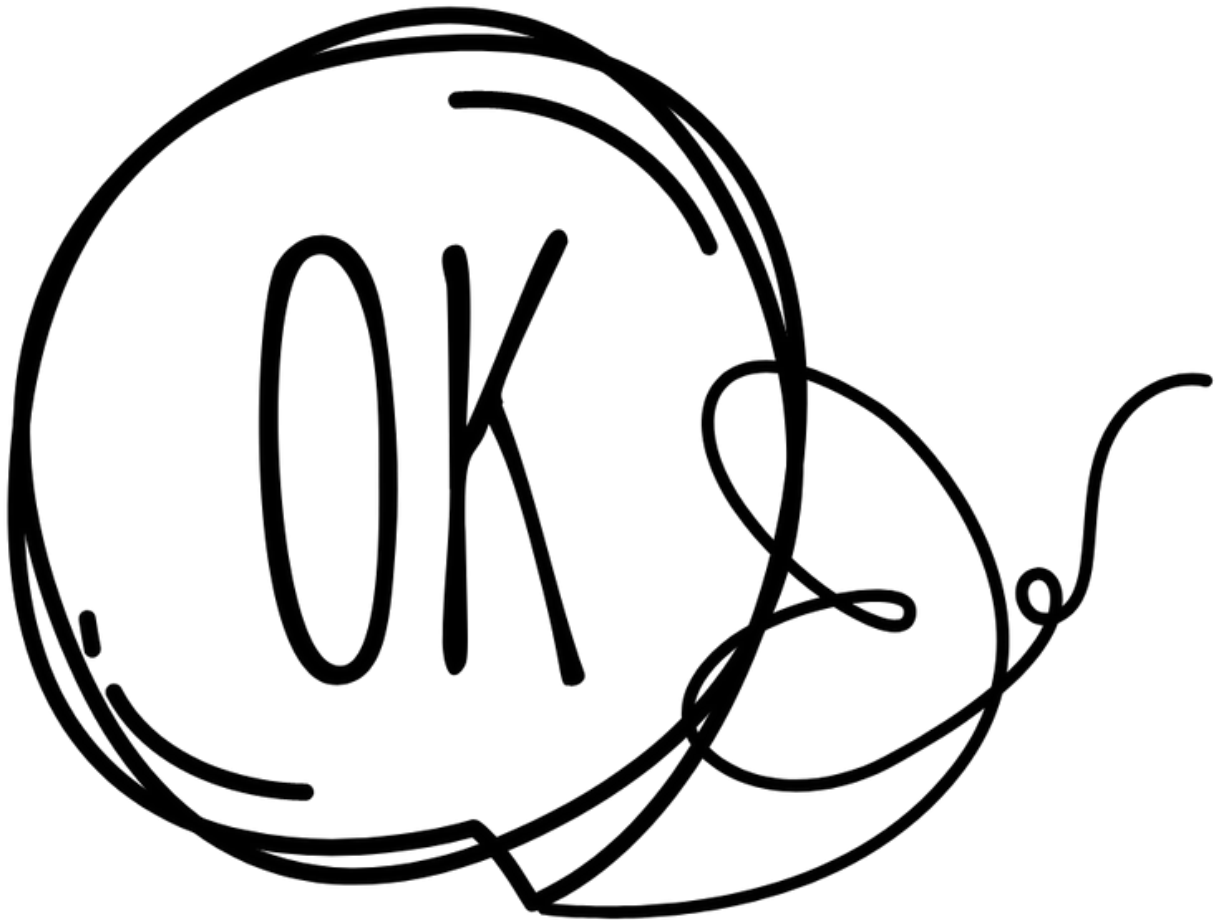


In honor of Children's Grief Awareness Month



A toolkit to support grieving youth.

Fostering healing for grieving families
across the Rio Grande Valley

WWW.CBC-RGV.ORG

PHONE: 956.368.4065



CHILDREN'S BEREAVEMENT CENTER
RIO GRANDE VALLEY

in partnership with
Moonflower Therapeutic Arts Center LLC





A JOURNEY OF HEALING

The Children's Bereavement Center Rio Grande Valley would like to thank you for your support of grieving youth. CBC-RGV hopes this toolkit will provide helpful information, tips, activities, and opportunities for sharing and healing.

INTRODUCTION

Death, grief, and loss are natural life experiences, yet they are often difficult and uncomfortable to address. During end of life care or after a death, caregivers often have questions such as, "Is it okay...?" The intention with this toolkit is to address the concerns about grief responses. The following pages will provide psychoeducation and activities to begin the process of healing. CBC-RGV encourages youth to begin developing awareness of their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. This awareness can reduce the anxiety surrounding death, death loss, and grief. You are not alone on this journey. It is okay...





Dear Caregivers and Community Professionals,

You are an important figure in the life of a young person. Young griever[s] will model their grief responses off of the trusted adult caregiver[s]. It is important to be aware of the following as you guide a young griever through the activities included in this toolkit.

- The toolkit provides psychoeducational information to raise awareness about children and teens' grief. **This is a place to begin and should not be used as a replacement for mental health services.**
- Some youth will not be ready to address their grief. It is important to honor the young griever's wishes.
- A youth's grief responses may be stirred up when attention is drawn to their grief. They may become dysregulated and may need support to regulate.
- Time will not automatically determine the youth's readiness to address their grief. It is recommended that these activities not be done in the first month after the death, as this could be too overwhelming. Note, even if considerable time has passed, the young griever may not be ready.
- Pay close attention to the youth's reaction. Be prepared to support the grief response such as crying, wanting to take a break, or questions about the death/deceased.
- Allow the youth to take the lead and share only what they feel comfortable sharing. Listen without giving advice.



WORDS TO KNOW

.....

This toolkit is meant to be a resource. It is not intended to be read from beginning to end. **Please move around the kit and find the pages that address your young griever's needs.**

To aid with some of the language in the toolkit, below you will find a list of words that it may be helpful to know.

Psychoeducation

"Psychoeducation is learning about our mental health. This can be our thoughts, feelings, or behaviors."

Regulation

"Regulation is when our mind, body, and emotions feel balanced. When you feel in control."

Dysregulation

"Dysregulation is when our body feels out of our control. Your thoughts, feelings, or behaviors are too big or are unmanageable."

Grounding

"Grounding means to give our heart, mind, and body a break. To give it a chance to remember it is safe and can calm itself."

Stigma

"Stigma is a negative, and often unfair, belief that people have about something."

Casket

"[Name's] body will be there, in a special box called a casket, but you will only be able to see the upper portion of the body."

Cremation

"[Name] wanted to be cremated after they died instead of being buried in the ground."

"Cremation is when a body is put into a very warm room and turned into soft ashes. The process does not hurt. Do you have any questions you would like to ask?"



Concrete vs Abstract Language: Why is this an important distinction?

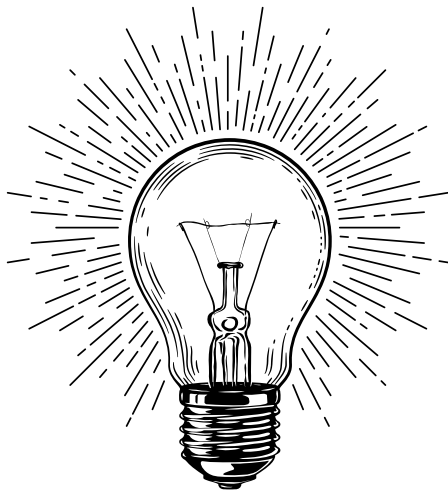
Young children are concrete thinkers. They understand and learn about the world around them by the things they see, feel, hear, taste, and smell.

As children grow and develop, so does their way of thinking and their understanding of the world around them. They will begin to understand things beyond what they can experience tangibly.

Abstract thinkers use information obtained from their senses and can make wider connections about the world around them. Abstract thinkers can understand symbolism, metaphors, utilize complex problem solving, and generalize about the world around them.

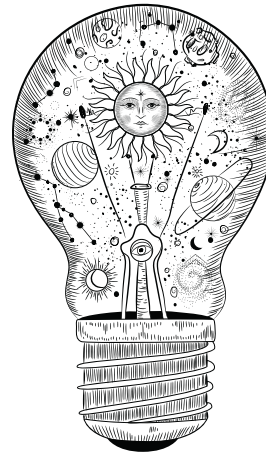
An example of how concrete and abstract thinkers may see a light bulb:

Concrete Thinking



Light Source,
An Object

Abstract Thinking



Idea, Inspiration,
Invention



CONCRETE VS ABSTRACT LANGUAGE: WHY IS THIS AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION?



Why is it important to understand the distinction between concrete and abstract language when supporting a young griever? Young people grieve differently than adults.

Explaining a significant loss to a young person can be difficult, especially if it was someone special to the youth.

- Using simple, concrete language can help a young person better understand a loss.
- Phases intended to “gently” explain death often include abstract language, euphuisms, or provide vague information. This can lead to more confusion, distress, or increased fears/worry.
- Developmentally appropriate language can help the youth better process death and loss. Support youth by providing simple information. Take things slow, offer short, simple explanations.
- Check in and see how they understand and are processing the information.

↑ Information

Abstract: [Name] is sleeping.

Concrete: [Name] died. Their body stopped working.

Abstract: We lost [Name].

Concrete: [Name]'s heart stopped working. They are no longer alive.

↓ Language Suggestions

Abstract: [Name] passed away.

Concrete: [Name] made their body stop working.

Abstract: [Name] is in the stars.

Concrete: [Name]'s body stopped working. They can no longer eat, sleep, think, or breath.

Abstract: [Name] left us, They are in a better place.

Concrete: [Name's] body stopped working. They no longer feel pain.





SUPPORTING YOUNG GRIEVERS AS THEY PREPARE FOR A FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE



Explaining the process/purpose of funerals:

When explaining the concept of death to young grievers, being honest and providing the freedom to ask questions is important. Before speaking to a young griever, take a moment for yourself. Allow yourself to feel regulated and prepared for the conversation.

It is okay to allow a young griever to be part of the funeral process. It gives them a sense of control. Here are some ways to allow a young griever to participate in funeral process:

- Picking out a photo to use at the funeral, selecting the clothing, jewelry, make up for the deceased to wear
- Make a drawing, note, or special object to place near or in the casket
- Allowing them to select a special song to be used at the funeral

Explain what will happen the day of the funeral before attending. For example:

- “We will be having a funeral for [Name].”
- “At the funeral, [Name’s] body will be in a box called a casket.”
- “You will probably see many of our family members there to visit [Name].”

Inform the young griever that a funeral or memorial can have a variety of purposes such as: Being able to say “I love you”, “Thank you”, and “Goodbye” to their special person who died. It can be a celebration of the life of the person who died. It can be a time to receive support and comfort from others in attendance by sharing stories, laughter and express feelings to begin the grief process.



↑ Information

The caregiver should find out how much knowledge about death the griever has. "Death can seem scary if you do not know about it. Can you tell me what you understand about death?"

Help the griever understand that all emotions are okay to feel. "Grief is more than sad. If you are feeling other emotions, it is okay. You can share this with me when you are ready."

↓ Language Suggestions

The young griever may have many questions and that is okay. Follow their lead and remember that honesty is the best policy.

If the body is cremated, it might be helpful to explain what a crematorium is and the purpose of spreading their ashes or storage in an urn.

It is important to explain to a young griever that once a person’s body stops working, they cannot feel pain.



SUPPORTING YOUNG GRIEVERS AS THEY PREPARE FOR A FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICES



Deciding whether a young griever should attend a funeral is a family decision. No age is too young as long as they are prepared and understand what will happen the day of. Here are some tips to support a young griever before or the day of the funeral.

- If possible, set up a visit to the funeral home beforehand to provide a chance to get familiar with the space. Allow the youth to see where the deceased will be, to find the restroom, a water source, or a break space for them to use.
- Explain how the body might look and explain how others may behave during the viewing or service.
- Let the youth know that it is okay to cry and that it is okay to not cry.
- Giving the option to not attend provides the youth autonomy over their actions. The caregiver and griever may plan to memorialize the deceased in a different way another time, and at a different place when they feel ready. Some options to not attending are:
 - a. Take pictures
 - b. Write an account of the service: who was there, what happened, who said what
- It is okay to set a boundary with individuals who might criticize the decision for having the griever attend or not attend.
- Letting the youth participate in family rituals of grief can shape how a young griever will cope with future losses.



Tips for caregivers

Resources



Explaining The Funeral to Your Children. (n.d.). <https://www.griefhealing.com/column-explaining-the-funeral-to-your-children.htm>

When Children Attend A Funeral: Some Preparation Tips. (n.d.). <https://www.griefhealingblog.com/2013/08/when-children-attend-funeral-some.html>

How to Explain Funerals & Cremations to a Child. (n.d.). Children's Bereavement Centre. <https://www.childrensbereavementcentre.co.uk/explaining-funerals-to-a-child>

VIDEO RESOURCE: Explaining to a child that someone has died. (n.d.). [www.youtube.com. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsRoTQcRJQI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsRoTQcRJQI)

VIDEO RESOURCE: How do I explain a funeral to a young child? (n.d.). [www.youtube.com. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMpDam54cOc&t=164s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMpDam54cOc&t=164s)





DEATH BY ILLNESS



When notifying about entering Hospice care or of the death:

- Allow the youth to ask questions. Explain what end of life care is. Consider asking the medical professional to explain the purpose of the machines and provide information about the illness.
- Reassure the youth that they did not cause this to happen.
- Invite the youth to take part in the care of the individual. Check in with the youth to ensure this provides comfort and not distress.
- Provide methods for the youth to begin to say, "Goodbye."



Tips for caregivers

Kaputk. (2022, August 1). How to explain death to a child. Cleveland Clinic.
<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-explain-death-to-a-child/>

Peter's Place. (2023). Tips for Parents & Care-providers: Anticipatory grief and children. Petersplaceonline.org.
https://petersplaceonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/resources_26_45703_3686.pdf

Sesame Workshop. (2023). Grief - Sesame Workshop.
<https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/grief/>

Wonders & Worries. (2023). Parenting Support and Tips.
<https://wondersandworries.org/for-clients/parenting-support/>

Dougy Center. (2023). Advanced Serious Illness Family Resources.
<https://www.dougy.org/resources/audience/pathways-program>

When supporting the young griever with their grief it is okay...

- to use creative methods for expression such as a journal to help them process the experience.
- to acknowledge the feeling. Recognizing some feelings may be contradictory, such as sad and happy that the deceased is no longer in pain. Some days will be harder than others.
- to encourage the youth to practice self care and self compassion. They are on a journey of healing.
- if the youth finds comfort in talking to different individuals about different aspects of their grief.
- to maintain routines. There is safety in the predictable.

Resources





SUDDEN DEATH LOSS



A sudden death is any death loss that comes seemingly without notice. A sudden death may be due to medical issues such as a stroke, a surgery complication, a blood clot, etc. Sudden death losses can come from events such as car accidents, natural disasters, acts of violence, etc. A sudden death may also be a death that happens within a short period of time. For example, the individual became ill, was placed in ICU, and died within a weeks span.

What distinguishes this type of death from others is that the griever was 'not prepared' for the death. This death loss may be marked with confusion. It may take the griever more time to accept the reality of the death loss. Grievors of these types of deaths may have grief responses such as nightmares, increased anger, fear for the safety of self or others, desire for revenge, become hyper alert, feel numb, etc. Due to the sudden nature, the change can cause a shock to the system.

Deaths of this nature may have additional complications such as the family making a discussion on organ donation, the cause of death being learned from the autopsy or a non familiar person, managing the aftermath of natural disaster, etc. The details surrounding the death may influence the griever's grief.

↑ Information

[Name] died.

[Name] died unexpectedly.

↓ Language Suggestions

[Name] died in _____.
or
The doctor found [medical term]. This made [Name's] body stop working.

We do not have all the answers about the death.

Is there something I can do to help you feel safe?





SUDDEN DEATH LOSS



When providing notification of the death:

- Be as honest as possible. Begin with a short and simple explanation. Extensive details do not need to be offered at this time.
- Reassure the youth that they did not do anything wrong and they are safe. Allow for repeated questions about the event. The youth is trying to make sense of the event and may need repetition to understand what has happened.

When discussing the deceased, it is okay...

- to acknowledge and validate the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the youth. Grief looks like many things. Listen without trying to make a change and allow space for safe expressions. Set boundaries when the responses appear unsafe. Example: "I see that you are angry. The wall is not for hitting. You can [choice] or [choice]. The wall is not for hitting."
- to not have answers. Death or the manner of death can bring up questions adults do not have answers for. It is okay to say, "I do not know" or "I wish I understood".
- to ask for help. Allow the youth to have control over when they are ready to address it. Remind them this will be an open conversation. Help the youth identify adults they can reach out to. Depending on the age of the youth, they may feel more comfortable sharing with someone outside the family.
- to take your time. Grief does not follow a timeline. Grief is a healing process. A child will re-grieve at each developmental stage. Be patient with the youth as they working to integrate the loss.



Tips for caregivers

Dougy Center. (2023). Grief Resources for Kids, Parents, & Supporters | Dougy Center. Dougy Center. <https://www.dougy.org/grief-support-resources>

NACG. (2022). National Alliance for Children's Grief | Resources. NACG - NACG. <https://nacg.org/resources-and-support/>

Coalition to Support Grieving Students. (2023). Conversation & Support. <https://grievingstudents.org/modules/conversation-support/>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2023). Helping School-Age Children with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers. https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/helping_school_age_children_with_traumatic_grief_caregivers.pdf

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2023). Helping Teens with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers. <https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/tip-sheet/helping-teens-with-traumatic-grief-tips-for-caregivers-updated.pdf>





DEATH LOSS WITH A LAYER OF STIGMA

When providing notification of the death:

- Be as honest as possible. It can add complications if the youth is told the death happened in a different manner than what occurred. Use developmentally appropriate language that is concrete.
- Allow for repeated questions about the event. Children will often need to re-hear news to fully process it.

When discussing the deceased, it is okay...

- to use the name of the deceased. Speaking about the deceased does not increase distress. The distress is present because of the separation. By addressing the loss, the child will be given have permission to grieve.
- to not have answers. Death or the manner of death can bring up questions adults do not have answers for. It is okay to say, "I do not know." or "I wish I understood." However, provide reassurance of the youth's safety.
- to ask for help. Seek helpers with related experience to the type of death loss. A trauma sensitive space would be recommended. As an example, it is common for griever of a stigmatized death not to feel as comfortable sharing in groups with griever who have not experienced a stigmatized death loss. The layers of complication can 'other' the stigmatized death griever.
- if you can not 'make it better'. Instead of looking for a solution, focus on the relationship with the youth. Help them feel they are not alone.



Tips for caregivers

Resources

Dougy Center. (2023). Grief Resources for Kids, Parents, & Supporters. Dougy Center. <https://www.dougy.org/grief-support-resources>

NACG. (2022). National Alliance for Children's Grief | Resources. NACG - NACG. <https://nacg.org/resources-and-support/>

Hospice Foundation Of America - Coping with Loss When Death is Stigmatized. (n.d.). Hospice Foundation of America. <https://hospicefoundation.org/Education/Coping-with-Loss-when-Death-is-Stigmatized>

Aas_Lilap. (2021). Toolkits and Briefs. American Association of Suicidology. <https://suicidology.org/media/toolkits-and-briefs/>

Additional Resources - Coalition to Support Grieving Students. (2023). Coalition to Support Grieving Students. <https://grievingstudents.org/resources/additional-resources/>



FAQ for Preschool Age Griever - IS IT OKAY?

Is it okay that my preschooler still calls out for the person who died? Is it okay that my preschooler talks about the person who died in the present tense?

- Preschoolers find it difficult to understand that death is permanent. Children at this age are exposed to many movies where a character dies but comes back to life before the end of the film. At this age, the stage of brain development, limits the ability for the youth to understand that death is permanent. Support the young griever by using concrete language and finding teachable moments to explain death.

Is it okay that my preschooler has become more “clingy” or crying more since their loved one died?

- Separation anxiety can be a common response to the death loss, especially in preschoolers and elementary age children. This is often linked to feeling unsafe or unsure about what will happen to them if [child's concern]. It is important to recognize the need for connection and reassurance during this time.

Is it okay that my preschooler has regressed such as using baby talk or bedwetting since the death occurred?

- Children often exhibit some type of regression in their behavior after a death. It is important that these behaviors are treated as a sign of grieving and that the child is not punished. This can be regression back to a time when the child felt safety and stability. Support the child by focusing and positively reinforcing on level behaviors.





FAQ for Elementary School Age Griever - IS IT OKAY?

Is it okay that my child is having behavioral issues such as aggressive outbursts or tantrums?

- If the person who has died was essential to the stability of the youth's world, anger is a natural reaction. The anger may be revealed in boisterous play, nightmares, irritability, or a variety of other behaviors. Often the child will show anger towards the surviving family members. Support the young griever by reminding them anger is not bad but there are helpful and unhelpful ways to express our anger. Do set boundaries for safety and provide options for emotional release.

Is it okay that the youth is worried about my safety or the safety of others?

- Bereaved youth have lost a stable presence in their life. This may cause them to worry about losing another important figure. This can lead them to worry about the safety of their caregiver in fear of losing them as well. It is common for young grievers to become more anxious. Support the young griever by offering reminders of safety and methods to calm their anxious feeling.

Is it okay that my child has temporarily regressed in some behaviors?

- After a death, many children will act younger than they are. The child may temporarily become more infantile, need attention and cuddling, make unreasonable demands for food, use baby talk, and even start wetting their beds at night. There may be regressions in behavior in familiar places like school. Support the child by focusing and positively reinforcing on level behaviors.





FAQ for Teenage Grievors - IS IT OKAY?

Is it okay that my teenager is withdrawing and needing more space?

- It is common for teenagers to withdraw from family to try to process the death. Often they will reach out to their peers for support. Teenagers may also “act out” as they grieve the deceased. Support the teen by providing opportunities where they will not be isolated or they can engage in activities they enjoy.

Is it okay that my teenager is having a difficult time concentrating?

- It is important to recognize that the adolescent may be preoccupied by the death loss. Teens have the ability to think abstractly. They may be contemplating big questions such as the meaning of life or their own morality. They are adjusting to their new life without the deceased in a different way from younger grievors. Difficulty concentrating is a normal response in grief.

Is it okay that my teenager is dreaming about their loved one?

- A 2014 study in the American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care* examined the impact of grief dreams on the bereaved and found that “dreams of the deceased occur frequently, can be highly meaningful and further healing from a loss.” Dreaming of a special person can be a part of coping with the feelings of a loss.

Resource Citation* Mendoza, M. (n.d.). Dreams and grief. Psychology Today.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/understanding-grief/201904/dreams-and-grief>





ADVOCATING FOR YOUNG GRIEVERS

You can support the young griever it is okay by:

- being patient with common grief reactions.
- providing information in bite sizes.
- being willing to talk about the person who died.
- listening without judgment or intent to problem solve.
- respecting differences in grieving styles.
- maintaining a normal routine.
- engaging the youth in activities previously enjoyed.
- not pressuring the youth to express feelings or thoughts.
- reassuring the youth it's okay not to take part in a certain celebration and/or holidays.
- reassuring them that there are people that support them.

Resource:

- The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families Portland, OR. (n.d.). Dougy Center. <https://www.dougy.org/resource-articles/how-to-help-a-grieving-child-1>
- NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee. (2015). Addressing grief: Tips for teachers and Administrators. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/addressing-grief/addressing-grief-tips-for-teachers-and-administrators> Contributors: Benjamin S. Fernandez MEd, Victoria A. Comerchero NCSP, Jacqueline A. Brown NCSP, Catherine Woahn, NCSP



IT IS OKAY...

ACTION STEPS FOR ADVOCATING FOR YOUR YOUNG GRIEVER

It is okay...	Within the school community	In social interactions
<p>It is okay to choose how and with whom you would like to share about the death and your grief.</p>	<p>A griever in the public school system, under FERPA, has the right to control what information is shared about the death loss and with whom. Students have the right to privacy.</p>	<p>At social or family gatherings, setting boundaries can be challenging for young grievers. Adults can help by stepping in to set boundaries with individuals who are pushing "grief buttons".</p>
<p>It is okay to collaborate and design your grief support plan to promote healthy bereavement.</p>	<p>A griever that is showing decreased performance in the academic environment can explore obtaining a 504 plan for modifications in the school setting. A conference with the school personnel can be requested.</p>	<p>Create an open dialogue with young grievers to address concerns such as reaching out for mental health services, discussing changes in routine, or how to share the news about the death.</p>
<p>It is okay to choose my level of participation in events that may affect my grief.</p>	<p>Consider how programming and events at school will impact the student's grief. Create open communication with the student and school community about what the youth needs to work through these events such as Parent's night, graduation, or class projects that have reminders of the death loss.</p>	<p>Some events may not be comforting for all grievers. Consider the grievers input in participation in activities such as visiting the grave site, holiday traditions, the funeral or memorials, etc.</p>
<p>It is okay to ask for support and to not be identified by the loss.</p>	<p>A death loss is a part of the grievers story but not their whole identity. Encourage the youth to share events at school that cause discomfort such as bullying related to the loss. Celebrate the various roles of the student such as artist, athlete, honor roll, etc.</p>	<p>When appropriate allow the youth to explore social interactions. Remind young grievers it is okay to laugh and have new experiences.</p>





EMOTION CHECK-IN WHEEL

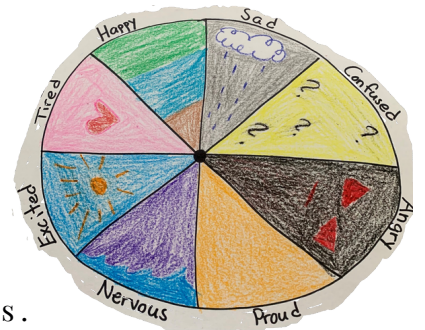
Supplies needed: White paper, pencil, color pencils, markers

Information: Becoming aware of our mood can help us identify what we need. It is okay to feel our feelings, however, sometimes the emotions get bigger than we can manage alone. Here is an activity to check in with a youth's mood and needs. Together you will work with the youth to build emotional vocabulary. The emotion wheel can be used to check in with emotions on a daily basis and help communicate the support needed when emotions are harder to manage.

Instructions:

- Draw a large circle that fills the paper.
- Draw lines to divide the circle into 8 pie wedges.
- Ask the youth what 8 emotions would you like to put on your pie. For younger individuals, consider using 4 or 6 pie wedges.
- Write the feeling words above each pie wedge.
- Choose a color or symbol to represent what the emotion looks like to them.
- Consider asking the youth to share what each symbol or color means to them.
- Use the wheel to conduct mood check ins. For example, try an AM and PM check in or perhaps make it a part of the bedtime ritual.

Note: The activity can be modified by adding a spinning mechanism.



Resource Citation: Corrington, D. R. (n.d.). Emotions Color Wheel.

<http://arttherapydirectives.blogspot.com/2012/02/emotionscolor-wheel.html>



EMOTION CHECK-IN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

This page can be used to assist the youth with identifying the feelings to be added to the wheel.

SAD **LOVED**

SCARED

LONELY

SAFE **SILLY**

MAD **CALM**

FRUSTRATED

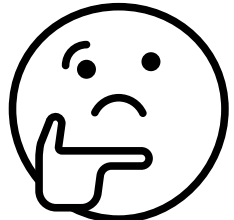
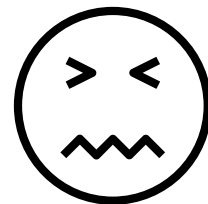
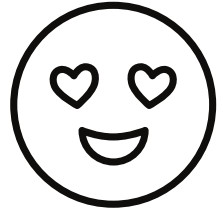
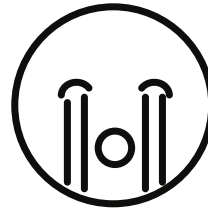
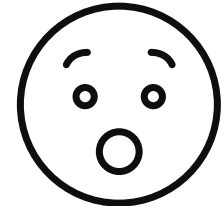
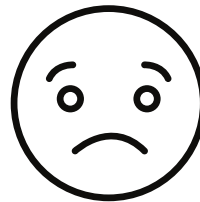
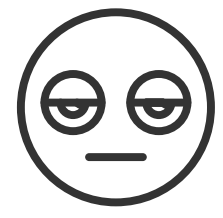
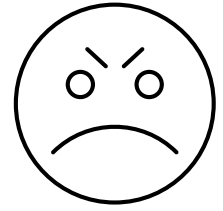
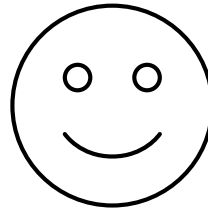
CONFUSED

HAPPY **TIRED**

ANNOYED

EXCITED

HOPEFUL





DIA DE LOS MUETROS [DAY OF THE DEAD] MASKS

Supplies needed: white paper plates, straws, black construction paper, glue, scissors, markers, tape

Information: Dia de los Muetros [Translation:Day of the Dead] is not Mexican Halloween. Dia de los Muetros is a day to honor those who have died. The sugar skull is a traditional part of the celebration that is designed to honor the deceased.

Learn more about Dia De Los Muertos by visiting <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/top-ten-day-of-dead-mexico>; *Top 10 things to know about the Day of the Dead*

Instructions:

- Cut a wide “v” shape on both sides of the paper plate.
- Cut black squares for eyes and triangle for nose of construction paper.
- Cut the squares into circles and glue on the mask.
- Consider adding decorative elements that reflect the deceased. Decorate as desired.
- Turn the paper plate over and attach straw with tape.
- Discuss the tradition of the holiday and take time to honor the deceased.





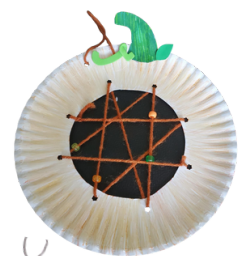
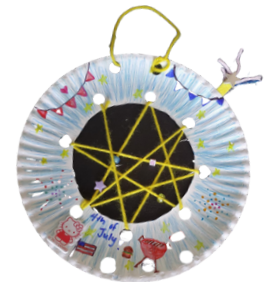
HOLIDAY MEMORY CATCHER

Supplies needed: Paper plate, scissors, yarn or string, beads, construction paper, and crayons or markers

Information: Grief does not take breaks for the holidays. There are holidays and celebrations throughout the year. It can be helpful to dedicate a time to acknowledging the grief during these times and finding ways to honor the absence of the deceased.

Instructions:

- Fold the paper plate in half. Cut out the center of the paper plate, ensuring to leave the rim intact.
- Using a hole punch or scissors create eight evenly spaced holes around the inside edge of the paper plate.
- Punch two holes at the top outer edge of the paper plate. This will be the top of the memory catcher where you can hang the memory catcher once it is complete.
- Using markers, crayons, colored pencils, or any other type of craft material, decorate the paper plate to your liking to represent a holiday.
- Using about four feet of yarn or string, tie one end of the yarn to the inner holes on the plate, creating a knot. Thread this yarn through the eight other holes in any pattern desired. You can also string beads through the yarn that represent memories with your special person. Tie a knot on the last hole.
- Cut a smaller piece of yarn to thread through the top holes. This is to hang holiday memory catcher.





Building Community

Grief is an individual journey, but you don't have to walk it alone.

Everyone's grief is different. Even when we share the same loss, the grief experienced is never the same. Nonetheless, building a support system can provide comfort and community. Accepting help from others can be a powerful experience both for the griever and the helper.

My Support System

Use the spaces below to identify people, places or activities that comfort you in your grief journey.

People Who Bring Me Comfort

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Places/Activities Which Bring Me Comfort

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How to be a Helper for the Grieving Community?

Understand that each griever will need different things, at different times throughout their grief journey. Your presence alone can be healing, the griever will come to learn they don't have to embark on the grief journey alone.

- **Give permission to grieve.** Remind the griever that all feelings are okay, and it is okay to express those feelings in a healthy way.
- **Accept the griever's feelings.** All feelings are okay. Sometimes a griever needs someone to sit with them as they experience all their grief feelings. You may feel the need to cheer up or find the positives in the situation; however, sometimes a griever just needs someone to accompany them through the difficult feelings. Grievers need to feel heard and understood.
- **Offer support.** There are times a griever may not know what they need or how to ask for help. Sometimes simple everyday responsibilities seem so much harder when one is grieving a death loss. Offering simple ways to help the griever adjust to a life without the deceased can be helpful. For example, offer to have a warm meal delivered, assist with chores around the home, or to pick up their groceries.
- **Your presence matters.** A simple message, word of encouragement, a warm meal, or a comforting shoulder remind grievers that they are not alone. Even the smallest act of kindness can speak volumes to a griever.
- **Offer ways to remember.** It is okay to talk about the deceased. Often friends and family shy away from talking about the deceased. However, for many grievers, they find comfort in knowing friends and family still remember their Special Person.



COMMUNITY GARDEN LANTERNS

Supplies needed: Recycled can, water, markers, nail, hammer, tea light

Information: Building a garden lantern is a simple way to remember and honor the deceased. This simple craft can be kept in your home to remind a griever that their Special Person is remembered and honored in your home, or it can be gifted to grieving family to communicate your continued support.

Instructions:

- Wash a recycled tin can (be sure the edges are safe to handle).
- Fill the tin can with water, leaving about an inch of space at the top of the can, to allow the water to expand as it freezes. Place the water filled can in the freezer and freeze overnight, or until the ice is solid. This will help the tin can keep its shape, while you create and decorate.
- Dry, draw or trace onto the outside of the can a word, name, or image.
- Holding the can firmly on its side and using a long, thick nail and hammer, carefully puncture the tin can along the lines of your design.
- Allow ice to melt, rinse, and dry your tin lantern.
- Paint/decorate as desired.
- Place a tea light candle inside and light up
- when remembering and honoring the deceased.





EXPLORING COPING SKILLS: WHAT ARE SOME THINGS WE CAN DO

Supplies needed: Print out the coping skills cards, scissors, and markers.

Information: Coping skills are activities we can do to help us working through a big feeling, a overwhelming thought, or manage the energy in our body. There are many things we can use as coping skills. It can be helpful to explore different skills and determine which ones work best for you. When you know which skills help you, the next step is to use them when you need support with an emotion, thought, or body response.

Instructions:

- Gather your supplies and discuss different activities someone might use as coping skills.
 - See the examples on the template page
- Design your own coping skills cards.
- Find a spot where the cards can be stored. Work with the youth to find a spot that can be assessed easily.
- When the youth needs to implement a coping skill, encourage them to look through their cards and choose one or more that can be done together.
- As the youth becomes more familiar with using the skills, you can continue to practice the skill together or encourage them to implement the skill for themselves.
- Remember, new cards can always be made and existing cards can be replaced. It is okay for your skills to change.



EXPLORING COPING SKILLS: WHAT ARE SOME THINGS WE CAN DO

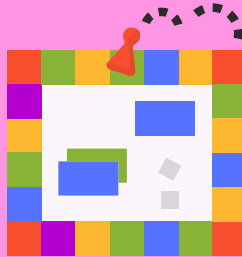
What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by taking a time out and playing with play doh.



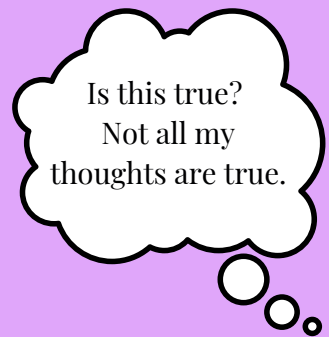
What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by playing a board game with someone I feel comfortable with.



What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by challenging my negative thought.



What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by playing in water [take a bath, outdoor water toys, or go to the pool or water side].



What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by cleaning or organizing my space.



What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by

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EXPLORING COPING SKILLS: WHAT ARE SOME THINGS WE CAN DO

What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by

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What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by

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What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by

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What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by

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What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by

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What are some things we can do?

I can work through this by

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DEEP BREATHING AND GROUNDING

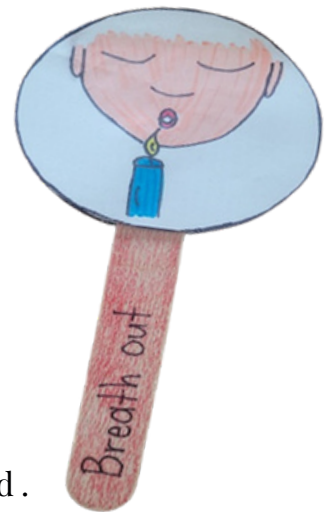
Supplies needed: Template, popsicle sticks, glue, scissors, markers or crayons

Information: The following activity can be used to promote healthy coping skills. The activity will introduce grounding by practicing deep breathing. The youth will practice "smelling the flower" (inhaling through the nose) and "blowing the candle" (exhaling out the mouth). The tool below will help make this breathing technique an interactive hands-on practice.

CREATIVE TIP: Consider using markers or crayons that have scents. The scents will encourage the child to engage in their senses.

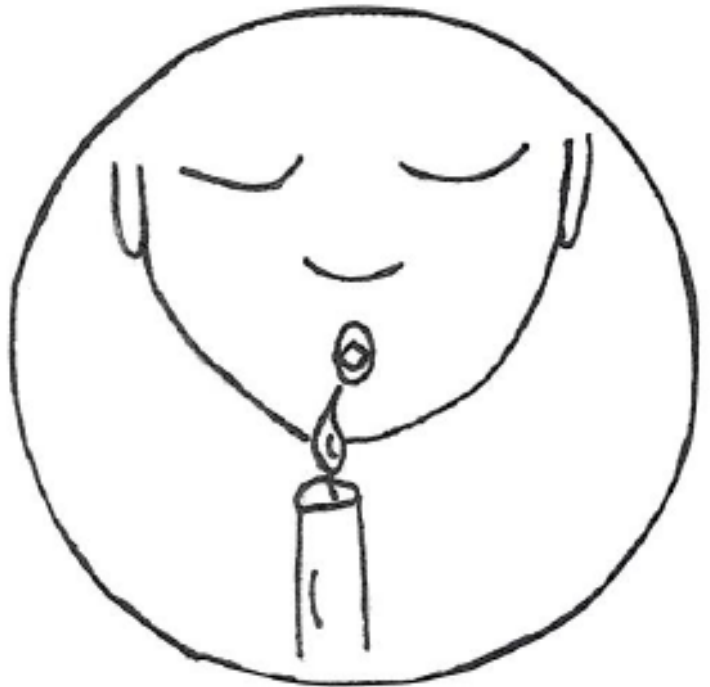
Instructions:

- Print out the template worksheet.
- Color the template as desired.
- Cut the circles from the template.
- Write "Breath in" on one side of the popsicle stick and "Breath out" on the opposite side. The popsicle stick can be decorated as desired.
- Glue the candle circle on the "Breath out" side of the popsicle stick.
- Glue the flower circle on the "Breath in" side of the popsicle stick.
- Practice with the youth by modeling deep breathing to ground them.



OK

TEMPLATE FOR FLOWER & CANDLE BREATHING





WRITE IT OUT: PROMPTS

Supplies needed: Paper and writing utensil

Information: Our emotions are one way that our body delivers messages to help us navigate life. When we grieve, we can store these big feelings in our body, and this can lead us to feel physically, emotionally, or mentally unwell. By releasing these feelings, you no longer expend the energy required to hold these big feelings in. Doing so, will help create a greater sense of self-awareness, personal growth, and help one feel more capable of creating space for emotions that feel more manageable.

So how do we release these feelings? One simple way is to put pencil to paper and bring our thoughts, questions, ideas, and feelings outside of our bodies. This can be an empowering and healing experience.

Here are some simple writing prompts to help you get started.

- Take a moment to scan your body. Notice any tension, tightness, or a new or different feeling? If so, journal what this feeling feels like. If you could write a message to this part of your body, what would you say?
- In this moment I feel...
- Consider the five senses, what are some things you can feel, smell, see, hear, and taste.
- Dear Grief, I'd like you to know...
- Write about what a perfect day would like for you.



DRAW IT OUT: HOLDING ON TO THE MEMORY

Supplies needed: Blank white paper or special memory template, markers or color pencils, writing tools

Information:

Sometimes using words to express what is in our hearts can be difficult. Drawing out a special memory the youth holds of their special person can be helpful. Use the template provided or a blank paper to draw and remember a special memory of the deceased. It is encouraged, but not necessary, to write down details about the memory to remember important details.

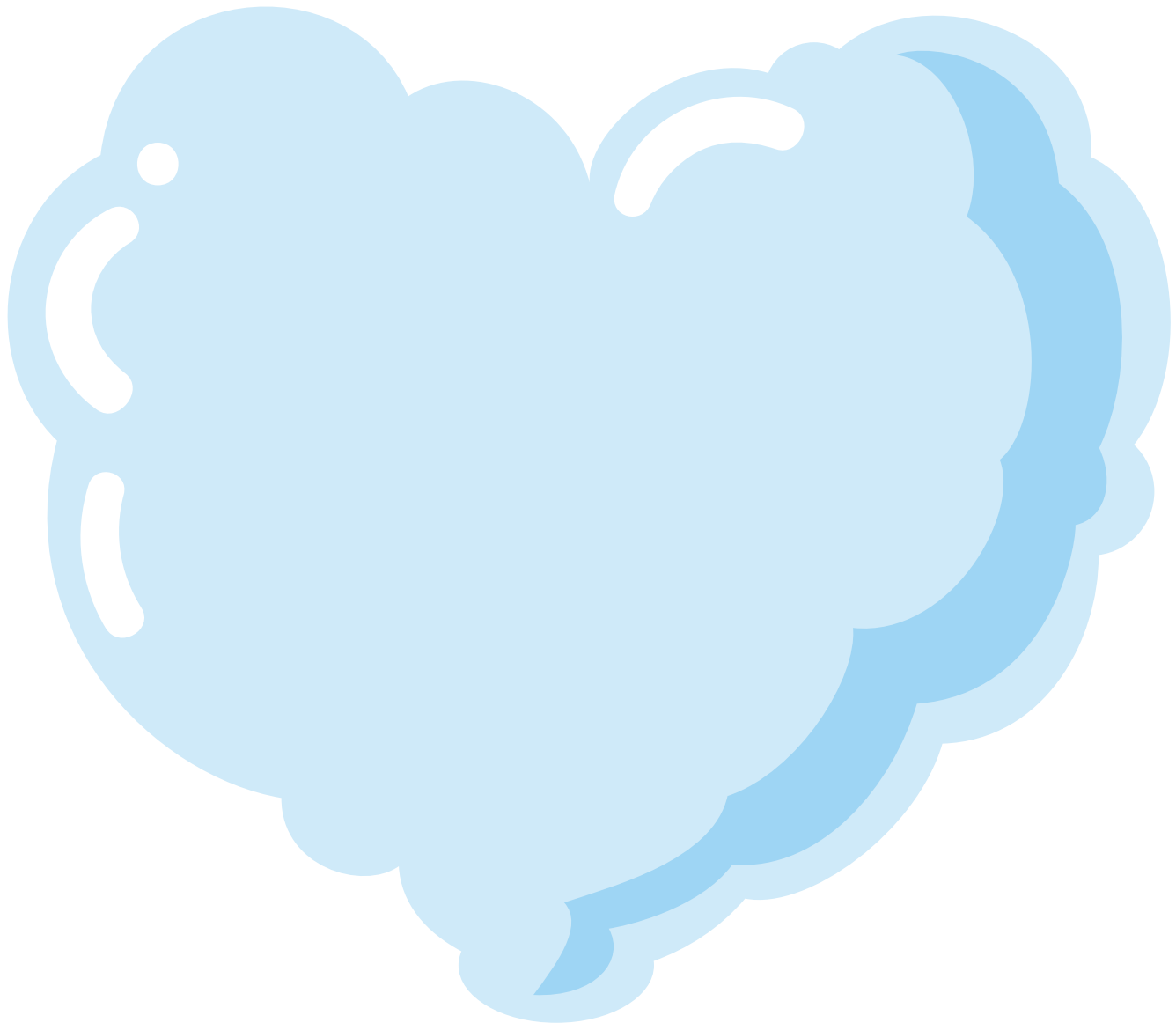
Instructions:

- Invite the youth to think of a memory that they value with the deceased and wish to share.
- Use the special memory template or a blank piece of paper to begin drawing. The drawing may be a recreation of the memory or any other interpretation of what the youth was thinking or feeling at the time or now. Encourage them to use the space as they need.
- Allow as much time as needed to draw the memory.
- If desired, use the provided space to write additional notes and details about the memory chosen.



MY SPECIAL MEMORY

A memory I remember with _____ is





MOVE IT OUT: LET'S SHAKE

Supplies needed: Mini water bottle, beads, buttons, or pebbles, toilet paper roll, decorative tape, hot glue gun

Information: Grief causes reactions that may lead to unwanted behaviors such as withdrawing from others, unhealthy anger expressions, hyperactivity, inconsolable crying, and other emotional outbursts. It can be helpful to practice self-regulating techniques with movement to release strong built-up grief emotions.

Instructions:

- Place your beads, buttons, or pebbles in the bottle.
- Close the bottle with the cap.
- Cut the toilet paper roll length wise. Please note: It is important **not** to cut the toilet paper roll in half.
- Place glue all around the bottle cap.
- Wrap the toilet paper roll around the bottle cap.
- Next, wrap the toilet paper roll with decorative tape.
- Repeat, if desired, to make one for each hand.
- Create your own rhythm and dance to the beat of your maracas!



Resource citation: How to make Maracas. Today's Parent. (2017, December 19). <https://www.todaysparent.com/kids/how-to-make-maracas/>



WHEN IT IS NOT OKAY



There are moments when the situation is **NOT** okay. It can be challenging to know what to do or what to look for. According to the CDC, the Center for Disease Control, these are some warning signs.

- Talking about being a burden
- Being isolated
- Increased anxiety
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Increased substance use
- Looking for a way to access lethal means
- Increased anger or rage
- Extreme mood swings
- Expressing hopelessness
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Talking/posting about wanting to die
- Making plans for suicide

If you or someone you know begins to show these or other concerning warning signs, do not try to manage this on your own.

- Reach out for assistance.
- Avoid promises to keep the self harming thoughts or behaviors a secret.
- Remove items that could be a danger to self or others.
- Listen, be present, and try to look for ways to reduce isolation. Assist with connections to support systems.
- Follow up with them. Following up can be a helpful reminder that they are not alone and knowing they are connected to others can decrease negative messaging.

↑ Information

↓ Language Suggestions

Call
911 or 988

Crisis Text Line
Text **HOME** to 741-741 to text with a trained crisis counselor

"I understand you might be upset with me, but you are important to me. It is time for us to get help."

"I can not promise [item that can not be done]. I will be here to help you through this hard moment."

Resource: How The 5 Steps Can Help Someone Who is Suicidal (2019). #BeTheTo.
<https://www.betheito.com/betheito-steps-evidence/>





MOVIE NIGHT!

Movies can be a relaxed way to begin a conversation about death and grief. The following directory provides a few movie suggestions based on different types of death losses.

Consider gathering members of the griever's support system, grab some snacks, watch the film, and have an informal discussion after.

With each film listed, a few conversation starters have been provided. This is a chance to explore more about each individual's understanding of death, dying, and grief.

It is okay to talk about death, dying, and grief.



Grief in Motion Pictures Directory

Age & Rating	Type of Death Loss	Movie
PG: All	Pet loss	Marley and me
Discussion Questions	Did the grief look different for the children and the parents after Marley's death?	Marley had many good and bad days with the family. How did those impact the family's grief?
G: All	Grandparent Loss	Encanto
Discussion Questions	Maribel did not meet her grandfather. Do you think she still grieved his death?	Abuela was changed when her husband died. What are some of the new behaviors or thoughts that happened after the death?
PG 13: 13 and up	Sibling Loss	Black Panther: Wakanda Forever
Discussion Questions	Shuri handled her grief differently than her mother and friends. What was different about her grief?	Shuri was drawn to the spirit of Erik. What do you believe she needed to learn from him to move forward in her grief?
PG 13	Death due to violence	Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close
Discussion Questions	Oskar mentions things have gotten harder since "the worse day". What are some things that appear more challenging for Oskar since the loss?	What do you make of the symbolism of the key in the movie?

Grief in Motion Pictures Directory Continued

Age & Rating	Type of Death Loss	Movie
PG: All	Parent Loss	Frozen II
Discussion Questions	Anna and Elsa's parents die in the first movie. How did they grieve their death differently in the second movie?	In what ways did being older change how Olaf, Anna, Elsa, and Kristoff responded to the challenges they faced?
G: All	Death due to illness	Walk to Remember
Discussion Questions	Landon and Jamie were dating when he learned of Jamie's terminal illness. What kind of changes occurred in their relationship thereafter?	Four years passed since Jamie's death in the film. What emotions did Landon appear to be experiencing?
PG 13: 13 and up	Multiple Loss	Reign Over Me
Discussion Questions	Charlie uses music and videogames to cope with his loss. How did Charlie Fineman use videogames to express his grief?	Charlie finally decides to open up to Alan about his loss story. What kind of behavioral and mental changes happened to Charlie afterwards?
PG	Friend Loss	My Girl
Discussion Questions	Vada grew up around funerals. When her friend died, it was not the same as the other funerals. What was different?	Vada experiences hypochondria. What are some circumstances that might have led to this fear? How do the adults support her through this?

Grief in Motion Pictures Directory

Age & Rating	Type of Death Loss	Movie
PG: All	Parent Loss	The Good Dinosaur
Discussion Questions	How did Arlo's family come together after his dad died?	Spot was adopted by a new family, how do you think this will change his life?
PG: All	Spouse Loss	We Bought a Zoo
Discussion Questions	How does buying and opening the zoo help the family on their journey of healing?	Benjamin struggles with the changes that occurred after the death of his wife. How can changes, or secondary loss, affect our ability to grieve?
PG 13	Child Loss	Collateral Beauty
Discussion Questions	As Madeline faces her daughter's death, she is told to "just make sure you noticed the collateral beauty". What do you think that means?	How does Howard's isolation affect other people in his life?
PG 13	Parent Loss	Slumberland
Discussion Questions	What do you think Nemo needed from her uncle when she first moved in with him?	Throughout the film, it appears that uncle Philip was disconnected from his emotions. How do you think this changed him grieving his brother?



COMMUNITY VIGIL

It is not always possible for individuals to gather to honor the deceased. There may be many reasons for this. In an effort to open a space to honor and remember, we invite you to join in a community vigil. Throughout the month of November, you are invited to decorate a candle in honor of a special person or persons who have died.

Place the candle in the window.

Together we will share the light that we carry because of the relationship we held with the deceased.

You are not alone.

WE REMEMBER THEM





**OUR CONNECTION IS A LIGHT THAT
SHINES WITHIN ME.
I AM OK BECAUSE OF MY LASTING
CONNECTION TO...**

