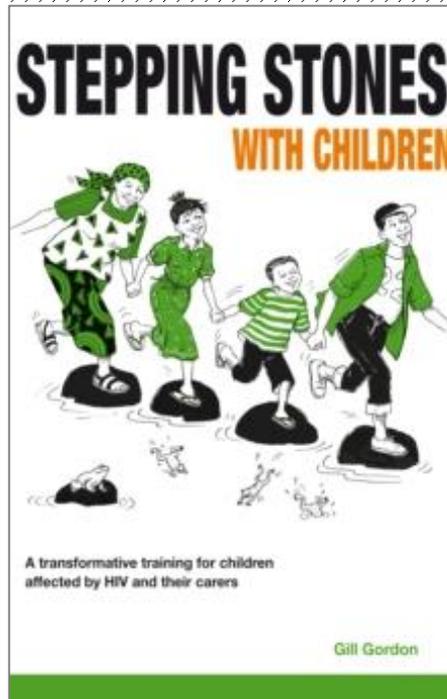


Handouts for *Stepping Stones with Children*



This *Handout for Stepping Stones with Children* is to be used with the *Stepping Stones with Children* training manual published by Practical Action Publishing, 2016.

You can download this handout for free for use with this training manual from the www.stepsstonesfeedback.org website.

On this website there are also many other resources to support you with this training manual and the original *Stepping Stones* training manual.

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UNDERSTANDING DEATH AND COPING WITH OUR FEELINGS

1. Helping each other to express our feelings after a death

It's good to talk gently but honestly. For example: 'Your mother died from a serious illness' or 'you're going to stay with me now.' Uncertainty can cause a lot of anxiety.

Show the bereaved person that we care about them and love them in many small ways.

Make it clear that you are ready to listen when they want to talk. Talking about the person who died again and again, and continuing to talk about them over the years is fine, and helps people keep their loving relationships alive.

Instead of stating your own opinion about the person who died, encourage them to talk and to say what they feel.

You can also help by saying, for example: 'I know you miss your mother very much', or 'Your sadness tells me how much you loved your Mum and how much she matters to you.'

Allow the other person to cry. If you feel you also want to cry that is fine.

We may show our sadness in many different ways and they are all OK. Children may feel sad one minute and cry, and then play and laugh soon after. They may feel angry and want to fight, or be unable to concentrate, or be naughty. They may say they don't care that the person has died. It's also normal to feel relieved or angry if there were problems with the person's behaviour, for example, if they were abusive. Use positive discipline to talk over issues, rather than punishment. Get down to their eye level and say that you also feel very sad.

Adults may also feel angry, or feel nothing, or drink too much to forget their feelings. These are all ways of expressing feelings after loss. Remember the volcano of feelings?



We need to support each other in gradually accepting the death, and in using our virtues to move away from negative feelings and behaviours.

2. Memory and Ritual

If children or adults have not had a chance to say goodbye when the person was dying then a ritual enabling them to do that can help. This could be a ceremony, such as a religious service; or an informal ritual, such as writing a poem, singing a song, throwing a drawing into the sea, or visiting the grave.

Performing a ritual gives us a chance to remember the person who has died and to honour them. If done with others, it can give us a sense of support that we are not alone in our sorrow. It's important to let children take part, if they are well prepared and supported by an adult. We can create simple rituals, such as lighting a candle to remember the person on certain days. Let children decide on dates and ways of remembering the person.

One way to focus memories is through a memory book, or a box or bag containing objects that bring back memories. These could be drawings, photos, bits of clothing or jewellery, letters, pressed flowers, or favourite things. We can use the items to help us talk about the person we loved, or spend private time remembering her or them.

3. Practical plans and building a future care

Explain to orphaned children any plans that have been made about their future care, and listen to what they feel, and think, and want. Remember their right to be involved in decisions about their lives, and their rights to education, food, and shelter, and love.

Give children honest information about how this death will affect them, for example, when discussing where they will live, or who will take care of them.

Support children in keeping family property and their possessions, particularly things given to them by the person who has died.

Support children in remaining together with their siblings, and in being looked after by someone who knows them well and who knew the person who has died.

Build children's self-confidence and faith in the future. Encourage and praise their efforts rather than criticizing them.

Talk to children about what they will do in the future, and encourage them to set goals.