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FOUNDATION



BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS

A resource for educators
in collaboration with Grief Encounter UK
and Rainbows Bereavement Support GB.

Bereavement and Loss Resource for Educators

In collaboration with Rainbows Bereavement Support GB
and Grief Encounter UK

This resource is for educators and will introduce you to some of the different ways that cultures observe grief and funeral rites, and introduce you to two very useful resources that will help you learn more about grief.

Telling stories about the unique ways that we each find ways to cope is an important part of learning about grief and personal nature of it.



Emu Runner

In the film *Emu Runner* by Imogen Thomas, Gemma, a ten year old Indigenous Australian girl, finds her own way through grief after the loss of her mother.

As Imogen explains, she ‘finds solace in the company of a wild emu, unwittingly connecting her with her mother’s traditional totem animal. As she spends more and more time with the emu, Gem skips school, attracting the attention of Heidi, a new social worker in town, who is convinced Gem’s family is failing to look after her... The story reaches its dramatic climax with social worker Heidi making the decision to remove Gem from her father’s care.’

Emu Runner is a story about respecting difference. It explores the underlying racial tensions in regional Australia and the importance of traditional customs in contemporary Indigenous culture.



You can find out more about the film on the film website <https://www.emurunnerfilm.com>



Cultural and Religious Differences

“Should you shield the valleys from the windstorms, you would never see the beauty of their canyons.” ~ Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

There is no ‘right way’ to grieve, we all experience death and grief in a different way. Each culture will have their own special observances, activities and sayings too. It’s helpful to understand others differences and cultural expressions of grieving.

- The NHS resource has a useful section on this - [CLICK HERE](#).

- More info about cultural differences in funerals and grief rituals can be found on the Funeral Guide website - [CLICK HERE](#).

Here are some of the unique differences that are found around the world, to give you a flavour of the variety of ways that cultures have developed to cope with grief.

Still from the film Emu Runner



Indigenous Australian people have many varied death rituals and funeral practices, dating back thousands of years. Death rituals aim to ensure the safe passage of the spirit into the afterlife, and to prevent the spirit from returning and causing mischief. Families, friends and members of the larger community will come together to grieve and support each other. Within some Aboriginal groups, there is a strong tradition of not speaking the name of a dead person, or depicting them in images. It is believed that doing so will disturb their spirit.

Some Caribbean and West Indian cultures may celebrate the 'Nine-Nights'. This is held on the ninth night after the passing and often seen as a community event. There are games, music, reminiscing with memories and stories, dancing and traditional foods.



In the Philippines it is not uncommon for a widow or a woman who has lost her children to wear black for the rest of her life.

According to Chinese custom, if a child or infant dies, they are buried in silence without a ceremony.

In Hindu tradition cremation is done as quickly as possible so that the soul can find a new body to inhabit. The Bhagawad Geeta are sung with loved ones for the next 13 days, after which the soul has left the body. The ashes are scattered in the River Ganges, or the nearest river or local body of water. As children are considered innocent, no mourning is required.



According to Islamic law cremation is forbidden, and traditionally only men were allowed to attend the burial. The immediate family will pray and receive guests for the first three days, and the community will provide food for them. A Muslim widow is allowed four months and 10 days of mourning, during which interact with other men.



In Judaism Shiva is the period of mourning in the seven days following a Jewish funeral. No members of the family will work or participate in everyday activities during Shiva. One Jewish funeral custom is for mourners to rip pieces of material from their clothes, and wear these torn garments during Shiva.



The Sikh funeral is known as Antam Sanskaar, meaning "the last rite of passage". The focus of the funeral ceremony is not loss and grief, but celebration that the soul has an opportunity to re-join Waheguru, the Wondrous Giver of Knowledge, the Sikh name for God.



When a Christian dies, it is seen as the end of their life on earth and the start of an 'afterlife'. There are variations in the bereavement practices across denominations.

- Catholics believe a spouse should spend a year and a day in mourning, siblings are to spend three months, other family members should spend thirty days in mourning.
- Protestant Christian funerals often focus on celebrating the life of the deceased, and that a loved one is now in Heaven.
- Orthodox Christians traditionally will not go to work for a week after the funeral.



Buddhists traditionally hold mourning services on the third, seventh, 49th and 100th day after the death of a loved one. Death is widely accepted by all Buddhists as part of a continually repeating cycle of life, called samsara, which incorporates reincarnation.





Rainbows Bereavement Support Great Britain, is a well respected national charity having a proven, positive impact on the lives of children, young people and adults. Their vision is quite simply for every child and young person in every school in Great Britain, grieving a significant and often devastating loss in their lives, to be understood and supported appropriately.

This loss could be through divorce and separation of parents, death of a parent or grandparent, loss of a home. There are a wide range of significant losses in the life of a child or young person, and having support through this will help them to manage their grief in a healthy way.

Rainbows programmes nurture and develop the emotional health and mental well-being of children, young people and adults who have experienced a significant loss through death, relationship breakdown or other adverse circumstance. And

raise awareness of the impact of bereavement and loss on children, young people and adults.

They facilitate high quality education and training in bereavement and loss, and provide practical, realistic and sensitive guidance to ensure all schools have appropriate bereavement policies and procedures in place.

A local Rainbows Trainer will visit your school to discuss your training needs and review current policies and practices. They will explain the Rainbows programmes that they run for different age groups, show you their resources and answer any questions you may have.

There are research documents you can read here on the impact of the Rainbows programme in supporting children and young people in schools. <https://rainbowsgb.org/research-documents/>



grief encounter

supporting bereaved children & young people

One child in every UK classroom will experience the death of someone close by the time they reach 16 years old. Grief Encounter is a charity set up to help with the confusion, fear, loneliness and pain, providing a lifeline to children and young people to cope with free, immediate, one-to-one support.

They offer grief guides on their website. Each have a specific focus, so there are guides for young adults, death from Covid-19, loss of a grandparent, emotional responses to grief, death of a baby, sudden traumatic death, and many more. <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/get-support/support-services/grief-guides/>

They offer training to schools, and other organisations. These cover a range of topics, such as Bereavement

Policy Training, Mindfulness and Bereavement, Working Creatively with Bereaved Children, Using Drama Therapy in Bereavement, and many more, including the Good Grief Training accredited course. They also offer bespoke training and school inset days. <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/training/schools-and-educational-services/>

Grief Encounter work closely with schools nationwide to ensure all students have someone to turn to following bereavement. Through their grieftalk helpline, 1:1 and group support services, they aim to enhance society's care of bereaved children. As well as offering training for schools, they offer advice, guidance and information, and their students can get free bereavement support and counselling.

Other Resources

We hope you found this guide useful. Here are some other resources that you might find useful.

The Coalition to support grieving students <https://grievingstudents.org/>

Our House, grief support toolkit <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Our-House-ESP-COVID-Toolkit.pdf>

Books for children about grief and grieving <https://valerieshouse.org/grief-books>

Using books to support students through grief, loss and healing <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/ny-foundation-grief-and-loss-books.pdf>

Winston Wish Helping school professionals support grieving pupils <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/support-for-schools/>

The Childhood Bereavement Network <https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

