

Thank you for attending the Grief and Loss session from the Wendt Center last spring. As a reminder of some of the key learnings, we created this tip sheet for you to use as the school year starts.

GRIEF DEFINED:

The experience of and reaction to any loss - not just due to death. Grief is always a multi-faceted, time-varying response that contains physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, spiritual, and philosophical components. These components are often experienced in “waves” across the grief process.

GRIEF MYTHS:

Children/teens need to be protected from loss or trauma
 Intense distress is inevitable after a loss, especially for young people
 The intensity of grief is equal to the strength of the relationship
 The goal of processing grief is to “get over it”
 People in the same family grieve the same way
 Children/teens who are “really” grieving can’t also experience joy
 If a child or teen isn’t talking to you about it something is wrong

GRIEF RESPONSE BY AGE GROUP:

Grief in Children: 0-3 years

Response to Loss

- ◇ Feeling of abandonment
- ◇ Confusion about death
- ◇ Repetitive questions
- ◇ Anxiety about safety
- ◇ Regression
- ◇ Proximity seeking

How to Support

- ◇ Single and frequent explanation
- ◇ Physical comfort
- ◇ Consistency
- ◇ Reassurance of safety
- ◇ Tolerance of regression

Grief in Children: 4-7 years

Response to Loss

- ◇ Magical thinking
- ◇ Confused questioning
- ◇ Anger and Sadness
- ◇ Behavioral issues
- ◇ Trouble sleeping
- ◇ Guilt or feelings of responsibility

How to Support

- ◇ Simple, honest, and frequent explanations
- ◇ Physical comfort
- ◇ Consistency
- ◇ Reassurance of safety
- ◇ Reassurance around responsibility
- ◇ Provide room for expression
- ◇ Offer coping strategies

Grief in Children: 8-11 years

Response to Loss

- ◇ Wavering on permanence of death
- ◇ Fear of death
- ◇ Anger and Sadness
- ◇ Somatic symptoms
- ◇ Avoidance
- ◇ Shame and withdrawal
- ◇ Suicidal thoughts

How to Support

- ◇ Simple, honest, and frequent explanations
- ◇ Physical comfort
- ◇ Consistency
- ◇ Reassurance of Safety
- ◇ Reassurance around responsibility
- ◇ Provide room for expression
- ◇ Teach coping strategies

Grief in Children: 12-18 years

Response to Loss

- ◇ Accurate understanding of death concepts
- ◇ Depression and distractibility
- ◇ Shame and withdrawal
- ◇ High-risk behaviors
- ◇ Suicidal thoughts

How to Support

- ◇ Honest and courageous conversations
- ◇ Consistent boundaries
- ◇ Encourage support-seeking behaviors
- ◇ Acceptance
- ◇ Listening
- ◇ Space

CARING FOR YOURSELF:

Providing grief and loss support can be difficult. You are stepping in and holding space for those in need when grief is too heavy for them to hold. Make time to care for yourself!

- Visually ground yourself
- Drink some water or eat a mint to slow down and help induce calm
- Stand up, stretch, shake it out, or get moving
- Write down your thoughts or share with a supervisor
- Listen to uplifting music or watch an inspiring video

CHILDREN NEED ADULTS TO:

1. Maintain routine and boundaries
2. Listen to how the child is feeling and acknowledge their experience
3. Share their feelings
4. Provide creative outlets
5. Create rituals or traditions
6. Be patient

RESOURCES:

Video Clips

- Coco: <https://youtu.be/t9Dn4YrJGak>
 Rugrats: <https://youtu.be/J01zTqgG63A>
 Kung Fu Panda: <https://youtu.be/RqjlkkwMlnw>
 Sesame Street: <https://youtu.be/gxIj4Tk83xQ>
 Big Hero Six: <https://youtu.be/lQu2arZ4mDk>

Games

- Grief questions Uno
 Grief feelings Jenga
 Grief terms word search

Books

- The Goodbye Book (ages 4+)
 The Invisible String (ages 4+)
 The Rabbit Listened (ages 4+)
 The Heart and the Bottle (ages 4+)
 The Memory Box (ages 4+)
 When Dinosaurs Die (ages 4+)
- What on Earth Do You Do When Somebody Dies? (ages 6+)
 Ms. Bixby’s Last Day (ages 8+)
 When a Friend Dies (ages 12+)
 The Color of Absence: 12 Stories about Loss and Hope (ages 12+)
 Help for the Hard Times:
 Getting Through Loss (ages 12+)