

WHEN SOMEONE DIES:
Bereavement and Loss

WHEN SOMEONE DIES: BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS

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TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

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WHEN SOMEONE DIES: BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS

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When we consider the losses commonly experienced by young people—such as the death of grandparents, relatives, classmates or pets—it is clear that many adolescents are forced to confront the topic of death early in their lives. Losing a close friend or loved one can be one of the most difficult things we ever deal with in our lives. Children and adolescents often have an especially hard time dealing with death, not only because of their emotional and mental immaturity, but also due to a shortage of coping resources. It is essential for children and adolescents to understand what to expect when they are grieving the death of a loved one and how to support each other in a time of crisis.

Perhaps the most important thing we can teach our children is that feeling grief is a normal, healthy reaction to death. In general there are five stages of grief that are often experienced by those who know someone who is dying or who has died. The initial reaction to death is *denial*—shock, numbness, and an inability to accept that it has really happened. The first emotion that is usually expressed is *anger* that the death occurred. The grieving person may blame God, the deceased, themselves, society or others for the death. They may also take their anger out on their friends and family. *Bargaining* is another stage of grief. Many people who are grieving attempt to bargain with God in exchange for the return of health for those who are dying or the return of those who have died. The acknowledgement that the death has occurred is often followed by *depression*, including feelings of guilt, loneliness, isolation and withdrawal. Finally comes *acceptance*. Accepting that the death has occurred does not mean that the grieving person is content or satisfied about the loss. It simply means that the person has accepted the reality of the situation, is adjusting to living in a world without the person in it, and is moving on with life.

While many people experience these stages of grief, it is important to remember that not everyone will experience each of these stages in the same manner. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Each person will experience their grief in different ways, depending on their age, sex, life experiences, individual personality, family and cultural background, and a multitude of other factors. No matter how individual grief is expressed, however, most every person who has experienced a loss can benefit from the support of friends and family. Too often we do not offer help to those who are grieving simply because we aren't sure exactly what to do or say. Those who are grieving need someone to be there for them and to listen attentively about their feelings without being judgmental. Being a good listener is one of the best ways to help a person who is mourning the loss of a loved one.

The video *When Someone Dies: Bereavement and Loss* and the materials provided in this Teacher's Resource Book present youths with valuable information about the bereavement process, including the fact that grieving is a natural reaction to death, that everyone grieves in his or her own personal way, and that there is no time limit to grieving. While coping with a loss is never easy, the materials in this Teacher's Resource Book provide young people with important information that may help make the grieving process less painful and confusing.

After watching the video *When Someone Dies: Bereavement and Loss* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- identify the five main stages of grief that people may experience
- understand that while there are certain stages of grief that many people experience, each person will grieve in a different way, based on their social, cultural and personal experiences
- recognize the variety of physical, emotional and behavioral reactions that a person experiencing grief may be feeling
- identify the warning signs for depression
- learn what they can do to help a person who is grieving
- learn how to be an effective listener
- know what to expect if they experience a personal loss
- make a distinction between myths and realities regarding grieving

The video opens with the voices of teenagers talking about loved ones who have died. Cynthia Burke, of Friends In Deed, opens the video. “Dying is something that each and every one of us is either going to go through with someone we love or know—or of course, ultimately ourselves.” The narrator expands on this thought, explaining that death and mourning those who have died is an inescapable part of life. Rituals that mark lifetime transitions—such as birth, adulthood and death—are universal and basic to humanity. In fact, death and mourning are no different now than in the past. “No matter how long we live, the death of someone we care about is usually a difficult and sad time, so much so that we wish we could change it.” However, Cynthia Burke emphasizes that it is important to embrace the “what is” in bereavement because we can’t live in the “what if;” we can only live in the “what is.”

Getting the News

“One will always remember where and when they hear of a loved one’s death.”

Several young people appear in this section, discussing how they first heard the news that their loved one had died and how they reacted: Carola and Federico who lost their grandmother to a stroke; Lidia, whose older sister committed suicide; Jonah, whose mother died of breast cancer; and Liz, whose father died suddenly of pancreatitis.

The Funeral

“A funeral is a ritual that allows us to mark the death of someone we love.”

This section of the video discusses the funeral from several different points of views. Doris Amen, a funeral director for 20 years, describes how every family’s needs are different. She tries to accommodate these needs in a discrete, comforting manner. The young people introduced earlier in the video discuss their funeral experiences. Lydia describes how “the funeral happens so soon after the person died that you’re still sort of not really incorporating the reality of it all.” Liz relates how she disliked the plans and preparation required for the funeral. “There’s a lot of formality in it. And I hated it. I really hated it. It’s like, you know, this is my Dad.”

The Reverend Jonathan Morgan describes how important it is for the funeral to be reflective of the person who has died and the surviving family. To this end, several of the young speakers describe the personal touches that they added to the funeral of their loved ones, such as saying private prayers with their family, singing, and reading poems they wrote. According to bereavement author and speaker, Earl A. Grollman, a funeral is meant to express two things: 1) that a person has died and 2) that the person really lived. People at funerals often share their feelings and talk about how the deceased has touched their lives.

Grieving Process

“We grieve because we love life. The loss of life hurts. It can be someone very close. It could be a celebrity. It could be your pet. Whomever or whatever we lose begins a long process of acceptance.”

Bereavement counselor Robert Ludwig explains, “Mourning and how we express our grief is different in each culture and in each family. But grief—the pain we feel—is all the same.” The young speakers then go on to describe how they felt after losing their loved ones. Lidia says that she felt sad in the beginning, but it didn’t seem real that her sister was gone. According to bereavement author Earl Grollman, “In the very beginning you don’t really know what’s happening. I don’t believe it, it didn’t really occur.” Counselor Robert Ludwig explains that children, adolescents and adults all grieve and feel the same feelings, but they may differ in how they express their grief. The experts and the teens appear on camera to discuss how males and females grieve differently. They comment on ways that our society encourages this by suggesting that males should “take it like a man” and not cry.

Stages of Grief

“Grief ebbs but it never ends.”

Various feelings and behaviors are described and discussed by the narrator, experts, and the teens, including feeling dazed and numb, disbelief, anger, envy of those not experiencing this loss, loneliness, feeling like you are going crazy, regrets, depression, sleeping more, and weight gain or loss. According to Andrea Freshman, a clinical social worker, psychologist and guidance counselor at a Brooklyn high school, these stages of grief are not set in stone. Rather grieving people may go back and forth between different emotions and behaviors. Several of the young speakers discuss how their grieving was complicated by the fact that they did not get adequate support from family and friends after the initial few weeks because people often don’t know what to say or do for those who are grieving.

The next section of the video shows actual pictures of the young speakers and their deceased loved ones while discussing how “the way your loved one died can have a profound effect on you” and how each person may react differently. R. Benjamin Cirlin, a bereavement counselor, asserts that sudden deaths are often more difficult because family and friends have had not time to prepare for their loss. Suicides are even more difficult to process, because there still exists a shame and stigma associated with suicide. According to Lydia, people don’t acknowledge or publicize suicides, so when it happens, you “feel like you are the only one.” These feelings of aloneness can lead to additional problems. Psychologist Andrea Freshman says, “Research shows that a student who is affected by a homicide or a suicide is at a greater risk to have something violent happen to themselves or to do something to themselves.”

Often, adolescents who are faced with the death of a loved one are forced to grow up quickly. Author Earl Grollman describes how as a society we don't allow adolescents to feel or to grieve. Instead, we compliment them on how well they are coping, or advise them that they are the man in the family now. Bereavement counselor R. Benyamin Cirlin agrees. "Our society allows grieving people about four to eight weeks of kind-of special mention, and people are willing to listen for about that length of time. The problem with that is that for many grieving people, the impact of a loss doesn't really start to hit for a good two to three months." Liz agrees, describing how six months after her father's death her attitude completely changed—she began to slack off and didn't care anymore about anything. According to Grollman, this is natural because "grief ebbs but it never ends."

Getting Help

"Going for professional help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength. It means you want to take charge of your grief."

Bereavement is never an isolated incident; instead it is a process involving many people. Many communities provide assistance in the grieving process, and this section of the video describes two such grieving groups. In New York, Friends In Deed is an organization devoted to helping people deal with death and bereavement and to normalize grief and loss. Lauren Zavier of Friends In Deed describes the "magic" of the organization as being able to "find your feelings in someone else's story."

School counselor Andrea Freshman created a bereavement group in her Brooklyn high school of 4,000 students. Several of the youths in the video participate in this group, and they describe how it helps just to see another young person who knows what they have been through and realizing that they are not alone. Jonah also describes another reason for participating in the group—to help others who are grieving. According to Freshman, teenagers are very peer-oriented, so group treatment is often very effective. In fact, it was often the case that "one person's talking encouraged another to share." While those grieving may have very different circumstances, the emotions they are feeling are often the same. One youth describes how sometimes they don't have to speak at all in the group, that just hearing other people describe their feelings—the same emotions the youth had been feeling—can be helpful.

Moving On With Life

"To go on living doesn't mean to forget, it doesn't mean to love less, but it means to go on living with memories that never die."

In this final section of the video, the young speakers relate how they are coping with their losses. Liz advises others who are grieving to "find something you love to keep you busy" through the long nights and the rough days. "If there is something that makes you happy and brings joy to you, you can get through it." Lydia describes how you can't fill the hole that is

left when the person you love is gone and that you always feel the loss. While pictures of the youths and their loved ones are shown, the youths describe their feelings about where their loved ones are now.

The video concludes with this message: “Through our rituals, with our friends and families, by talking with people who share our experiences, and by the passing of time we go through grief. Your sadness may never completely disappear, but with time it will soften. Go on with life. To go on means to survive and celebrate your loved one’s life. Treasure your memories. Going through grief changes you. You become a different person. It is important to honor these changes.”

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

How much do you know about grieving? Indicate whether you think each of the statements below is a myth or a reality. Answers can be found in the *Grief Mythology* fact sheet.

Myth / Reality

Time heals all wounds.

Myth / Reality

Keeping busy will help you recover from your grief.

Myth / Reality

Crying is a normal way to express grief.

Myth / Reality

You'll get over your grief eventually.

Myth / Reality

Everyone goes through the same feelings of grief.

Myth / Reality

Talking about the deceased person can help those who are grieving.

Myth / Reality

Helping someone deal with a loss is not always a personal, family responsibility.

Name: _____

Read the following paragraphs and then identify the stage(s) of grief that the person is experiencing, the emotions that they may be feeling, how they may be acting, and what appropriate responses to the person may be. Next, form small groups and act out one or more of the following scenarios. Discuss your responses and the potential consequences of these responses based on the information in the class lesson, video and fact sheets.

1. Your mother’s best friend recently died of cancer. The funeral was three weeks ago but your mother is still acting different. She doesn’t want to go out anywhere and rarely smiles. When you try and tell her about your day at school, she doesn’t seem to really be listening. In fact, she seems preoccupied all the time now. And yesterday when you accidentally spilled your milk she blew up at you—something she rarely does. You are determined to talk to her about her behavior tonight—you can’t take one more day of this.

Stage(s) _____

Emotions/Behavior _____

Appropriate Responses _____

2. Your neighbor, Scott, and his dog, Spot, grew up together and were practically inseparable. Two days ago, while Scott was at school, Spot was hit by a car. When Scott got home from school his mother told him that Spot had died. Since then, Scott has spent almost every waking hour wandering around the neighborhood looking for Spot. Although he knows what his mother told him, he still thinks there might be a chance that it could have been a different dog that got hit by the car and that Spot just ran away. You’ve seen Scott wandering around the neighborhood, even putting up lost dog signs. You offer to help him, hoping that you’ll get a chance to talk about how he’s feeling.

Stage(s) _____

Emotions/Behavior _____

Appropriate Responses _____

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

3. Your friend Marcia’s older sister, Susan, has been sick for a while. Last week Marcia and her family found out that her sister has cancer and that she is only expected to live a few more months. Marcia is in shock—she can’t believe that her sister may actually die. Yesterday she told you that she has started stopping by the local church on her way home from school. Some days she just sits with her eyes closed. Other days she prays for a miracle. She even offered to go to church every day if he would keep her sister alive. She feels like there must be some thing that she can do to make her sister well again. Marcia and you can usually talk about anything, so after soccer practice you decide to bring up the subject of her sister.

Stage(s) _____

Emotions/Behavior _____

Appropriate Responses _____

4. Elizabeth has been your best friend since 4th grade. You do everything together. Last weekend her grandfather passed away. She was out of school on Monday for his funeral. You expected her to be a little sad on Tuesday, but she seemed like her same old self, telling jokes and teasing you. On Wednesday, though, she didn’t wait for you to walk to school and when you saw her at lunchtime, she had already finished her lunch and was leaving the lunchroom. You called her that night to ask why she was avoiding you. Somehow you ended up getting into a fight, with Elizabeth accusing you of being insensitive and selfish. By the end of the conversation, she was crying and talking about how her grandfather never would have died if she had visited him more often. You knew she wasn’t making any sense, but you didn’t know what to say to her.

Stage(s) _____

Emotions/Behavior _____

Appropriate Responses _____

Name: _____

Different cultures experience death and express grief in different ways. Research one of the following cultures or religions and write a brief paper on your findings. Your paper should include answers to the questions listed at the bottom of this page. You can gather information at your school or local library, as well as on the Internet. See the *Web Resources* fact sheet for a list of appropriate websites. Use a Resource Tracker (Activity Sheet 3b) to collect information.

Suggested Cultures for Your Research

Chinese

Japanese

Native American

Ancient Egyptian

Mexican American/Hispanic

Buddhism

Christianity

Hinduism

Judaism

Islam

Issues to Include in Your Report

What is the religious, cultural, and/or societal view of death?

What rituals are associated with the final arrangements for the body?

What rituals are associated with honoring the dead?

Are there any other rituals associated with death?

What is the belief about what happens after death?

What is considered a normal expression of grief?

Name: _____

UNIQUE GRIEF FACTORS

Grief is a highly individualized emotion. Each person will mourn a death in a slightly different way and with a slightly different intensity. These reactions are based on a variety of personal, social and cultural factors. For example, gender stereotypes may make a male less likely than a female to cry or exhibit emotions as part of his grieving. Describe how, in your opinion, the factors listed below may influence how a person mourns a loss.

Age	
Gender	
Social support	
Religious beliefs	
Family stability	
Physical or mental health	
Previous experiences with death	

Name: _____

Death and grieving have been the subject of many works of fiction. Read a book that your teacher has chosen for you or choose one of the books listed below. Then write a short report on how the subject of death is handled in the book. Discuss how the characters are affected by death and how they express their grief. Your teacher may ask you to present your report to the class.

Appropriate for Middle School Age and Older

A Taste of Blackberries
by Doris B. Smith

Blue Eyes Better
by Ruth Wallace-Brodeur

Bridge to Terabithia
by Katherine Paterson

Good-bye, Chicken Little
by Betsy Byars

Missing May
by Cynthia Rylant

On My Honor
by Marion Dane Bauer and Dolores Kozielski

The Usual Rules
by Joyce Maynard

Wenny Has Wings
by Janet Lee Carey

Words of Stone
by Kevin Henkes

Appropriate for High School Age and Older

A Death in the Family
by James Agee

After the Rain
by Norma Fox Maser

Tears of a Tiger
by Sharon Mills Draper

Telling Christina Goodbye
by Lurlene McDaniel

The Tiger Rising
by Kate Dicamillo

Tiger Eyes
by Judy Blume

Party Girl
by Lynne Ewing

Say Goodnight, Gracie
by Julie Reece Deaver

Whirligig
by Paul Fleischman

Name: _____

WRITE A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

You have just been hired as a reporter for your school newspaper. Your first assignment is to write an article about the ways that people deal with feelings of loss and grief. Interview three to four people (classmates, family members, teachers, friends, neighbors) about a loss that they have experienced. Your goal is to find out how they reacted, and what they did, and what other people did that helped them through their grief. Be sure to prepare a list of questions ahead of time. Use the questions listed below as a guide. After you have conducted your interviews, write a newspaper article describing what you discovered.

Name of Person: _____ Occupation: _____ Age: _____

Have you ever experienced a loss, such as moving away from a friend or someone you know dying? If so, could you describe the details of the loss?

How did you react to the loss?

What were your feelings?

How long did you feel that way?

What did you do to feel better about your loss?

What did other people do to help you feel better about your loss?

What did other people do that didn't help you feel better?

Name: _____

Memorials are often used as a way to remember those who have died. For many people, memorials are an important part of the grieving and healing process. Some memorials are large in scope, encompassing many people who have died. For example, the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC lists the names of those who died during the Vietnam War.

Memorials are also used to educate. The AIDS Memorial Quilt is made up of more than 44,000 colorful panels, each panel memorializing a person who died of AIDS. The Quilt is displayed across the United States and worldwide to help people understand the devastating impact of the disease. Other memorials are smaller and more personal, such as when people leave flowers, notes, photos and stuffed animals at the scene of a fatal car accident.

For this activity, your project is to design and construct a memorial that recognizes a loss that is important your class, school, neighborhood, state or country.

- 1.** Your first step is to decide what event or person you will be memorializing. You may use personal experiences as well as local and national current events.
- 2.** As a class, you should agree upon a list of at least five losses that could be memorialized.
- 3.** Then each student will vote to decide which loss will be the subject of your memorial.
- 4.** Next you will need to decide what type of memorial to construct, using the questions below as a guide.
- 5.** Finally, you will actually create the memorial.
- 6.** Once your memorial is finished, you may choose to display it in a place where others in your school or neighborhood can view it.

Use the questions below to help you get started.

Who is being memorialized?

What type of memorial do you want to create? Some ideas include an online Internet memorial, a garden memorial or a visual memorial (using photos, pictures or other visual aids).

What do you want the memorial to express?

What were some key things about the person (or people) who died that you want to bring out in the memorial?

Do you want the memorial to educate the viewer in any way? If so, how will you do this?

FACT SHEETS

Name: _____

When someone dies, the family and friends experience strong and difficult emotions. Feeling sad and grieving is a normal, healthy reaction to death and is part of the bereavement process. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Each person will experience and exhibit their grief in different ways, depending on their age, sex, life experiences, individual personality, family and cultural background, and a multitude of other factors.

In general however, there are five main stages of grief that are often experienced by those who know someone who is dying or who has died. Not everyone will experience each of these stages, these feelings may not occur in exactly this order, and they may often overlap or intermingle with one another. There is no time limit to how long each stage may last, just as there is no set beginning or end to the grieving process.

These five stages were first defined by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross in her groundbreaking work with people who have terminal illnesses. Her 1969 book, On Death and Dying, presents five stages that terminally ill persons may go through upon learning of their illness. These stages have been widely adopted as stages of grief and are often used in bereavement work.

1

Denial

2

Anger

3

Bargaining

4

Depression

5

Acceptance

This fact sheet is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

1 - Denial

The initial reaction is death is shock, numbness, and an inability to accept that it has really happened. Many people refuse to believe that the death has occurred and thus will not express or share their feelings initially.

2 - Anger

The first emotions expressed are usually anger that the death occurred. There may be anger that this happened to this particular person. The grieving person may blame God, the deceased, themselves, society, or others for the death. They may also take their anger out on their friends and family.

3 - Bargaining

Many people who are grieving attempt to bargain with God in exchange for the return of health for those who are dying or the return of those who have died.

4 - Depression

The acknowledgement that the death has occurred is often followed by depression, including feelings of guilt, loneliness, isolation and withdrawal.

5 - Acceptance

Accepting that the death has occurred does not mean that the grieving person is happy with that fact or that they think it was fair. It simply means that they have accepted the reality of the situation, are working through the physical and emotional pain, are adjusting to living in a world without the person in it, and are moving on with their life.

Name: _____

There are a variety of physical, emotional and behavioral reactions that a person may experience during the grieving process. Knowing what these reactions may be—and recognizing that they are a normal part of mourning—may help the grieving process to be less painful and confusing for you. Reactions can include:

- ✓ Shock
- ✓ Denial and disbelief
- ✓ Sadness
- ✓ Crying
- ✓ Despair and hopelessness
- ✓ Remorse
- ✓ Yearning
- ✓ Anger and irritability
- ✓ Guilt
- ✓ Self-pity
- ✓ Avoidance of emotion
- ✓ Needing to talk
- ✓ Overwhelmed and unable to cope
- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Forgetfulness
- ✓ Loss of concentration
- ✓ Anxiety attacks
- ✓ Fear of being alone
- ✓ Nightmares
- ✓ Physical ailments (e.g. headache, nausea, dizziness, digestive problems)
- ✓ Loss of appetite or change in eating patterns
- ✓ Insomnia or interrupted sleep
- ✓ Loss of energy
- ✓ Loss of interest in daily activities and events.
- ✓ Drop in school performance or a refusal to attend school
- ✓ Withdrawal from friends and social supports
- ✓ Among younger children, acting younger or reverting to earlier behaviors (e.g. thumb sucking)
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Thoughts of suicide

Name: _____

Sadness and grief are normal parts of the grieving process. However, sometimes the intense grief experienced after losing a friend or family member turns into a more persistent depression. If you (or someone you know) exhibit any of these warning signs of depression for an extended period of time, it's important to seek help from a counselor, teacher, relative or clergy member.

- ✓ Sleep disturbances
- ✓ Changes in eating habits
- ✓ Low energy and fatigue
- ✓ Impaired concentration
- ✓ A loss of interest in daily activities
- ✓ Inability to experience pleasure
- ✓ Isolation from friends
- ✓ Vague and generalized feelings of guilt, helplessness, or hopelessness
- ✓ Increased sexual promiscuity
- ✓ Increased alcohol or other drug use
- ✓ Thoughts of suicide

The National Mental Health Association can provide a referral to a mental health service or support group in your area:

1-800-969-NMHA or 1-800-969-6642

A certified crisis center can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week by contacting the National Hopeline Network:

1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-784-2433

Name: _____

If you know someone who has experienced a loss, there are many things you can do to help the grieving person through this difficult time.

- ✓ Let the person know you are sorry for the loss rather than trying to offer false comfort (e.g. “It was for the best”).
- ✓ Do something, whether it is sending a card, making a phone call, giving a hug or offering practical help, such as with chores.
- ✓ Let the person know that you are there to listen if he or she needs to talk
- ✓ Be honest and open about the situation, unless the person specifies that he or she doesn’t want to talk about it.
- ✓ Listen attentively about what the person is feeling without being judgmental.
- ✓ Understand that there is no right or wrong way to grieve—allow the person to grieve in his or her own way.
- ✓ Be patient—grief is an on-going, ever-changing process.
- ✓ Encourage the person to seek professional help if you think he or she is having difficulty coping alone.

Name: _____

- ✓ Physically let the person know that you are listening by keeping your face and body towards him or her and making frequent eye contact.
- ✓ Allow the person to talk about what he or she wants to talk about, and only when he or she wants to talk about it.
- ✓ Don't interrupt or change the subject. Be attentive and really listen. If you are preparing what you are going to say next, you are not truly listening.
- ✓ Encourage the person to continue talking. Nod your head, say things like "Yes, I see," or repeat some of what the person just said. This not only lets someone know that you are truly listening, but that you are interested in what is being said.
- ✓ Don't criticize or judge the speaker's feelings or thoughts. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Each person responds to death in his or her own unique way.
- ✓ Don't respond with clichés, such as "It will get easier with time."
- ✓ Don't be afraid to admit your own feelings, such as "I'm not very good talking about this" or "I don't know what to say."
- ✓ Avoid offering advice unless asked.

Name: _____

While grieving is a normal, natural process, it is certainly not an easy one. If someone you know has recently died, there are several things that you can do make the grieving process less painful and confusing.

Get support.

Seek out relatives, friends, and/or support groups who understand your feelings of loss. If you are religious, talk to a clergy member about your beliefs and feelings.

Express your feelings.

Discussing feelings such as loneliness, guilt, and anger may help you get through the grieving process. You can also use writing, art, dance, or music to express your feelings and thoughts.

Stay healthy.

Stressful events such as death take a toll on your immune system. Make an extra effort to eat well, get adequate sleep, and exercise. Do not rely on alcohol and drugs to cope—they will only create more problems.

Postpone major life changes.

Try to hold off on making decisions regarding your job, college, or relationships while you are grieving.

Be patient.

Grief is an ongoing process. It may take months or years for you to fully accept your loss and move on with your life. And some days may be better than others.

Be forgiving.

Recognize that you may not be at your best during this time. You may be forgetful and lack concentration, lowering your academic and physical performance.

Return to life.

Start by re-establishing your day-to-day routine. Reconnect with friends. Participate in activities that you enjoy. Your life may never be the same as it was before your loss, but it is still your life.

Seek outside help when necessary.

If you feel like your grief is too much to handle, don't hesitate to get professional assistance. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. The National Mental Health Association can provide a referral to a mental health service or support group in your area (1-800-969-NMHA). To reach a certified crisis center immediately, contact the National Hopeline Network (1-800-SUICIDE).

Name: _____

Myth Time heals all wounds.

Reality Grief is an ongoing, ever-changing process. There is no set beginning or end to grief. Grief over a loved one's death may come and go over an entire lifetime.

Myth Keeping busy will help you recover from your grief.

Reality Maintaining social and personal relationships can be healthy and helpful during the grieving process—when the person is ready. It is not helpful to pressure a person to remain busy. Not only may this interfere with a person's grieving, it may also make him or her feel like you are trivializing the loss.

Myth Crying is a sign of weakness.

Reality Crying is a healthy and natural way to grieve. At the same time, not everyone feels the need to cry to express their grief; some people may use laughter and joking around to express their grief.

Myth You'll get over your grief eventually.

Reality Losing a loved one is a life-changing event that is never truly "gotten over" but rather accepted and incorporated into life in a way that lets the individual move ahead.

Myth Everyone goes through the same feelings of grief.

Reality While there are certain stages of grief that many people experience, each person will grieve in a different way, based on their social, cultural and personal experiences.

Myth Talking about the deceased will only make it worse.

Reality Sharing grief is an essential part of the bereavement process. The best thing anyone can do to help someone who has experienced a loss is to be available to *listen*.

Myth Helping someone deal with a loss is a personal, family responsibility.

Reality Often family members are also in mourning, which may impede their ability to support other family members. Never assume that someone has enough support—you can never have too much help in a time of crisis.

Name: _____

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

www.aacap.org

American Psychological Association

www.apa.org

Association of Death Education & Counseling

www.adec.org

Center for Mental Health Services

www.mentalhealth.org

The Compassionate Friends

www.compassionatefriends.org

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Website

www.elisabethkublerross.com

Fernside Website

www.fernside.org

GriefNet Website

www.griefnet.org

National Center for Grieving Children & Families

www.dougy.org

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsnet.org

National Institute of Mental Health

www.nimh.nih.gov

National Mental Health Association

www.nmha.org

New York University Child Study Center

www.aboutourkids.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.samhsa.gov

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