

# How play can help children grieve

## Sarah Helton explains how Good Grief Toys can enable children to engage with death and bereavement

A child's natural way of learning is through play and exploration. Children learn about all aspects of life through play: shopping, cooking, going to the doctors and so on.

What about if we applied the concept of play to learning about the other aspect of life – death?

### Can we provide children with a way to explore their experiences of death, bereavement and grief through play?

Good Grief Toys allows children to do this. This is a new toy set that provides



children with engaging toys to explore difficult scenarios through play. And it provides adults with the resources they need to help deliver difficult news, and to support the development of the child's understanding of the situation and their emotional reaction to it.

Good Grief Toys is a set of 45 handcrafted wooden toys. Each wooden piece can be used in a versatile manner to represent an infinite number of situations: visiting Granny in hospital; a parent dying; returning to school after a bereavement; a road traffic accident; attending a funeral and much more. The toys have been designed for children aged three to 12. They are also appropriate to be used with individuals with special educational needs/disabilities.



### Good Grief Toys – the perfect resource to support your work

- To further help the families that you work with
- To support children to understand what has happened and why – the death
- To prepare children for what will happen next – the funeral/cremation/burial/memorial
- To help prepare children for what will happen in the future – returning to school after a bereavement, moving house and so on
- For many of the children that you work with this will probably be the first bereavement that they've experienced, and the first funeral that they will attend. Good Grief Toys allows you to better support children at this difficult time

### How to use Good Grief Toys

As a resource that:

- is available in your office for children to explore
- family members or staff can use to help explain to children what has happened and what is going to happen
- you can lend to families
- is available at the church, crematorium etc for children to play with.

### Good Grief Toys comes with free support from BackPocketTeacher

With every purchase of Good Grief Toys, BackPocketTeacher provides you with a package of free advice, training and support – to ensure you get the very most out of your toys.

Included are three hours of remote support and training (which can be used at any time during the 12 months after



the purchase of Good Grief Toys). You choose how and when you use your time. Below are some ideas:

- to deliver online training with staff on how to use Good Grief Toys
- to provide advice and training on how to best support bereaved children
- to provide advice and training on how to best support bereaved children with learning disabilities

To find out more visit [www.backpocketteacher.co.uk](http://www.backpocketteacher.co.uk)



### About Sarah Helton

After working in the Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEND) field for nearly 25 years and working with many pupils who had been bereaved, and sadly experiencing the deaths of pupils that she taught, she developed an immense interest in how we can better support bereaved and grieving children. Sarah now works as BackPocketTeacher – an author, trainer and consultant in the field of child bereavement, specialising in the (sadly often overlooked) needs of bereaved children with SEND.

Sarah is also currently fundraising to provide 10 UK bereavement charities and 10 UK schools with a set of Good Grief Toys.

[www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/goodgrietoys](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/goodgrietoys)