

# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Loss and Grief Through the Reading of Picture Books (Primary)

Note:

The interest levels listed in this bibliography are those given by the publishers. Each teacher, however, needs to decide the age suitability for their own students.

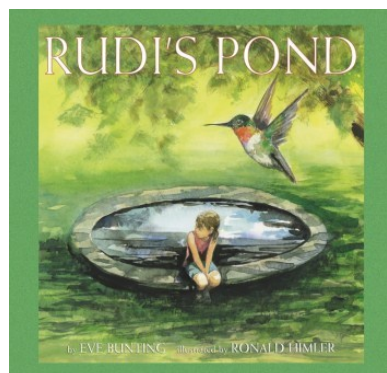
The summaries are from the publishers as well and have been included to give you a quick overview of the main themes of each title. In this way you can quickly select the titles that suit the particular social and emotional needs of your students. Some of the titles fit the theme loosely and others more tightly. The titles also range from "light-hearted" to more serious in tone.

Your school counsellor is an excellent source for suggestions on how to support students when teaching more sensitive subjects.

*Joan Pearce, April 2024*

# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Loss and Grief (Primary)

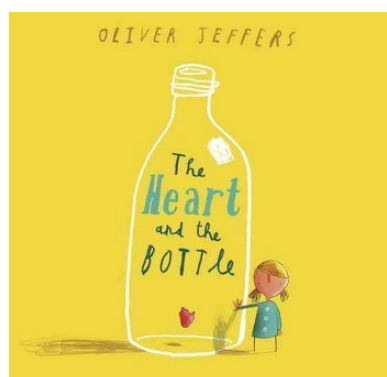
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
Picture Book Format



## **Rudi's Pond**

by Eve Bunting, c1999, 2004 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.0)

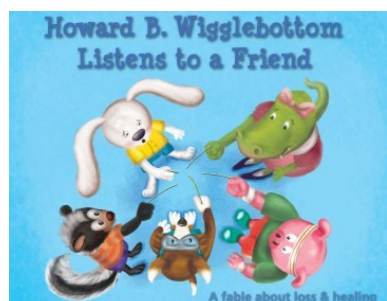
"The young narrator's best friend, Rudi, is very sick, and it's hard for her to understand. When Rudi dies, the narrator and the other children in school help to build a pond by the big knobby oak to remember him by. A hummingbird feeder that Rudi made hangs by the pond, and one day a special hummingbird comes to visit... Based on a true story, Rudi's Pond is an insightful book that will help young readers to deal with loss.." - Pub.



## **The Heart and the Bottle**

by Oliver Jeffers, c2010 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.8)

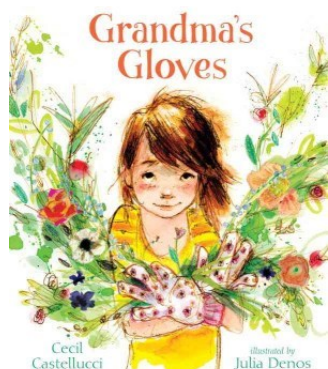
"There is a wonder and magic to childhood. We don't realize it at the time, of course...yet the adults in our lives do. They encourage us to see things in the stars, to find joy in colors and laughter as we play. But what happens when that special someone who encourages such wonder and magic is no longer around? We can hide, we can place our heart in a bottle and grow up...or we can find another special ..." - Pub.



## **Howard B. Wigglebottom Listens to a Friend: A Fable About Loss & Healing**

by Reverend Ana Howard Binkow, c2015  
(IL: K-3, RL: 3.0)

"The 15th book in the award-winning Howard B. Wigglebottom series teaches young children what to expect and how to help out when friends and loved ones experience loss. Tips and lessons are included in this educator-approved and counselor-approved picture book." - Pub.



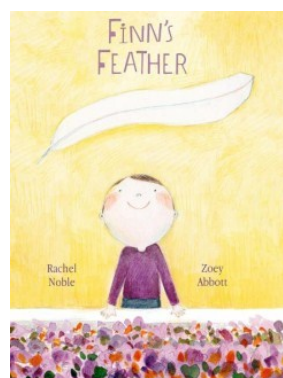
## **Grandma's Gloves**

by Cecil Castellucci, c2010 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.3)

"A story about a child who loses a beloved grandparent finds comfort in carrying on the activities they shared in this sweet, genuine look at a universal rite of passage." - Pub.

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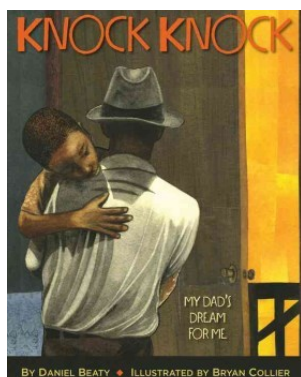
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## **Finn's Feather**

by Rachel Noble, c2018 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.3)

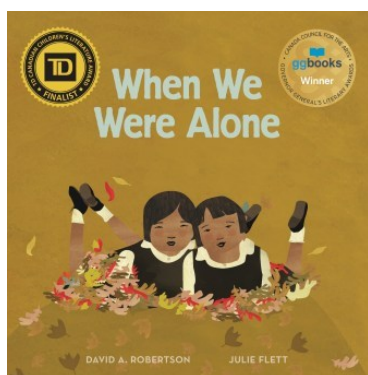
"When Finn finds a feather he believes was sent by his deceased brother, Hamish, his mother and teacher are not excited but his friend Lucas helps him find great joy in Hamish's gift." - Follett



## **Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream for Me**

by Daniel Beaty, c2013 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.3)

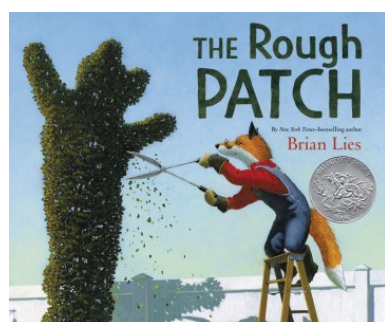
"A boy wakes up one morning to find his father gone. At first, he feels lost. But his father has left him a letter filled with advice to guide him through the times he cannot be there" - Follett



## **When We Were Alone**

by David A. Robertson, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.6)

"When a young girl helps tend to her grandmother's garden, she begins to notice things that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long, braided hair and beautifully colored clothing? Why does she speak another language and spend so much time with her family? As she asks her grandmother about these things, she is told about life in a residential school a long time ago, where all of these things were taken away..." - Follett



## **The Rough Patch**

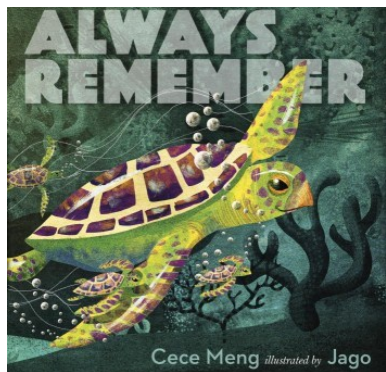
by Brian Lies, c2018 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.0)

"Farmer Evan and his dog do everything together and, especially, in the garden but when his dog passes away Evan lets his garden fill with weeds until a pumpkin vine brings new hope." - Follett



# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Loss & Grief (Primary)

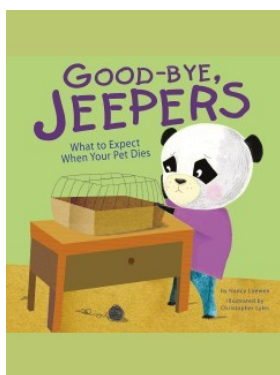
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## Always Remember

by Cece Meng, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.5)

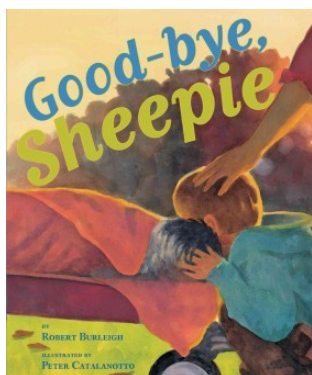
"After Old Turtle swims his last swim and breathes his last breath, and the waves gently take him away, his friends lovingly remember how he impacted each and every one of them. As the sea animals think back on how much better Old Turtle made their lives and their world, they realize that he is not truly gone, because his memory and legacy will last forever." - Pub.



## Good-bye, Jeepers: What to Expect When Your Pet Dies

by Nancy Loewen, c2012 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.3)

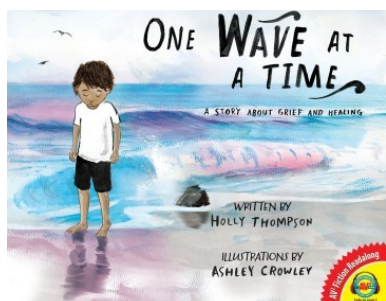
"Includes bibliographical references (page 23) and index. When his pet guinea pig, Jeepers, dies, a boy's parents help him deal with the confusing emotions he feels and show him how to cope with the tough times." - Follett



## Good-bye, Sheepie

by Robert Burtleigh, c2010 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.0)

"Owen and his dog, Sheepie, are best friends. They like to play, take long walks, and chase each other in the yard. But Sheepie is getting old. He can't fetch a stick as quickly as he used to, and sometimes Owen has to help him climb the stairs. Then one afternoon, Sheepie falls asleep by the big oak tree and doesn't wake up. Owen has to part with his old pal, but his father helps him understand that Sheepie will always be part of their happy memories." - Pub.



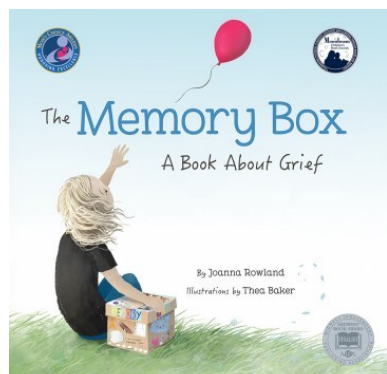
## One Wave at a Time

by Holly Thompson, c2018 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.9)

"After his father dies, Kai experiences all kinds of emotions: sadness, anger, fear, guilt. Sometimes they crash and mix together. Other times, there are no emotions at all just flatness. As Kai and his family adjust to life without Dad, the waves still roll in. But with the help of friends and one another, they learn to cope and, eventually, heal. A lyrical story about grieving for anyone encountering loss." - Pub.

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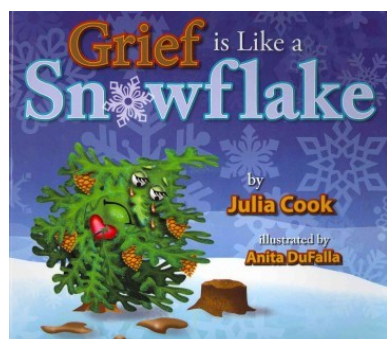
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## **The Memory Box: A Book About Grief**

by Joanna Rowland, c2017 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.0)

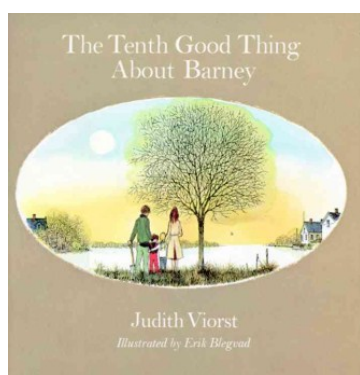
"Grieving over the death of a special person, a young child creates a memory box to keep mementos and written memories of the loved one. Includes a guide for parents with information from a Christian perspective on helping manage the complex and difficult emotions children feel when they lose someone they love, as well as suggestions on how to create their own memory box." - Follett



## **Grief Is Like a Snowflake**

by Julia Cook, c2011 (IL: 3-6, RL: 4.5)

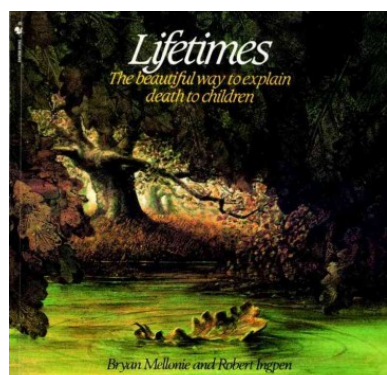
"A little pine tree tries to understand why his dad was taken away and learns how to deal with his grief." - Follett



## **The Tenth Good Thing About Barney**

by Judith Viorst, c1971 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.1)

"Barney was a cat. He died last Friday. And everyone was sad. They did what most people do when a cat they like dies. They had a funeral. And then they tried to think of good things about him. They wanted to remember him as he was; and they thought about some other things, too." - Pub.



## **Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children**

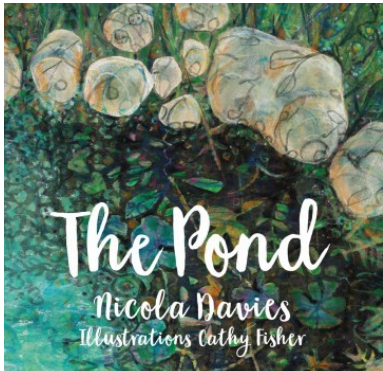
by Bryan Mellonie, c1983 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.0)

"Briefly describes the beginning and end of life for plants, animals, insects, and people." - Follett



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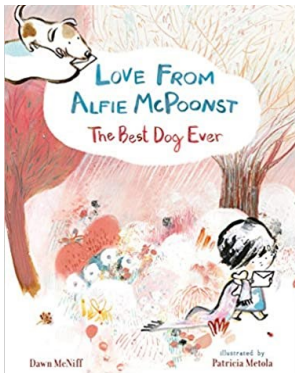
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## The Pond

by Nicola Davies, c2017 (IL: K-3, RL: 2.4)

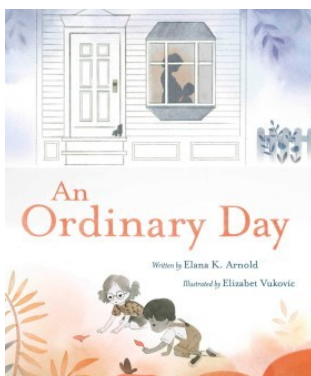
"A touching picture book for children about a young boy and his family overcoming the loss of his father. This colorful, emotional book is filled with natural imagery, centering on a small pond in the garden, and will teach children not only about death and loss, but the importance of the natural world." - Pub.



## Love From Alfie McPoonst: Best Dog Ever

by Dawn McNiff, c2020 (IL: K-3)

"When Alfie the dog dies, he sends his owner Izzy letters in the post from his new address: The Nicest Cloud, Dog Heaven, The Sky. He wants her to know that he misses her - so much! - but his new home in heaven is BRILLIANT. There are postmen to chase, angels to tickle his tummy, and he never even has to take a bath!" - Goodreads



## An Ordinary Day

by Elana Arnold. C2020 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.9)

"It's an average day in the neighborhood—children play, roses are watered, and a crow watches over it all. But then two visitors arrive at two houses, one to help a family say hello to a new baby and one to help a family say goodbye to a beloved pet. This sensitive picture book takes a gentle look at life, death, the bonds of family, and the extraordinary moments that make ordinary days so special." - Pub.



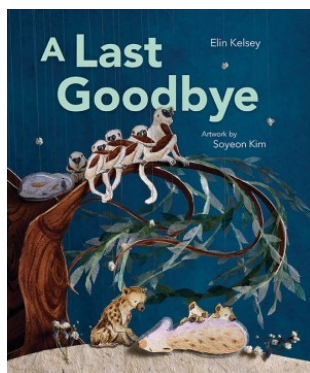
## Grandpa's Stories: A Book of Remembering

by Joseph Coelho, c2019

"One young girl reflects on a year with her beloved grandpa. She remembers the fields and parks they explored in the springtime and the old toys they fixed up in the summer. She remembers the handmade gifts they exchanged in the fall and the stories Grandpa told by the fire each winter. But this year, the girl must say good-bye to Grandpa. In the face of her grief, she is determined to find a way to honor him..." - Amazon.ca

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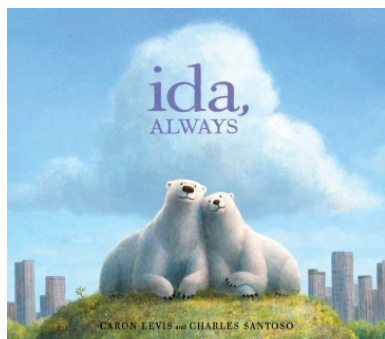
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## A Last Goodbye

by Elin Kelsey, c2020 (IL: K-3)

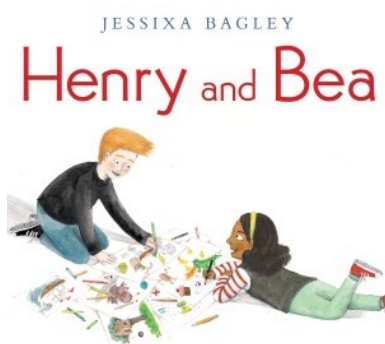
"Combines simple, poetic text with a "big idea" - in this case, the idea that death is a natural part of our lives and that many species experience sadness and mourning when their loved ones are sick and dying. From elephants to killer whales, parrots to bonobos, lemurs to humans, many animals have rituals to commemorate their loved ones and to help them through difficult times." - Follett



## ida, ALWAYS

By Caron Levis, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.0)

"Gus lives in a big park in the middle of an even bigger city, and he spends his days with Ida. Ida is right there. Always. Then one sad day, Gus learns that Ida is very sick, and she isn't going to get better. The friends help each other face the difficult news with whispers, sniffles, cuddles, and even laughs. Slowly Gus realizes that even after Ida is gone, she will still be with him—through the sounds of their city, and the memories that live in their favorite spots." - Pub.



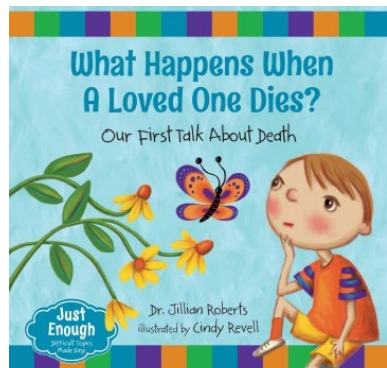
## Henry and Bea

by Jessixa Bagley, 2019 (IL: K-2, RL: 2.4)

"Henry and Bea have always been inseparable...until one day Henry suddenly stops talking to Bea. He won't chat with her in class, and he won't sit with her at lunch. Bea can tell something's going on, and she's determined to find out what it is. Then their teacher announces that the class is taking a field trip to a farm, and Bea hopes that this might be her chance to reconnect with Henry. When Henry finds an old cat collar at the farm and starts to cry, he finally reveals his secret to Bea: his cat Buddy died last week." Pub.

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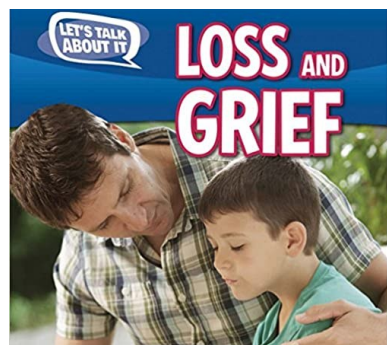
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
Non-fiction



## What Happens When a Loved One Dies? Our First Talk About Death

by Dr. Jillian Roberts, c2016 (IL: K-3, RL: 3.4)

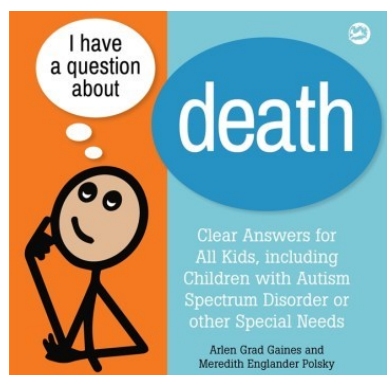
"Whether children are experiencing grief and loss for the first time or simply curious, it can be difficult to know how to talk to them about death. Using questions posed in a child's voice and answers that start simply and become more in-depth, this book allows adults to guide the conversation to a natural and reassuring conclusion." - Pub.



## Loss and Grief (Series: Let's Talk About)

by Caitie McAneney, c2015

"The death of a loved one is a heartbreaking event in a child's life. This book will guide readers through the feelings and questions they might have after such a loss. Readers will learn what grief is and how it is different for each person. Readers are encouraged to accept their feelings and talk them out with the people in their support system." - Amazon.ca



## I Have a Question About Death: Clear Answers for All Kids, including Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or other Special Needs, by Arlen Gaines, c2017 (IL: K-3, RL 2.1)

"Designed to help children with autism or other special needs understand what is happening when someone dies, this book uses text, illustrations, and a question-and-answer format to address the child's confusion, validate their feelings, and assure them that it is okay to ask questions." - Follett