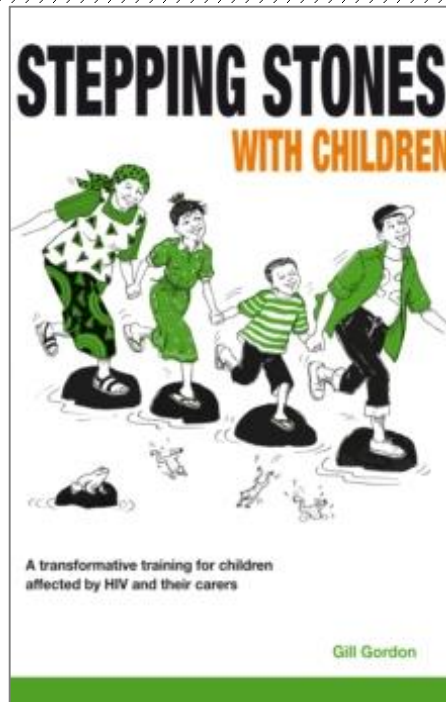


Handouts for *Stepping Stones with Children*



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.

Stepping Stones and *Stepping Stones Plus* as well as *Stepping Stones with Children* are both programmes created and supported by Salamander Trust, www.salamandertrust.net

Stepping Stones with Children was created by Salamander Trust with PASADA. It was funded by Comic Relief.

© *This Handout: Salamander Trust 2016*



COPING WITH LOSS

All of us have been touched by death or loss in our families. There are ways that we can support each other to understand death and our feelings, remember our loved ones with sadness and joy, and find ways to support ourselves and each other with loving kindness. Just like a bundle of sticks tied together, we can be strong in supporting each other. One stick can easily be snapped in half – but a bundle of sticks? Impossible!

1. Supporting children to understand a death

For children aged 5 – 8 years

- Give a simple explanation of death: for example, 'Have you ever seen a dead animal? Can it breathe? Can it eat? – No, because it's body has stopped working. – That's what's happened to Mummy. - She can't eat or walk now, because she is dead. - And she cannot come back.'
- Explain the cause of death, and that it was serious. Encourage questions.
- Help children to talk through their fears. The death was not their fault - nor anyone else's.
- Reassure them about the future, and the people who will care for them.
- Keep familiar routines going such as going to school and playing; they are comforting and necessary.
- Show encouragement and loving praise, to build self-confidence.
- Use your beliefs about what happens after death to comfort children. 'Some people think that we turn to stars when we die. The stars twinkle above us and watch over us, even when we can't see them. We can't touch the stars, but we know they are always there.'
- Tell a story, which shows how things change in life and new things come. 'A flower gets old and the petals fall off. It leaves seeds, which fall to the ground and grow into seedlings, and then whole plants. The plants have flowers and the cycle starts again. The dead petals feed the plants.'

For children aged 9 – 11 years

- Take time to talk and listen. Give simple explanations about the death.
- The child may want to spend time alone, perhaps with the belongings of the deceased person.
- Be honest about how the death will affect their lives.
- They may wish to rely on friends for support as well as adults.
- Share responsibilities so they have time to play and be children;

For children aged 12 – 14 years

- Set time aside to talk and listen to them.
- Use the stars and flower stories as needed.
- Encourage them to spend time with friends.
- They may express their feelings through risk-taking behaviours, for example, alcohol or sex or stopping taking their medication. Discuss the possible consequences of this and how they can feel supported in looking after themselves.

- Support teenagers who are caregivers in managing their responsibilities.

For children aged 5 – 14 years

- Involve children in planning the funeral, for example, by choosing a song or flowers that the loved one liked, or drawing a picture. Take them to the funeral if culturally acceptable, and if they would like to go.
- Help them think of a special place that reminds them of the person who has died, which they can go to in their mind any time; or a special song they can sing to themselves.

2. Tree of Love

Look again at your trees of love and remember and talk about the loved ones who died.

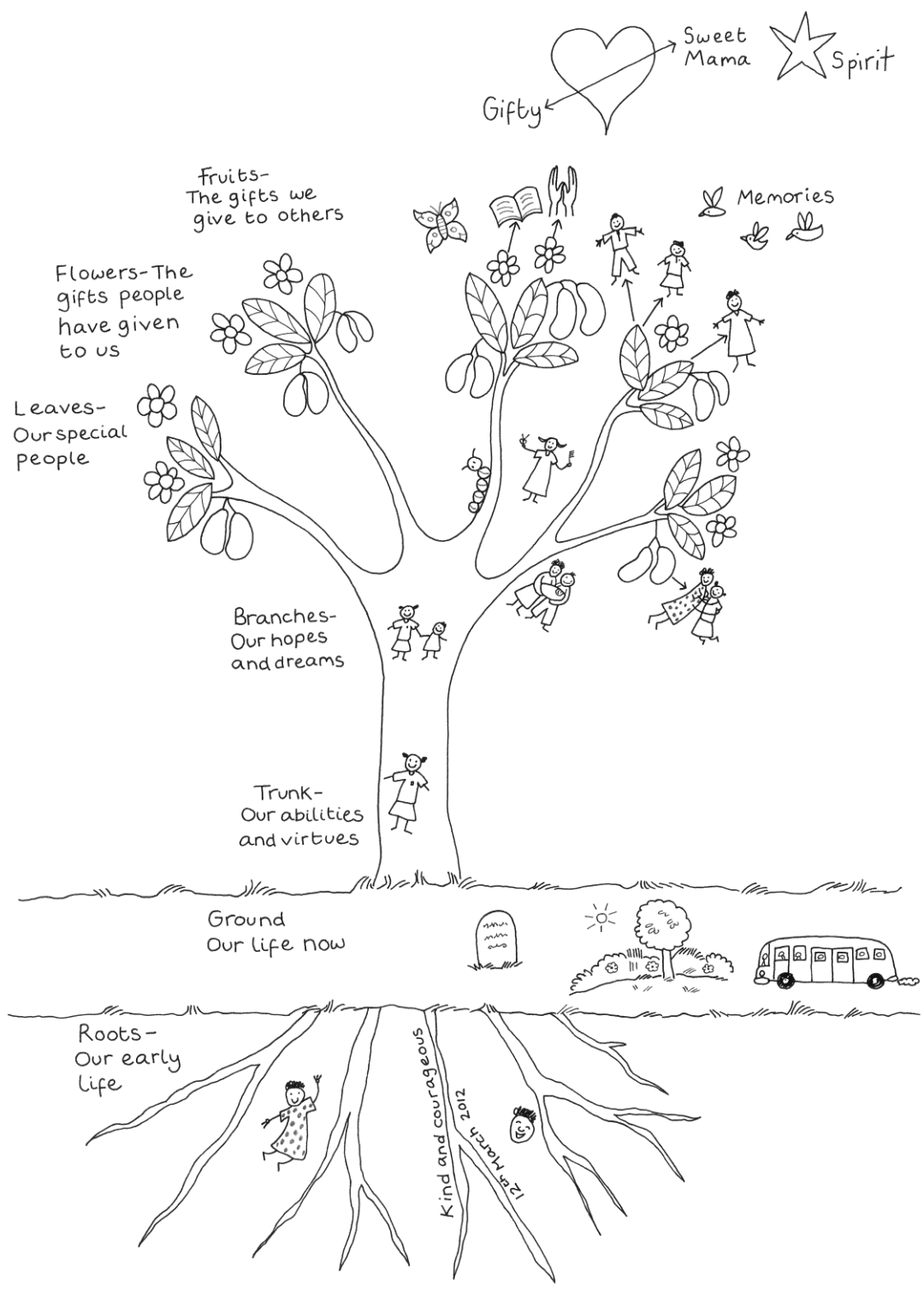
You could invite a friend or family member to draw their own tree of love as you talk about your tree. Talk about how we can support each other and still feel strong despite our loss and sadness.

The *roots* show how the person who died lives on in our lives, through us and our family, and in their spirit, maybe among their ancestors.

The *ground* is the place where you live now; we can add some places that are special because they link us to the person we loved, or places that they would like if they were to visit us now.

The *trunk* is about our abilities, including the things our loved one would be proud of or that they taught you.

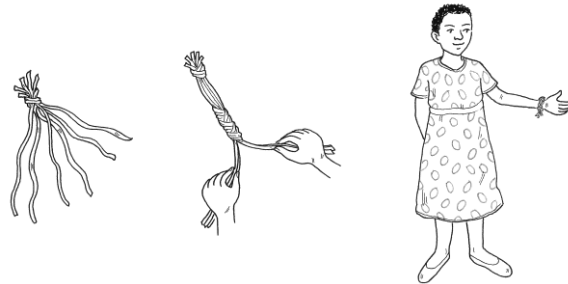
The *branches* show our hopes and dreams, and could include our loved one's wishes for us, and things that would have made them happy as we live and grow.



3. Feeling supported

We used different coloured threads to make a bracelet to remind us of the different people who care about us.

This is something you could do with other people, to help them. Or make yourself a new bracelet when your first one is worn!



4. Using meditation to calm ourselves

Remember you can use the meditation exercises yourself, or with others, to calm your mind.

To meditate, find a time when you will not be interrupted.

Sit comfortably, close your eyes and relax. Feel your breath going in... and coming out.

You may want to imagine being surrounded by a colour that gives you a feeling of warmth and kindness.

Imagine breathing in the colour, which spreads through your body. It keeps you warm and snug like a beautiful shawl. You feel it warming and soothing you. Open your eyes when you are ready.

