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# Life Changes

Loss, change and bereavement for 3-11 year olds

Everyone will experience aspects of loss and change throughout their life, but there are some loss and change experiences which do not happen to everyone. These may be called 'circumstantial losses' and include situations such as family breakdown, homelessness, the death of a relative or friend, imprisonment and serious illness or injury. Some adverse experiences can have both immediate and long-term consequences, particularly for children. Grief is a human response to loss, and mourning is the way in which grief is expressed.

**Whatever the circumstances, the death of the person is not only a loss, it is a change and a turning point: the world will never be the same again.**

Arguably the most damaging situations are those which are harmful to the child-family relationship, but there are numerous events in children's lives which may have potentially damaging physical, social and emotional consequences. School communities often have to support children who are facing loss. Teachers are naturally concerned to develop good practice.

There is a lack of material that addresses both a **proactive whole school approach** to loss and change in children's lives (teaching about life experience of loss and change) and a **reactive approach** that gives guidance on how best to help children when sad things happen.

## Life Changes aims to:

- Provide adults with an insight into children's developmental understanding of death and how they grieve;
- Support schools in a proactive approach to including the subject of loss and change, in myriad forms, in the curriculum;
- Suggest reactive approaches and strategies for caring for bereaved children and those undergoing loss and change in a variety of circumstances;
- Provide a springboard for discussion, so that school communities can develop their own policy and practice matched to the individual needs of children and their families.

**Please pass on my thanks to fellow Lions for this quality resource and assure them that it will make a significant contribution to my work with schools on managing loss.**

**Carol Tompkins, Associate Adviser, Personal Development and Well Being Team, West Sussex County Council.**

