

CONNECTIONS

FOR TEENS


HopeWest
HopeWestCO.org

Coping with Grief

Grief is hard work! It is an emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual experience. Grieving teens may struggle to make sense of their world, a world that has turned upside down. Sometimes the loss is such a shock or so huge that teens feel frightened and wonder if they can cope or if they are just “going crazy!”

What is Coping?

Coping is dealing with, managing, and handling a variety of things. Coping means learning to live with the loss. We may be tempted to run and hide from the death, fighting the fact that

the loss has occurred. But, using healthy coping skills is a way to work through the loss so your grief wound can heal.

Do you have a scar? Remember how you got it? Somehow you got hurt and you had a wound. It bled; it was painful. Maybe you even needed a cast, or stitches, or a band-aid to help heal and prevent infection. Your scar may feel a little funny when you press on it and you may be able to still see it. The pain is less intense, but you will never be the same. The scar will always be a part of you.

Grief is like that. It is a wound; it hurts. It requires special care to heal but it isn't a raw, open wound anymore. Coping is choosing “special” self-care so that your grief wound can heal. Just as your scar is a part of you, your loved one will always be a part of you.

What are Coping Skills?

Coping with grief means finding a safe way to:

- Acknowledge the loss
- Confront the pain from the loss
- Identify your feelings
- Express your feelings
- Seek support

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How we think
about something
affects how we feel
about it which affects
how we act.

-The Cognitive
Triangle



You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.
-Maya Angelou

Positive, Healthy and Productive Coping Skills

Some coping skills are healthy and productive and some coping skills are not. A healthy and productive coping skill helps you deal with your feelings and thoughts while grieving. Some examples of healthy coping skills are: journaling, exercising and talking with friends.

An unhealthy coping skill helps you deal with your grief by trying to shortcut the grief process. However, an unhealthy coping skill

actually lengthens the amount of time it takes to grieve. Some examples of unhealthy coping are: withdrawing, using alcohol or other drugs, or pretending the loved one is still alive.

Each of these may help you to forget and not experience the pain for a time, but eventually the pain and feelings will return. Only you can choose which coping skills to use in your life.



Coping Corner

Ideas You Can Use to Help Your Grief Heal

1. Learn About Grief

Read books about grief (one is even reviewed in this newsletter!) Find others who have grieved and share with them. Learning about grief provides you with a “road map.” You can learn that the experiences you are having are normal and natural for grieving teens.

2. Find Support

Sharing how you feel is necessary for grief to heal. You may find a special friend, adult or counselor with whom you can share your sadness and grief. Teen grief support groups can help a lot.

3. Express Yourself

You can express your feelings and your grief in many ways. One way is keeping a journal about your loved one, your grief journey and your loss. You may also use art, dancing, music or any other creative activity to express your feelings.

More Coping Skills

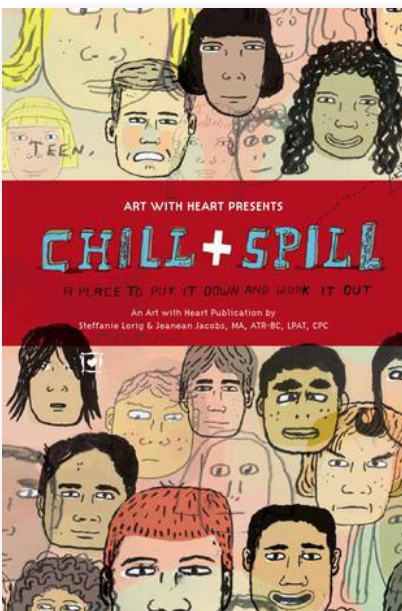
Listening to music • Playing a musical instrument • Writing poetry • Crying
Laughing • Drawing • Hanging out with friends • Going for a walk or run

This Month's Helpful Book & Movie



Movie: *The Last Song*

Unruly New York teen Ronnie Miller is angered to learn that she and younger brother Jonah are being sent to stay with their father for the summer. The talented young pianist is already grappling with her mother over her refusal to attend the prestigious Juilliard music school, and is in no mood to spend the holidays away from her friends in a small Southern beach town. Fall arrives and Jonah returns to New York for the school year. Ronnie stays behind to take care of their father, who revealed to Ronnie and Jonah during the summer that he is terminally ill.



Book: *Chill & Spill: A Place to Put it Down and Work it Out* by Stephanie Lorig

This is a journal by Art With Heart out of Seattle and though not exclusively a grief journal, this journal is designed for any teen dealing with a traumatic event. Whereas the above journals incorporate a lot about the person who died, this journal focuses almost exclusively on the teen – from their experiences, strengths, thinking, current challenges, etc. Each prompt page is followed by 5 blank pages that would be great for writing, drawing, or collaging (or any combination!)

JOURNAL PROMPT

Journal Prompt:

What are some positive coping skills that have helped you on your grief journey? Are there any unhealthy coping skills you use? How have these influenced your grief journey?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Use the name of the person who died.

When you're talking about the death or about your life in general, don't avoid using the name of the person who died. It's good to say their name out loud. It may feel weird at first but you'll get used to it.

Using their name lets others know they can use it, too.

Your friends and family may avoid saying the name of the person who died because they're afraid it will cause you pain. Let them know you like it when they talk about your loved one.

