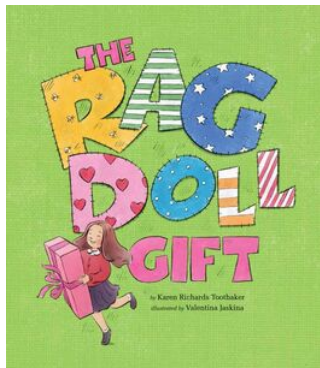


Care & Comfort Annotated Book List by Karen Richards Toothaker

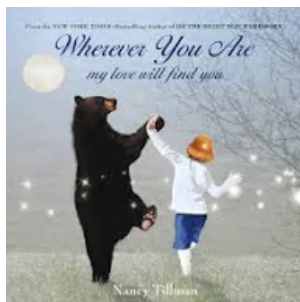
Children in grief need care and comfort. Children's literature can help. High quality picture books dealing with loss can open doors to conversation and provide space for healing in a natural comforting way. I find that the best children's books about death use simple language, don't sugarcoat or dismiss the difficulty of the experience, and validate feelings that are often part of the grieving process. It can be hard for grown-ups to know what to say to children and when to say it; children's books about death can help guide you. I have written a short summary of my book which deals with grief and loss, as well as some of my personal favorites by other authors that I have found helpful. I have also included a list of ten other books I recommend checking out. It is my hope that these books will find a place in your heart, speak to the hearts of the children you serve, and offer them some care and comfort as they grieve and heal.



The Rag Doll Gift

written by Karen Richards Toothaker illustrated by Valentina Jaskina

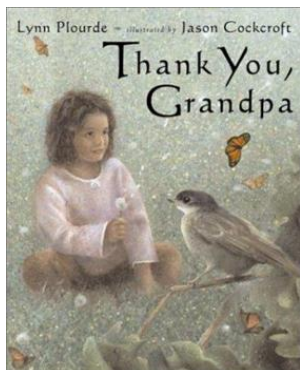
On their sixth birthdays, all the cousins in her family receive a rag doll homemade with love from Gran. Soon it would be Kimberly's turn! But Gran dies before Kimberly's birthday. This gentle story is about loss, but more than that it is about the strength of family, the comfort of traditions, and the boundlessness of love. The illustrations, along with the text, take the reader through a wide range of emotions as Kimberly faces her loss. A timeless story that appeals to young listeners, early readers, and adults alike.



Wherever You Are my love will find you

written and illustrated by Nancy Tillman

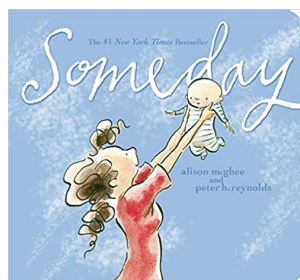
People of all ages - babies and adults - are drawn to this book. Why? Because it speaks a universal truth from the heart to the heart: even if you cannot see me or hear me, even if I am not near you or in this world, my love is. Even the design of this book brings comfort with its unique, calming illustrations and its board book size and feel. The gentle flowing text meets children where they are and provides an opening for deep connections.



Thank you, Grandpa

written by Lynn Plourde illustrated by Jason Cockcroft

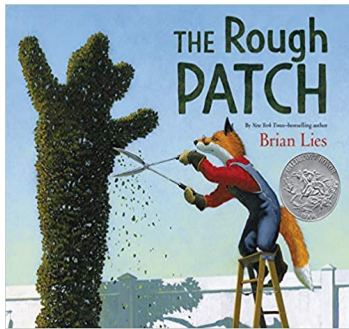
This book draws its readers into a secure loving relationship between a granddaughter and her grandfather. Through the beautifully illustrated pages and action based text, you walk alongside them discovering life as you see them changing and growing older - until the day the granddaughter walks alone. She is sad, but because Grandpa has walked with her and taught her in a very naturally occurring, organic way, she knows what to do. This book evokes a wide range of feelings including empowerment from within.



Someday

written by Alison McGhee illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds

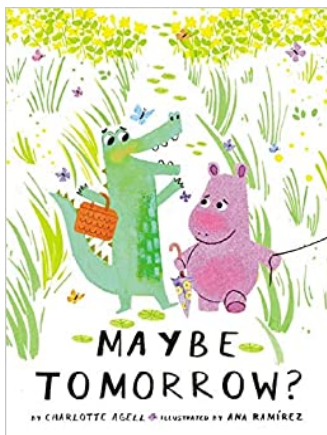
Someday is a deceptively simple narrative spoken to a newborn baby by her mother. It is a gentle introduction to the fact that death is a part of every life. "*Someday, a long time from now, your own hair will glow silver in the sun. And when that day comes, love, you will remember me.*" This tender lifecycle story provides reassurance to a grieving child.



The Rough Patch

written and illustrated by Brian Lies

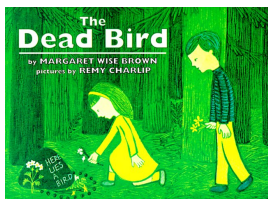
The title of this book, to me, speaks volumes. Grief is a period of life when you literally are living in a rough patch - for a while. Death, loss, and grief can feel rough, dark, lonely, and hopeless. When Evan's dog dies he is so filled with sadness and anger that he destroys the garden they loved, turning it into "the saddest and most desolate spot he could." However, the healing powers of love and nature slowly ease their way in, smoothing over the rough patch and creating beauty again.



Maybe Tomorrow?

written by Charlotte Agell illustrated by Ana Ramirez Gonzalez

Maybe it's the charm of a hippopotamus named Elba dragging her big block everywhere she goes or an equally charming alligator named Norris who dances wherever he goes, but whichever it is, this book draws you in and guides you in feeling loss, sadness, kindness, hope, and friendship. Norris meets Elba where she is and gently walks with her, offering to lighten her heavy load - never pushy, always inviting - never judging, always hopeful. "Maybe tomorrow?" he says. Maybe that's what we all need - the strength and company of someone who can believe in tomorrow for us when we are lost in our own darkness of today.

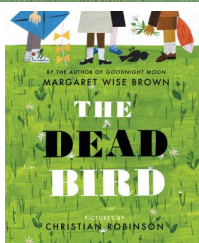
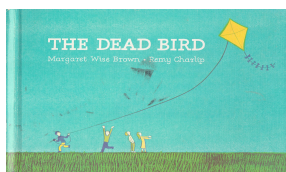


The Dead Bird

written by Margaret Wise Brown text copyright 1938 first published 1958

originally illustrated by Remy Charlip reissued in 2016 with new illustrations by Christian Robinson

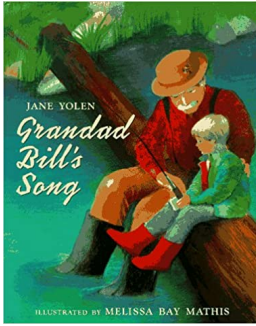
This beautiful classic has been a favorite of mine for over 30 years. Its straight-talking text tells the story of children who find a dead bird. The children observe that the bird is cold, stiff, and has no heartbeat. They decide to have a funeral and bury the bird. As young readers and listeners engage with this book they learn about rituals of death and the role they play when a death occurs. The fact that it has stood the test of time, has never gone out of print, and was reissued with new illustrations after forty-five years on the market speaks to the value of this book. If you are fortunate enough to have or find a copy with the original illustrations it is noteworthy to compare them to the newer illustration to see that they each add depth to the text in different ways.



The Invisible String

written by Patrice Karst illustrated by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff

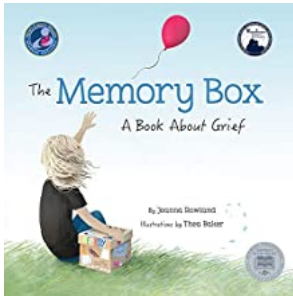
A thoughtful, poignant, and heartfelt book that assures us that no matter where anyone is at any point, whether dead or alive, we're all connected by an invisible string. That string is strong and unbreakable; that string is called love.



Granddad Bill's Song

written by Jane Yolen illustrated by Melissa Bay Mathis

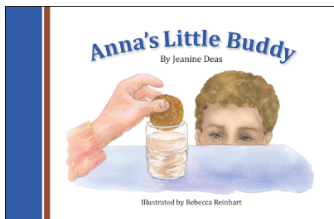
A little boy, seeking to express his feelings after the death of his grandfather, asks each grownup in Granddad's life, "What did you do on the day Granddad died?" Each answer addresses an aspect of grieving and tells the story of Granddad from birth to death. Told in a smooth flowing lyrical poem that comforts readers, and with a mixture of photos and illustrations.



The Memory Box

written by Joanna Rowland illustrated by Thea Baker

"I lost my balloon once. I was sad. But not as sad as I am now." These simple, clear statements declare the depth of her loss. A heartfelt and comforting story that addresses the hard realities of death: What do I do with my feelings? Will I forget you? Creating a memory box assures her, "You're still with me in my heart." The unique point of view allows the reader to imagine the loss of any person they have loved - a friend, a family member, or even a pet.



Anna's Little Buddy

written by Jeanine Deas illustrated by Rebecca Reinhart

Anna and Warren live next door. A little boy and his Mom develop a warm, meaningful relationship with them. Anna calls out to him "Hey, little buddy!" When Anna gets sick their relationship changes but stays very special. The gentle text, told in the voice of the child, guides the reader through joy and sadness, through the steps of saying goodbye, and into a glimpse of healing.

One Wave At A Time

written by Holly Thompson illustrated by Ashley Crowley

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney

written by Judith Viorst illustrated by Erik Blegvad

Sad Isn't Bad

written by Michaelene Mundy illustrated by Michaelene Mundy

The Scare

written by Charlotte Moundlic illustrated by Olivier Tallec

Sammy In The Sky

written by Barbara Walsh illustrated by Jamie Wyeth

Samantha Jane's Missing Smile

written by Julie Kaplow and Donna Pincus illustrated by Beth Spiegel

I Miss You

written and illustrated by Pat Thomas

Love is Forever

written by Casey Rislov illustrated by Rachael Baslsatis

ida, ALWAYS

written by Caron Levis illustrated by Charles Santoso

Tear Soup

written by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen illustrated by Taylor Bills