

# **Developing Your Toolkit: Recognizing and Addressing Grief to Promote Resiliency in Children and Adolescents**

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# Objectives

01

Identify the facts and myths of grief.

02

Educate clinicians and caregivers on the signs and symptoms of grief.

03

Utilize tools such as bereavement risk assessment and develop low, moderate and high-risk care plans.

04

Learn specific coping skills to promote and facilitate best practices with children and family.

# Agenda



Introduction



Facts & Myths



Signs and  
Symptoms



Bereavement  
Tools



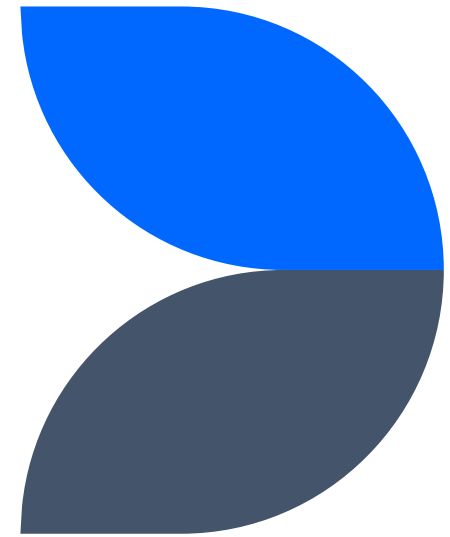
Coping Skills



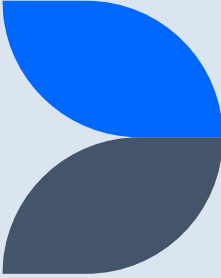
# Introduction: What is Grief

Grief is the normal and natural response to the loss of someone or something important to you. It is a natural part of life. Grief is a typical reaction to death, divorce, job loss, a move away from family and friends, or loss of good health due to illness (*What is grief* 2019).

# Facts & Myths



# Myths about Grief



- Grief has an endpoint.
- Once you are done grieving, life will return to “normal”.
- You recover from grief like you recover from a cold, it gets a little better every day until it completely goes away.
- Someone who experienced the same type of loss will be supportive and understand what you’re going through.
- If you aren’t following “The 5 Stages of Grief” it is a problem.

# Facts about Grief

- Grief is **FOREVER**

- **Not a bad thing**

**Love will always linger**

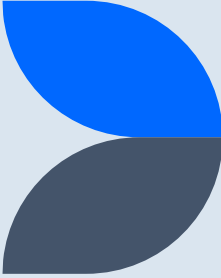
**Manageable**

- **Life will always be different without that loss**

- **New life choices**

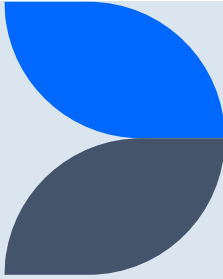
- **Recreating life after a loss**

# Facts about Grief-Continued



- The 5 stages of Grief can happen in any order
  - denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance
- Grief is a normal reaction
  - never avoid or ignore your grief
- Moving on with life accepting what has happened
  - grief can't be tied in a red bow and mailed off
  - Learn to carry grief with us in meaningful and healthy ways
  - Continued CONNECTION





# Facts about Grief-Continued

Children are in need as well

Children may be able to learn things faster than adults, but they can't learn if they are not COACHED, TAUGHT, & SUPPORTED.

Taking medication might be able to help with some symptoms (depression/anxiety)

Sometimes grief really is positive and transformative, and we can reflect on all the ways it has made us a better person.

-That said, not everyone finds or embraces transformation in grief.

# Stages Of Grief

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Denial

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Anger

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Bargaining

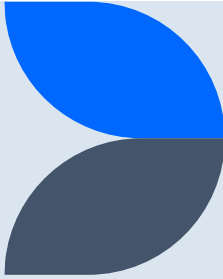
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Depression

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Acceptance

# Different Types of Grief



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Normal/Common: Flowing through emotions in a time frame and carrying on with life

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Ambiguous: Physically Absent, Psychologically Present

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Complicated: Unfinished Business

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Disenfranchised: Not openly Acknowledged

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Inhibited: Not showing signs of Grief outward

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Anticipatory: Before the Loss

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Cumulative: More than one loss

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Traumatic: Tragedy

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Collective: Felt by many

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# Different Types of Grief

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Delayed: Grief emotions felt later and not immediately

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Chronic: Suffering through grief over an extended amount of time

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Absent: Not showing any signs of grief at all

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Stigmatized: Loss that is felt “was going to happen”

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Secondary: “Domino Effect”, One loss happens right after a loss

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Invisible: Things that was looked forward to that we loss along the way

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Role/Identity: Life’s Transitions or changes in health or independence

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Object/Non-Death: Significant loss related to things outside of the death of something

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Non-Finite: associated with what life is supposed to look like vs what it does look like



# Youth & Grief



# Reflective Activity

Think about losses adolescents and young adults have experienced and/or may be experiencing now?

# Elements of Grief-Signs

Physical

Emotional

Cognitive

Behavioral

# Reflection Activity

What are some responses to loss  
you have seen or experienced?



# Signs & Symptoms of Grief

Difficulty in talking about their emotions

Questioning their understanding of the world

Increased anger or reckless behaviors

Withdrawal from family

Physical complaints such as stomachaches or headaches

Changes in sleep, energy levels, and/or eating habits

Difficulty concentrating

# Signs and Symptoms of Grief-Continued

## When To seek Professional Help

- Having difficulty functioning at school or home
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope
- A significant drop in school performance
- Regressive behaviors that persist
- An extended period of sadness, anger, guilt, and/or anxiety
- Statements about surrounding the event that has taken place
- Symptoms of PTSD such as nightmares, reliving the event in their thoughts or play, being on guard for possible threats, or avoiding people and places related to the loss
- Symptoms continue or get worse over time

# Coping Skills

- Be honest with them about your own grief
- Let them know that a range of different emotions is normal.
- Be patient and open-minded. Allow them to grieve in their own way.
- Be available – Sit with the child, listen to them, and answer their questions.
- Validate their feelings and do not minimize them.
- If they don't want to talk to you, try to find another trusted adult they can speak with
- Check in with other adults involved in their life – teachers, school counselors, coaches.

# Bereavement Tools

The purpose of identifying family members at risk for developing bereavement-related mental health challenges pre- or post-loss is two-fold: 1) to make a connection with the at-risk family members so that they might feel more comfortable seeking assistance from the institution in the future should they need.

# Implications to Social Work Practice

## Strengths Perspective:

The Strengths Perspective emphasizes the human capacity for resilience, resistance, courage, thriving, and ingenuity, and it champions the rights of individuals and communities to form and achieve their own goals and aspirations.

# Strengths Perspective

1. Grief in response to the death of a loved one is a natural, normal, and health-producing process that aids the individual in adjusting to the absence of the loss.
2. The symptoms, emotions and behaviors associated with normal grief represent a process of healthy adaptation and are not inherently pathological.
3. Mourners benefit by knowing that life-enhancing grief reactions are productive and beneficial.
4. All persons have individual and environmental strengths that can assist them as they experience grief. The mourner benefits from the reinforcement of those strengths and the encouragement to consciously employ them during the grief process.



# Strengths Perspective

5. Environmental conditions can either help or hinder the mourner's ability to adapt to the loss and enhance their life.

6. Many symptoms of grief, though they may be uncomfortable and are commonly regarded as “negative” symptoms, are healthy coping mechanisms in that they facilitate the process of disengagement, adaptation to change and integration.

7. Life enhancing grief symptoms should not be discouraged. Rather, they should be allowed expression while being carefully monitored so that they remain helpful to the mourner's process of adaptation.



# Strengths Perspective

8. Life enhancing grief reactions to loss enable accommodation and adaptation to occur. They facilitate the process of psychological separation from the deceased.
9. Grief may be considered life depleting when the symptoms it produces significantly weaken the mourner's aspirations, competencies and confidence.
10. Life depleting grief reactions prevent the process of adaptation and lead to discord.
11. Life enhancing, and life depleting grief reactions are on a continuum of intensity.



# Strengths Perspective

12. The experience of grief evolves over a person's lifetime and is experienced with varying levels of conscious awareness.

13. The process of grief is fertile ground for personal growth and the development or enhancement of the mourner's strengths.

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# Questions, Comments, Concerns

## Quote

Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become your greatest ally in your life's search for love and wisdom. – Rumi