

Supporting Children Born After the Death of a Sibling

Children born after the death of a baby or child - sometimes called rainbow babies - often need gentle, age-appropriate support to understand their family story. Some families embrace the term “rainbow baby,” while others prefer not to use it. Either choice is valid.

Helping Young Children Understand

Around age three, children begin to ask questions about siblings they cannot meet. Simple, honest language helps them make sense of death:

- “Your brother or sister died.”
- “When someone dies, their heart stops beating and they don’t breathe.”
- “People cannot come back once they have died, but we can always love them and talk about them.”
- “We can’t be with your sibling, but we can remember them.”

Understanding Their Feelings

It’s common for children to:

- Miss their sibling
- Try to imagine ways to “get them back”
- Feel confused or sad as they learn about death

Bonding With a Sibling They Never Met

Children often form a bond with their sibling over time. They may:

- Ask how or why their sibling died
- Talk openly about their sibling being dead
- Draw pictures including their sibling
- Mention them to teachers or strangers

Letting teachers know about the sibling can help them support your child during family-themed activities.

These reactions are part of learning to love someone they never met. If a child struggles, professional support can help them explore their feelings. Bodie’s Treasured Memory Bags are one resource designed for this purpose.



Remembering as a Family

There is no right or wrong way to include a child who has died in everyday life. Families often find comfort in traditions such as:

- Sharing photos and memories
- Planting flowers or trees
- Saying the child's name
- Tying ribbons
- Marking birthdays or anniversaries
- Lighting candles
- Visiting special places
- Planning a family day out

Letting your living children guide how they want to include their sibling can be empowering.

Helpful Books for Children

- **Ethan's Butterflies** — Jonas Simpson
- **To My Rainbow Baby With Love** — Tamika McCauley
- **The Dragonfly Story** — Owen Kelly
- **I Miss You: A First Look at Death** — Pat Thomas
- **Let's Talk About When Someone Dies** — Molly Potter

Bereavement support resources

Bodie's Treasured Memory Bags are filled with grief resources for bereaved siblings to encourage conversations about death, understand grief and remember their sibling. They are available for siblings aged 3-16 years; we also provide SEND bag.



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