



**Cornerstone
of Hope**

UNDERSTANDING DEATH, GRIEF & MOURNING *A Resource Manual*

UNDERSTANDING
Death, Grief & Mourning
Bereavement Resource Book



**Cornerstone
of Hope**

CENTERS FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN, TEENS AND ADULTS

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ABOUT CORNERSTONE OF HOPE

From the Founders

This book is dedicated to those who have lost a loved one, and to those who want to effectively serve the bereaved in their professional or personal community.

Knowing the personal impact of losing our 3-year-old son, Bobby, we realized the devastating effects of how life completely changed for us. How would we handle our daily responsibilities of raising a family when we both wished life would have just stopped? Yet in the same breath, we also knew that we needed to keep going for our other children, our marriage, our jobs, and ourselves.

As a result, we sought support. We attended weekly counseling sessions and participated in a monthly support group. We could write a novel about this entire experience, but probably still wouldn't be able to find the exact words to describe those events. We are confident in one aspect for sure; that our grief journey brought us to our knees. We have remained on our knees ever since, asking God to give us the strength to get through each day. You see, Cornerstone of Hope is not an emotional response to our son's death, but a devotional response to God's call to serve those left to grieve. We pray that you will find this guide useful as you travel your own grief journey, or accompany those who seek support after the death of a loved one.



*Bobby Tripodi,
Christmas 1999*

Ultimately, we desire to change pain and suffering into purpose and meaning.

Sincerely,

Christi & Mark

Christi & Mark Tripodi
Founders, Cornerstone of Hope

*"...and our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort."
-2 Corinthians 1:7*

Forward

If you're holding this resource book, most likely you work with bereaved children, adults or families. Please accept our appreciation for the hard work you do in walking with those who are grieving. Our goal with this book is to assist you in understanding death and bereavement, as well as to provide you resources on various aspects of loss. Please feel free to make copies of appropriate pages to distribute to your clients.

If you have any questions about grief, either in general or specific to your client situation, please feel free to consult with one of our experienced grief counselors, who will be happy to answer questions and provide additional resources and/or interventions.

Cornerstone of Hope is committed to providing comprehensive bereavement services to children, teens and adults. If Cornerstone can help your client in any way, please have them contact us at 216.524.3787 (Cleveland) or 614.824.4285 (Columbus).

THE CORNERSTONE APPROACH

Bereavement Care for Children & Teens

Helping Children & Teens Through the Grief Process:

Children experience the same range of emotions as adults, but because they are still developing cognitively and emotionally, they are not able to grieve in the same way. Children's coping skills are limited and, for this reason, they need to grieve intermittently, or in small spurts, for a longer period of time. Due to their developmental limitations, children need education about grief as well as assistance in identifying their complex feelings. For them, grief issues will resurface throughout their growth. As they develop mentally and emotionally, they will need further education and support to become happy and healthy adults.

PRESCHOOL AGE

We believe that all children grieve a loss; however, they are not all developmentally ready to work through their grief with the help of a professional. It is difficult for young children under the age of six to talk to a professional about their grief at a scheduled time. When young children are experiencing grief, they express it in the moment or in their behaviors. It is important for the parent(s)/caregiver(s) to understand how their young child experiences grief, so they can better support them through the process. That is why the therapists work with the parent/caregiver to help create boundaries and a supportive atmosphere at home that will nurture grieving infants and preschoolers. Five-year-olds may be appropriate for limited sessions with a therapist, but emphasis is directed on helping a parent/caregiver emotionally support the child.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE

Children ages six through ten understand the finality of death and are more capable of working through their grief with the help of a professional. Due to their limited vocabulary and cognitive development, it can be difficult for children to express their grief verbally. Through the use of storybooks, games, and art & creative therapy, we help children understand their emotions and learn healthy ways to cope. The therapist also keeps open communication with the parent/caregiver to provide parenting support.

JUNIOR/MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE

As children get older, they are better able to verbalize their emotions but continue to express their grief through behaviors. Common problems include a decline in academic performance, sleep changes, and somatic complaints such as headaches and stomachaches. Through the use of books, games, and art & creative therapy, we help children understand ways in which grief affects them and how to manage it. In addition, we work with the parents/caregivers to help them understand what their children are experiencing and establish ways they can support their children through this process.



We at Cornerstone of Hope believe it is important for children, adolescents and adults to understand the grief process and be given opportunities to express their emotions of grief. We provide a place of support and guidance for families who are grieving. Our professionals help families understand that their experiences are normal and offer healthy ways to cope with those experiences.

THE CORNERSTONE APPROACH

Bereavement Care for Children & Teens Cont.

HIGH SCHOOL AGE

Once a child has reached adolescence, he/she may have an adult understanding of death. Even though adolescents have the vocabulary to express themselves, they often do not share what they are experiencing because they do not want to appear different from their peers. Due to their already difficult life stage, adolescents' experience with grief is unique. They are neither children nor adults. Instead, teens constitute a special group of mourners who deserve a special kind of care and consideration from the adults around them. We use various creative therapies to help adolescents work through their grief while educating them about the grief process.

ART INTERVENTIONS—A CREATIVE APPROACH TO THERAPY

Art therapy is one of the main modalities Cornerstone of Hope uses in working with children and teens. Art therapy is based on the belief that the creative process involved in the making of art is healing and life-enhancing. No artistic skill is necessary to benefit from art therapy. Verbalizing thoughts and feelings can be difficult, especially during stressful life events. An art therapist can guide a client through the creative process in a safe and comfortable atmosphere. The simple use of color or line can communicate complex feelings or experiences without words. The artwork can also be a stepping stone to verbal communication about feelings or events. At Cornerstone of Hope, our professionally trained art therapists hold a Masters Degree in art therapy and are trained in both art and psychology. We use art therapy to assist in moving through the grieving process because it allows people to do the following:

- Get in touch with, accept, and express feelings
- Foster positive coping behaviors
- Gain insight and understanding
- Reduce anxiety and provide emotional release
- Create memorials that express the significance of the life of the deceased

BEREAVEMENT SUMMER CAMPS

The youth who are grieving often feel alone, believing they are the only ones who have lost a loved one. However, at camp, they meet others who have also had a loss. Cornerstone combines traditional camp activities and field trips with personalized memorial projects. Through these experiences, meaningful friendships are formed. We offer three unique camps for grieving children and teens.

Day Camps:

- Camp Cornerstone (Cleveland)
- Camp Memory (Columbus)

Overnight Camp:

- Camp Erin® (Cleveland and Columbus)



THE CORNERSTONE APPROACH

Bereavement Care for Adults

HELPING ADULTS THROUGH THE GRIEF PROCESS:

Initial Assessment Interview: Individuals seeking grief support and counseling services after the death of a loved one are eligible for bereavement services at Cornerstone of Hope. Please call to schedule an appointment with one of our grief counselors to determine readiness for group support and individual counseling needs. Our master's level clinical staff is dedicated to guiding the bereaved on the path toward hope and healing. In the spirit of Christ, we welcome and serve all seeking support.

INDIVIDUAL GRIEF COUNSELING

Weekly or bi-weekly sessions

50 minutes in length

Counselors will work with you to develop the best plan of care

TRAUMA COUNSELING – EMDR (EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITIZATION AND REPROCESSING) THERAPY

- A non-traditional type of therapy that has been proven to help with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Releases negative memories, allowing the reprocessing of the traumatic events to be worked through and become less disabling for the client

Bereavement Care for All Ages

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

- Structured Support Group; topics related to grief are explored each week and opportunities are provided for participants (ages 5 through adult) to explore their healing process
- Monthly groups that help continue supporting the grief journey

WORKSHOPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

- Candle Lighting & Remembrance Ceremony—This December memorial event is open to all grieving families
- Butterfly Release—This family-friendly remembrance event is open to all grieving families
- Pregnancy & Infant Loss Programs: Mother's Day Tea, Father's Day Lunch, Pregnancy & Infant Loss Candle Lighting Service
- Journaling, scrap booking, and guest speakers promote hope and healing in a safe group environment
- Educational seminars guide and direct professionals and guests in serving the grieving in the community

About Anticipatory Grief

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO INFORM A CHILD WHEN A LOVED ONE IS SERIOUSLY ILL?

- Not keeping children informed can lead them to draw their own conclusions.
- Keeping children informed builds a trusting relationship.
- Children pick up on nonverbal signs: worried looks, hushed conversations, telephone calls in the night, relatives showing up, perhaps less contact with you, and general household tension. Children may develop a high anxiety level, because they do not know what is happening.
- Knowing helps the child prepare for loss through anticipatory grief.
- By including the children, you can demonstrate the love, support, and strength your family shows its members in times of crisis or pain.
- United families can help each other learn to cope with illness and loss. Parents can role model healthy coping behaviors for their children to prepare them for life.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION

1. Begin on the child's level.

Children process information differently at varied ages. It is important to gear information to the child's developmental level. Vocabulary and concepts have to be consistent with the child's. Beginning with the child's experience allows one to gear information to the child's own level. For example, "You know how Grandma has been ill..."

2. Let the child's questions guide.

Adults sometimes provide too much information which can overwhelm the child. Provide basic information, and then let the child's questions guide you. It is important to understand what the child is really asking. We need to address both the questions and the underlying feeling. The response should be open-ended enough to allow the child to address all concerns and questions.

3. Encourage feedback.

One is never quite sure how one's words will be understood, especially in anxiety-filled crises. For this reason, it is critical to ask children to summarize what they have heard. This provides opportunities to clarify misconceptions.

4. Provide opportunities for the child to express feelings.

A child's feelings during illness, whether the child's own or another's, can be complex and frightening. It is important that the child have opportunities to comfortably express those feelings. Adults can help by listening, validating those feelings, and sharing their own feelings and the ways they cope with them.

5. Utilize other resources.

Books and films can often be shared experiences that facilitate conversations. There are many adults in a child's life other than parents who can be useful sources of support. Helping children identify people with whom they feel comfortable discussing their problems reminds them they need not cope alone.

6. Use the child's natural expressive means to stimulate dialogue.

Children often express themselves in stories, games, play, art, or music. Using these approaches with children can be very helpful, since they are more comfortable for the child, they offer direct opportunities for expressing feelings, and they provide opportunities for dialogue.

About Anticipatory Grief

(GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION CONTINUED)

7. Visits and medical procedures.

Should a child visit an ill person? Leave this decision to the child. Provide the child with information, options, and support and let him/her decide.

Provide information as to what the child can expect and what it will be like. Explain how the person feels, looks, responds, and if they are connected to machines or IVs.

Provide options such as staying at home with an adult, waiting in the hall if they choose not to go in, etc. If they decide not to go, there are other ways they can show their love and support such as sending letters, tapes, drawings, and calling on the telephone.

Provide support by identifying an adult whose role is to support the child if the child needs to leave the room or talk about how seeing the ill individual is affecting him/her.

8. Additional Suggestions

- Learn as much as you can about the illness.
- Get information for children from the national organization or your library to help children understand basic concepts of the illness.
- Help children find appropriate ways to be involved in the care of their loved one.
- Children need a strong support system when their family is coping with an illness. Grandparents, teachers, neighbors, etc. need to provide more support in a child's life during this time.
- Make school counselors and teachers aware of this situation and keep them updated as changes occur.
- Prepare children for changes as the illness progresses.



United families can help each other learn to cope with illness and loss. Parents can role model healthy coping behaviors for their children to prepare them for life.

Informing Children about the Death of a Loved One

WHO

Children should be informed about a death by their parents. If this is not possible, then another adult to whom they feel close should inform them.

WHEN

Inform children of a death immediately. This reduces the risk of them hearing the news from the wrong person, at the wrong time, or in the wrong place.

WHERE

Inform children in familiar surroundings, preferably at home.

HOW

- Think about the age of the child and any past experiences that may affect or help with their understanding of what has occurred.
- Speak with a calm, natural tone of voice.
- Share your feelings. However, if you are extremely upset, try waiting until you have calmed down some so the child doesn't become frightened.
- Be honest and truthful, using correct terminology, i.e., cancer; died.
- Avoid euphemisms, i.e., gone away, sleeping, eternal rest, lost, etc.
- Allow the child to lead, encourage him/her to ask questions, and answer only what the child is asking. Avoid giving unnecessary details.
- Meet the individual needs of the child and allow him/her to express feelings. The child may become angry, need to cry, need to be alone, or need a hug.

This is an adaptation of an article by Kenneth Doka appearing in Children Mourning, Mourning Children published by Hospice Foundation of America, 1995. Reference: Helping Children Understand Death. Cooperative Extensions Service, Ohio State University



Art Therapy for Children: Grief Timeline Water-color

ART THERAPY TASK:

Create a grief time-line painting using water-color

POPULATION:

Good for teens, can also be used with children

SUPPLIES:

Large water-color paper, prang water-color set, paint brushes, water container

DIRECTIVE:

Think about your life from the time your loved one died to present day. How did you feel when the loss first happened? How did you feel in between? Where are you now on your grief journey? Using line, shape and color create a timeline of your grief (words/representational images can also be used if needed). Choose specific colors to represent the feelings you have had.

PROCESSING:

Ask the teen to describe their grief time-line. Some helpful questions to ask:

How does this color, pattern, shape, design reflect your grief?

Where would you put yourself now in this picture?

Grief isn't always linear. Do you sometimes move up/down/forward/back within this timeline?

What is the most painful spot you can identify on this timeline? What are some things that helped you at that time? (Or things that can help you if you are currently in that spot)



PREPARING FOR FUNERALS

Children need to feel a part of the family. A funeral or calling hours can be a good time to help the child feel a part of what has happened. There are some guidelines you might want to follow to help your child with the funeral experience.

1. Let the child know what a funeral is and that it is to say goodbye to the deceased person, to show that the person was loved and appreciated, and to give comfort and support to the family members.
2. Talk about where the funeral will be held. Describe the room, the casket, the appearance of the body and basic information about what happens to a body when a person dies – the heart stops beating, stops breathing, cannot think or feel, etc.
3. Never force a child to go to a funeral, touch a body, kiss a body, etc.
4. Allow the child to be part of the funeral planning. This inclusion is important.
5. Plan to have someone answer questions about the funeral process (friend, funeral director, clergy) if you cannot handle those questions at that time. Talk about cremation if that has been chosen.
6. Let the child know that it is permissible to write a note, draw a picture, or leave an item in the casket making sure the child understands that the deceased person cannot give it back or answer it.
7. Take the child to view the body before visitors come to give the child a chance to adjust, question, or react.
8. Ask the funeral director to show the legs of the body to the child if they want to make certain that all of the body is there.
9. Explain the purpose of the casket (keeps dirt off the person) and the purpose of the vault (keeps insects and water out of the casket).
10. Allow the child to “touch” things (the casket, flowers, the body) if the child chooses.
11. Do not insist that a young child stay for call hours or go to the funeral - allow the child to make the decision.
12. Explain that calling hours and the funeral allow people to come and say that they are sorry for your loss and to say goodbye.
13. Allow the child to bring along a favorite stuffed animal for comfort.
14. If you are a close relation to the deceased and will be busy greeting mourners, arrange to have a family friend watch over your child. This person should feel comfortable explaining what is going on and be able to leave the room with the child if he/she needs a break.
15. Tell the child how the day will go and what will happen in the next few days.
16. Let the child know how others will act at the funeral. They are sad, so they might cry. Some people act like they don't care as their way of covering up their true feelings. People sometimes say strange things because they do not know what to say. Some people have different religious beliefs and may mention these.
17. Answer your child's questions as they arise with simple and honest answers. Do not allow time for their imaginations to run wild.

PREPARING FOR FUNERALS

18. Be sure to go back over the “biology” of death.
19. Remember it is hard for a child to separate soul and body. Share your beliefs with the child.
20. Ask your clergyman/woman for help with spiritual questions.
21. Children commonly have fears about losing a parent, especially if one of the parents has already died or abandoned them. Do not say, “Nothing will ever happen to me.” Explain to the child that chances are small that anything will happen to you. Assure your child that most parents live to see their children grow up and have children of their own.
22. After a death, children may have fears about what would happen to them if their parent or caregivers died. Let the child know who has been designated to care for them in your will. If you do not have a will, write one to ensure their peace of mind and yours.
23. Give your child something that belonged to their loved one. This can provide a very important connection to the deceased.
24. Give the child permission to cry, grieve, express feelings like anger or guilt or ask questions.
25. Share your emotions with the child. “It is OK for me to cry.” Share with them if you are very sad, lonely, relieved, etc. DO NOT SAY, “Be brave,” or “Don’t cry.” Allow emotions.
26. Remember that, as a primary caregiver, you are the child’s role model. By your own actions, you are teaching your child how to grieve, cope with loss, and work through the healing process.



Children need to feel a part of the family. A funeral or calling hours can be a good time to help the child feel a part of what has happened.

COMMON FEARS & QUESTIONS OF GRIEVING CHILDREN

- What happened?
- Was it my fault?
- Did I do something bad?
- Am I going to die?
- Are you going to die?
- Will others I love die?
- How old are you?
- Who will take care of me?
- What does dead mean?
- Why do people die?
- Where do people go when they die?
- Where is heaven?
- How can someone be underground and in heaven at the same time?
- Can I go too?
- Don't people get cold, hungry, or scared underground?
- Why would God take him/her away?
- When is (deceased's name) coming back?

Children have limited cognitive and verbal abilities and grief can be an overwhelming experience. They may or may not be able to directly communicate the above listed fears and questions. However, sensitive ears and eyes will be able to pick up on these themes in whatever forms they may appear. Even if there is no noticeable communication of these fears, chances are that some are there.

One might even say to a bereaved child, "When my grandmother died, I began to worry that other people I loved might die, too. I'm wondering if you have ever worried about that." Statements such as these do not put fears into children that do not exist. They will either tell you no, or, more likely, will grab the opportunity to hear an adult acknowledge and address this fear.

Acknowledging children's fears normalizes their experience and allows them to explore their fears and receive support. Remember, children have fantastic imaginations and will create their own answers when they can't find them elsewhere.



HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH GRIEF EMOTIONS

Listed below are some of the most common grief emotions and some specific activities to help children cope.

ANGER

- Help your child identify specific things or people that make him/her angry.
- Modeling clay or playdough is great for relieving stress; have your child sculpt what makes him/her angry, then pound it flat.
- Suggest physical activity to deal with anger.
- Run around the yard
- Punch a pillow
- Scream in a closed room
- Kick a soccer ball
- Have your child let out anger into a tape recorder and then listen to himself expressing his anger.
- Suggest that your child write a letter to whomever he or she is angry with and then rip it up.

GUILT

- Have your child draw a picture of something that happened and that he/she now wished had happened differently.
- Make paper bag puppets (one of the child and one of the deceased) so your child can “talk” to his/her loved one and apologize or discuss their regrets.
- Write a letter to his/her loved one stating the regrets.
- Suggest that your child make his/her “confession” into a tape recorder and then erase it.
- Help your child recall all of the good things he/she has done.
- Help your child write his/her secret message onto a small strip of paper, attach it to a helium balloon, and then release his/her guilt into the air.

SADNESS/DEPRESSION

- Reminisce by drawing a favorite memory.
- Make a collage out of magazine pictures that remind your child of his loved one.
- Look at photographs.
- Make a home video in which your child interviews other family members about their memories of his/her loved one.
- Talk about “keepsakes” that your child has selected to remember his/her loved one.
- Put together a scrapbook which can include: Photos, Newspaper clippings, Cards, Drawings

FEARS

- Help your child identify specific fears and address them one at a time.
- Title a blank paper, “I worry about...” or “I am afraid of...” and then have your child draw a corresponding picture.
- Talk to your child about any nightmares.
- Draw the dream and then draw an acceptable ending for it.
- Help your child write his/her fears on the outside of a helium balloon, then release the balloon and fears into the sky.
- Keep daily routines and discipline consistent.
- Provide lots of hugs and safe touching.

CHILDREN & BEREAVEMENT

The following is a guide to understanding a child's concept of death and common grief reactions based on age. Many other factors besides age and developmental level affect a child's concept of death and experience of grief including personality, life experiences, culture, level of support, religious/philosophical beliefs, etc. This information is presented as a guide based on age, not as a strict tool.

0-2 Years of Age

Developmental Stage	Concept of Death	Common Reaction to Loss and Change	How Adults Can Help
<p>Physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral aspects.</p> <p>PROVISION OF BASIC NEEDS Food, warmth, comfort, love, security. Importance of bonding/attachment to mother or key caregiver.</p>	<p>NONE Only an awareness of separation by absence.</p>	<p>PHYSICAL Feeding, sleeping , toileting difficulties</p> <p>EMOTIONAL Lengthy separation from key caregiver may lead to despair and detachment.</p> <p>COGNITIVE Need for distraction, play, and stimulation.</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL Regression to an earlier stage of development. Protests against separation.</p>	<p>PHYSICALLY Respond to children's needs for normal routines regarding feeding, toileting, and rest.</p> <p>EMOTIONALLY Provision of a consistent, loving, comforting caregiver.</p> <p>COGNITIVELY Respond to child's need for stimulation and distraction. Stranger anxiety.</p> <p>BEHAVIORALLY Allow for regression. Be sensitive to child's fear of separation and stranger anxiety.</p>



CHILDREN & BEREAVEMENT

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3-5 Years of Age

Developmental Stage	Concept of Death	Common Reaction to Loss and Change	How Adults Can Help
<p>PHYSICAL ASPECTS Becoming less dependent. Likes routine and order.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL ASPECTS Can tolerate some separation from key caregiver.</p> <p>COGNITIVE ASPECTS Beginning to understand and use two-way communication. "Why" questions. "Magical thinking" (own thoughts, wishes, and actions determine what happens to others.)</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS Beginning to know what is expected of them socially and learning appropriate ways of responding, particularly to parents.</p>	<p>Separation and sleep are related to early thoughts of death.</p> <p>The child does not perceive death as irreversible, but rather under changed circumstances, i.e., another form of life.</p> <p>DRAWINGS Show concern about physical features of death and the dead, separation and abandonment, humanizing the unknown.</p>	<p>PHYSICAL Feeding, toileting, and sleeping difficulties. Concern about routines.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL Fears about separation and abandonment.</p> <p>COGNITIVE Will want to know what has happened. May feel that they are being punished for "bad thoughts" – that what has happened is their fault. Interested in the death.</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL Regression to infant needs. Aggressive, rejecting behaviors, and/or withdrawn and/or clinging behaviors.</p>	<p>PHYSICALLY Follow normal routines and activities.</p> <p>EMOTIONALLY Give as much comfort as needed and give reassurance that the children will be cared for. Enable children to keep mementos.</p> <p>COGNITIVELY Answer all questions as simply and honestly as possible. Reassure children that what has happened is not their fault, that they are "OK" and not bad. Allow children to see the body, attend the funeral, etc.</p> <p>BEHAVIORALLY Allow for regression. Be consistent and supportive regarding any changed behaviors. Inform school, family, friends, etc, as appropriate.</p>

CHILDREN & BEREAVEMENT

The following is a guide to understanding a child's concept of death and common grief reactions based on age. Many other factors besides age and developmental level affect a child's concept of death and experience of grief including personality, life experiences, culture, level of support, religious/philosophical beliefs, etc. This information is presented as a guide based on age, not as a strict tool.

6-8 Years of Age

Developmental Stage	Concept of Death	Common Reaction to Loss and Change	How Adults Can Help
<p>PHYSICAL ASPECTS Consolidating physical development.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL ASPECTS Working towards autonomy and responsibility.</p> <p>COGNITIVE ASPECTS Seeking casual explanations to "why" questions. Experiment with their perception and experience of the world through fantasy and play.</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS Social assimilation into the culture. Transition from family and home to peers and school.</p>	<p>Dying and death are identified with the dead but still personified. Death is kept at a distance and externalized, associated with old age and illness.</p> <p>The fear of death is also associated with a fear of loss of the self, an early preview of life crisis (i.e., leaving home, middle age, and old age).</p> <p>DRAWINGS Symbols associated with the dark, water, sleep, emptiness, rebirth, mutilation, and personification and rituals of death.</p>	<p>PHYSICAL Children may exhibit psychosomatic symptoms and/or depression. They may want to be "of use" practically.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL Children may exhibit a range of emotions, manifest rapid mood challenges. Will often try to be brave, do not like to lose control.</p> <p>COGNITIVE There may be evidence of learning difficulties. Play, stories, and drawings will often reveal a child's inner feelings and fears.</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL Regression may accompany stress. May become withdrawn or act out in anger. May exhibit behavioral difficulties at home or school. May become the "perfect child."</p>	<p>PHYSICALLY Acknowledge the symptoms and seek professional help when appropriate. Enable the child to help and give comfort to others.</p> <p>EMOTIONALLY Acknowledge that you know that it is very hard for him/her at the moment and it is understandable if he/she feels upset, etc. Reassure the child that he/she will always be cared for by someone.</p> <p>COGNITIVELY Seek and offer help at school as appropriate. Give short, honest, concrete explanations to questions and encourage children to see the body, attend the funeral, draw, etc. and to discuss concerns if needed.</p> <p>BEHAVIORALLY Allow short term regression and dependence on parents & other adults. Give clear boundaries and limits to inappropriate behaviors. Inform school, etc.</p>

CHILDREN & BEREAVEMENT

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9-12 Years of Age

Developmental Stage	Concept of Death	Common Reaction to Loss and Change	How Adults Can Help
<p>PHYSICAL ASPECTS Relatively stable.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL ASPECTS Gaining a sense of self outside the family, a place in the world. Questioning parents' judgments, faulty arguments and inconsistencies.</p> <p>COGNITIVE ASPECTS Beginning to rationalize events. Shift from concrete towards abstract thought. Can project back into the past and forward into the future.</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS Beginning to understand the rules of society.</p>	<p>Dying and death are identified with the dead but still personified. Death is kept at a distance and externalized, associated with old age and illness.</p> <p>DRAWINGS Display common and individual concerns about own mortality and fear of death. Interest in violent deaths. Death is represented in abstract terms (i.e., blackness, emptiness).</p>	<p>PHYSICAL Children may exhibit psychosomatic symptoms (stomachaches, headaches, etc.) and/or depression.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL Children usually manifest a more stable, surprisingly calm and accepting response to death and loss.</p> <p>COGNITIVE Can rationalize the death and loss. Can think retrospectively about what has happened and imagine the possible implications for the future.</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL Will normally respond appropriately, although there may be some changed behaviors.</p>	<p>PHYSICALLY Take symptoms seriously. Give children reassurance that help and support are available.</p> <p>EMOTIONALLY Allow children to give comfort and help without making too many "adult" demands. Encourage and enable children to talk about the deceased and the implication of the loss. Allow children to express their feelings, and do not hide adult feelings from them.</p> <p>COGNITIVELY Give clear, truthful answers about the manner of dying and death, and be honest if the answer is not known.</p> <p>BEHAVIORALLY Allow for some behavioral abbreviations and seek professional help if concerned. Inform school, etc.</p>

CHILDREN & BEREAVEMENT

The following is a guide to understanding a child's concept of death and common grief reactions based on age. Many other factors besides age and developmental level affect a child's concept of death and experience of grief including personality, life experiences, culture, level of support, religious/philosophical beliefs, etc. This information is presented as a guide based on age, not as a strict tool.

13-18 Years of Age

Developmental Stage	Concept of Death	Common Reaction to Loss and Change	How Adults Can Help
<p>PHYSICAL ASPECTS Bodily changes from childhood to adulthood are often very stressful</p> <p>EMOTIONAL ASPECTS Seeking to establish a unique identity. Need to find meaning and purpose in life. Feeling that they have deep and powerful emotions which no one else has experienced.</p> <p>COGNITIVE ASPECTS Data gathering to gain understanding of philosophical, existential and intellectual issues.</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS Acting out behaviors for feelings that are unrecognized and difficult to express. Testing out parental values and society's rules.</p>	<p>Difficulty in recognizing the personal implications of mortality (as opposed to awareness of own death) because they have a sense of being immortal. Becoming "adult" is associated with participation in a range of experiences and activities which range from challenging to potentially lethal.</p>	<p>PHYSICAL May exhibit psychosomatic, stress and/or depressive symptoms. Increased concern and distress regarding physiological body changes.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL Regression and dependence and/or taking on an adult role. Feelings of loneliness, sadness, despair, anger, guilt, hostility, rejection. May either have a sense of seeing no meaning or purpose in life and/or may see the situation as a challenge to be overcome.</p> <p>COGNITIVE Difficulty in concentration. Poor or changed motivation regarding learning. May have an excessive interest or lack of involvement in important issues.</p> <p>BEHAVIORAL Exaggerated acting out behaviors, often masking fears with joking, sarcasm, or withdrawal.</p>	<p>PHYSICALLY Take concerns seriously and seek professional help as appropriate. Involve teenager in the care before death as appropriate and in practical consideration before and afterwards, but avoid making excessive demands of responsibility.</p> <p>EMOTIONALLY Give as much comfort and support as possible. Take feelings seriously and reassure them that their extremes of feelings are normal. Maintain privacy and modesty. Give teenagers space and respect.</p> <p>COGNITIVELY Enable teenagers to verbalize beliefs, concerns, & opinions. Demonstrate an interest in what seems important to them. Avoid idealizing the deceased.</p> <p>BEHAVIORALLY Set limits to acting out behaviors and set boundaries (preferably jointly). Inform school, etc.</p>

WAYS GRIEF CAN AFFECT US

Common Feelings

Shock - feeling surprised and disturbed by a sudden powerful event
Numbness - can't feel any emotion
Disbelief - do not believe it really happened
Anxiety - feeling nervous and worried
Fear - do not feel safe, or feel that loved ones are safe
Betrayal - feeling someone purposely chose to hurt you
Emptiness - feeling hopeless and sad, with nothing to give others
Apathy - things do not seem important anymore, not caring what happens
Impatience - want things right away and have trouble waiting
Sadness - feeling unhappy and sorrowful
Powerlessness - having no control over what is happening
Agitation - inability to relax, shaken up
Despair - to lose hope
Uncertainty - feeling unsure
Shame - feeling dishonored or disgraced
Guilt - self-blame, feeling regretful about doing or not doing something
Thankfulness - appreciative
Relief - to feel free from stress, pain or burden
Loneliness - feeling alone
Isolation - removed or away from others
Anger - a strong emotion of displeasure with others or with an event
Strength - tough, powerful
Weakness - frail, powerless
Uselessness - feeling worthless
Helplessness - feeling like there is nothing one can do to make a difference in a situation

Common Behaviors and Social Reactions

Overachieving or trying to be super good
Underachieving or trying to be super bad
Changes in grades at school
Being preoccupied and forgetful
Being more clumsy
Crying a lot, or more easily
Blaming others
Not caring about things, wanting to drop out
Wanting to spend more time alone
Trying to stay constantly active
Dropping out of social activities
Pulling away from other's attempts to touch and comfort you
Wanting more attention and affection
Seeking approval and assurance from others
Being aggressive, getting in more fights or arguments
Showing more creative expression through music, writing, and art

Common Physical Reactions

Sleep changes: too little or too much
Weight and appetite changes
Tiredness
Deep sighing
Feeling weak
Energized: feeling strong/invincible
Muscle tension
Pounding heart
Headaches and stomach aches
Easily shaken by certain sights or sounds (perhaps reminding you of the loss)
Increased number of colds & infections

Common Mental Reactions

Difficulties in concentrating
Continuously thinking about the loss
Difficulty making decisions
Low self-esteem
Believing you were responsible for the loss
Increased or decreased dreams
Increased nightmares
Thinking everyone is watching you
Thinking you are different from everyone else
Self-destructive thoughts

Common Spiritual Reactions

Feeling lost and empty
Feeling abandoned/punished by God
Questioning a reason to go on living
Feeling like you don't belong
Questioning your religious beliefs
Feeling spiritually connected to the person who died
Feeling spiritually connected to God
Needing to receive forgiveness
Finding hope in prayer/spiritual beliefs
Finding purpose in life

Remember, everyone is affected a little differently by grief. Some of these things will happen to you when you grieve and some of them won't. Reference: Donna O'Toole, Facing Change, 1995. Compassion Press.

Suggestions for Parents

1. **Be aware of personal loss issues.**

Our own experiences with death and grief can have a major impact on how we respond to our children.

2. **Establish and maintain contact with the school.**

Children spend many hours of their day at school. The more you can learn from teachers and school counselors, the better you will be able to provide support at home. Likewise, the more you can share with teachers about what you are observing at home, the better equipped the teachers will be.

3. **Approach the topic of death and grief with your children.**

If you tell children, "Let me know if you need to talk," there is a good chance they won't. Children are often uncomfortable initiating conversations about an emotionally laden topic, especially if they think it might upset their parents. Reach out to them and let them know it is okay to talk to you.

4. **Keep in mind the developmental level of the child and begin there.**

Younger children need simple, concrete definitions and explanations.

5. **Use proper terminology**

Such as cancer, death, died, etc. Avoid euphemisms like gone away, passed on, eternal rest, left us, etc. Abstract phrases such as these can confuse children.

6. **Use the deceased person's name or title**

(i.e., Mother, Aunt Jane).

7. **Listen.**

Let the child's questions guide you. Answer with a question until you understand exactly what the child is asking.

8. **Review your conversation.**

Ask the child to summarize what he/she heard you say. This provides opportunities to clarify misconceptions.

9. **Be patient.**

Remember, children may ask the same questions or tell the same stories over and over again as they process and adjust to their loss.

10. **Avoid saying, "I know exactly how you feel."**

Relate to the child's feelings, but do not take ownership of them.

11. **Remember that grief may be intermittent.**

Children grow up with their loss and may have reactions at various points of their development regardless of how long ago the loss occurred. Also, be aware of the resurfacing of emotions around important days of the year such as birthdays, holidays, and the anniversary of the death.

Suggestions for Parents Cont.

12. **Grief is often exhibited through behaviors.**

Children need the structure of their normal routine, adult role models, appropriate limit-setting, and discipline. However, grieving children also need affection and security. The need to hear that we understand and that we care about them despite their acting-out behaviors.

13. **Watch for academic decline.**

Keep in mind that grieving children may not be well rested due to insomnia, sleep interruptions, and dreams. They may have trouble concentrating and getting their homework done. Offer to assist them with homework or see if the school can recommend a good tutor.

14. **Share your thoughts, concerns, and feelings.**

Children learn what is acceptable from parents/guardians. Give them permission to grieve by allowing them to see you grieve.

15. **Reassure the child the death is not their fault.**

Children often think something they did or thought must have somehow caused the death to happen.

16. **Remember, loss and grief are unique.**

Allow children to teach you what their loss means to them.

17. **Encourage and provide opportunities for the expression of feelings.**

Communicate that it is okay to express emotions. Use children's natural expressive outlets such as stories. Encourage and provide opportunities for the expression of feelings. Utilize children's natural expressive means such as stories, art, games, play, and music to stimulate expression and conversation.

18. **Share your religious and spiritual beliefs with your child.**

Children may become angry with God. Let them know that this is a normal reaction that happens to some people. Reassure them that God still loves them and will use time, love, and the special people in their lives to help them through their anger and pain.

19. **It is okay to say, "I don't know" to your child.**

Nobody has all the answers. There are some things beyond our understanding.

20. **Do not be afraid to seek grief support for your child.**

Individual support can address personal loss issues, and support groups can help children feel less isolated and different from others their age.

Reference: Fitzgerald, Helen. The Grieving Child: A Parent's Guide, New York: Simon & Schuster 1992.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY CHILD NEEDS COUNSELING?

First of all, trust your instincts. If your gut feeling tells you a child needs additional support, work to get that help for him. Many of the signs and symptoms of complicated grief are the same responses we see in normal grief. What makes these "red flags" is a matter of degree. Fear and/or anger, for example, are normal grief reactions. Persistent or prolonged fear or anger, however, is symptomatic of unmet mourning needs. If the child is progressing in his or her grief journey, reactions should soften in intensity and duration over time.

Signs of Normal Grief	Signs of Complicated Grief or Clinical Depression
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually connect depressed feelings to the death. • Disbelief, denial, shock. • Often openly angry. • Sense of unreality, withdrawal from others. • Disruption of typical behavior patterns or personality. • Children respond to comfort and support. • Can still experience moments of enjoyment in life. • Adults can sense sadness and emptiness in the child. • Often have transient physical complaints. • May express guilt over some aspect of the loss. • Self-esteem temporarily impacted, but is intact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often do not relate depressed feelings to any life event. • Total denial of the reality of the death. • May suppress anger. May complain and be irritable, but may not directly express anger. • May be persistently angry and hostile. • Consistent withdrawal from family and friends. • Prolonged change in behavior or personality. • Often reject support. • Often project a pervasive sense of doom. • Often project a sense of hopelessness and chronic emptiness. • May have chronic physical complaints or actual medical illness. • Often have prolonged feelings of guilt over the death or generalized feelings of guilt. • Typically a deep loss of esteem. May use drugs & alcohol. • Suicidal thoughts or actions.

Once you determine a grieving child may benefit from counseling, how do you tell her/him? Talk to the child with compassion and understanding. Many children and adults associate counseling as something for people who have something wrong with them. Assure children that they are not crazy or abnormal. Explain that, just as there are people like doctors and nurses who can help with physical pain such as a broken arm, there are people who can help with the pain of grief.

*References: Wolfelt, Alan. Healing the Bereaved Child, Fort Collins, Colorado: Companion Press.
Simons, R.C. Understanding Human Behavior in Health and Illness, Baltimore, Maryland: Williams and Wilkens.*

HELPFUL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

DEALING WITH ILLNESS, GRIEF & LOSS

Frahm, Amelia (2001). Tickles Tabitha's Cancer-Tankerous Mommy. Nutcracker Publishing Company. Told through Tabitha's eyes, this book uses candor and comic reality to dispel stereotypes and acknowledge the moody truths faced by families living with cancer.

Heegaard, Marge (1991). When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness. Minneapolis, MN: Woodland Press. This is a workbook created to help young children understand and accept the changes in their lives when a loved one is diagnosed with a life threatening illness.

Le Shan, Eda (1987). When a Parent is Very Sick. Little Brown and Co. This book identifies the many responses a young person might have to a parent's illness, hospitalization, or death.

Numeroff, Laura, & Harpham, Wendy (1999). The Hope Tree. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. Various kids describe their feelings and how they cope with their mothers' breast cancer.

Parkinson, Carolyn (1996). Mommy's In the Hospital Again. Solace Publishing. An honest caring depiction of how life can go on successfully for a child and family despite the painful experiences of dealing with the unpredictable course of mom's illness in a gentle, easily understandable, and non-frightening fashion.

Parkinson, Carolyn (1991). My Mommy Has Cancer. Rochester, NY: Park Press. A book for young children explaining cancer and why hospitalization is necessary. Written by a mother who has cancer.

Peterkin, Allen (1992). What About Me? New York, NY: Magination Press. A book for siblings when a brother or sister has an illness.

Vigna, Judith (1993). When Eric's Mom Fought Cancer. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company. A ski trip with his father helps a young boy who feels angry and afraid when his mother gets sick with breast cancer.

SPECIFICALLY CHILDREN AND GRIEF

Brown, Laurene Krasny and Brown, Marc Tolon (1996). When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death. Boston. The authors explain in simple language the feelings people may have regarding the death of a loved one and the ways to honor the memory of someone who has died.

Greenlee, Sharon (1993). When Someone Dies. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers, Ltd. Great discussion starter. Attempts to describe the "goneness" created by death. (No more phone calls or birthday cards). Helpful suggestions for remembering and taking care of yourself.

Puttock, Simon and Bartlett, Alison (2001). A Story for Hippo. New York, NY: Scholastic Press. A gentle and reassuring book for anyone who has ever lost a loved one. With beautiful simplicity, it answers difficult questions that even a very young child can understand and shows us how to keep the spirit of a cherished person alive forever.

Karst, Patrice and Stevenson, Geoff (2000). The Invisible String. Marina Del Rey, Calif. Author Patrice Karst shows children that they are always loved, whether their parents are near or far. This lesson is perfectly suited for a variety of situations, including for military families while a parent is serving overseas as well as for coping with loss.

Greive, Bradley Trevor (2005). The Blue Day Book for Kids: A Lesson in Cheering Yourself Up. Kansas City, Mo: Andrews McMeel Publishing. The deceptively simple, imaginative story line reflects a child's sensibility about the symptoms, causes, and cures for those times when children feel tired, grumpy, left out, or think that nothing ever goes as they planned.

HELPFUL BOOKS

for Children & Teens cont.

SPECIFICALLY CHILDREN AND GRIEF CONT.

Kaplow, Julie B. and Pincus, Donna (2007). Samantha Jane's Missing Smile: A Story about Coping with the loss of a Parent. Washington, DC: Magination. Since her father died, Samantha Jane has become fearful and does not want to acknowledge her grief. Using examples from the natural world this book shows how to acknowledge feelings and give them a proper place in life.

Holmes, Margaret M. and Mudlaff, Sasha J. (2000). A Terrible Thing Happened. Washington, DC: Magination. This gently told and tenderly illustrated story is for children who have witnessed any kind of violent or traumatic episode, including physical abuse, school or gang violence, accidents, homicide, suicide, and natural disasters such as floods or fire.

Bostrom, Kathleen Long and Kucharik, Elena (2000). What about Heaven?. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House. The rhythmic rhyming book begins with questions kids ask about heaven and answers each one in a theologically accurate yet age-appropriate manner, including scriptures to reference.

Thomas, Pat (2001). I Miss You. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's. Explores the difficult issue of death for young children.

Johnson, Marvin and Johnson, Joy (2003). Where's Jess?: For Children Who have a Brother or Sister Die. Omaha, NE: Centering Resource. A helpful resource for children who have lost a sibling through illustrations and easy to understand text.

SPECIFICALLY TEENS AND GRIEF

Hanson, Warren (1997). The Next Place. Minneapolis, MN: Waldman House. An inspirational journey of light and hope to a place where earthly hurts are left behind.

Loftis, Chris and Gallagher, Catherine (1997). The Boy Who Sat by the Window: Helping Children Cope with Violence. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon. A story of a small boy whose classmate is killed by random gunfire includes coping skills and restores hope by instilling a message of peace.

Hipp, Earl (1995). Help for the Hard Times. Hazelden. A guide that helps teens understand how they experience grief and loss; how our culture, in general, doesn't often acknowledge their losses or give them tools to grieve; how they can keep their loss from overflowing.

Traisman, Enid Samuel (1992). Fire In My Heart, Ice In My Veins. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. A journal for teenagers experiencing a loss. Just reading it will let them know that all of their feelings are normal even though some may feel crazy. Writing in it will help them explore their feelings and insure they will never forget.

Noel, Brook and Blair, Pamela (2000). I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping & Healing after the Sudden Death of a Loved One. Vancouver, WA: Champion.

Hughes, Lynne (2005). You are Not Alone. New York, NY: Scholastic Press. The loss of a parent has been called "the loss that is forever" and young people who have suffered this loss feel especially different than those around them. This book reaches out to teens and people who care for them with understanding and compassion. Frank and accessible testimonials, along with discussion of what helps, what doesn't, what "stinks," and ways to stay connected to loved ones.

Wolfelt, Alan (2001). Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens. Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press. When you are a teen, the death of someone you love can be especially difficult. Being a teen is hard enough; being a grieving teen can feel completely overwhelming. This book was written to help teens understand and deal with their unique grief. It gives many really simple, practical ideas and suggested activities.

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ADULTS

Who are Helping Children & Teens Affected by Grief or Life-Threatening Illness

BOOKS

Fitzgerald, Helen (1992). The Grieving Child: A Parent's Guide. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
A wonderful, readable book for parents to help understand how grief is different for children. Great suggestions for processing feelings, both within and without a group.

Heiney, Sue et. al (2001). Cancer in the Family. Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society.
This book outlines valuable steps necessary to help children understand what happens when a parent has been diagnosed with cancer. "Hands-on-tools" help those affected by cancer, as well as their loved ones, face many of the dilemmas that come with the disease. A specially illustrated workbook designed just for kids helps even the youngest children record their thoughts and feelings so they can learn how to navigate through this emotional time.

Huntley, Theresa (1991). Helping Children Grieve. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.
This book will help you listen to children, answer their questions, and guide them in coping with their feelings. Also included are ideas for dealing with behavior changes that often accompany a child's grief.

Linn, Erin (1990). 150 Facts About Grieving Children. The Publisher's Mark,
Children do grieve, and with an intensity that would astound many adults. We are obligated to learn more about a child's bereavement. We must begin to understand their world, their feelings, and their hurts.

McCue, Kathleen (1996). How to Help Children Through a Parent's Serious Illness. St. Martin's Griffin.
A thorough, but quick guide for parents and professionals, from diagnosis of an illness to resolution. Each chapter has a wonderful summary at the end. Topics covered include what to tell, how to deal with different ages children, and helpful hints for effective communication.

Wolfelt, Alan (1983). Helping Children Cope with Grief. Accelerated Development, Inc.
Written to assist adults in helping children deal with their thoughts and feelings on death. Especially helpful is its approach to naming and teaching the skills needed to help children share their grief.

ONLINE RESOURCES



www.AChildinGrief.com includes a variety of resources with a bilingual kit uses the power of Elmo and the Sesame Street Muppets to support grieving families.



www.childrengrieve.org provides a national database of children's bereavement centers along with resources.

COPING AS A FAMILY

Communication is the key to coping and growing as a family through grief. It is important to be together to talk, cry, rage, or even sit in silence. At the same time, there should be respect for each member's way of handling grief. Some family members will grieve privately, others openly, and others with a combination of these two styles. In many ways, each family member must grieve alone. Here are some suggestions to help with family grief. Suggestion for easier reading:

- Continue to give attention and time to your present family members when you are together. Let them know that you love them.
Maintain balance of attention between deceased family member and surviving family members.
- Try to be sensitive to each other's feelings. Feelings are often difficult to verbalize. Listen to what is meant as well as what is said.
- Hugs, a hand on the arm or back give comfort and a sense of closeness.
- It may be helpful to set aside time to be "alone together" as a family or to even hold a family meeting. Encourage but don't pressure family members to talk and express grief in their own way. Be a good listener.
- Plan family projects or trips.
- Make a "family diary" in which each family member may contribute a writing or drawing. You may want to make a collage together.
- Be careful not to give each other the silent treatment. Make sure the person who has died continues to be part of family conversations.
- Respect the life stages of various family members; an adolescent might gravitate towards peers in coping with grief.
Everyone has a unique way of grieving which can at times be at cross purposes among family members. Accept each person's methods of coping.
- Discuss the loved one's former role in the family which now necessitates changes in family duties and new roles for the survivors in the family. Be careful not to expect a family member to replace or to be the same as the member who died (expecting a young boy whose father died to be "the man of the house" or a son whose sibling died to be like that sibling in schoolwork, sports, etc.). Discuss what will be missed and irreplaceable.
- If depression, withdrawal, grief or family problems are getting out of control, seek professional help.
- Recognize that anniversaries, birthdays, and special holidays will be difficult for the family. Discuss together how to observe these occasions. Should there be a variation on traditional celebrations? Do any family members have particular concerns, suggestions?
- Consult family members on the disposition of the deceased loved one's possessions, including his/her room. Take your time and tread carefully where these precious mementos are concerned. If possible, put off making major decisions about moving, giving away possessions, etc.
- Studies show that a bereaved person's self-esteem is extremely low. Survivors should work on their image of themselves
Remember, it is difficult to help your family if you are falling apart. Working on your own grief will eventually enable you to help your family members cope with their grief.
- If you can learn to share your grief as a family, you will grow as a family.

IDEAS FOR A MEMORY BOX



- Photograph of you and your loved one
- Cards and letters from your loved one
- Recipe for you loved one's favorite dish
- Recipe for the favorite dish that your loved one used to make
- Drawings
- Obituary
- Funeral program
- Dried flower from the funeral
- Mementos
- Handkerchief scented with loved one's perfume / cologne
- Old ticket stubs
- Programs from special events
- Photographs of loved one as a child, wedding photo, etc.

Time Remembered

There are many creative ways to help your child cope with emotions and grief after a death. One focus could be on evoking memories of the loved one. Reminiscing is a healthy way to help your child through this difficult time. The following are some ideas to help you do this. Pick one or two that are good for you and your child and have fun!

DRAWING

You might suggest to your child that he/she draw a favorite memory that involves the loved one who died. Do one of your own, too. Then share them and just enjoy remembering. What about unhappy memories? What if your child says, "I remember when Daddy yelled at me, and I didn't even do anything!" Don't panic! We all have both good and bad memories, even our children. It is healthy to express all of our memories. You may want to encourage your child to draw an unhappy memory. This may help your child understand that relationships and people are not perfect, and that it's okay to hold on to all memories.

KEEPSAKES

Keepsakes that the child has selected to remember a deceased loved one are often more valued than the ones which we, as parents, select for them, but all keepsakes have the potential to revive pleasant memories. Find opportunities to share these special items with each other. Memories are wonderful things. They are ours, and no one can take them away from us. Memories may seem painful early in grief because they are a reminder of how much you have lost. However, with the passage of time they do a flip-flop and become treasures like an old quilt or a favorite sweatshirt.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Looking at pictures can be helpful for some and painful for others. Keep this in mind when suggesting that you get out that old box or album of pictures. Looking at pictures may be most useful for the child who is uncomfortable talking about the loved one. This can be a safe, non-threatening way to open communication. There may be tears as well as laughter.

Informing Children about the Death of a Pet

For many people, pets are like family members, offering unconditional love, companionship and security. When a pet dies, the emotional response can be shock, sadness, and a host of other feelings. Many communities offer pet loss support groups, and a great place to get information about groups in your area is from your Veterinarian. Here is a list of books that might be helpful to read to your child when a pet dies:

BOOK FOR PARENTS ON PET LOSS:

Greene, Lorri (2002). *Saying Good-Bye to the Pet You Love: A Complete Resource to Help You Heal*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc. Oakland, CA. ~ This book helps readers to understand the special bond that humans and animals share. This book offers techniques that will help to support you in your grieving process including offering guidance in helping a child cope with the loss of a loved pet.

BOOKS FOR PET LOSS: PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Fox, Mem (1994). *Tough Boris*. Voyager Books. New York, New York. ~ This book tells the story of a tough pirate who cries when his parrot dies.

Rylant, Cynthia (1995). *Dog Heaven*. Blue Sky Press. New York, New York. ~ This book describes the place that dogs go after they die. In this place they can run and play freely, eat ice cream and ride on fluffy clouds.

BOOK PET LOSS: K-4TH GRADE

Hemery, Katheleen M. (2000). *Not Just A Fish*. Centering Corporation. Omaha, NE

This story reveals the deep love a little girl has for her pet goldfish. When the fish becomes sick, the story reveals the little girl's worry as she doesn't want to leave his side and cannot concentrate when they are apart. In the end, the fish dies and the family has a memorial service. To help cope with her grief, the little girl reads a short paragraph about how much fun she had with her fish at the memorial service.

Johnson, Joy (1991). *Remember Rafferty*. Centering Corporation. Omaha, NE. ~ This book reveals the tale of a family losing their dog. The story contains ideas for coping with the loss of a loved pet. The back of the book is a journal that children can use to express their feelings and memories.

Viorst, Judith (1978). *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*. Aladdin Paperbacks. New York, New York. ~ In this book, a young boy attempts to cope with his grief by making a list of the ten best things about his cat that died.

THE POWER OF PAIN

BY: ASHLEY DAVIS PREND

"No one ever told me grief would be this painful," commented a woman who had lost her husband of thirty-three years. When someone you love dies, your world as you know it is shattered. A part of you dies as well ~ and all of this is painful. However, like many grievers, she was amazed by the fact that losing someone you love hurts so unbearably. But why do we expect otherwise?

Our society does much to avoid pain. It encourages us to medicate ourselves, indulge in alcohol or seek mindless distractions. Our friends may encourage us to "move on" and "get over it." People are uncomfortable if we indulge our feelings of pain and anguish. They worry that we are wallowing in our grief and we may worry about that as well.

What some people may not understand is that pain is ultimately healing. You need to truly feel in order to heal. The pain, believe it or not, must be experienced, expressed, and externalized in order to move through your system. If pain is repressed or inhibited, then troubles will ensue later on. The troubles could range from depression or bitterness to lethargy and stagnation, among other things.

Staying with the pain takes a tremendous amount of courage, to be sure. It may be one of the hardest things of all to do when others push us to deny our pain. However, pushing directly through the grief by going into the abyss, by immersing yourself in the feelings of pain, by walking in the valley of the shadow, is exactly what is needed to heal. Time alone will not do this; time, plus feeling the pain, will.

Some people say they're afraid to really immerse themselves in the pain lest it destroy them. I generally tell grievers to ride the pain like a wave. Pain washes over you much like the rhythms of the ocean might. Mighty waves come crashing upon you, but then they recede. Gentler waves come lapping along, but they too recede. Just ride the waves of pain because even as they come pounding, they will eventually wash away from whence they came.

So if you find yourself awash in pain, don't think you are crazy. If you find yourself crying freely and often, even at the most inopportune moments, don't think you are insane. Know that you are healing and that the process is a natural response to having a loved one wrenched from your life. Know, too, that in time the pain will begin to soften its dull edge and the searing power will eventually fade.

Also know that even as pain stretches you, it leaves you with more capacity to contain the other side of pain which includes compassion, spirituality, and wisdom. But that will come in time. For now, don't be afraid of the pain. Feel it, let it honor your loved one, and rest assured that you are on the path to true healing.

What You can Expect

REFERENCE: THERESE RANDO, PHD

Grief: You can expect that...

- your grief will take longer than most people think.
- your grief will take more energy than what you would have imagined.
- your grief will depend on how you perceive the loss.
- your grief will entail mourning not only for the actual person who died, but also for all the hopes, dreams and unfulfilled expectations you had with that person. You will also grieve for those needs that go unmet because of the death.
- you will grieve for what you have already lost and what you have lost for the future.
- you will grieve for many things symbolic and tangible, not just the death alone.
- your grief will resurrect old issues, emotions and unresolved conflicts from the past.
- your grief will create some identity confusion as a result of your major loss.
- your grief may cause you to begin a search for meaning and you may find yourself questioning your faith and/or philosophy of life.

You may...

- feel as though the loss isn't real, that it actually didn't occur.
- become obsessed with the death and experience an intense preoccupation with the deceased.
- have a need to recount things about your loved one and retell the events and experiences surrounding the death.
- feel a tightness in your throat or heaviness in your chest.
- have an empty feeling in your stomach and either lose your appetite or begin eating more.
- have difficulty sleeping and dream of your loved one frequently.
- feel as though you need to take care of the other people who are uncomfortable around you by politely not talking about your feelings of loss.
- sense the loved one's presence. You may find yourself expecting the person to walk in the door and the usual time, hear his/her voice or even see his/her face.
- experience grief spasms. These acute feelings of grief that occur suddenly with no warning. You may find you cry at unexpected times.
- have a combination of feelings ~ anger, guilt, frustration, irritability, annoyance, or intolerance with yourself and others.
- feel guilty or angry over things that happened or didn't happen in the relationship with the deceased.
- feel restless and look for activity, but find it difficult to concentrate.
- wander aimlessly around the house. You may find yourself disorganized, starting but not finishing tasks.
- feel your mood change over the slightest thing. You may wonder if you're going "crazy"?! (...You're not!)
- assume mannerisms or traits of your loved one.
- alternate between periods of seeking the company of others and withdrawing, preferring to be alone.

RECOMMENDED READING

For Adult Grievers

Cornerstone of Hope has a Bereavement Library with several hundred books on all topics related to grief, including Infant/Neonatal Loss, Suicide, resources for children and teens, faith-based books, and more. Please drop in during normal business hours to check out as many books as you need. Some of our favorite selections are:

- The Journey Through Grief: Reflections on Healing by Dr. Alan Wolfelt
- Healing a Parent's Grieving Heart by Dr. Alan Wolfelt (Note: Dr. Alan Wolfelt is one of the leading authorities on grief care, and has a number of great books. His books can be ordered directly at Companion Press, 3735 Broken Bow Road, Fort Collins, CO 80526 or www.centerforloss.com)
- I Wasn't Ready To Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping and Healing After the Sudden Death of a Loved One by Brook Noel and Pamela D. Blair, PhD
- A Healing Year – Daily Meditations for Living With Loss by Alaric Lewis, O.S.B.
- Children Mourning, Mourning Children by Kenneth Doka, PhD
- The Centering Corporation has a free catalog with hundreds of books and resources for the bereaved. You can request their catalogue on their website at www.centeringcorp.com

Other Resources/Social Media

First Call for Help, a United Way agency, is an information clearing house for many local resources, including bereavement support groups and grief counselors. They can be reached by dialing 211 on your phone.

School Crisis Team is a crisis intervention available to schools throughout Cuyahoga County. Contact Cornerstone of Hope for more details.

Hello Grief developed by Comfort Zone Camp, Inc. to start an online discussion about the impact of loss, and how to help grieving persons cope; as well as build a community of support for those living with grief. www.hellogrief.org

What's Your Grief promotes grief education, exploration and expression in both practical and creative ways in a supportive social media community. www.whatsyourgrief.com



TRAUMA LOSS

Traumatic grief is a combination of grief emotions/reactions and trauma responses. It impacts every part of you. Traumatic grief is not something that is over quickly. The goal is not even to get over it, but to learn to live with the traumatic death of a your loved one. Much of what you are experiencing currently: emotionally, physically, relationally, spiritually, mentally, etc., is normal when someone is grieving. However, you may have some grief reactions that do not fall within the typical grief reactions due to the traumatic nature of your loss.

TRAUMATIC GRIEF REACTIONS

- *Intrusive, distressing preoccupation with the person who died
- Frequent attempts to avoid reminders of what has happened
- Feeling of purposelessness and a sense of futility about the future
- Subjective sense of numbness, detachment or an absence of an emotional response
- Feeling stunned, dazed or shocked
- Difficulty acknowledging the death
- Feeling that life is empty or meaningless
- Difficulty imagining a fulfilling life
- Feeling that part of oneself has died
- Shattered world view (e.g. a lost sense of security, trust or control)
- Assumes symptoms of harmful behaviors of, related to, the deceased person
- Excessive irritability, bitterness, or anger
- Feelings of vulnerability, helplessness, or threat
- Posttraumatic Stress symptoms such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, irritability or outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, hyper vigilance and an exaggerated startle response (CRITERIA FOR TRAUMATIC GRIEF AS PROPOSED BY TRAUMA SPECIALISTS, JACOBS, 1999 AND RANDO, 1993)

SUICIDE IS DIFFERENT

FROM "A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE," BY JEFFREY JACKSON

Death touches all of our lives sooner or later. Sometimes it is expected, as with the passing of an elderly relative; sometimes it comes suddenly in the form of a tragic accident.

But suicide is different. The person you have lost seems to have chosen death, and that simple fact makes a world of difference for those left to grieve. The suicide survivor faces all the same emotions as anyone who mourns a death, but they also face a somewhat unique set of painful feelings on top of their grief.

GUILT

Rarely in other deaths do we encounter any feelings of responsibility. Diseases, accidents, old age... we know instinctively that we cannot cause or control these things. But the suicide survivor – even if they were only on the periphery of the deceased's life – invariably feels that they might have, could have, or should have done something to prevent the suicide. This mistaken assumption is the suicide survivor's greatest enemy.

STIGMA

Society still attaches a stigma to suicide, and it is largely misunderstood. While mourners usually receive sympathy and compassion, the suicide survivor may encounter blame, judgment, or exclusion.

DISCONNECTION

When we lose a loved one to disease or an accident, it is easier to retain happy memories of them. We know that, if they could choose, they would still be here with us. But it's not as easy for the suicide survivor. Because our loved one seems to have made a choice that is abhorrent to us, we feel disconnected and "divorced" from their memory. We are in a state of conflict with them, and we are left to resolve that conflict alone.

Write yourself a script. Suicide survivors often find themselves faced with uncomfortable questions from outsiders. It will help if you can anticipate some of these and write yourself a "script" of answers that you can mentally keep at the ready. For example, when someone probes for details of the suicide that you are not comfortable discussing with them, you might simply say "I do not want to talk about it right now," or "I'm sure we can find something happier to discuss." When new acquaintances learn of your loss, they may ask "How did they die?" You should have no reservations about saying plainly, "They took their own life," or a straightforward "They committed suicide." But if this is a casual acquaintance that you wish to deny this information, you would be equally justified in saying, "They suffered a long illness," which may very much be the truth. The more you fear these kinds of inquiries, the better a prepared "script" of answers will serve you.

Suggestions for Survivors of Suicide

BY IRIS M. BOLTON

1. Know you can survive; you may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with “why” it happened until you no longer need to know “why” or until YOU are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but that all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy; you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself. It’s okay to express it.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do. Guilt can turn into regret, through forgiveness.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will act on those thoughts.
8. Remember to take one moment or one day at a time,
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don’t be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence on another’s life.
13. Expect setbacks. If emotions return like a tidal wave, you may only be experiencing a remnant of grief, an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain in your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful with other survivors of suicide. If not in your area, ask a professional to start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reaction to your grief, e.g. headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go. Letting go doesn’t mean forgetting.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and even go beyond just surviving.

SUICIDE SURVIVOR RESOURCES

SUPPORT GROUPS

OHIO RESOURCES

Cornerstone of Hope has professionally-led, ten-week groups for adult survivors of suicide. Groups run quarterly; call for current dates. 216-524-4673 (Cleveland) or 614-824-4285 (Columbus)

LOSS (Local Outreach for Suicide Survivors) Franklin County offers peer-led response to the suicide scene to provide resources, support and hope to those left behind. E-mail franklincountylossteam@gmail.com. There may be other LOSS groups in your areas, please visit www.lossteam.com for additional resources.

Cuyahoga County Suicide Postvention Response Team in partnership with the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, responds to those most immediately affected by suicide loss. We provide timely response to survivors, a listening ear, and information about local resources available to survivors. Contact Pete Bliss at 216.509.3594 or pbliss55@gmail.com

SOS (Survivors of Suicide) a peer-led group that meets twice a month in various locations on the east and west sides of Cleveland. E-mail Cheryl at m3nowak@yahoo.com or call Maureen at 440-237-1359 for meeting locations and times.

LifeAct holds more than 25 years of educating teens about depression awareness and suicide prevention in Northeast Ohio. They provide lifesaving programs at no cost to schools. E-mail info@lifeact.org or call 216-464-3471.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Please contact these national organizations to find a local chapter near you:

The American Association of Suicidology: 202.237.2280 or www.suicidology.org

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: 888.333.2377 or www.afsp.org

The Link's National Resource Center for Suicide Prevention and Aftercare: 404.256.2919 or www.thelink.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800.273.8255

BOOKS

No Time to Say Goodbye, by Carla Fine, Doubleday publishing

Why Suicide? By Eustace Chesser, Arrow Book publishing

Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One, by Ann Smolin and John Guinan, Simon and Schuster publishing

Life After Suicide" A Ray of Hope For Those Left Behind, by E. Betsy Ross, Insight Books publishing

My Son... My Son: A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss or Suicide by Iris Bolton, Bolton publishing

MURDER LOSS

The loss of a loved one to accident or illness is heartbreaking, but the devastation is exacerbated when the loss is due to a traumatic crime. The horribleness of the death amplifies the grief of the surviving loved ones and forever scars their memories of the beloved victim. All too often, when an individual succumbs to a violent death, the person is remembered for how they died rather than for how they lived.

The families of murder victims face many unique struggles in their process of bereavement. A sense of loss of control is common, and the suddenness of the death is so overwhelming that, for a period of time, families are often incapable of processing through the grief. For these individuals, dealing with spiritual beliefs, attitudes toward life, and general physical health may hold special importance.

The victim's family and loved ones should understand that they don't have to suffer alone; there are many experts who can guide them through the process of coping with grief associated with murder, as well as lead them toward recovery. Begin a search with one's local police or sheriff's department. Ask if their staff can provide contact information for a local grief counselor who specializes in victim services. Additionally, consider the following questions and suggestions:

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?

- Keep a journal; sometimes it is helpful to write down in words what you are feeling and thinking.
- Talk about your loved one, if you would like to do so. Although it may be painful, it can help you heal. Take time to participate in a familiar activity with your family. This helps to provide stability when your world is feeling chaotic.
- Join a support group; people often respond that becoming involved in bereavement groups helped them through their loss and strengthened their relationships with others.
- Seek therapy when you, or others close to you, feel that your grief is becoming too difficult to bear, or is too prolonged.



Families of murder victims can feel a sense of loss of control. The suddenness of the death is so overwhelming that families are often incapable of processing the grief for some time.

MURDER LOSS RESOURCES

FAMILY OR INDIVIDUAL THERAPY

Talking through your emotions one on one with a counselor or as a family will help you be able to process your feelings.

SUPPORT GROUPS

When a person is dealing with the death of a loved one due to murder, their grief can be complicated. General grief issues are addressed, as well as the specific needs that arise after a traumatic death. If you or someone you know is looking for support after the murder of a loved one, this group could be just what you need. Find a support group and talk with others who understand the depth of your pain. Cornerstone of Hope offers a group specifically for those who have lost a loved one to murder.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Websites

PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN, INC. : Parents of murdered children make the difference through ongoing emotional support, education, advocacy and awareness. They provide support and assistance to all survivors of homicide victims while working to create a world free of murder. There is a list of local chapters in Ohio.
www.pomc.com/

NOVA : NOVA's mission is to promote rights and services for victims of crime and crisis everywhere. Its experience is described in the following review of its guiding purposes.
www.trynova.org

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE U.S.A. : Bereaved Parents of the USA (BP/USA) is a national non-profit, self-help group that offers support, understanding, compassion and hope, especially to the newly-bereaved, whether they are bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings struggling to rebuild their lives after the death of their children, grandchildren or siblings.
www.bereavedparentsusa.org

BOOKS

- Coping with Traumatic Death: Homicide, by Bob Baugher.
Someone you love has been murdered. This book is intended to help you understand what to expect after the homicide of a family member or friend. The book is divided into sections that cover the first few days, weeks, and months; the first year; and beyond. One reader commented, "If this booklet had been available when I was told of my brother's homicide, I would have carried it with me and used it often."
- What to Do When the Police Leave : A Guide to the First Days of Traumatic Loss, by Bill Jenkins.
Written by a victim for other victims and their caregivers, this book offers authoritative and invaluable advice, guidance, and resources for families dealing with the traumatic loss of a family member or friend. This one of a kind resource is heart-to-heart practical advice from one who has been through the trenches of grief and loss, encouraging and helping others in their own paths. The victim's voice has never been heard so clearly.
- A Grief Like No Other: Surviving the Violent Death of Someone You Love, by Kathleen O'Hara.
From mass tragedies, such as suicide bombings, to sensationalized crimes that make the news only to be replaced by yet another victim-filled crime, more families and friends are left with the aftermath of dealing with the violent death of a loved one. Violent death brings its own special brand of grieving: Victims' families can spend years dealing with the legal ramifications, guilt, and myriad other unique circumstances. This book guides the reader to a point of survival.

Helping Yourself Heal When Someone You Care About Dies of a Drug Overdose

BY ALAN D. WOLFELT, PH.D.

A friend or family member has died of a drug overdose. Death and grief are always hard, but when someone dies from drug use, understanding your feelings and knowing what to think and say about the death can be especially difficult. This article offers compassionate guidance for coping with your own grief as well as helping others affected by the loss.

Addiction and the opioid epidemic

People of all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels are affected by addiction. Addiction is a recognized disease in which the pleasure centers of the brain get taken over by the need for the drug. Addicts cannot control their behavior. In the United States today, the majority of drug overdose deaths involve an opioid, such as prescription painkillers or heroin. About two and a half million people are addicted to these drugs, and nearly 100 people die each day from an overdose. In fact, opioid use and overdose trends have grown so bad that the Department of Health & Human Services has labeled the problem an epidemic. You are not alone. Millions of families and friends have lost a loved one to drug use. This doesn't make the death of the unique person you cared about any less tragic. It does mean that there are resources to help you and many people who may be able to understand and support you.

Coping with the stigma

Even though addiction is a disease that can affect anyone, there is still a social stigma associated with drug overdose deaths. For you, a person who has lost someone special, this can seem doubly unfair. Not only has someone you cared about died, but others may avoid you or make you feel ashamed about the death. Remind yourself that your friend or family member died of a common, deadly disease. Learn more about opioid use and how it's affecting so many. Reach out to others impacted by overdose death. Talk openly about what happened. Shining a light of openness and empathy on overdose deaths will help you and others heal.

A complicated grief

Grief is what you think and feel on the inside after someone you care about dies. Your grief will naturally be complicated by the cause of this death. If the person who died was young and otherwise healthy, that fact will affect your grief. We typically feel a sense of injustice and a stolen future whenever a young person dies. We also often feel anger when deaths are caused by behaviors. You might be mad at the person who overdosed, at others whom you perceive enabled the behavior (such as a drug dealer), or at medical staff or police who may have been involved. You might also feel guilty that you weren't able to help the person stop using drugs before it was too late—even though the behavior was outside your control. Whatever your complicated thoughts and feelings may be, your task now is to express them in healthy ways.

Mourning the death

While grief is what you feel on the inside, mourning is what you do when you express your grief on the outside. Crying is mourning. Attending the funeral is mourning. Talking to others about the death is mourning. Part of your mourning will be about the cause of the death. Over time, the larger part of your mourning will be about the loss of a special, unique person who was loved by you and others. Openly and actively discussing all your thoughts and feelings about this death will help you cope with the stigma and eventually heal. Mourning helps you acknowledge the reality of the death, embrace the pain of the loss, remember the person who died, consider the meaning of the person's death, and receive support from others. Do not let the stigma of the death keep you from mourning fully. Talking about drug overdose and your particular loss will help our society grow more compassionate and work toward solutions.

Learn about resources

Your community may have resources for people grieving an overdose death. Call your local hospital, health department, or funeral home to find out more about support groups, counselors, and volunteer opportunities. Nothing is better than face-to-face, personal contact with others who walked the same walk. There are also many resources online. Google "grief support overdose" and you'll find a number of websites and forums dedicated to helping mourners like you. Reading others' stories and sharing your own is often a great source of comfort, validation, expression, and healing.

AFTER A DRUG OVERDOSE

Helping Yourself Heal When Someone You Care About Dies of a Drug Overdose

Take good care of yourself

As you grieve this death, remember to practice good self-care. Think of yourself in emotional intensive care. Just as people who are severely physically injured need around-the-clock attention, you need and deserve excellent care for your psychic injury. Rest often. Eat healthy foods. Drink ample water. De-stress your life as much as possible. Exercise gently but regularly. Spend time with people who care about you. Express your grief whenever you're feeling it.

Meet your spiritual needs

Most of all, grief is a spiritual journey. You will naturally have questions about why this death had to happen now and in this way, and you might find yourself wondering about the purpose and meaning of life in general. If you believe in God, you may find solace in your faith, or you may be angry at a God who could let this happen. All of these spiritual responses are normal. Making time each day to feed your spirit will help. Pray, meditate, visit a place of worship, go for a walk in the woods, journal about your spiritual struggle, or speak with a spiritual leader. All of these practices are forms of mourning, and all will help experience your natural grief and move toward healing.

Explaining this death to children

Any child old enough to love is old enough to grieve and mourn. Children affected by an overdose death deserve our compassion, our presence, and our honesty. Never lie to kids or keep difficult truths from them in an effort to protect them.

Start from the child's place of understanding. Listen to and answer questions with words and ideas that are appropriate to the child's age and unique development. If the child was unaware of the person's habit, you will probably first need to explain drug use and the disease of addiction. Remember that young children, especially, are literal thinkers. If you tell them only that medicine killed the person, for example, they might end up being afraid to take their own medicine the next time they're sick. Young children are also prone to magical thinking. For instance, they sometimes think that something they thought or did may have caused the death. Reassure them that it wasn't their fault. Children, too, often sense the stigma of an overdose death. You can help by explaining that addiction is an illness and talking about thoughts and feelings openly and without judgment. Also, it's never too early to start teaching children about the dangers of drug use.

Children typically grieve in small doses. They may upset one moment and playing the next. This is normal. Give them brief, frequent opportunities to ask questions or play out concerns (such as drawing or role playing). Be present and ready to talk and offer support. Express your own grief when it arises.

Helpful Book Resources

When A Child Dies From Drugs, by Pat and Russ Whittberger

Living When A Loved One Has Died, by Earl A. Grollman:

I Miss You, by Pat Thomas

When Someone Very Special Dies, by Marge Heegaard

The Next Place, by Warren Hanson

Tear Soup, by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyern

I Am Your Disease, by Sheryl Letzgus Mc.Ginnis

ACCIDENTAL OVERDOSE **GRIEF REACTIONS**

GRIEF REACTIONS COMMON FROM DEATH BY OVERDOSE OR ACCIDENTAL OVERDOSE

- Guilt
- Feel they could have prevented the death or should have done more to prevent it
- Blame self for the addiction
- Guilt for feeling relief that they no longer have to live with the chaos of addiction
- Obsess over actions taken or not taken to help the person
- Shame
- Feel judged by others “bad family or parent”
- For enabling the person who died
- This type of loss is not as deserving of mourning and sympathy
- Hesitate to ask for help from friends or family
- Reluctance to openly discuss the death
- Blame
- Blaming the drug dealers or fellow users for the death
- Blaming the deceased, perhaps labeling him/her a bad person
- Blaming other family members for not preventing the death or doing more to stop the addiction
- Blaming others for the deceased starting to use or abuse drugs in the first place
- Fear
- Afraid other family members, especially the children of the deceased will begin using in the future
- Fear that others known to use will die
- Fear others with a history will relapse



Helping Yourself Heal When Someone You Care About Dies of a Drug Overdose

by Center for Loss | Jan 12, 2017 | Articles by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

A friend or family member has died of a drug overdose. Death and grief are always hard, but when someone dies from drug use, understanding your feelings and knowing what to think and say about the death can be especially difficult. This article offers compassionate guidance for coping with your own grief as well as helping others affected by the loss.

ADDICTION AND THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

People of all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels are affected by addiction. Addiction is a recognized disease in which the pleasure centers of the brain get taken over by the need for the drug. Addicts cannot control their behavior. In the United States today, the majority of drug overdose deaths involve an opioid, such as prescription painkillers or heroin. About two and a half million people are addicted to these drugs, and nearly 100 people die each day from an overdose. In fact, opioid use and overdose trends have grown so bad that the Department of Health & Human Services has labeled the problem an epidemic. You are not alone. Millions of families and friends have lost a loved one to drug use. This doesn't make the death of the unique person you cared about any less tragic. It does mean that there are resources to help you and many people who may be able to understand and support you.

COPING WITH THE STIGMA

Even though addiction is a disease that can affect anyone, there is still a social stigma associated with drug overdose deaths. For you, a person who has lost someone special, this can seem doubly unfair. Not only has someone you cared about died, but others may avoid you or make you feel ashamed about the death. Remind yourself that your friend or family member died of a common, deadly disease. Learn more about opioid use and how it's affecting so many. Reach out to others impacted by overdose death. Talk openly about what happened. Shining a light of openness and empathy on overdose deaths will help you and others heal.

A COMPLICATED GRIEF

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MOURNING THE DEATH

While grief is what you feel on the inside, mourning is what you do when you express your grief on the outside. Crying is mourning. Attending the funeral is mourning. Talking to others about the death is mourning. Part of your mourning will be about the cause of the death. Over time, the larger part of your mourning will be about the loss of a special, unique person who was loved by you and others. Openly and actively discussing all your thoughts and feelings about this death will help you cope with the stigma and eventually heal. Mourning helps you acknowledge the reality of the death, embrace the pain of the loss, remember the person who died, consider the meaning of the person's death, and receive support from others. Do not let the stigma of the death keep you from mourning fully. Talking about drug overdose and your particular loss will help our society grow more compassionate and work toward solutions.

LEARN ABOUT RESOURCES

Your community may have resources for people grieving an overdose death. Call your local hospital, health department, or funeral home to find out more about support groups, counselors, and volunteer opportunities. Nothing is better than face-to-face, personal contact with others who walked the same walk.

Grieving Someone Who was Hard to Love

Some people have difficult relationships with the person they lost, leading to ambivalent feelings after the death. Sometimes there are individuals in our lives that are hard to love. You may have had a difficult relationship with them, with many ups and downs, or maybe you cut them out of your life completely. The people we lose often had very human problems: addictions, mental health issues, abuse/neglect, gambling, and infidelity, to name a few. These problems had a lasting impact on your life. So, when death strikes, you are left with conflicting emotions about the individual, yourself, and your relationship with them. You need a safe place to explore those feelings and unresolved issues with others who understand.

SOME IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN EXPERIENCING THIS TYPE OF GRIEF:

- When the death occurred, so did the opportunity to resolve the relationship with the deceased. Any chance of reconciliation is now gone.
- Many individuals feel relieved as this relationship was an overwhelming, emotional burden. The individual may be shocked or even feel guilty at the relief they feel.
- Secrets build in complicated relationships. This may be the first time individuals are able to share the true nature of the deceased. You need to have a safe place to share things that have been kept hidden for so long.
- Some people may be angry that in death, their loved one has been labeled a saint.
- There is an unwritten rule in our culture, "you do not speak ill of the dead." But if you can't speak honestly about the dynamics of your relationship with the deceased, where does it go?

SYMPTOMS

During the first few months after a loss, many signs and symptoms of normal grief are the same as those of complicated grief. However, while normal grief symptoms gradually start to fade over time, those of complicated grief linger or get worse. Complicated grief is like being in an ongoing, heightened state of mourning that keeps you from healing.

Signs and symptoms of complicated grief may include:

- Intense sorrow, pain and rumination over the loss of your loved one
- Focus on little else but your loved one's death
- Extreme focus on reminders of the loved one or excessive avoidance of reminders
- Intense and persistent longing or pining for the deceased
- Problems accepting the death
- Numbness or detachment
- Bitterness about your loss
- Feeling that life holds no meaning or purpose
- Lack of trust in others
- Inability to enjoy life or think back on positive experiences with your loved one

Complicated grief also may be indicated if you continue to:

- Have trouble carrying out normal routines
- Isolate from others and withdraw from social activities
- Experience depression, deep sadness, guilt or self-blame
- Believe that you did something wrong or could have prevented the death
- Feel life isn't worth living without your loved one
- Wish you had died along with your loved one

Grieving Someone Who was Hard to Love Cont.

RISK FACTORS

Complicated grief occurs more often in females and with older age.

Factors that may increase the risk of developing complicated grief include:

- An unexpected or violent death, such as death from a car accident, or the murder or suicide of a loved one
- Death of a child
- Close or dependent relationship to the deceased person
- Social isolation or loss of a support system or friendships
- Past history of depression, separation anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Traumatic childhood experiences, such as abuse or neglect
- Other major life stressors, such as major financial hardships

COMPLICATIONS

Complicated grief can affect you physically, mentally and socially.

Without appropriate treatment, complications may include:

- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Anxiety, including PTSD
- Significant sleep disturbances
- Increased risk of physical illness, such as heart disease, cancer or high blood pressure
- Long-term difficulty with daily living, relationships or work activities
- Alcohol, nicotine use or substance misuse

GRIEF IN THE WORKPLACE

FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOLS OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES

We handle grief differently in the workplace than we do at home. Many of us try not to cry or show emotions at work because we are under social pressure to act normally regardless of the crisis. We tend to view a show of emotions as a sign of weakness, but that is far from the truth. When a sense of loss is present in the workplace, everyone typically experiences a series of emotions that cycle through the grieving process.

THOSE EMOTIONS ARE:

- shock/denial
- inward anger
- outward anger
- depression
- acceptance

Some may not experience every emotional stage, while others will linger longer in one stage than another. One person may have intense feelings and another may deny that any loss has occurred.

It is important to understand grief in the workplace because our jobs are a large part of our daily lives. It can be difficult to maintain productive relationships with someone who is angry, anxious, and depressed, and interacting with traumatized people can make others feel traumatized as well. Each of us must make our own adjustments and deal with our own issues.

Each of us grieves differently. During times of crisis or upheaval, we all must grieve losses: the actual physical losses of co-workers; the loss of our sense of security; the loss of the workplace as it was; and the loss of our roles in the workplace as it was. Most people have difficulty recovering from the experience of loss and the subsequent anger and anxiety by themselves. Without the help of others, many people may express their feelings of loss in inappropriate or misdirected ways. If you would like to help someone deal with their loss, try to show that you understand their pain and be positive, assertive, open and sensitive.

HOW CAN I MAKE THE LOSS MORE BEARABLE?

- Express your emotions and talk to others
- Control your response to adverse conditions
- Weigh your options before acting
- Examine realities
- Pace yourself
- Improve your planning and organization
- Increase your sense of control, but try not to need too much control
- Ease up on yourself
- Learn ways to relax healthfully
- Recognize that you can handle a lot more than you thought you could

HELPING EMPLOYEES DEAL WITH TRAUMA

FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOLS OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES

Following a traumatic incident, everyone has some type of an emotional response. Each person will recover at his or her own rate, and for some, recovery can be a long and difficult process. Here are some suggestions to help employees through this trying time:

- **Tell employees how you feel and that you are sorry they have to face this experience.** Avoid the following statements, which may make the employees think their feelings are not understood:
 - I know how you feel.
 - Everything will be all right.
 - You shouldn't feel that way.
- **Be willing to say nothing sometimes.** Just being there is often the most supportive thing you can do to help. Be visible to your employees. Circulate among them and be available to those who want to talk.
- **Maintain a normal workday routine, but be flexible.** Employees will generally be most comfortable when things feel familiar, but some may need special consideration.
- **Attempting to explain why this incident happened is not usually helpful.** Your explanation may not be believed and trust may be damaged.
- **Be aware that employees may need to talk among themselves.** One way people adjust to a crisis is to talk through it, and make some sense of the event.
- **Be alert to signs that an employee may be having an especially hard time.** The employee may seem depressed, withdrawn or unusually silent. Or, he/she may be tearful or extremely anxious.
- **Recognize that you are also human and are experiencing an emotional response.** If you are focused on assisting employees, you may overlook your own needs. Find someone you trust—a friend, a manager, or a family member—and let them know that you need to talk.

Ways to Remember Loved Ones

- Photos: Display old photo albums in a location accessible to holiday visitors. People can't resist a well placed photo album. Before you know it you'll be reminiscing and telling stories with family and friends. Are all of your photos digital? Make an album featuring your loved one. Shutterfly and Snapfish have great deals on photo products this time of year. After you receive your album, you might want to share it with others who would appreciate the photos.
- Get out the old home videos. Yes you may get emotional, but it also might be comforting to see your loved one up on the TV screen. Again, it's a great opportunity for story telling and reminiscing. If your anything like me you may also end up in stitches over the ridiculous outfit you wore to Thanksgiving in '01.
- After a loss it can be hard to part with your loved ones belongings. The holidays present the perfect opportunity to give away some of these things, especially if you are someone who always wants to make sure that old treasures go to good homes. Wrap up a few of your loved one's old things and give them to family and friends who will appreciate them. Write a card letting the recipient of the gift know why you chose to give them this particular item. I guarantee you they will adore the gift and the sentiment.
- Create a special place for people to write down memories. Put out a marker and paper or plain wooden ornaments. Friends and family can hang the ornaments or leave the memories in an old stocking or empty gift box. When everyone is gathered together, read the memories aloud.
- Donate to a cause in your loved ones name. Choose a charity your loved one would have supported. During the holidays churches and places of worship, food pantries, homeless shelters, soldiers and their families, nursing homes, and 'Toys for Tots' are all very active.
- When you see a gift your loved one would have liked, go ahead and buy it. Donate it to a charity or give it as gift.
- It may be too difficult to send out the annual family holiday cards. Don't feel guilty. Instead take an hour to write a few cards for the military and send them through the American Red Cross Holiday Mail for Heroes project.
- Volunteer your time to others in need. You might choose a cause your loved one worked with or supported. If your feeling lonely, try a retirement home where you can sit and talk to those you are helping.
- Light a candle in honor of your loved one. Leave it burning during days when you think you'll miss them the most.
- Set a place for your loved one at the dinner table. Would it be too hard to see the seat left empty? Invite someone from your loved one's past to dinner.
- Invite your family and friends to a holiday potluck. Ask guests to make a dish that your loved one liked.
- Buy or make a memorial ornament.
- Use your loved one's old recipe(s) to make holiday cookies or a holiday dinner.
- Send a holiday card to someone from your loved ones past who they may have lost touch with.
- Visit or spend time in a place where you feel close to your loved one. You could also spend time watching their favorite holiday movies or listening to their favorite holiday songs.
- Take the trip you have been planning or dreaming about.
- Take care of yourself. Attend a workshop or support group for people dealing with a loss during the holidays. Remember that your loved one would have wanted you to have the support you need.

SPIRITUAL CARE

"Jesus, I Ache" from Grieving with Hope, Leaning on Jesus ~ by Tim Wesemann

Jesus, I ache.

Emotionally. Physically. Spiritually.

I hear you are close to the brokenhearted.

I need You close to me.

Hold me. Help me. Bring me hope.

As I lead on You, quiet me in Your love,

Whispering Your promises of hope

Into my life.

Yes, Jesus, I ache.

My heart aches for You.

My heart aches for Your hope and help.

I trust You.... Even in my grief.

Amen

"Sometimes It's Too Silent"

It makes me feel alone, and often sad.

But I can also say I need Your holy silence.

The kind where you just sit with me quietly, Lord.

The kind where I know you are near.

The kind where I know you are working for my good, even when I don't have a clue.

I want to be still and simply know that

You are God.

You are my God, my Savior, my Friend.

Even when you are silent, I will trust you.

Quiet me with your love.

Sit with me. Quiet me. You are God. Shhh.

You are my God. Shhh.

I find my rest in You. Shhh.

Be still, and know that I am God from Psalm 46:10

We need to be reminded that we are not God and we are not in control. This seems pretty simple. You wouldn't think it would be hard to remember. But we get so caught up in proving ourselves by performing, achieving and rescuing that we forget that we are humans with real limits. We fill our time so full of frenzied activity that there is no 'stillness'.

And when there is no stillness, it is hard to remember who is God and who is not. It is hard to remember it is God who is control and not us. Fortunately, God does not forget who is God and who is not. God invites us to quiet ourselves, to slow ourselves down. God invites us to be still long enough to regain perspective. "Be still", God says, "and know that I am God." In the stillness we can see again that there is a difference between our frenzy and God's kingdom. It is God's work to sustain and guide and heal. It is not our work. We can do our part. But our part needs to be respectful of our human limits. Our part needs to actively acknowledge our dependence on God. God is God, and we are not. Only God is sovereign and we are not. Creator God,

Help me to slow down, Lord.

Help me to be quiet.

Help me to be still long enough to remember that you are God.

Help me to remember who is creature and who is Creator.

Let this truth free me, Lord, to accept my limits, Amen.

A Bible Reader's Aid for Strength and Guidance in a Time of Need

Many people turn to their faith in times of intense stress and grief. The following scriptures are meant to help those in search of meaning at this most difficult time in their lives.

When You Are Afraid

The Lord is my light, Ps. 27
Lazarus is raised from the dead, John 11
Jesus arises from the dead, John 20
Jesus prays for his followers, John 17

When You Are Worried

Take no thought, Matt. 6:25-34
O give thanks unto the Lord, Ps. 107
Be careful for nothing, Phil. 4:6
Humble yourselves, 1 Pet. 5:6-10
Be content, Heb. 13:5
Fret not thyself, Ps. 37

When You Are Bereft

Jesus has compassion, Luke 7:11-15
Christ's victory over death, 1 Cor. 15
Sorrow not, 1 Thes. 4:13-18
Christ comforteth, John 14:1-4
Jesus, the bread of life, John 6:44-51
Bring your pain to God, Isa. 53:3-5; Heb. 4:14-16

When You Are Discouraged

The Lord is my shepherd, Ps. 23
Cast thy burden upon the Lord, Job 11:13-19
Hear my prayer, O Lord, Ps. 102
Christ strengtheneth, Phil. 4:11-19
For this is the love of God, 1 John 5:3-11
The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3-12
God watches over all, Luke 12:6-7
Come unto me, Matt. 11:28-30
The Comforter, John 14:16-21; 26-27
The love of God, Rom. 8:28, 35-39



When You Need Comfort

He saveth the poor, Job 5:15-24
If thou prepare thine heart, Job 11:13-19
For in the time of trouble, Ps. 27:5
In His favor is life, Ps. 30:5
Save me, O God, Ps. 54
The Lord is merciful, Ps. 103:8-14
This is my comfort, Ps. 119:50
In the day when I cried, Ps. 138:3-8
Comfort me on every side, Ps. 71:21
As one whom his mother, Isa. 66:13
Be of good comfort, 2 Cor. 13:11
The Lord hath comforted, Isa. 49:13
And even to your old age, Isa. 46:4
They shall be comforted, Matt. 5:4
He that comforteth you, Isa. 51:12
I will not leave you, John 14:18

When You Are in Trouble

Preserve me, O God, Ps. 16
The Lord hear thee, Ps. 20
In Thee, O Lord, Ps. 31
I sought the Lord, Ps. 34:4-22
A refuge in times of trouble, Ps. 9:9-10
I waited patiently, Ps. 40
I called upon the Lord, Ps. 118:5-9
I will lift up mine eyes, Ps. 121
Yet man is born unto trouble, Job 5:7-8
Be not far from me, Ps. 22:11
In the time of trouble, Ps. 27:5
I am in trouble, Ps. 31:9-14
Thou art my hiding place, Ps. 32:7
I cried unto God, Ps. 77
He shall call upon me, Ps. 91:15
Lord, be gracious, Isa. 33:2
The Lord is good, Nah. 1:7
Neither be troubled, 1 Pet. 3:14-16
My soul fainteth, Ps. 119:81-88

A Bible Reader's Aid for Strength and Guidance in a Time of Need

When Friends Fail You

Plead my cause, O Lord, Ps. 35
Yea, mine own familiar friend, Ps. 41:9-13
For it was not an enemy, Ps. 55:12-23
If thy brother trespass, Luke 17:3-4
Bless them which persecute, Rom. 12:14-21

When You Are in Need of Peace

Hear me when I call, Ps. 4
He will speak peace, Ps. 85:8
We have peace with God, Rom. 5:1-5
The peace of God, Col. 3:15
But we have this treasure, 2 Cor. 4:7-18
God is our refuge, Ps. 46
O give thanks, Ps. 107
Peace I leave with you, John 14:27
The Lord will give strength, Ps. 29:11
For the kingdom of God, Rom. 14:17
And the peace of God, Phil. 4:7

When You Are in Need of Prayer

Have mercy on me, Ps. 4
Return, O Lord, Ps. 6
Unto thee, O Lord, Ps. 25
As the heart panteth, Ps. 25
David prays for mercy, Ps. 51
The Lord's prayer, Matt. 6:5-15
Pharisee and publican, Luke 18:10-14
Promise to disciples, John 14:13-14
Confidence in Jesus, I John 5:14-15
He shall hear my voice, Ps. 55:17
Cornelius' prayer answered, Acts 10
Ask, and it shall be given, Luke 11:9
By prayer and supplication, Phil. 4:6
Pray without ceasing, I Thes. 5:17
I intreated thy favor, Ps. 119:58
And ye shall see Me, Jer. 29:13

When You Are Weary

Eternal God is thy refuge, Deut. 33:27
Cast thy burden, Ps. 55:22
Renew their strength, Isa. 40:31
When my soul fainted, Jonah 2:7
Come unto me, Matt. 11:28-30
My heart faileth, Ps. 73:26
Inward man is renewed, 2 Cor. 4:16

When You Need Patience

We count them happy which endure, James 5:11
Ye have need of patience, Heb. 10:36
Ask of God, James 1:3-5
Be patient, 1 Thess. 5:14
We shall reap, Gal. 6:9
Bring forth fruit, Luke 8:15
In your patience, Luke 21:19
The patient in spirit, Eccl. 7:8

When You Are Angry

He that backbiteth, Ps. 15:1-3
Jonah's anger, Jonah 4
He that is soon angry, Prov. 14:17
Make no friendship, Prov. 22:24
An angry man, Prov. 29:22
Be not hasty, Eccl. 7:9
Whosoever is angry, Matt. 5:22
Be ye angry, and sin not, Eph. 4:26
Cease from anger, Ps. 37:8
He that is slow to anger, Prov. 19:11
Put off all these, Col. 3:8

When You Feel That Justice Is Not Done

Jonah is reproved, Jonah 4
Avenge not yourselves, Rom. 12:19
God, to whom vengeance, Ps. 94:1
Justice and judgment, Ps. 89:14
The last shall be first, Matt. 19:27-30
Why standest thou afar off, Ps. 10

THE NEED FOR SELF-COMPASSION

EXCERPT TAKEN FROM WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF

Imagine you're talking to a close friend who is grieving and she tells you she's frustrated because she doesn't think she's coping well. You know she has made many active efforts to constructively cope such as attending a support group and journaling about her grief and you believe she has been doing as well as can be expected, but she feels like she has been making very little progress. She wonders whether she is strong enough to handle her grief and compares herself to others in her grief support group, who she believes are coping better than she is. Keeping in mind this friend typically appreciates feedback – what would you say to her?

Take a few minutes to think about it...So, what did you say to your friend? I'm guessing most of your responses were compassionate, supportive, and encouraging. Am I right? I bet I'm right.

Now, I want you to think about a time when you were the frustrated and self-critical grieving person. Even if the content of your criticism was different, the self-reproach was the same. What, at that time, did you say to yourself? Did you show yourself the same support and encouragement that you gave to your hypothetical friend above? Were you even open to your own self-kindness and compassion? If the answer to this question is, "No, I was not kind to myself", you are definitely not alone.

It's puzzling, isn't it? Why do we respond to our friends with understanding, patience, and compassion, but we respond to ourselves as though we were hard-nosed football coaches running drills before the big game?

If you think about it, most of us are taught to be kind to others at a very early age, but lessons about being kind to oneself are far less overt. This is an unfortunate reality because self-compassion has been linked to greater levels of things like increased resilience and well-being and lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. As prominent self-compassion researcher and author Kristin Neff has written, "If you are continually judging and criticizing yourself while trying to be kind to others, you are drawing artificial boundaries and distinctions that only lead to feelings of separation and isolation."

Self-compassion is useful and important, especially during times of difficulty and suffering. Sadly, I worry many people won't even make it past the title of this article because they dismiss it as buzzwordy, or because they confuse self-compassion with things like self-indulgence or self-pity. But self-compassion is not the same as pitying or indulging oneself. It's not self-centered, it's not weak, and it's not letting yourself get away with things without a second thought.

Self-compassion is made up of 3 parts:

1. Self-Kindness: Showing self-kindness means being understanding, accepting, and compassionate towards oneself, rather than harsh and critical. Self-kindness does not require a person to ignore their suffering or to immediately let themselves off the hook for their wrongdoing. Instead, it asks people to approach experiences like these with a more flexible, open, and understanding stance as opposed to one of shame and condemnation.

For many, self-kindness is easy to understand, but hard to live. People often feel their self-criticism is what keeps them in line. They fear that without it they won't know when they've done something wrong or push themselves to be as good and productive as they can possibly be. But there isn't evidence to support this is true and such self-criticisms can create stress for the person and undermine their sense of self-confidence and capability.

Grief is an overwhelming experience that challenges a person to cope with the grief while simultaneously juggling a complex and complicated life filled with jobs, bills, housework, parenting, friends, family, etc. To make things even more challenging, grief sometimes involve feelings of guilt, regret, shame, low self-esteem, and loss of identity. So quite often people find themselves struggling with thoughts like – "I'm not strong enough to deal with this." "I don't know who I am anymore." "I should be feeling better right now." "I wasn't a good wife/husband/son/daughter/etc" "The death was my fault" So, grieving people should be especially mindful of their self-critical voice and how loud it has become.

THE NEED FOR SELF-COMPASSION

2. A Sense of Common Humanity: Acknowledging our common humanity doesn't deny our differences, rather it asks people to focus instead on how we are the same. It may seem abstract to some, but for others, it may be comforting to remember that suffering and imperfections are a part of the broader human experience. Everyone suffers, everyone is imperfect, so we are not abnormal, wrong, or different when we experience them and we do not need to isolate, separate, or hide.

I think this is especially relevant to grief because almost everyone will experience the death of a loved one at some point in their lives, but people often get caught up in thinking about how their experiences differ. Take WYG for example, we often talk about how grief feels different for everyone and no two people grieve in the exact same way. We also often hear people comparing their losses, measuring their suffering against another, or saying, "no one understands me (us)". While we don't deny the fact that no one can fully understand another person's pain, my question would be, what purpose does focusing on these differences serve other than to further isolate and separate? When we focus on our common humanity we see that, although I don't know the depths, colors, and shapes of your pain, I do know that you are suffering because I have suffered and you are not alone.

3. Mindfulness: Mindfulness fits into the bigger picture of self-compassion because one must be present with their experiences and emotions in order to offer themselves kindness and compassion. Just like the friend who runs away at the first sign of a tearful lip quiver, if you can't be present with your own grief, then how can you acknowledge it and offer yourself understanding?

Well, I've managed to use up all our time talking about the concept of self-compassion without offering you any actual tools. I want to challenge you all to show yourself kindness and compassion by following the (very simple) acronym below.

B – Be kind to yourself. We've already discussed this one.

R – Respect your body by not overindulging alcohol, drugs, and bad food; by getting enough sleep, and by moving around at least a little every day.

E – Engage with others in big and/or small ways. We're not asking you to bloom into a social butterfly or anything. Just try not to isolate. If you haven't been around other people in a while, go to the local coffee shop or go out for a walk and wave to your neighbors.

A – Allow your emotions to ebb and flow. Don't run from them. Expect that grief emotions will bubble up, their intensity will rise, and they will wash over you and recede.

T – Take life one minute, hour, and day at a time. The enormity of what it means to live life without your loved one is intimidating and overwhelming, but remember that coping with grief is something that happens bit-by-bit and day-by-day.

H – Allow yourself space and time to remember, honor, and to connect with your loved one's memory and their continued impact on the world.

E – Your critical voice has a lot of expectations about what grief should be like and how you should cope. Remember, there are very few "shoulds" when it comes to coping with grief. Everyone copes in their own way and at their own pace. So give yourself a break.

CORNERSTONE OF HOPE SERVICES

Community Support

Support and education to local businesses and organizations who have experienced a death through:

- Grief Resources and materials
- On site education and support services
- Consultation and follow up services

Continuing Education

Regularly scheduled programs for professionals, including CEU opportunities

Department luncheons and community presentations for CEU credit

Visit our website at cornerstoneofhope.org for list of topics and current schedule

Counseling / Art Therapy

Children, teens, and adults

Bereavement care only; mental health services are referred to community counselors

Affordable, flat-fee per session/financial assistance available

School Services

Free Grief Education Materials for staff, students, and families

Free Grief Support Groups for students

Initial Debriefing with Staff after a loss

Initial Phone Consultation to determine appropriate needs and resources

Information on current and upcoming Grief Services and Events for students and families taking place at COH

Student Internship

Master's level counseling, art therapy, and social work internship program

Summer Camps

Therapeutic bereavement summer camps for grieving children and teens through our Cleveland and Columbus locations

Offered at no charge to families

Support Groups (Eight to ten weeks in length, offered throughout the year)

General and specific types of losses (such as Accidental Overdose, Murder, Suicide, Loss of Spouse, Loss of Child, Perinatal/Infant Loss)

"Taking F.L.I.G.H.T." (Families Living In Grief and Healing Together)

TAPS GROUP: for families grieving the death of someone who served in the Armed Forces

Monthly support meetings for adults

Family workshops for all ages

Stepping Stones: An introductory informational session optional to attend before registering for a support group

CORNERSTONE OF HOPE SERVICES

Volunteer Opportunities

Help others by becoming a volunteer at one of our locations
Opportunities for individuals as well as groups
Service hours for junior high and high school students
Senior Projects for undergraduate students

Other Programs

Bereavement group facilitator training
Resource library for grieving individuals and professionals who support them
Annual memorial services, social outings, and guest speakers
Free quarterly newsletter- contact us if you wish to be added to the mailing list

Contact Information Cornerstone of Hope Cleveland

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Contact Information for Cornerstone of Hope Columbus

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Cornerstone of Hope is a 501 C(3) non-profit organization that would not be able to provide a single program without the generous donations of time, talent and treasure from local businesses, foundations, and individuals who give of themselves so freely to support our ministry. If you are interested in contributing to our organization, please contact us by phone at 216.524.4673. Our TAX ID # is 34-1945499.



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