

CONNECTIONS

FOR TEENS



The Family and Grief

The family is so much more than its individual members. The ability of a family to deal with change and loss is what makes a healthy family function. When any member of the family dies it affects how the family functions on a daily basis. When a family gets stuck and is not able to deal with change and loss, one or more

members of the family may start to get in trouble. Individual distress is felt not only because one is grieving, but also because of family adjustment. Can you identify this in your family? Is your family or individuals in your family open and honest about the death?

Open Family Grief vs. Closed Family Grief

An open family is able to acknowledge the death. They will individually deal with the pain in their unique way. They may seek support within the family or outside of the family system. Each member will work to discover how he or she has been changed by the death. An open family will want to increase their knowledge about loss & grief.

In contrast, a closed family will deny and/or pretend the death did not happen. They may even completely avoid their need to mourn. A closed family will want to continue in the same pattern they followed before they lost a cherished family member.

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"Our problems and our pain are not our shame, they are our work. Each of us has certain work to do to grow into our own fullness."

-Polly Berrien Berends, Gently Lead

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Life is no more a trip to be planned than grief is a problem to be solved. Both are journeys to be traveled.

-James Emswiler

Someone in Your Family Has Died

Someone in your family has died; the journey ahead may be frightening, painful, and sometimes lonely. Each surviving member of your family is a unique individual. No member will grieve exactly like another member. It isn't useful to compare yourself to others in your family. The grief work you do will be in your own special time frame.

Each person in the family needs to express their grief. Find a warm, caring supportive friend and/or family member to talk with. Each family member will feel a multitude of different emotions; they will not always feel what you are feeling. Be tolerant of one another's uniqueness. The death of a loved one affects you mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Your family can get support. Forget-Me-Not is a family group that meets for 8 weeks, two times per year. The group provides a safe and caring place to explore grief and its impact on the family.

Forget-Me-Not offers education and support about the grieving process through the use of games, arts and craft projects and music. You will work in age-specific groups, as will parents, allowing you to connect with peers facing similar experiences.

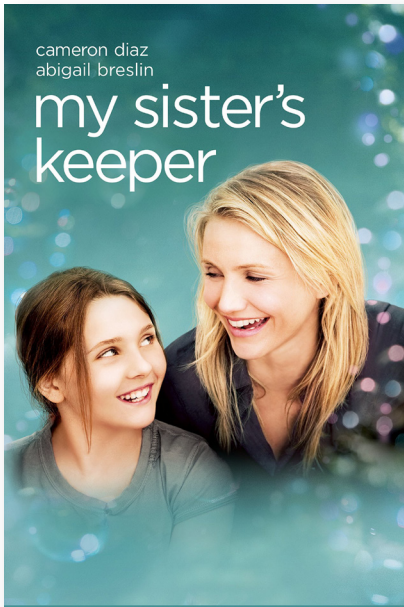
At the conclusion of the group each family member can receive a memory bear or pillow lovingly sewn by a HopeWest volunteer out of a garment of clothing from the family's loved one who died. It will serve as a special memory object for the family to treasure as they learn along their grief journey. Contact HopeWest Kids for dates (970) 245-5377.



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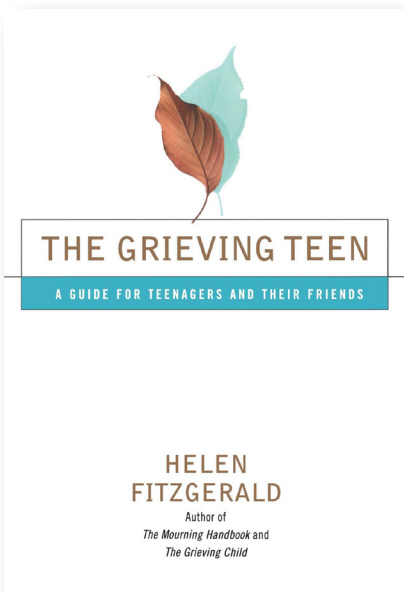


This Month's Helpful Book & Movie



Movie: *My Sister's Keeper*

Conceived as a marrow donor for her gravely ill sister, Anna Fitzgerald (Abigail Breslin) has undergone countless surgeries and medical procedures in her short life. Though their older daughter's life has no doubt been prolonged, the unorthodox decision of Anna's parents has cracked the entire family's foundation. When Anna sues her parents for emancipation, it sets off a court case that threatens to destroy the family for good.



Book: *The Grieving Teen— A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends* by Helen Fitzgerald

This book has a chapter about changes in families following a death with such topics as a dating/marrying parent.

