



Living with Grief and Loss



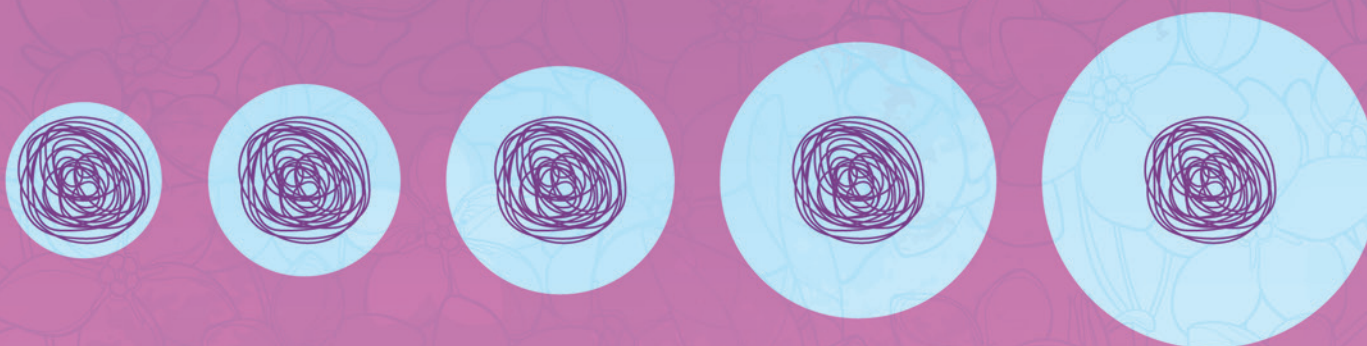
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A loved one, precious to you, and to us here at Cincinnati Children's, has died. While we know that nothing we can offer will soften the blow of this loss, we hope knowing that Cincinnati Children's has not forgotten you or your loved one can be a source of comfort. Every grieving person is different and grief manifests in many ways. There is no right or wrong way for you to grieve. What we have learned, through our contact with others who have experienced deep loss, is that over time, you will find ways to build your life around your broken heart.

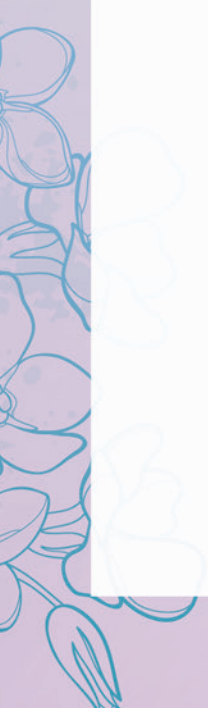
A useful way of looking at grief comes from the BBC television program, *Like Minds*. Scan the QR code to the right or visit: youtube.com/watch?v=5wVLDHUc5ic to watch the video.



Grief doesn't change in size. *Instead, you grow around it.*

We sincerely hope you will find this workbook helpful as you navigate your grief journey. The following pages contain information about grief and offer activities and resources to further explore. We know there's a lot here. Take your time, and take it at your own pace.

For many people, sharing stories about their loved one helps them grieve and nurture good memories. Some memories are challenging, and it can help to talk through those with someone who is able to listen to everything you think and feel. We believe it's important to continue the care you received while your loved one was a patient at Cincinnati Children's. We strive to provide a safe, caring opportunity for you to share as much or as little as feels right to you. It is important to us to share in this remembering as a way to honor the memory of the one who means so much to you. One of our Bereavement Coordinators will call you; also, please know you are welcome to contact us.



Psychological, Social, & Physical Experiences

During these early days, your grief may feel overwhelming and all consuming. You may be in a state of shock and feel numb, or you may feel exhausted from crying. No matter what is happening, know that it is normal. Each person experiences grief in their own way and in their own time.



Below are some responses you may notice in yourself or family and friends who are also mourning. Some find they experience these responses off and on for longer than they expected. It is not uncommon to feel “recovered” from your grief experience only to be caught off guard when a memory or event triggers a new response.

This does not mean you have taken a step backward in your grief journey. There may be times that unexpectedly arise when you need support. During these times, consider reaching out to a loved one or professional, or revisit helpful coping strategies.

Psychologically, some people may:

- Find it difficult to concentrate
- Feel emotionally exhausted
- Feel numb or unable to express emotions
- Have racing or distracting thoughts
- Feel anxious or panicked
- Feel that they see or hear the deceased loved one
- Worry about other loved ones dying
- Feel anger or guilt
- Experience feelings of sadness and despair

**Try to express gratitude for one thing,
no matter how simple, each day.**

Socially, some people may:

- Avoid previous routines
- Feel irritable around others
- Shy away from offers of help and support
- Cling to loved ones out of fear they may die too
- Feel no one understands their grief, which may lead to anger or frustration
- Feel they no longer relate to others

**Don't be afraid to let family, friends, and
co-workers know how you would like to be
treated during this time.**

Physically, some people may:

- Feel their heart is literally breaking (deep pain or discomfort in chest)
- Experience frequent sighing
- Feel tightness in their throat as if they can't breathe
- Have an increase or decrease in their desire to eat
- Experience frequent stomach upset or headache
- Have uncontrolled shaking or trembling
- Sleep either too much or too little

Spiritually, some people may:

- Find beliefs that once brought comfort no longer do
- Find previous spiritual practices (prayer, meditation, etc.) feel impossible
- Feel angry when told to rely on faith/God
- Experience anger toward a higher power
- Wonder if it is okay to have feelings of doubt
- Find connection and comfort in new beliefs or perspectives
- Experience a deepening of faith and connection to the divine

When possible, try to get out and move your body. Whether by taking a walk or working in the yard, physical movement is a wonderful outlet. Consider scheduling a physical exam and/or trying a new exercise routine as a gift to yourself.

With eyes closed, place your hand on your heart and breathe deeply. Imagine that with each in-breath you are bringing what you need into yourself and that you are letting go of what you do no need with each out-breath.

If your grief becomes worrisome...

Although grief is normal, the intensity of your experience should lessen over time. If you feel a desire to harm yourself, or if your grief responses feel intrusive or disruptive for more than four to six months, with no relief, please ask for help.

Reach out to a counseling professional or go to your nearest emergency room. Or call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

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Tracking the Journey

Sometimes, it can be helpful to track your personal grief journey.

Which of the grief responses from the previous lists are you presently experiencing?

Which ones do you notice most? Are there any you would add?

Do they affect your daily life? How?

If I could have one day without feeling _____, I would _____. On the other hand, I have been surprised to notice I occasionally feel _____.

As time goes on, I am feeling _____ more and _____ less.

Come back to this list in 3 to 6 months to see how your grief may have changed.

The Unexpected & Challenging Feelings

Grief can trigger many different types of emotional responses. Sometimes, we are caught off guard by certain uncomfortable or intense feelings. Rather than feeling ashamed or trying to avoid these unexpected feelings, focus on what these feelings are trying to tell us.

Fear & Anxiety

Fear is our body's way of telling us that we don't feel safe in the moment, while anxiety is more about generally never feeling safe. It is common for the stress of a profound loss to cause fear or anxiety. It is also not unusual for our grief to invite us to feel *old* fear again, as if it were new.

- Write a list of anything that's making you feel fear. Now circle all of the causes that existed *before* the death of your loved one.
- Talk with a trusted friend, family member, spiritual leader, or counselor about your fear. Sometimes saying it out loud can make it feel smaller.
- Fear and anxiety often make us hold our breath. Take a few deep breaths on purpose whenever you're feeling fearful or anxious.

Anger

Anger is information that tells us we need extra energy to address a problem. Sometimes the circumstances of a death can leave us feeling angry. Other times, anger comes from past threats to our security. Perhaps, you're angry with the deceased. These are all normal and even healthy to express.

- Break down anger into smaller pieces. Instead of saying "*angry*" or "*mad*," use more descriptive words—*irritated, frustrated, betrayed, furious, ignored, offended*. Can you think of any others?
- Anger needs a constructive outlet. Carry a heavy object. Scribble in a journal. Throw paint at a canvas. Squeeze a pillow. As you grow tired, the object of your anger may come into focus.
- Ask someone you trust to be with you as you consider your anger words and express your anger physically. They can help keep you safe *and* give you someone to talk with afterward.



Hopelessness & Despair

Sadness is perhaps the most common emotional expression of grief. Hopelessness and despair are similar to sadness, but they are more intense and tend to be felt all the way down to the bones. Like anger and fear, these deeply powerless feelings are information, not a permanent condition.

- Create a list of things you're looking forward to. Choose one of these things and make a list of things you can do to make it happen.
- Remember gratitude. What are you grateful for today? Did you eat? Are you breathing? Did a friend check on you? These are all good reasons for gratitude.
- Each day, take a deep breath and complete the sentence, "I am..."
- If lists are too far out of reach right now, give yourself a hug. Wrap yourself in a blanket and say, "It's going to be OK."

Ambivalence or Regret

After a loved one dies, we tend to avoid talking about the uncomfortable parts of the relationship. This can leave us feeling isolated in our grief or with feelings of regret. Remember: even though our loved one is gone, we *still* have a chance to work through these difficult feelings.

- Honesty is healing. Acknowledging that a loved one was imperfect is not only honest, it's also part of honoring the truth of your own experience of that person.
- Write a list of situations with the deceased that caused you regret or mixed feelings. Ask yourself if you could have done anything to change those situations.
- Try writing a letter to the deceased. Start with, "I know you _____, AND I wish that _____."

Share your feelings with someone you trust.

If feelings of hopelessness or despair stay with you for several months or get in the way of daily activities, it may be helpful to talk with a professional counselor who can assist you on your journey.

Relief

Feeling a sense of relief after the death of a loved one may be one of the most difficult feelings to share with others. It is important to feel *what you feel* and to not judge yourself. No matter the reason, relief is a valid response to the end of a difficult situation.

- Try finishing the statement, “*I am sad you’re gone, and I am glad that _____.*”
- Take a deep breath, and then exhale slowly and completely. Acknowledge the way you may feel relief in your body. How does it feel?
- Affirm to yourself, out loud, that, “*I am human. I do my best. I am relieved the burden has lifted.*”





Activity

Cultural Considerations

How we experience and express grief is deeply informed by our cultural identities. Culture is a combination of traditions, beliefs, values, and rituals that are shared by a group. Language, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, location, and many other factors are also parts of our cultural identity.

As you read through this workbook, some sections may feel familiar from a cultural perspective, while others may seem very different. In the space below, reflect on your own cultural background, and consider these questions.

How does my culture view death and grief?

Are there grief customs in my culture that are comforting?

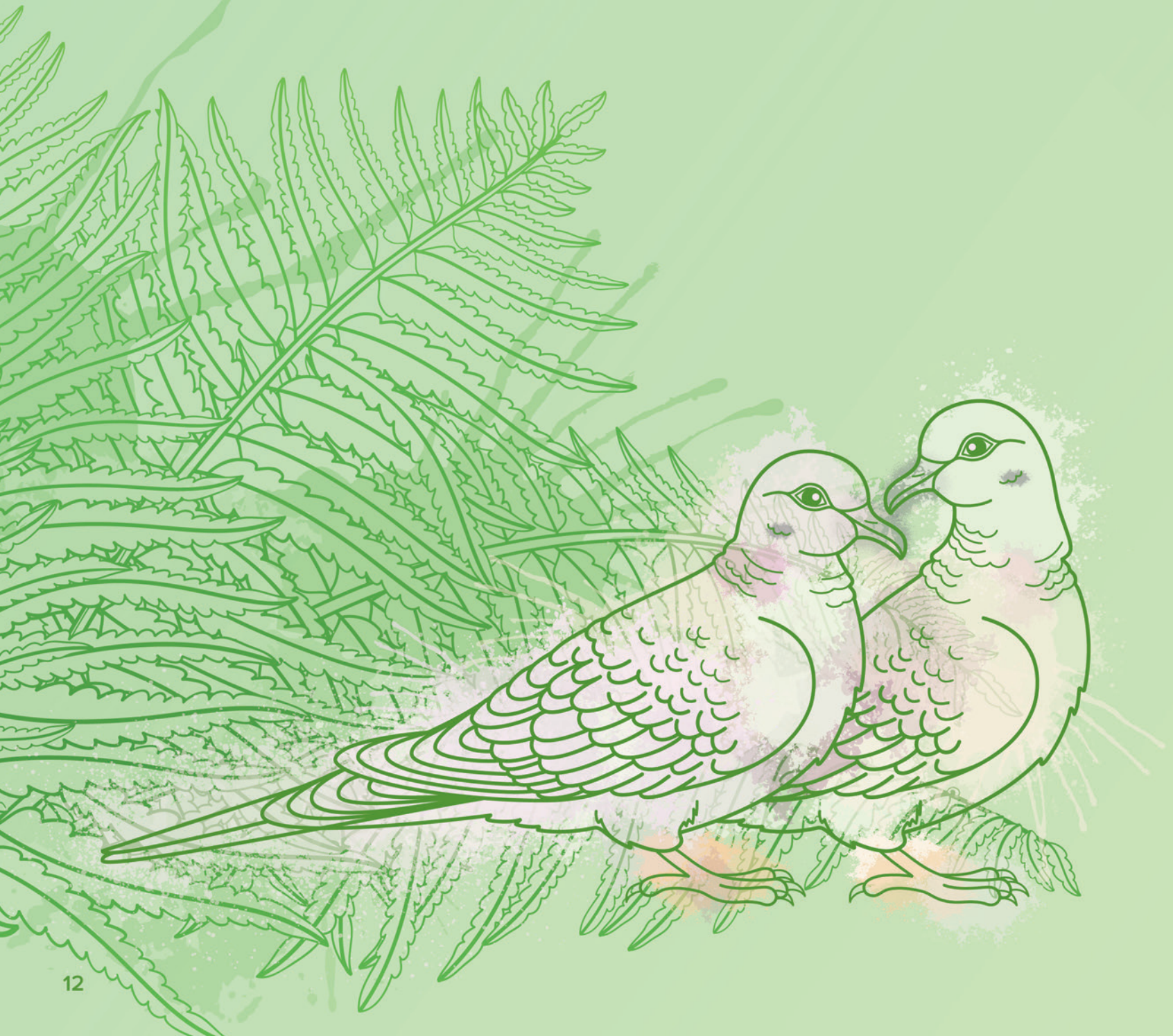
How might my cultural history make grief easier? Harder?

When I think about grief in my culture, I wish others knew _____.

The best way others can support someone from my culture after the death of a loved one is to _____.

Relationships

No two people grieve the same way or for the same length of time. There is no right or wrong way. There is just the right way *for you*. We all experience many different kinds of relationships. Grief touches all of them.



Grieving with Spouses or Partners

The different ways we experience loss and grief can be both a challenge and a blessing at times, especially when mourning the death of a family member together. You may notice:

- Differences in your willingness to talk about grief and/or your loved one who has died
- Differences in how you express grief. For example, you may experience deep sadness and yearning, while your partner focuses on creating a memorial scholarship or raising money for research. Or vice-versa. Both are valid, even though they are different.
- A desire to support others in their grief rather than expressing your own
- One of you wants to be busy all the time while the other seems incapable of doing anything
- A need to be alone, even when you express a desire to be together

Despite these differences, many couples share that their relationships grew stronger through their shared bereavement. Surviving grief together requires accepting these and other differences, sharing your feelings, and accepting help from available resources when needed.

Open, honest communication is always a good bet and may offer your partner the permission they need to share their own feelings. At the same time, talking with a trusted friend or family member other than your partner can also be helpful for you, while easing the emotional strain on your relationship.

Sometimes, sharing an activity helps get a good conversation started. Together, you could:

- **Read** *Healing Your Grieving Heart* by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD.
- **Visit** the Cincinnati Children's online grief library at:
cincinnatichildrens.org/bereavement-resources
- **Watch** movies that thoughtfully explore death and grief. Some worthy choices include:
 - *Steel Magnolias*
 - *To Dance with the White Dog*
 - *The Fault in our Stars*
 - *Coco*
 - *Big Hero 6*
- **Join** a grief support group to connect with others experiencing similar losses. Some national organizations offer local groups in many communities. We have provided a list in the back of this booklet.

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Together but Different

Sometimes it can help to reflect on your own style of grieving and your partner's style of grieving. Try writing a few thoughts below, and revisit your words in a few months to see how your experience may be changing. Perhaps, even consider doing this activity *with* your partner as a conversation.

What I notice about how I'm experiencing this loss is:

What I notice about how my partner is experiencing this loss is:

One thing I really appreciate about my partner right now is:

Something I find challenging about my partner right now is:

My partner probably struggles to understand when I:

One thing I hope my partner notices and appreciates about me right now is:

Friendships & Grief

Friends, co-workers, and others want to help. It is human nature. They especially want to make things better. Unfortunately, because grief is so different for everyone, it can be hard for others to understand your unique needs. While you do not need to take responsibility for their discomfort, it is okay to state clearly what will be helpful to you in the moment.

Some people give you too much space, others may give you no space. It is okay to think about what your needs are in the moment, and to find a way to let others know what you need.

Helpful things friends may offer:

- Caring, supportive words and actions that leave you feeling loved
- Imagining what you might need and getting it right
- Being able to carefully listen to you without needing to give advice
- Enlisting others to be part of your bigger, better support team

Some not-so-helpful things friends may offer:

- Acting uncomfortable around you or avoiding you
- An insistence that certain actions will “make you feel better”
- Taking this opportunity to re-hash their own losses
- Reacting to your intense emotions by distancing themselves

All of these—both the helpful and the hurtful—are common and come from a desire to reduce either your discomfort or theirs. But what if you got to make the rules?

Many times, the people close to us will offer to do anything they can to support us. In our grief, however, it is sometimes difficult to come up with a meaningful request. Let others know what you need and how you need it. The following activity may help.



Grief at Work

Outside of our family members and friends, our co-workers represent some of our most important relationships. After the death of a loved one, returning to work may be difficult. You may have to navigate conversations about your loved one with co-workers, take time away from work or, in some cases, make difficult compromises due to financial challenges.

Some people find that returning to work provides a sense of normalcy, structure, and routine. You may even have a strong social support system at your place of employment that helps you along your grief journey.

On the other hand, grief can negatively impact your work performance. You may feel guilty about returning to work, feel unmotivated or distracted, find it difficult to focus, or have a shorter “fuse.”

Work also can be used to avoid difficult feelings. So, it may be important to reflect on how your grief and your job are impacting you. If you find the challenges too much, ask for help. The support of co-workers can be a great source of comfort and reassurance. And many companies offer special support for employees following the death of a loved one. Consider contacting your human resources department or your supervisor to see what resources may be available for you.



Support for Grieving Children & Teens

The Child Life Team at Cincinnati Children's provides some great information in their booklet *How to Help Children: Through Grief and Loss*. We are grateful to share some highlights here.

If you have young children, you may notice:

- No understanding of death
- General anxiety or separation anxiety
- Engaging in "magical thinking," believing their thoughts, action or words caused the death
- Regressive behaviors such as baby talk, bedwetting, thumb sucking, wanting a bottle, fear of the dark
- Questioning how their life will be different, what will be the same
- Worry that their caregiver may die
- Separation anxiety when going away to camp, school, etc.

To help children:

- Provide physical contact, cuddling and holding if the child welcomes touch
- Maintain routines as much as possible
- Give simple and truthful answers to questions
- Allow safe ways to express anger and other feelings
- Include in family rituals and mourning activities
- Give permission to cry through words and example, or let them know it's okay not to cry if that's more typical for them

If you have teens you may notice:

- Understanding that death is final and unavoidable
- Denial
- Conflict with control of feelings; fear they will be viewed as weak if they show their feelings
- Use of spiritual concepts to cope
- Internal conflict about feeling dependent yet desiring independence
- Peers as the primary and most trusted source of support

To help teens:

- Expect and allow mood swings
- Allow for hidden feelings unless there is risk for harm
- Be available to talk and listen
- Share your grief
- Encourage healthy expressions of grief
- Discuss role changes that may occur in family structure
- Provide physical touch and say, "I love you," often
- Encourage frank conversations with trusted peers



Adults & Children: Growing Together

Children learn from watching others. Sometimes parents want to protect their children from the pain of their grief. Hiding your own grief prevents children from learning that they *can* handle and work through difficult emotions and may leave your child feeling isolated.

When you and your child share memories, dreams, and grief together, your child will grow in their ability to tolerate a range of emotions. There may be times when supporting your child/children seems beyond what you're able to do right now or when you are concerned your emotions are too strong for your child to handle.

It is okay to ask others to step in and support your child/children when you cannot. You may ask a trusted family friend, a religious or spiritual leader, or a therapist to spend time with your child.

Resources for Children & Teens

In the Cincinnati area, there are many great resources for children and teens. Also be aware that financial support for grieving children may be available through Hamilton County Mental Health Levy funding; ask your healthcare provider.

Some local programs include:

- **Fernside Center for Grieving Children**
 - fernside.org
 - ☎ 513-246-9140
- **Beech Acres**
 - beechacres.org
 - ☎ 513-231-6630
- **Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services**
 - gcbhs.com
 - ☎ 513-354-5200
- **STARS Grief Support – NKY**
 - stelizabeth.com/medical-services/hospice/support/grief-support/stars-support-groups
 - ☎ 859-301-4611

For those living outside the Greater Cincinnati community, a national directory is included in the back of this booklet.

Additional online resources can be found at:
cincinnatichildrens.org/bereavement-resources

Coping Strategies

There are as many different ways to cope with grief as there are expressions of grief. In this next section, we will share suggestions for actions that have been helpful for others. We encourage you to let these ideas be a starting point to help you think about what may be most healing to you now and in the future.



Talking with a Bereavement Coordinator from Cincinnati Children's

- Bereavement Coordinators are people with specialized training who can listen with understanding to your grief. They may be able to help you think of your grief in new ways. They may also suggest resources or coping strategies based on what you have shared with them.
- Contact information is included in the back of this booklet.

Joining Online Support Groups

- A benefit of online support groups is that you can choose when and how you wish to participate.
- To get the most benefit, check credentials to be sure a mental health professional is involved, only join forums that are moderated, and be cautious if you are encouraged to purchase anything.

Reading Stories Written by Others Who Have Experienced Loss

- Feeling alone is common among grievers. Reading the experiences of others can be a way to validate your own emotions and responses to grief.
- To get you started, we have included a list of helpful books in the back of this booklet.

Sharing with Support Groups, a Therapist, or Trusted Friends

- Talking about your loved one and/or your feelings is a natural part of the grief process. However, finding the right person to trust with your story can be difficult at times.
- Seeking recommendations from friends, family, trusted professionals, or your workplace employee assistance program can help you find the options that are best for you.
- If your first choice doesn't feel right, it is okay to look again. Sometimes taking good care of yourself takes time.

Post-Loss Clinical Review

- Following either a long period of treatment or a sudden death in the hospital, there are always questions, doubts, and moments of confusion. Some families find it helpful and comforting to have a conversation with the care team to discuss their loved one's condition and care a few months after the death.
- Cincinnati Children's offers families a chance to have this conversation in-person with their care team through a Post-Loss Clinical Review conference. For your comfort and convenience, the conference can be scheduled at a time and location (even virtually) of your choosing.
- If you are interested, contact a bereavement coordinator or chaplain, using the contact information included in the back of this booklet, to request a conference.

Creating Rituals

- Rituals help us organize and make sense of troubling and confusing times in our lives. Rituals can be especially helpful as you approach specific days related to the death of your loved one. For example, the day you learned of their diagnosis, the anniversary of the day they died, a birthday or other special occasions. Having a plan in place prior to a “hard day” can keep the day manageable. Rituals *do not* need to be complicated.
- Some rituals that families have shared with us are visiting the cemetery and reading a special poem, lighting a candle as a family, or releasing a balloon.
- Consulting with a trusted counselor, friend, or religious leader may help if you want to create a ritual but are not sure where to start.

The most satisfying rituals have a clear beginning, middle and end. In other words, they create a space that is separate from your everyday life. It may help to include objects or symbols that are meaningful to you and were meaningful to the deceased.


Affirmations

- Affirmations are statements we make *to ourselves* to help us think about situations in new ways.
- Recorded affirmations can be purchased for repeated listening—you *may have to try a few to find what works for you*.
- You can also read some that are written here out loud or quietly to yourself, or even write your own.
 - *“I am courageous for facing the pain of my grief.”*
 - *“I can breathe through the pain I am experiencing.”*
 - *“I will let others support me in my grief.”*
 - *“Experiencing joy does not discount my connection to the one I have lost.”*
 - *“I have the strength within me to survive.”*
 - *“I am grateful for my tears. They are good medicine.”*
 - *“I allow myself to experience both the hard days and the joyful ones.”*
 - *“I choose to take the next deep breath.”*


Now try creating a few affirmations of your own.

Journaling

- Journaling about your loss, grief, and growth can be a way to process the many emotions you are experiencing. For some, just writing, without editing oneself or pausing to think of what to write next, is most helpful. This is called “stream of consciousness” writing.
- Others find having a prompt helps them to focus their thoughts. Some prompts to consider are:
 - “*If we had one more day together, I would...*”
 - “*I wish I had...*”
 - “*I feel sad/happy when I remember...*”
 - “*I feel angry when...*”
 - “*I feel strengthened by...*”
 - “*Just for today, I am grateful for...*”



How might it feel to write a letter to the deceased? Give it a try. Then, a few weeks later, try writing back to yourself *from them*. You may be surprised by the conversation that emerges.



Creating Art

- You don’t need to be artistic to find comfort in creating, nor do you need to share your creations with anyone else. Some things you might try:
 - Make a collage—simply cut words and pictures from old magazines or pages you print from the internet. Place them on paper in a way that feels meaningful to you.
 - Take a box of crayons and pick three colors that you feel express your mood. Use them to draw randomly on a piece of paper. Don’t think too hard or try to draw a specific thing, just let the crayon move across the paper.
 - Write down five words that describe yourself, your loved one, or what you are experiencing in this moment. Use those words as a starting point to write a poem.
 - Challenge yourself to take a picture every day for one week of something you find beautiful.
 - Using simple geometric shapes, mandalas are a time-honored way of using art to explore thoughts and feelings that seem too big for words. Try making them outside using sidewalk chalk as a way of giving those big feelings back to nature.

Moments of Joy

- After experiencing a devastating loss it can be hard to imagine ever feeling joy again.
- When a small moment of joy peaks through, many report feeling guilt or shame. It can feel wrong to laugh when your loved one is no longer with you.
- Reframing, or the art of looking at something in a new way, can help. What would your loved one want for you? Can you imagine feeling connected to them through this joyful moment?
- What other ways of thinking might help you be able to sustain, even briefly, joy?
- These moments are part of grieving too, and for many they increase slowly over time. You may notice one day that for a brief time you felt thankful, or perhaps something made you laugh.
- These moments do not mean you are forgetting your loved one, only that you are learning to live with your grief in new ways.



Eating a piece of chocolate, watching a funny cat video, or singing along to a favorite song are all possible examples of “small joys.” What small joys have you discovered recently?





Activity

Even Superheroes Cry

What do many of the best-known superheroes have in common? They've lost people they loved dearly. Comic books and superhero movies can be a great and *safe* way for adults and adolescent children to explore themes of loss and grief *together*.

Now, try writing *and* drawing your own story. If you created a superhero story about your own experience...

Who is the hero?

What does their uniform look like?

What or whom have they lost? How do they react?

Who is the villain?

Does your hero have a sidekick or a super-team?

What special abilities are helpful in this story?

How did they overcome the challenge?

Consider, if I could _____, I would _____.

Can you think of any heroes in your own life?

Holidays & Special Occasions

Holidays and other special gatherings can be challenging when we are mourning. Even joyful traditions can remind us of loved ones who aren't with us. These shared moments, however, don't have to be a source of dread. There is hope and, yes, even joy to be found if we know where to look. Here are eight proven tools for surviving *and thriving* during traditional gathering times.





1. You Are the Boss

Nobody knows better than *you* what you need, what you can handle and what's too much. You're going through a lot. Grief is hard work. So, you get to choose what your experience looks like. Some people find it helpful to scale back plans or to try something new. Others find comfort in the familiar. Whatever you choose, follow your instincts, maintain your boundaries, and do what's right for *you*.



2. Plan Ahead

A little planning can reduce stress and help you avoid pitfalls. As you consider your plans, be on the lookout for places, people or customs that may be challenging, and ask people you trust to help you through those moments. Think about safe places you can retreat to or people who can drive you home if it all becomes too much. Talking with your hosts in advance about concerns can also be a big help.



3. Pace Yourself

Trying to do too much is a recipe for becoming overwhelmed, both emotionally and physically. You can only do the best you can with what you have. Scaling back this year just may be the key to finding a little joy. Take bite-sized doses, and savor each moment.



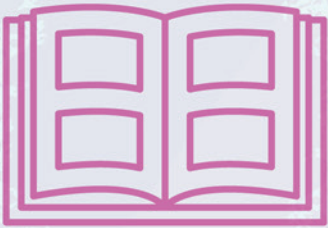
4. Honor the Moment

Grief changes everything. And, while you may be thinking about who you've lost, holidays and group gatherings also offer us a chance to remember and *celebrate* the amazing people who meant so much to us. Experts suggest these moments invite us to welcome departed loved ones back into our lives in special ways. Set a place for them at the table. Create a photo memorial. Light a candle in their honor. Or hang a special memorial decoration of your choosing.



5. Spread the Love

Good deeds can be good medicine for bereaved families and can plant the seeds of new traditions. Volunteer for charitable causes in your loved one's honor. Donate some of their clothing to people in need. Create care packages for friends and neighbors who may be struggling this year. Invite a "holiday orphan" to join your family's festivities.



6. Give Thanks for the Memories

Sharing stories is a time-honored tradition that supports resilience, healing and even transformation in grief. Take turns telling funny stories about your loved one, and consider asking a family member or friend to record those stories in a special journal that can be enjoyed year-after-year. Passing around photo albums or playing old home movies during family gatherings also can be unexpected sources of joy.



7. Heal Thyself

There may be no better tribute to our departed loved ones than taking good care of ourselves. Let the special days be reminders to register for a support group or to plan a visit with a counselor. Schedule a physical. Sign up for an exercise class, or join a hiking group. Stop smoking. Drink less alcohol. Eat healthier foods. Remember to feed the soul, as well. Research tells us that observing familiar faith traditions, praying, meditating, and even taking long walks in nature can be deeply restorative. Simply stated, if you feel better, you'll *feel better*.



8. Dare to Enjoy Yourself

No doubt, holidays and special events can intensify all of our emotions, and, in our mourning, this can be daunting. Just remember that we grieve our losses because we loved the people who are gone. So, feel *everything* you need to feel. It's normal and healthy. And if a little joy makes its way into your heart this year, be grateful and enjoy it! Joy is a feeling too, and there may be no safer place to experience these deep feelings than in the presence of dear friends and cherished family members.



Books to Support Your Grief Journey

Many great books have been written to support people experiencing loss and grief. Here are a few that may be helpful.

For Adults

A Broken Heart Still Beats by Anne McCracken & Mary Semel

A book for parents who have lost a child written by two bereaved mothers.

Dark Nights of the Soul: A Guide to Finding Your Way Through Life's Ordeals by Thomas Moore

A thoughtful, non-religious exploration of the spiritual side of heartbreak and transformation.

Dear Parents: A Collection of Letters to Bereaved Parents by Joy Johnson

Letters written by bereaved parents to parents grieving the death of a child due to various causes.

Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart by Marc Epstein, MD

Drawing on events in his own life and stories from his patients, the author offers lessons for navigating trauma and loss in peaceful, transformative ways.

Grandfather Remembers: Memories for My Grandchildren by Judith Levy

A wonderful guided exercise for collecting stories and memories to pass along.

Grandmother Remembers: A Written Heirloom for My Grandchildren by Judith Levy

**See Grandfather Remembers*

Grandma's Tears: Comfort for Grieving Grandparents by June Cerza Kolf

For grandparents mourning the loss of a grandchild while also trying to support their adult child.

A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis

Selections from author C.S. Lewis' personal journals following the death of his wife.

Healing Your Grieving Heart by Alan D. Wolfelt

This workbook style volume offers 100 practical ideas and activities.

Healing a Parents Grieving Heart by Alan D. Wolfelt

100 practical ideas and activities written specifically for bereaved parents.

I Don't Know How to Help Them by Linda Maurer

Helpful hints for family members and friends of bereaved parents.

Later Courtney by Susan Evans

The 12-month journal of a mother who lost her 22-year-old daughter in an auto accident.

Letters to My Son by Mitch Carmody

Written by a grieving father whose 9-year-old son died after a two-year battle with cancer.

Lose, Love, Live: The Spiritual Gifts of Loss and Change by Dan Moseley

Addresses the challenges of dealing with loss and provides smart tips for healthy coping.

Men and Grief: A Guide for Men Surviving the Death of a Loved One by Carol Staudacher

Explores grief from the male perspective and addresses the differences between how men feel grief and what society may expect from them.

No Death, No Fear by Thich Nhat Hanh

The celebrated Buddhist master turns his attention to death, grief, and resilience.

Roses in December by Marilyn Willett Heavilin

A bereaved parent shares how she found hope on the darkest days.

Stations of the Heart: Parting with a Son by Richard Lischer

The first-hand account of a Christian pastor's grief following the death of his adult son to cancer.

Unattended Sorrow: Recovering from Loss and Reviving the Heart by Stephen Levine

A series of tender reflections and contemplations to encourage healing and growth.

When the Bough Breaks: Forever After the Death of a Son or Daughter by Judith Bernstein

Real-life reflections and advice from interviews with 50 bereaved parents.

Without: Poems by Donald Hall

A poignant collection of poetry written during the terminal illness and after the death of the author's wife.

For Children & Teens

After the Funeral by Jane Loretta Winsch

Multicultural book that encourages children to explore and share their thoughts, feelings, and fears about loss and grief.

Aarvy Aardvark Finds Hope by Donna O'Toole

A sweet storybook for younger readers exploring life, friendship, and death.

A Birthday Present for Daniel by Juliet Rothman

A beautiful story about a young child who's brother has died.

Cool Cats, Calm Kids by Mary Williams

Relaxation and stress management for children and adolescents.

Dear Bruno by Alice Trillin

A sick dinosaur tries to cheer up a dino-friend who has cancer. Full of hope and helpful hints for children with cancer.

Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: A Journal for Teenagers

Experiencing a Loss by Enid Samuel Traisman

Designed to help teens recognize, name, and own their feelings about loss.

For Those Who Live: Helping Children Cope with the Death of a Brother or Sister by Kathy LaTour

A book for adolescents that explores the feelings and changes accompanying sibling loss.

Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by

Byron Mellonie & Robert Ingpen

This story book uses pictures and simple stories to help younger children understand the life-and-death cycle.

Liplap's Wish by Jonathan London

A young boy's wish as he grieves his grandmother's death. Storybook for younger readers.

The Next Place by Warren Hanson

An easy-to-read book for both children and adults that imagines what the "next life" could be like.

On the Wings of a Butterfly by Marilyn Maple

A young girl dying of cancer learns a lot about life and death by watching the butterflies.

Part of Me Died, Too: Stories of Creative Survival Among Bereaved Children and Teens by Virginia Lynn Fry

Real stories of children and teens who mourned—and survived—the death of a loved one.

The Saddest Time by Norma Simon

A collection of interviews with children discussing various types of death, how they were told, and how they felt. Ideal for elementary age and older.

Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss by Pat Schweibert & Chuck DeKlyen

A charming illustrated story with something to offer the whole family.

What's Heaven by Maria Shriver

Written for children with lots of questions about death and where people and animals go after they die.

When Someone Very Special Dies by Marge Heegaard

A creative journaling resource to help young children explore loss and grief.



Online Resources

Whether you're seeking counselors and support groups in your area or looking for more general grief information, the following online resources are great places to start exploring.

ADEC: Association for Death Education and Counseling
adec.org

AfterTalk
Online grief support.
aftertalk.com

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Get help. Learn to help. Find support.
afsp.org

Center for Loss & Life Transition
Resources and support for grief from author Dr. Alan Wolfelt.
centerforloss.com

Companions on a Journey
National parental bereavement support network, with links to local chapters.
companionsonajourney.com

Compassionate Friends
Supporting a family after a child dies. Nationwide support group directory.
compassionatefriends.org

The Dougy Center: A National Center for Grieving Children
dougy.org

Fernside Center for Grieving Children
Free support services and resources for bereaved children.
fernside.org

Grief.com: Because Love Never Dies
Information, support, and resources based on the work and writing of David Kessler.
grief.com

GriefShare
National program with local chapters. Grief support from a Christian perspective.
griefshare.org

GriefWatch
Resources for bereaved families, with additional focus on perinatal loss.
griefwatch.com

Hospice Foundation of America
hospicefoundation.org

National Alliance for Grieving Children
childrengrieve.org

Return to Zero: H.O.P.E.
Transforming the culture of silence and isolation around pregnancy and infant loss.
rtzhope.org

Sesame Street: Caring for Each Other
Activities and tips for talking with children about tough topics.
sesamestreet.org/caring

Share: Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support
nationalshare.org

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Network
sids-network.org

Sympathy Solutions
Online loss and grief bookstore.
sympathysolutions.com

TEARS Foundation
Financial assistance and grief support for families whose children have died.
thetearsfoundation.org

What's Your Grief
Grief sharing, support, resources, and more.
whatsyourgrief.com

Contact Us

The Bereavement Care Team at Cincinnati Children's is specially trained to support you in your grief and to connect you with helpful resources for coping. If we can ever be of service, please call on us any time.

Bereavement Care Team:

☎ 513-636-7720

✉ bereavement_care@cchmc.org

Pastoral Care:

☎ 513-636-4200 or 1-800-344-2462 and ask the operator to page the on-call chaplain

✉ pastoral_care@cchmc.org

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