

Bereavement book club with Winston's Wish

INDUSTRY

Not-for-profit

KEY CHALLENGES

Winston's Wish needed a series of books to clearly and sensitively illustrate the process of child bereavement.

SOLUTION

A deeply visual series of 12 books guiding both parent and child through loss.

12

Stories

384

Pages

2,400

Books printed

41,000

Children in the UK are bereaved of a parent before the age of 18

The challenge

In 2021, as part of our Corporate Social Responsibility as a business, we wanted to give back to a charity that meant a lot to us and offer our services free of charge. The opportunity arose to create a series of books for children and parents with bereavement charity, Winston's Wish – and we eagerly took on the challenge.

The solution: a labour of love

By the end of the year-long design project, we had created a 12-part book series guiding children and parents through loss. The series would act as Winston's Wish's very own book club, with each subscriber receiving an illustrated book on a different emotion every month.

With each book based around a key emotion, it was essential that all aspects of bereavement

were carefully explored. The emotions chosen included common feelings such as shock, anger, fear, and sadness, but also those not necessarily associated with grief, such as relief and happiness.

Spearheading the project was Ellie Topham, Individual Giving & Supporter Care Manager, Winston's Wish, and Jess Pardoe, Creative Content Officer, Winston's Wish, who worked collaboratively with our designers to make sure the project ran smoothly. Here at Learning Nexus, it was Lead Creative Designer, Louisa Appleton who kicked off the project before it was handed over to Creative Designer, Steph Collins, to complete. Put together with thought and reflection, the 12

Tools for navigating grief

books were designed as a tool to help children process their emotions through their grief journey.

Whilst grieving, speaking to someone outside the family unit can often seem daunting, so the series gives those grieving something to work with, or

in the case where there's no one-to-one support available quickly, something that they've got access to immediately.

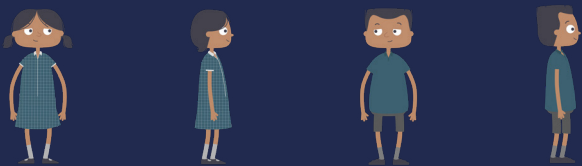
"We wanted to develop a product for bereaved children who would not otherwise have access to our services. Each book helps a family to open a conversation themselves. And for children who have had one-to-one time with Winston's Wish, they help continue that conversation at home. Grief is not a linear path, and these books can sit on their bookshelf, to be looked at again any time," explains Ellie Topham, Individual Giving & Supporter Care Manager, Winston's Wish.

Adding to Ellie's thoughts is Director of Fundraising & Marketing at Winston's Wish, Paul Moore. He says: "The book club provides an opportunity for children who otherwise might not come into contact with the work of Winston's Wish. It can be used as a tool to open important conversations, helps children to normalise their experience of grief, and ultimately reminds them that they are not alone."

A collaborative design process

The design of the books was key in creating a body of work that was both sensitive and informative. To begin with, the team at Winston's Wish scoped out what the 12 different emotions and characters would be. Then, it was down to the Learning Nexus team to come up with a set of illustrations that encapsulated each of those emotions.

Inspired by Winston's Wish's signature branding, our team created each monster. Using a pair of little monsters we had designed for the charity previously, our team worked emotions in to shapes. Expressive eyes and a range of colours and accessories were added so that each monster had its own identity.

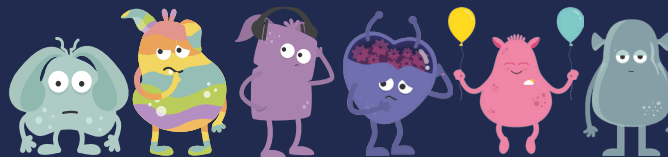


Engaging the children

As part of the project, children associated with the charity were also engaged via a competition that challenged children to design the character that would be used to illustrate the 'Happy' emotion. The winning design was a beautiful representation of how children perceive the emotion, and this little monster became the main character in the book.

In addition to the 'emotion monsters', two children, Max and Molly, feature throughout the books and these were created by the Learning Nexus design team.

Louisa Appleton, Lead Creative Designer, Learning Nexus, explains, "As I was working from home, I tested ideas out on my young daughter, Poppy, asking her, 'What do you think is happening on this page, and do you think this makes sense?'. Poppy also helped design the girl character's summer dress, and school uniform. So it had the seal of approval of a little one from the outset!"



Drawing from real life

In order for each book to be rooted in real life situations that both children and parents may encounter, a strong dialogue between Creative Content Officer, Jess, and Winston's Wish's practitioners was formed. These practitioners are a group of support workers who work with children and families, or on the charity's helpline.

"At the beginning, when I would start to write, I would ask the practitioner: 'How would this present normally? If someone has called the helpline about this, what have they said?' The practitioner would give me an outline, and then I took those examples and put that into day-to-day life," says Jess.

Ellie adds: "Our practitioners were very involved in the development of these books. Jess worked with them consistently to make sure we weaved some of the tools into the content, and that we're writing them in a way that we know connects with children in the context of grief."

Reassuring parents, too

The book series also includes a short Adult Guide, designed to help parents navigate bereavement alongside their children. The guide explores the range of emotions a child might feel after loss and offers discussion points for adults to talk about with their children.

"It's the unabridged version of what's in the book from a grown-up point of view," says Ellie. "It's there to help guide them as to some of the questions that might come up when a child reads the book. That extra layer is so important, because it's not just about giving a book to a child and expecting them to be able to digest it all in one go."

Jess adds: "As the parent or caregiver of the bereaved child, they're also likely to be going through grief themselves, so to help prepare them for some of the emotions their child may experience gives much-needed reassurance. In every single book, we explain how children's grief may differ from adults, and how it's perfectly normal for a child to go through a whole range of emotions within a short space of time, from extreme sadness to typical childhood joy at the sound of an ice-cream van, or the suggestion of a trip to the park.

This helps prepare adults for emotions they may have to deal with that could otherwise have come as a surprise."



Invaluable support

With the 12 books distributed through the book club, the project has served to enhance the services the charity delivers to families and caregivers.

“The collaboration between Winston’s Wish and Learning Nexus delivered something incredibly special, Jess Pardoe, Winston’s Wish, reflects.

“It’s been great having such a collaborative relationship that enabled us to bring our vision to life. We wanted to create something that would appeal to a lot of children and be easy to read and understand and achieving this was all dependant on the execution. Learning Nexus knew that from the start – that it needed to be a series that’s accessible and engaging, rather than something really niche.”

Paul Moore, Winston’s Wish, echoes Jess’s closing thoughts:

“Working with Learning Nexus has meant that we can focus our time and energy on finessing our content with the reassurance that the design was in more than capable hands. Learning Nexus have taken the time to really understand our cause and our specific needs at every stage. As a result, it feels that they’re just an extension of our own team. We’re incredibly grateful for all of their support.”

Paul Moore, Director of Fundraising and Marketing,
Winston’s Wish



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