

# MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS LEARNING SERIES

## Recovery Strand

Helping Children Cope with Grief, Presented by Tori Stone, PhD, LPC

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### Webinar Summary:

This learning session will provide information on the grieving process in children and teens. Books, resources, and activities to support children and families will be provided.

### Resources:

#### Activities

- [All About Me: A Journal for Young Kids with Cancer](#)
- [Bounce Works: A part of me.](#) A game designed to help kids cope with the death of a loved one.
- [Grief House](#): A visual arts activity to help children to process and discuss grief and loss.
- [Healing Activities for Grieving Children](#)
- [Responding to Change & Loss](#) - Toolkit from National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC)
- [Worry Beads](#)

#### Books

- Acevedo, E. (2020). *Clap when you land*. Harper Collins.
- Cook, J. (2011). *Grief is like a snowflake*. National Center for Youth Issues.
- Fitzgerald, H. (2000). *The Grieving teen*. Simon & Schuster
- Fitzgerald, H. (2003). *The Grieving child*. Simon & Schuster
- Jeffers, O. (2010). *The heart and the bottle*. Philomel books.
- Mellonie, B., & Ingpen, R. (1983). *Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children*. Bantam

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### Websites

- [American Hospice Foundation](#) - Guidelines for parents to help their children through grief
- [Support for Grieving Children](#)
- [Collation to Support Grieving Students](#) - Talking with children about grief
- [How to Prepare & Support Children for Family Hospital Visits](#)
- [National Alliance for Grieving Children \(NAGC\)](#)
- [New York Life Bereavement Resources](#) - lots of free information and activities
- [Virginia Bereavement Resource Guide](#)

### References:

- Fitzgerald, H. (1995). The mourning handbook. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Fitzgerald, H. (2000). The Grieving teen. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Fitzgerald, H. (2003). The Grieving child. New York: Simon & Schuster.

### Discussion Guide:

#### Questions for practitioners

- On a scale of 1-5 rate your comfort level regarding working with children and teens through grief and loss.
  - What actions can you take to move yourself one point up the scale?
- Do I have grief resources for children, parents, teachers and other caregivers?

#### Personal reflection questions - ask yourself:

- Do I have any unfinished business around grief that I need to work through before I can become a more effective practitioner? What resources and supports are available to me to work through my own grief?
- Can I talk about death, grief, and loss using appropriate terminology?

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- Can I talk about death, grief, and loss without inserting my personal belief system?
- Am I comfortable talking about death and the afterlife with a parent or child who has vastly different religious beliefs?
- Am I comfortable talking about death and the afterlife with a parent or child who does not believe in God or an afterlife?
- Am I comfortable talking with a child or parent who has lost a loved one to death by suicide?
- Can I approach a grieving child with compassion and curiosity, not expertise?
- Do I understand the difference between grief and trauma?
- Do I feel comfortable walking individuals or groups of children through grief activities?
- How can I increase my knowledge and comfort level in each of these areas?

### Reflection/process questions for children and teens

#### **Remembrance questions:**

- Please tell me about your loved one.
- What were your favorite things to do together?
- Would you like to share a favorite memory?
- If you could talk to the person who died, what would you ask them?

#### **Feelings questions:**

- How are you feeling today?
- Tell me about your feelings (anger, hurt, sadness, fear)...
  - For smaller children a feelings poster would be helpful to identify feelings
- What things (talking, music, exercise) have been most helpful when you are feeling sad?
  - Activity: Make a sign or poster - Things I tell myself when I am feeling sad /full of grief
- Some kids have trouble eating or sleeping after a loved one dies. Are you eating and sleeping okay?
- Are there people or places that make you feel good or safe when you are feeling sad? Tell me about those.
- What do you wish people knew about how you are feeling?
  - Activity: If you really knew me iceberg activity (Pinterest)
- Grief is exhausting. Tell me some ways you are taking care of yourself?

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### Sentence completion questions:

- Since the death I have felt...
- Since the death my family....
- The person I most like to talk to is...
- The person who understands me the most is...
- Name three things you can do to let out anger without hurting yourself or others...
- What advice would you offer other kids who have lost a loved one?