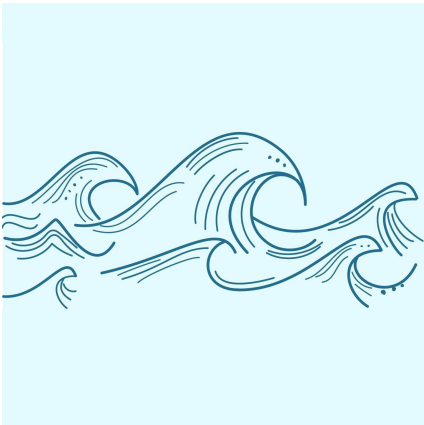


Grief is a natural response to loss and the changes that come with it. Grief is a lived experience, not a problem to be fixed. Each person's grief is unique, and it is normal to have lots of different feelings and reactions in grief.



Grief is like the weather

There will be sunny days, calm days, cloudy days, and stormy days - sometimes all in the same day. Grief can be ever changing, unpredictable, and sometimes overwhelming. In the beginning, it may feel like the grief will never let up. Eventually, if you ride out the storm, there will be more calm days than stormy days. If you let yourself experience the grief, you will eventually feel better. Gradually your days will have more sun, and when there are storms, you will be able to get through them.



Grief waves

Grief comes and goes like waves in the ocean. Sometimes the water is calm, rolling in gently, and other times it is overwhelming. Sometimes a wave comes crashing in when you're least expecting it. You can't stop the waves from coming, but you can pay attention to them and ride them out.

Video: Grief Comes In Waves Poem | The Wandering Paddy (2m 45s)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=txUhyub6ybc

Video: Waves of Grief and Loss | Life, Loss, Hope (8m 2s)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ_fMCM8D0

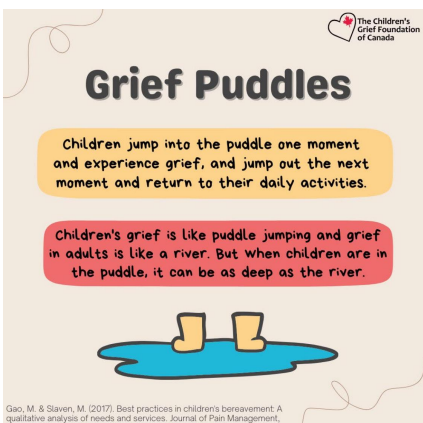


Growing around grief

At first the loss is consuming and takes up a lot of your life. Over time, as you heal, life begins to grow around the grief. The loss doesn't shrink, but it becomes less dominant. Life becomes full again. The grief will always remain and be something that you carry with you, *and* your world will grow more colorful around the loss. -Rebekah Ballagh

Video: What Nobody Tells You About Grief and Loss | Dr. Julie (0m 53s)

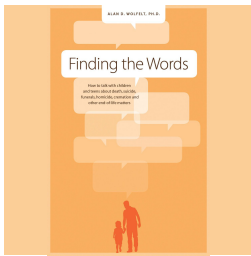
www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoUDh1DCXg



Puddle jumping

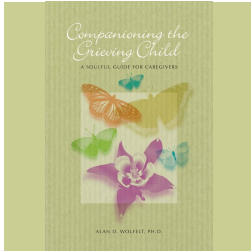
Children often "jump" in and out of their grief. They may feel very upset and distressed one moment, and in the next moment be asking what's for lunch or wanting to go play. This can be confusing for adults, or lead adults to mistakenly believe that a child is unaffected by the death. However, "puddle-jumping" is developmentally appropriate and necessary for children, as they are not able to tolerate grief for long periods of time. It is a built-in safety mechanism that stops them from becoming too overwhelmed by powerful feelings.

Video: Puddle Jumping: how children can seem to move in and out of their grief | Child Bereavement UK (1m 12s) www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmkbTnWSZ_U



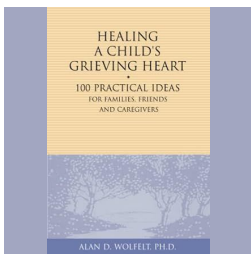
Finding the Words by Alan Wolfelt

Guide to children's grief by developmental stage, companioning children through grief, and how to talk with children about death and dying.



Companioning the Grieving Child by Alan Wolfelt

A guide for caregivers, family members, teachers, and others on how to support grieving children. Views the child as the expert on their own grief, and grief as an experience that children are living, rather than an illness or a problem to be fixed.



Healing a Child's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas for Families, Friends and Caregivers by Alan Wolfelt

A concise, easy-to-use resource that offers practical, kid-friendly ideas for helping children mourn well so they can grow to live well and love well again.



It's OK That You're Not OK by Megan Devine

Megan, a therapist who is also grieving the death of her partner, writes with deep insight about the truths of loss, love, and healing. She offers perspective and practical guidance to learn to live inside grief, and build a life alongside it, rather than seeking to "overcome" it.

Podcast: It's OK That You're Not OK



The Dougy Center: The National Grief Center for Children & Families

Find support, resources, and connection before and after a death. Tip sheets, activities, podcasts, and more.

Podcast: Grief Out Loud

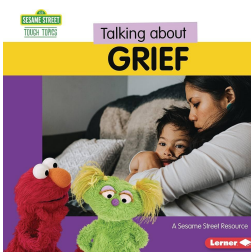
Website: www.dougy.org



National Alliance for Children's Grief

A national organization of professionals dedicated to supporting children and the networks and communities surrounding them. Offers resources, information, and connections to local support.

Website: <https://nacg.org>



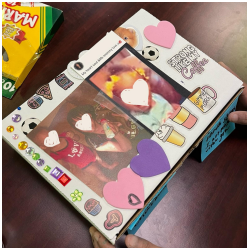
Sesame Street Grief Workshop

Resources, videos & activities. Grieving may never completely end, but working through difficult feelings can get easier with time. Through support, open conversations, and finding ways to keep the person's memory alive, families can begin to heal.

Website: <https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/grief>

Coping & Remembrance Activities

There are many creative ways to help your child cope with feelings and reactions following a death. It can be helpful to focus on how the person lived and impacted your lives. Together, your family can choose the memories you want to cherish and hold on to. Here are some ideas to consider.



Memory box

Read *The Memory Box*, then decorate a box and choose items that remind you of your person or represent special memories to put inside.



Family playlist

Have each member of the family choose some special songs and share why the music is meaningful. Create your playlist and listen as a family while driving, playing a game, etc.



Memory bracelet

Read *The Invisible String*, then choose beads that remind you of your person or represent memories with them to make a bracelet, keychain, or necklace.



Coping kit

Put items that engage the five senses in a bag or box to use for grounding when stressed. Examples: textured stickers, scented lip balm, photo of a peaceful place, stress ball, etc.



Memory candle

Decorate a jar in memory of your person and use it to hold a candle to light as a comfort when thinking about them. Can also pair with a [remembrance poem](#).



Stress ball

Choose 3 - 5 different shaped beads. Put them in an uninflated balloon, then add small pieces of play-doh a little bit at a time. Tie the balloon, and see if you can find each bead as you squeeze.



Memory journal

Start a journal of stories and memories from people who knew your person.



Feelings Uno

Assign a feeling to each color: red=mad, etc. When a player changes the color, they tell a time they felt the corresponding feeling, or something that makes them feel that way.



Letter or drawing

Write a letter to your person, or draw them a picture



Community activity

Participate in a walk or race, volunteer for a cause, or make a donation in honor of your person who died.



Memory stone

Decorate a memory stone, or create one out of clay, and put it in a special place.



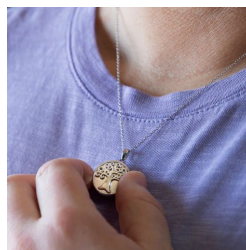
Linking experiences

Activities that help you feel close to your person. Eating your person's favorite food, listening to a song they loved, playing a sport they liked, going to a place that you used to go together.



Picture frame

Decorate a picture frame and put a photo your person (or you with your person) in it, to put in a place of your choosing.



Linking objects

A physical item that can be held to help you feel connected to your person, such as their clothing, jewelry, perfume, tools, instruments, photos of them, a cremation necklace, etc.

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR GRIEVING STUDENT

It's important to keep in mind is that grief is not a problem to be fixed for a child, it is an experience they are living. Students benefit from having a caring, trusted adult with whom to share, and who can be present with them in their pain without trying to take it away.

PROVIDE SAFETY

- Provide a safe and structured environment at school
- Maintain a routine and clear, consistent boundaries to increase student's sense of security
- Be aware of potential grief and trauma triggers, such as holidays, community events, class readings, violence in the news and social media. You might suggest that youth limit their exposure to violence in social media and entertainment, even if only in the short term.

EMPOWER

- Help the student identify who, when and how they can access support if needed
- Understand that the student may or may not want to talk about the death or other traumatic event - each child has the right to decide what they feel ready to share, when, and with whom
- Identify specific, tangible supports that can be offered, and invite the student/family to indicate what they may need right now. Know that this may change at different points in their grief.

LISTEN

- Be present with the student
- Provide support by listening to questions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences without judgement
- Allow students to tell their story without sharing about your own personal losses
- Avoid: The impulse to "fix," falling back on platitudes and clichés, telling a student how they feel

VALIDATE

- Validate and normalize their feelings and reactions
- Educate about typical grief reactions - grief impacts us emotionally, physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually
- Affirm that there is no "right" way to grieve, each person's grief is unique to them

MODEL

- If the death was a community loss, share your own reactions
- Model or share your own coping strategies during difficult times (without crossing personal/professional boundaries)

ENCOURAGE COPING & EXPRESSION

- Encourage the use of relaxation strategies such as grounding, slow breathing, stretching, and physical activity
- Provide outlets for emotional expression - art, music, writing, movement, community support
- If they are ready, you might suggest commemorative activities, such as awareness or memory walks, tree planting, creating a scrapbook, photo album or memory box, writing stories, poems, songs, or a service project in honor of their person.

ADVOCATE

- Educate school staff about common grief reactions, and ways that grief may show up for students in the school environment
- Encourage staff to consider ways that they can support the student, such as utilizing a non-verbal signal or code word for student to indicate the need for a break
- Advocate for flexibility to allow students to participate in grief support services

STUDENT SUPPORT STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

When a student returns to school after the death of a significant person in their life, they may feel alone and challenged by the task of engaging with their daily routine. Students that need and receive support as they are grieving have improved outcomes socially, emotionally, and academically. Each individual has unique needs that change over time; not every strategy outlined here will be the best fit for every student.

ENVIRONMENT

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

INSTRUCTION & ASSIGNMENTS

- Check-in for understanding/review
- Repetition of directions as needed
- Extra time to complete assignments/assessments
- Provide tutor/peer assistance
- Implement flexibility as needed
- Clarify prioritization within assignments
- Be aware of activities and assignments that involve death and adjust as needed

SUPPORT STAFF

- Provide linkage with local grief support resources
- Provide safe and supportive space for student to share thoughts, feelings, memories, and to develop healthy coping strategies

BEHAVIOR

- Keep classroom rules simple, visible, and clear
- Ignore minor problem behaviors that do not cause harm

BREAKS

- Develop a plan with student for when/if regulation breaks are needed
- Utilize non-verbal signals or code words for teacher-student communication to indicate the need for a break
- Allow student open pass to school counselor/social worker/nurse for support

SPECIAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

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

