

Grief Tips

- **Talk regularly with a friend.** Talking with another is one of the best things you can do for yourself.
- **Carry or wear a linking object.** Carry something that reminds you of the one who has died.
- **Create a memory book.** Compile photographs which document your loved one's life. Add other elements.
- **Recall your dreams.** Accept your dreams for what they are and see what you can learn from them.
- **Tell people what helps you and what doesn't.** People around you may not understand what you need. So tell them.
- **Ask for a copy of the memorial service.** Some people find these thoughts provide even more help later on.
- **Plant something as a living memorial.** Plant a flower, a bush, or tree in memory of the one who died.
- **Spend time in your loved one's space.** Do this if it brings you comfort. You will know what is right for you.
- **Journal.** Write out your thoughts and feelings. Don't censor what you write –just be as honest as you can.
- **Purchase something soft to sleep with.** Select something that feels warm and cuddly.
- **Write the person who has died.** Write letters or other messages to your loved one.
- **Consider a support group.** Spending time with a small group of people who have undergone a similar life experience can be very therapeutic. You can discover how natural your feelings are. You can learn from others.
- **Light a candle at mealttime.** Pause to remember them as you light it.
- **Create a memory area at home.** In a space that feels appropriate, arrange a small tableau that honors the person.
- **Use your hands.** Knitting, crocheting, carving, woodworking, polishing, jigsaw puzzles, painting, braiding, etc.
- **Begin your day with your loved one.** Recall lessons this person taught you, gifts he or she gave you.
- **Invite someone to be your telephone buddy.** Ask their permission for you to call them day or night.
- **Structure alone time.** A large part of grieving involves what goes on inside yourself – your thoughts, feelings, memories, your hopes and dreams.
- **Listen to music.** Choose music you believe will help at any given moment.
- **Do something your loved one would enjoy.** Remember the one who died in your own unique way.
- **Screen your entertainment.** Some TV shows and movies are best not viewed when you're deep in grief.
- **Engage your soul.** You'll want to do this your own way. Some people meditate, pray, spend time alone in nature.
- **Allow yourself to laugh.** You'll be consecrating their love of life, and your own, too.
- **Allow yourself to cry.** Crying goes naturally with grief. If you feel like crying, then cry. If not, then don't.
- **Create or commission a memory quilt.** A wall hanging or bedroom quilt that remembers their life events.
- **Read how others have responded to a loved one's death.** If you'd like to, look at the ways others have done it.
- **Take a day off.** When the mood is just right, take a one-day vacation. Just make it your day.
- **Invite someone to give you feedback.** Select someone you trust.
- **Give yourself rewards.** Be kind to yourself in grief. Do those things for yourself that you really enjoy.
- **Do something to help someone else.** Step out of your own problems from time to time.
- **Write down your lessons.** Your grief experience will have much to teach you.

(Taken from www.willowgreen.com website, By Jim Miller)

Children and Grief

Children look at death differently than adults do. To help children cope with the death of a loved one, it is important to learn how they understand death. Their understanding is based on several things. Developmental level, family upbringing, cultural and religious backgrounds, and previous experiences with death are essential in determining their understanding of the subject. Below are some developmental considerations and guidelines that may help you explain death to your child.

Infancy: At a few months of age, children will not have any understanding or comprehension of death but will react to parents emotions. Keep infants routine as consistent as possible.

Preschoolers: They fear separation, but think it is temporary. During play they may pretend that some living thing has died and then bring them back to life. So they need an explanation that the body stopped working and won't start working again. Children at this age may also be alarmed by their parents grief. They need to be told something like "mommy and daddy are very sad right now because we miss (your child's name), but we are going to be okay."

4 to 6 years old: Children at this age may wonder why people have to die. They still have a hard time understanding death and may have some wrong ideas. For example, they may think their angry thoughts or jealous feelings may have caused their sibling's death. In the child's magical world, wishes and desires can make things happen. They need reassurance that they did nothing to cause the death.

6 to 9 years old: At this age, children may still think the sibling can come back, but they are beginning to understand that death is final. Or, if they have been taught a belief in heaven and life after death, they may wonder why they can't go there and visit and then come back. At around eight or nine years of age, children may think that they did not love the sibling who died enough, and that was why he or she died. As children approach nine years of age they tend to ask more questions about life and death.

9 through 11 years old: These children may begin to understand the irreversibility of death and death becomes more real, final and inevitable. Child may show interest in biological aspects of death and details of funeral.

Adolescence: By about 12 years old, children can understand death as well as an adult, but they are preoccupied with the present, with their relationships with their peers, and with their own identity.

Children and Grief

Children need to grieve. They do so in their own time and in their own way, but they need to work through grieving experiences and find healing.

The following are possible reactions of children who have experienced the death of a loved one:

- * Shock
- * Anger
- * Sadness
- * Loneliness
- * Fear
- * Frustration
- * Curiosity
- * Disruptive behavior
- * Guilt
- * Crying
- * Regression
- * Nightmares
- * Loss of appetite
- * Changes in school behavior
- * Irritability
- * Confusion
- * Withdrawal
- * Denial

Guidelines for Helping Children Cope with Death

- Your children should be told as soon as possible that the death has occurred. Explain the death in terms that your children can understand. Use correct terms such as “died” “dying”. Other words or expressions like “passed away,” and “sleeping” can confuse children. Keep explanations simple. Be honest.
- Encourage and allow children to ask questions and express feelings. Use resources such as books to open communication and encourage questions (see enclosed Centering Corporation listing of books).
- Model healthy grieving for your children (e.g., it’s alright to cry or to share memories).
- Saying good-bye is important for children. Children may wish to do the following depending on age of your children:
 - Help in planning the memorial service
 - Write a letter or draw a picture
 - Place a toy/picture in the casket or at the grave
- Maintain an openness to discussing the loved one who has died and the subject of death in general.
- Keep regular routines as much as possible. Children often find comfort in routines.
- Connect with other bereaved siblings through community support programs.
- Discuss role changes in family structure (e.g., the middle child is now the eldest child and how this may affect their role within the family).

Grief can be overwhelming for your children as well. They may have feelings, thoughts and reactions that they have not before experienced. If you are concerned or worried about their reactions or that they may need to talk to someone, please see enclosed resources or if you feel they are having a mental health emergency please call: **“Access and Crisis Line at 1-800-479-3339 24 hours a-day/7 days a-week.”**

Children and Grief

Kids and Funerals

Parents often want to protect their children from any contact with death. However, a memorial service can be an important event for children as it is an opportunity to say good-bye. Encourage your children to attend, but respect their wishes if they choose not to go. Be sure to understand the reason your child wishes not to go, if that is their choice, as they may have misconceptions or fears that can be discussed to make them feel more comfortable in participating.

The following are some suggestions that may be helpful, but please keep in mind the developmental level of your child:

Viewing the Body

- Children should be given a choice to view or touch the body. Seeing the body may help them to understand the reality of the death.
- Tell your children what to expect when they see or touch the body.
- You might consider taking your children separately or with only a few close family/friends as this might make the children feel more secure and comfortable.
- They may want to take a special item with them to place in the casket.

Funeral/Memorial Service

- Tell your children what to expect and what will happen during the day.
- Consider making arrangements with a person your children feel comfortable with so they can keep an eye on your children during the service and so that they can assist if your child feel they need to leave early.
- Depending on your child's age they may want to have a part in the service and it is a good idea to incorporate their ideas in planning the service.

Cremation

- When telling your children about cremation, you might to explain it by saying for example that "Cremation is where heat is used to change the body into ashes."
- If your children want to view the body before cremation, most mortuaries and crematoriums can arrange a viewing for family members.

Resources for More Support

Books & Publications

Centering Corporation: See enclosed, "Seasons of Grief Catalog of Grief Resources."

Telephone Orders: 402-553-1200, Fax Orders: 402- 553-0507, Email: center@centering.org

Website: www.centering.org

Compassion Books: They have many books for sale that deal with the topic of loss and grief .

Telephone Orders 800-970-4220, Fax Orders: 800-970-3350, Email: Heal2grow@aol.com

Website: www.compassionbooks.com

Grief Journal by Linda Andrezzi: "A powerful journaling retreat to help you move toward peace and acceptance of the loss in your life." Website: www.griefjournal.com; Order through Good Ground Press, 1884

Randolph Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105, Website: www.goodgroundpress.com

Phone Orders: 800-232-5533, Fax Orders: 651-690-7039, Email: sales@griefjournal.com

Willowgreen: Grief Resources. Telephone 260-490-2222, Fax 260-497-9622,

10351 Dawson's Creek Blvd, Suite B, East Wayne, IN 46825, Email: jmiller@willowgreen.com

Website: www.willowgreen.com

Support Groups/Organizations

Children's Hospital of San Diego

Rev. John Breeding, Director of Pastoral Care and Director of HOPE Bereavement Support Program Support Program. 3020 Childrens Way, MC5086, San Diego, CA 92123

Telephone 858-966-7493 or The HOPE Hotline: 858-560-4673

Childrens Hospital as two types of Bereavement Support events. Children's has a bi-monthly "Celebration of Life" ceremony to honor children who have died in the two previous months. In addition, Children's has ongoing bi-monthly "Gatherings" which provide bereaved families with programs where they can gather with other bereaved families for support while being involved in a healing activity.

Children's Hospital & Health Center of San Diego – Chadwick Center for Children and Families,

Trauma Counseling Program. Central Access Number for Intake (866) 576-4011. A program to assist families in coping with traumatic events and they have experienced staff to help children who are experiencing grief and loss.

The Compassionate Friends "The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive. The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees." Local San Diego Chapter: 619-583-1555, PO Box 3696, Oak Brook IL, 60522-3696, Telephone: 630-990-0010, Fax: 630-990-0246, Toll Free: 877-969-0010, Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Empty Cradle: Empty Cradle is a self-help support group for parents who have experienced the loss of a baby due to miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death. Support is offered by a parent network, monthly meetings and written material. Pre-registration required for free, monthly, evening adult support group meetings. There are several meeting places and times, call for more information. Telephone: 619-595-3887.

Resources for More Support

Hospice of the North Coast: They offer a wide range of counseling opportunities for people of all ages, which includes individual, family and group counseling. An annual family bereavement retreat, Camp H.O.P.E. is offered every July for children age six and up with a parent or guardian. Services are offered at no charge. Yoga and massage are also available. 5421 Avenida Encinitas, Suite N., Carlsbad, CA 92008, Telephone: 760-431-4100.

Jewish Family Service of San Diego: The Jewish Healing Center offers services for bereaved adults including individual counseling, rabbinic support and adult bereavement groups. 3715 Sixth Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103, Telephone: 619-291-0473.

Jenna Druck Foundation: "Our Mission is as follows: *Families Helping Families* provides comprehensive bereavement services to families who have experienced the death of a child. *Young Women's Leadership* provides resources for high school women to become leaders. No cost for services. 3636 Fifth Ave, Suite 201, San Diego, CA 92103, Telephone: 619-294-8000, Fax: 619-294-8889. E-mail: JDFound@aol.com, Website: www.jennadruck.org

Logan Heights Family Counseling Center: To assist with surviving a loss or death, the Family Counseling Center employs Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Marriage/Family therapist, and Licensed Clinical Social workers. Adult, children and teen groups are offered day and evening, some are at no cost and others are based on a sliding fee scale. **Groups are also available in Spanish.** 2204 National Avenue, San Diego, CA 92113, Telephone: 619-515-2355.

San Diego Hospice: Supportive and therapeutic groups available for children, teens, families and adults. Services are offered throughout the county at various locations and times. 4311 Third Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103, Telephone: 619 278 6371, Website: www.sandiegohospice.org

Survivors of Suicide: Offer support to anyone who has suffered the loss of a family member, relative or friend by suicide. Finding a "safe place" of understanding and comfort where others have experienced the same loss is a gift we can give each other. Teens and Spanish speaking participants are welcome. Telephone 619-482-0297. For the teen group, pre-register by calling Melissa at 858-679-1704. For the Spanish speaking group pre-register at 619-482-0297.

Survivors of Violent Loss Program: Provide comprehensive support, educational and clinical services for families and friends of victims of violent death. Many of our services are free and everyone is eligible, regardless of their ability to pay. 140 Arbor Drive, San Diego, CA 92103, Telephone: 619-497-6609, Email: info@homicidesupport.com or info@survivorsofviolentloss.org, Website: www.survivorsofviolentloss.org

Thresholds Home and Family Directed Funerals: 8719 Los Coches Rd., Lakeside, CA 92040, Telephone: 619-390-1411, Fax: 619-334-2783, Email: homefunerals@cox.net, Website: www.thresholds.us

Twinless Twins: Individual and group support provided to those who have lost their twin.
Joan S. Bruner, LCSW, 3636 First Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103, Telephone: 619-291-3931,
Toll free: 888-205-8962, Email: southwest@twinlesstwins.org Website: <http://www.twinlesstwins.org/>

Below are a few names of therapists in the San Diego area that specialize in bereavement counseling. This is neither a complete listing of providers nor does it imply any recommendations of providers. For additional recommendations, please call Jenna Druck Foundation at 619-294-8000 or Website: www.jennadruck.org

Cynthia L Bernee, MS, MFT: Cynthia is a professional with 18 years of experience who specializes in the counseling of those with grief, loss and trauma issues. Cynthia offers individual, family and couples work. 3703 Third Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103 Telephone: 858 272 7496.

Linda Brown, RN, CTS, MFT: Linda focuses on working with crime victims including homicide survivors and assault survivors. She provides services to adults and children. 4407 Manchester Avenue #204 Encinitas, CA 92024, Telephone: 760-753-2288.

Karen Druck, MFT: Karen, herself a bereaved parent, provides counseling in many areas, including parental, couple and sibling grief. 990 Highland Dr. Suite 102, Solana Beach, CA 92075, Telephone: 858-259-8044.

Judy Ervice, MFT: Judy has a private psychotherapy practice with experience and a special interest in assisting with various types of grief and loss including the chronic illness and/or death of a child. Support is available to individuals, couples and families. 3707 Third Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103, Telephone 619 294-9011.

Lisa Falls MPA, ATR-BC: Lisa is a board certified art therapist in private practice, specializing in bereavement counseling, grief and loss issues, traumatic loss due to suicide, homicide or accidents with children, teens and adults. 2667 Camino del Rio South, Suite 100A, San Diego, CA 92108, Telephone: 619 295 2787, Email: LFallsarttherapy@aol.com

Sherry Kaplan, MFT: A licensed marriage and family therapist who also is a bereaved parent. Counsels individuals, couples and families in any stage of the bereavement process. Sliding fee scale available. 162 S. Rancho Santa Fe Road, Suite F2 Encinitas, CA 92024, Telephone: 760-736-2998.

Jeff Thomas, LCSW: Jeff Thomas is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker providing individual, couple, family and group therapy in the La Jolla area. He is currently facilitates groups through Stevens Cancer Center at Scripps Memorial Hospital. 9850 Genesee Avenue, Suite 910 La Jolla, CA 92037, Telephone: 619-606-7567.