

# Grief & Loss

**Presented By:**

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**Our Mission:**  
A world where every young person benefits from mental health support

**Our Services:**  
Online counseling, designed for teens

# Agenda

- Understanding different types and impacts of grief & loss
- Learning what grieving looks like in a teen, both emotionally and in their expressions and behaviors
- Learning how to support your child in coping with grief and loss
- Connecting to available resources
- Q&A



# Safe Space Guidelines

## A Message To You

### **Take Care**

Today's topic can be a difficult one to discuss. We recognize that this discussion may bring up strong emotional reactions. Feel free to step away at any time.

### **Reach Out for Help**

While our conversation today will be guided by a licensed clinician, this class is not intended as a diagnosis or treatment. Please reach out if you need further help or information.

### **Know There is Hope**

Our conversation today will focus on the impacts of grief and loss, while also covering information, strategies, and tools we can all use to support ourselves and each other.

# What is Grief & Loss

# Definitions

- **Loss:** The act or experience of losing a person, place or thing of importance.
- **Grief:** The process of emotional, cognitive, functional and behavioral responses to a loss.
  - Grief can happen before a loss, it can last a long time, or can reoccur—especially if we aren't able to grieve appropriately or with the right support.

# Types of Loss

- Death of loved ones
- Illness/loss of health
- Loss of abilities + capabilities
- Divorce/Separation
- Moving or leaving home, graduations
- Relationships changes
- Job loss/family financial changes

Any major changes in lifestyle, whether positive or challenging, can include a sense of loss



# Pandemic & Loss

There has been **concrete loss globally** due to the pandemic

- Changes in routines/normalcy
- Loss of plans, experiences and events at school
- Missed family events/holidays/traditions
- Loved ones dying or getting very ill

According to the CDC, in 2021:

- **37%** of high school students reported experiencing poor mental health during the pandemic
- **44%** reported feeling persistently sad/hopeless in the past year



# Stages of Grief

- **Denial:** "This can't be happening to me."
- **Anger:** "*Why* is this happening? Who is to blame? What's the point"
- **Bargaining:** "Make this not happen, and in return I will ."
- **Depression:** "I'm too sad to do anything."
- **Acceptance:** "I'm at peace with what happened."



# Common Reactions

## Emotional symptoms of grief:

- Depression
- Anger
- Disbelief/denial
- Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Shock
- Guilt
- Regret
- Loneliness
- Overwhelm
- Fear
- Helplessness

# Common Reactions

## Physical symptoms of grief:

- Headaches and body aches
- Tightness in chest
- Sensitive skin
- Dizziness
- Fatigue or exhaustion
- Shortness of breath
- Increased illness
- Oversensitivity to noise
- Heart palpitations
- Changes in appetite or weight

# Common Reactions

## Mental symptoms of grief:

- Forgetfulness
- Sleep difficulties (too much or too little)
- Inability to concentrate
- Confusion
- Decreased ability for decision making or problem solving
- Low self-image
- Self-destructive thoughts

# Expectations About Grief

- The intensity and duration of grief may be impacted by a number of factors, such as: age, health, spirituality, culture, additional stressors, the nature of the relationship and the loss, and available support & resources.
  - Younger children may not understand what is happening or the permanency of grief.
  - Older kids/teens may refuse to acknowledge what's happening and may withdraw or isolate themselves.
- Grief looks different for everyone, and people will grieve in their own way. We may experience pressures from others, or from ourselves to “move on” – but it is important to remember every healing journey is unique and may take time

# **How to Support Your Child**

# Talking to Kids About Grief

Talking about grief and loss can be uncomfortable and unfamiliar. It can be overwhelming to support children through these difficult emotions because you don't want them to feel any hurt, especially as you may be navigating your own grief.

**It is important though to talk openly about grief.** Make sure that your children know it is okay to talk about their feelings, and to ask for help when they need it.

Support, acknowledge and normalize feelings or reactions, even if you don't understand them. **Validate your child's emotions** and experiences

# Talking to Kids About Grief

- **Ask open-ended and direct questions** to determine your child's emotional state and understand their perceptions of the event.
  - Children sometimes may come up with distortions, where they may feel responsible or guilty for something out of their control – *"if I had done x, maybe y would not have happened"*
  - Help make sure they understand the facts of the situation, and answer their questions, appropriate to their age.
- **Acknowledge your own feelings** appropriately – trying to empathize and not burden, so your children know they are not alone
- Give them **time and space** if requested. If your child doesn't feel comfortable sharing with you, help them find a **safe/trusted adult** they can go to



# Helping Children Grieve

- **Maintain routines** as much as possible; even if it's only one normal routine in the day
- Consider developing **new rituals** in your daily routine to stay connected with your loved ones to replace those that have been lost
- Try to **stay in the present** and focus on aspects of your life that you have control over right now
- Ask your child how they want to be comforted. Do hugs help or does that not feel good? When talking about the loss – do any kinds of comments get under their skin? What is helpful for them to hear?

# Transformation of the Relationship

Through the separation from a loved one, youth may seek new and meaningful ways of continuing that relationship. It is normal to connect with loved one through:

- Dreaming
- Looking for their face in a crowd
- Sense their presence
- Feeling them watching over or protecting them
- Talking to them, rehearsing discussions
- Connecting through objects

# Supporting a Grieving Family or Friend

Your family and your child may experience second-hand grief through knowing someone else experiencing a loss. This can be a good time to talk about grief & loss with your children, and come up with ways together that you can show your support.

- Help with a chore—like helping to clean, delivering groceries, or bringing over their favorite snack
- Help them study or work on a project. Grief can make concentrating extra tough
- Take their dog for a walk or scoop out their cat's litter box
- Organize a game or movie night for them and a few close friends

# Activities for Families

*My Favorite Memory*

Draw a picture of your favorite memory with the person that you lost. Answer the questions to share more about your picture!

What is happening in this picture?

When did this memory happen?

Why is it your favorite memory?

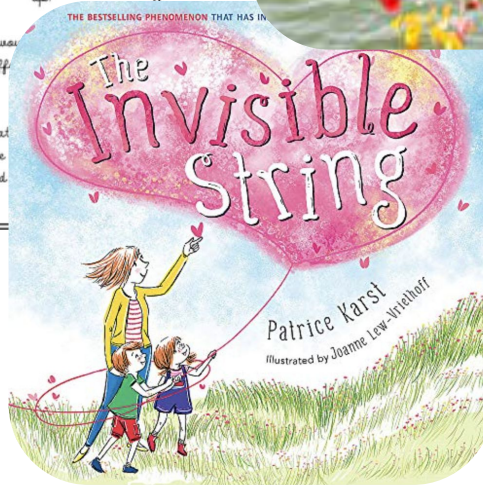
When you think of this memory, what feelings come up?

What was different about this memory?

What positive feelings did you share?

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# Activities for Families

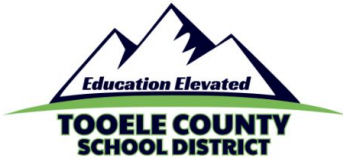
- Beaded memory bracelet
- Make a family recipe book or a scrapbook
- Write or read a comic, a story, in a journal
- Listen to a podcast: "Grief Out Loud"
- Write a name poem
- Play a game together
- Create a family playlist
- Make Worry Boxes / Gratitude Boxes



# When To Seek Help

- **You know your child best.** Talk to your child, their healthcare provider, or school about your concerns and if you notice *changes* in their behavior that may be impacting their functioning.
- **Access resources.** If you notice separation anxiety, persistently depressed mood, statements of not feeling safe, nightmares, etc. It may be beneficial to seek additional areas of support.
- **Exceptions.** Unexpected or violent deaths may lead to a more complex journey after a loss. It may be beneficial to help children and teens access professional help early on to help prevent complex grief reactions or trauma reactions.

# Resources



# Resources

If you are interested in getting a referral to Daybreak counseling for your child, please contact your school counselor for more information.

To find more resources for families in the Tooele CSD Community, please visit:

[www.tooeleschools.org/families/family-resources](http://www.tooeleschools.org/families/family-resources)

You can find more community resources using this link:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19EEj9eTn365mbZ5FHq0ZOsezeY4VOclrCtIcAdzQxew/edit?usp=sharing>



# Feedback Survey

Please take a moment to complete this feedback survey.

You can use this [link](#) or scan the QR Code below



# Thank You!

## CONTACT

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