

Supporting Children, Teens, and Families through Change and Loss

Resources for Educating and Supporting Youth amid Coronavirus/COVID-19

COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19

- ▶ **How to Talk to your Child about Coronavirus | UNICEF**
<https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/march-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-coronavirus>
- ▶ **Answering Kids Questions about Coronavirus**
<https://youtu.be/vSsKQPqS7A>
- ▶ **COVID-19: What Parents/Caregivers should know | UNICEF - Australia**
<https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know#how-can-avoid-risk-infection>
- ▶ **6 Things you should know**
https://youtu.be/ujWFj_6FaMY
- ▶ **Reducing Stigma and Racism**
Countering COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Stigma and Racism: Tips for Parents & Caregivers | National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/countering-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-stigma-and-racism-tips-for-parents-and-caregivers](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/countering-covid-19-(coronavirus)-stigma-and-racism-tips-for-parents-and-caregivers)
Reducing Stigma | CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/reducing-stigma.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%

CREATIVE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES WITH CHILDREN

- ▶ **Wiggles Handwashing Song and Dance (VIDEO)**
Note: The Wiggles say 15 secs instead of 20 secs for handwashing, but as an adult, please promote the updated recommendations of 20 seconds with the child in your care
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=590854655103487>
- ▶ **Without Soap My Finger Does Nothing | DrLucyRogers on TikTok (VIDEO)**
Notes: 1.) Must have Tik Tok app downloaded, and 2.) It works but need to have a substantial amount of soap on finger and must hold into the mixture (oil, water, and pepper) for a few seconds longer than Dr. Rogers does for it to work. vm.tiktok.com

MAINTAINING ROUTINES AND PREDICTABILITY FOR YOUTH THROUGH ACTIVITIES

Note: Routines provide a sense of control and stability for youth and families in times of change, uncertainty, and loss.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH, TEENS, AND FAMILIES

- ▶ **4-H Inspire Kids to Do: Activity Guide | 4-H**

<https://4-h.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/4-H-Activity-Guide-Final-0126-2020.pdf>

- ▶ **Teaching Remotely for Grades K-12: Free Resources and Strategies**

***Includes Daily Projects (stories, videos)*

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html?caching>

SUPPORTING CHILDREN, TEENS, AND FAMILIES THROUGH CHANGE, LOSS, AND GRIEF

- ▶ **Responding to Change and Loss: In Support of Children, Teens, and Families | National Alliance for Grieving Children**

<https://indd.adobe.com/view/924b5436-fca0-4a15-901a-9233134766e4>

This resource includes Tip Sheets and Activities:

- ▶ **How to Support Your Child or Teen: For Parents/Caregivers**

Examples:

Establish/Maintain Routines

Children need routine and normalcy to feel in control, supported and comforted. Keep limits consistent and clear to provide a safe and secure environment for everyone.

Allow Emotional Expression

Allow your child to have a safe space to express their emotions. Your child may experience a wide range of emotions: anger, sadness, pain, shame, guilt, or other powerful emotions. Often, children are not able to verbalize what they are feeling. Avoid minimizing these emotions, telling them how they should feel, or trying to put a positive spin.

- ▶ **How to Help Yourself: For Children and Teens**

Example:

MOVE Your Body

Move your body. Play, run, jump, wiggle, dance, hit a balloon or yell into a pillow, clean up, stretch.

Surviving Healing Evolving through Death (S.H.E.D.) and Loss: Grief and What to Expect in Children and Teens

By Tashel Bordere, PhD, Certified Thanatologist - MU HDFS/Extension State Specialist

Grief is a normal response to loss for both children and adults. It is expressed in many different ways. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Grief is a process staying into our daily lives.

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF is the grief that is felt before an expected death or loss happens (long term illness-human/pet, plans to move to a new home/living arrangement or school)

Grief is expressed emotionally, physically, cognitively, behaviorally, and spiritually.

EMOTIONALLY – irritability, excessive crying, sadness, anger, yearning, guilt, relief, regret, anxiety

PHYSICALLY – sleep difficulties, clinging/difficulty separating from attachment figures, regressive behaviors (bed-wetting, thumb-sucking), stomachaches, low energy, extra sensitive (sound, light, noise), hitting, yelling.

COGNITIVELY – distracted, difficulty concentrating, difficulty remembering information, forgetful, dreams of deceased

BEHAVIORALLY – hyperactivity, withdrawal, bursts of anger, irritability

SPIRITUALLY - angry at higher power (e.g., mad at God “for taking cousin”)

Grief may be triggered by routines (e.g., morning walk without pet companion) **and reminders such as anniversaries, transitions – kindergarten, high school graduation, and sensory experiences** (e.g., scent of deceased aunt’s perfume) **related to the deceased person or pet companion. Non-compliant or disruptive behaviors result from disruption in daily routine** (Bugge, Darbyshire, Rokholt, Haugstvedt, Helseth 2012).

NORMAL questions and concerns for children:

▶ **“Grandpa got sick and died. Will I die if I get sick with a cold?”**

Response: Most people live for a long time even when they get sick with things like a cold. Grandpa was very sick. He died because his body stopped working.

▶ **“When will mommy come back?” (if parent/caregiver is in quarantine – COVID-19)**

Response: Yes, mommy is staying downstairs for two weeks so that we all stay well and do not get sick. We can call mommy, facetime with her, and also add stickers to the calendar to count down the days until we can be with mommy again.

NORMAL experiences among the bereaved children:

- ▶ Hearing or seeing the deceased
- ▶ Expected and unexpected emotional, physical, cognitive, behavioral responses when doing normal routines that may have involved the deceased person or pet companion.

Examples:

Feeling unusually tired around the time of the anniversary of the death or birthday of the deceased.

- ▶ Even if child does not show an immediate reaction, they may have delayed reactions to the loss that last a lifetime.

Infant Children

- ▶ may have separation anxiety or detachment from people
- ▶ Overattachment to material things (food or toys)

Pre-School Children

- ▶ May ask repeated questions
- ▶ Sometimes think they may have caused the death
- ▶ Consider the death to be temporary and reversible

School-Age Children

- ▶ May experience guilt around the misconception that they could have done something to prevent the death
- ▶ Think the death could have been beaten
- ▶ Feel alone and worry about separation from remaining parent

Adolescents

- ▶ Question the fairness, nature of death, and the meaning of life
- ▶ Tend to further isolate and seclude themselves.
- ▶ Changes in academic performance

All Ages

- ▶ Children often mirror parent's/caregivers mood and reactions
- ▶ Need more support

GRIEF IS A PROCESS. HEALING TAKES TIME.

Loss and Change: Tips on Communication with Bereaved Youth and Families

By Tashel Bordere, PhD, Certified Thanatologist,
MU HDFS/Extension State Specialist

The following tips offer ways to support youth and families experiencing grief that may otherwise go unnoticed, unrecognized, unsupported, and even penalized as youth and families survive, heal and evolve through death and non-death losses and transitions.

UNHELPFUL Messages – Examples of What Not to Say/Do:

- ▶ **USE OF AMBIGUOUS/UNCLEAR LANGUAGE** that does not concretely reflect loss and grief
Unclear - “Grandpa went on vacation.” Clear and accurate - “Grandpa died because his body stopped working.”
- ▶ **AVOIDANCE OF PERSON** (youth and family) coping with loss and grief (neglecting to check on teen or inquire about her/his/their thoughts, feelings about changes, loss, sense of grief)
- ▶ **GENERAL OFFERS.** “Come talk to me if you need anything.”
Note: Bereaved children and teens often lack the energy to think of specific things they need when overwhelmed with grief.
- ▶ **ENCOURAGEMENT OF GRACIOUSNESS FOR MAJOR CHANGES AND/OR TRAUMATIC LIFE EXPERIENCES.**
“You should be thankful that you get to miss school due to the coronavirus instead of complaining and crying all the time about missing your 8th grade graduation/Senior Prom. Graduation and proms are way overrated!”
“You’re so lucky that you only got your bike and dog stolen from your house. Some people get their dog, bike, and barbies stolen too!”
- ▶ **COMPARISON OF NON-NORMATIVE AND NORMATIVE LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT MINIMIZE LOSS EXPERIENCES.**
“I understand what it’s like feeling alone right now while you have to be quarantined for 14 days. I went on a family vacation to Hawaii for 14 days and couldn’t swim one day due to the weather.”
“I understand what it’s like feeling alone after your cousin died. Sometimes my friend won’t have lunch with me, so I feel isolated sometimes too.”
- ▶ **AVOID CLICHES** or commonly used phrases. “It was meant to be.” - “You should count your blessings.”
- ▶ **OPPRESSIVE TOLERANCE.** Avoid setting limits on time allowance for grief as it is a process that takes time. Grief and mourning take time and are re-intensified during anniversaries and other special dates (Anniversaries - Hurricane Katrina, date of cancer diagnosis, life altering injury, and death)
- ▶ **“BENEFIT-REMINDING”.** Although meaning-making and “post-traumatic growth” (Bonnano, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) are possible in bereavement following death or loss, “benefit-reminding” may serve to minimize the loss experience. “You’ll have a great story to tell now that your grandparent was among those diagnosed with Coronavirus!”

HELPFUL Messages – Examples of What to Say/Do:

- ▶ **NAME AND LABEL THE EXPERIENCE USING LOSS AND GRIEF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION.** “It is normal to feel grief or to have many different feelings, thoughts, and behaviors when a death or non-death loss happens like missing your graduation and prom.”
- ▶ **ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXPERIENCE.**

“Please know that I care about your feelings about physical time away from your best friends and your sadness about missing events that you were looking forward to like your graduation ceremony. I know that you were looking forward to throwing your cap into the air!”

“Please know that I care about your recovery from the concussion injury.”
- ▶ **SAY THE NAME OF THE DECEASED.**

“My favorite story about Ella is the time that she.....”
- ▶ **OFFER REASSURANCE REGARDING FAULT.**

“It is not your fault that your parents got divorced.”
- ▶ **OFFER CONCRETE SUPPORT AND FOLLOW-THROUGH.**

“Although we are moving classes online for the rest of the semester, I am still here to support you by having office hours through zoom or by talking to you by phone.”

“I will allow you to do your math test next week.”
- ▶ **OFFER SPACE, TIME, ACTIVE LISTENING, AND HUMAN PRESENCE FOR SHARING BY THE BEREAVED.** In an attempt to make sense of even senseless experiences, it is normal for the bereaved to have a need to tell and retell the story of the death or non-death loss. It is common for young children to even talk about the death or loss with complete strangers.
- ▶ **BE AWARE OF AND SENSITIVE TO REMINDERS/TRIGGERS** (e.g., anniversary of death or non-death loss, wedding anniversary, birthday of deceased, “mother’s”/“father’s” day, holidays, violent language – “Shoot me an email.” My email is “flooded” with messages.) **AND USE THEM AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT AND REMEMBRANCE.**

“I know that today is the anniversary of the death of your dog Jake. Do you want to tell your favorite story of Jake or share pictures with the class?”
- ▶ **SUPPORT THROUGH MEANING-MAKING RECOGNIZING IMPORTANCE OF TIME, CULTURE, AND DEVELOPMENT.**

“Sometimes very well-meaning people will encourage you to move-on before you are ready or to make the best of this unfortunate experience. You are safe here at home/school/counseling and can talk about Jake whenever you would like to do so.”

Online Resources on Loss, Change, Grief, and Coping

VIDEOS AND MEDIA:

- ▶ **No Child Should Ever Grieve Alone** | Carly Woythaler-Runestad 2015 | TEDx Lincoln Talk
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR9eokO8cFA>
- ▶ **When Families Grieve** | Sesame Street
<https://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/grief/>
- ▶ **Living with Grief: Helping Adolescents Cope with Loss** | Drs. Tashel Bordere, Kenneth Doka, Pamela Gabbay, Stacy Orloff, Donna Schuurman, & Carol Wogrin | Hospice Foundation of America
<https://vimeo.com/93406821/96e56331f4>
- ▶ **Supporting Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities** | Hospice Foundation of America
<https://vimeo.com/93519197/ed54ce71da>
- ▶ **Grief: What Helps When It Hurts (HFA)** | Video for Individuals and Organizations
<http://eventcenter.commpartners.com/se/Meetings/Playback.aspx?meeting.id=377537>
- ▶ **African-American Grief: Saving At Risk Children** | Dr. Tashel Bordere and Jackie Rowe-Adams
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olPEAxSLpN8>
- ▶ **Teens and Homicide: Accessing Services**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDuL2NSDEq4>
- ▶ **Teens and Grieving** | Drs. Tashel Bordere and Heather Fitzcharles-Keller Podcast
<https://www.kcur.org/post/teens-and-grieving>

WEBSITE RESOURCES:

- ▶ **The National Alliance for Grieving Children** | <http://nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org/>
- ▶ **The Dougy Center** | www.dougy.org
- ▶ **Association for Death Education and Counseling** | www.adec.org

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