

News release February 2016

## How to support a bereaved child this Mother's Day

Mother's Day is traditionally a time for us to thank mums for all they have done for us, but what happens when they are no longer around? It is estimated that almost 5 per cent or around 1 in 20 young people in the UK will have experienced the death of one or both of their parents by the age of 16.\*

It is likely that children and young people experiencing bereavement will go through a range of emotions as they adjust to this enormous life change. For children who have lost their mum, times such as birthdays, Mother's Day and Christmas can be particularly difficult but equally, it can help children through the grieving process if they can mark them in some way.

Relate Cambridge has put together some advice for anyone who is caring for a child who has lost their mum.

Relate counsellor, Elaine Taylor at Relate Cambridge said: "Mother's Day is usually a time to celebrate but for others it can be a time which stirs up emotions of pain and loss. For children who've lost their mum, it can be particularly hard when friends are spending special time with their mums and making them cards or gifts.

One tactic is to ignore the day but this is often not helpful as feelings become suppressed. Instead they may find it therapeutic to mark Mother's Day by making a card with a personal note inside or by looking at photos together. These actions may reassure them that although mum is no longer here, she will never be forgotten."

### How to support a bereaved child this Mother's Day – Relate Cambridge's advice:

**Let them know you are there for them:** Explain that you know this must be a difficult time for them, but that if they want to talk you are there for them whenever they feel ready.

**Suggest that they do something to mark it:** Ask them if they would like to make a card for their mother and perhaps include a letter inside which can help them to express their feelings.

**Look to siblings for support:** Ask siblings to support one another and look out for one another during this time. Perhaps they may want to do something together to remember their mum such as look through photos, make a memory box or light a candle.

**Remember that people grieve at different stages:** If the child doesn't want to talk, make a card or mark the event in some way then understand this is normal and perhaps gently revisit it another time.

**Remind their teacher:** Often schools will get children and young people to make cards or gifts for Mother's Day. They are likely to be sensitive to the fact your child has experienced loss but it can't help to remind them so they can factor this into their lesson planning.

**Don't forget your own needs:** It can be tempting to place all of the focus on the child who is grieving but if you were close to the person too – perhaps they were your spouse, partner or child- then make some time for yourself to reflect and get support if needed. This will allow you to better support the child.

**Consider counselling:** Bereavement counselling may be good in the earlier stages but later down the line if bereavement continues to affect behaviour or family relationships then the family counselling provided by organisations such as Relate may be helpful.

Relate Cambridge offers information, advice and counselling for all stages of your relationships, including helping families, to build and maintain strong relationships. We offer support (free in some cases) to children (5-10 years) and young people (11-17 years) who are adversely affected by traumatic life circumstances, including family change or breakdown, loss or bereavement. Call us on 01223 357424 or visit [www.relatecambridge.org.uk](http://www.relatecambridge.org.uk) for more information.

\*Parsons, S (2011) *Long-term Impact of Childhood Bereavement: Preliminary Analysis of the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70)*. London: Child Well-being Research Centre.

## ENDS

For all media enquiries contact Elaine Taylor on **01302 347712**

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**Relate Cambridge – supporting relationships at every stage of your life**

### Notes to editors:

- Relate Cambridge celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2015.
- Relate champions the importance of strong and healthy relationships as the basis of a thriving society.
- Personal and social relationships are important in our everyday lives and are central to our wellbeing.
- Relationships are under increasing pressure - breakdown costs the UK economy £46 billion each year according to the Relationships Foundation.
- Over a million people every year access information, support and counselling from Relate but its clear many more would benefit from Relate services.
- Relate's services extend beyond relationship counselling to family counselling, counselling for young people, sex therapy and informal courses and workshops and are offered through a network of 1,700 counsellors across the country.
- For more information and advice visit: [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk).