

The Bench Under the Big Tree

Helping Young Children Understand Loss of a Grandparent

Janet Paul · Recommended ages 3–8 · A 24-page picture book to read aloud

ABOUT THIS BOOK

The death of a grandparent is often a child's first experience with grief. *The Bench Under the Big Tree* is a gentle rhyming picture book that helps young children understand that loss with warmth and reassurance. A child returns to a beloved bench beneath a protective tree — a place that once held shared time with a grandparent — and the story shows how love can stay close even when someone is no longer there.

BEST FOR

LOSS

Children who have lost a grandma, grandpa, nana, papa, or other grandparent.

SETTINGS

Counseling office, classroom after a loss, hospice family room, library, and at home

BEFORE YOU READ

You might begin by asking if the child has a special place they shared with their grandparent, but it is fine if they do not want to say. Read at an unhurried pace. The language is soft enough for bedtime and clear enough for a first conversation about death, without graphic detail.

TALKING TOGETHER

1. What do you remember about time you spent with your grandparent?
2. Is there a place that still reminds you of them?
3. How did this story make you feel?
4. What helps love feel close, even when someone is no longer here?
5. Is there something you would like to remember or say about your grandparent?

SIMPLE ACTIVITIES

Draw your special place

Invite the child to draw a bench, a tree, or another place that holds memories of their grandparent.

A memory to keep

Together, write or tell one favorite memory, or add a small drawing to a memory jar or envelope the child can keep.

Something you shared

If the child wishes, look at a photo, name a shared activity, or talk about a place that still reminds you of their grandparent.

GENTLE REMINDERS FOR GROWN-UPS

- Let the child lead. Some children will talk a lot; others will be quiet. Both are okay.
- It is okay to say "I don't know." Honest, simple answers are enough.
- Watch for signs that a child may need more support — such as lasting trouble with sleep, eating, play, or school, or distress that does not ease — and connect with a counselor or grief professional.

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