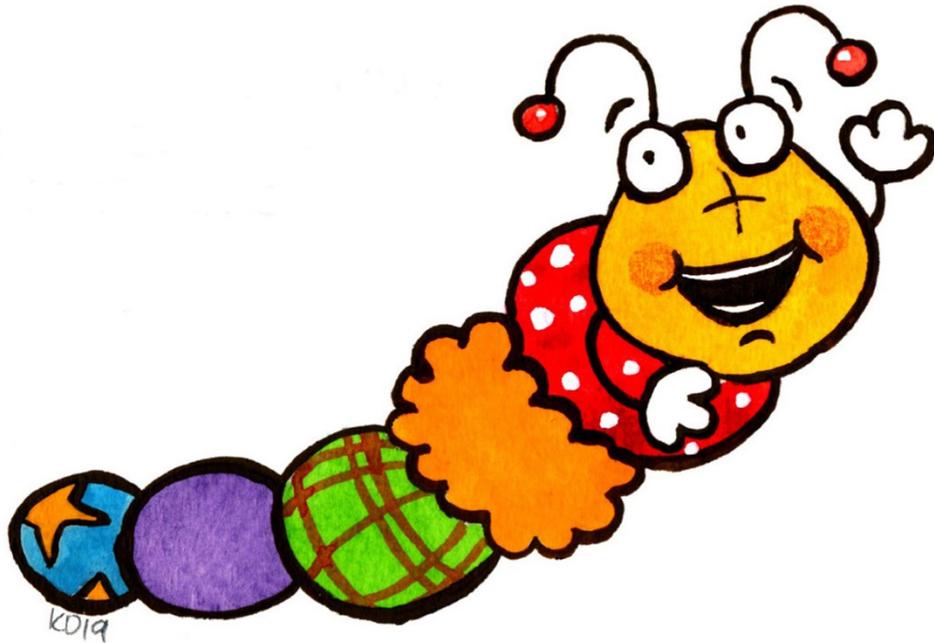


# **CASEY'S CATERPILLAR CLUB**

**Reception - Year 1  
and  
Year 2 - Year 4**

**Grief and Loss Edition**





## Introduction to the Casey storybook

Dear Parents,

Sadly, grief and loss is something experienced in families at different times and for different reasons. We thought it might be helpful, therefore, to share with you this extension of the Casey storybook to help you support your child with feelings of grief and loss whenever you are faced with a bereavement within your family. The purpose of this storybook is to act as a guide to help you discuss with your child some of the feelings they may experience. It is by no means prescriptive and we would recommend that you gauge what is the right approach to discuss grief and loss for your child/children before embarking on the story with them.

You will also note that we have included the discussion around funerals in square brackets. Whether or not children attend funerals is a very personal decision and there is no right or wrong answer. We have included the paragraphs explaining funerals in order to help facilitate this discussion for you. Please feel free, however, to not include these paragraphs as you read the story to your child if you think they may include too much information or if you would like to discuss funerals in a different way.

### Some helpful tips when discussing bereavement with your child

- Try to be honest and clear when communicating death with your child, using age-appropriate language.
- Try to avoid the use of euphemisms such as 'passed', 'lost' or 'gone to sleep' – these can lead to increased confusion for children.
- Reassure your child that it is normal to have a whole range of conflicting feelings when experiencing grief.
- Endeavour to find the space and time to discuss the bereavement with your child, but don't feel rejected if they aren't ready/need space before discussing it; keep gently trying.
- If necessary, allow your child time to 'just be' rather than cajoling them to 'feel better'.
- Allow your child to feel anger; feelings of anger are normal in bereavement. Find safe ways for your child's anger to be expressed – hitting a cushion/shouting in the garden.
- If possible, try to keep to daily routines as much as possible, but without being overly rigid.
- As suggested in the story, allow your child the opportunity to remember their loved one – creating a memory box/looking through photographs etc.
- If you do not want your child to attend the funeral, allow them to 'say goodbye' in other ways, e.g. by drawing a special picture to be put in their loved one's coffin/having a special event in the home at the same time as the funeral or the next day.
- Particularly in the early days, it may help children to have a special item that belonged to their loved one that they can hold/keep as this helps them feel close to the person who has died.
- Be a model not a hero – demonstrate that it's OK to be sad

In addition, it is also worth noting the following:

- Babies may sense a parent's emotional absence during grief and may cry more/be unsettled at night
- Children aged less than 6 -
  - may struggle to understand the permanency of death and therefore may ask seemingly 'odd' questions or may keep looking for the dead person
  - may 'puddle jump' with their feelings i.e. flip between feeling sad, normal and happy
- Children aged 7 and above -
  - may regress in their behaviour e.g. thumb sucking, bed wetting
  - may become more aware of the inevitability of death for all of us, including the possibility of other close family members dying or even themselves; try to reassure them without lying
  - may experience separation anxiety and feel they need a parent/sibling to be with them more often/at bedtime. Allow this for a time, but be clear that this is only acceptable for a bounded amount of time

Resources:

- [www.childbereavementuk.org/supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people](http://www.childbereavementuk.org/supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people)  
This website gives lots of very comprehensive advice as well as some excellent resources to help children work through their experience of being bereaved
- Michael Rosen's book 'Sad' written on the death of his son, is a very simple and lovely exploration of the sadness connected with death for children up to age 10/12.

Whilst we recognise that the subject of death and loss are never easy, we hope that you find this resource useful as you seek to support and guide your child/children through what will always be difficult and challenging times.

With our very best wishes,

Liz and Natalie.  
April 2020



## Reception to Year 1

[The age-range for this story is only a suggestion. Please feel free to read whichever version of the story you feel is most suitable for your child/children.]

The sun was shining as Casey popped up through the flowers in Oliver's back garden. He wiped the soil from his eyes and looked around to see if he could see where Oliver was. Casey knew that Oliver was sad because his [insert name of loved one] had recently died and he wanted so much to try and help Oliver with his tricky feelings.

*"Hello Oliver"* called Casey, *"I'm so glad to see you. How are you feeling today?"* he asked.

Oliver reached down, picked Casey up and settled him on his lap.

*"My [insert name of loved one] has just died"* Oliver explained as two big tears fell from his eyes *"and I feel very sad today. I have a big lump inside my tummy and I feel like I want to cry all the time"*, he explained. *"Yesterday I didn't mind at all and I just wanted to see my friends and play as if nothing had happened"* he added, *"but today I feel very sad."*

*"The feeling we have after somebody has died is called **grief**"* Casey explained, *"and it can be very confusing. Sometimes we might feel really sad and sometimes we might feel like nothing has changed. It's OK to have lots of different feelings when we feel grief. It's also OK to have a big cry if you want to as well"* he continued. *"Crying when you feel sad about something can really help, that's why grown ups sometimes cry a lot when someone has died"* he added.

*["Not being able to see [insert name of loved one] ever again can feel a bit odd at first"* Casey explained, *"but finding a way to say goodbye can really help with this. Grown ups say goodbye by going to what's called a funeral, but there are lots of other things you can do to say goodbye and to help with your sad feelings"* he added. *"You could paint a picture for [insert name of loved one] that Mummy/Daddy could take to leave with him/her at his/her funeral, or you could collect lots of special things that remind you of him/her or write him/her a special 'goodbye' letter."* ]

*"Thanks for explaining all this"* said Oliver, *"I was wondering what all my different feelings were and I think it will help to do something to say goodbye properly. Do you think that it would help to practice calm time too?"* he added.

*"Practising being calm will always help with tricky feelings like grief"* Casey agreed. *"Shall we practice it together? Have a little wiggle to get comfortable, then we'll start."*

### INSTRUCTION TO PARENTS

**PLEASE ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO JOIN IN WITH THE CALM TIME BETWEEN CASEY AND OLIVER**

*"Ready, close your eyes and think about these two simple questions:"*

*"What can I hear?"..... "What can I smell?".....*

*"Next, imagine there's a big cloud of calming magic floating just above your head. On the count of three, let's take 3 big deep breaths together, blowing out all your tricky feelings and sucking in lots of calming magic."*

*Ready, one, two three and breathe...*

*in and out... in and out... in and out...*

*“Well done Oliver” said Casey, “you did some great calm breathing. If you practice that as much as you can, it will really help you with your feelings of grief.”*

*“And remember, **‘feelings are just feelings, they come and they go, we don’t have to be afraid of our feelings, we just have to know what they are and use our words to talk to someone about them.’**”*

*“Thanks for helping me with my tricky feelings” said Oliver. “I still feel sad about my **[insert name of loved one]**, but I don’t feel so confused about my feelings anymore” he added.*

*“I’m really glad you’re feeling a bit better” replied Casey. “I have to go now, but remember, finding a grown up you can trust to talk to about your feelings will always help.”*

**INSTRUCTION TO PARENTS  
IF APPROPRIATE, PLEASE USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS YOUR RECENT  
BEREAVEMENT WITH YOUR CHILD**

Oliver smiled and gave Casey a gentle cuddle as he placed him carefully back on the ground among the flowers. Casey waved as he turned and shuffled his way back through the soil to the comfort and safety of his cosy warm cocoon, at the bottom of the old oak tree in the school field.

## Years 2 to 4

The sun was shining as Casey popped up through the flowers in Oliver's back garden. He wiped the soil from his eyes and looked around to see if he could see where Oliver was. Casey knew that Oliver's [insert name of loved one] had recently died, and he wanted so much to try and help Oliver with his tricky feelings.

Soon Casey spotted Oliver sitting alone on the swing in the corner of his garden. He waved and shuffled his way over.

Oliver reached down, picked Casey up and settled him on his lap. As he did so, his face crumpled and he started to cry.

*"I'm so sorry that your [insert name of loved one] has died" comforted Casey. "When somebody dies we have lots of tricky feelings that we call **grief**" he explained. "Feeling grief can hurt a lot and it can be very confusing" he added.*

*"Thanks for coming to see me Casey" Oliver sobbed. "You're right I've had lots of confusing feelings since my [insert name of loved one] died. Today I feel like I've got a big lump in my tummy and my throat and I can't stop crying" he continued. "I feel like there's a big hole inside me where [insert name of loved one] should be and I keep thinking about all the things we did together. Everybody is sad in my house too which isn't very nice either" he explained. "What I don't understand is that yesterday I didn't hardly feel sad at all and I just wanted to meet up with my friends and play and not really think about it" he continued. "I did feel guilty though because I really love my [insert name of loved one] and I know that everybody is so sad that she/he has died."*

*"Grief is very confusing" agreed Casey. "When somebody dies it can feel really sad for a time because we know we won't ever get the chance to see that person again. It really can feel like there's a big hole inside us and it really is OK to have a good cry. Crying can make things feel a lot better, which is why grown ups cry sometimes when they're sad and feeling grief too. Sometimes, when somebody I know has died, I feel better after I've had a good cry and I'm ready for things to go back to normal. It can feel a bit odd when things at home stay sad for a long time though" Casey explained.*

*Wanting things to be normal again and having days when you don't think about your [insert name of loved one] and the fact that she/he has died is OK too. It doesn't mean you don't love them or that you don't care that they've died. It's just all part of feeling grief. It's also OK if you don't think about your [insert name of loved one] for a while and then for some reason you suddenly feel really sad about it all again. You don't need to feel guilty about things like that Oliver, it's all part of the confusing feelings we have when we feel grief" explained Casey.*

*"Thanks for explaining that" said Oliver as he wiped the tears from his cheeks. "It really helps to understand grief a bit better."*

*["One of the other things I'm really confused about is what my [insert name of loved one] funeral is going to be like" he continued. "Everybody keeps talking about it, but I don't really understand what it is and what is going to happen" he added.*

*"A funeral is just a grown up way of saying goodbye to somebody we love" explained Casey. "All funerals are different, because they depend on what religion you believe in and what customs you celebrate as a family. It's best to ask a grown up in your family what you are*

going to do for [insert name of loved one] funeral. Whether or not you go to the funeral is something the grown ups will probably decide, but you can find lots of other ways to say goodbye to your [insert name of loved one]. You can paint a picture for her/him, or collect lots of special things that remind you of her/him or write her/him a special 'goodbye' letter" Casey suggested.]

"Thanks for talking with me about this" said Oliver. "I think I understand my feelings a little bit better now and I don't feel so confused" he added.

"That's OK" said Casey, "grief really is a very tricky feeling and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Can you remember what we learned about feelings in class? Why don't we say it together, ready... **'feelings are just feelings, they come and they go, we don't have to be afraid of our feelings, we just have to know what they are and use our words to talk to someone about them.'**" Oliver and Casey smiled as they said the words together.

"Practising being calm really helps when you have tricky feelings too" added Casey. "Shall we try it together now?" he asked.

**INSTRUCTION TO PARENTS  
PLEASE ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO JOIN IN WITH THE CALM TIME BETWEEN CASEY AND  
OLIVER**

*"Ready, have a little wiggle and get yourself comfortable then we can start."*

*"First of all, close your eyes and think about these three simple questions:"*

*"What can I hear?" ..... "What can I smell?" ..... "What can I feel?" .....*

*"Next, imagine there's a big cloud of calming magic floating just above your head. On the count of three, let's take 4 big deep breaths together, blowing out all your tricky feelings and sucking in lots of calming magic."*

*Ready, one, two three and breathe....*

*in and out... in and out... in and out... in and out.*

*"Well done Oliver" said Casey, "you did some great calm breathing. If you practice that as much as you can it will really help you with your sad feelings."*

*"And remember, grief can be a very tricky feeling and there is no right or wrong way to feel it. Try to find a grown up you can trust to talk to about your feelings, even if you think they're feeling grief too or if your sad feelings come back a long time after your [insert name of loved one] has died. Talking about your feelings can really help to move your sad feelings into happy memories" he explained.*

*"Thanks for helping me with my tricky feelings" said Oliver. "I still feel sad about my [insert name of loved one], but I don't feel so confused about grief anymore."*

*"I'm really glad you're feeling a bit better" replied Casey. "I have to go now, but you can always carry on chatting with your Mummy/Daddy/teacher about your feelings if you think it would help."*

With that, Oliver gave Casey a gentle cuddle as he placed him carefully back on the ground among the flowers. Casey smiled warmly as he turned and shuffled his way back through the soil to the comfort and safety of his cosy warm cocoon, at the bottom of the old oak tree in the school field.