

COPING WITH FATHER'S DAY

Father's Day can be a very difficult time for children whose Dad has died. What matters is that they are supported to remember Dad in whatever way feels right for them at this special time.

Being allowed to be free of other's expectations is empowering and important. Some children will want to remember Dad in a celebratory way, and will want to talk about him lots. Other children will want to be quieter in their reflections, and may be missing Dad and finding it hard to be positive.

Feeling that whatever you say, or however you want to mark the day won't be judged or criticised can give confidence and a sense of being in control, which in turn supports children to cope.

Being mindful of the build up to the day is important. Increasingly, we are surrounded by 'triggers' in the form of Father's Day cards for sale, television adverts and posters about Father's Day. These reminders can be painful and can cause a great deal of sadness, but it can also be painful to not have the opportunity to remember Dad.

Talking about Dad

If the child wants to talk about Dad, then be prepared for this and make sure that you can get support for yourself, especially if you are also grieving for him. It can be helpful to have some prompt questions such as:

- When I think about Dad I feel...
- When I picture Dad I see...
- Dad was special because...
- When I remember Dad it makes me feel...

Father's Day is an opportunity to remember all the special things that Dad did, and even though he is not alive any more, his legacy lives on in his children and their memories of him.



Top tips for remembering Dad on Father's Day

- Visit a special place to remember him – this might be his grave or where his ashes are scattered, but it could also be a place which has special significance for other reasons
- Start a memory box if you haven't already done so, and fill it with special and significant mementos
- Write a special message or make a special card for Dad, and add it to your memory box if you have one
- Plant bulbs, flowers or a shrub in memory of Dad
- Blow bubbles and send Dad your love on the wind
- Bake a cake and decorate it in a way which symbolises your love for Dad
- Make a picture frame and frame a special photo of him, or a drawing that you have done about him
- Talk to someone who knew Dad well – listen to their stories about him
- Write a story, a poem or a song about your Dad and why he was special to you
- Prepare and eat his favourite meal – was it curry, a roast dinner, a healthy salad?
- Play Dad's favourite music and dance
- Make a scrapbook of all your special memories of Dad
- Write down all the things you'd like to tell Dad – all the achievements you have made since he died so that you can feel proud and strong of how you are coping