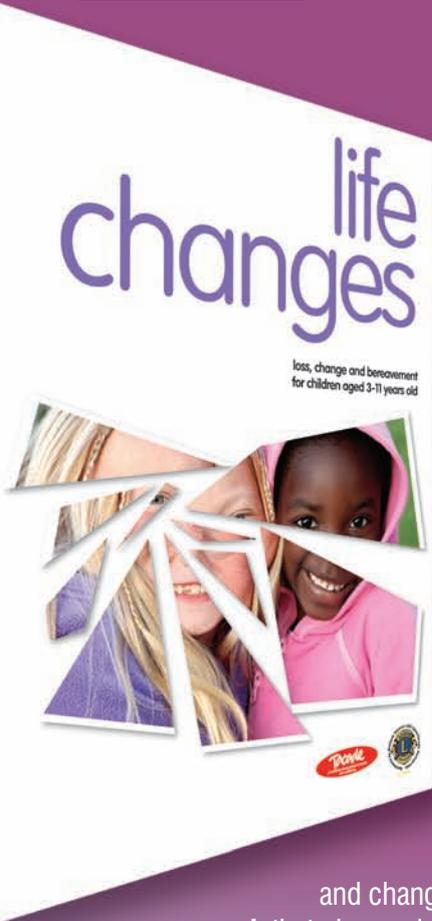


Available NOW - call
0844 963 2427



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.

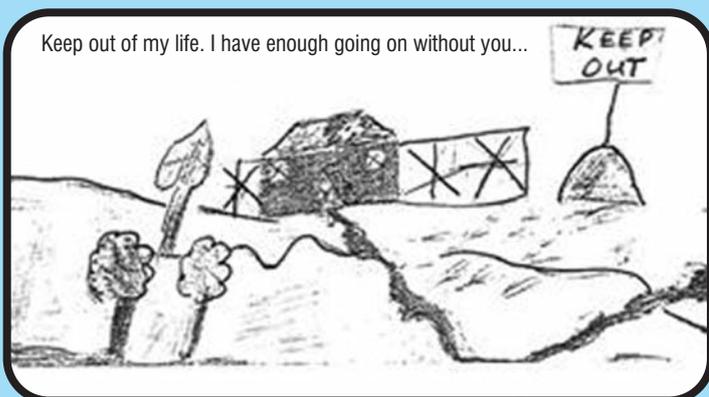
There is a lack of material that addresses both a **proactive whole school approach** to loss and change in children's lives (teaching about life experience of loss and change) and a **reactive approach** that gives guidance on how best to help children when sad things happen.

Life Changes aims to:

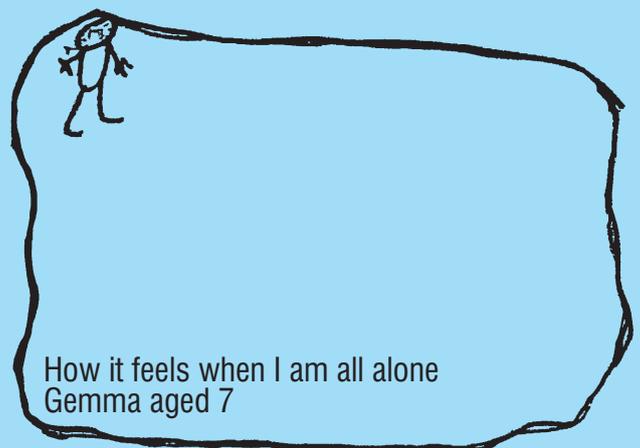
- Provide adults with an insight into children's developmental understanding of death and how they grieve;
- Support schools in a proactive approach to including the subject of loss and change, in myriad forms, in the curriculum;
- Suggest reactive approaches and strategies for caring for bereaved children 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.



Keep out of my life. I have enough going on without you...



How it feels when I am all alone
Gemma aged 7

Life Changes contents

Section 1

The impact of loss, change and bereavement on the lives of children describes children's experiences and understanding of loss and grief, and how schools may support them proactively and reactively. Schools are offered advice and support about how to break bad news to a child and children's questions about death and dying are explored. Rites and rituals surrounding death are described, with references, to help teachers to access information from faith communities so that a family's cultural needs are met.

An example of a school scenario in 'Life Changes': Three year old Ben was brought to the nursery class by his maternal grandma. He was usually a confident outgoing little boy who would happily wave 'bye bye' to the family member who brought him to school. When he arrived at nursery one day he clung to his grandma's coat and buried his face against her legs, sobbing loudly. Grandma explained that his Daddy had been arrested by the police the night before and that he had been taken from the house to the police station. Ben had witnessed what had happened.

Children of Ben's age are acutely aware of the absence of a primary carer and they worry that if that person is missing then other people may also disappear without warning.

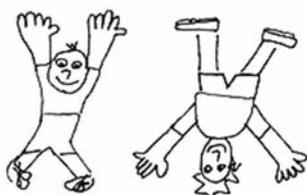
Section 2

Classroom activities, children's sayings, stories and poems, and assemblies provides school staff with a range of 'tried and tested' classroom activities that may be used both proactively and reactively to focus discussion upon loss and change.

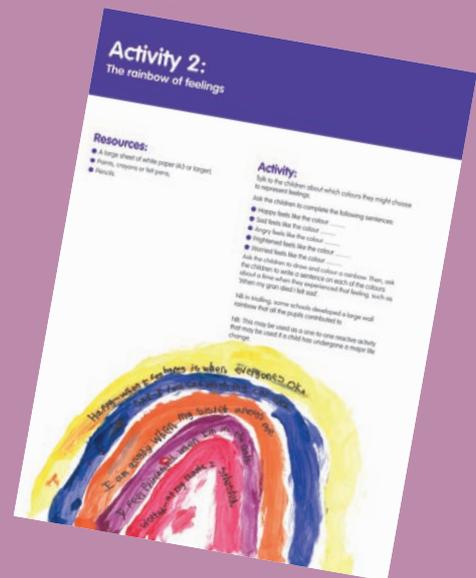
An example of a Child's poem:

Sadness

Sadness is like a waterfall without any water
Sadness is like having a meat pie without any gravy
Sadness is having clothes without a body
Sadness is having a purse with no money
Sadness is a light bulb without any light
Sadness is a toothbrush without any toothpaste
Sadness is a shower without any soap
Sadness is something I could live without.



When it happened it was like
everything was upside down.



As a class we talked about the colours we feel when we experience these emotions. The children then chose a set of colours to represent their feelings. They all painted their Rainbow and they were left to dry overnight. We discussed as a class what sort of feelings we might write on the Rainbow. The children did this the following day with a supply teacher. They produced some lovely thoughts and the Rainbows look fantastic. The supply teacher was very impressed with the results and said it would be a lesson she would like to take around with her to fulfil other emotional needs not only that of bereavement. I will definitely use it again as it produced some thought provoking responses from my Year 2 class.

Jackie Millier, St Paul's C of E Primary School

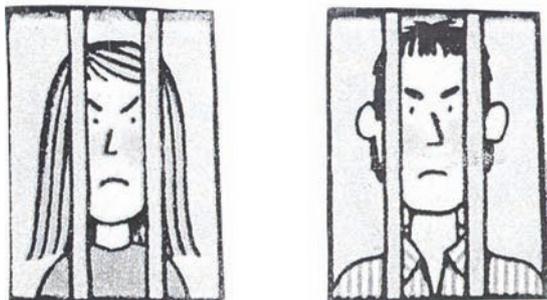
Section 3

Children's responses to adverse life changing events considers how children are likely to be affected by different types of loss, including traumatic events such as parental suicide, a family breakdown, the child of a parent/carer in the armed forces, being a young carer, the child of a prisoner, a refugee child.

Each of the traumatic events illustrated are supported by scenarios and both proactive and reactive ways of supporting children are suggested.

Traumatic events strike unexpectedly, turning everyday experiences upside down and destroying the belief that it could not happen to us. Little is known about children's individual responses to trauma, or why some children are more vulnerable to experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder than others. However, the degree of a child's

exposure to the traumatic event seems to play a critical part in the severity of the effect and it is generally accepted that children's responses to trauma are very similar to those of adults. Not all children will suffer post traumatic stress, but many will experience anxiety, fear and phobias.



My dad killed my mum's boyfriend. Then my dad and mum had a fight. Now they are in a hospital with small windows.

Children of Prisoners - each year, many children are affected by having a parent/carer, or other relative, in prison. Among children's emotional responses to the loss of a parent/carer through imprisonment are isolation, guilt, low self-esteem, confusion and frustration. These feelings may be manifested through: bed wetting, nightmares, temper tantrums, aggressive behaviour, withdrawal and school refusal.

Me mum told me sister and me, our dad were in hospital. But what she didn't know was we could both read the prison notice above the gates when we went to visit. In any case, you don't get nurses in black uniforms with handcuffs and bunches of keys. Our mum's lies made it more harder when we found out. (Girl aged 11)

Children of prisoners section very useful. This is sometimes brought up in class if a parent goes to prison and their peers see it in the newspaper. This happened in my class and we weren't prepared for it!

**Naomi Anstice,
Frodsham Manor House Primary School**

Young Carers - large numbers of children in the UK are involved in some kind of care for members of their families. Often caring is a long-term commitment, with some young carers having to take on caring responsibilities because a second parent has to go out to work. The average age for young carers is about 11 years old.

The variety of situations covered is wonderful and very helpful, in terms of looking at things from a child's perspective.

Sarah Timms, Locking Primary School

My dad had a stroke and so he can't go out to work any more. My mum has got an early morning job and she leaves the house at 4.30 am every morning. It is my job to get my younger brother and little sister out of bed and washed and dressed ready for school. Then I get our breakfast. Next I get some breakfast for my dad and give it to him. Before I go to school I see the other two on the bus and get a bowl of warm water for my dad so he can shave and be ready for my mum to get him out of bed for a shower when she comes home at 9.30 am. I don't mind but I would like a lie-in sometimes and to be able to watch breakfast telly like my friends do.

Did you ~~show~~ ^{think}
Why
?

Gail, aged 7

Children of parents/carers in the armed forces - most children of primary school age will be aware of the concept of war, and an increasing number of families will have a member who is in military service. The number of in-service deaths is the highest that it has been for the last ten years. Many responses children have are likely to mirror the experiences of children who have experienced a traumatic event:

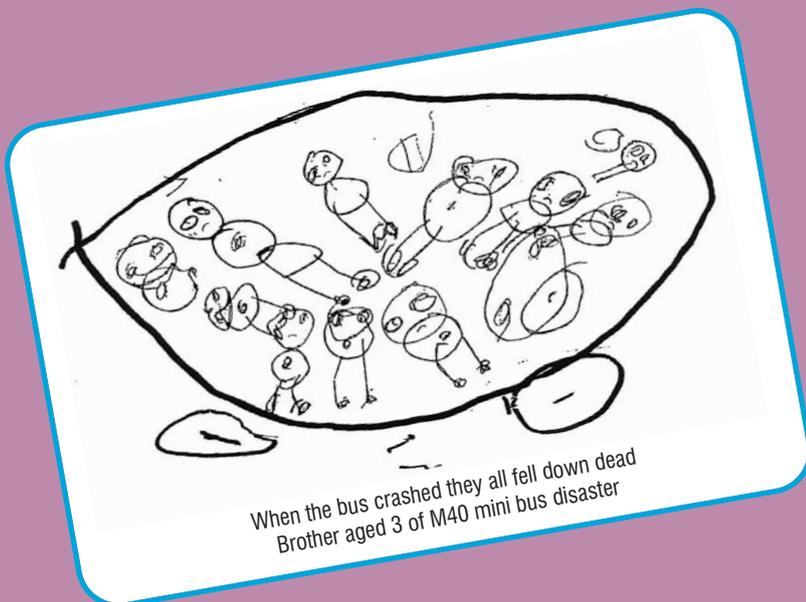
My dad is in the army and he is in Afghanistan for the second time. I have a map on my bedroom wall that he drew for me to show me where he is but I think I need to know what is happening to him out there. My mum has stopped talking about him and I think it is because she is worried about how my sister and me feel. When the news comes on the TV she turns it off but that doesn't stop me thinking about what is going on. My friend's dad was badly injured and he had to be flown home. He is in hospital and he lost his legs. I can't wait for my dad to come back so that he is safe. We all miss my dad. (Boy aged 10)

In some schools there may be a large number of pupils on role who come from service families. Support networks are likely to exist between families but, where a child finds that their family life differs from that of their peer group, they may feel isolated and vulnerable. In an uncertain time, when a parent is away on active service, school can offer a source of stability and routine for children, enabling them to hold their lives together when other aspects of their lives may be in turmoil.

Section 4

Life changes – a school response provides advice and potential strategies for schools to manage a critical incident and respond to sad events. It contains two workshops intended to allow schools both to raise staff awareness and to develop a whole school approach to life changes through the curriculum.

Managing a critical incident in school - in recent years there have been several disasters and tragedies which have affected schools and pupils directly. There is also a growing awareness of loss and change in children's lives. Events like these have an impact on children, although the emotional effects are not always immediately apparent.



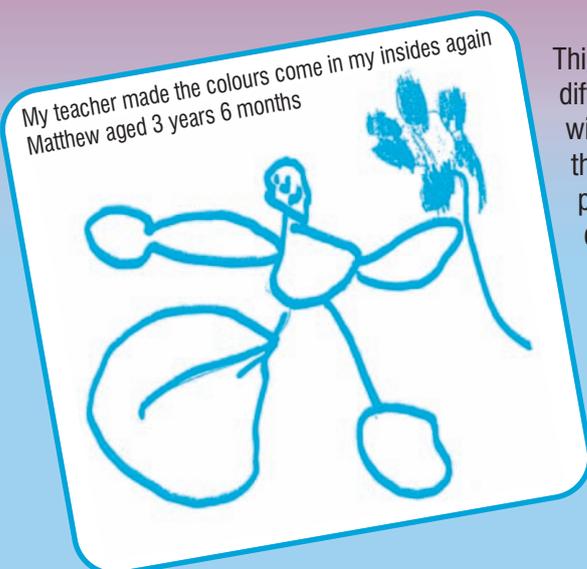
Case Study - Westbury Leigh C of E Primary School

Sam was in one of the Reception Classes. He was very severely disabled and his wheelchair was his life support. He had nurses and special teacher assistants to support him in class and as a school we felt privileged to have known him. Having children like Sam in school gives the other pupils an awareness of disability and feeling of empathy.

When Sam died it was a shock because he didn't die directly from his condition. The double tragedy of his parent's suicide was devastating for the whole school community and had to be dealt with on two levels.

As a school we decided to focus on Sam's death as a priority and an announcement was made in school assembly with a brief talk about Sam and his life in school. Staff were prepared to go back in the classroom and discuss any issues that needed airing by pupils.

Afterwards several parents wrote in to thank the school for the way in which the situation was handled. One example is: "I just wanted to write and say a big thank you for the sensitive way in which you and the staff handled the death of little Sam. Pheobe was terribly upset ... however, the way in which the children were told and the obvious support and care that was offered has helped her a lot". (Parent)



This pamphlet has been put together upon request to illustrate some of the different examples which have been included within 'Life Changes'. Children will encounter loss and change in their everyday experience. Each year thousands of children face bereavement through the death of a grandparent, parent/carer, sibling or friend. When someone dies, adults are often so engrossed in their own grief that children's grief may remain unnoticed. However, the way in which children are helped when sad things happen may have a profound effect on how they are able to adapt to loss and change throughout their lives. This resource examines the different types of loss and grief experienced by 3 to 11 year olds and will support schools in a proactive (teaching about life experience of loss and change) approach, as well as suggesting reactive approaches and strategies (giving guidance on how best to help children when sad things happen).

For further information on

'Life Changes – loss, change and bereavement for children aged 3-11 years old'
please contact:

Mandy Broadbent, Marketing and Administration Manager,
Lions MD 105 Lifeskills Ltd, 257 Alcester Road South, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 6DT
Tel: 0844 963 2427 Email: info@lionslifeskills.co.uk Website: www.lionslifeskills.co.uk