



Helping Children Deal with Grief & Life-Threatening Illness

A list of resources compiled by the Children's Library of the Akron-Summit County Public Library

Picture Books for the Grieving Younger Child

Sometimes, stepping into another's shoes via a storybook will help and comfort a young child. This list contains suggested titles for parents and other adults to share with the grieving child. All titles are in the picture book (JE) section of the library.

Papa's Gift

Kathleen Long Bostrom

From the moment of Clara's birth, her special friend is her Papa Clarence. They share rocking in the old rocking chair, telling stories and playing in the snow. After Papa dies, Clara comes to understand that she can see him in her heart.

I Remember Miss Perry

Pat Brisson

When his teacher, Miss Perry, is killed in a car accident, Stevie and his elementary school classmates take turns sharing memories of her, especially her fondest wish for each day.

Grandma's Purple Flowers

Adjoa J. Burrowes

A young girl who delights in visiting her grandma and bringing her purple flowers, is very sad when grandma dies, but with the coming of spring the girl discovers a way to remember her special loved one.

You Hold Me and I'll Hold You

Jo Carson

When a great-aunt dies, a young child finds comfort in being held and in holding, too.

Heaven's All-Star Jazz Band

Don Carter

A young boy imagines his grandfather playing with jazz music greats up in heaven.

Turtle Girl

Carole Crowe

As her grandmother taught her, Magdalena continues to protect the sea turtles that nest near her home even after Grandma's death.

The Giant

Claire Ewart

As the seasons pass on the family farm after her mother's death, a young girl searches for the giant that her mother said would look after her.

Grandpa Never Lies

Ralph J. Fletcher

A poetic description of the special relationship between a grandfather and a young child helps to soothe the pain of Grandpa's death.

A Season for Mangoes

Regine Hanson

Sareen is concerned about participating in her first sit-up, a Jamaican celebration of the life of her recently deceased grandmother, but discovers that sharing her stories of Nana's passion for mangoes helps lift the sadness.

Grandma's Gone to Live in the Stars

Max Haynes

In the moments after grandmother has passed away, her spirit is at peace as she says goodbye to her sleeping family and her home.

Kaddish for Grandpa in Jesus' Name Amen

James Howe

Five-year-old Emily tries to understand her grandfather's death by exploring the Christian and Jewish rituals that her family practices during and after his funeral.

That Summer

Tony Johnston

Two brothers are freed from school to fill their summer days as they choose. As they indulge in fishing, playing baseball, and catching lightning bugs, the boys discover that one of them is dying, and soon each moment becomes precious.

Remembering Grandpa

Uma Krishnaswami

When Grandma comes down with a "bad case of sadness" one year after Grandpa's death, Daysha collects objects that will remind her grandmother of Daysha's grandfather.

What is Heaven Like?

Beverly Lewis

Missing his grandfather who recently died, a young boy asks many people, including his teacher, his dentist, the ice-cream truck driver, and his grandmother, about heaven. Includes a Bible verse about heaven on each page, and contains a note for parents and Christian educators.

Blackberry Stew

Isabell Monk

When her Grandpa Jack dies, Hope remembers the time she went with him to pick blackberries, and she realizes that he will continue to live in her and in her memories.

Lighthouse: A Story of Remembrance

Robert Munsch

After her grandfather's funeral, Sarah wakes her father in the middle of the night so they can go to the lighthouse her grandfather loved and remember other night-time visits there.

Flamingo Dream

Donna Jo Napoli

Grieving over her father's death from cancer, a young girl celebrates their last year together by making a book that includes mementos and a story.

Thank You, Grandpa

Lynn Plourde

A little girl learns to appreciate nature while walking with her grandfather through the years, and remembers his lessons with love and thankfulness after his death.

Where Do People Go When They Die?

Mindy Avia Portnoy

Children ask different adults and themselves about death and receive a wide variety of answers. Includes an afterword and suggestions for parents.

The Purple Balloon

Chris Raschka

Easy-to-read text reveals that dying is hard work, for the old and especially the young, and how good it is that so many people help when a person dies, from medical staff to clergy and friends to family members.

Michael Rosen's Sad Book

Michael Rosen

A man tells about all the emotions that accompany his sadness over the death of his son, and how he tries to cope.

In the Piney Woods

Roni Schotter

Grandpa and his granddaughter spend his last summer visiting and enjoying the pine woods near their house.

Hello Grand Mamoon!

Donna Steinmann

Tula, saddened over the death of her beloved Grandma Nellie, searches the full moon for the face of the woman her grandma used to tell her about, and is delighted and comforted when she finally sees the image her grandmother saw and called Grand Mamoon.

Together Forever

Jeannie St. John Taylor

A young girl, grieving the death of her brother, dreams that he came back to Earth again for one day.

Non-Fiction for Children and for Adults Working With Children

Many of these titles are within reach of an older child's understanding and may be used by the child. They are also designed to be used by adults working with younger children.

Sometimes Bad Things Happen

Ellen Jackson 2002

J155.9 J12s

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death

Laurene Brown 1996

J155.937 B878w

After You Lose Someone You Love: Advice and Insight from the Diaries of Three Kids Who've Been There

Amy Dennison 2005

J155.937 D411a

Part of Me Died, Too: Stories of Creative Survival among Bereaved Children and Teenagers

Virginia Lynn Fry 1995

J155.937F947p

When People Die

Sally Hewitt 2009

J155.937 H611w

Can You Hear Me Smiling?: A Child Grieves a Sister

Aariane Jackson 2004

J155.937 J12c

Let's Talk About Going to a Funeral

Marianne Johnston 1996

J155.937 J73L

Dealing With the Loss of a Loved One

Sara Latta 2002

J155.937 L364d

Gentle Willow: A Story for Children about Dying

Joyce Mills 1993

J155.939 M657g

Sad Isn't Bad: A Good Grief-Guidebook for Kids Dealing With Loss

Michaelene Mundy 1998

J155.039 M965s

Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children

Doris Stickney 1997

J155.937 St854w

Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children

Bryan Mellonie 1983

J306.9 M527L

Non-Fiction for Adults Working With Children
From the Parent-Teacher Collection

Helping Children Grieve

Ruth Arent 2005
PT 155.93 Ar 681h

Caring For Your Grieving Child

Martha Wakenshaw 2002
PT 155.9308 W 149c

**Your Grieving Child: Answers to Questions
on Death and Dying**

Bill Dodds 2001
PT 155.937 D642y

**Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for
Teachers**

The Dougy Center 2003
PT 155.937 H483g

**Helping Children Cope with the Loss of a
Loved One: A Guide for Grownups**

William Kroen 1996
PT 155.937 K93h

**25 Things to Do When Grandpa Passes
Away, Mom and Dad Get Divorced, Or the
Dog Dies: Activities to Help Children Heal
After a Loss or Change**

Laurie Kanyer 2004
PT 155.937 K16t

**Helping Children Cope with the Death of a
Parent: A Guide for the First Year**

Paddy Lewis 2004
PT 155.937 L675h

**What Children Need When They Grieve: The
Four Essentials: Routine, Love, Honesty, and
Security**

Julia Rathkey 2004
PT 155.937 R234wc

**Never the Same: Coming To Terms with the
Death of a Parent**

Donna Schuurman 2004
PT 155.937 Sch396n 2004

35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child

The Dougy Center 2004
PT 155.937 T447 2004

**Talking With Children and Young People
about Death and Dying**

Mary Turner 2007
PT 155.937 T949t

**What about the Kids? Understanding Their
Needs in Funeral Planning and Services**

The Dougy Center 1999
PT 155.937 W555a

Books for Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy uses selected reading materials to assist a person in solving personal problems or for other therapeutic purposes. While not formal psychotherapy, the books listed here can provide an outlet for emotions encountered in the face of dealing with a life-threatening illness, whether that illness is that of oneself, a friend, a classmate or a family member. This list includes titles for many situations in all age levels.

Altman, Linda **Singing with Momma Lou** JE Ages 6-9

Nine-year-old Tamika uses photographs, school yearbooks, movie ticket stubs, and other mementos to try and restore the memory of her grandmother, who has **Alzheimer's** disease.

Banks, Kate **Lenny's Space** JFIC Ages 8-12

Nine-year-old Lenny gets in trouble and has no friends because he cannot control himself in school and his interests are not like those of his classmates, until he starts visiting Muriel, a counselor, and meets Van, a boy his age who has **leukemia**.

Cheng, Andrea **Brushing Mom's Hair** JFIC Ages 10-12

A fourteen-year-old girl, whose mother's **breast cancer** diagnosis and treatment have affected every aspect of their lives, finds release in ballet and art classes. The story is written in a series of poems.

Christopher, Matt **Shoot for the Hoop** JFIC Ages 8-12

Rusty Young wants to play basketball in the summer league, but his parents object because Rusty has been diagnosed with **diabetes**. That is only one of the obstacles Rusty has to overcome before he can join the team.

Douglas, Mary-Kyle **Clara's Gift from the Heart** JE Ages 6-9

Seven-year-old Clara decides to do something wonderful with her long hair which she finds troublesome to brush.

Hamilton, Virginia **Bluish** JFIC Ages 9-14

The kids at school call her Bluish because **leukemia** is making her pale. But when two other girls reach beyond their fear, the three begin to construct an unbreakable friendship.

Hannigan, Katherine **Ida B--: And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World** JFIC Ages 9-11

In Wisconsin, fourth-grader Ida B. spends happy hours being home-schooled and playing in her family's apple orchard, until her mother begins treatment for **breast cancer** and her parents must sell part of the orchard and send her to public school.

Hobbs, Valerie **Defiance** JFIC Ages 10-17

While vacationing in the country, eleven-year-old Toby, a **cancer** patient, learns some important lessons about living and dying from an elderly poet and her cow.

Hrdlitschka, Shelley **Sun Signs** TEEN FICTION Ages 12+

Taking online correspondence courses while she battles **cancer**, fifteen-year-old Kaleigh Wyse collaborates with several new cyber-friends on an astrology-themed science project and finds that electronic relationships can be deceiving.

Johnston, Tony **That Summer** JE Ages 7-10

Two brothers are freed from school to fill their summer days as they choose. As they indulge in fishing, playing baseball, and catching lightning bugs, the boys discover that one of them is dying, and soon each moment becomes precious.

Kadohata, Cynthia **Kira-Kira** JNBRY/JFIC Ages 10-14

Two Japanese-American sisters share a close relationship growing up in rural Georgia during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the despair when one sister becomes terminally ill.

Knowlton, Laurie **A Young Man's Dance** JE Ages 6-8

Grandma Ronnie's grandson has a hard time adjusting to her needing a wheelchair, living in a nursing home, and not recognizing him when he comes to visit her, but the two find common ground in dancing.

Krisher, Trudy **Kathy's Hats: A Story of Hope** JFIC Ages 6-10

Kathy has always liked hats but finds a fresh use for them when she must undergo chemotherapy treatments for **cancer**.

Louie, Therese **Raymond's Perfect Present** JE Ages 4-10

When Raymond's mother becomes sick, he remembers that she misses the living things of the country and, with the help of their neighbor, he tries to prepare the perfect present for her.

McDaniel, Lurlene **Breathless** TEEN FICTION Ages 12+

A high school diving champion's diagnosis of **bone cancer** affects not only his life, but those of his best friend, his sister, and his girlfriend.

McKinty, Adrian **The Lighthouse Land** TEEN FICTION Ages 12+

Shortly after moving with his mother from Harlem to Ireland, teen **cancer** survivor Jamie O'Neill discovers a portal in a lighthouse that brings him to a distant planet, where he helps a community of aliens fight against invading warriors.

Martin, Ann **On Christmas Eve** JHOLI Ages 9-12

Eight-year-old Tess is convinced that if she believes and stays aware of the magic around her, she will meet Santa Claus on Christmas Eve of 1958, when she will thank him for his gifts and ask him to use his magic to cure her best friend's father of **cancer**.

Morgan, Nicola **Chicken Friend** JFIC Ages 9-12

When her parents decide to move their family to the English countryside, homeschool their children, and raise chickens, Becca tries to make friends with her new neighbors by hiding her **diabetes** and throwing a twelfth birthday party for herself.

Negron, Ray **The Boy of Steel: A Baseball Dream Come True** JE Ages 4-9

A young boy stricken with **cancer** has his dream come true when he gets to be a Yankee batboy for a day.

Nicholls, Sally **Ways to Live Forever** JFIC Ages 9-11

Eleven-Year-Old Sam McQueen, who has **leukemia**, writes a book during the last three months of his life, in which he tells about what he would like to accomplish, how he feels, and things that have happened to him.

Pearce, Emily **Isabel and the Miracle Baby** JFIC Ages 8-12

Eight-year-old Isabel feels her mother no longer cares about her because she has no time or energy even to listen with Isa tries to share her sadness about being unpopular, her jealousy over her new baby sister, and, most importantly, her fear that her mother's **cancer** will come back.

Oelschlager, Vanita **My Grampy Can't Walk** JE Ages 4-9

A group of children enjoy having fun with their grandfather despite the fact that he is in a wheelchair and cannot walk.

Polacco, Patricia **The Lemonade Club** JFIC Ages 6-9

After learning that they both have **cancer**, Marilyn and her teacher, Miss Wichelman, support and encourage each other through their treatments.

Preller, James **Six Innings: A Game in the Life** TEEN FICTION Ages 10-14

Earl Grubb's Pool Supplies plays Northeast Gas & Electric in the Little League championship game, while Sam, who has **cancer** and is in a wheelchair, has to call the play-by-play instead of participating in the game.

Richter, Jutta **Summer of the Pike** JFIC Ages 11-14

Three children who live on the grounds of a German castle spend the summer trying to catch a pike trapped in the moat, while the mother of two of the children is slowly dying of **cancer**.

Ries, Lori **Punk Wig** JE Ages 7-9

Tells a story of how a young boy helps to care for his mom who is going through **chemotherapy**, and accompanies her to the salon to purchase a wig.

Scott, Liz **Alex and the Amazing Lemonade Stand** JE Ages 3-10

Shares the true story of Alex Scott, a little girl who developed **childhood cancer**, and though sick herself, decided to set up a lemonade stand to earn money for her hospital to search for a cure for other children—sparking a nationwide movement.

Tinkham, Kelly **Hair for Mama** JE Ages 4-7

When Marcus's mother has chemotherapy for her **cancer** and loses her hair, he tries to find new hair for her to make her well again.

Tusa, Tricia **Bunnies in My Head** JE Ages 5-7

A charming little girl joyfully explores the world—both real and imaginary—through her drawings. Artwork by some of the young patients from M.D. Anderson **Cancer** Center in Houston, Texas is featured.

Urdahl, Catherine **Emma's Question** JE Ages 5-8

When Emma's grandmother, who takes care of her after school and takes her out for bagels on Wednesdays, gets sick and has to go the hospital, Emma is afraid that she will die—but she is also afraid to talk about her fear.

Vigna, Judith **When Eric's Mom Fought Cancer** JE Ages 6-9

A ski trip with his father helps a young boy who feels angry and afraid when his mother gets sick with **breast cancer**.

Winthrop, Elizabeth **Promises** JFIC Ages 6-8

A young girl experiences a range of emotions when her mother undergoes treatment for **cancer**.