

FAMILY BEREAVEMENT IN ADOLESCENCE: WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS, LONG TERM EFFECTS AND INTERVENTIONS AVAILABLE?

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WHAT IS TRAUMA?

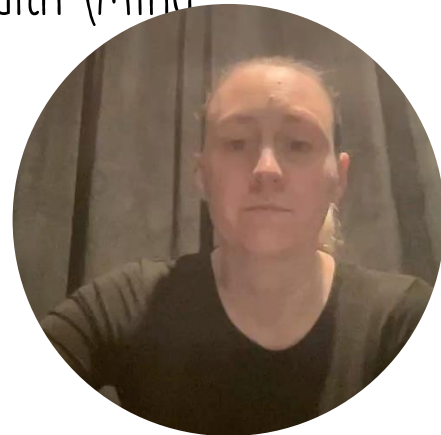
- Trauma is defined as an emotional response to a terrible event what has happened to someone.
- The effects of trauma can be lifelong and can cause lasting adverse effects (Mind 2026)





FAMILY BEREAVEMENT

- Losing someone important to us can be emotionally devastating, especially a loss of a parent as this can have significant effects on the person, including complicated emotions, and it can affect a person's mental health (Mind 2026)



ADOLESCENCE GOING THROUGH PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT

- By the age of 16, 4.7 per cent or around 1 in 20 young people will have experienced the death of one or both of their parent. That's at least one in every classroom (Childhood Bereavement Network, 2026)
- Parental bereavement is considered an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) (NHS, 2026)
- The death of a parent may come suddenly or can be anticipated, either way it is a significant loss to someone.



ADOLESCENCE UNDERSTANDING OF GRIEF



- Abstract understanding of death
- Awareness of long-term consequences
- Emotional intensity and vulnerability
- Feelings of anger, sadness or guilt

(Marie Cu)





EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS

- Depression and anxiety
- Complicated grief
- Guilt and anger
- PTSD symptoms (if traumatic) (Psych Ce
2025)



SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL IMPACTS

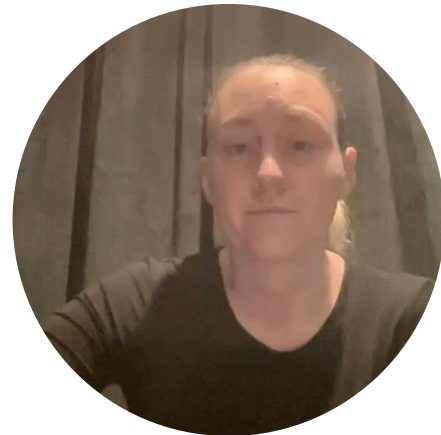
- Social withdrawal
- Risk-taking behaviours
- Peer relationship difficulties
- Parentification (NHS, 2022)





LONG TERM IMPACTS INTO ADULTHOOD

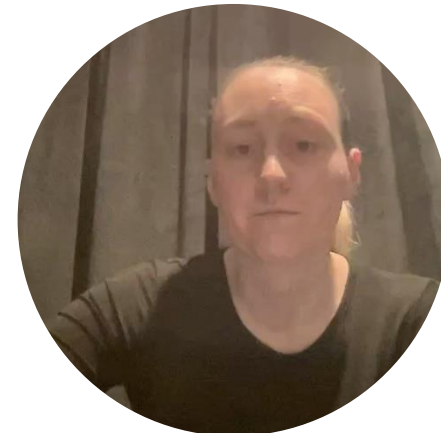
- Increased mental health risks
 - Attachment difficulties
 - Relationships challenges
 - potential post traumatic growth
- (Azuike, Anjoyeb and King, 2022)



LINKING TO THEORY

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY

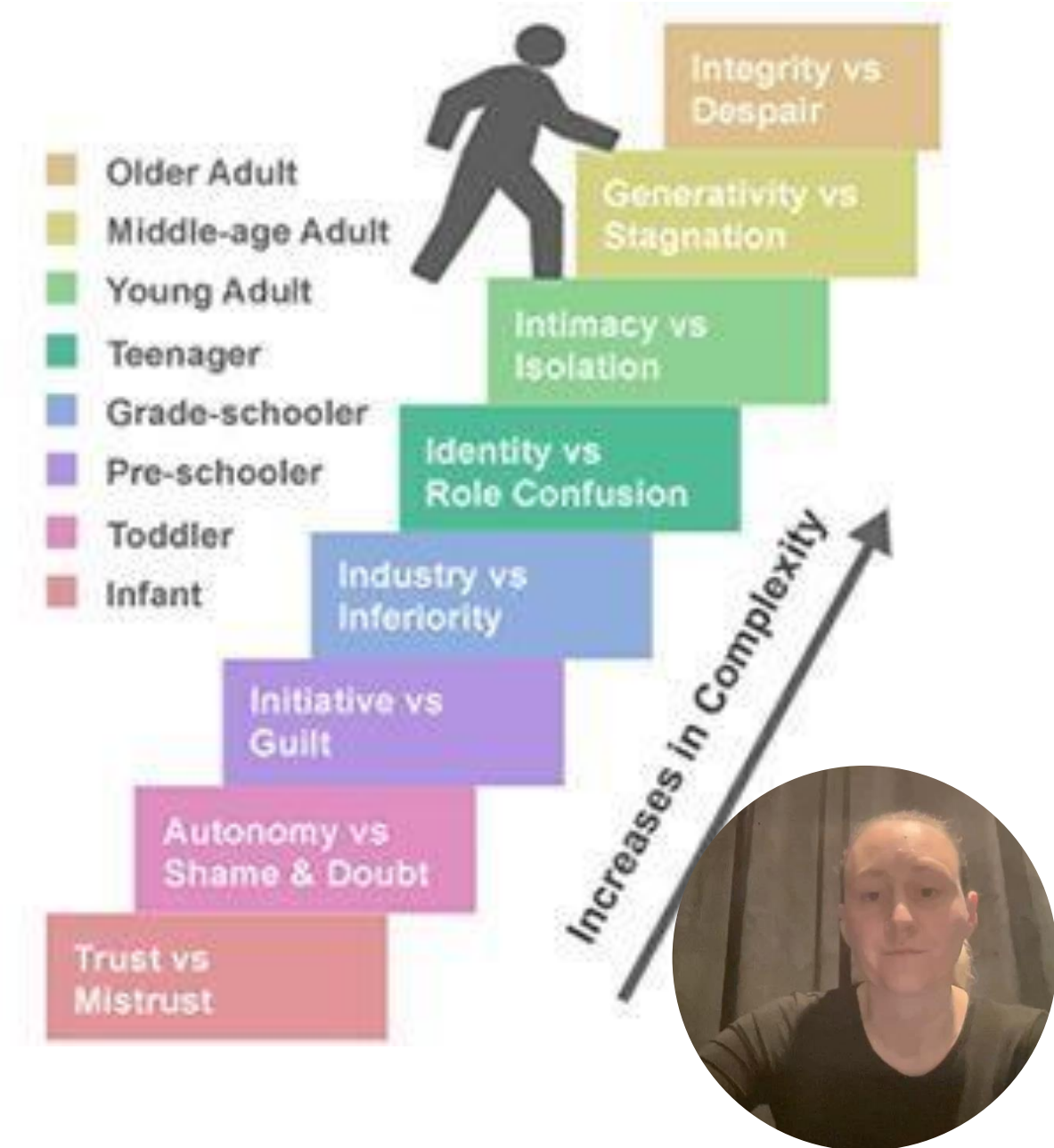
- Basic needs must be met before higher development can occur.
- Losing a parent can disrupt safety and emotional security.
- This disruption can slow learning, confidence, and emotional growth.
- Supportive adults and stable routines help rebuild these needs. (McLeod, 2025)



ERIKSON PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORY

Identity vs Role confusion 12–18 years

- Identity formation– exploring values, interests and roles
- Sense of self– understanding strengths and personal identity
- Future goals– beginning to plan education, career and life direction. (McLeod,



BOWLBY'S ATTACHMENT THEORY & PARENTAL LOSS

While Erikson helps us understand how parental bereavement can disrupt identity development during adolescence, Bowlby's attachment theory helps explain the deep emotional impact of losing a primary caregiver and how this affects a young person's sense of security

- Parents as primary attachment figures
- Loss disrupts emotional security
- Risk of insecure attachment patterns
- Impact on future relationships (The Loss Foundation, 2026)

ATTACHMENT STYLES INFANTS

The lasting psychological connectedness between human beings. In infants, this is between a child and primary caregiver.



SECURE

Child becomes distressed when parent leaves, but is easily comforted when the parent returns.



AVOIDANT

Child is not distressed when parent leaves and ignores or avoids the parent when they return. This is the child's covert way of managing their anxiety.



ANXIOUS-RESISTANT

Child is distressed when parent leaves, and seeks to punish the parent for leaving when the parent returns by displaying overt feelings such as anger.

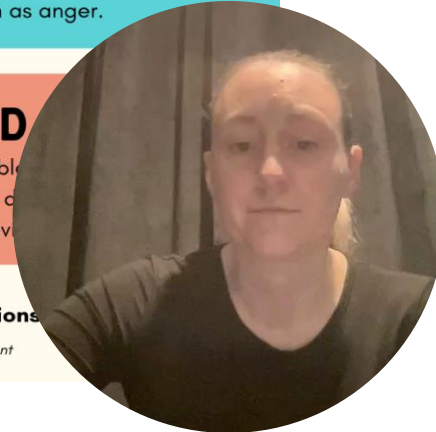


DISORGANISED

Child does not have a predictable attachment. Includes child who shows depression and disturbing behavior.

Attachment styles lay the foundations for future relationships

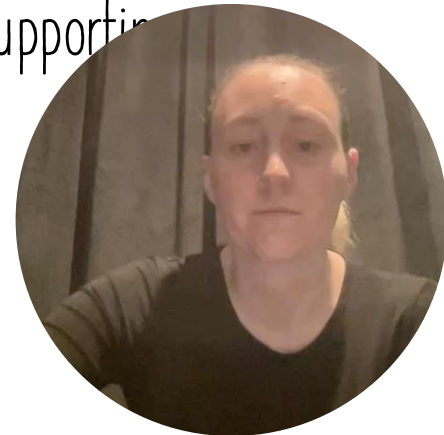
John Bowlby (1969). *Attachment and loss, Vol. 1: Attachment*



SUMMARY OF THEORIES

Looking at these three theories highlights how deeply parental loss affects young people. Erikson shows that adolescence is a key time for building identity, and losing a parent can create role confusion and uncertainty. Maslow reminds us that growth and confidence rely on basic needs like safety and emotional support in which bereavement may disrupt. Bowlby explains how the loss of a parent affects attachment and by losing an important source of comfort will cause significant damage to a person.

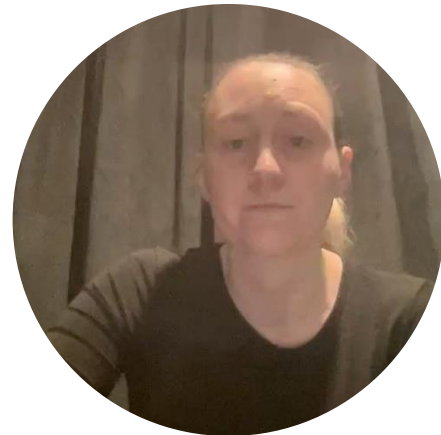
Together, these theories show that parental loss impacts identity, emotional security and relationships. This is why targeted support is essential to help rebuild safety, belonging and stability while supporting adolescence.



INTERVENTIONS FOR ADOLESCENCE

There are many different types of interventions adolescence can look at whether this is through individual support, family focused interventions or school/community support.

During time of grief adolescence might not feel like looking after themselves but it is important to support them and help them manage with the extreme emotions that come with bereavement (NHS, 2022)





INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

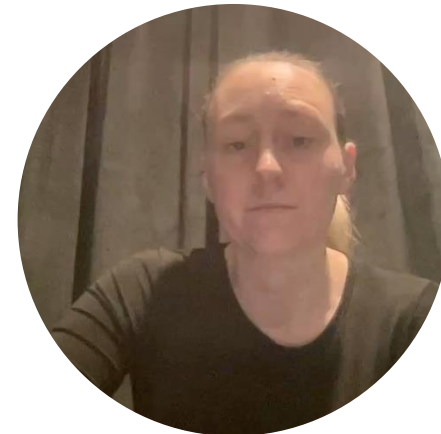
Talking to a trusted person
(e.g other family, friends,
teacher)



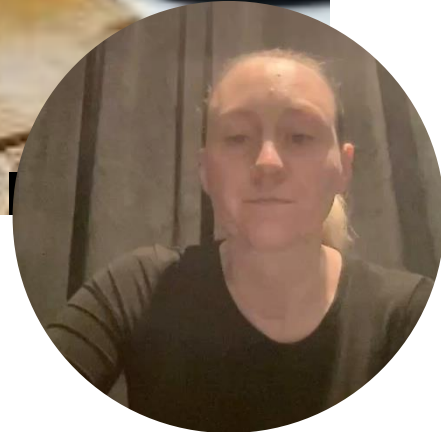
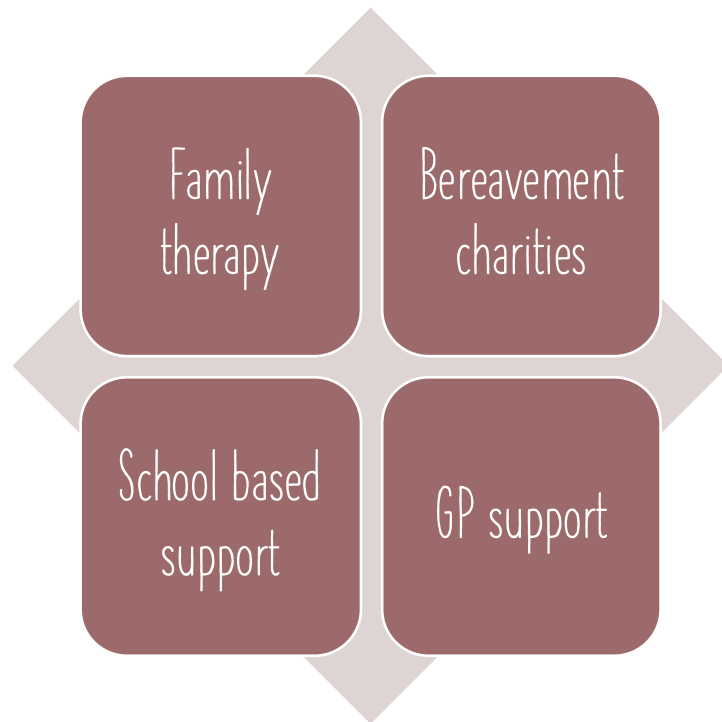
Grief focused CBT



Trauma informed therapy



FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS



LINKS TO DIFFERENT INTERVENTIONS

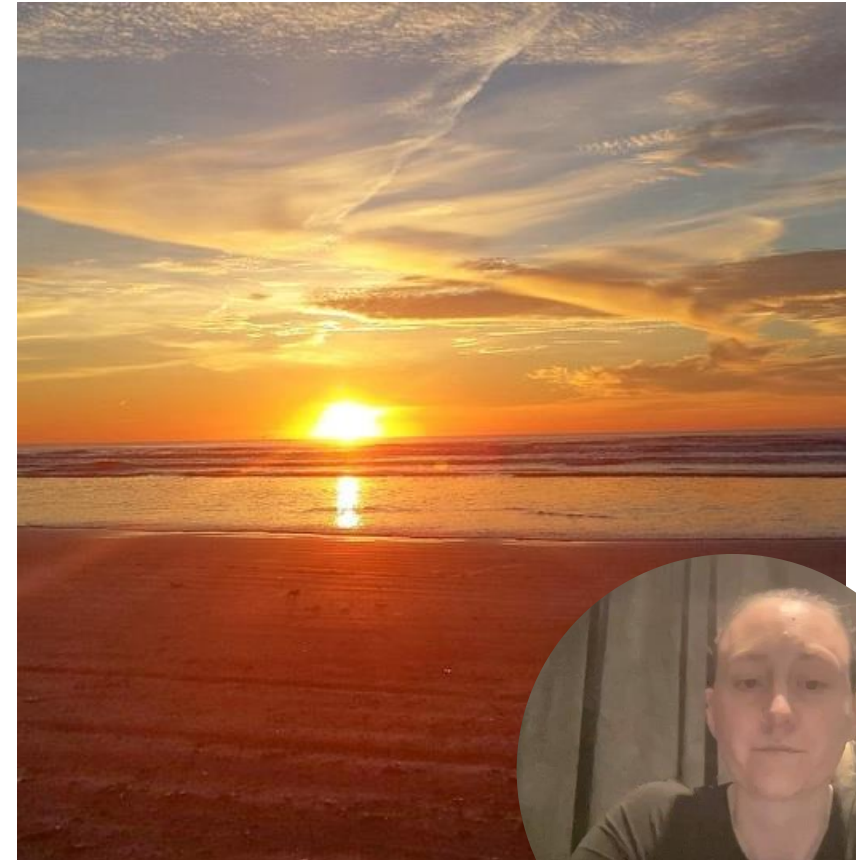
Websites and blogs such as:

- Hope again- <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>
- Winston's Wish- <https://winstonswish.org/>
- Child Bereavement UK- <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>
- Health for Teens- <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/feelings/bereavement-loss/>
- Cruse Bereavement support helpline- <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
- Marie Curie- <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/wales-bereavement-information-and-support-service>
- Barnardo's- <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/support-for-parents-and-carers/mental-health/grief-and-loss/coping-with-grief>
- Young Minds- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/grief-and-loss/>
- 2 Wish- <https://2wish.org.uk/get-support/ongoing-support/>



CONCLUSION

- Parental bereavement during adolescence has significant emotional, social and psychological effects
- Theories from Maslow, Erikson and Bowlby highlight how grief disrupts safety, identity development and attachment.
- With appropriate support, adolescents can develop resilience and healthy coping strategies
- Interventions, including therapy, family and school support, and community services, help to rebuild stability and emotional security.
- The goal is not to remove grief, but to ensure young people feel supported, understood and not alone.



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