

Background

There are times to play, laugh, sing and have fun and there are also times to feel sad and treasure our memories of people and pets we miss ...

In this special episode, Emma introduces us to a new baby and she has some exciting news herself! Alex shares how he and his family remember his beloved grandmother. Through stories and play, we explore ways to help children through what can be very challenging times. It's time to talk about the 'Beginnings and Endings' of life on Play School.

Follow Up

The Play School team created *Beginnings and Endings* collaboratively with childhood bereavement experts from the [National Centre for Childhood Grief](https://www.nccg.org.au/) (NCCG). The NCCG recognised a need for more readily accessible resources to support young children and families experiencing grief.

Play School is delighted to provide this special offering where the subject of life and death is introduced in a familiar, gentle and safe environment. Parents and children are encouraged to watch together, talk together about the meanings children have made, then think about what could be explored a little further.



Beginnings ... Welcoming a new baby!

Our much-loved presenter Emma has a baby on the way! We meet baby Clara and her mum Kate who explains some of the things new babies need and like to do. Introducing a new baby to the family is an exciting time, but also a big adjustment for everyone. The first segment of *Beginnings and Endings* is a great talking point for children about to become an older sibling. There are some wonderful resources to help families through this transition and beyond. Here are just a few suggestions ...

- Visit raisingchildren.net.au for practical articles with plenty of tips to help prepare children for a new baby.
- Check out some of the joyful and reflective stories about pregnancy, becoming a brother or sister and living with a new baby. Recommended titles include:

- ***There's a House Inside My Mummy*** (2002) by Giles Andreae & Vanessa Cabban.
- ***There's Going to Be A Baby*** (2011) by John Burningham & Helen Oxenbury.
- ***Where Do Babies Come From?*** (2016) by Usborne Books: A useful resource with plenty of great illustrations, excellent for sharing facts in a developmentally appropriate way.



Endings ...

Possible causes of grief for young children

Feelings of grief and associated behaviours in early childhood can present as the result of a variety of life events including:

- The death of someone they love, perhaps a grandparent, friend or family pet.
- Significant change events such as starting school or moving to a new house.
- Loss of a friendship, loss of favourite toy or comfort object.
- Changing family circumstances including moving overseas.
- Having a family member in hospital for a long time or who is very ill.

What does grief look like in early childhood?

[Bereavement reactions can differ](#) greatly depending on a child's age, developmental stage and temperament. For pre-school aged children, their grief is often undetected or misunderstood.

Reactions may include:

- Becoming withdrawn.
- Behaving in an attention seeking way.
- Tending to show exaggerated responses to seemingly insignificant events.
- Feeling anxious or fearful.
- Having difficulty sleeping.
- Changes in eating and seeming fretful and distressed.

When they are grieving, children, like adults, often feel regressed and vulnerable. Children may return to bedwetting, thumb sucking, or carrying a security blanket or favourite toy around.



Supporting children in times of grief

This episode shares the scenario of Little Ted grieving after his pet goldfish Swish dies. His friends come over to share memories and be there to support him. We also see Alex sharing a special memory album of his Grandmother. As presented in *Beginnings and Endings*, experts recommend making the most of everyday teachable moments to introduce children to the concept of death over time, hopefully long before they experience the death of someone they love.

Other helpful strategies

- Provide loving support to allow them to grieve in whatever way they need.
- Know they can ask any questions and be answered truthfully, in age appropriate language.
- Talk about how they are feeling with a trusted person.
- Remember it's ok to cry and feel sad.
- Include children in family rituals and other family experiences.
- Share happy memories of the person, or pet, who has died.
- Maintain a 'normal' daily routine as much as possible.
- Get out in the fresh air, exercise and have fun!
- Sometimes, particularly when the whole family is grieving, professional help is needed.

ABC Kids listen bring us the popular series '*Imagine This*'. Have a listen to the insightful episode [How does our heart beat?](#) Learn more together about how our amazing heart keeps us alive.

Children's literature and grief

The classic children's story ***Sophie*** (1989) by Mem Fox is included in the episode. Story sharing is wonderful way to introduce children to themes that are sometimes challenging to build into everyday conversation. Here are some other titles for consideration.

- ***The Goodbye Book*** (2015) by Todd Parr:
A perfect follow on from Little Ted grieving the death of Swish the goldfish. This book also explores the death of a special pet goldfish.
- ***I Miss You: A First Look at Death*** (2001) by Pat Thomas: Helps children begin to understand natural feelings of grief when someone they love dies. Author, Pat Thomas is a psychopathologist and counsellor. She has published a range of books to support children, families and educators through challenging times.
- ***Wherever You Are*** (2012) by Nancy Tillman:
A touching narrative written from the perspective of a parent to bereaved child.
- ***Stitches and Stuffing*** (2017) by Carrie Gallasch: A gentle celebration of beloved grandparents and precious attachment toys.

Reference books for families and educators

- ***Coping with Grief*** (2018) by Mal and Dianne McKissock: A helpful guide for the bereaved and those supporting them.
- ***The Grief of Our Children*** (1998) Dianne McKissock: Practical insights and advice for parents and carers of children of all ages.

Credits

Book

Sophie (1989) Mem Fox & Craig Smith. Drakeford / Watts

Senior Producers

Bryson Hall
Sarah Dabro

Executive Producer

Jan Stradling

Childhood grief advisor

Dr Liz Mann, National Centre for
Childhood Grief.

Series Producer

Sophie Emtage

Music

Title: *Hello Song (What Do You Think My Name Is?)*

Composer: Arthur Baysting / Peter Dasent / Bryson Hall / Sarah Dabro

Publisher: Origin / ABC Music Publishing

Title: *When I Was A Baby?*

Composer: Traditional

Publisher: ABC Music Publishing

Title: *Rags (My Little Puppy)*

Composer: Elizabeth Deutsch

Publisher: Unknown

Title: *It's So Nice To Have A Cuddle*

Composer: Sandy Tobias-Offenheim

Publisher: ABC Music Publishing

Title: *Skidamarink*

Composer: Traditional

Publisher: ABC Music Publishing

Title: *Teddy Bear Teddy Bear*

Composer: Traditional

Publisher: ABC Music Publishing

Title: *My Granny Loves To Laugh*

Composer: Arthur Baysting / Peter Dasent / Justine Clarke

Publisher: Origin / Control

Title: *Stir Up The Pudding*

Composer: Traditional

Publisher: ABC Music Publishing

Title: *The More We Are Together*

Composer: Traditional

Publisher: ABC Music Publishing

If you need more support visit

<https://childhoodgrief.org.au/>

or contact 1300 654 556

Notes for families and educators complied by
Early Childhood Producer Laura Stone in
collaboration with Dr Liz Mann.