

# Bear Us In Mind

A Psychological Toolkit For Children



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## Toolkit Contents

Hello, and welcome to your  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL TOOLKIT**

**Whether you are a child's parent, their host in the UK or a supporting adult from their school or local community, this kit is for you.**

This toolkit has been compiled for families displaced due to the war in Ukraine, but it can be easily adapted for refugees from other countries.

**A small team of us have collaborated on a range of tools that we hope will help you to support any child or young person impacted by separation, loss or bereavement.** So often, with just a little support and understanding, a child can manage the most unthinkable of circumstances and so can their parents. They find strength they didn't know they had. The hope and determination of the Ukrainian people has been an inspiration to the world and has guided us in the production of this special toolkit.



Over 30 years' experience working directly with families who are trying to rebuild their lives after great loss has allowed us to choose tools that are simple and safe for you to use. It is our hope that you will build a deeper connection to the children you have chosen to share this toolkit with, at times having fun with it, and at other times allowing for complex emotions like sorrow and anger to be expressed.

The tools will help with the letting go of trauma, holding on to special memories and rebuilding strength and trust. Grief is a natural reaction, and these tools will help you support both the expression and management of grief. If a child shows more severe signs of trauma, then you may need to seek specialist help. There are several specialist national helplines and partners at the end of 'toolkit guidelines' who you can contact if needed.

### AIMS OF THE TOOLKIT

- To support an adult (parent, teacher, volunteer etc.) who wants to help a displaced child to process separation, loss and/or bereavement
- To provide videos and written information to build confidence to use the eight tools
- To provide practical, simple and safe tools to help all children adjusting to change

Please visit our website to register your box and watch the nine short films about how to use the tools to optimum effect. We have also written worksheets for each of the tools, which can be found both on our website, alongside the corresponding video, or towards the end of these guidelines. The films and written guidelines are available in both English and Ukrainian.

**Please stay in touch and let us know how you are getting on.**

Children need to know they are not alone. Equally, a Ukrainian parent may want to swap stories with others who will understand. We have therefore created a Bear Us In Mind community on our website and Instagram pages. We are unable to respond to individual queries on an individual child, however we will try to respond to any themes that emerge on our website under FAQs.



[www.bearusinmind.org.uk](http://www.bearusinmind.org.uk)

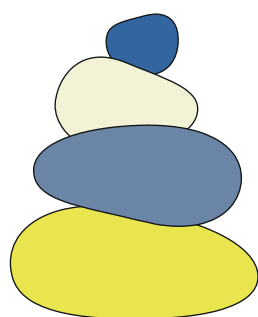


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## A psychological toolkit for children who have experienced loss and separation



Balancing  
Memories

- To encourage a child to describe difficult memories and the different impact on their **senses** (what they thought, heard, smelt, touched etc.)
- To encourage a child to **edit** and **balance** their memories
- To help reduce the frequency of **flashbacks** and improve **concentration**

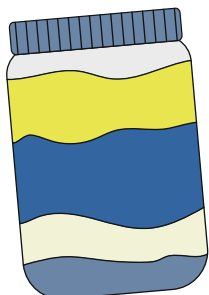
This tool is a simple collection of three stones to help a child process trauma and balance difficult and precious memories. On our website you can find our films, which will help to explain how trauma can impact a child's brain. The Balancing Memories video will also demonstrate how this work can help to reduce the challenge of unprocessed trauma.



There Will Be Light,  
There Will Be Hope

- To build **trust** between a child, their parent and their supporter
- To experience **shared grieving**
- To have a positive way of recognising **important dates**

The tool in the kit for this activity is a candle, which can be used to establish a sense of calm when it is time to work with the child; to create a special ritual for the family and host family to enjoy together; to mark significant dates for the family; and simply to make a wish, keeping the flame of hope alight in these young people. The candle in our kits is infused with soothing essential oils and is inscribed with '**There Will Be Light, There Will Be Hope**', a phrase chosen by a Ukrainian woman to inspire strength in others affected by the war.



Friendship Rainbow

- To hold on to **friendships from home**
- To allow others to understand what these **relationships** mean to the child
- To acknowledge the importance of **new friendships**

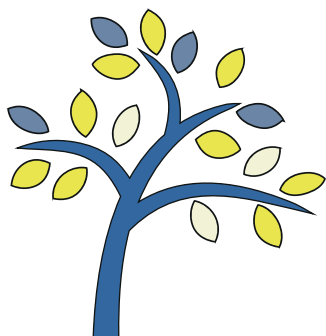
This is a simple but impactful tool that will help a child to share thoughts of their friends back home. The child colours white salt with chalks chosen to represent each friend and then stores this collection of colours in a jar. They can add to it as they develop new friendships: this is what we call 'the grief swing' - allowing oneself to both hold on and let go during an experience of loss.



We Are Family

- To create a strong symbol for **family unity**
- To enable a child to manage **separation anxiety** and night-time fears
- To use **sensory connections** to soothe (e.g. scent, touch)

A family of bears, both large and small, to represent the solidarity and strength of the family unit and provide comfort to children experiencing separation anxiety. The child can then take photos of the bears with drawings or messages for loved ones. These can be shared with the Bear Us In Mind community online, and especially with family members in Ukraine where possible.

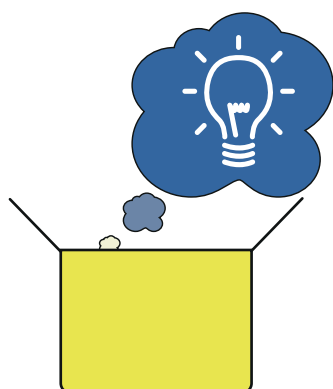


### Growing Around Grief\*

- To engage the child in the **outdoors** and show the importance of **movement** when managing grief
- To show the benefits of a **growth mindset** when managing grief
- To create a greater sense of control and mastery of **skills the child values**

With all the many losses, a child can feel quite suffocated by grief. This tool – sunflower seeds to plant with their family – is all about growing around their grief, not ignoring it, but looking at how they can begin to rebuild their lives, as symbolised by the growing of tiny green shoots.

My Family Tree and Me is another powerful tool in this collection that helps a child to build a stronger sense of self and where they have come from. Their drawing of a tree will help them identify and share the most important people who have shaped their lives (the roots), their strengths (the trunk), their hopes for the future (the branches), the new people they trust and respect (the leaves) and the things they love to do that gives them energy, as symbolised by the sun.



### Little Box of BIG Thoughts

- **To expand the stories**, we tell ourselves about other people in our family
- To **strengthen the connection** between an older child and a parent
- To promote the **continuing bonds** that reassure a child separated from family through displacement or bereavement

A simple but impactful gift for both parents and children of all ages, these small cards carry a series of incomplete sentences for each family member to complete, prompting conversations and the expression of a range of emotions, hopes and fears. There is an electronic version of this tool that can be filled in and sent to someone or you can make a set of cards to give as a gift.

\*Lois Tonkin - Growing around Grief - another way of looking at grief recovery. Bereavement Care Volume 5, 1996 issue 1



This Is Me

- To encourage a child to explore what makes them **unique** – their identity
- To hold on to a sense of **PAST** and **PRESENT**
- To help them to share their **personality and culture** in a new setting/country

These tools are designed to help a child talk about life before, life now and to retain a sense of what can never be lost. You will use simple worksheets to choose photographs or capture drawings and words to describe what is important to the child. Together you can make a photo book and then send it off to be printed. It will give them something tangible to have to hand and read if they are feeling lost or lonely.



You Will Be Okay

- To find **strength**, stay **hopeful** and get to grips with grief
- To support a child when someone **important** to them has **died**
- To help an adult supporter to have **empathy** and an **expanded grief toolkit**

Not all children you support with separation and loss will use this tool. This book is only to be given to a child if they have been bereaved. We recommend the supporters who are using the Bear Us In Mind toolkit read it. The seven grief muscles involve a range of practical tools that will help the child to start a more open conversation. Acknowledging the child's feelings and thoughts may help to avoid the more complicated aspects of grief that can be shown in their behaviour.

**You Will Be Okay** was published in 2021 by Hachette Children's Group. It is one of the first non-fiction books about grief for children aged 9 and above. The book helps children deal with bereavement from all types of death and we are currently working with the publisher on a translation into Ukrainian.