



For schools

Any day can be difficult for a grieving child, but for a child who has lost their mum, occasions such as Mother's Day can be particularly challenging. There are Mother's Day cards and gifts in shops, friends may be planning how to celebrate, or perhaps the class are making something special for their mums.

It's no wonder that the run up to Mother's Day can leave a child whose mother has died feeling sad, alone and unsure.

In the classroom

Making a Mother's Day card in class can be an enjoyable activity for many children – and it may still be for some children grieving a mother's death – but it does require a sensitive approach. If you are thinking about doing an activity to celebrate Mother's Day, have a quiet word with the bereaved child and their parent/carer to let them know what will be happening.

Doing this about a week beforehand will give them some time to think. Invite them to decide if they would like to be part of the class activity or not. If they prefer to not participate, respect their decision and perhaps offer them an alternate enjoyable activity. Siblings in the same class may make different choices.

If a bereaved child does decide to participate, try not to focus too much on them - they will already be feeling different from their peers and may not welcome too much extra attention.

Be aware that the child may still become upset but a kind and gentle response will normally help them with the emotion that has come to the surface.

For older classes, it can be helpful to have discussions that focus on exploring role models of Mothers and Fathers, extended family members and other positive role models in a young person's life.



Keep listening...

Because grief is individual to each child, what helps one child may not be useful for another. However, you **can** help. Grieving children may feel particularly sad on Mother's Day.

We should not try to take these feelings away, or to distract a child. Instead, acknowledge their (often very strong) emotions, and listen to how things are for the child.

Although their mother is no longer with them, children often want to think and talk about her.

This can help children to feel *their* special person has not been forgotten.

Suggestions for a child

Children should always have a choice in what they do. Along with any ideas the child may have, some ways you can help them to remember their mum are:



- Visit her grave.
- Go for a walk in a place she liked.
- Have her favourite meal.
- Bake a cake.
- Talk about her.
- Write a message on a stone and throw it in the sea.
- Look at some photos.
- Write down favourite memories.
- Plant bulbs to flower in summer.
- Buy or make a Mother's Day card.
- Wear her favourite colour.
- Light a candle.
- Say a prayer.
- Go on her favourite walk.
- Listen to her favourite song.

With thanks to The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network

Stay in touch

If you need any support, please call 01237 479027
(Mon to Fri). Or send an email to info@familiesingrief.org.

Families in Grief is a registered charity no 1116474.

