



GRIEF 102

WORKING WITH AND  
SUPPORTING GRIEVING  
CHILDREN & FAMILIES:

INTERVENTIONS AND  
RESOURCES  
FOR PROFESSIONALS

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# THE Cove CENTER FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN





# Before We Dive in

- **Honor your emotions:**  
This can be a challenging conversation that might activate your own grief and/or painful memories. You are not alone—reach out for support!
- **Please take breaks as needed:**  
Grab a snack, take deep breaths, doodle, watch the recording later—do whatever you need to do to care for yourself.

# Self Check-In

Who and/or what are you personally grieving?

Feel free to type into the chat or take a moment to reflect...



# Objectives

Identify the unique challenges faced by grieving students

Discuss interventions for grieving students

Review effective communication with grieving families

Explore resources in the community for grieving families

Share self-care strategies for professionals

# Introduction



[Grief Out Loud: Teens Talk About Loss](#)

# How Grief Impacts Students: *Learning*

- Difficulty with focus and concentration
- "Grief fog" or "Grief brain"
- Interventions:
  - Be proactive: Don't wait for academic issues to develop or for grades to fall
  - Meet with the student, caregivers, and teachers to assess the child's needs and helpful accommodations

Source: Schonfeld & Quackenbush, 2021

# How Grief Impacts Students:

## *Physical & Emotional Changes*

- Depressed mood, feelings of guilt/shame, increased isolation, outbursts of anger/frustration
- Changes in appetite and sleep
- Sudden onset of physical ailments: Stomachaches, headaches
- Age regression

# How Grief Impacts Students:

*Pre-existing  
Conditions  
May  
Worsen*

- Grief adds a significant amount of stress, leading to worsening conditions such as:
  - Mental health issues
  - Learning disorders
  - Behavioral issues

# Factors that Determine How Students Respond to a Death

Relationship/level of connection to the deceased

Past experiences with loss

Age & understanding of death

Current coping skills

Methods of expressing emotions

Support network

Level of empathy towards others

# Identifying Grief Activators in a School Setting

Songs

Movies/TV Shows

Holidays (Major holidays, Mother's Day, Father's Day)

Birthdays

Death Anniversaries

Major School Events (games, shows, graduation, awards ceremonies)

Certain topics in classes (Drugs/Overdose)

Question:

What are some common phrases you should never say to a grieving student?

# Harmful Comments

What NOT to Say to a Student	Reasoning
"They're in a better place" "At least they're not in pain" "Some people have it worse"	Minimizes the experience of the student. Do not attempt to "cheer up" or make the student "feel better." Student will not feel comfortable speaking to you
"You have to be strong for your family"	Places unfair expectations on the grieving child and encourages them to bottle up their grief
"I lost my _____ when I was younger"	Comparing losses may cause a student to shut down. Self-disclosure may be helpful eventually, but maintain focus on the student's loss
"You'll get over it."	Insensitive and dismissive
"Don't be sad! You're okay!"	Dismissive of their feelings and minimizes pain
"You must be angry/sad"	We cannot assume or tell someone how they ought to feel. Ask how they are feeling.
"They are in Heaven now."	Cultural Competence: Everyone has different beliefs. Ask questions and be curious

Source: [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org)

# Helpful Comments

What TO Say to a Student	Reasoning
Ask open-ended questions about feelings: "It's completely normal to have many strong feelings when something like this happens-- how are you feeling today?"	Normalizes the experience, allows student to respond without judgment
"It can be so hard to focus in class when grieving. Is there anything we as staff can do to support you during the school day?"	Shows the student you are aware of the challenges they might be facing, allows student to give feedback
"What kinds of memories do you have about your person (mom, dad, friend, etc.)?"	Shows the student that you are curious and allows them to speak openly about their person
"Tell me more about what this has been like for you."	Meets the student where they are—allows them to talk about what's on their mind
"I'm here for you if you would like to talk more."	Opens the door, allows student to come to you when they are ready
"Your feelings are valid. It's completely normal to feel that way."	Validates the student's feelings
"This is a safe space to talk—you don't have to put on a 'brave face.'"	Allows student to drop their "mask" and express themselves openly

Source: [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org)



## General Considerations: Communicating with Students and Families After a Death in the Family

- Express condolences: Do not overwhelm family with calls
- Ask the family if there is anything they would like to share regarding the death
- Validate and normalize the range of feelings one might be experiencing
- Do not try to "brightside." *NO "AT LEAST" STATEMENTS*
- Remember it is not your job to make anyone "feel better."
- Inquire about funeral arrangements
- Ask the family and the student what, if anything, they would like the school staff to share with other students

Source: [schoolcrisiscenter.org](http://schoolcrisiscenter.org)

## General Considerations: Communicating with Families Following Death of a Child

- **Ground yourself first**
- **Express condolences:** Have a few key people contact the family
- **Ask family about any special requests:**
  - **What information would they like to be shared with students?**
  - **Do they want students to attend the child's funeral?**
  - **Would they like condolence cards from the school community?**
- **Ensure student's name/contact info is removed from automated calls**
- **Ask about any school-aged siblings to ensure they receive support**
- **Ask what type of ongoing involvement (if any) the family would like to have with the school community**

Source: [schoolcrisiscenter.org](http://schoolcrisiscenter.org)



## Surviving Siblings: "The Forgotten Grievers"

- Following the death of a child, siblings are often asked by others: "How are your parents doing?" Lack of focus on sibling's grief process
- Siblings often report feeling the need to "put on a brave face" for their parents following a death
- Siblings often delay or hide their grief as not to further upset their grieving parents
- Siblings report feeling the impossible pressure to "live up to" their deceased sibling's legacy
- Siblings may try to become the "perfect child"
- Siblings may blame themselves for the death and wonder if parents wish they would have died instead of their sibling
- When sibling grief is left unattended, they may begin to cope in maladaptive ways: Self-harm, substance use, high-risk behaviors



## General Considerations After Death of a School Community Member



Upon learning of the death, activate the school crisis team to develop a plan

Notify all school staff prior to making announcements to students

Inform students at the same time, in smaller groups, in a familiar setting, and with a familiar staff person presenting the news

Allow students to express their emotions openly in a safe space

Prepare a statement for parents/caregivers so they are aware of the situation and the supports being offered by the school

Identify risk-factors that might indicate that a student needs mental health services beyond what the school can provide

Students may want to create art or write letters to the family of the deceased

Speak to parents about typical grief reactions vs reactions/behaviors of concern that require outside mental health support (ex: self-harm, suicidal ideation)



Source: [schoolcrisiscenter.org](https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org)

What was it like going  
back to school?

# General Considerations: Neurodiversity & Grief

*(Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Down Syndrome, Sensory Processing Disorders, Learning Disorders, and other Neurodevelopmental Disorders)*

Every person's grief experience is unique—what is helpful for one person may not be helpful for another. The following guidelines from the NACG can help set the stage when sharing about a death:

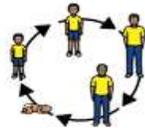
- "Promote trust by being honest, clear and timely with all communication
- Keep information in small manageable pieces
- Be prepared to repeat everything that you have said several times
- Use supportive devices or social stories, if appropriate, to support your initial explanations to promote the child's understanding
- Explain that the child may feel an array of emotions when a loss occurs. Validate that all feelings are OK and help them name them
- Explain what emotions a child may expect to observe in the people around them when a loss occurs
- Always end with reassurance that they are loved, supported and safe“
- Routine is incredibly important

## What is Death?

Death is the end of life.



Everybody's life has a beginning, a middle and an end.



When a person dies, it means that their body stops working.



Their heart does not beat any more.



They do not breathe.



This means: They don't eat. They don't sleep. They don't talk.



We will never see them alive again.



It is ok to have questions about death.



*Please do not reprint without permission.  
www.heartplayprogram.org*



## When Someone Dies

People are alive. They see, hear, feel things, eat, drink, move, breathe and sleep.

alive



I am alive. I see, hear, feel things, eat, drink, move, breathe, and sleep.



Everyone dies at some time.

die



People die from a sickness, an accident, or when they are old and their body stops working.

sick accident old



When people die, their body stops working. They cannot see, hear, feel things, eat, drink, move, or breathe.

die



When people die, they do not come back.

die



come back



My special person died and is not coming back.

person die come back



I miss my special person and may feel sad, mad, or confused and I may cry.

feelings



It is OK to feel this way and cry.

OK



I can think of all the fun and happy times I had with my special person.

happy



times

# Sample Sesame Street Video & Visual Aid for Celebration of Life, Funerals & Visitations,



[https://elunanetwork.org/assets/files/Someone Dies ALL.pdf](https://elunanetwork.org/assets/files/Someone_Dies_ALL.pdf)

# General Considerations: Suicide

- According to the CDC, suicide is a leading cause of death for middle and high school youth
- Youth suicide rates increased during the pandemic
- Contact the family to learn what information they wish to share, activate the school crisis team, identify high-risk students (friends, classmates, scapegoats), provide education to students/staff about suicide warning signs/what to do if you're concerned about a friend, encourage students/staff to seek support.
- Helpful training video for school staff: <https://grievingstudents.org/module-section/suicide/>

Source: schoolcrisiscenter.org

# General Considerations: Suicide

- Decrease stigma: Say “died by suicide” instead of “committed suicide”
- Students/staff may blame themselves and wonder how they could have prevented the suicide
- Students may become afraid of others dying by suicide
- This is an opportunity to provide education on mental health: Explain depression as a disease of the brain, and how suicide can be a symptom of depression
- It's important to explain the following:
  - “When someone dies of suicide, it is not the result of a single event such as a break-up, loss of a job, a death, or major disappointment, even though it may seem like that event was the cause of the death. Dying from suicide is a result of someone experiencing unbearable emotional pain, feeling hopeless about it ever getting better, and thinking death is the only way to stop that pain.”

# General Considerations: Suicide

- Any discussion of suicide must include the following:
  - Talk to someone (a trusted adult) if you or someone you know might be having suicidal thoughts
  - Do not keep secrets if you are worried about a friend
  - Hotline numbers:
    - Call or Text 988 Suicide and Crisis Line
    - Call 211
  - Post hotline numbers in common areas: Counseling office, bathroom, library, teacher's lounge, school newsletter, ID badge
- Inform students/staff how they can access support within the school/community

Source: [schoolcrisiscenter.org](http://schoolcrisiscenter.org)

# INTERVENTIONS





## Interventions:

### *Active Listening*



Oftentimes, the best intervention is to simply listen vs. responding



Grief must be witnessed: Allowing the grieving student to express their thoughts and emotions in a safe and non-judgmental environment is a powerful intervention



Ask open ended questions:

“How are you feeling today?”  
“How are things going at home?”

Source: [grievingstudents.org](https://grievingstudents.org)

# Interventions Within the Classroom

- Be flexible and compassionate
- Allow the grieving student to work with a partner on classroom assignments
- Provide more time for completion of tests/classroom assignments/homework
- Modify assignments for the student (written report versus oral report– **TALK TO YOUR STUDENT**)

# Interventions Within the Classroom

## Anticipate Challenging Days

- Anniversaries, Mother's/Father's Day, Holidays, Birthdays, Graduation, Career Day, etc.
- Check in with the grieving student on these days to let them know you understand this could be a difficult day/week/month for them.
- Convey to the grieving student that you are available if they want to meet—have a plan to manage grief bursts

## Teacher Training

- Encourage teachers to be mindful of classroom assignments
- Ex: Mother's Day, Father's Day, All About Me, Family Tree:
  - Teacher can check-in with the student prior to announcing the assignment to gather their thoughts/comfort level and discuss alternatives
  - Teacher should express to the class that there are many types of families: Some parents are absent, not everyone has a mother/father, some children are raised by grandparents, etc. **NORMALIZE!**
  - Student can do the assignment about a special person in their life (coach, older sibling, etc.)

Source: [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org)

## Individual Interventions: *Grief Bursts*



- Managing “Grief Bursts”
  - A grief burst = flood of emotions related to grief
  - Establish a code word/gesture: Student will share their code word/gesture, which subtly indicates that they are experiencing a grief burst and need space/support
  - Students rarely “overuse or abuse” this intervention—simply knowing that one can leave the classroom if overwhelmed is sometimes enough to relieve one’s anxiety
    - Examples:
      - Grabbing a tissue and leaving the classroom: This agreed upon gesture indicates that the student is having a grief burst and heading to the guidance office or nurse for space/support
      - “I need to refill my water bottle”
      - You know your students best— work together with the student/staff to decide upon a code word/gesture. This demonstrates to the student that you recognize the challenges of managing grief in the classroom and want to support their needs

Source: [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org)

## Individual Interventions: *Grief Bursts*

Identify

- Identify a safe space or location where the student can go

Provide

- Provide the child with an adult they can see when feeling upset or wishing to talk

Allow

- Allow the child to call a parent or family member

Give

- Give permission and encouragement for the child to speak with other school staff

Offer

- Offer private time to talk over feelings, questions, or other concerns

Source: [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org)

Individual  
Interventions:  
*NACG*  
*Student Rights*

## The Rights of a Student Who is Grieving

**I have the right to grieve in my own time, in my own way.**

As I grow, my needs and wants may change.

**I have the right to collaborate and design my grief support plan with school staff who understands.**

This includes me having a school staff support person identified in my grief plan and a safe place to go in school when needed.

**I have the right to share or not share about my grief.**

I have the right to ask what I share be held in confidence unless I say otherwise.

**I have the right to ask for support and not to be identified by my loss.**

I will be viewed as a student and not be identified solely by my grief. I am more than my grief.

**I have the right to have my school community respect my need to express my grief.**

My grief expressions may come at various times throughout the school day, and I may express myself in different ways as long as it does not hurt myself or others.

**I have the right to give and get support with other students at my school.**

It is important for me to have an opportunity to connect with other students including others who are grieving.

**I have the right to flexibility with deadlines to help me stay on track with my academic performance.**

My grief may necessitate adjustments to expectations with due dates.

**I have the right to choose my level of participation in events that may affect my grief.**

I have permission to not attend or participate in special events, activities, or conversations that make me uncomfortable.

National Alliance  
for Children's Grief

[childrengrieve.org](http://childrengrieve.org)

Find support  
& resources  
on our website.



Source: Griefftalk Schools: Rights of a Student Who is Grieving - NACG

# Individual Interventions:

## *NACG Individual Bereavement Plan*

### Considerations for Risk

Students may respond to death cognitively, socially, emotionally, and/or physically. Considering risk involves looking at factors that can cause grief reactions to be more severe. Utilize school district policy for guidance on addressing risk.

- Limited social support
  - Sudden and/or unexpected death
  - Had shared classes or extracurricular activities
  - Had a recent relationship with the deceased
  - Active social, emotional, or academic stressors
  - Changes in social, emotional, or academic behaviors
  - Difficulty coping with past or present stressors
  - Multiple deaths experienced
  - Multiple secondary losses (Divorce, incarceration, foster care)
- Other:

### Considerations for Strengths

A student's interpersonal strengths and personal network of family and friends will contribute to responsive support during the grieving process. These factors are helpful to note when developing an Individual Student Bereavement Support Plan.

- Hopeful Attitude
  - Personal Resilience
  - Ability to Maintain Daily Routine
  - Sense of Meaning and Purpose
  - Sense of Wellbeing
  - Satisfaction with End-of-Life Care Received by Deceased
  - Involvement in Meaningful Activities
  - Ability to Express Feelings, including crying
  - Feels Support from Family and Friends
  - Grief Support in Place
  - Mental Health Support in Place
- Other:

Source: [https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/3o0uxzua0g4s2hjbz1rnb/NACG-Individual-Bereavement-Support-Plan\\_Editable\\_Updated-3.2024.pdf?rlkey=zsq84ifktyrm68qoa9mofgt11&st=8115ii7l&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/3o0uxzua0g4s2hjbz1rnb/NACG-Individual-Bereavement-Support-Plan_Editable_Updated-3.2024.pdf?rlkey=zsq84ifktyrm68qoa9mofgt11&st=8115ii7l&dl=0)

### Potential supporting strategies

Possible strategies to consider when developing accommodations for the student:

#### Environmental Strategies

- Seat student near the teacher
- Seat student near the door – implement signal in case a break is needed
- Uphold classroom routine, structure, and expectations
- Consider all the locations that the student may need support and identify strategies for each (eg: cafeteria, recess, transportation etc.)

#### Lesson Presentation Strategies

- Check-in for understanding/review
- Test-taking strategies
- Allow extra time for the exam

#### Assignment Strategies

- Give extra time to complete assignment
- Implement flexibility as needed
- Clarify prioritization within assignments
- Be aware of assignments that involve death and adjust as needed.

#### Behavioral Strategies

- Keep classroom rules simple, visible, and clear

#### Break Strategies

- Utilize non-verbal signals or code words for teacher-student communication to indicate the need for a break
- Allow student open pass for counselor/social worker/nurse for support

#### School/Classroom Events

- Provide choice for participation or an alternative option in special projects or holiday activities that may remind the student who is grieving of their person (e.g., Mother's Day, Father's Day)
- Use inclusive language (e.g., caregiver or grown-up instead of parent, mom, or dad)

#### Data Collected

Student name:

School:

Grade:

Members of student support team:

School-based supports in place at the time of death:

Primary family contact regarding the death:

Name of person who died:

Relationship to student:

Date of death:

Cause of death:

Cultural or religious considerations:

Significant dates to consider (future end-of-life ceremonies, deceased person's birthday, special occasions)

Other details that are helpful for school staff to know and family has given permission to share: (use additional paper as needed)

# In-School Grief Support Groups

- Mary's Place: Request a School-Based Grief Support Group  
[www.marysplacect.org/support](http://www.marysplacect.org/support)
- Cove in Schools: Curriculum is currently being re-vamped into a 6-week program with plans to offer a pilot program in Fall 2026 and to later expand
- Best Practices for School-Based Support Groups for Bereaved Students:  
[NACG | School Group Best Practices](#)

## **Grief Activities for All Ages**

Elementary-Middle School:

<https://www.dougy.org/grief-support-resources/kids>

High School:

<https://www.dougy.org/grief-support-resources/teens>

## 10 THINGS TO TRY WHEN THE GRIEF TIDE ROLLS IN

**1. Remember to breathe.** When we get tense we tend to hold our breath or have short, shallow breaths. First, notice that you are breathing and then try slowing it down, breathing more into your belly, and exhaling a little longer than you inhale.

**2. Move your body.** This doesn't have to be a sport (but it can be) — take a walk, do a push up, dance, or just jump up and down.

**3. Call or text a friend.** Pick ones who know how to show up and listen — or will at least send you a cute animal video.

**4. Write it out.** Forget spelling and grammar, there are no grades in grief.

**5. Get messy — draw, paint, collage.** Sometimes grief doesn't have words and art can be a great way to get out the feelings that don't always make sense. It's not art class, so don't worry about making it look a certain way.

**6. Make room for whatever feelings are coming up.** If you try to push them away, they will probably just push back harder. Feelings change and they won't last forever. Grief has no timeline, but it really does change over time.

**7. Be kind — to yourself.** You know that voice that sometimes gives you a really hard time? It might sound strange, but you can talk to that criticizing voice and ask it to tone it down. "Hey, I hear you, you're worried I'm doing this wrong, but really, I'm not. I'm doing the best I can right now, but thanks for your input."

**8. Be a good friend — to yourself.** Experiment with telling yourself you can do this, even if you don't know what you're doing! You might be feeling emotions you've never had before or doing things for the first time and all of it is happening without the

person who died. Take a moment to acknowledge how new and different this is and tell yourself, "Even if I'm overwhelmed right now, I will figure this out." And then...

**9. Ask for help.** We know, this one can be really hard and scary to do. Keep it simple and remember that people usually want to help, they are just waiting to be asked.

**10. Take time to celebrate whatever is going well.** When you're grieving it can be hard to make space for feeling good. You might feel guilty if you find yourself laughing or having a good time. Taking a break from grief doesn't mean you love or miss the person any less.

### SOS (GETTING MORE HELP)

One last (but important) thing. Grief can be really hard — and it can make other things that were already hard seem impossible. Sometimes, grieving teens need more help. If you are struggling with school, eating, or sleeping, or if you're thinking about hurting yourself or others, talking to a real human person can be one of the best ways to get help. You can start with a friend, a family member, a trusted teacher or counselor, or a crisis line such as Youthline, a peer-to-peer crisis line for teens. You can call them at 877-968-8491, text them by sending teen2teen to 839863 between 4pm and 10pm, or chat online at [OregonYouthLine.org](https://oregonyouthline.org). One more option: the Crisis Text Line can be reached by texting HELLO to 741741. Whether you connect with a crisis line or a person in your life, please do reach out to someone when you're struggling — you matter, and you deserve help and support!

## Individual or Group Interventions:

### Tip Sheet for Grieving Teens: Provide to students individually or read together in a group setting:

[Tips-for-Teens-Who-are-Grieving 2023-03-17-201232.pdf](https://www.dougy.org/2023/03/17/Tips-for-Teens-Who-are-Grieving-2023-03-17-201232.pdf) ([dougy.org](https://www.dougy.org))

## School-Wide Interventions:

Tip Sheet for Helping Grieving Friend: Distribute to all students or read as a group: [Your-Friend-is-Grieving.pdf \(dougy.org\)](#)

### CHECKING IN

The question, "How are you?" can be hard to answer for a grieving person. If you want to ask your friend how they are, be sure you have the time and energy to listen to the real answer. Reaching out to your friend helps them feel less alone, so here are some other ways to ask how they're doing that might be a little easier for them to answer.

- How are you in this moment?
- How's your grief been behaving lately?
- What would be most helpful from me right now?

### HOW TO LISTEN, LIKE REALLY REALLY LISTEN

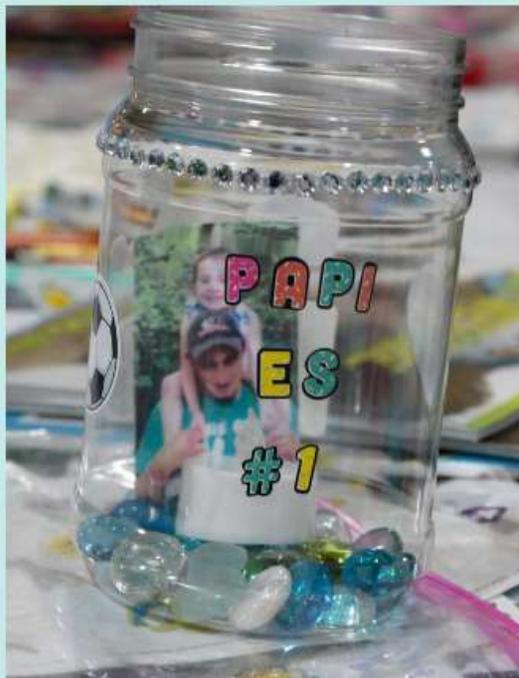
Listening is more than not talking. Here are ways to communicate you're truly paying attention.

**Put away any distractions like phones and laptops.** Talking about grief is tough and many grieving people worry that other people can't handle what they're saying, so any sign you're looking for something else to do might make it seem like it's not safe to share.

**Go light on the questions.** Asking a lot of detailed questions can leave your friend feeling like they're on the witness stand.

**Hold off on giving advice or suggestions.** It's hard when friends are in pain. The urge to give advice comes from a compassionate place of wanting someone to feel better, but unless your friend asks for advice, it's best to hold off on telling them what you think they should do. If you're not sure if your friend is looking for suggestions, you can ask "Do you just want to vent or are you looking for ideas?"

Source: The Dougy Center



## Group Interventions: Luminary/Memory Jar

### Instructions:

Student will decorate their jar in honor of their loved one who has died.

Ask the student about their loved one's interests, hobbies, and favorite things (cars, sports, music, food, animals).

Colorful gems, a battery-powered candle, and photo go inside of the jar.

Student can display their luminary at home and light it whenever they want to honor or feel connected to their loved one.

# Grief Books by Age

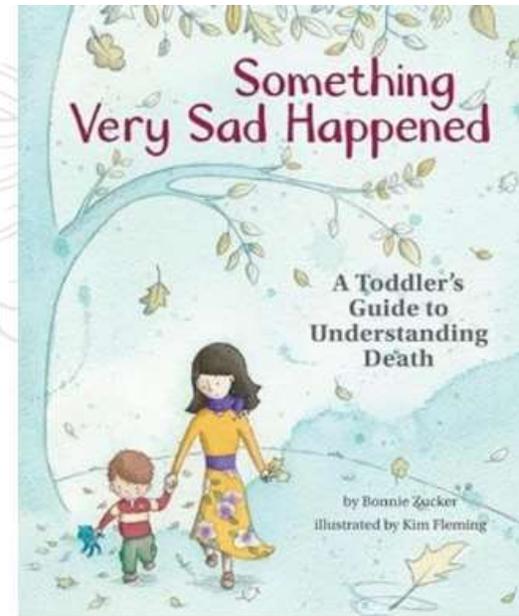
<https://www.covect.org/readinglist>

<https://www.erinshouse.org/recommended-reading>

# Books About: Explaining Death & Grief

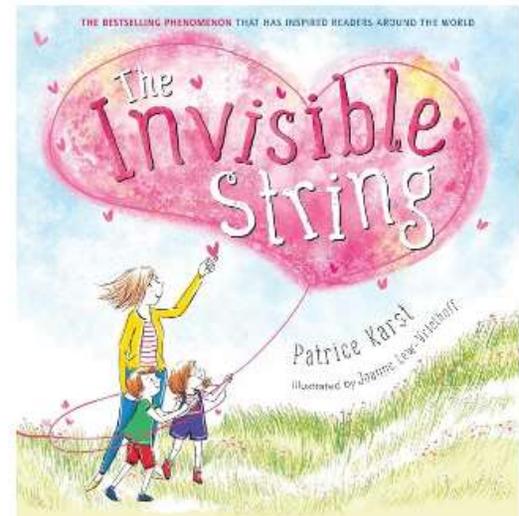
## Something Very Sad Happened:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHaspeyGYFQ>



## The Invisible String:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlUxXexjhYI>



# RESOURCES



## COALITION *to* SUPPORT GRIEVING STUDENTS

- Website: [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org)
- Call: 877-536-2722 or email [info@grievingstudents.org](mailto:info@grievingstudents.org) if your school needs help NOW
- Guides and Toolkits for caregivers, educators, professionals
- Training Videos
- Grief Sensitive Schools Initiative: Each organization that receives this presentation and pledges to strive to be more Grief-Sensitive will receive a one-time \$500 grant to support its efforts

## Talking to children about terrorist attacks and school and community shootings in the news

This guide offers advice on how to talk to children about tragic events, such as shootings and terrorist attacks, that they are likely to hear about at school and/or on the news.

### THEY WILL ASK WHAT HAPPENED

Children and teenagers are better able to cope with upsetting news when they understand more about the event. They need information just as adults do. Begin by asking what they already understand about what happened. They have likely heard about the event on TV, on the internet or social media, at school, or from their friends.

However, much of their information may not be accurate. As they explain what they know about the event, you can figure out what it is they don't already know or understand. Look for misunderstandings or frightening rumors. Tell the truth and do not try to mislead them "for their own good." Children and youth of different ages understand and react differently according to their developmental age and unique personal experiences. It is important to remember that we cannot assume that children's worries are the same as our own. When we listen to children and come to understand their feelings and worries, we can better help them make sense of these experiences and how they affect us all.

The amount of details that children will find useful will depend upon their age. The older the child is, the more details will likely be needed to answer their questions and address their concerns. Provide the basic information in simple and direct terms and then ask for questions. Take your cues from children in determining how much information to provide. Older children may wish to discuss the larger implications of the event. Provide reassurance whenever possible. Our government, police, and schools are taking steps to protect us from something like this happening again and to keep us safe. Children often look for reassurance that they are now safe after such graphic reminders of danger and hatred.

Terrorist acts and school and community shootings remind us all that we are never completely safe - but now is the best time

to reassure children that they can and should feel safe in their school, in their home, and in their community. While it is useful for children to know enough about what has happened to feel that they understand what has occurred and what they should do, it isn't helpful for children (or adults) to be exposed to graphic images or information or to continuous or repetitive media coverage. Such images and details are often included in coverage of the event on television, radio and print media, as well as in social media and elsewhere on the internet. Limit the amount of exposure to media coverage and discussion in social media. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis event, it's a good time to turn off television, computers, and smart phones and come together as a family and community for discussion and support.

### COULD I HAVE DONE ANYTHING TO PREVENT THIS?

After a tragic event, we all wonder what we and others could have done to prevent this from happening.

Even when it is obvious that there is nothing children could have done to prevent or minimize the crisis, they may still feel helpless and wish they could have changed what happened. Let children know that this is a common reaction; we all wish that there is something we could have done to prevent this or any tragedy. Instead, suggest that together you can concentrate on what can be done now to help those most directly affected and to promote safety, tolerance and acceptance in our communities.

### WHOSE FAULT IS IT?

In some ways, blaming is a way to feel as if you can regain control of uncomfortable feelings and a sense of personal risk.

## Valentine's Day and Grieving Students



Schools host a profusion of fun and playful activities for Valentine's Day. There might be hallway and classroom decorations, card exchanges, singing telegrams, flower exchanges, valentines for parents and more. How do these spirited activities affect grieving students? And what steps can education professionals take to offer support?

### HOW DO GRIEVING STUDENTS FEEL?

Every student's experiences are unique. In a general sense, however, it can be tough for grieving children and teens to feel surrounded by the exuberant expressions of love, connection, affection, and romance seen on Valentine's Day. Even several years after a loss, such celebrations can trigger a resurgence of grief. Students may feel caught off-guard by powerful feelings—sadness, loneliness, resentment, anger, or others.

These feelings can be confusing and even contradictory—missing a loved one, feeling guilty about a heated exchange before the death, being resentful about an abusive or neglectful relationship, believing oneself responsible for the death in some way. While most students will not be grieving the loss of a romantic partner, those who are may be challenged by the amorous themes of Valentine's Day. They may miss their partner deeply. They might believe that they will never again have a close relationship. They may feel guilty because they're ambivalent about the relationship or the deceased.

### WHAT EDUCATORS CAN DO

- If you know a student has experienced the death of a family member or close friend, speak privately before Valentine's Day activities. Describe upcoming activities so the student knows what to expect. Offer alternatives if the student wishes.
- Introduce activities thoughtfully and keep them flexible. For example, instead of asking students to make a valentine for parents, invite them to make a valentine for their parents or someone else they care about. If students are drawing a picture about ways their family celebrates Valentine's Day, suggest they may also draw a picture of another celebration they've enjoyed, or one they would like to attend.
- Reach out to grieving students during these types of celebrations with a simple, caring check-in: "I know these activities can be hard for someone who has experienced the death of someone close. I'm wondering how this is all going for you."

### LEARN MORE

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students ([www.grievingstudents.org](http://www.grievingstudents.org)) hosts a website with videos and downloadable modules providing more information about students and grief. These tools can be of immeasurable assistance to educators and Grief-Sensitive Schools. Modules especially relevant for grief responses to holidays include:

- Grief Triggers <https://grievingstudents.org/module-section/grief-triggers/>
- Guilt & Shame <https://grievingstudents.org/module-section/guilt-shame/>
- Providing Support Over Time <https://grievingstudents.org/module-section/providing-support-over-time/>
- Commemoration and Memorialization <https://grievingstudents.org/module-section/commemoration-and-memorialization/>

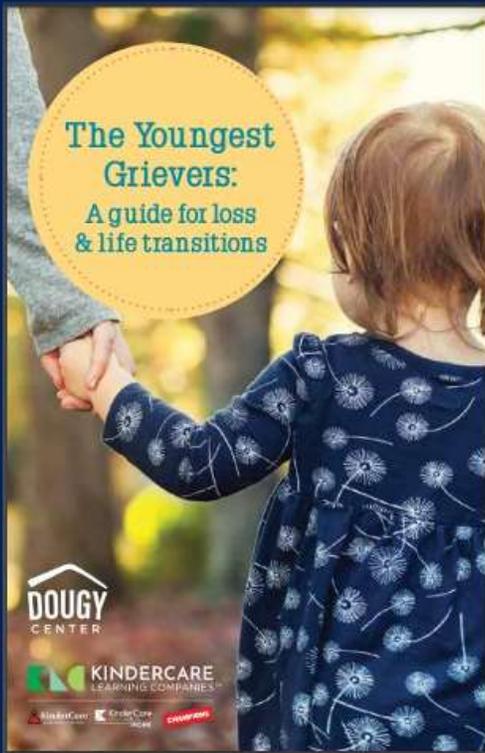
### COPING WITH GRIEF ON VALENTINE'S DAY

- Think of Valentine's Day as a way to reflect on your continuing bond with those who died.
- Accept feelings of sadness, and also look for joyful moments in the memories brought up by Valentine's Day.
- Know that feelings of grief can be painful and confusing. It's not unusual to sometimes feel anger, resentment, guilt, or shame.
- You may feel you missed opportunities to say or do something important with the person who died. Be forgiving towards yourself. Avoid being judgmental about perceived shortcomings in your past based on how you feel in the present.



NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR  
CHILDREN'S GRIEF

- Website: [nacg.org](http://nacg.org)
- Toolkits for professionals and caregivers
- Resource library, educational webinars (recorded and live), grief support locator



## Free Guides & Activities from The Dougy Center

[https://www.dougy.org/assets/uploads/The-Youngest-Grievors\\_Book.pdf](https://www.dougy.org/assets/uploads/The-Youngest-Grievors_Book.pdf)



## How to Use This Page

Grief is hard, but knowing you are not alone can help. Use the filters below to find articles and activities just for you.

Topic or Type of Death:

All



The Person Who Died:

All



Filter by Type:

All Types



Filter by Age:

All Ages



<https://www.dougy.org/resources/audience/kids>

# David Kessler's Tender Hearts Grief Support Groups & Free Grief Webinars

- Grief Educator Certification Course Online (fee)
- Free Trainings for Professionals
- Free Webinars for Grieving Families
- Sign up for FREE Videos using name and email

[www.davidkesslertraining.com](http://www.davidkesslertraining.com) & [www.grief.com](http://www.grief.com)

## Specific Loss Groups

- Death of a Child 17 and under
- Death of a Child 18-26
- Death of a Child 27 - 37
- Death of a Child 38 +
- Death of an Only Child/All Children
- Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Infant Death
- Death of a Spouse 50 and under
- Death of a Spouse 51 - 60
- Death of a Spouse 61 - 70
- Death of a Spouse 71 and Older
- Death of a Mother
- Death of a Father
- Death of a Sibling
- Death by Suicide
- Fentanyl Poisoning
- Death by Addiction
- Death by Murder
- Death by Long Illness/ Cancer /Dementia
- Anticipatory Grief
- Newly Bereaved (12 months)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> losses after a death - Divorce, Pet, Estrangement
- Multiple Losses
- Older Losses
- LGBTQ+
- Faith
- Afterlife

# Free CT Supports for Grieving Families:

## *Empower*

- Mentorship program
- Death of a parent
- Mentors are age 25 and up
- Mentees: Children and young adults up to the age of 24
- Year-round community events for families
- Website: [weareempower.org](http://weareempower.org)



# Free CT Peer-Based Supports for Grieving Families: Grief Centers

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- **The Cove Center for Grieving Children:**
  - Family Program sites in New Haven, Meriden, Guilford, West Hartford, Stonington, virtual programs, grief camp
- **Mary's Place: Windsor**
- **Adam's House: Shelton**
- **The Den for Grieving Kids: Greenwich**



## Free CT Supports for Grieving Families:

### *Tighed Together*

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- Free outings and experiences for families living with trauma
  - Grieving families
  - Families experiencing terminal illness
  - Families facing challenging circumstances
  - Aerial Adventure Park, Art Therapy Experience, UTV Tour



## Free CT Peer-Based Supports for Grieving Families:

**Brian's Healing Hearts: Grief Support Groups for Adults (Survivors of Suicide Loss, Loss of Partner, Men's Grief Support, Bereaved Parents, Senior's Support Group, and more!)**

**Tricircle: Grief Support Groups for Substance-Related Deaths**

**Hope After Loss: Pregnancy of Infant Loss**

**First Candle: Pregnancy of Infant Loss**





## Free CT Supports for Grieving Children

### *Grief Camps*

- Camp Compassion: Kent, CT May 15-17
- Camp Kangaroo CT
- Experience Camps
- Camp Kesem

CT Supports for Grieving Families (fee for service):

*Child Life Specialists*

- Leah Yazmer: Tranquility: A Private Child Life Practice  
[tranquilityccls.com](http://tranquilityccls.com)
- Stacey Malcolm: Healing Hearts a Child Life Private Practice  
[healingheartsccls.com](http://healingheartsccls.com)

# Join The Cove's FREE Virtual Session



*Supporting Children Through  
Grief: What Children Need When  
the Worst Happens*



Feb 19, 2026  
12:00 PM

**Presenter: Leah Yazmer,**  
Certified Child Life Specialist  
& Owner of Tranquility: A  
private child life practice



# *Self-Care*

What are some unique self-care practices you/others use to avoid burn-out?



# Self-Care for Clinicians and School-Based Professionals

Individual or Group Supervision

Realistic work-life boundaries

Individual therapy

Professional support groups (check online, TIPP)

Volunteering for meaningful causes

Books: Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others

# COVE PROGRAMS

- Camp Compassion
- The Family Program
- Virtual Cove Programs
- Scholarship Program
- Volunteer Program
- Webinars &
- Professional Development



# CAMP COMPASSION

- A free, weekend-long, overnight grief camp for children ages 6-17 grieving the death of someone significant in their lives
- Kids come together to learn how to grieve in healthy ways through specialized grief activities
- Each cabin has a Lead Clinician and volunteers to assist the campers in navigating the grief process
- When: May 15-17 2026 at Club Getaway in Kent, CT
- Volunteers receive training prior to camp
- Camper and Volunteer Applications available now!



# CAMP COMPASSION ALLOWS CHILDREN TO:

- Share their story in a safe and supportive environment
- Process grief in healthy ways
- Connect with peers facing similar circumstances
- Build a tool-box of adaptive coping skills
- Honor and memorialize loved ones
- Have fun!





# THE FAMILY PROGRAM

- 20-week peer-based, mutual support program
- September-June; 2 meetings per month on average
- Delivered by a licensed clinician and trained volunteer facilitators
- Children ages 5-17 who are grieving the death of a *parent, daily caregiver, or sibling*
- Curriculum is based on creative expression activities and projects that help children learn healthy coping strategies to process their grief and maintain a connection to their loved one
- Site locations: Meriden, Guilford, New Haven, West Hartford (waitlist), & Stonington
- 3 month waiting period following the death



# VIRTUAL COVE PROGRAMS (OPENINGS!)

- Teen Virtual Support Group
- Young Adult Virtual Support Group
- Caregivers of Grieving Children Virtual Support Group
- CT residents only



## The Cove & McIntyre Hope & Healing Scholarship

- **Scholarship Eligibility Requirements**
- High school senior, class of 2026 graduate
- Has experienced the death of a parent, guardian or sibling
- Accepted into any higher education program such as, but not limited to a 2 or 4 year accredited college or university, culinary school, or trade school, located in the United States, including DC and Puerto Rico
- Must be a permanent resident of the state of CT
- Has *not* already completed or attended any prior or current higher education programs



# Volunteer Program

The Cove's programs are run on many volunteer hours!

Applications can be found on website!

Camp Compassion Volunteer

Volunteer Facilitator in the Family Program

Supply Inventory

Special Events Volunteer

Board of Directors

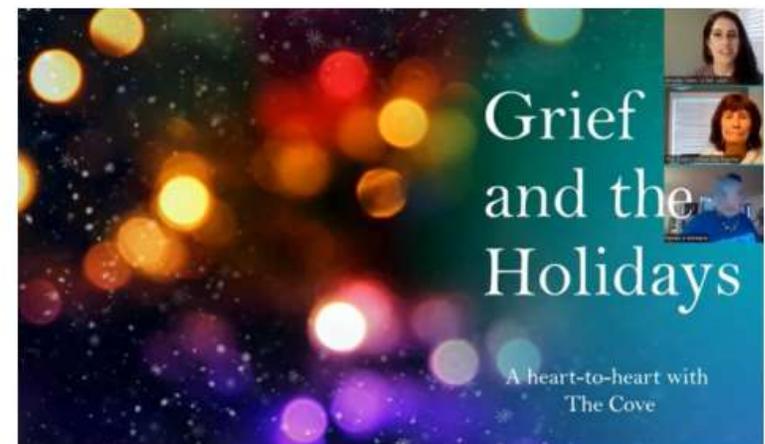
Outreach volunteers



# Educational Webinars and Trainings

Follow The Cove Center for  
Grieving Children on social  
media or visit our website to  
learn about upcoming  
webinars and events

[covect.org/webinars](http://covect.org/webinars)





A HUGE THANK YOU!



Wheeler

**CONNECTICUT**  
Clearinghouse

a program of the Connecticut Center  
for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

**Thank YOU  
for being  
here!**

Contact The Cove:

Email: [info@covect.org](mailto:info@covect.org)

Phone: 203-634-0500

Visit: [www.covect.org](http://www.covect.org)





## Loving-Kindness Meditation

May I Be Well

May I Be Happy & Content

May I Be Free From Danger & Suffering

May I Be Filled with Love & Kindness

May You Be Well

May You Be Happy & Content

May You Be Free from Danger & Suffering

May You Be Filled with Love & Kindness

May All Beings Be Well

May All Beings Be Happy & Content

May All Beings Be Free from Danger & Suffering

May All Beings Be Filled with Love & Kindness