

## Other things make children sad too, like when...

Parents separate or divorce

- They move house or school
- A friend moves away
- A pet dies
- They lose a favourite toy
- There is a serious illness or disability
- They fight with a friend or get bullied

## When parents separate...

This is a particularly difficult time for children. Parents are often so tied up with their own problems it can be hard to focus on their children. Children often feel responsible for the break-up, because they think they've been 'bad'. Don't add to their worries by undermining the other parent. Find other adults to unburden your feelings with when the children are not around.

For more parenting information and support:

Parentline ACT	(02) 6287 3833
Parentline NSW	1300 130 052
Parentline NT	1300 301 300
Parentline QLD	1300 301 300
Parent Helpline SA	1300 364 100
Parenting Line TAS	1300 808 179
Parentline VIC	13 22 89
Parenting Line WA	(08) 6279 1200 (Metro) 1800 654 432 (Freecall STD)

Parenting lines provide a telephone service providing information and good ideas about caring for babies and children.

[Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

The Kids Helpline is a free 24 hour telephone counselling service for children and young people aged between 5 and 25.

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NAPCAN is an independent charity and the leading advocacy body for prevention of child abuse and neglect.

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**NAPCAN**  
PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

WHEN A CHILD FEELS SAD

# When a CHILD feels Sad

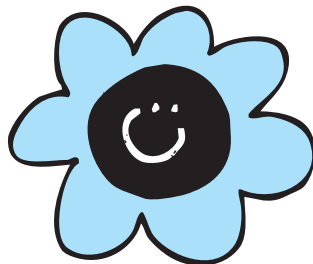


## Children feeling sad may...

- Have difficulty going to sleep, or have bad dreams
- Feel sick or have a headache or tummy ache
- Become withdrawn
- Go off their food
- Be clingy and very demanding
- Have tantrums and get angry and mean

## Helping Children Through Grief, Loss and Change

Just like us, children feel sad when someone close to them dies, but they usually show their grief in different ways. Children are less likely to talk about sad feelings. Instead, they may show their sadness by their behaviour.



## What you can do when a child is sad...

- Talk about feelings, especially sadness and anger. There are some great children's books to help you. Check out your library, bookshops or the school counsellor.
- Make sure the children's teachers and carers know your child may be upset.
- Be available for cuddles, but be sure it is for their needs, not yours.
- Make sure that they know what has happened isn't their fault.
- If death is involved, talk about it simply but honestly – saying things like “gone to sleep” can make things worse. They might be scared to sleep!
- Talk to your child about the person or pet they have lost and encourage them to talk too.
- Reassure them that it's OK for grown-ups to cry, but that you'll feel better soon and you still love them very much.
- Don't burden your children with your grief. Get support from other adults.
- Try to keep family routines going, as this helps children feel more secure. Make 'special' times together to do favourite things.
- Get active! It can really help when we're sad or stressed.
- Try to end every 'sad talk' session with a bit of hope. Plan something special with your child – like playing with a friend.

## Making memories

- Remember together the good and funny times. You can still laugh when sad.
- Make a 'Memory Book'– with photos, stories, drawings and other special mementos.
- As well as helpful storybooks, you might like to make up your own story about a similar situation and show how those people managed.

## Child Protection Issues

If your child is sad but won't say why, you need to make sure they are safe. Children being bullied or abused may not speak out because they are scared you might get angry, or blame them. Reassure them and explain you will work with them to fix the problem. If your child tells you something that needs your urgent action, stay calm, but do act!

