- Grab a post card from the far side of the training room that represents your hope or expectation for today's training event
- Introduce yourself and share why you chose the card you did once your table has filled with fellow attendees
- Please leave the card on the table once you are done, as these cards are often used for grief counseling and support groups

KIDS IN GRIEF

Presented by Kaylee Kron LMSW, GC-C

KAYLEE KRON, LMSW GC-C

- Bereavement Coordinator at Hospice of North Idaho
- Certified Grief Counselor
- Camp Kaniksu Director

OUR PHILOSOPHY ON KIDS IN GRIEF

1. Anyone who is old enough to love is old enough to grieve
2. Grief is a normal, natural response to the death of a loved one
3. Within each of us is an innate capacity to heal
4. A supportive and caring environment can facilitate the healing process
5. Children and teens will only express their grief when they feel safe to do so
6. Children and teens learn what grief looks like from the important adults in their lives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Define Grief
- Establish a knowledge base regarding the needs of grieving youth
- Identify typical grief responses by a child's developmental age
- Differentiate a typical grief response from a complicated grief response or traumatic grief response
- Examine the correlation between grief and the ACE Study
- Dispel myths of grief in youth
- Identify commonly used theories of the grief process
- Discuss typical needs of children and teens in grief
- Discuss grief support in the schools

WHAT IS GRIEF?

An internal reaction to a loss

GRIEF
/gRĒF/

Deep sorrow, especially that caused by someone's death.

"She was overcome with grief"

Synonyms: sorrow, misery, sadness, anguish, pain, distress, agony, torment, suffering, heartache, heartbreak, broken-heartedness, desolation, despair, angst

"Grieving allows us to heal,
to remember with love rather than pain.
It is a sorting process.
One by one, you let go of the things
that are gone.
You mourn for them.
One by one, you take hold of the things
that have become a part of who you are
and build again."
- William Worden

OUR DEFINITION OF GRIEF

We define grief as the internal reaction to an event that has occurred or something that has been taken from you without your permission.

- By our terms, grief is not isolated to the death of someone close to you. It is a much broader experience that occurs in our lives, often without us even realizing it
- Common losses for youth include:
  - Death of a family member
  - Divorce of parents
  - Moving (school or neighborhood)
  - Illness (loss of health)
  - Bullying (loss of safety / self esteem)
  - Loss of first love
  - Death of a classmate / friend

OTHER COMMONLY USED GRIEF TERMS

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

- This term identifies feelings that surface once a loved on has been diagnosed with a terminal illness and continues until the death of that loved one.
- It defines grief related to what has been lost thus far:
  - Loss of mobility
  - Loss of plans for the future
  - Loss of a partner
  - Loss of intimacy
  - Loss of history

DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

- This term is identified as "grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned, or mourned." – Ken Doka
- This grief may fall into one of the following categories:

1. The loss doesn't seem worthy of grief (non-death losses)
2. The relationship is stigmatized
3. The mechanism of death is stigmatized
4. The person grieving is not recognized as a griever
5. The manner in which someone is grieving is stigmatized

CONSIDERATIONS DURING TODAY'S TRAINING

While this training will often refer to grief through the lens of a loss through death, we want you to keep the concept of "non-death losses" in the back of your mind through out the training.

When we consider all losses through the grief lens, we are better able to walk with clients, families, and children with empathy rather than jumping into problem solving.

A deeper look into the need for good grief support for youth

STATISTICS

WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY?

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR9eokO8cFA
- Given at the 2015 TEDxLincoln event, Re:Think. Carly Woythaler-Runestad gives a thought-provoking talk on how, as a society, we need to "Re:Think" how children's grief is addressed and how to create a supportive environment which emphasizes the holistic needs of bereaved families. Carly Woythaler-Runestad has been the executive director of the Mourning Hope Grief Center for over 7 years. Mourning Hope is a nonprofit, grief support network for children, teens, young adults and their families who have experienced the death of someone significant in their life. She has served on a number of diverse statewide boards and in 2014 was elected to the National Alliance for Grieving Children's Board of Directors. Find more at www.TEDxLincoln.com This talk was given at a TEDx event using the TED conference format but independently organized by a local community. Learn more at http://ted.com/tedx

STATISTICS FOR GRIEVING YOUTH
• 1 in 5 youth will experience the death of a parent, grandparent, or sibling before the age of 18
• With suicide rates on the rise in our community, more and more children are effected by a suicide death within their school
• In 2018, the suicide rate continued to increase with Idaho ranking 8th in the nation
• 3 of the deaths were by someone under the age of 18

- Grab a strip of paper and a pen from the center of your table
- Write down your experience or understanding of grief using only 6 words to complete the sentence
- When you are done, share with your table if you feel comfortable

"Anyone who is old enough to love is old enough to grieve."

-Dr. Alan Wolfelt

GRIEF RESPONSES BY DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

GRIEF RESPONSES BY DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

- It is important to be informed about grief responses by developmental age for the following reasons:
  - Each developmental stage experiences, understands, and processes grief differently
  - The needs at each stage vary due to the different grief experience
  - What may work for one child, may not work for another, due to their difference in development
  - We can use this knowledge to meet the child where they are at in their grief which creates an environment of safety and understanding

GRIEF IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Presented by
Breanna Ammari
Developmental Specialist
Infant Toddler Program

TRUTH OR MYTH?

- Babies are too little to be affected by the death
- Children shouldn't attend funerals or memorials
- Children can't handle the truth of a loved ones death
- Because a child is playing and very active he/she is not grieving anymore.
- Children are resilient; they bounce back

- "Children haven't had many of the experiences life has to offer, nor are they cognitively able to understand death as we do. Thus they grieve without the same level of comprehension of what is happening to them, for they have not had the experience of the finality that accompanies someone's death" (1992, p. 53).

YOUNG CHILDREN'S EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF

"Young children have cognitive and emotional immaturities that involve limitations in attention span and in their capacity to endure stress, and these limitations lead to their need for "time off" from demanding psychological endeavors."

(Lieberman, 2003, p.10)

ATTACHMENT

Definition: Attachment is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care and pleasure.

According to Attachment Theory, young children need to form a strong attachment to at least one primary caregiver who can provide the unconditional love and support that allows them to form and develop necessary relationship skills as they grow older.

So what happens when a child loses one or both parents in childhood?

THE CHILD'S SENSE OF SELF

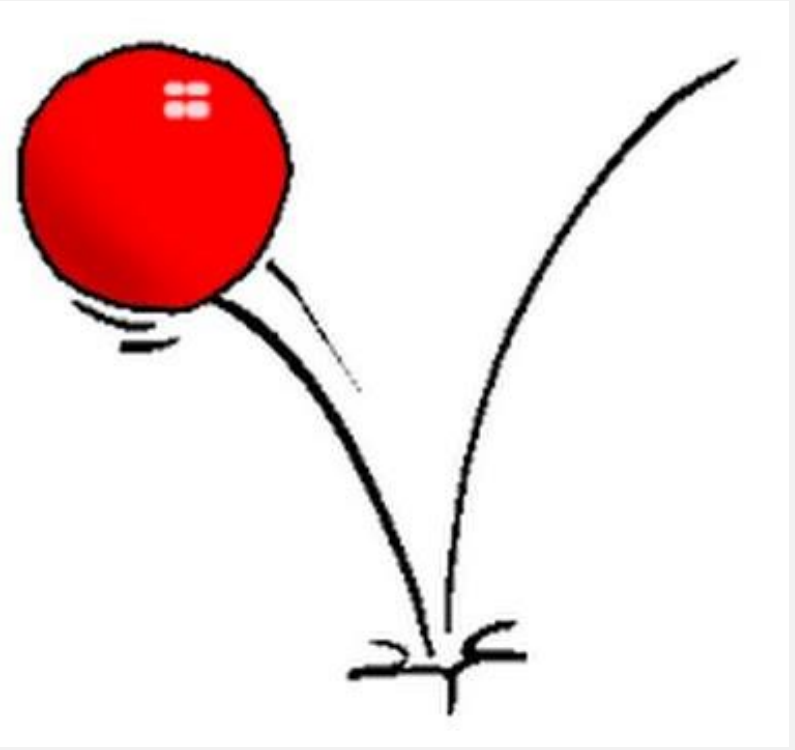
- Regulation of bodily rhythms
- Modulation of emotion
- Formation and socialization of interpersonal relationships
- Learning from exploration of the environment

"HIDDEN REGULATORS"

- When a parent dies, the child loses the feeling of security generated by these reassuring interactions, which served as the "hidden regulators" for the child's neurophysiological and psychological functioning through the parent's protective and caregiving interventions.
- (Lieberman, 2003, p. 8)

RESILIENCY

- **Children aren't born resilient.**
- It is with continuous, compassionate support with a trusted adult and age-appropriate environmental support, can they show potential for resilience.



- Ask yourself,:
  - "What is my child's behavior telling me?"
  - "What can I say and do to support him/her?"

INFANCY

- Myth: Infants are young enough to not be affected by loss.
  - Truth: Babies don't have an understanding of death or the language to say how they are feeling, however they do feel the sense of loss and separation and pick up on the anxiety of those around them.

GRIEF RESPONSES IN INFANCY

- They may express these feelings by…
  - Crying more often
  - Irritability or fussiness
  - Easily distressed
  - Show a fear of abandonment
  - Change in eating and sleeping patterns
  - Biting

HOW TO RESPOND

Children at this age are learning Trust vs. Mistrust

(Erik Erikson)

Be consistent with a routine

The caregiver should be the same persons and they should not come and go.

Increase time spent with the infant

Respond with gentle and dependable attention to the baby's cries so the baby learns to trust you and knows that help is always available. Crying is communication, there is always a reason for an infants cry.

Talk to your baby during everyday routines

TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS

- They may express feelings by
  - Crying
  - Being sad
  - Regression of previously mastered skills (thumb sucking, bedwetting, baby talk)
  - Frequently asking questions surrounding death, dying, and what happens to the deceased
- (between ages 2-5, death is viewed as temporary or reversible like sleep)

TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS CONT.

- Anger and aggression (hitting, yelling, biting.)
- Anger at the loved one that "abandoned" them
- Showing separation anxiety/ extra clingy
- Confusion (not understanding why their loved one isn't coming back).
- Physical complaints (stomachache, or headache)
- Fear that other adults will leave as well
- Night time wake ups and nightmares

UNCLE JACK

RESPONDING TO THEIR GRIEF

- Keep as much of a routine as possible (Predictability is comforting to children. When routines change it can provoke feelings of anxiety.)
- Allow the child to regress into previous behavior (don't punish this behavior)
- Give more attention. Spend as much time as possible with your child in the early weeks and months following a death.
- Provide comfort items such as a blanket, stuffed toy, pacifier, etc.
- Be understanding that they may be more emotional than usual and be calm for them. (All behavior is communication; wonder to yourself what the behavior may be actually stemming from.)
- Use playing, talking, writing or drawing to cope with the intense feelings. Write their loved one a letter, or draw them a picture then talk about it.

RESPONDING TO THEIR GRIEF

- Create a picture book of that child with their loved one. Invite the child to look through it with you; talk about what he/she sees.
- Let the child keep a photo of their loved one with them, or something that belonged to them that reminds the child of their loved one.
- Name their feelings. "I see that it makes you sad when I have to go to work. After work I'll pick you up and we can play more together."
- Talk about and label your own feelings around your child. "I'm sad right now, but I won't be sad forever."
- Read books together that explore emotions and how other children navigate those emotions.
- Encourage your child to talk about their loved one and use the name of their loved one often.
- Preschoolers are still concrete thinkers. Never explain a persons death in terms that they are sleeping.

SHOULD MY CHILD ATTEND THE MEMORIAL SERVICE?

- You know your child best. Use what you know about the child's reactions to new people, places and situations to help you decide what is best for him/her.
- Ideas to keep in mind if your child does attend:
  - Tell your child what to expect.
  - Arrange for an adult your child knows and trusts to stay with your child during the service.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- www.militaryonesource.com or 1-800-342-9647
- Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS)
- www.zerotothree.org
- Children's Books:
  - Goodbye Mousie by Robie H. Harris
  - I Miss You: A First Look at Death by Pat Thomas
  - The Invisible String by Patrice Karst
  - Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney
  - The Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown
  - What Mommies Do Best/What Daddies Do Best by Laura Numeroff

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

- Books:
  - The Grieving Child by Helen Fitzgerald
  - Healing A Child's Grieving Heart by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D
  - Nurturing Adoptions by Deborah Gray
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EARLY CHILDHOOD: AGES 4 – 7

- Concept of Death
  - Self-focused, they may believe something they did caused their loved one to die. "Magical Thinking"
  - May continue to see death as temporary and reversible
  - May connect two separate occurrences together
- Grief Response
  - Searching for the deceased, repetitive questions, grief expressed through play, may appear unaffected, they may model grief reactions by the adults around them, regressive behaviors, and may form attachment to people who resemble the deceased
- How to Support Them
  - Answer any questions, even if they are repeats, help them name their strong feelings, reassure that it's not their fault by retelling the story

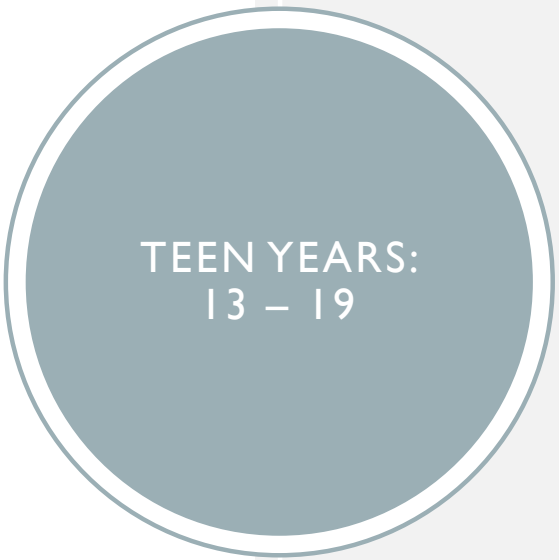
MIDDLE YEARS: AGES 7 – 10

- Concept of Death
  - Begin to see death as final and universal but not as something that can happen to them or their family
- Grief Response
  - May become concerned with how to help others in grief, ignoring their own feelings
  - May act out their anger and sadness at school, appearing as lack of concentration
  - May act as if they do not care about the death or that it is funny
  - May assume the role or mannerisms of the deceased or idealize the deceased
- How to Support Them
  - Give grace, but maintain expectations, help give them words for what they're feeling and explanations for what they're doing, allow space to avoid feelings, but discuss your own

PRE-ADOLESCENT: AGES 10 – 12

- Concept of Death
  - Comparing their experiences to others
  - They begin to understand that death can happen to their family
  - Able to understand the facts than the feeling surrounding the death
- Grief Response
  - May cover up their feelings so they do not appear different
  - May express their grief through anger outbursts, irritability or bullying
  - May show concern for how the household will run after the death
- How to Support Them
  - Get them around others who have experienced something similar, allow an open door policy for discussion, allow grace, but maintain behaviorally expectations

- Concept of Death
  - Have an understanding that death is permanent
- Grief Response
  - May engage in magical thinking as a way to cope with the harsh reality of death
  - May withdrawal from family or support network
  - Engage in risky behaviors
  - Unpredictable, sometimes explosive emotions
  - Confusion over role / identity
- How to Support Them
  - Maintain routines and clear expectations, provide choices whenever possible, include them in ritual planning, model appropriate grief reactions, assist with connection to support systems

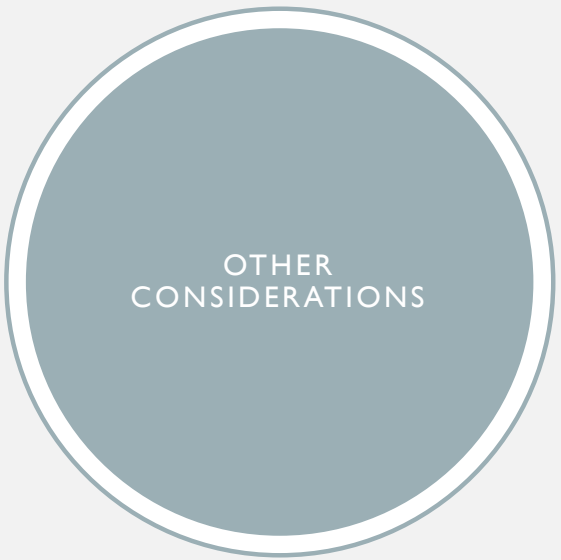


A CLOSER LOOK INTO THE GRIEF EXPERIENCE OF A TEEN

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgrRoJylje Q&list=PL9lMfHAqtaLRHKRIjzrWiro02hvJXAi-g
- Hospice of the Chesapeake
- Published on Aug 10, 2016
- This video was made for Hospice of the Chesapeake as an educational piece to start the conversation about grief with teens. Funded by a grant from TransAmerica, the film was created by Sugar Farm Productions and Kat Korbelak, an Annapolis High School Performing and Visual Arts Magnet Program video intern.

RE-GRIEVING

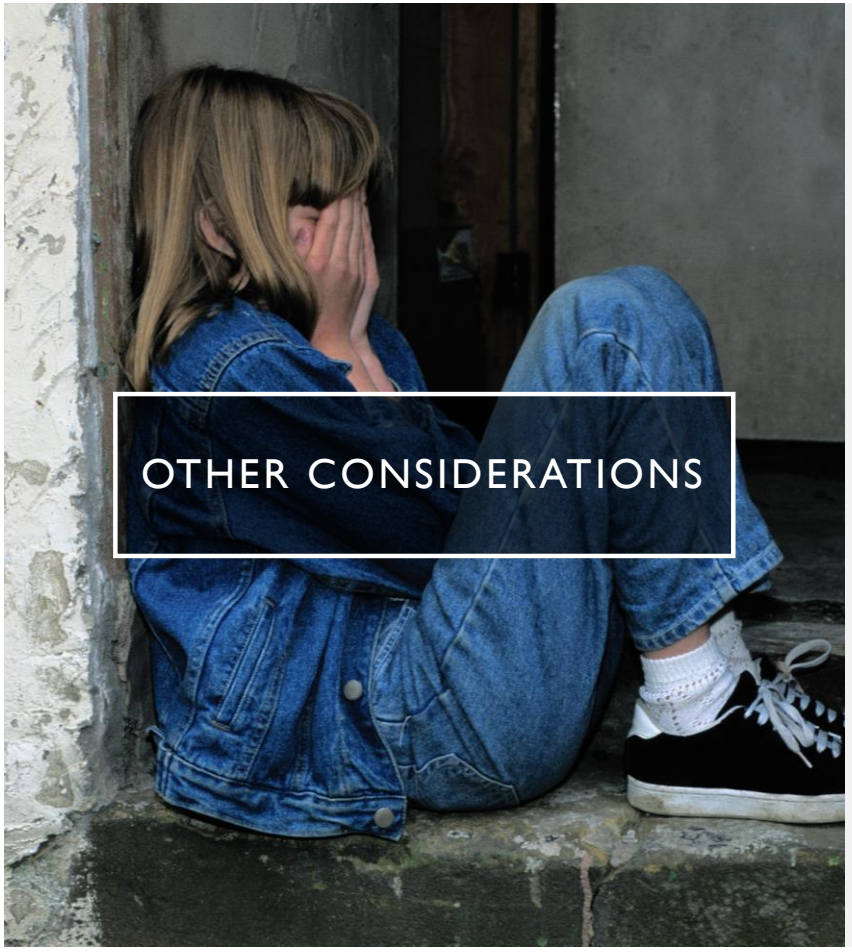
- A child will "re-grieve" their loved one in a new way as they mature developmentally
  - As their ability to see the loss as permanent
  - As they experience major life events



- A child or teens' grief response is not completely determinate on their developmental age.
- Many other factors contribute to the unique grief response including, but no limited to:
  - Relationship to the deceased
  - Other supports in their life
  - Exposure to other difficult life events
  - Their particular temperament
  - History of mental illness or cognitive disability
  - Emotional intelligence
  - The nature of the death
  - The extent to which they were involved in the illness process
  - Attachment Style *

ATTACHMENT STYLES AND GRIEF

Secure Attachment	• When remembering the deceased is more helpful than harmful
Insecure Attachment	• When remembering the deceased is more harmful / confusing than helpful



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Often times, when a child is experiencing grief, it is for the first time
- They will likely use dysfunctional coping strategies as a way to express their strong emotions
- These often are disruptive to a home or school environment
- Identifying the reason behind these "naughty behaviors" can help a parent or helper get to the heart of the issue instead of just addressing the problem
  - Ask yourself, "what emotion is this behavior attempting to cover up?"

- Take the handout labeled "Exploring Your Own Grief" from the middle of your table
- Take 10 minutes to complete this sheet
- You will not be sharing this information with your table
- This information is meant to help you take stock of the losses in your own life

Complicated and Traumatic Grief Defined

SEVERE GRIEF REACTIONS TO THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

COMPLICATED GRIEF

- The main difference between "typical grief" and "complicated grief" is that a typical grief response will soften over time, while complicated grief either maintains the initial level of disruption or will become more severe
- Often, the question is "WHY"
  - While the cause is not concretely known, many times one can looks at a person's environment, personality, and support systems for answers:
    - For example, an individual who has a history of highly emotional responses to life struggles will likely show signs of complicated grief. This may be a result of their natural temperament, lack of social supports, or a learned coping behavior.

COMPLICATED GRIEF

- Risk Factors
  - Attachment Style
  - Gender (more common in females)
  - Unexpected or violent death
  - Death of a child
  - Close, dependent relationship with the deceased
  - Social Isolation or loss of support system or friendships
  - History of depression, separation anxiety, PTSD
  - Traumatic Childhood
  - Other major life stressors

TRAUMATIC GRIEF

- In some cases, "complicated grief" may be considered "traumatic grief". The formal cause is relatively unknown, however the following factors may indicate the existence of traumatic grief as opposed to complicated grief:
  - Grief symptoms become more pronounced over time, as in complicated grief
  - Traumatic-stress reactions are present in the bereaved including disbelief, horror, flashbacks of the event, heightened startle response, and anger

TRAUMATIC GRIEF

- The death may be traumatic if it occurred under traumatic circumstances:
  - Car accident
  - Multiple deaths
  - Deliberate homicide
  - Situations in which the body was not recovered
  - Suicide
  - Bereaved was present at time of death

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCED AND HOPE THROUGH RESILIENCE

Leah Moeller, LCSW
Region 1
Program Specialist
Children's Mental Health

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE ACE STUDY?

1

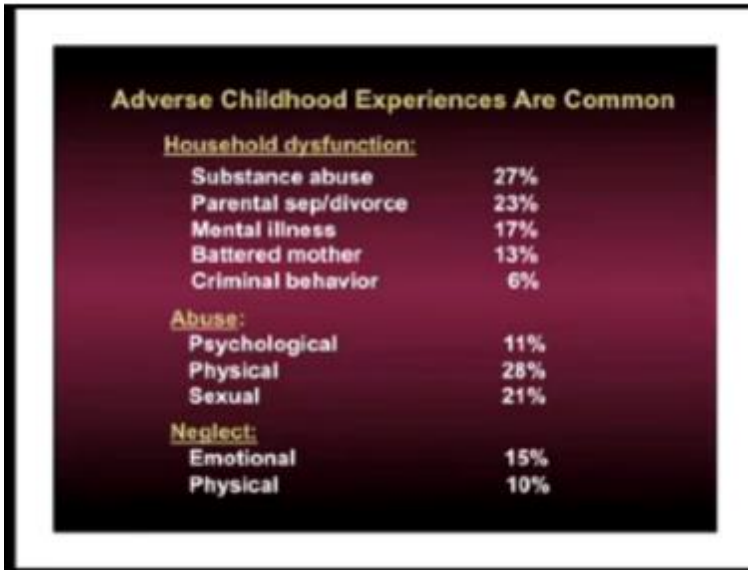
Obesity leads to groundbreaking research

2

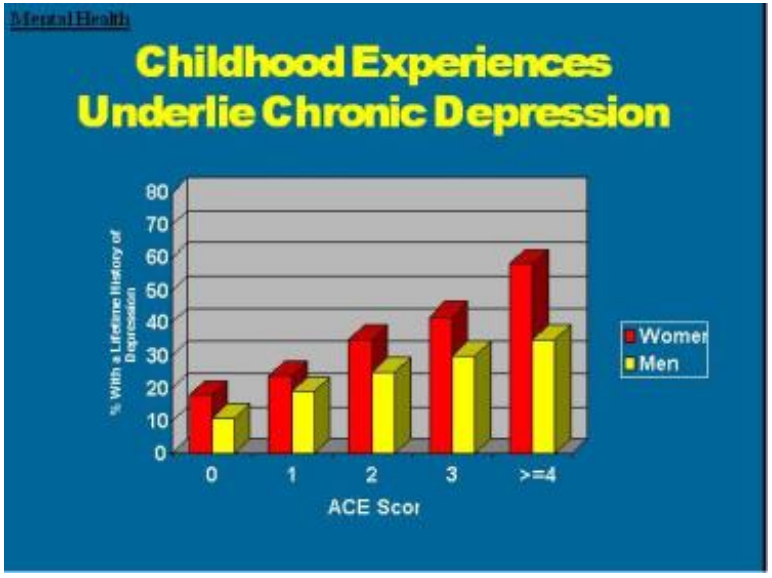
CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experience Study

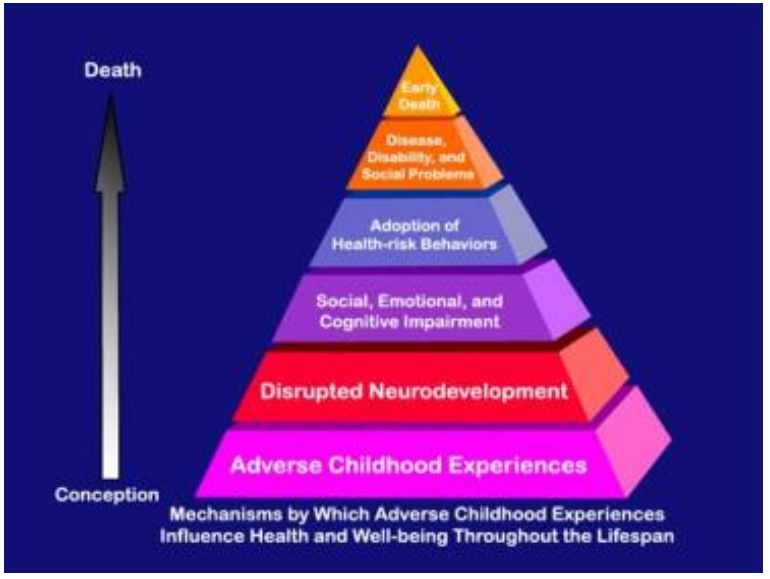
3

1995 – 1997
Over 17,000 Health Maintenance Organization Members Participated


Adverse Childhood Experiences Are Common
Household dysfunction:
Substance abuse 27%
Parental sep/divorce 23%
Mental illness 17%
Battered mother 13%
Criminal behavior 6%
Abuse:
Psychological 11%
Physical 28%
Sexual 21%
Neglect:
Emotional 15%
Physical 10%

Health Risks
Childhood Experiences vs. Adult Alcoholism
% Alcoholic
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
0
1
2
3
4+
ACE Score


Childhood Experiences
Underlie Chronic Depression
% With a Lifetime History of Depression
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0
1
2
3
>=4
ACE Scor
Women
Men


Death
Conception
Early Death
Disease, Disability, and Social Problems
Adoption of Health-risk Behaviors
Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Impairment
Disrupted Neurodevelopment
Adverse Childhood Experiences
Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

THE IMPACT OF TOXIC STRESS IN THE BRAIN

- Increased stress hormones lead to changes in the brain structure and functioning

THE IMPACT OF TOXIC STRESS IN THE BRAIN

Is there hope?

Can it be changed?

What do we do with this information?

RESILIENCE

- Resilience is another word for hope
  - Are we born with it?
  - How do we get it?

RESILIENCE

- Many researchers believe that they have the key to developing and increasing resilience

INCREASING CAREGIVER AWARENESS AND VALUE

Address the mental health of caregivers

Provide psychoeducation in understanding their role in creating resilience in their child

EMPOWERING YOUTH

Internal

- Self-Esteem
- Optimism
- Personal Goals

External

- Healthy Activities
- Mentoring Others
- Achieving Steps Toward Goals

DEVELOPING AND INCREASING RESILIENCE

- Research shows that interrupting the trajectory of ACES to illness is possible
  - But not without action
  - And not without you
  - https://vimeo.com/189290361

ACE Study Self Test

What is YOUR ACEs Score?

What were/are your resilience factors?

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- Author unknown, American Psychological Association; APA Help Center; retrieved from https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/roadresilience.aspx

Content collected from The Center for Loss and Life Transition

MYTHS RELATED TO CHILDREN IN GRIEF

- We want to protect children from painful subjects
- We hope their "natural resiliency" will be enough to support them
- We ourselves are uncomfortable with the subject of death and the act of grieving
- We rely on outdated assumptions and commonly used phrases that do not have any evidence behind them
- We are eager for an easy answer

MYTHS RELATED TO CHILDREN IN GRIEF

- MYTH #1: Children are naturally resilient and do not need any support to get through a loss
- FACT: Children learn how to be resilient through difficult situations and consistent adults modeling resilient behavior

- MYTH #2: A child's grief and mourning is short in duration
- FACT: Mourning is a process, not an event.
  - It affects kids differently by age at the time of a death.
  - Additionally, as a child develops, and their understanding of their loss becomes more concrete, they will grieve their loss again.

MYTHS RELATED TO CHILDREN IN GRIEF

- MYTH #3: The goal of helping bereaved children is to "get them over" or resolve their grief
- FACT: People are not the same after the death of a person to whom they were strongly attached. Reconciliation or "living with the loss" happens

- MYTH #4: Infants and toddlers are too young to mourn
- FACT: Anyone old enough to love is old enough to mourn and feel pain at a loss.
  - Attachment exists in the first days of life. A loss of an attachment figure is felt, but may not look like grief

MYTHS RELATED TO CHILDREN IN GRIEF

- MYTH #5: Children are not affected by the grief and mourning of the adults who surround them.
- FACT: Children "read" emotions long before they can talk. When children hurt, we want to deny their pain in order to protect them.
- MYTH #6: The pain of childhood bereavement always leads to later problems
- FACT: Since 1930s, researchers have tried to link grief with later mental illness but have not done so.
  - A person may be at risk for emotional problems but not "destined" for difficulty

MYTHS RELATED TO CHILDREN IN GRIEF

- MYTH #7: Children are better off if they don't attend funerals
- FACT: When a significant event happens in the life of a family, every member should be respected enough to be included in rituals (like the funeral service) to help them deal with the death
- MYTH #8: Children who express tears are being "weak" and harming themselves in the long run.
- FACT: Don't say, "be a man", "be strong" or teach shame with crying. Tears lessen over time but they are an intelligent response to grief and mourning

How we conceptualize grief in a way that promotes a broader understanding

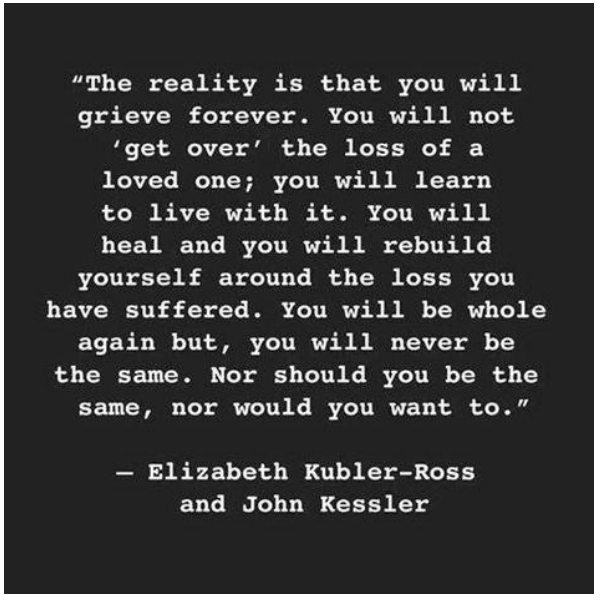
GRIEF THEORIES IN USE

HOW TO USE THEORIES IN GRIEF WORK

- There are a variety of theories related to the grief process. Some are widely acknowledged, while others are more obscure.
- Each theory holds truth and can be applied to an individual's grief process as a way of giving them guideposts they can relate to and reference
- Where we get stuck is subscribing exclusively to one theory, and disregard others
- The best thing we can do to educate ourselves on good grief work with kids and teens is to have a brief understanding of the many theories and use whichever best applies to the situation or individual
- For our purposes, we will focus on the two most widely acknowledged theories in grief work

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

- Created by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in 1969
- These stages were not originally meant for explaining the grief process, but were adapted after creation and put in an arbitrary order:
  - Denial,
  - anger,
  - bargaining,
  - depression,
  - and acceptance.

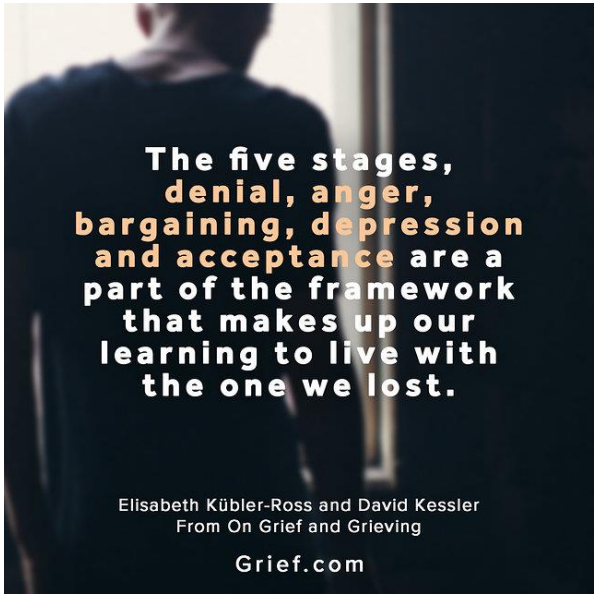


THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

- While these are not accurate in stage form, they do reflect common feelings one may experience while in the grief process, however:
  - They may not experience all of these feelings
  - They may not just experience each of these feelings once
- They may experience additional feelings typically associated with grief; i.e. guilt, longing, etc

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

- When using this theory with children, it can be helpful to enlist popular culture themes
  - Inside out to explain why difficult feelings are an essential part of life
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SaHt3ps1dM

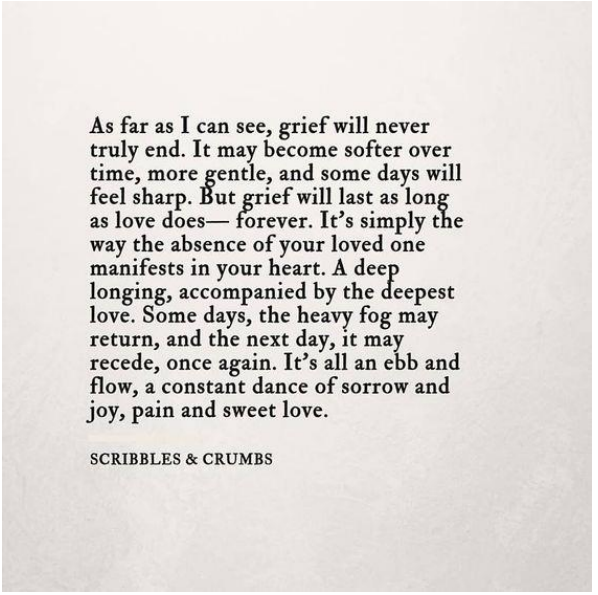


THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

- How these common feelings may manifest in a child:
  - Denial – acting like the loss is not happening or did not happen, acting like it doesn't bother them or the are unaffected
  - Anger – tantrums, bullying, stomach issues
  - Bargaining – believing they somehow caused it or could have done something to avoid it
  - Depression – crying, withdrawing, denying a close relationship with the deceased
  - Acceptance – working the loss into their story

WORDEN'S TASKS OF MOURNING

- J. William Worden created these tasks in an effort to create an alternative to the "stages of grief"
- This model is meant to be flexible and can be approached at any time in no particular order
- He states mourners will need to complete each task several times throughout the course of their life
  - For children, this often means re-grieving a loss at each developmental stage



"Grieving allows us to heal,
to remember with love rather than pain.
It is a sorting process.
One by one, you let go of the things
that are gone.
You mourn for them.
One by one, you take hold of the things
that have become a part of who you are
and build again."
- William Worden

WORDEN'S TASKS OF MOURNING

Task breakdown and what it can look like in kids and teens:

- Task 1 – Accept the reality of the loss
  - Asking a lot of questions, potentially repetitively, dreams, searching for their loved one
- Task 2 – Process the grief and pain
  - See common grief reactions according to developmental age
- Task 3 - Adjust to the world without your loved one
  - Redefining family rules and roles, bonding with other important adults
- Task 4 – Find a connection with the deceased while embarking on a new journey
  - Finding ways to keep a loved one around, rituals, traditions

13 Helpful Ways to Support Youth in Grief

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

We cannot count on a child to work through their grief on their own	• We can provide guidance, information, and a listening ear
We cannot shield children from our own grief	• We can model good grief to children
We cannot force a child to grieve in a manner that we find appropriate	• We can accept each child's grief as unique
We cannot protect a child from the pain of grief	• We can support them in a way that helps them process this loss, and to build resilience for future losses in life

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

1. Recognize that children grieve differently
   - Often, children who are experiencing grief are doing so for the very first time
   - They may seem unaffected one moment, and inconsolable the next
   - They may show behaviors that seem inconsistent with a typical grief response
   - They may need help finding the words for how they are feeling or acting
   - Regardless of the difference, children need what we all need; a safe, judgement free space

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

2. Answer their questions
   - Even the hard ones
   - When children ask questions it means they are trying to make sense of what happens
     - When you leave them to fill in the blanks themselves, it will often be more traumatic for them

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

3. Keep their developmental age in mind
   - This requires a bit of patience, especially when you are in grief as well
   - Follow the child's lead with questions and be truthful in a way that is age appropriate
   - Refer to the previous slide regarding developmental grief responses and do not expect a child to be "advanced" through this process

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

4. Talk about the person who died
   - Remembering the person who died is a part of the healing process
   - Bringing up the person yourself gives the child permission to talk about them as well
   - The conversation doesn't always have to be heavy, bringing them up in light conversation will help integrate the person's memory into every day life
   - Maintain a realistic, not idealized, view of the deceased that includes both positive and negative attributes

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

5. Be direct
   - Do not use euphemisms
     - "went to sleep"
     - "we lost him"
   - Use clear concise language that will equip them to explain this loss at a later developmental age as well
     - Died
     - Death
     - Cancer

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

6. Give the child choices whenever possible
   - Grief often causes us to feel out of control, the same is true with children
   - Giving a child choices, within reason, can help them feel valued and as though they have some control over their lives

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

7. Include them in the Funeral
   - Be clear with what they will encounter at the funeral
   - Give them a role or job
   - Most want to be included in rituals simply because they are a part of the family, not based on an understanding of death

CHILDREN'S ROLE IN DEATH RITUALS IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURES

The roles played by children in funeral and death customs varies widely across cultures, for example;

- Mexican Culture: Children are socialized to accept death informally. It is expected that they take part in the wake and church service and participate with the rest of the family in the ritual of throwing dirt on the casket after it has been lowered as a symbol of acceptance that the body has been returned to the earth
- Hmong Culture (Southeast Asia): This culture believes in reincarnation. Family, including children, gather with the elder who is dying in hopes that they will impart wisdom on them. Children are directly involved in preparations for the funeral process; young men are taught how to conduct a roper funeral ceremony, while females are expected to watch their mothers and grandmothers in an effort to learn how to behave and be helpful.

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

8. Be consistent with your beliefs
   - The idea of an after life can be a great comfort to a child
   - It is appropriate to share beliefs that are held within your own family about where we go after death
   - For non-religious families, other strategies may include sharing the belief that the one we love live in our hearts and our memories

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

9. Show your own grief
   - Do not attempt to "protect your children" from your hurt
   - Children often imitate grief from those closest to them
   - When you hide your grief, you are teaching them
     - It is not okay to show your emotions
     - They must grieve alone if at all

   These lessons remain long after the first loss. Make sure you are giving them skills for future losses as well

   You cannot expect a child to show you their grief if you are unwilling to show them yours

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

10. Stick to routines as much as possible
    - Children need structure and predictability to feel safe
    - It can also show them that although someone has died, life is still going to move forward in a familiar way

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

11. Listen without judgement
    - Sometimes being quiet is the best way we can support a child
    - Do not try to talk them out of difficult feelings, instead, dig deeper, allowing for more processing
    - This helps to validate their experience

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

12. Take a break
    - Remember that children grieve in cycles
    - Give them permission to go out and play, have fun, reminding them that this is a part of healing as well

COMMON NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN GRIEF

13. Facilitate a continued connection to the deceased

- Create opportunities to keep the memory of their loved one alive during important life events
  - Holidays, milestones, daily life
- The establishment of a continued connection in childhood reduces reported depression in adulthood

Truths, regardless of age

WHAT NOT TO SAY TO A PERSON WHO IS GRIEVING

WHAT NOT TO SAY TO SOMEONE WHO IS GRIEVING

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyQMh9j56r4
- It is hard to know what to say to someone who is grieving. Kay Warren shares some practical advice for what to say and how to support people going through grief and loss.

WHY WE SAY THE WRONG THINGS

- Lack of comfortability with death and grief
- Fear of the griever's experience
- Attempting to help the griever based on their own view of the world or lack of first hand experience in grieving

What not to say to a grieving child

- As a group, put your heads together and come up with phrases, platitudes, and generally minimizing statements that people tend to say to grieving child that is globally unhelpful
- Perhaps it was said to you or a friend
- Perhaps you have said it in the past
- Choose a statement to share with the room as a whole

SUPPORTING GRIEF AT SCHOOL

What teachers, counselors, and administrators can do to help

SUPPORTING GRIEF AT SCHOOL

- A few things to keep in mind
  - You do not have to be an expert
  - You may be the first person a child feels safe to talk to
  - You are not expected to change your entire classroom environment to accommodate a grieving child
  - You can serve a source of stability and safety for a student experiencing grief

SUPPORTING GRIEF AT SCHOOL

1. Help a student understand what is happening

   Reinforce the basic realities of death

   Speak in clear concise language

   By speaking about it, it encourages the child to speak about it

SUPPORTING GRIEF AT SCHOOL

2. Invite older students to talk

   Older students are often overlooked when a death occurs or may even be looked to as a support to other family members

   They may feel safe sharing feelings with someone who is not connected to the loss

   However, do not try to force a conversation if there is no relationship foundation

SUPPORTING GRIEF AT SCHOOL

3. Allow children to express themselves

Avoid comments aimed at trying to cheer the student up

Try to listen more, talk less

4. Reach out to parents or caregivers to offer assistance

Inform the parents about how their child is coping at school

Reach out to coordinate supportive efforts

Parents will generally welcome any advice from caring adults in the wake of a loss because they are unsure what to do themselves

SUPPORTING GRIEF AT SCHOOL

5. Provide learning supports

Do not wait for a problem to arise before offering support

Students may benefit from one on one study support if it is available

Do not spotlight them during this time

SUPPORTING GRIEF AT SCHOOL

- The bottom line:

  During the week, kids spend as many waking hours at school as the do at home

  Educators have a huge opportunity to lend support

  A little understanding can go a long way

Excerpt from: Bereaved Children and Teens; a support guide for parents and professionals

-Edited by Earl A. Grollman

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN ACROSS DIFFERENT CULTURES

SUPPORTING CHILDREN ACROSS CULTURES

- Recognize that they may have different experiences related to death. Age / developmental level may not necessarily be an accurate predictor of exposure to grief
- Consider linguistic differences and do your best to remove language barriers by bringing on an interpreter if necessary
- Do not make assumptions about their grief based on limited knowledge about their particular culture's practices. Ask questions from their perspective
- Consider the differences within common ethnic categories; For example, a Hispanic individual may be Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, or form another Latin culture
- Be honest about your own beliefs
- Saying "I don't know" is okay

Yes, it is almost time for lunch!

IN CLOSING

WHAT WE HAVE COVERED SO FAR TODAY

- Built a foundational knowledge of grief, especially for kids and teens through their developmental age and life experiences
- Established a need for grief support for children in our community
- Identified the differences between "typical or normal grief", complicated grief, and traumatic grief, as well as defined grief that is disenfranchised or anticipatory that often gets overlooked
- Learned about the ACE Study and how it applies to grief in children, as well as ourselves
- Dispelled myths of grief and replaced these myths with concrete interventions that kids and teens need to support their grief
- Supplied tools for teachers, school counselors, and other trusting adults in a child's life to support grief as well as to build resilience
- Discussed ways to approach cultural differences in the grief experiences with an open heart and mind

Supporting children and teens in their environments

SUPPORT GROUPS

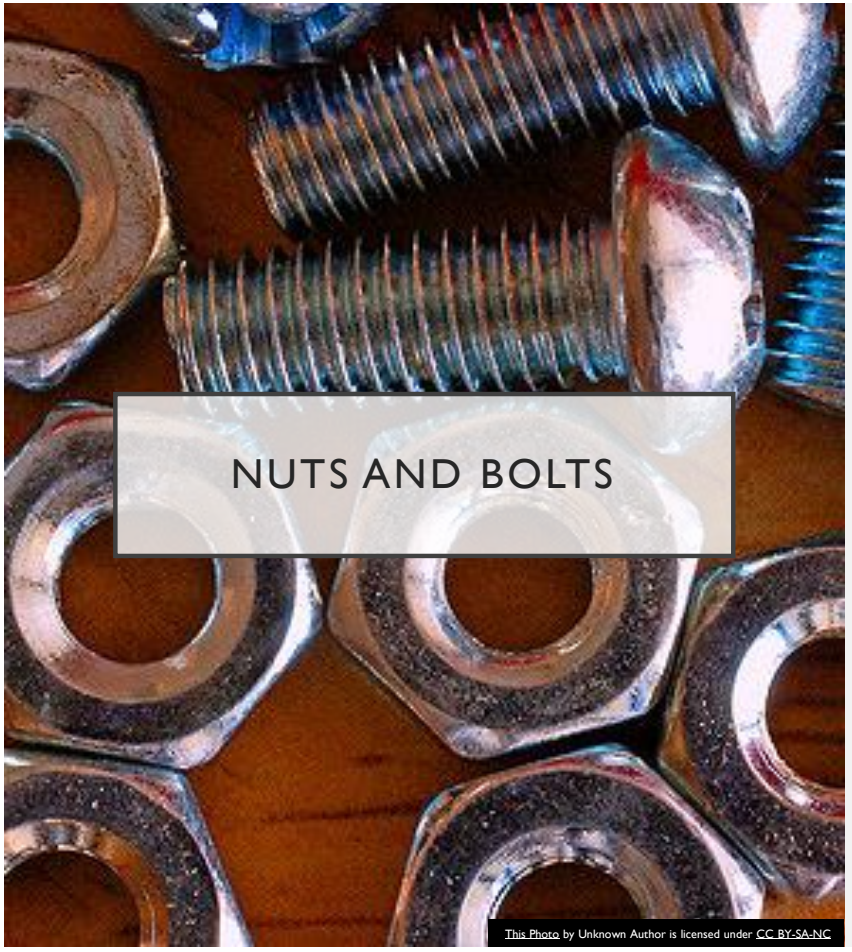
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop understanding of purpose in facilitating support group
- Identify action steps to establishing support group
- Recognize skills necessary to facilitate support group
- Establish fundamental knowledge for developing group outline
- Use of art to encourage outward expression of mourning

GROUP PURPOSE

- *"Individuals in grief need to know they are not alone, that there are safe places and kind and loving people willing to help them" -Alan Wolfelt*

- Safe space to explore feelings in which others agree to a mutual understanding of safety, respect, and confidentiality.
- Peer support reduces feelings of isolation that many experience in our shame-based, mourning avoiding culture
- Emotional, physical, and spiritual support
- Support that models compassion for self and others
- Opportunity to nurture problem solving
- Develop trust in an unsafe world
- Provides hope for healing



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- Needs assessment
- Group format
- Identify a co-leader
- Identifying and preparing meeting place
- Identify number of participants
- Group structure
- Identify length and frequency
- Prescreen group members
- Develop group ground rules
- Get the word out

1

Awareness: self, others, atmosphere, developmental issues of grieving

2

Reflection: shared content, visual observation, energy, movement, relationship

3

Communication: effective listening, silence, paraphrasing, clarifying, summarizing, reflecting questions, open-ended questions.

GOT SKILLS?

GROUP OUTLINE, PROCESS, INTENT

- Introduction and ice breaking
- Rapport and memory building
- Family changes
- Feelings of grief
- Coping tools
- Good-byes and memorials

HONI SUPPORT GROUP OUTLINE

Kids in Grief

- Wk. 1- Getting to know you
- Wk. 2- How did you hear
- Wk. 3- What if I am so angry?
- Wk. 4- Being sad hurts sometimes
- Wk. 5- Remembering my loved one
- Wk. 6-On our way home

Teens in Grief

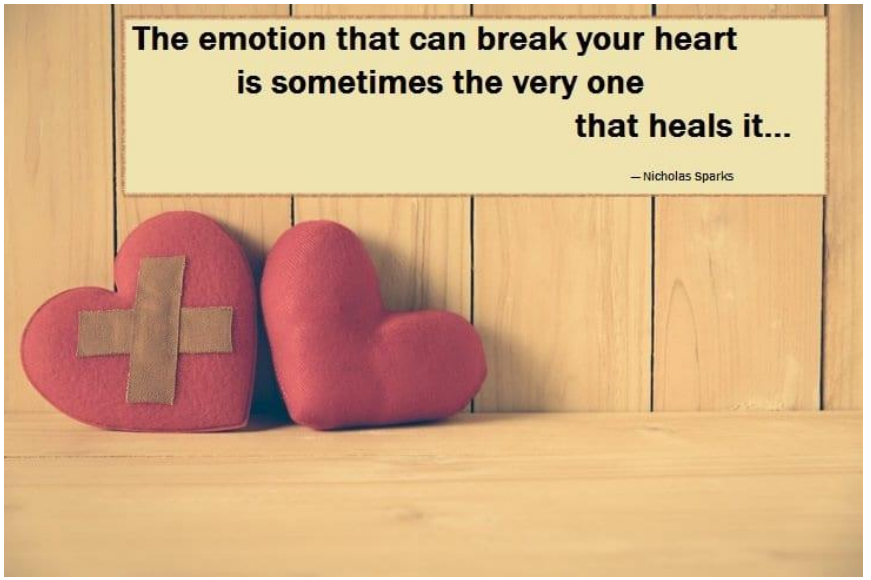
- Wk 1- Introductions, ice breaker
- Wk. 2-Getting to know each other
- Wk. 3- Changes since death
- Wk. 4- feelings
- Wk. 5- coping
- Wk. 6- Memorial activity

CURRICULUM EXAMPLE

- Theme: Ice-breaking, introductions, group norm building
- Opening: Brief intros, develop rules, invitation to share
- Activity 1: "Move"; taking stick.
- Activity 2: "what got me here"; Question basket
- Handout: Normal grieving, physical effects
- Closing: re-invite sharing, review handout, ask about what helps

FEELING HEALING HEART

- Use of color to express emotion
- Visual expression of pain and healing
- Allows child to identify needs in deep feelings of grief



REFERENCE / RESOURCES

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- https://elunanetwork.org/resources/developmental-grief-responses/
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- www.dougy.org (Skills Development Manual)
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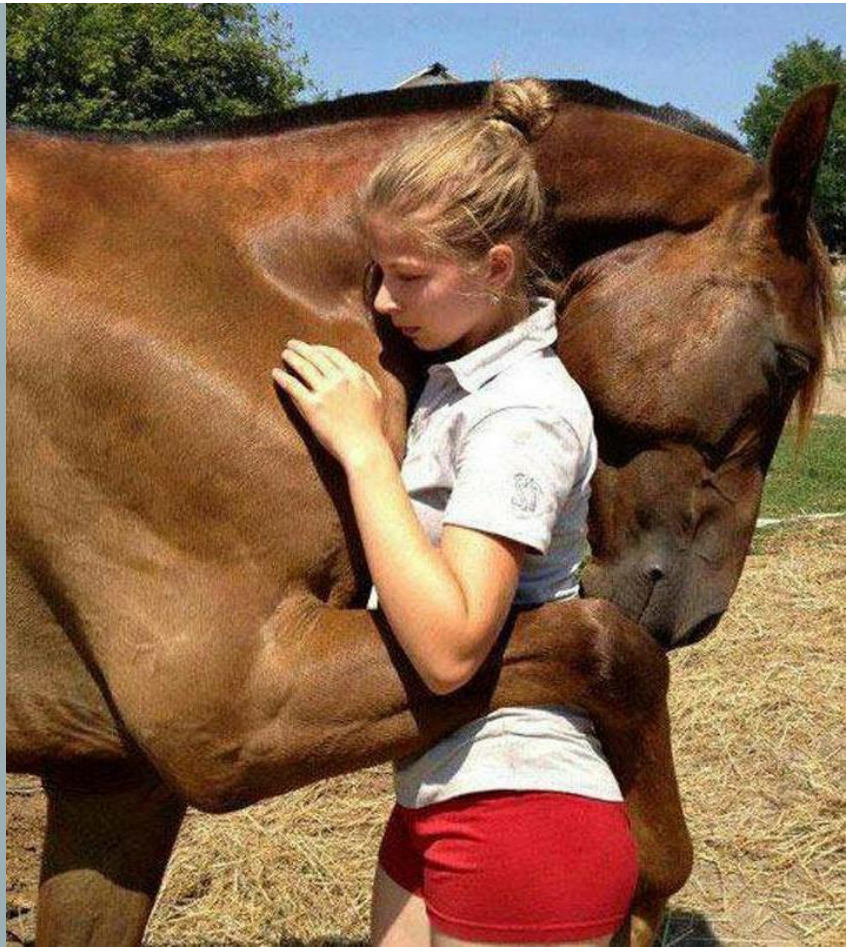
EQUINE THERAPY

Equine Therapy is a powerful and unique treatment for youth who experience complicated issues as a result of grief and loss

"Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim."

~Vicki Harrison



WHAT IS EQUINE THERAPY AND EAGALA?

- Equine therapy is psychotherapy utilizing horses
- EAGALA stands for Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, it's an international organization that created this modality of equine psychotherapy
- EAGALA is Client Centered, Solution Oriented, and Evidence Driven
- EAGALA Video

1. EAGALA is Experiential
2. EAGALA is Solution Oriented
3. EAGALA uses a Team Approach
4. EAGALA follows a Code of Ethics

OVERVIEW OF EAGALA

WHY IS EQUINE THERAPY A POWERFUL AND UNIQUE TREATMENT FOR THE EFFECTS OF GRIEF?

- Horses are honest and you can't fake it with them
- Equine Therapy allows clients the space to feel and think whatever they need to without judgement
- Horses can be a presence when words don't work

QUESTIONS?