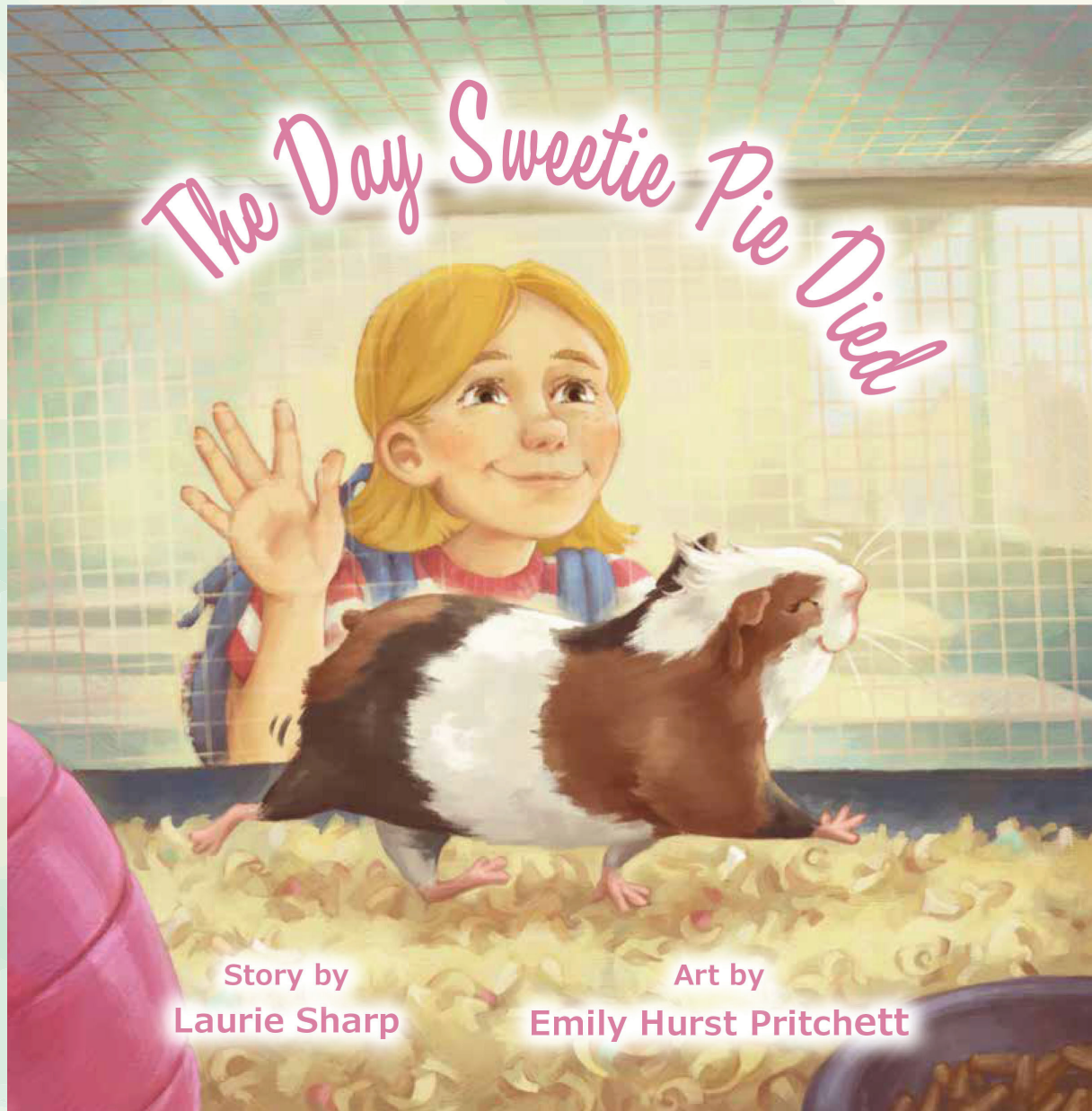


Helping Children Understand Death

A Parent Discussion Guide



Using *The Day Sweetie Pie Died* by Laurie Sharp
Published by Belle Isle Books

Dear Parent,

Children are naturally curious about death. Many adults avoid talking about it because they want to protect children from sadness. However, children often cope better when adults answer their questions honestly, calmly, and with love.

The Day Sweetie Pie Died provides a gentle way to begin these conversations before a child experiences a significant personal loss. After all, it is not a matter of *if* they will experience the death of something or someone, but *when*.

Embrace life and embrace death—they are partners.

BEFORE READING THE DAY SWEETIE PIE DIED STORY

Ask your child

- Have you ever met a pet?



- Have you ever cared about an animal?
- What do you think makes pets special?

There are no wrong answers.

WHILE READING

Pause occasionally and ask:

- How do you think Maggie feels?
- How would you feel?
- Why do you think the children are asking questions?

There are no wrong answers

AFTER READING

Ask Open-Ended Questions

- What was your favorite part?
- What made you feel sad? angry? scared?
- What made you smile?
- Why do you think everyone loved Sweetie Pie?



TALKING ABOUT DEATH

Use simple language.

Examples:

- Sweetie Pie died.
- When someone dies, their body stops working.
- They do not breathe anymore.

Avoid confusing and confounding phrases such as:

- passed away
- at rest
- left this life
- not with us anymore or no longer with us

- went to sleep
- gone away.

Young children often interpret these phrases literally.

IF YOUR CHILD ASKS A DIFFICULT QUESTION

It is okay to answer:

- I don't know.
- People believe different things and that's okay.
- What are your thoughts?
- I wonder about that, too?

Children do not need every answer immediately.

REASSURE YOUR CHILD

Children often ask:

- Will you die?
- Will I die?

Provide reassurance without making promises that can't be guaranteed.

Example:

I plan to be with you a very long time, and many people love you and will care for you when I die, like our family and friends. We don't know when anyone is going to die. All living things do die. As sad as it is, it is part of life. That's why we surround ourselves with lots of people who love and care for us.

HEALTHY WAYS TO REMEMBER SOMEONE

One of the most appropriate and necessary

ways that children grieve is through their play. If your child needs an activity, encourage your child to:

- draw pictures
- tell stories about the memories of the loved one
- look at photographs
- write letters
- plant flowers
- create memory boxes
- future activity—celebrate birthdays or anniversaries.

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

Grieving isn't about forgetting. It's about coming to accept the death gradually. Children may:

- cry
- become quiet
- ask repeated questions
- become angry
- seem unaffected
- want to play immediately.

These responses can be normal. Grief often comes and goes in waves and is different for everyone.

WHEN TO SEEK EXTRA SUPPORT

Consider speaking with your pediatrician, school counselor, clergy, or mental health professional if your child:

- has prolonged sleep difficulties
- becomes withdrawn for weeks
- stops participating in their favorite activities
- develops intense fears that interfere with daily life
- repeatedly expresses hopelessness or severe distress.



FAMILY ACTIVITY—OUR MEMORY BOX

Decorate a shoebox or any small box together and fill it with some of the following:

- photographs
- drawings
- artwork
- notes
- small keepsakes
- flowers
- favorite objects

Talk about each item as you place it inside.

Conversation Starters

You don't have to finish the conversation in the same day.

Ask:

- What do you remember most about Sweetie Pie?
- Why do you think memories matter?

- How can we help someone who is sad?
- What makes someone unforgettable?

A FINAL THOUGHT FOR FAMILIES

One of the greatest gifts we can give children is permission to ask questions, express emotions, and remember those they love without fear, shame, or embarrassment. By talking openly about death with honesty, compassion, and patience, we help children discover that while grief is a part of life, so are love, remembrance, and hope. *The Day Sweetie Pie Died* reminds us that every life leaves a lasting imprint, and every cherished memory can become a source of comfort.



Thank you for using this complimentary parent discussion guide alongside *The Day Sweetie Pie Died* by Laurie Sharp
Published by Belle Isle Books.

The Day Sweetie Pie Died is available in hardback, paperback, e-book, and audio formats. Copies may be purchased through [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com), [barnesandnoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com), and [bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org). For more information, visit: [lmsharpbooks.com](https://www.lmsharpbooks.com)



“All too often, children are shielded away or dismissed when a death occurs. Yet they feel real emotions, too, and while those feelings are often difficult for them to grasp, they are well in tune with others and can tell that people are upset, which can be very scary. The Day Sweetie Pie Died helps address these real-time emotions, both the ups and downs. The best part is that the children participate actively in their coping with Sweetie Pie’s death, working together to honor her memory and celebrate her life! What a gift for the children and their teacher, who demonstrate to us that a life lived is a life worth celebrating, and Sweetie Pie was a gift to all the children who knew her.” – Laurens Fish III, fourth-generation funeral director