

Following the sad death of Dame Deborah James last Tuesday, it made me reflect on the grief that we all face at different points in our lives.

Her obituary in The Guardian newspaper

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jun/29/dame-deborah-james-obituary> begins :

In the last five years of her life, Deborah James, who has died aged 40 from cancer, never stopped talking about life as worth living. She did this as co-host of BBC Radio 5 Live's award-winning, lively podcast about living with cancer, You, Me and the Big C, originally alongside the broadcast journalist [Rachael Bland](#), who died in 2018, and the [Girl Vs Cancer founder and activist Lauren Mahon](#).

From its first episode in March 2018, frankness, honesty and humour were the unique selling points of the show, and Deborah, diagnosed with stage 4 bowel cancer in December 2016, was its outrageous heart. She said that she had “the glam cancer”, and talked in detail about her experiences and symptoms, such as “pooing blood”, because “one of the biggest problems is that people aren’t frank enough”.

Her Bowelbabe Fund, as I type this, has raised just over £7 million – what a legacy for her to leave behind. <https://justgiving.com/campaign/BowelbabeFund>

In my previous job as a Deputy Head in a Primary school, I attended some training with the charity Winston's Wish. Our school had 3 children at the time who had lost parents and we wanted to learn more about what we could do to support them and their families – something I would imagine the schools that Dame Deborah's children, Hugo and Eloise, attend are considering right now.

On their website www.winstonswish.org they highlight that they were the UK's first childhood bereavement charity and have been supporting grieving children and young people since 1992. They provide emotional and practical bereavement support to children, young people and those who care for them.

One of the interesting parts of their website is where they talk about the 12 things you should know about grief [12 things I wish I'd known about grief | Winston's Wish \(winstonswish.org\)](#)

- 1) There aren't just 5 stages of grief
- 2) Grief isn't something you 'get over'
- 3) Getting help doesn't mean you're unwell or weak
- 4) Sudden bursts of emotion are normal when you're grieving
- 5) It's okay not to cry
- 6) Laughing and having fun is okay
- 7) You won't go back to your old self
- 8) You can still experience grief even if you didn't like or had a strained relationship with the person who has died
- 9) Telling people about yourself can need a bit of thought
- 10) It's impossible to replace someone who has died
- 11) Grief can be a physical pain
- 12) Well-meaning people can say ridiculous things

There is a really useful tab for young people – it includes articles for them to read. For example, around returning to school after a bereavement and, very movingly, stories written by young people about how they have dealt with grief in their own situations [Help 2 Make Sense | Support for grieving young people](#)