

## Talking to children about their experience

**Children and young people need acknowledgement that when someone they care about has a serious illness it may be very difficult to cope with at times.**

They may need reassurance that it is hard to see someone they love change, or be in pain, or not be able to do the things with you that they used to do. It could be that someone they love has been ill for a very long time but as they are getting older they are noticing things more. Children often tell us how unfair it feels that this has happened to their family and how difficult they are finding it to cope with the changes.

“Since my sister’s been ill she gets all the attention. Mum’s always spending time with her”

“Dad can’t play football with me anymore. He spends most of the time sleeping.”

“It’s scary seeing Mum with no hair!

“When I’m at school I worry about how mum is and what is happening at home”

“I feel really angry that this has happened to my family. It’s just not fair!”

“I hate seeing the way Dad looks. He’s got really thin & weak”

“My friends treat me differently”

“Everyone in the family has changed”

“No-one tells me what’s going on but I know there’s something wrong”

“I’m scared he’s going to die”

The children and young people we see tell us that they feel all sorts of different feelings, including:

- **SAD**
- **UPSET**
- **ANGRY**
- **LONELY**
- **WORRIED**
- **SCARED**
- **CONFUSED**
- **STRESSED**
- **BORED**
- **FED UP**
- **HOPEFUL**
- **HOPELESS**

Feeling like this can be really hard to deal with, and it is important to acknowledge the additional pressure they may feel whilst still having to do all the usual things like get up each morning, go to school / college / job, be with their friends, tidy their bedroom, eat, sleep etc.

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It may also be the case that they have had to take on extra responsibilities such as doing housework, cooking, or looking after siblings.

It's really important that they are encouraged to still have fun and have breaks from thinking about the person who is ill.

### **Who can they talk to?**

You could explain that it can help to talk about how they are feeling and that if they keep everything bottled up inside it can build up and make it hard to cope with everyday life.

Mention that there might be people they can talk to in the family, someone in their school or they could talk to trusted friends.

You could also highlight that there are times when they might find it helpful to talk to someone who is separate from all the things they usually do.

You can tell them that, at Daisy's Dream, we often visit children and young people who have someone in their family with a serious illness.

Unfortunately, we can't make the ill person better, but we can:

- Listen to them without getting upset

- Discuss their worries

- Help them find ways to cope with their worries and feelings

- Give them information and advice

- Visit them at home or school

**If you would like to find out more about talking to someone from Daisy's Dream, please contact us on 0118 934 2604.**

You can also have a look at the Serious Illness section of our website for a list of organisations that you, and they, might find helpful or interesting to read more about.

**Call us: 0118 934 2604**

**Email us: [info@daisysdream.org.uk](mailto:info@daisysdream.org.uk)**

**[www.daisysdream.org.uk](http://www.daisysdream.org.uk)**