

I acknowledge the use of Grammarly embedded in PowerPoint throughout making my presentation for spelling check.

I acknowledge the use of Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar> throughout making my presentation for research papers and journal articles related to bereavement and childhood development.

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT [ChatGPT](#) to specific papers.

I used the prompt(s):

1., can you find a recent study for family based interventions for bereaved children?

2., can you find empirical studies about play therapy for bereaved children?

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Slide 1

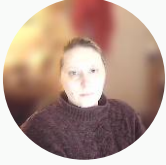


Slide 2



What is bereavement?

- Bereavement is the experience of losing a loved one. If it happens in childhood, it is a significant experience that may have long-term effects on development (Revet et al., 2020).
- Grief is the emotional response to this loss
- Children process it differently



Grief is a universal human experience

Emotional well-being, behaviour, relationships, long-term mental health

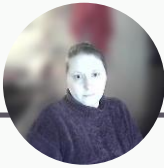
Understanding is important for support

Slide 3

Bereavement impact on childhood development	
	The loss of a parent or caregiver • Emotional • Cognitive • Social • Psychological • Disrupt attachment patterns
	

Sense of insecurity – disrupt attachment patterns – hard to form secure bonds later
Increased anxiety and relational difficulties (Hoppe et al., 2025)

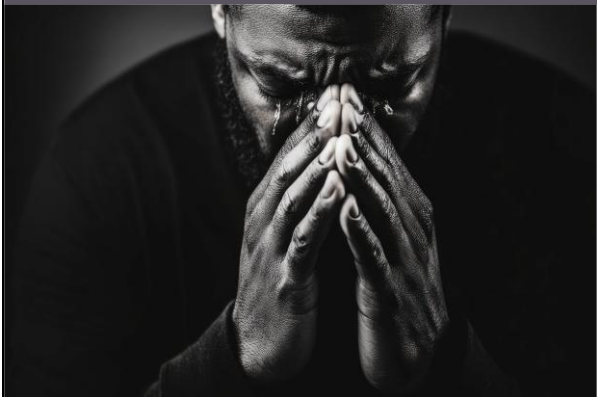
Slide 4

Bereavement impact on childhood development	
	Effects on neurocognitive development • Academic performance • Educational engagement • Bolhuis et al., 2024 IQ scores
	

Academic performance, educational engagement and accomplishments negatively impacted. (Elsner et al., 2022)

Bolhuis et al (2024) children experienced bereavement before age of 10 lower IQ scores – aspects of cognitive processing

Slide 5

Bereavement impact on childhood development	
	Effects on emotional and psychological development • Increased emotional responses • Not simple sadness • Symptoms associated with prolonged grief disorder
	

Boelen and Spuij (2021) prolonged grief symptoms, depressive symptoms, depressive symptoms and post traumatic stress symptoms
Emotional distress reach beyond sadness
Persistent emotional pain, intrusive thoughts, difficulty accepting the loss
The distinction is important – intensity, duration, functional impairment
PGD interfere with concentration, sleep, emotional regulation, social engagement
PTSD- hyperarousal, avoidance, recurrent distressing memories
Joy et al., 2024- children's questions about death – supporting children's understanding

Slide 6

Bereavement impact on childhood development	
 This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY	Mental health effects • Emotional and behavioural symptoms: depression, anxiety • Bjørndal et al. (2025) death of parent or sibling • O'Hara et al. (2024) children 8-16 years old who lost a parent 

the risk of emotional and behavioural symptoms, including depression and anxiety, when compared to non-bereaved children (Denckla et al., 2024)

Bjørndal et al (2025) 1.7 million

Increased risk of common psychiatric disorders, depression, anxiety, substance use and stress related

Stress resilience lower – lower resilience – higher rates of psychiatric disorders

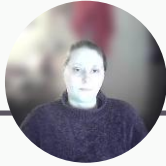
Statistically significant association bereavement – mental health conditions

O'Hara et al 2024 Family Bereaved Program – mental health problems

Changes in stressful events, adaptive coping and positive parenting-children's mental health outcomes

Fear of abandonment – increased internalising symptoms and maladaptive grief several years later, girls

Emotional and cognitive responses to bereavement are important mediators for long term mental health problems

Bereavement impact on childhood development	
	Social and relational development • Alters family dynamics • Alters peer interactions • Scott et al. (2025) disruption in social engagement • Gerhard et al. (2012) Peer relationships 

Family dynamics and peer interactions, potentially leading to social withdrawal or difficulties in forming secure relationships

Articulate needs to understand death and process their experiences socially

Scott et al (2025) – children loss of a parent reported disruptions in social engagement

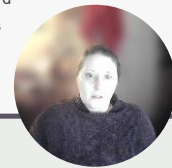
Altered children's roles in family and social context, they felt misunderstood

Gerhard et al. (2012) siblings aged 8–17 years who had experienced the death of a brother or sister, compared with matched classmates, social behaviour, peer acceptance, friendship nominations, and peer perceptions of social qualities. They were perceived sensitive isolated victimized

In elementary grades fewer friendships, lower peer acceptance, isolated behaviour

Observable social withdrawal and relational isolation

Interventions		
Boelen et al. (2021) CBT	Salinas (2021)	Fitzson et al. (2024)
• Prolonged grief disorder • CBT compared with a nondirective supportive counselling • CBT consistently produced significantly greater reductions in PGD symptoms	• Play based intervention in a group setting • Semi-structural interviews and sandtray • The camp environment helped reduce feeling of isolation and normalise grief reactions	• Long-term impact of Family Bereavement Program (FBP) • Up to 15 years • The key is strengthening parent – child relationships



Boelen et al. (2021)

Empirically supported bereavement intervention for children and adolescents with prolonged grief disorder.

Randomised clinical trial with 134 bereaved youth, comparing CBT Grief-Help with nondirective supportive counselling.

Both interventions reduced grief symptoms, but CBT Grief-Help produced significantly greater reductions in prolonged grief at post-treatment and all follow-ups.

CBT Grief-Help also led to greater long-term reductions in comorbid depression, post-traumatic stress, and internalising problems at 6- and 12-month follow-ups.

Provides robust evidence that structured, targeted CBT is particularly effective for children experiencing persistent and clinically significant grief.

Salinas (2021)

Explored the impact of a bereavement camp using a qualitative design.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and sandtray play, allowing for the developmentally appropriate expression of grief.

Findings indicated themes of posttraumatic growth, including improved coping, emotional expression, and meaning-making.

Symbolic play reflected feelings of safety, belonging, and peer support, helping to normalise grief and reduce isolation.

Although not a controlled study, it offers valuable empirical insight into how play-based group interventions support emotional processing in bereaved children who may struggle with verbal expression.

Fitzson et al. (2024)

Examined the long-term effects of a family-based intervention up to 15 years after parental death.

Randomised controlled trial involving 244 bereaved children and adolescents and their caregivers.

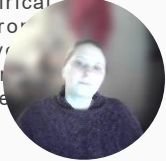
The FBP focused on improving parenting quality, emotional support, and coping skills for both parents and children.

Improved parenting immediately after the intervention predicted greater child support-seeking and perceived parental warmth at 11 months.

These relational improvements were associated with posttraumatic growth in social relationships at 6 years and broader personal growth at 15 years.

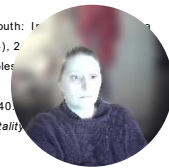
Highlights the importance of strengthening parent–child relationships as a key mechanism for promoting long-term resilience and positive adjustment following bereavement.

Slide 9

		
	Conclusion	
		Bereavement has a profound effect on children, but empirical evidence shows promising results with interventions tailored to children's developmental needs. 

Slide 10

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