

## Children and Grief

Below is a Google Slide presentation, articles, guidance, activities and stories that can be shared as part of staff and family outreach.

Google Slides for adult audience: [Children and Grief](#)

### Articles to support grief response in adults:

- How to “Hold Space” for others who are struggling:  
<https://upliftconnect.com/hold-space/>
- How Not to Say the Wrong Thing: Comfort In, Dump Out ([Google doc of NYT article](#))
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-d7YwgrhggprMUtM7i4n4eFBF9gw27siHP3GhuQez7c/edit?usp=sharing>

### Suggestions for adult self-care

- Be easy on yourself and open to your own grief
- Find someone to talk to
- Seek out positive activities such as crafts, hikes, or volunteering
- Allow yourself time to eat healthy meals and get enough sleep

### Suggestions for talking to children:

- Simple, age appropriate explanations
- Encourage family to include children in daily routines
- Encourage family to provide a way for the child to stay connected
- Offer the child a space to ask questions
- We can help families prepare simple, age appropriate answers to questions that may arise.
- It is important for children to feel that they can have a role in any ritual that the family participates in. Families can also create new rituals.
- We can prepare children for the reaction of others to their loved one’s death (crying, prayer, anger).
- Sesame Street Video on talking to children about death (Can be offered to parents to facilitate conversation): <https://youtu.be/daxasrg9UNM>

Guidance on cultural awareness:

- Take time to understand the beliefs and rituals that exist in the child’s culture and for the child’s family
- When using books and materials, try to include representations of different cultures and different experiences.

### Effects of Grief:

- Increased headaches, stomach aches, difficulty sleeping

- Increased anxiety and changes in eating patterns
- Increased depression and lethargy

### **When to be concerned:**

- Child is unable to relax
- Decrease in self-grooming
- Decreased sleep/ general physical health
- Self-isolation
- Unable to enjoy activities
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Difficulty communicating feelings or needs
- Inability to work in a group
- Tendency towards perfectionism
- Decreased ability to talk
- Experiencing frightening thoughts

### **Group activities for kids that are grieving**

1. Draw two pictures: one representing life and one representing death. Sharing should be optional.
2. Brainstorm words that describe how they've felt in their grief. Talk about how feelings aren't good or bad and how much they can vary.
3. Draw family pictures that represent how each family member is experiencing and living their grief. (better for older children)
4. Read a story about feelings and have them draw a picture about how their grief feels.
5. Paper plates: On one side, draw a face showing how they feel right now. On the other, draw how they feel when they are grieving. Discuss how they sometimes feel different on the outside than on the inside, how we can feel sad even when doing normal activities, and ways that they can express their feelings appropriately.
6. Have children bring in a memory object, read *The Tenth Good Thing about Barney* and let each child talk about their object.
7. Memory Collage: Cut out pictures from magazines that remind them of their loved one and paste on construction paper.
8. Funeral memories: Ask children to draw a scene from the funeral or make a visual storyline from the funeral. Provide time for optional sharing.
9. Use a whiteboard to brainstorm constructive ways that they have coped with their grief.
10. Have the children write a letter to themselves describing what they liked about the group and how or if they feel differently about the loss than before they came.
11. Use a white board or make a drawing to list or describe how their family has changed since the death of their loved one.
12. Sentence completers that can be recorded in a journal:
  - The memory that I like best of my loved one is . . .
  - I am glad my loved one and I got to . . .

- Something that has changed in my family is . . .
- One day I will . . .
- Now my family and I . . .

\*From Bereavement Support Group Program for Children (leader manual) by Beth Haasl, B.S. and Jean Marnocha, M.S.W.

### **Stories that address Grief**

*Gentle Willow: A Story for Children About Dying* by Joyce C. Mills, PhD

To Hell with Dying by Alice Walker

Everett Anderson's Goodbye by Lucille Clifton

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst