

Additional Resources for Supporting Young Child Survivors of Parent Suicide

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Parents and caregivers should carefully review and select resources to meet children's specific circumstances and associated needs. Prior to sharing books with children, adults should read the story and consider the appropriateness of the book to address specific needs. When reviewing books, adults should pay attention to the book's illustrations and how children might react to the illustrations. After reading the story, adults should encourage children to talk about the story and how the story may or may not be similar to their experience.

Books for Children

Brown, L. K., & Brown, M. (1996). *When dinosaurs die: A guide to understanding death*. Little Brown and Company. (Ages 3–6).

This picture book talks about the variety of ways dinosaurs die, including suicide as one cause of death. The book also portrays a variety of ways people pay respect the deceased individuals and includes several religious beliefs and practices, such as burial, cremation, and funeral. After reading the book, parents may wish to talk about their own family's spiritual and religious beliefs (e.g., life after death, reuniting with loved ones, and the eternal nature of the human spirit).

The Dougy Center. (2001). *After a suicide death: A workbook for grieving kids*. Dougy Center. (Ages 8–10).

This 50-page workbook includes interactive activities for children who have experienced the suicide of a loved one, including a parent's suicide. The book includes blank spaces for children to write and draw. The book's illustrations feature samples of children's drawings and their statements about suicide-related grief. It also shares children's advice on how they managed the grief process. Some of the children's comments are very direct.

Kaplow, J., Pincus, D. (2007). *Samantha Jane's missing smile: A story about coping with the loss of a parent*. Magination Press. (Ages 4–8).

After the death of her father (cause of death is not indicated), Samantha Jane has difficulty thinking about her father and expressing her grief. Her neighbor helps Samantha Jane talk about her feelings, write a letter to her deceased father, and share the letter with her mother. The story ends with the return of Samantha Jane's smile. The book helps normalize strong feelings associated with grief and facilitate conversation about

death. Additionally, in a section titled *Note to Parents*, this book includes information to assist parents in supporting their young children.

Karst, P. (2018). *The invisible string*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. (Ages 3–7).

The story includes twins, a young girl and boy, and their mother. The mother reassures her children that no matter what happens or where they may be, there are unbreakable connections that link them with their loved ones, living and dead. This book helps children understand the parent's unwavering bond of love and connection and the strength and reality of loved ones' connection across time and place. This book is a favorite of mental health experts, parents, and children.

Rowland, J. (2017). *The memory box: A book about grief*. Sparkhouse Family. (Ages 5–10).

Although not specifically about a parent's suicide, the child in the story is anxious that they might forget their deceased loved one. They create a memory box to collect memories of a deceased loved one. The book concludes with a parent guide that offers recommendations about how to remember and memorialize deceased loved ones.

Smid, E. (2015). *Luna's red hat: An illustrated storybook to help children cope with loss and suicide*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. (Ages 6–9).

The story is about how a young girl responds to and copes with challenging feelings following her mother's suicide. The story is told from the little girl's point of view and addresses a variety of strong emotions, including anger. The father in the story is patient and gentle in response to his young daughter's strong reactions. The book concludes with a *Guide for Parents*.

Parent Resources

Montgomery, S. S., & Coale, S. M. (2015). *Supporting children after a suicide loss: A guide for parents and caregivers*. Chesapeake Life Center.

This booklet is written to guide parents and caregivers in talking honestly about suicide with children and youth. This is not solely about a parent suicide but is helpful in guiding conversation and providing examples of suicide-specific conversation.

Requarth, M. (2006). *After a parent's suicide: Helping children heal*. Healing Hearts Press.

This book is specifically for parents who are supporting children following a parent's suicide. The information in this book is informed by research and personal experience. As a very young child, the author experienced her mother's suicide. She explains the need to consider children's age and level of maturation

when talking about suicide. She also gives examples of developmentally appropriate conversations and how to keep lines of communication open. Content includes the importance of being sensitive to changes and critical issues that are especially challenging for child survivors.

Stubbs, D. (2008). *Beyond the rough rock: Supporting a child who has been bereaved by suicide*. Winston's Wish.

This booklet shares advice for families to support them immediately after the suicide of a loved one and in the following weeks and months. It provides recommendations for talking with children about death by suicide and includes child-friendly activities geared to helping families make sense of what happened. The booklet includes strategies to cope with grief.

Crisis Hotline and Internet Resources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Support Group.

afsp.org/find-a-support-group

To help connect families with support, this Internet site provides locations and contact information of suicide prevention groups across the USA.

US Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

988lifeline.org

The US Suicide and Crisis Lifeline offers a national 3-digit hotline phone number, 988. The crisis lifeline is available 24/7. Services are available in English and Spanish and interpretation services are available in over 250 languages. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and TTY users, have the option of dialing 711, then 1-800-273-8255. Services on the lifeline are for those who are having thoughts of suicide, a mental health crisis, substance use concerns, and other types of emotional distress. Additionally, the lifeline is available to those who are worried about loved ones in need of crisis support.

Children, teens, and suicide loss.

<https://aws-fetch.s3.amazonaws.com/flipbooks/childrenteenssuicideloss/index.html?page=1>

This free electronic booklet is provided by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and the Dougy Center. This resource includes practical and easy-to-understand information about age-appropriate intervention, broken into two age groupings: young survivors and teen survivors.

Supporting children & teens after a death from suicide. (2022).

dougy.org/assets/uploads/Supporting-Children-Teens-After-a-Suicide.pdf

This concise and informative 4-page handout for parents and caregivers is available on the website of the Dougy Center, The National Center for Grieving Children & Families. The handout provides specific tips for talking with young children and teens about a death by suicide and also includes ways to support children as they grieve.

Talking to kids about suicide. (YouTube video).

youtube.com/watch?v=iwh8fdpHfac&t=98s

This video is sponsored by the Child Mind Institute and features Nancy Rappaport, a child psychiatrist who specializes in suicide prevention. Dr. Rappaport speaks from experience. Her mother completed suicide at the age of 34 when Rappaport was four years old. She discusses the importance of talking about suicide with children after someone close to them has completed suicide. She emphasizes the need to assure children that it was not their fault.