



**STANDBY**<sup>®</sup>  
SUPPORT AFTER SUICIDE

Accompanying notes

# A book just for me

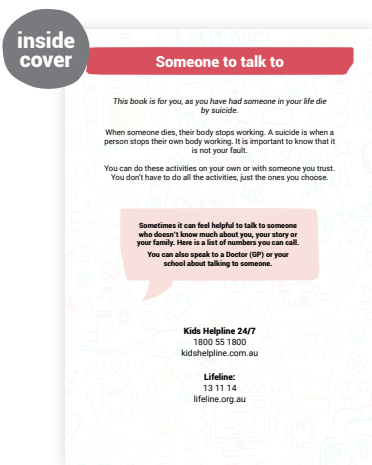


These notes have been developed to those parents/carers who support children working through the impact of suicide using the resources 'A book just for me'.



## Children's book

Generally, children react to and express their grief differently from adults. Conversations about death can be difficult and/or uncomfortable, which is why we created "A book just for me". We hope that these accompanying notes will be a helpful resource for you in supporting your child through the impact of suicide using the activity book, "A book just for me".



## Someone to talk to

Children are extremely susceptible to situations surrounding them, and if a suicide is not discussed with them, they may use their imagination to form their own opinion of what is going on. How children comprehend and express the impact of the death depends on their development stage, age, past experiences, and connection with the person that died (*Kids Helpline, 2019*). One way to explain suicide is "when someone makes their body stop working". Saying things like "they have gone away" or "they are sleeping" can be confusing and even frightening for children (*Suiceline, 2019*).

Instead, clearly talking about death and dying in biological terms has been shown to reduce death anxiety in children (*Slaughter & Griffiths, 2007*).

### There are a few things to remember:

- Inform the child/ren as soon as possible (telling a child about suicide should be done by their parent, guardian or someone they trust)
- Ask them what they know about death
- Discuss the suicide keeping it simple and not going into detail
- Use non-judgemental, child friendly and age appropriate wording

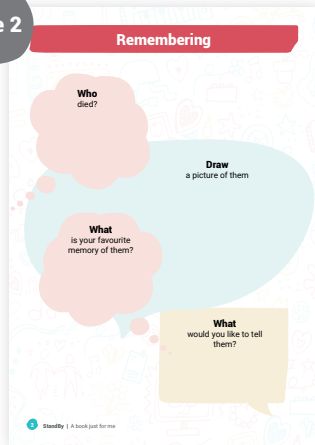
(*Conversationsmatter.com.au, 2019*).

We have also included contact details on this page that you may like to call individually or together for support.



## Draw a picture of yourself

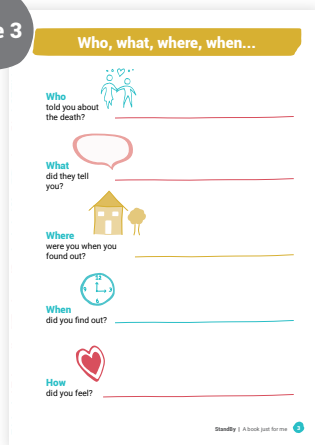
This page is for children to draw a picture of themselves. This activity is designed to assist children to feel recognised as an individual and that this book is specifically for them. It is important for them to feel that their grief is acknowledged.



## Remembering

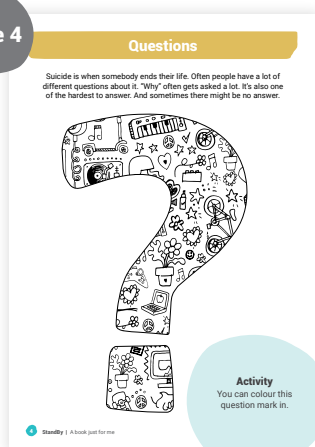
This activity is designed to help children remember the person who died in different ways. Young children may not have many memories about the person who died. You can help by sharing pictures, stories, and details about the person's life. Eg. "Your Dad really liked this song". Children often appreciate having pictures and possessions from other people who talk about and remember the person who died. Remembering the person who died is part of the healing process. It reminds children that it is not taboo to talk about the deceased.

(Suicide Call Back Service, 2019).



## Who, what, where, when...

Many children learn about suicide via media platforms, overheard adult conversations, community or kinship groups, or experiencing the loss of loved one who has died by suicide. Children are curious and appreciate knowing the truth. This activity may assist them to process what they have learned and begin expressing their feelings.

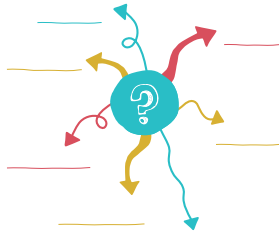


## Questions?

When someone dies by suicide, those left behind often have many unanswered questions, such as 'Why?'. This activity is designed to normalise that there may be many unanswered questions after a suicide death.

## Questions

When we have a lot of hard questions it can help to "get them out" by writing them all down, without thinking about answers. Use the space here to write down all your questions, even the ones you haven't asked anyone yet:



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## Questions

It's important that children feel free to talk about the suicide openly and honestly and to ask questions (Mayo Clinic, 2019). Children learn by asking questions. When they ask questions about a death, it's usually a sign that they're curious about something they don't understand.

As an adult, a couple of the most important things you can do for children is to let them know that all questions are okay to ask, and to answer questions truthfully (Suicide Call Back Service, 2019). This activity is designed to help children identify what questions are on their mind.

## Helping hand

On each finger, write down the name of someone you can talk to about how you're feeling and what you're thinking:



If you don't have someone to talk to or you want to talk to someone else, you can call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800. It's free!

## Activity

Try speaking to one of these people. Did it help? How do you feel after speaking to them?

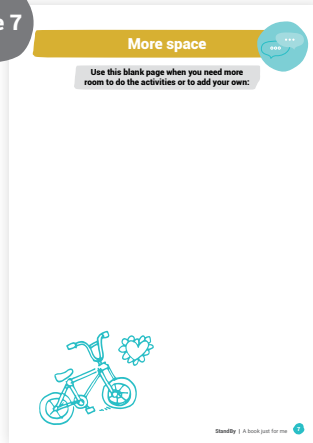
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## Helping hand

There may be times when children may benefit from talking to others. This activity is designed to help children identify who they feel comfortable to talk to, so that when they need to talk, they know where to turn. This may be a grandparent, other relative or teacher. It would be useful to prepare these people in understanding what has happened so they can be prepared to support if required (Conversationsmatter.com.au, 2019).

Kids Helpline is Australia's only free, private, and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. Counselling is currently offered by phone 1800 55 1800 or webchat.

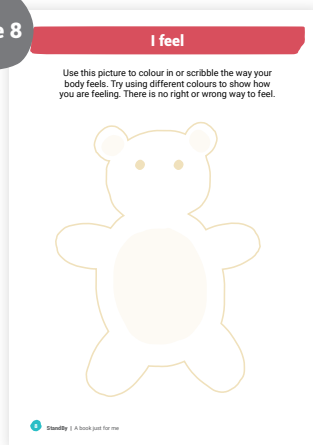
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchatcounselling>



## More space

This page is blank for a child to express their feelings through art, storytelling, poetry, etc. Remember they may also express their feelings through their behaviour and play

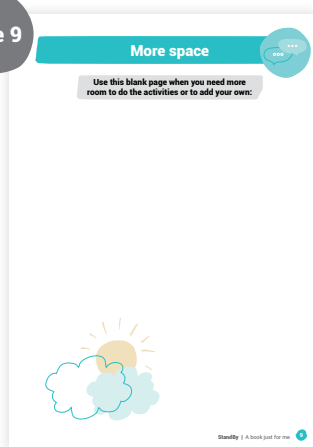
*(Suicide Call Back Service, 2019).*



## I feel

This activity is designed to enable children to express different emotions and feelings in their own words and drawings. A child can go through many emotions and feelings at this time. These can include sadness, relief, disbelief, guilt, frustration, fear, anger, panic, shock, confusion, anxiety, numbness, longing, lack of emotions, etc.

*(Kids Helpline, 2019).*



## More space

As mentioned previously, children often turn to creativity to express themselves and make sense of their situation. This is another free space to do that.

**Changes**

When somebody dies, our lives can change in lots of ways. Here are some examples of how things might be different now. Tick the ones that are true for you and add your own.

- My family moved to a different house/ town/ place
- My family talks and acts differently
- I changed schools
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Remember, you can also ring kids helpline on 1800 55 1800 any time.

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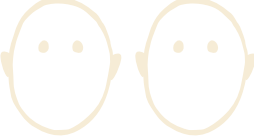
## Changes

There can be a variety of changes after a suicide death. You might find this activity useful to reflect on what changes to your family life that you have noticed, and to understand what changes your child is experiencing. Sometimes what your child is experiencing may not be obvious, so giving them the opportunity to express the changes can help you understand what is happening for them, and then assist with and maintain some level of routine. In circumstances where it is the parent who has died by suicide, the child needs to be reassured that they will be safe and cared for (Kids Helpline, 2019).

**Inside - Outside**

Sometimes what we show on the outside is very different to what we feel on the inside.

Draw, scribble, colour or write in these faces.



What I show on the outside

How I feel on the inside

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## Inside - outside

Children may not always show visible reactions. This activity is designed to help us understand how they could be feeling on the inside and allow an opportunity for us to explore feelings with them. Remind them that it's ok to have feelings and help them find ways to express and manage these feelings. Children need to know who will be there to care for them (Suicide Call Back Service, 2019).

**What could help you?**

What makes you feel better when you feel sad?

Circle all the things that help, or add your own:

- Sports or swimming
- Going to (a place)
- Listening to or making music
- Talking to someone
- Planting or building something
- Drawing or writing
- Time with animals or being outside
- Being around friends
- Making something

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## What could help you

We can often be quick to offer advice and give opinions, which is natural to do when we are worried about someone we love. However, what's most helpful is to listen without judging or advising what might help. This activity is designed for children to explore what helps them to feel better when they're feeling sad (Mayo Clinic, 2019).

### My week

Choose some of the activities that you liked from the last page and try it out for one week.

Circle the face to show how you felt that day

	What you did	How you felt
Monday		😊 😐 😞
Tuesday		😊 😐 😞
Wednesday		😊 😐 😞
Thursday		😊 😐 😞
Friday		😊 😐 😞
Saturday		😊 😐 😞
Sunday		😊 😐 😞

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## My week

Children sometimes feel powerless and out of control in response to the loss and the changes this can create to family's lives as they grieve and school, work, and day to day routines are disrupted. Children still need to adhere to a daily routine for a sense of security. The act of giving children choices can help them regain a sense of power and control in their world (Suicide Call Back Service, 2019). This activity is designed to help children identify what things they find helpful and can choose from to become part of their routine.

### Free space

Draw, colour, write, scribble. Use this page for whatever you like.

## Free space

Extra space for your child to complete the activities in the book or to express themselves.

### Remembering

Different people have different ways of remembering the person who died.

Here are some examples you can do with someone else or on your own:

**"Memory Box"**

Find a box you can use and fill it with things that remind you of the person who died. You could fill it with photos, drawings, some of the person's things that you might have or anything that helps you to remember them.

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## Remembering

There are a few activities children can do to evoke or symbolise their relationship with the deceased, to remember and talk about how the person lived, and how their life was unique and important. This memory box may contain photos, poems, artworks, pressed flowers or other mementos that mean something to the child. This activity is designed to help children start to identify these mementos. Remember, young children may not have many memories about the person who died (Kids Helpline, 2019).



Memory garden

A memory garden is something you can make to remember the person who died. It can be inside or outside. You can make the garden out of painted rocks or pressed flowers, drawings or photos. It's a place for you to remember and you can add to it over time.

**"Memory Garden"**  
 To make a Memory Rock you will need:  
 ✓ A Rock  
 ✓ Paint  
 ✓ A Marker  
 Paint the rock and put it in a quiet place. You could even write a letter or draw a picture to go with it. Add to this memory garden over time.



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# Memory garden

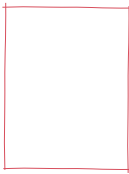
This activity is designed to give children another way of remembering the person that died and a way of feeling a connection to them (*Suicide Call Back Service, 2019*). The act of creating the memory garden can itself be an expression of grief, and the children have control over how they would like to decorate the rock.

Write a letter

Or draw a picture here for the person who died

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity**  
 Write or draw about:  
 1) things you remember or  
 2) things you wanted to say to the person







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# Write a letter

Death by suicide is sudden and gives no opportunity to say goodbye, or anything else they may have wanted the person to know. This activity is designed to give children an opportunity to say those things that were not possible to say when the person was alive (*Kids Helpline, 2019*). The letter could be in words, or a drawing – any way that the child would like to express themselves.

Special days

On days such as birthdays, holidays or any day, can you think of special ways to remember the person who died?

 Write a letter	 Listen to music
 Pick some flowers	 Do something you enjoyed doing together

**Activity**  
 Think about what the person liked to do. What music did they like to listen to? What are some good memories you have with the person? Draw circles around the things you might like to do when you're really missing them on holidays, birthdays or special days.

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# Special days

Encouraging celebrations of a special day in the deceased person's life will assist with the healing process for children and adults. So, celebrate birthdays, and include them in Christmas and other holiday celebrations. This may also include the anniversary of the death (*Kids Helpline, 2019*). This activity is designed to help children identify what things they might like to do on those days to remember the person who died.

Telling other people

When you're ready, you may want to tell your friends or others about what happened. Sometimes it is hard to talk about, so practising what you might say could help. They might not know what to say, or scared they may say the wrong thing.

1) about what happened

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) how they can help you

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Example: "My \_\_\_\_\_ died but I don't want to talk about why"  
Or "I don't know why, please don't ask me again"

## Telling other people

Don't assume that others will know what has happened. Contact the school and advise them of the death and circumstances before your child goes back to school. You may also want to rehearse with the child what they will say to their friends or teachers so that they are well prepared. Maintain contact with the teachers and inform them of any anniversary dates or other stressful times (*Suicide Call Back Service, 2019*), (*Mayo Clinic, 2019*). This activity is designed to help children plan and prepare for what they will say to other people.

Dear...

What would you say to someone who also lost a person in their life to suicide?

What would you say to yourself?



Thinking of the future can feel hard when somebody in your life has died. Imagine you could go into the future a few years from now.

## Dear...

This activity may be useful for prompting your child to think about being kind to themselves, and to help them work out what they might need to hear from other people in their life.

More space

Use this blank page when you need more room to do the activities or to add your own.



## More space

Another space for your child to complete the activities in the book or to express themselves.

back cover



## Back cover

It can be difficult as a parent or main carer to tend to your child's needs when you may be struggling with your own grief. It is vital that you look after yourself and surround yourself with some extra support so that you do not have to go through this alone.

You might find some of these ideas helpful: <https://standbysupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Ideas-for-self-care.pdf>

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## References

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Suicide Call Back Service. (2019). Helping and supporting children mourning a loss by suicide: SCBS. <https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/resource/supporting-children-bereaved-suicide/>



# **STANDBY**<sup>®</sup>

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For more information about **StandBy**  
and the services provided by our local regions, visit  
[www.standbysupport.com.au](http://www.standbysupport.com.au)

**Contact:**

**E:** [national@standbysupport.com.au](mailto:national@standbysupport.com.au)

**T:** 1300 727 247

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