



A Year of Books



January

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst

Whilst reading this book search for the hidden hearts in the illustrations and after reading, ask: Who can we think of now at the end of one of our invisible strings? How does thinking about them make you feel? Can you think of something you have done with them which made you happy? Your child may talk about someone who is still alive and that's ok too. It helps to hear who is special to them.

February

Wherever You Are my Love Will Find You by Nancy Tillman

As you turn each page, point to the stars and sparkles in the illustrations as love follows the child wherever they are. Ask: How do you know that someone loves you? Can you still love someone after they die?

March

Goodbye Mog by Judith Kerr

After reading, ask: What does Mog do to help the new kitten? What did your dad/mum do to help you when they were alive? Who could help you do that now?

April

The Sea Saw by Tim Percival

Whilst reading, note the different ways the sea tries to help return the bear to the little girl and ask: Why is the bear so special to the girl? Do you have something that belonged your mummy/daddy which is now special to you? Who do you know who helps and looks out for you like the sea in this book?

May

Waterbugs and Dragonflies by Doris Strickney

After reading, ask: Can someone come back to life after they have died? How do you think the dragonfly would want the waterbugs (nymphs) to live?

June

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy

Take turns to find an illustration and quote which seems the most meaningful to you for the moment and explain why you chose it. This book doesn't need to be read in one sitting and many children will already know it as schools use pages from it,

July

The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers

After reading this story, ask: What do you remember doing with your daddy/mummy when they were alive? What made them so special to you?

August

Waiting for Wolf by Sandra Dieckmann

After reading, ask: Which page shall we look at again? Share your thoughts and feelings about that page. It might be the illustrations or certain words and phrases and/or how they are displayed on the page. Why did you choose it? How do you think fox and/or wolf are feeling there? How does it make you feel/what does it make you think about?

September

When Sadness Comes to Call by Eva Eland

Share feelings about sadness after reading, and don't be afraid to share your sadness too. "I feel sad because I miss your daddy/mummy. They were my best friend and I miss them." Discuss things suggested in the book to do with sadness: sit together, draw, listen to music, drink hot chocolate or go for a walk. Explain that feeling sad is normal and it's important to share your feelings. Always finish a bedtime story with the biggest of hugs!

October

No Matter What by Debi Gliori

If you read this story on a clear night, like Large, hold your Small to look out of the window. It's a big concept to understand but in the author's words, "Look at the stars - how they shine and glow, but some of those stars died a long time ago. // Still they shine in the evening skies. Love, like starlight, never dies." Ask: Who and what do you love?

November

The Memory Tree by Britta Teckentrup

After reading this book, turn back to the fourth page spread which shows woodland animals gathering around Fox's body after he has died. Ask: How do you say goodbye to someone who has died? How are the animals feeling here? What makes them feel better in this story? What makes you feel better when you think about your mummy/daddy?

December

The River by Tim Percival

Research shows that walking by water significantly improves mental health. Even though it may be cold, try to plan a walk by a river or some water this month. The reason for the main character's grief in this story may be lost on very young children but they can still understand and explain that the river changes just like feelings do. When on your walk, discuss how the river has changed over the past year through the seasons. Older children will be able to explain how the main character feels and how they feel too. They may be able to reflect on their own life and emotion changes over the past year. Ask: What changes when someone dies? Is it OK to have fun after someone had died?



Written for Children's Grief Awareness Week by WAY member and ex-primary school deputy headteacher, Emma Marfleet