

The funeral

Providing Children and Young people with explanations and information about what will happen at the funeral can be helpful.

Children need to have information that is clear, direct and concrete to help them make the right decision for themselves. When discussing the funeral with a child, it may be helpful to include the following:

- Where will the funeral take place
- who will be there
- What will happen
- How long will it take

Children can feel that they haven't had the opportunity to say goodbye if they are stopped from attending a funeral, however there are also children who feel resentful at being forced to attend. If a child makes the decision not to attend the funeral they should not be criticised for it. They may later regret their decision, but it is important that it is their decision to make without blame.

Be prepared for fears

Because of the sudden nature of a suicide, children can worry that it will happen to others who they care about, or that they might be destined to die this way too. Listen to their fears and reassure them, you may need to do this more than once. To lessen confusion try to be consistent with your explanation about death.

Inform the child's school

Sometimes children's behaviour can be affected by their grief and it is likely that their school life will also be affected. Informing the school will enable teachers to support a child if they are having difficulties, they can be excused from class without having to explain each time.



Mission Statement

We believe that we can make a difference in the lives of children who have been bereaved by supporting them through their grief using therapeutic play providing a safe haven for them to work out their feelings

Richmond's Hope is a Scottish
Charitable Incorporated Organisation
SCIO SC036720



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RichmondsHopeCharity



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to make an enquiry about a
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base

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AFTER A SUICIDE

Information
For supporting
children and
young people



Do you know someone who has died by suicide?

If you do, you are not alone. approximately two people a day die by suicide in Scotland.

They are mums, dads, siblings, grandparents and friends.

Richmond's Hope has been supporting children and young people who have been bereaved by suicide since 2003 and we have made this leaflet to help you support a child or young person who has been bereaved by suicide.

Why do some people die by suicide?

No one knows why some people choose to die by suicide, and every family's situation is unique. Some people leave notes and others do not. If the child has a note left for them, be prepared to support them through reading their note as it could lead to more questions. (If a note has been left and the police have taken it for evidence, you are entitled to a copy)

If you would like some support, information or advice on explaining suicide to a child or young person you can contact your closest base and arrange a call-back or a face to face support and advice session with one of our Therapeutic Grief Practitioners.

Talk openly about suicide

There is still stigma around suicide which can be difficult for grieving families. We encourage people to say "died by suicide" rather than use the word "committed" as this can help normalise how a person died and help aid understanding.

The Importance of Truth

It is important to be honest with children.

They don't necessarily need to know every detail about a death, but they do need truthful answers and information. Initially saying something like "they did something to themselves that caused them to die" and building on this as they ask more questions or as they get older.

We might think we are protecting children by pretending that the suicide was an accident, children need to know the truth so that they can process the information.

Telling the truth about a death can be hard, especially if the circumstances surrounding the death are unclear or difficult. If possible, a parent or carer is generally the most suitable person to tell their child about the death. They may find out the truth from other children, adults or news reports, so hearing it from a trusted adult first can prepare them.

Viewing the body

Some choices can be more difficult to make than others. For example, many parents feel uncomfortable with the idea of a child viewing the body of a person who has died, they feel that this might be too distressing for a child and want to protect them from further hurt. Children's imaginations can often be worse or more frightening than reality, and because children have a natural curiosity, viewing the body can help them understand that the person is dead.

It is important to use concrete words, lie dead or died, as children often become confused by other explanations. For example, people can say "it looks like they are asleep". Although this term seems kinder to use, children can become confused or worried that when they or other people go to sleep, they might not wake up.

Again, choice is important for the child. If a child decides that they do not want to view a body, but everyone else in the family does, they should not be made to feel wrong. Children need permission to choose and reassurance that whatever they decide is alright. here are some things that a child might find helpful to know when deciding to view the body.

- Is it an open or partially open coffin
- Is it in a cool temperature
- They can't move
- They can't talk and they don't see you
- They wont come back to life
- They may look "puffed up"
- They may have marks on them as a result of how they died
- They will look different than when they were alive
- They may smell different