

The Healing Place

Center for grieving children & families

April 2024 Newsletter



Common Grief Expressions by Age

At The Healing Place, we often tell the people we serve that everyone's grief experience is unique. While that is true, there are some common grief reactions parents/caregivers can expect to see in their children depending on developmental age.

AGES 0-2

- Unable to understand that a death has occurred
- Able to sense something is missing or different.
- Able to sense emotional changes in their caregivers
- Child may exhibit increased clinginess and fussiness, decreased ability to self-soothe or be soothed, loss of appetite sleep disturbances, and more colds/sicknesses than usual
- Children at this age benefit from direct and basic explanations about death since they do not yet understand metaphors such as "gone to a better place" or "passed on"
- Remind children that whoever has died did not choose to leave them. Being specific about this aspect of the death can help mitigate a child's feelings of abandonment.

AGES 2-4

- Unable to understand the permanence of death
- May believe that death is reversible or that the deceased can wake up when they want to
- Children at this age benefit from direct and basic explanations about death since they do not yet understand metaphors such as "gone to a better place" or "passed on"
- Remind children that whoever has died did not choose to leave them. Being specific about this aspect of the death can help mitigate a child's feelings of abandonment.
- The child may ask the same questions again and again regarding the death. This is the child's way of attempting to incorporate this new information into their developing brain.
- Children may incorporate death into their play to make sense of and process the death.



What You Can Do Ages 0-2

Provide reassurance to the child with extra skin-on-skin contact, and a consistent day and nighttime routine. Avoid overstimulating situations, engage in creative play (music and movement, dancing, art, reading), and model appropriate/healthy grief coping strategies.



What You Can Do Ages 2-4

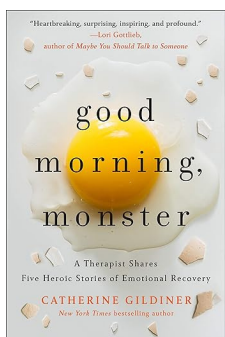
Remain consistent with routines, avoid overstimulating situations, include the child in memorializing and funeral activities, prepare the child for separation events and when the child can expect you to return, be willing to talk about the deceased person and answer ongoing questions about the death, model appropriate grief responses and coping strategies. Read books and watch movies or shows that discuss death.

UPCOMING EVENTS

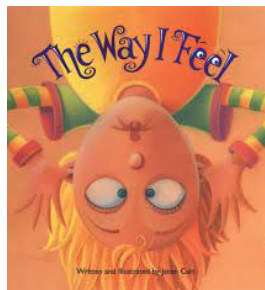
- April 1: Terrific Tuesday's Registration Opens
- April 2: World Autism Awareness Day
- April 4: Group Night 5:30pm-7pm
- April 14: Out of the Darkness Walk for Suicide Prevention
- April 18: Group Night 5:30pm-7pm
- April 22: Frank's Italian Night

WHAT WE'RE READING

KIDS NEED WORDS TO NAME THEIR FEELINGS. JUST AS THEY NEED WORDS TO NAME ALL THINGS IN THEIR WORLD. THE WAY I FEEL USES STRONG, COLORFUL, AND EXPRESSIVE IMAGES WHICH GO ALONG WITH SIMPLE VERSES TO HELP CHILDREN CONNECT THE WORD AND THE EMOTION.



A THERAPIST SHARES FIVE OF HER MOST "HEROIC AND MEMORABLE" PATIENTS. EACH INDIVIDUAL COMES TO HER FOR ONE PROBLEM BUT OVER THE YEARS DISCOVERS THE SOURCE OF THE HURT AND PAIN IS FROM SOMETHING IN THEIR PASTS.



EMPHASISING THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING. REFLECTING AND ALLOWING TIME TO COME TO TERMS WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS. IT DEMONSTRATES HOW TO FIND POSITIVE WAYS TO MOVE FORWARD. THE TALE ENCOURAGES CHILDREN TO EXPLORE STRATEGIES TO MANAGE TURBULENT FEELINGS. HELPING THEM TO DEVELOP THEIR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

