

Review

Brenda Mallon, *Building Continuing Bonds for Grieving and Bereaved Children*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018, 144 pp. (Pbk). ISBN: 987-1-78592-193-3, £14.99.

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Brenda Mallon is a psychotherapist/counsellor, creative writing tutor, workshop leader and author. As a Primary School teacher she worked in the School Psychological Service. Training as a counsellor in 1980 she was one of the first people to introduce counselling into schools in Britain. After completing her Masters in Education at Manchester's Victoria University, Brenda began concentrating on training teachers who worked with distressed children. She also set up her own psychotherapeutic practice in Manchester and began her writing career. Specializing in bereavement, loss and separation, and with those who have a life-threatening illness, she offers one-to-one work with adults and children. Mallon has been on the Board of Directors of the International Association for the Study of Dreams and is vice chair of the Manchester Area Bereavement Forum. Her other publications include *The Dream Bible* (2004, 2009, 2011), *Creative Visualisation with Colour: Healing Your Life with the Power of Colour* (1999), *Mystic Symbols: The Complete Guide to Magic and Sacred Signs and Symbols* (2007).

Building Continuing Bonds for Grieving and Bereaved Children: A Guide for Counsellors and Practitioners is written for anyone working with or caring for bereaved or grieving children. Looking along my colleague's bookshelves it strikes me that there is quite a lot already available in terms of books and resources relating to bereavement and the support of children, which is no bad thing. The particular focus of this book, "continuing bonds", is an important one. Developing and maintaining relationship has long been held as fundamental to good care.

After an introduction which highlights that bereaved children need adults and that adults caring for bereaved children need healthy support patterns, there follow seven chapters under different themes. Chapter 1, *Keeping Love*

in Your Heart, makes the point that making and maintaining bonds with the deceased is helpful and natural. It offers useful pointers towards things like resilience, making memories and having conversations that hold the future open. Chapter 2, “Harvesting Stories”, looks at exploring opportunities to share and experience stories. Stories can help us develop resources to help us live with loss. Chapter 3, “Keeping Up Conversations”, offers many examples of how to keep conversations going creatively and practically. Chapter 4, “Guiding Lights: Dreams and Spirituality”, explains the importance of dreams and how they express and enable spiritual understanding and how they are a way to finding meaning, peace and hope. Chapter 5, “Loving Yourself When Someone You Love Has Died”, begins with case studies where the need for self-care is highlighted. Much of the chapter comprises of advice intended to be read by children. Chapter 6, “Making Memories Together When Someone You Love Is Dying”, using case studies again offers information and advice about working together with the dying in creating healing and hopeful memories. Chapter 7, “Useful Resources”, gives information about relevant books and organizations. With résumés for each entry any individual or department working with bereaved children would find this helpful.

The content and structure of the book is simple, straightforward and practical. This will be a helpful approach for those wanting an easy way into the subject but less enriching for those needing something more thoughtful or academic. If there is a theme helpful to all running through, it is a certain essence of hopefulness that seeps through constantly. Although having said that, I realize that the work could have benefited from spending some time in the darker shades of grief and bereavement. What happens when things go wrong and the techniques don’t work and hope is lost? What do we do? How will this affect all those involved? Some chaplains too will find the chapter relating to spirituality somewhat lacking for want of more about different religious and cultural perspectives.

Having worked as a chaplain in adult palliative care for almost seven years what I like most about this book is the confidence it gave me to know that I can also work with children. If one already has some basic core skills in caring and counselling Mallon’s work is a useful resource. This book gives the novice and more experienced practitioner guidance, information, advice and comment about the main issues and is helpful in enriching practice in healthcare, private practice and in education.