

# Activities to accompany

An illustration of a rabbit's nest with several white and brown speckled eggs. A large rabbit's head is on the right, looking towards the nest. A basket of carrots is in the foreground. The background has soft, colorful washes of green and purple.

## Saying Goodbye to Hare

Written by Carol Lee  
Illustrated by Donna Bell

For use with children aged 5-9 years

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Guidance notes

**Guidance  
notes  
included**



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[www.southgatepublishers.co.uk](http://www.southgatepublishers.co.uk)  
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# **Welcome** to the activity sheets that accompany the book, *Saying Goodbye to Hare.*

These activities can be used by parents, teachers, charities and any professionals working with children who are going through, or have experienced, a bereavement.

## **Author's introduction**

When I wrote *Saying Goodbye to Hare* my vision had two aims: firstly that it would help children understand the concepts around death and dying, and secondly to support the adults caring for, and supporting, those children. In so doing, the adults would then gain the confidence to find the words to be open and honest with their child about this difficult subject. The activity sheets are an extension of this vision and have been created with the help of Stevi Cumming, a Creative and Therapeutic Art Specialist, and then brought to life by the beautiful artwork of Donna Bell.

When my husband was dying, my boys were just 7 and 9 and we struggled to find the right words for them, and answer all their questions, when we were struggling ourselves to come to terms with what was happening. My hope is that these activity sheets will provide you with a focus and quiet time with your child to open up discussion and for the right words to flow. There are no right or wrong answers or words children need to hear, as long as they are honest, factual and age appropriate. If they feel safe and secure, children will always ask more questions when they are ready. My experience was that my children were very matter of fact about the whole experience and that their questions were mostly factual: "Why can't the doctors make daddy better?" and "After dad dies can I have his chair?" and "Why is daddy so thin?"

Finally, these activity sheets are designed to be used alongside the book. Through reading the book with your child, you will both get to know the characters and you will get more from the activity sheets. Children will also be able to relate to the characters and perhaps use them to express themselves indirectly; for example, "Rabbit's tummy hurts when he thinks of mum going into hospital today." Likewise, advice and explanation from an adult can be expressed through Buzzard or one of the other characters.

If you feel you need more information around this subject, please visit this website:  
**[www.sayinggoodbyematters.co.uk](http://www.sayinggoodbyematters.co.uk)**

With warm wishes,  
Carol Lee

# Memories stay forever

Rabbit's mum believes that after someone we love dies their special spark of life lives on in our heart. This is because we have special memories of the person. Fill this BIG heart with pictures or writing of some of the memories you have.

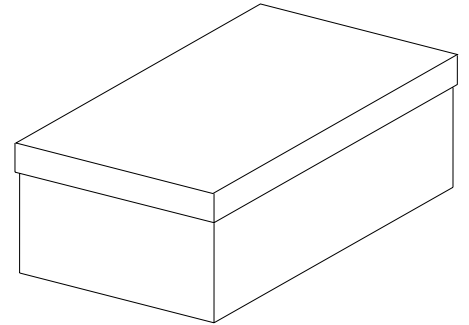
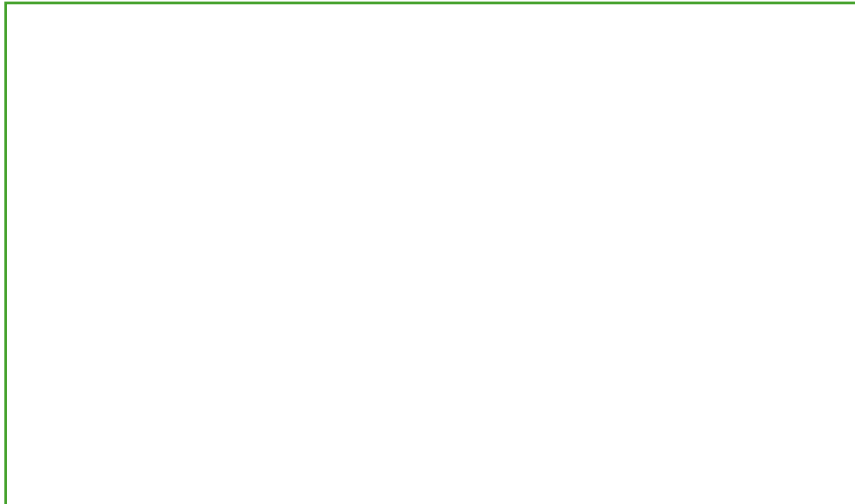


# Making a memory box

Hare and Rabbit made a memory box together. How would you decorate and design your own memory box? You could base your design on a shoe box; this might help if you decide to go on and make one.



**TOP of box**



**SIDE 1**

**END 1**



**SIDE 2**

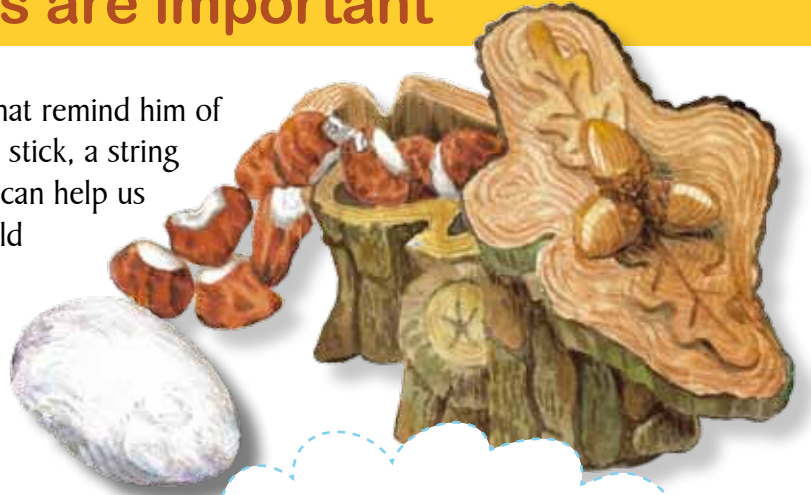
**END 2**



# Memories are important

In Rabbit's memory box are special things that remind him of Hare and his life. These include a friendship stick, a string of conkers and a large white stone. Objects can help us remember special times, but we can also hold pictures in our mind too.

Draw or write about some of your special memories. Here are some thought bubbles for your memories but you could draw or write them on a separate sheet of paper if you want to.



Eight thought bubbles arranged in two columns and four rows, each with a dashed blue outline for drawing or writing.

# Helping can make you feel better



Buzzard helped Rabbit find ways to help Hare when he was ill, like filling his water dish and taking him special dandelion flowers for lunch. Make a list, or draw some ideas, of how you could help someone special to you.



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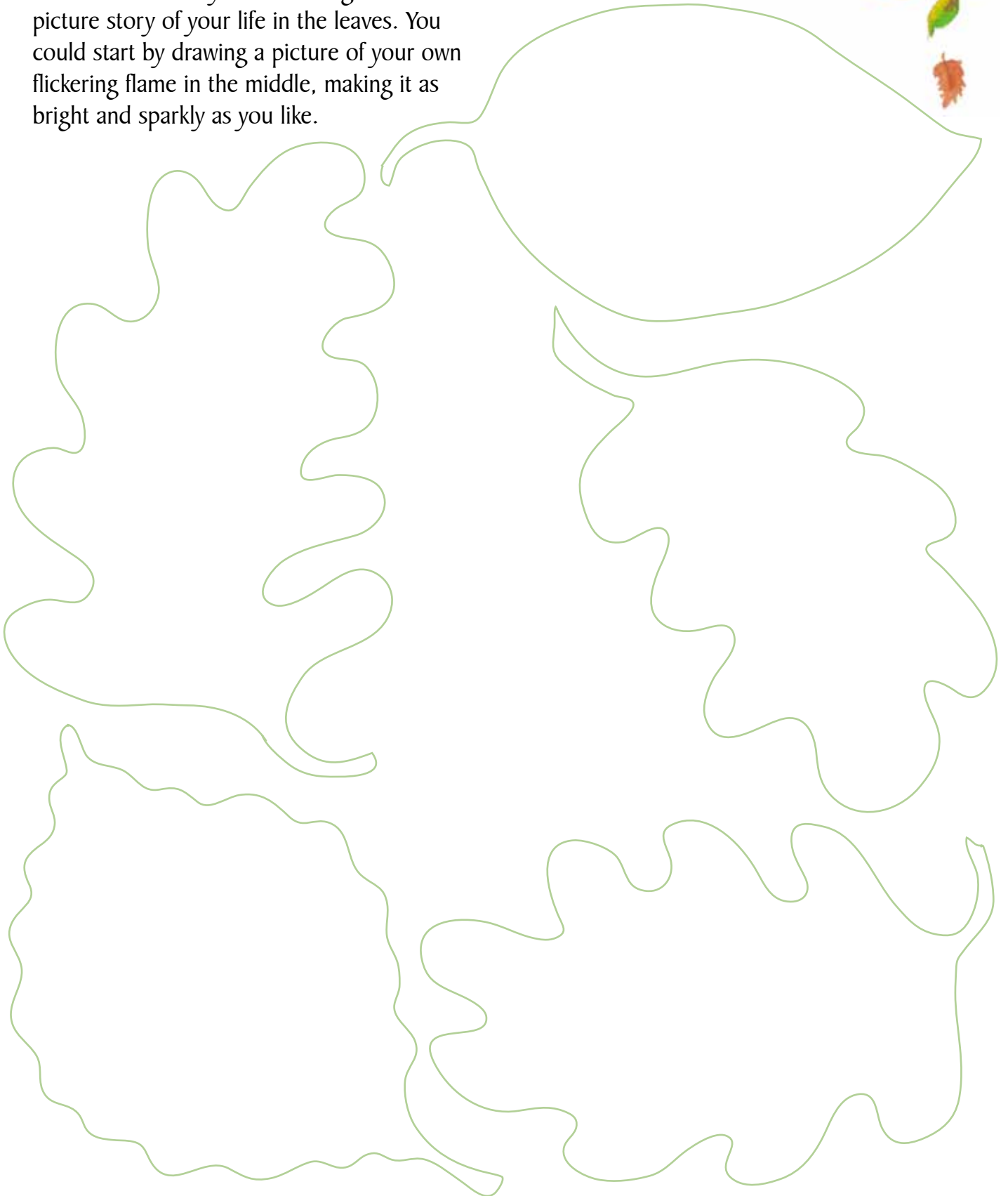
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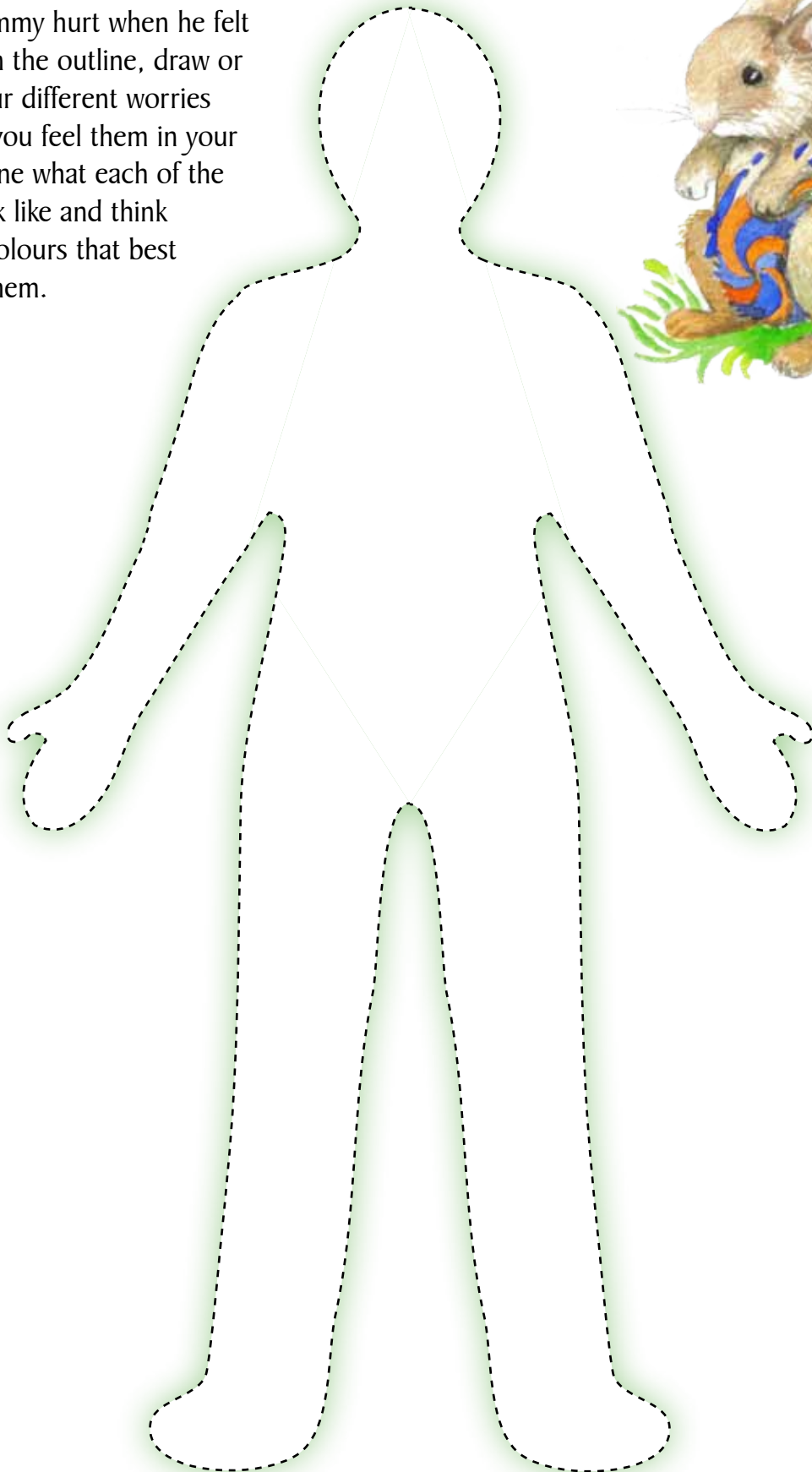
# Death is part of life

Buzzard explains to Rabbit how life moves on and changes using the cycle of life in the woodland seasons. How has your life changed? Make a picture story of your life in the leaves. You could start by drawing a picture of your own flickering flame in the middle, making it as bright and sparkly as you like.



## Where does your body hurt?

Rabbit's tummy hurt when he felt worried. On the outline, draw or write all your different worries and where you feel them in your body. Imagine what each of the worries look like and think about the colours that best goes with them.



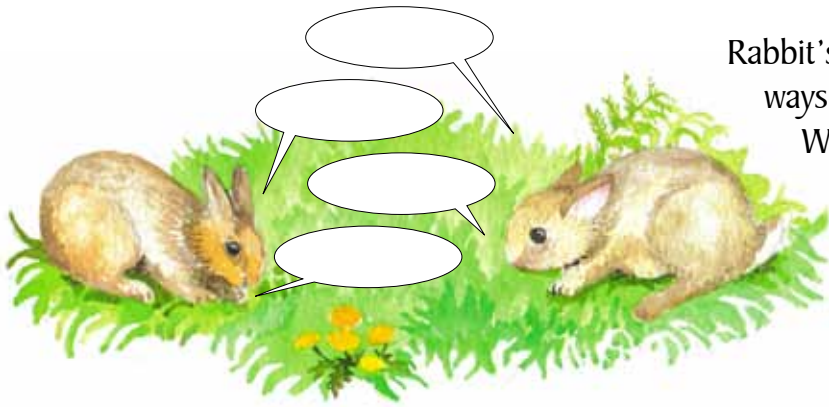


# It's OK to feel angry and say, "It's not fair!"

Rabbit felt angry that his friend Hare was going to die. Draw what angry feelings look like to you.



# Friends are important



Rabbit's friends helped him in lots of different ways when Hare was ill and after he died.  
What would you like your friends to say or do to help you? You could draw two friends talking to each other.



# Feeling sad is OK



It is a stormy day in Bluebell Wood. Draw some big raindrops falling from the clouds. In the raindrops draw what sad feelings look like to you.

# General guidance for activity sheets

For many children talking about feelings can be hard, and even more so when these are feelings around loss and bereavement. Often they may find it difficult to put into words what they are feeling, or it is just too painful. Drawing or writing about their experiences and feelings and then chatting about what they have drawn or written can be a gentle way to explore, and make sense of, what is going on in their lives. Here are some general pointers for helping a child get the most out of the activity sheets.

- Go through the worksheet together explaining what you would like them to do and explaining that there is no right or wrong way of doing it.
- Encourage them to draw or write what they feel in whatever way they would like to.
- Try to allow them free expression without adult-guided preconceptions.
- Help them feel safe and secure whilst writing or drawing by giving them your undivided time and attention.
- Show a focused interest in what they are doing.
- Ask questions if you feel they would welcome this. Some children like to talk when they are working; others find it easier to work in silence with their own thoughts.
- Ask open-ended questions like, “Tell me about ...” Or “How do you feel about ... ?”
- Sometimes children don’t feel confident about putting pen to paper. Perhaps you could fill in your own sheet at the same time, which will help to reinforce that there is no right way to do this.

# Memories

There are three activity sheets to help you explore memories.

## **Why are memories important?**

For children who have experienced the death of someone significant in their lives, celebrating memories is an essential part of learning to live without that person. Telling and retelling stories of time spent together help embed in their minds experiences that help define their childhood and their place in the world.

Children may feel uncomfortable about sharing their own memories for fear of upsetting others, so by sharing your own memories of that person this will give them permission to do the same.

In the early part of grieving, sharing memories brings up sad feelings, so children may need reassuring that feeling sad is a natural part of learning to live without someone we loved. As time passes, memories can become a source of great happiness and comfort.

We all remember events differently, as we can only see the world through our own eyes. It is also important to remember that children will interpret memories differently, depending on their age and stage of development. Research has shown that up until the age of about eight, children often slip into a fantasy world, embellishing stories and memories. From around nine years, most children are more in touch with the real world.

## *Enjoying special memories*

**Memories stay forever:** this activity can open up a reassuring conversation; that despite the fact that someone special is dying or has died, we can always have special memories. This sheet can be a way of 'rounding out' a child's memory bank and it is an opportunity to share happy memories together. It could also be used to appreciate or remember the special individual 'spark' of that person; what it was about their character that made them so special.

These could include:

- Funny little eccentricities and individual ways of doing things.
- How they shared their 'special spark' in the world; for example, hobbies they enjoyed, special talents and gifts, (good joke teller, singer, champion cuddler, good listener), their personality (kind, funny, grumpy in the morning), their job and so on.
- Memorable events - these don't have to be world changing or grand; just something that was memorable to the child and the family.

# Memories continued

## *Creating a memory box*

**Making a memory box:** this activity provides an opportunity to discuss special memories whilst designing a memory box. The child may want to use some of their memories in the design or they may want to make it purely a fantasy creation.

**Memories are important:** this activity is an opportunity to explore memories and think of ideas to put in a memory box. It opens up the chance to reflect, remember and recall how special objects, photos and pictures help keep memories alive.

## **About memory boxes**

Whatever a child's age, memory boxes or treasure chests are a way of consciously sharing and 'banking' memories, either when we know that someone special is going to die, or after their death. This is something that the person who is dying could do alongside the child if they feel able, but equally it could be done with another supportive adult.

Most memories are visual; pictures we hold in our head which can be stimulated and refreshed by outside triggers. But we actually store memories in many different ways, using all of our senses. The senses of touch and smell for children can be particularly evocative. The close interaction of touching, cuddling and soothing - which forms part of the early bonding in a relationship and which releases 'feel good' chemicals in the body - can be re-awakened by the feel of 'dad's old jumper' or the smell of being in his shed. This can feel soothing to a child. So when putting a memory box together with a child, it may be worth thinking about how you can stimulate all their senses.

Memory boxes can be made from anything - a shoebox, a wicker basket, even an old suitcase - just as long as it is identified as a special, dedicated place to collect and store precious objects, photos or anything related to the person they want to remember.

Items that could be in a memory box include;

- Photos
- A favourite item of clothing
- Cards exchanged
- Favourite perfume
- Favourite music and/or film
- Items about that person's life, including childhood photos, school certificates.

There are endless possibilities of items for the box and they can be continually added to over time. Once established, you may find that the memory box is looked at daily or left seemingly abandoned and of no interest. However, the fact that it is there for when the child is ready to explore memories again will give a great sense of security.

# Helping can make you feel better

This activity sheet can be used to explore the feelings of helplessness and confusion that often surrounds the changing relationship with someone whose health is deteriorating.

When someone's health deteriorates there will be a change in the role and relationship between the child and the adult. Witnessing the health of someone you love deteriorate can be painful and confusing for a child. It can be difficult to watch the person change both in personality and behaviour. Children often need help to understand the physical deterioration that takes place as someone becomes weaker or they have symptoms from medical treatment, such as sickness or hair loss from chemotherapy. On an emotional level, it is often natural for the dying person to withdraw from family life, to sleep more and to interact less with people. This can be hard for a child to understand.

This sheet could help you discuss with the child new ways of spending time together, and activities they could do. There could also be small ways that they could help care for the person. This way, they will feel more involved in the process.

Questions you may ask to prompt a conversation, using the Hare and Rabbit scenario, could include:

- What do you think Hare might need help with?
- How does Rabbit feel when he is helping out?
- What would Rabbit like to ask Hare about how he is feeling?

Ideas of how a child could help or be involved may include:

- Look at photos together and create a memory box or photo album
- Read stories
- Bring food in for them and help them eat
- Play cards or simple games.

As the person becomes more ill and less able, activities may include:

- Sit with them and chat to them about their day at school or time spent doing an activity. Even though the person may not be able to respond, hearing is one of the last senses to disappear
- Sit with them, holding hands, maybe gently massaging their hands or cuddling up on the bed
- Help them take sips of water or wet their lips
- Wash their face or hands.

# Death is part of life

This activity sheet is about exploring change and understanding the cycle of life and death.

Life changes forever when someone we love dies. If a very close family member dies, especially a parent, day-to-day life will never be the same.

Life will change in big ways and small ways and often it is the small ways that the child most notices; a different way of the packed lunch being 'packed', different routines, a simple question not being asked.

This sheet can be used in different ways. Here are some ideas:

- You could use each of the leaf outlines to represent the woodland seasons of spring, summer, harvest time, autumn and winter. In the story, Buzzard talked to Rabbit about the five different 'seasons' or phases of a lifetime, (birth/childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age and old age/death) in relation to Hare's life to help Rabbit understand the 'cycle of life'. You could use this idea to talk about the life of the person who has died, your own life or that of the child to help explain and discuss the cycle of life.
- Talk with your child about changes that have happened and get them to write or draw about some of them in each of the leaf outlines.
- Use the idea of the 'flickering flame' (as representing our own unique spark of life) to talk about the special ways the person touched their life as they have grown up. Use the leaf shapes to draw or write about these.

This may also be an opportunity to clarify or reinforce that we feel 'life' in our bodies through breathing, physical strength and feelings - and when we 'die', all physical processes shut down.



# Where does your body hurt?

This activity sheet is an opportunity to explore how our bodies may feel in relation to stress and different emotions. This gives the child a way to connect physical feelings to emotions, and so a way to communicate how they are feeling.

It is completely normal to have a physical response to grief. Here are a few common experiences:

- Tummy pains and upsets
- Aching/weak muscles
- Tight chest
- Tight or sore throat
- Headaches.

Research has shown that there is a chemical change within the body in relation to loss and bereavement. These reactions are to do with the withdrawal from the 'feel-good' chemicals that form the basis of our emotional attachments. When this attachment is broken through loss and bereavement, we feel this loss in a physical way.

Making connections for children about bodily sensations will take away any anxiety about aches and pains they may have.

When they draw their worries, they may draw situations or they may just draw shapes and colours. There are no right or wrong answers or ways of completing the sheet; just use what they have done to start a conversation by saying things like:

- Tell me about this 'red blob', interesting picture, etc.
- How does your body feel now?
- When does your body feel like this picture?

# It's OK to feel angry and say, "It's not fair!"

This activity sheet can be used to explore angry feelings.

Sometimes the sense of loss a child feels when someone is dying, or has died, is very hard to express. Younger children often don't have the words to express their feelings. Sadness can often be expressed as angry feelings, which come out as angry outbursts, tantrums, and aggression towards themselves or others. Feeling angry is a normal response to loss and bereavement.

It is hard for children to understand how someone they need and love very much could die and leave them, and why it has happened to them.

Many children harbour feelings of it being their fault in some way: "if only I'd been nicer, done as I was told, tidied my room, maybe it wouldn't have happened." When a child says "It's not fair" all we can do is agree and say that often life isn't fair, but reassure them that what happened is nothing to do with anything they did or didn't do.

If a child feels very angry, it is important to help them find healthy ways to express this such as:

- Punching a pillow or cushion
- Scribbling or drawing in a particular colour, or in an 'angry' book
- Physical activity, such as running, bouncing on a trampoline or kicking a ball.

On this activity sheet, children are asked to draw what angry feelings look like to them. How they choose to draw this will reflect how they are feeling. You could encourage them to imagine how Rabbit would have felt. By doing this, they are really tapping into how they are feeling.

Bearing this in mind, you could ask these questions while chatting to the child about what they have drawn:

- How is Rabbit feeling now?
- What would make Rabbit feel better?
- How 'big' is Rabbit's anger?

Allowing children to talk about how they are feeling through Rabbit, and then helping them make the link between angry feelings, their behaviour and their sadness, will help them make sense of mixed-up feelings and sensations.

# Friends are important

Children can feel isolated and alone when someone close to them is dying or has died. The situation at home may mean that they haven't been able to invite friends home or they may have felt too anxious to spend time away from whoever is ill.

Children crave normality and routine. These routines form a secure foundation from which they can step out into the world. Living with someone who is terminally ill makes all their foundations wobble.

Telling a friend that someone you care about is terminally ill, or has died, can be very difficult. For a child who may be struggling with all the concepts and the feelings, it can feel impossible.

This sheet gives you the opportunity to help children find a way to say what support and help they need. It is also a chance to 'rehearse' a difficult conversation they would like to have, perhaps with their friends. Friends in the context of this activity sheet can mean supportive adults or peer relationships. In the book, Buzzard is Rabbit's main support who offers wise counsel. The child will take whichever meaning is most helpful to them.

Children ask lots of questions, if they feel they are allowed to. This sheet is as much about asking what they need generally, as it is about what they need from their friends.

Support may be everyday things or they may be more profound. They might include:

- Someone to talk through their worries with
- People not to talk about 'it' with them
- To just feel normal
- To find a different way to spend special time with the person who is unwell
- To have a friend around to tea, as has happened in the past
- Someone to do a specific activity with
- Finding the right words to say difficult things
- Something else which is nothing to do with death or dying.

# Feeling sad is OK

Feeling sadness is part of the normal grief reaction to loss and bereavement. The sadness of grief can feel heavy, deep and prolonged, like a general malaise that dampens our whole experience of life. On the other hand, it can flash in and out for intensely painful moments as we stumble across reminders in our day-to-day life that someone special to us has died or is dying.

Children tend to dip in and out of sad feelings; they are naturally optimistic and full of life and so may not dwell on feeling sad. This can sometimes be disconcerting for the adults around them who are feeling overwhelmed with a mixture of feelings about death and dying and how best to support their child. Children may also feel inclined to hide their feelings or swallow back tears for fear of upsetting others. It is important that children are encouraged to honestly express how they feel so they can convey their sadness when they feel sad and not to feel bad when they don't.

Messages you may want to give about feeling sad include:

- It is normal to feel sad when someone we love dies
- We feel sad because we miss that person very much
- Sadness can be felt in the mind and the body. We may feel strange aches and pains in our body and think we hear or see that person
- Sadness can sometimes make us feel cross and angry, and to lose interest in things that used to make us happy
- Although we will never forget the person who has died, the sadness will feel less as time goes by as we learn to go on living without that person
- Sadness can come and go and sometimes it surprises us as it seems to pop up out of nowhere
- It is okay to feel sad and it is okay not to feel sad
- It is okay to laugh and carry on enjoying life; this is what being alive is all about.

When your child is completing the sheet, questions around what they have drawn could include:

- "Tell me about this picture."
- "What does that colour mean to you?"
- "How big does your sadness feel today?"

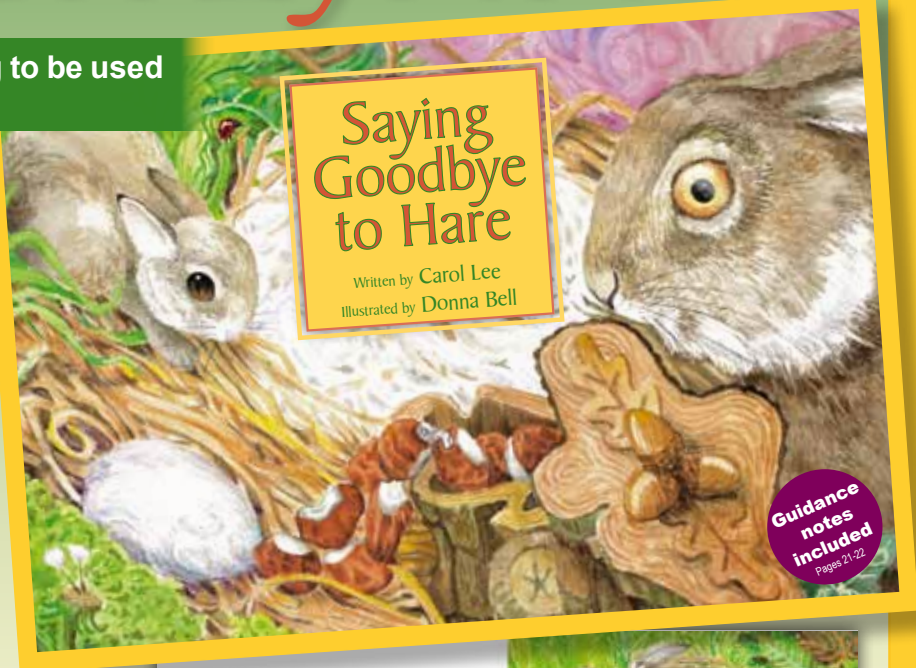
# Saying Goodbye to Hare

A story about death and dying to be used with children aged 5-9 years

Carol Lee 24 pages £3.95 9 781857 411386  
Illustrations by Donna Bell

This is an uplifting story written for children aged 5-9 years about death and dying. Beautifully illustrated, **Saying Goodbye to Hare** is full of honesty and warmth. As young Rabbit witnesses the life, illness and death of his dear friend Hare, the story explores some of the feelings and questions children have at this time. Inspired by the author's own personal experience of supporting her young children through the illness and death of their father, the story is sensitively written to give a positive, thoughtful message about death and dying. The book includes guidance notes for the adult supporting the child.

The book will make an excellent addition to school, hospice and charity resource libraries and discounts are available so that you can buy in copies to give out to families as needed.



Revenue from sales of the book are being donated to the Balloons charity, which supports pre- and post-bereaved children, young people and their families.

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