap, he presents just a few on-target, incisive lines on each page on topics such as "the first days after a death" and "facing your future." He acknowledges that it's normal to feel that one's own grief is the worst; some teens may be disappointed not to find their particular situation treated more fully. Still, all are likely to find consolation in the book as a whole, and in completing (in the concluding workbook pages) statements like "The last thing I did with you was..." or "What scares me the most is..."

WHEN WILL I STOP HURTING?: TEENS, LOSS, AND GRIEF BY EDWARD MYERS

A self-help guide for teenagers struggling with bereavement. Myers provides an overview of grief as a painful but normal process and offers insights from bereavement experts and practical suggestions for coping, including accounts from teens. *When Will I Stop Hurting?* closes the gap in current literature on grief and mourning, which tends to focus on adults and younger children. This book is warm and accessible and will reassure teens about the normality of grief, encourage their understanding of what happens during the grief process, and provide resources for coping with loss. Myers explains the psychology of grief, provides psychologists' guidance on bereavement, and offers teens' insights of their own experiences. Teens who are coping with loss and grief, as well as parents, relatives, teachers, psychologists, and other adults concerned with teens' well-being, will find this book a valuable resource.

FIRE IN MY HEART, ICE IN MY VEINS: A JOURNAL FOR TEENAGERS BY ENID SAMUEL-TRUISMAN

Teens can write letters, copy down meaningful lyrics, write songs / poems, tell the person who died what they want them to know, finish business and use their creativity to work through the grieving process.

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THE HEALING YOUR GRIEVING HEART JOURNAL FOR TEENS: 100 PRACTICAL IDEAS

BY ALAN D. WOLFELT

In light of how difficult it is just to survive the teenage years, the grieving process can be especially difficult and overwhelming for teenagers. This diary affirms the grieving teen's journey and offers gentle, healing guidance. In order to sort through their confusing feelings and thoughts, teens are prompted to explore simple, open-ended questions. Teens are encouraged to write what they miss about the person who died, the specific feelings that have been most difficult since the death, or the things they wish they had said to the person before they died.

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