December 2023

THE COUNSELORS' CONNECTION

The Newsletter of the
Elementary Counseling Department

What's in this month's issue:

GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

As parents, you can feel a strong pull to make the holiday season a time of joy and celebration. But November and December can also bring "grief spikes." Perhaps this is the first holiday season without a loved one. Or maybe we find ourselves missing someone who has been gone for years. Hope Edelman is a grief expert and author of The AfterGrief: Finding Your Way Along the Long Arc of Loss. As we enter these winter months, Edelman offered some advice for families experiencing grief.

Turn an absence into a presence

The sadness we may feel in the holiday season reminds us that "we're longing for a connection" said Edelman. So, one way that families can process these feelings is to look for creative ways to stay connected to those we have lost.

This might look like cooking one of grandma's or grandpa's special recipes. It could be lighting a candle in someone's memory. It may also look like carrying on one of their favorite traditions. As Edelman said, "Rituals give kids a feeling that they belong to something larger than themselves."

Give children space to talk

One of my parenting mantras comes from Fred Rogers: "Anything human is mentionable, and anything mentionable can be manageable." The holidays can be a time to share family stories and to pull out pictures of loved ones. You can laugh over funny memories or watch old home movies. Edelman said that these activities can help children feel connected to those who have died.

Gather your village to help

It's important to remember that there will be different responses to grief in the same household. This is a good time to ask for help from friends, neighbors, or extended family. They can be an extra support person in your children's lives. Edelman shared that kids need at least one adult who gives them "permission and space to talk about their feelings." But, that person doesn't have to be the parent, at least not right away.

Click here to read the full article

DID YOU KNOW?

The SEL curriculum includes lessons about expressing feelings sensitively. Students learn how to manage their thoughts and emotions, including feelings of sadness related to grief, through books and activities.

HELPING KIDS COPE WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

Dealing with grief and loss can cause a great deal of upheaval for both children and the surrounding adults. Because of the upheaval, children can sometimes act out or internalize their emotions in an effort to stop the pain they are feeling.

One of the most important things to do is to keep their routine consistent. Often, a loss can temporarily cause daily and weekly activities to be interrupted or derailed because of the funerary obligations that the adults have to meet after a death.

Even if it's difficult, work to ensure some aspects of your child's usual routines are met. This may include attending extracurricular activities or playing with friends. The purpose of this is to provide children with the reassurance that things are still stable.

Another vital component of helping children develop coping skills to assist with grief is through developing an emotional vocabulary. Helping children develop an emotional vocabulary will help them name and describe different feelings.

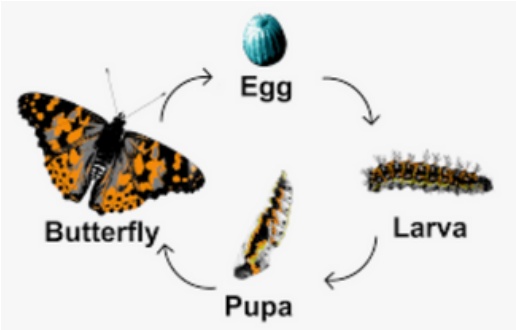
If children are struggling to express their emotions verbally, encourage them to use a combination of the strategies below:

- **Draw:** Encourage children to draw a picture of their memories of the individual who was lost.
- **Create:** Create a scrapbook or memory book with pictures of the deceased individual so that the child can have a special creation to look back on when they are feeling sad.
- **Write:** Give the child a journal so they can write about their thoughts and feelings. Encourage the child to write poems or stories if they show a particular passion for writing.

Giving a child several outlets to express their feelings is key in allowing them to work through the grieving process.

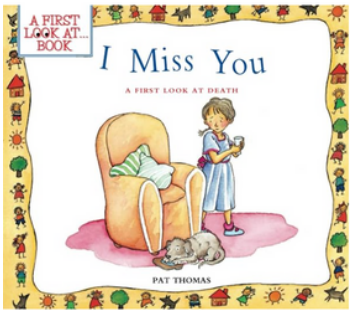
Click here to read the full article

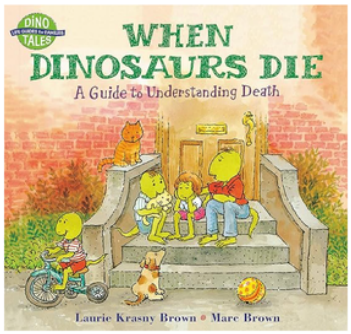
TRY IT AT HOME!



All life cycles start at birth, involve growth, and end with death. Some living things go through their life cycle quickly, like mayflies that live for only 24 hours and drone ants that live for only three weeks. Other living things go through their life cycle slowly, like tortoises that live for 250 years and sequoias that live for over 2,500 years! Help your child understand, celebrate, and marvel at all stages and natural lifespans.
All living things have a birth/born-day and a death/die-day with living in between...and that is their lifetime.

SEL BOOKS OF THE MONTH





Click here for more book recommendations:
25 Children's Books That Explain Death And Grief To Kids