parent has died within the last six to nine months. They are encouraged think about what they have in common, and to talk about their dead parent, what happened, and how it feels to be different in school.

Card and pens are made available and they are invited to write, on a card, a question a bereaved adolescent might want to ask, so that perhaps together we can work out some answers to the things they have found difficult since their parent died. We emphasise that their answers could be helpful to other young people in the same position, and the cards are then put in a box so that the questions are anonymous.

This engenders a lot of sharing of memories and experiences, such as going to the funeral, seeing friends at school, answering the door or the phone to people asking for the dead parent, wondering if they should laugh when somebody had just died, how to deal with their sadness and, in some cases, with the guilt of often wishing that it was the other parent who had died.

Bereaved parents' group

We ran this small group for two sets of young parents eight months after the death of their children from cancer. Outside, they had to put on a brave face as others could not bear the unhappiness and did not want to talk about the child who had died. The group gave the parents the opportunity to cry and talk about their pain and the struggle to continue their lives. We did, exceptionally, run this group for eight sessions.

Procedure after groups

A short de-briefing is held after the groups, noting those about whom we are particularly concerned and need following up with letters or phone calls. Generally this involves two or three specific offers of help. Observations are noted in the bereaved person's record and these are shared with the member of the multi-disciplinary team who was involved with the family concerned. Relatives and friends who indicated that they would be attending but who did not arrive are automatically sent a brief note expressing our interest and concern.

We recognise that the volume of grief expressed by a group of bereaved relatives may affect the workers and they are encouraged to express their feelings. A supervision meeting is held between the social workers and volunteers every two or three months.

CONCLUSION

This article was written as part of our ritual of ending our many years of working together with bereaved people at the Hospice. As a social work team, we felt that the groups had many advantages. There is economy in seeing quite a lot of people together and the effect of peer group support, especially when similar experiences are shared, often decreases the feeling of isolation. Our sense is that it minimises the dependence some relatives could have on a hospice or palliative care unit.

We are aware that a number of hospices provide longer-term bereavement support on an individual basis and in groups[2]. However, we made a conscious decision to maximise our resources in a way that gave priority to assessment, and brief and short-term intervention. At the moment we are involved in a research project to gain feedback from relatives on their experience of the groups and we hope to report on this later.

References
1. Grenfell J. Joyce: by herself and her Friends. London, UK: Macmillan, 1980.
2. Wilkes E. The characteristics of hospice bereavement services. *Journal of Cancer Care*, 1993; Vol 2: 183-189.

Trailing the cemetery with children

Judy Harris
Primary School Teacher, West Norwood, London, UK

Several years ago I discovered West Norwood Cemetery as a teaching resource. As part of a local history project, I took a class of 11-year-olds and the visit was so successful, only beaten by Chessington World of Adventure, that I have repeated the Cemetery Trail several times with similar success.

I soon found that a tomb trek with children of this age is very different from one with adults. The Tombstone Trail laid out by the local Council may be an excellent introduction to the cemetery for adults, but children have not heard of most of the notable people; they are much more fascinated by visually interesting headstones and monuments.

Planning for a visit is particularly important. Obviously permission needs to be sought from the superintendent, and the teacher must be familiar with the cemetery (a local group, like the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery, may be able to help here). Equally important, however, is the classroom preparation. A few parents may express some disquiet about the visit and, very occasionally, permission will be withheld, but this has only happened twice in my school. The children can also be apprehensive. Thoughts of ghosts and skeletons may cause a few trem-

EDITOR'S NOTE

I found when my children were young that a walk round a cemetery was a wonderful way of getting them to think about death, and the tombstones with their inscriptions stimulated their fantasies about the dead people buried there. It was a short step then to introduce the idea that death is the end of life, that it happens to us all and to discuss how and why people die. This article might inspire readers to introduce children to these fascinating 'tomb treks'.

ors but the only really worried child, in my experience, was the boy whose religious upbringing engendered rather an over-developed fear of hell and damnation. Comments from both parents and children after visits have always been complimentary.

I try to portray the cemetery as a peaceful, fascinating place, full of history; but also a place where the peace or the grief of other must not be disturbed.

Recently-bereaved children may need special attention but I usually find they are reassured by the visit, taking comfort from reading the messages on wreaths and relating this to their experience. Looking at recent burials, the flowers and the messages, seems to fascinate most children; particular interest is shown in the graves of children. On a visit with her class of nine-year-olds, one of my colleagues said a prayer for the deceased child, which was much appreciated.

I allow the children to roam freely, within a clearly defined area, so they can choose what to look at. Admittedly I have had a few daunting moments. On my first visit, quietly and reverently on the way up a narrow path, we passed a disturbed slab, a hole and a scattering of bones. It is no joke being very publicly in charge of 28 running, screaming 11-year-olds. I have since avoided a repeat of this by warning them that they might see the odd dog's (!) bone lying around. Another visit occurred on a grey, rather misty day; not a good idea. Even a frequent visitor, as I am, appreciates the difference a sunny day makes.

On my last visit, we arrived at the same time as a funeral party. I hurriedly ushered my curious class through the group and hoped we would miss the interment. Unfortunately we later met the approaching hearse, the children being scattered across its path. Much to my horror and the children's intense interest, the coffin was that of a very young child. I unsuccessfully tried to arrange the children into a semblance of a respectful parade as they gawped at the coffin and the distraught mother. I do not think she would have even seen us, but perhaps she would have appreciated the sympathetic comments from the children.

We then continued to an area where the children could spread out, sit on the paths, and draw or copy from a variety of headstones. Unfortunately, on this occasion, a woman was tending a recent grave. I do not think she appreciated the child who, trying to be helpful, said 'You've got really good words on that stone. Would you like me to copy them for my project book?'.

So, what do we look at? Obviously the cemetery is an important resource for any historical project from Victorian times onwards. We look at interesting stones and look for interesting people. We draw the variety of shapes, the angels and cherubs being particular favourites. We copy interesting epitaphs and sentimental verses. We copy biographical details: the names and details show the ethnic origins of people from all over the world, from 1838 onwards.

My visits start with the grieving water nymph by the pond at the entrance. We marvel at the entrance archway and the impressive view. We look at the variety of memorials inside the gate. Of particular interest is the nine-year-old child's tomb with the robot design and epitaph from the 1970s: 'May the force be with you', already history to the children with me.

The number of handsome mausoleums next catch the eye, particular attention being drawn to a high Art Deco style mausoleum. We pause at Sir Hiram Maxim's stone while I give a short account of the work of 'the chronic inventor', and the gun which is named after him. We then look with more interest at a memorial with an unfading photograph of Lucy Gallup who died 110 years ago at the age of 35, and its likeness to the statue above. We find a recent teddy-bear stone and a fine monument with scupture of a hoarding squirrel. By this time the children have caught the mood and the enthusiasm.

We then take another path and draw an attractive stone in memory of Joe Hunte, opponent of racism. We see gravestones with names from many nationalities, including German, Chinese, Polish and Afro-Caribbean, many with photographs of the deceased, reflecting the long-term cultural diversity of south London. We explore a path to the tomb of a naval Captain, with its carving of ships. We look at great monuments bearing famous names, like Doulton and Tate, eagerly explore the marvellous Greek cemetery and wonder at the mosaics, the names and the vast mausoleums.

But we also pause at the well-tended graves of two ex-pupils of the school, both killed in early adulthood in the mid-1980s: one by a terrorist's bomb as he served with the RAF band in Germany, the other by a friend, another ex-pupil, in a knife fight.

We then walk down to an area where there is room to relax, write and draw before the return to school. This area has a wealth of varying stones, angels and epitaphs to copy, perhaps the favourite being the cherub and verse for Dulcie Amy Siemssen, died 1907, aged four.

'This lovely bud so young and fair
Called from our midst so soon
Just came to show how sweet a flower
In Paradise could bloom.'

As we leave to return to school, I hope to have instilled in the children an appreciation of the cemetery as a part of their heritage, as a place of peace, of rest and a memorial for the dead.

'Miss, it's really good in there. Can we bring drinks next time?'

This article is reprinted from the Friends of Norwood Cemetery *Newsletter* No 16, October 1993, by kind permission of the author and Editor. The Friends also run tours of the cemetery for adults. Tel: 0181 761 3996.

NAFSIYAT INTERCULTURAL THERAPY CENTRE

Nafsiyat was set up in London, UK, in 1983 to provide a specialist psychotherapy centre for black and other minorities. Help is offered to adults, adolescents and children experiencing psychiatric problems or emotional distress, taking into account the racial and cultural component in mental illness. The therapy is either one-to-one or with couples, families or groups.

Nafsiyat also organises training courses and seminars in the field of intercultural therapy, and gives consultation on cases to other professionals.

Research has been conducted into the efficacy of the treatment at Nafsiyat. New ways of therapy are developed through constant monitoring and evaluation of the work. The address is:

Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre,
278 Seven Sisters Road
London N4 2HY, UK