

# Always Remembered: A Bereavement Giving Library

## Recommended Resources for Children and Teens



*This list of books and other resources was compiled by the Mott Bereavement Committee, a multi-disciplinary team of staff members and families who are dedicated to supporting families at the end of life. The books on this list have been carefully reviewed by this group, including parents who have experienced the loss of a child.*

*We encourage you to review these resources before reading or giving a book to a child to be certain the story and content are in line with your family's values and beliefs.*

*We want to express our deepest sympathy to your family. We hope these recommendations may bring some help and comfort to you and your family.*

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## Universal Loss

**Book Title & Author:** *The Goodbye Book* by Todd Parr

**Description:** This book uses bright colorful illustrations to tell a touching and hopeful story about saying goodbye to someone you love. It is a simple and comforting picture book, told through the lens of a pet fish that has lost his companion, that touches upon the host of emotions children experience. It reminds readers that it's okay not to know all the answers, and that someone will always be there to support them.

**Age(s):** 3 – 6 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Always and Forever* by Alan Durant

**Description:** In this story, Fox died and his friends, mole and otter, grieve for him throughout the winter. In the spring, their friend squirrel reminds them of all of the fun times they had together and how funny Fox was. Charming picture story that may help young children understand and cope with grief.

**Age(s):** 4 - 7 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *I Miss You: A First Look at Death* by Pat Thomas

**Description:** 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. Children are encouraged to understand personal feelings and social problems as a first step in dealing with them. The story line is simple and direct. There are colorful illustrations throughout the book.

**Age(s):** 4 – 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion or spirituality.

**Book Title & Author:** *Ida, Always* by Caron Levis

**Description:** This book tells the story of a special friendship between two polar bears, Gus and Ida. One day, Gus learns that Ida is very sick and isn't going to get better. The book talks about how Gus and Ida cope with her sickness and how sad Gus is when she dies. Gus must learn to live without Ida, but realizes that loved ones will always stay in our hearts. This is a gentle and beautifully illustrated book, mostly focused on anticipatory loss.

**Age(s):** 4 – 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Someone I Love Died* by Christine Harder Tangvald

**Description:** This book guides children through grief with the opportunity to journal while learning about the grief process. This is a great resource for adults when helping a child after the death of a special person in their lives. The book is nicely illustrated.

**Age(s):** 4 – 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Yes. Uses biblical terms and references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Wherever You Are: My Love Will Find You* by Nancy Tillman

**Description:** This book helps children understand that they are always loved, no matter if their loved one is present or not. One heartfelt passage reads, "And if someday you're lonely, or someday you're sad, or you strike out at baseball, or think you've been bad...just lift up your face, feel the wind in your hair. That's me, my sweet baby, my love is right there." The book includes beautiful illustrations throughout. Great for children experiencing the loss of a parent, grandparent, or any loved one.

**Age(s):** 4 – 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Title & Author:** *What's Heaven* by Maria Shriver

**Description:** Kate came home from school one day and learned that her Great Grandmother died. Kate had many questions and asked her mother and an older cousin about death, Heaven and funerals. She worried that her Great Grandmother would be uncomfortable and her mother talks with her about a separation of the body and the soul. Kate learns that her Great Grandmother will always be a part of the lives of those she loved.

**Age(s):** 5 - 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Very spiritual book with significant discussion about Heaven, angels, God and a person's soul.

**Book Title & Author:** *Healing Your Grieving Heart for Kids 100 Practical Ideas* by Alan D. Wolfelt Ph.D.

**Description:** This book is for children who are grieving the death of someone they love. The basic message of the book is that children need to mourn and express their grief outside themselves if they are to heal. They also need the compassionate support of adults.

**Age(s):** 8 - 12 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion or spirituality.

**Book Title & Author:** *Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss* by Michaelene Mundy

**Description:** Gentle book about loss, framed around common questions and feelings that children may have about loss. Includes advice for children about how to cope with grief (talking, sharing feelings, asking for help) and discusses common emotions that children may have about loss (sadness, guilt, fear and confusion).

**Age(s):** 8 - 12 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Yes, includes references to God, Heaven and prayer. Also acknowledges not everyone believes in God.

**Book Title & Author:** *What on Earth Do You Do When Some Dies* by Trevor Romain

**Description:** This book addresses many of the questions and thoughts that children have after the death of someone close to them in a compassionate and straightforward manner. It offers sound advice and comfort during a difficult time. The author describes the strong, confusing feelings children might have and offers ways to feel better.

**Age(s):** 12 - 15 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Gentle Willow* by Joyce C. Mills

**Description:** Written for children who may not survive their illness or for the children who know them, this tale helps address feelings of disbelief, anger and sadness, along with love and compassion. In this story, Amanda and Little Tree discover that their friend Gentle Willow isn't feeling very well.

**Age(s):** All ages

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Teenagers Face to Face with Bereavement* by Karen Gravelle and Charles Haskins

**Description:** The authors discuss the grieving process and how it differs for adolescents. This book touches on the phases of grief teens may experience. Throughout this book, seventeen adolescents share pieces of their journey through grieving. Going back to school, handling friends/social situations following a loss, the many emotions associated with grief and more are discussed with great detail. All seventeen teens that share their stories have different experiences, which is true for all people grieving.

**Age(s):** 13 – 19 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion or spirituality.

**Book Title & Author:** *Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas* by Alan Wolfelt

**Description:** This book provides teens with 100 ideas to help grow their “Personal Mourning Account (PMA).” This is defined as an area to deposit any expression of feeling related to grief. Each page is an easy read and provides simple tips on understanding and expressing grief. Acknowledging that death is a painful, ongoing part of life, they explain how people need to slow down, turn inward, embrace their feelings of loss, and seek and accept support when a loved one dies. Provides ideas and action-oriented tips that teach the basic principles of grief and healing. These ideas and activities are aimed at reducing the confusion, anxiety, and huge personal void so that the living can begin their lives again.

**Age(s):** 13 – 18 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion or spirituality.

**Book Title & Author:** *Aarvy Aardvark Finds Hope* by Donna O'Toole

**Description:** Beautiful, gentle story of loss, grief and hope, told from the perspective of animals. Includes a good description of the grief process and common feelings about loss. Explains some key concepts of death referred to in reference materials (e.g. when you are dead you can't feel pain).

**Age(s):** All ages

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Lifetimes--The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children* by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

**Description:** This book focuses on beginnings, endings and life in between. Lifetimes talks about all living things including plants, animals and people and that dying is a normal part of life for all living things. A classic book that helps with understanding death.

**Age(s):** All ages

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

## Universal Loss: Activity Books

**Book Title & Author:** *Muddles, Puddles, and Sunshine: Your Activity Book to Help When Someone Has Died (Early Years)* by Diana Crossley

**Description:** This activity book offers invaluable, practical, and sensitive support for bereaved younger children. Provides suggestions of a helpful series of activities and exercises accompanied by the friendly characters of Bee and Bear. Offers a structure and an outlet for coping through the many feelings experienced after a death. The purpose of this book is to help children make sense of their experience by reflecting on the different aspects of their grief. At the same time, the book manages to find a balance between remembering the person who has died and having fun.

**Age(s):** 4 – 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope With Grief* by Marge Heegaard

**Description:** This is an activity workbook with the purpose to teach children about death and help them express their feelings of grief. This book can help with having healthy communication with the child about how they are feeling and what they may be thinking about the death that may be inaccurate. This workbook can be used over a period of time to support the child in continuing to address feelings and needs regarding the loss. There is also information in the book about how adults can help children cope.

**Age(s):** 4 – 9 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion and spirituality. The book gives examples of ideas some people have about what happens with the soul/spirit when someone dies.

**Book Title & Author:** *Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for Helping Kids Cope When a Special Person Dies* by Janis Silverman

**Description:** An art therapy and activity book for children coping with death. Sensitive exercises address all the questions children may have during this emotional and troubling crisis. Children are encouraged to express in pictures what they are often incapable of expressing in words. Simple prompts on every page to allow for discussion and space for pictures.

**Age(s):** 6 – 9 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Healing Your Grieving Heart JOURNAL for Teens* by Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D. and Megan E. Wolfelt

**Description:** A guided journal that encourages teens to learn about grief and mourning and then write down their unique thoughts and feelings. Topics include: what makes each teens' grief unique, common feelings after death, the six needs of mourning, capturing memories of the person who died and achieving reconciliation. Throughout teens are invited to write down responses to questions about grief. Spaces are provided to attach photos and other memorabilia. This book is designed as a companion to *Healing your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas* by the same author.

**Age(s):** 13 – 18 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion or spirituality.



**Book Title & Author:** *Help Me Say Goodbye* by Janice Silverman

**Description:** An activity book for children of early elementary school age who are anticipating the death of someone special in their life and grieving that loss as well. Children are encouraged to think of ways to keep connected to their special person through memories, writing and drawing. Included is also a list of helpful suggestions for healthy grieving.

**Age(s):** 6 – 10 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

## Loss of Sibling

**Book Title & Author:** *Where's Jess?* by Joy and Marv Johnson with the Goldsteins-Heather, Ray and Jody

**Description:** This is a very short and simple story of a child asking where his/her sibling is and wanting to understand what dead is. Dead is not like sleeping or going on a trip. Though the child can see Jess' toys and pictures of Jess, Jess is not coming back. We can remember Jess and talk about Jess and we don't have to be afraid of our tears—crying can help us to feel better. We can laugh sometimes too.

**Age(s):** 3 - 6 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion or spirituality.

**Book Title & Author:** *Lost and Found—Remembering a Sister* by Ellen Yeomans

**Description:** “We lost Paige”. That’s what my Grandma said, “lost”. My Parents said she died. I wondered if I could find her again.” So begins the story of one child’s search for understanding after the death of her sister. If someone could be “lost” could they also be “found”? Dealing with her own grief and accepting the emotions of those around her this child finds her way toward healing.

**Age(s):** 6 - 13 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

## Infant Loss

**Book Title & Author:** *Something Happened* by Cathy Blanford

**Description:** This beautifully illustrated, simple 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. Most pages include a box with words to help parents understand what their child might be experiencing and why the particular illustrations and text were chosen. Children who have experienced a death in their family are very reassured by stories of other children who have had a similar experience.

**Age(s):** 3 - 5 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *We Were Gonna Have a Baby, But We Had an Angel Instead* by Pat Schwiebert

**Description:** This is a short story about a little boy whose mom has lost a baby. The book does a good job describing the child's emotions of excitement and then loss, and also describes his family's feelings. There is a helpful section in the back of the book, titled "How to help your children". This includes two pages of detailed discussion about children's emotions, grief and ways to help kids.

**Age(s):** 3 - 5 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Not religious. However, the book uses the term angel.

## Loss of Parent

**Book Title & Author:** *Cinnamon Roll Sunday, A Child's Story of Anticipatory Grief* by Jennifer Allen

**Description:** In this story, father and son share cinnamon rolls each Sunday and spend time together. When Noah's dad is approaching death, Noah has all sorts of feelings about what is happening around him. This book is very detailed about the progression of terminal cancer. A very thoughtfully written book that says everything a parent would like to say to their children while someone is dying, but can't because it is too painful.

**Age(s):** 4 - 10 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Daddy's Promise* by Cindy Klein Cohen and John Henney

**Description:** The story follows Jesse after the death of his dad. Jesse has many questions about death and what happens afterward. His mother supports him with answers to his questions. Jesse's dad visits him in his dreams and also answers his questions.

**Age(s):** 4 - 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion or spirituality.

**Book Title & Author:** *Everett Anderson's Goodbye* by Lucille Clifton

**Description:** Beautifully written and illustrated story of a young boy who loses his father. This is a shorter story for younger children. The book deals with stages of grief and common emotions children feel. There are simple, powerful descriptions of Everett's feelings and comforting discussions with his mother.

**Age(s):** 5 - 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Samantha Jane's Missing Smile* by Julie Kaplow and Donna Pincus

**Description:** This book gently guides families through the feelings, thoughts, and wishes that children experience when a parent dies. Sammy is encouraged by her adult neighbor to open up about her grief, worries, and confusion. She is guided by her mother to accept and respond to the profound loss. The book offers helpful tools to caregivers for understanding and coping with grief.

**Age(s):** 5 – 8 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

**Book Title & Author:** *Geranium Morning* by E. Sandy Powell

**Description:** This is a story of a child whose father dies in a car accident. A girl whose mom is dying befriends the boy. Their friendship helps them both cope with their feelings and losses. Together, they come to terms with death, sharing a special understanding that sustains and heals.

**Age(s):** 6 – 9 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

## Loss of Grandparent

**Book Title & Author:** *Annie & the Old One* by Miska Miles

**Description:** This story is about a Navajo girl named Annie who is close to her grandmother. Throughout the book, Annie understands that her grandmother's life is coming to an end and she struggles to find ways to prevent her grandmother from passing away. Eventually, Annie learns that she is not capable of holding back time. Beautifully written and illustrated story that may help children understand and accept the loss of a loved one.

**Age(s):** Ages 4 – 8

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Not religious, but specific to Native American culture.

## Traumatic Loss

**Book Title & Author:** *When Dinosaurs Die* by Laurie Krasny and Marc Brown

**Description:** No one can really understand death, but to children, the passing away of a loved one can be especially perplexing and troublesome. This is true whether the loss is a classmate, friend, family member, or pet. Here to offer advice and reassurance are the wise dinosaurs from *Dinosaurs to the Rescue*, *Dinosaurs Divorce*, *Dinosaurs Travel*, and *Dinosaurs Alive and Well*. This succinct and thorough guide helps dispel the mystery and negative connotations associated with death. This helpful book provides answers to kids' most-often asked questions and also explores the feelings we may have regarding the death of a loved one, and the ways to remember someone after he or she has died.

**Age(s):** 9 - 15 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

## Loss of Classmate

**Book Title & Author:** *The Class in Room 44* by Lynn Bennett Blackburn

**Description:** An elementary school class learns of the death of their classmate Tony due to a car accident. The book includes examples of how children struggle with the reality that their friend will not be coming back. The story also gives examples of how people feel differently about having Tony's things stay in the classroom or remove them from the room, emphasizing that there is no right or wrong way to act or feel when there is a death. Some discussion takes place among the children about what a funeral may be like. The teacher addresses magical thinking that some children may have, blaming themselves for causing the death.

**Age(s):** 5 - 10 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion and spirituality.

## Loss of a Pet

**Book Title & Author:** *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* by Judith Viorst

**Description:** This is a short story told by a boy whose cat Barney just died. The book focuses on remembering good things about someone we love. There is some description about creating a special memorial ceremony/funeral. The boy has a good friend who is part of the funeral. The two boys have a conversation and share their differing views about what happens when someone dies. The friend talks about Barney going to heaven and the boy is firm that Barney is in the ground. The boy has a discussion with his parents about how things change in the ground and likes the idea that Barney will be helping to grow flowers and trees.

**Age(s):** 5 – 9 years

**Religious/Spiritual References:** Minimal references to religion or spirituality. Includes discussion about whether Barney went to heaven and what that may mean for a cat.

## Online Resources

***Sesame Street Grief Toolkit***

**Description:** This collection of resources by Sesame Street allows families to explore topics related to grief through a variety of multi-media formats. These tips, videos, children's stories, printable activities, and resource guides can help families communicate with one another, express emotions, and begin the process of moving forward. Originally intended for military families, however, there is little mention of the military.

**Link:** <https://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/grief>

**Age(s):** 3 – 5 years (preschool - kindergarten age)

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

*Ele's Place*

**Description:** Ele's Place is a center supporting the emotional wellbeing of grieving children and has several locations in Michigan. The website describes events, programs and resources that are available to grieving children and their families.

**Link:** <https://www.elesplace.org>

**Age(s):** 3 – young adult and their families

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

*Sandcastles*

**Description:** Sandcastles is a grief support program for children and teenagers and their families through Henry Ford Hospice. The website provides information about their programming as well as available resources.

**Link:** <https://www.aboutsandcastles.org>

**Age(s):** 3 – 18 years and their families

**Religious/Spiritual References:** No religious references.

*Always Remembered: A Bereavement Giving Library is a project made possible by thoughtful and generous donations. Learn more: [www.med.umich.edu/socialwork/oda](http://www.med.umich.edu/socialwork/oda)*

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