**Notes for children following collective loss**

As a child, it can seem that life can be upside down at times. You are happy one day and then something happens to change all that. A person you love and care for has died.

When someone you love dies, you feel grief. It’s not always easy being a child coping with death; grief can come out in thoughts and feelings. It can change the way your body feels and acts.

You could be sad or mad when the death happens. It might feel like it's your fault or that you could have done something different. Maybe you are scared about someone else dying or even that you might die. You might cry, or maybe at times you don't feel anything at all. These are feelings and thoughts that lots of children feel when they experience grief after someone dies.

It is important to remember that all of you will react differently to the loss. You could feel very little (zero), to extreme feelings of grief or anger (ten). Whatever you feel that is o.k. and it is normal for people to have any of the range of feelings and sometimes all of those feelings over a period of time. If you don’t feel much right now, that doesn’t mean that you don’t care.

Maybe you can't sleep or don't feel like eating. Your tummy or head might hurt. Or you might feel jumpy or cranky with other people. You may not want to go to on with your normal acticities for a while or go out to play. Other children who are coping with death and grieving have these things happen too. If you do feel any of these things, try to be patient with yourself and others around you. Do nice things for yourself if you need to. Sleep if you feel tired, don’t force yourself to go out if you don’t feel like it. In time all of this will pass.

You might also feel different now from how you were. Like you are the only one who can know what it's like to have someone die. It may seem like your friends or other people who are not experiencing this are different around you and may not know what to say to you anymore. But there are other children who feel that way too.

You may be worried about the person who has died, that they might be sad or in pain or lonely. It is very important to know that when someone dies, they no longer feel any pain or worry or suffering. They are now in a happier place. You may be worried about yourself, your family or other friends. It is important to know that this person died from an illness that is not that common, in children or in adults. The chances of this happening to someone you know are very slim.

When children are grieving, it is very helpful if they can talk about the person who died and the feelings and thoughts that they have while coping with the death. Please find an adult, or someone else you trust, and talk with them about your questions, your fears and all the other things that are on your mind.

To help us today, we could make a memory box for our friend. Each of you will write something on a page and then draw a picture of a happy time you remember with them. We can keep these in the box and maybe at a later stage the family might like to have the box to remind them of how much your friend meant to you all.

I know that you are all very sad and shocked and maybe frightened by what happened to Claire, but again I want you to remember that Claire is o.k. now and she could be up there in heaven watching out for all of you.