

# HOSPICARE AND PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

of Tompkins County, Inc.

## SELECTED LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN: ANNOTATED DESCRIPTIONS

### Picture and Coloring Books for Preschoolers and Beginning Readers

Bartoli, J. (1975). *Nonna*. New York: Harvey House. A boy and his younger sister, with good memories of their grandmother, are permitted to participate in her funeral, burial, and the division of her property among family members so that each receives some memento of her life.

Blackburn, L.B. (1987). *Timothy Duck: The Story of the Death of a Friend*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation (P.O. Box 4600, Omaha, NE 68104-0600). Timothy Duck tries to understand his own reactions to the death of a friend and the ways in which the adults around her are overlooking the needs of his friend's sister. Sharing his questions and concerns with his mother and with his best friend is helpful.

Boulden, J. (1989). *Saying Goodbye*. Weaverville, CA: Boulden Publishing (P.O. Box 1186, Weaverville, CA 96093-1186). This activity book tells a story about death as a natural part of life, the feelings that are involved in saying goodbye, and the conviction that love is forever, while allowing the child-reader to draw pictures, color images, or insert thoughts on its pages.

Brown, L.K., & Brown, M. (1996). *When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death*. Boston: Little, Brown. A cartoon format introduces young children to issues of death and loss.

Brown, M.W. (1958). *The Dead Bird*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. Some children find a wild bird that is dead, touch its body, bury it in a simple ceremony, and return to the site each day to mourn ("until they forgot"). The moral is that sadness need not last forever; life can go on again. An early classic.

Bunting, E. (1999). *Rudi's Pond*. New York: Clarion Books. After Rudi dies, his classmates write poems and make a memorial pond that attracts a beautiful hummingbird.

Buscaglia, L. (1982). *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages*. Thorofare, NJ: Slack. Photographs of leaves on a tree in the park are accompanied by text in which one leaf (Freddie) asks another (Daniel) to explain their anticipated fall from the tree and the meaning of life. Fear of dying is compared to fear of the unknown and to natural changes in the seasons. Life itself is its own purpose and death is a kind of comfortable sleep.

Calstrom, N.W. (1990). *Blow Me a Kiss, Miss Lilly*. New York: Harper & Row. Sara's best friend is her neighbor across the street, an old lady named Miss Lilly. When Miss Lilly is unexpectedly taken to the hospital and dies, Sara cries, looks for the light in her house, and is lonely. In spring, Sara finds happiness in Miss Lilly's garden and in her conviction that Miss Lilly is blowing her a kiss.

Carney, K.L. (1997-2001). *Barklay and Eve Activity and Coloring Book Series*. Dragonfly Publishing Company, Wethersfield, CT (277 Folly Book Boulevard, Wethersfield, CT 06109; tel, 860-257-7635). This series of soft-cover books (24-44 pages) currently consists of seven titles: Book 1, *Together We'll Get through This!*; Book 2, *Honoring Our Loved Ones: Going to a Funeral*; Book 3, *What is the Meaning of Shiva?*; Book 4, *Our Special Garden: Understanding Cremation*; Book 5, *What IS Cancer, Anyway?*; Book 6, *Everything Changes, but Love Endures: Explaining Hospice to Children*; Book 7, *Precious Gifts: Katie Coolican's Story*. An additional book on pet loss is in preparation. Each book uses a large 8 ½" x 11" format to tell a story and to offer drawings to color or blank spaces in which to draw a picture about a loss-related topic that adults often find difficult to discuss with children. In each book, two curious Portuguese water dogs learn lessons like: loss and sadness do happen; those events are not their fault; it is OK to have strong feelings as long as they are expressed in constructive ways; and "we can get through anything with the love and support of family and friends" (Book 1, p. 5). All of the books (\$6.95 each, plus tax, shipping, and handling) and custom-made 10" replicas of Barklay and Eve in soft toy format (\$16.95 each, plus tax, shipping, and handling) are available from the Web site [www.barklayandeve.com](http://www.barklayandeve.com). An outstanding series.

Carson, J. (1992). *You Hold Me and I'll Hold You*. New York: Orchard Books. When her Daddy's Aunt Ann dies, a little girl thinks about her parents' divorce and other losses she has experienced. During the memorial ceremony the girl watches all the people and everything that happens. She wonders how sorry she will have to get. Being held and holding others is comforting.

Clardy, A.F. (1984). *Dusty Was My Friend: Coming to Terms with Loss*. New York: Human Sciences. Benjamin is 8 years old when his friend Dusty is killed in an automobile accident. As Benjamin struggles to understand his reactions to this tragic event, his parents give him permission to express his thoughts and feelings, mourn his loss, remember the good times he shared with Dusty, and go on with his own life.

Cohn, J. (1987). *I had a Friend Named Peter: Talking to Children about the Death of a Friend*. New York: Morrow. The children's section of this book describes Beth's reactions when a car kills her friend, Peter, along with the helpful ways her parents and teacher respond to Beth, her classmates, and Peter's parents. An adult section tries to prepare adults to assist children in coping with death.

Connolly, M. (1997). *It Isn't Easy*. New York: Oxford University Press. When his 9-year old brother is killed in a car accident, a little boy is sad, lonely, and angry. As he ponders many good memories of his brother, he gradually gets used to being an only child—but it isn't easy.

Curtis, C.M. (1994). *All I See Is Part of Me*. Bellevue, WA: Illumination Arts Publishing Co. (P.O. Box 1865, Bellevue, WA 98009; 888-210-8216; [www.illumination.com](http://www.illumination.com)). Through big pictures and brief text, Sister Star helps a little boy to realize that all of creation is a part of him and he is a part of creation.

Czech, J. (200). *The Garden Angel: A Young Child Discovers a Grandparent's Love Grows Even After Death*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation (P.O. Box 4600, Omaha, NE 68104-0600). After her grandpa dies, 8-year-old Camilla remembers all his gardening activities. This

year she plants the new garden herself, dresses a scarecrow with his old clothes, and spreads his old quilt behind it like wings.

Dean, A. (1991). *Meggie's Magic*. New York: Viking Penguin. After 8-year-old Meggie's illness and death, her mother, father, and sister feel sad and lonely. But one day when Meggie's sister goes to their special place, she finds it still filled with the magical qualities of the games they used to play and she realizes that Meggie's magic still remains inside each of them.

De Paola, T. (1973). *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs*. New York: Putnam's. One day, Tommy is told that his beloved great-grandmother ("Nana Upstairs") is dead, but he does not believe this until he sees her empty bed. A few nights later, Tommy sees a falling star and his mother explains that it represents a kiss from Nana who is now "upstairs" in a new way. Later, an older Tommy repeats the experience and interpretation after the death of "Nana Downstairs" (his grandmother). A charming story about relationships, whose interpretations should be addressed with caution.

Dodge, N.C. (1984). *Thumpy's Story: A Story of Love and Grief Shared by Thumpy, the Bunny*. Springfield, IL: Prairie Lark Press (P.O. Box 699, Springfield, IL 62705). In picture book, coloring book, and workbook formats (in both English and Spanish), a rabbit tells a simple story about the death of his sister, Bun, and its effects on their family.

Doleski, T. (1983). *The Hurt*. Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press. Justin is hurt by an angry insult from his friend, but he doesn't share his feelings with anyone. He takes The Hurt into his room, like a big, round, cold, hard stone, but it just gets bigger and bigger and bigger. It is ruining everything until he finally tells Daddy. As he gradually lets it go, The Hurt gets smaller and smaller until at least it goes away.

Fassler, D., & McQueen, K. (1990). *What's a Virus, Anyway? The Kids' Book about AIDS*. Burlington, VT: Waterfront Books. Just a few words or pictures on each page leaves room for coloring, drawing, and shared discussion so that parents and teachers can begin to talk about AIDS with young children.

Fassler, J. (1972). *My Grandpa Died Today*. New York: Human Sciences. Although David's grandfather has tried to prepare the boy for his impending death, when it actually happens David still needs to mourn his loss. But he does find comfort in a legacy of many good memories from his relationship with his grandfather and in the knowledge that his grandfather does not want him to be afraid to live and enjoy life.

Fox, M. (1994). *Tough Boris*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. Boris von der Borch is a tough, massive, scruffy, greedy, fearless, and scary pirate—just like all pirates. But when his parrot dies, Boris cries and cries—just like all pirates, and just like everyone else. A simple story with simple pictures designed to give children permission to experience and express their grief.

Gaines-Lane, G., (1995). *My Memory Book*. Gaithersburg, MD: Chi Rho Press. A good example of a workbook providing suggestions, guidelines, and space for children to draw or write out their memories of someone who has died.

Hanson, W. (1997). *The Next Place*. Minneapolis, Waldman House Press (525 North Third Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401). In a serene and comforting way, this book uses text and art to suggest how different we will find the next place we will go by contrast with the place we now inhabit.

Harris, A. (1965). *Why Did He Die?* Minneapolis: Lerner. The death of a friend's grandfather leads a mother to explain to her young son that death is something that happens when someone's body, like an engine in a car, no longer works. They discuss aging, the life cycle, memories, and quality of life.

Hazen, B.W. (1985). *Why Did Grandpa Die? A Book About Death.* New York: Golden. When Molly's much-loved Grandpa dies suddenly, Molly cannot accept that harsh fact. She feels frightened, awful, and misses Grandpa very much, but cannot cry. Only after a long time is Molly finally able to acknowledge that Grandpa will not come back, to cry, and to realize that Grandpa still is available to her through pictures, in her memories, and in stories shared with her family.

Heegaard, M.E. (1988). *When Someone Very Special Dies.* Minneapolis, MN: Woodland Press (99 Woodland Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55424; 612-926-2665). A story line about loss and death encourages children to share their thoughts and feelings through coloring and drawing.

Hesse, K. (1993). *Poppy's Chair.* New York: Scholastic. Leah visits her grandparents every summer, but this time things are different. Poppy has died. Leah remembers things she did with Poppy, but is still afraid to look at his pictures. One evening, Leah finds Gram half asleep in Poppy's chair. They sit together, share their grief and their plans for the future, and help each other feel a little better.

Hodge, J. (1999). *Finding Grandpa Everywhere: A Young Child Discovers Memories of a Grandparent.* Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation (P.O. Box 4600, Omaha, NE 68104-0600). A little boy realizes that Grandpa is dead, not "lost" as the adults keep saying. But he consoles himself and his Grandma with this thought: Grandpa always said "to do something for someone you have to put a little of yourself into it." So memories of Grandpa and his love live on everywhere the boy looks.

Johnson, J., & Johnson, M. (1982). *Where's Jess?* Omaha, NE 68104-0600). A good book to use in helping young children cope with infant sibling death by exploring topics like what "death" means, remembering the dead child, and the value of tears.

Jordan, M.K. (1989). *Losing Uncle Tim.* Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Co., When Uncle Tim becomes infected with HIV, develops AIDS, and dies, his nephew looks for solace through an idea they had once discussed: "Maybe Uncle Tim is like the sun, just shining somewhere else."

Kantrowitz, M.K. (1973). *When Violet Died.* New York: Parents' Magazine Press. After the death of their pet bird, Amy, Eva, and their friends have a funeral with poems, songs, punch, and even humor. It is sad to think that nothing lasts forever, but then Eva recognizes that life can go on in another way through an ever-changing chain of life involving the family cat, Blanch, and her kittens.

Ladwig, T. (Illustrator.) (1997). *Psalm Twenty-Three.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. The familiar text of this psalm, comparing God to a loving shepherd is here accompanied by forceful and moving illustrations depicting the world of love and fear faced by an urban, African-American family.

Lanton, S. (1991). *Daddy's Chair*. Rockville, MD: Kar-Ben Copies, Inc. (800-4-KARBEN). After his father's death, Michael does not want anyone to sit in Daddy's chair so it will be ready for him when he comes back. Mommy explains what it means to be sick and die, as well as the Jewish customs involved in sitting shiva. Sharing memories of Daddy gradually enable Michael to allow the chair to be used again.

London, J. (1994) *Liplap's Wish*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. As a rabbit named Liplap builds the winter's first snow bunny, he remembers his grandma and misses her. He finds comfort in an old Rabbit's tale that his grandmother used to tell about how, long ago, when the First Rabbits died, they became stars in the sky who even now come out at night and watch over us, and shine forever in our hearts.

Mellonie, B., & Ingpen, R. (1983). *Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children*. New York: Bantam. Through many examples, this book affirms that "there is a beginning and an ending for everything that is alive. In between is living. ....So., no matter how long they are, or how short, lifetimes are really all the same. They have beginnings, and endings, and there is living in between."

Numeroff, L., & Harpham, W. (1999). *Kid's Talk: Kids Speak Out about Breast Cancer*. Dallas, TX: Susan B. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation (800-462-9273). This book uses animal drawings to depict common situations experienced by children whose mothers are diagnosed with breast cancer. Death is not directly addressed, but the book conveys children's confusion when confronted by difficult situations and offers guidelines to open communication and help parents talk to children on their level.

O'Toole, D. (1988). *Aarvy Aardvark Finds Hope*. Burnsville, NC: Compassion Books (477 Hannah Branch Road, Burnsville, NC 28714). Designed to be read aloud, this is a story about how Aarvy Aardvark comes to terms with the loss of his mother and brother. Many animals offer unhelpful advice to Aarvy; only one friend, Ralph Rabbit, who really listens to Aarvy as the two of them share their losses, is truly helpful.

Prestine, J.S. (1993). *Someone Special Died*. Torrance, CA: Fearon Teacher Aids/Frank Schaeffer Publications (23740 Hawthorne Blvd., Torrance, CA 90505-9527). This book describes a young girl's reactions to the death of someone special. She discusses death with her mother, explains how she feels, and plans a scrapbook to remember good times shared with the person who died.

Rylant, C. (1995/1997). *Dog Heaven and Cat Heaven*. New York: Blue Sky Press. Vivid acrylic illustrations and charming story lines in these two books describe the delights that dogs and cats might hope to find in their own special heavens.

Schlitt, R.S. (1992). *Robert Nathaniel's Tree*. Maryville, TN: Lightbearers Publishers (P.O. Box 5895, Maryville, TN 37802-5895). A child tells about the things he likes, including getting ready for a new baby. But the baby dies, and then there is much that he does not like. Later, he likes caring for Robert Nathaniel's memorial tree and being his big brother—"even if he didn't come home."

Shriver, M. (1999). *What's Heaven?* New York: Golden Books. This book reflects the author's discussions with her 5- and 6-year old daughters when their great grandmother, Rose

Fitzgerald Kennedy, died. It suggests that heaven is a place without hurts where your soul goes when you die.

Simon, J. (2001). *This Book Is for All Kids, but Especially My Sister Libby. Libby Died.* Austin, TX: Idea University Press. Five-year-old Jack struggled to understand the death of his young sister. This book reproduces his questions and comments, along with dramatic, colorful illustrations.

Stickney, D. (1985). *Water Bugs and Dragonflies.* New York: Pilgrim Press. This little book focuses on transformations in life as a metaphor for transformations between life and death. One key point is that the water bug that is transformed into a dragonfly is no longer able to return to the underwater colony to explain what has happened. Each individual must wait for his or her own transformation in order to appreciate what it entails.

Stull, E.G. (1964). *My Turtle Died Today.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. When a pet turtle dies, a boy and his friends bury it and talk about what all of this means. They conclude that life can go on in another way through the newborn kittens of their cat, Patty. Much of this is sound, but the book also poses two questions that need to be addressed with care: Can you get a new pet in the way that one child has a new mother? And Do you have to live—a long time—before you die?

Varley, S. (1992). *Badger's Parting Gifts.* New York: Mulberry Books. Although Badger is old and knows he must die, he is not afraid. He worries about his friends, who are sad when he dies but who find consolation in the special memories he left with each of them and in sharing those memories with others.

Viorst, J. (1971). *The Tenth Good Thing about Barney.* New York: Atheneum. When a pet cat dies, a boy tries to think of ten good things to say at the funeral. At first, he can only think of nine: Barney was brave and smart and funny and clean; he was cuddly and handsome and he only once ate a bird; it was sweet to hear him purr in my ear; and sometimes he slept on my belly and kept it warm. Out in the garden, he realizes the tenth good thing is that "Barney is in the ground and he's helping grow flowers."

Warburg, S.S. (1969). *Growing Time.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin. When his aging collie, King, dies, Jamie's father gets him a new puppy. At first Jamie is not ready for the new dog, but after he is allowed to express his grief, he finds it possible to accept the new relationship.

Weir, A.B. (1992). *Am I still a Big Sister?* Newtown, PA: Fallen Leaf Press (P.O. Box 942, Newtown, PA 18940). This simple story follows the concerns of a young girl through the illness, hospitalization, death, and funeral of her baby sister, and the subsequent birth of a new brother.

White Deer of Autumn (Horn, G.) (1992). *The Great Change.* Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words Publishing, Inc. (20827 NW Cornell Road, Suite 500, Hillsboro, OR 97124-9808; 800-284-9673). In this story, a Native-American Indian grandmother explains to her 9-year-old granddaughter, Wanba, that death is not the end, but the Great Change—a part of the unbreakable Circle of Life in which our bodies become one with Mother Earth while our souls or spirits endure.

Wilhelm, N. (1985). *I'll Always Love You*. New York: Crown. A boy and his dog grow up together but Elfie grows old and dies while the boy is still young. Afterward family members regret that they did not tell Elfie they loved her. But the boy did so every night and he realizes that his love for her will continue even after her death. He doesn't want a new puppy right away, even though he knows that Elfie will not come back and there may come a time when he will be ready for a new pet.

Wunsch, J.L. (1995). *After the Funeral*. Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press. This book seeks to normalize reactions that people have after a death, like crying and feeling sad or scared. The text says, "everyone handles sadness in their own way." It recommends sharing feelings and affirms a hope in everlasting life.

Yeomans, E. (2000). *Lost and Found: Remembering a Sister*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation (P.O. Box 4600, Omaha, NE 68104-0600). A young girl recounts the confusing experiences that she and her parents have after her sister dies, but she also realizes many ways in which she still feels her sister's love. So Paige isn't "lost" forever; she is right there in their hearts and the girl knows where to find her.

Zolotow, C. (1974). *My Grandson Lew*. New York: Harper. When 6-year old Lewis wonders why his grandfather has not visited lately, his mother says that Lewis had not been told that his grandfather had died because he had never asked. The boy says that he hadn't needed to ask; his grandfather just came. Son and mother share warm memories of someone they both miss: Lewis says, "He gave me eye hugs"; his mother concludes, "Now we will remember him together and neither of us will be so lonely as we would be if we had to remember him alone."