

CONNECTIONS

FOR TEENS



HopeWest
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What is Grief?

Grief is a natural and normal response to loss. It is all the things we feel, think and the way we behave when we lose a loved one. Grief is a process that helps you work through the hurt of loss. Most teens experience many feelings and physical reactions during the grief process. Don't be surprised by these feelings and physical reactions. Learning about grief is helpful; it is easier to cope with feelings or reactions when you have an idea of what to expect.

Common Feelings & Physical Reactions

We often ask teens in our groups to make a list of things they have experienced during their grief process. The following is a collection of their experiences:

Common Feelings

- Anger
- Loneliness
- Disbelief
- Numbness
- Fear
- Irritation / Frustration
- Guilt
- Betrayal
- Helplessness
- Emptiness
- Relief

Common Physical Reactions

- Changes in sleep – too much or too little
- Appetite changes – increase or decrease
- Energy level – increase or decrease
- Tiredness
- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Anxiety

Other Common Reactions

- Difficulties concentrating
- Increased number of dreams
- Increased number of nightmares
- Searching for a reason to continue living
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Decreased interest in social activities
- Concern that he/she caused the death
- Changes in school performance – overachieving or underachieving



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



Perhaps they are not stars in the sky, but rather openings where our loved ones shine down to let us know they are happy.
- Eskimo Saying

Grief Support Groups

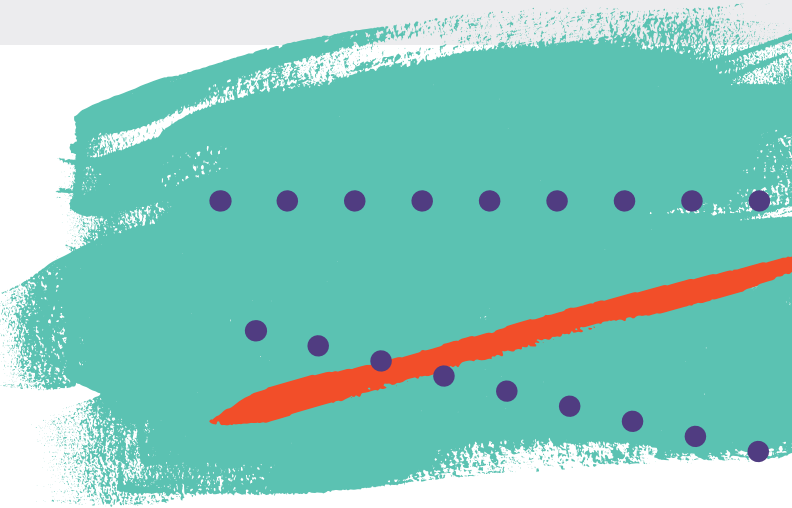
Grief groups help you learn to cope and connect with other teens facing similar experiences. Many teens make new friends and find comfort in sharing their story with someone who understands.

What can I expect?

Most groups meet weekly for a certain number of weeks. These groups are usually called “closed” groups and you meet with the same teens each week. Other groups are called “open” groups and you may attend for as many sessions as you wish. Membership will change as new teens join and others graduate. Teens may be comfortable expressing their grief by talking. However, through the safety of a support group, teens are often challenged to experiment with other means of expression — such as art, music, drama, physical challenges, movies and games.

Typical topics in a group would be:

- What is Grief
- Expressing Feelings
- Telling Your Story
- Memories
- Funerals and Memorials
- Coping with Grief
- Where to Go From Here



What if going to a group just seems too weird?

Do yourself a favor and commit to attending two sessions, before making a decision. This allows you to:

- “Try out” the group to see if it feels comfortable
- See if other teens have similar thoughts and feelings
- Find out if group is a place where you can connect

How do I find out about grief support groups in my area?

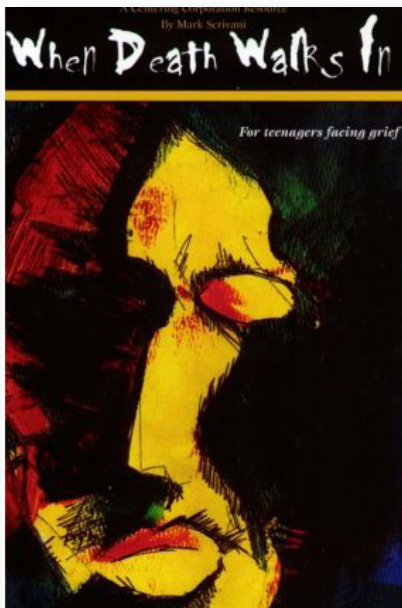
For more information call HopeWest Kids at 970-245-5377 or talk to a counselor at your school.

This Month's Helpful Book & Movie



Movie: *Hugo*

Orphaned and alone except for an uncle, Hugo lives in a train station in 1930s Paris. Hugo's job is to maintain the station's clocks, but to him, his more important task is to protect a broken automaton and notebook left to him by his late father. Hugo embarks on a quest to solve the mystery of the automaton and find a place he can call home.



Book: *When Death Walks In* by Mark Scrivani

This book gives important information about grief and what you can do about anger, sadness and all the emotions that come when someone close to you dies.



Grief only becomes a tolerable and creative experience when love enables it to be shared with someone who really understands.

- *When Death Walks In* by Mark Scrivani

Positive Coping Skill: JOURNALING

Writing in a journal can be helpful. A journal can be as simple as a spiral notebook. You can use a pencil, ink pen or gel pen – whatever you enjoy. All you really need is paper and a pencil to get started. You can type your entries on a computer, but journaling seems to be more of a healing experience when it is handwritten. You can begin your journal in many ways. In this newsletter, as well as in our other issues, there is a journal prompt to get you started. You can simply start by writing anything that comes to mind. Write down your thoughts and reactions as you think of them. Don't worry about whether

or not it makes sense or if the sentences are complete. Grammar and spelling are not important. You may even want to draw your feelings occasionally.

Give journaling a chance. It may feel awkward at first, but you may find you enjoy the time spent writing and remembering your loved one. It is helpful to take out your journal and reread it from time to time. You will be able to see how far you have come in your grief journey.

Journal Prompt

What it's been like for me since you died . . .

You can choose to keep your journal private, so don't worry about spelling or what you say. It's only for you!



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