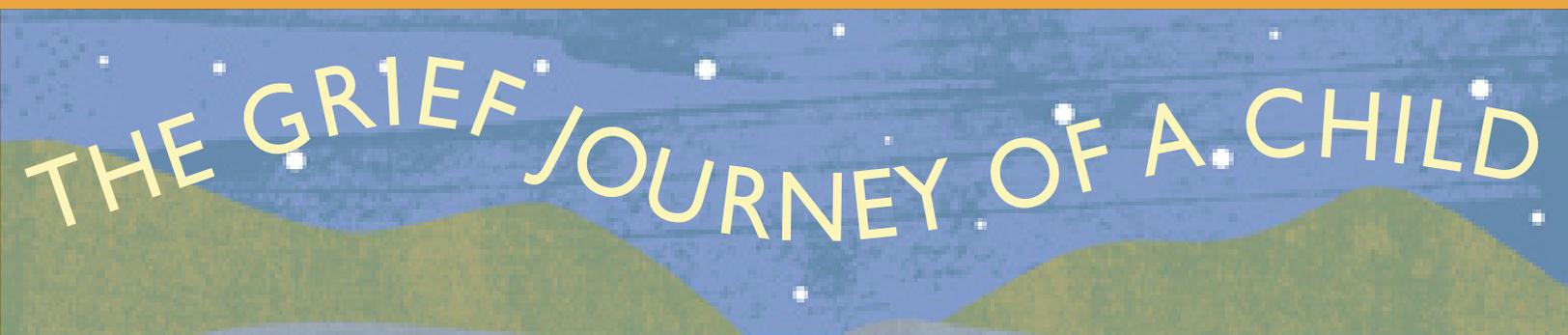


THE GRIEF JOURNEY OF A CHILD

HELPING CHILDREN WHO HAVE LOST
A LOVED ONE

WHAT KIDS IN GRIEF WANT YOU TO KNOW

NEW
YORK
LIFE



THE GRIEF JOURNEY OF A CHILD

HELPING CHILDREN WHO HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE

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MESSAGE FROM CHRIS PARK

PRESIDENT OF THE NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION



Thank you for taking the time to read *The Grief Journey of a Child*.

Your interest in this issue is appreciated. Childhood bereavement is extremely common yet painful and rarely discussed. **It is estimated that one in seven Americans will lose a parent or sibling before the age of 20.** Growing up in a society that is unnerved by death, kids who lose loved ones get the message early on that people are uncomfortable with their grief. As a result, many kids suffer in silence. We need to change that.

The New York Life Foundation has a longstanding commitment to grieving families. We've invested in excess of \$7 million over the last five years in programs designed to raise understanding of the issue and support bereavement centers and camps nationwide, providing thousands of grieving kids every year with a safe and supportive environment in which to heal.

Recently, in an effort to better understand kids' experience and perspective, we worked with the National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC), a nationwide association of bereavement centers, on a groundbreaking survey of children who've lost a parent or sibling. Our goal: to give grieving kids the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives while underscoring the importance of community support.

Obviously losing a loved one is incredibly hard and isolating for children. These kids experience a wide range of emotions—sadness, anger, loneliness, confusion, guilt—but one of the themes that emerged so strongly from our research is kids' desire to be resilient and get back to a happy, "normal" place. This can be a struggle, given the rush of emotions and isolation, but one main message is clear: don't treat me differently or, worse yet, ignore me altogether. Critical influencers like friends, neighbors, teachers and counselors can play a crucial role in helping kids regain some equilibrium. That's where you come in.

This brochure is meant to help you help kids and families who are grieving. In it, you will find an overview of the research and related key findings, kids talking about grief in their own words, a perspective on childhood grief from a leading bereavement expert and some tips and resources for concerned friends of all ages. Additional resources—including a downloadable brochure, "After a Loved One Dies—How Children Grieve"—are available at www.AChildInGrief.com.

Grief is a journey. We can't eliminate it, but with your help, we can make the path a lot easier. Thank you for caring.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Park". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Chris Park
President
New York Life Foundation

THE GRIEF JOURNEY OF A CHILD

BEREAVEMENT IN AMERICA

Childhood loss of a parent or sibling is extremely common, yet incredibly painful and rarely discussed. Research shows that 1 in 9 Americans lose a parent before they turn 20, while 1 in 7 lose either a parent or a sibling.

Our society is generally unnerved by death. As a result, children who have lost a loved one often suffer in silence and isolation, with precious few opportunities to share their grief feelings—and all too little support from the individuals and institutions around them.



Simply stated, many of us are unsure of what to do when the loved one of a child dies. What do we say? What do we do? How can we be tactful? Do they even want us to talk with them? As a result of our hesitance and indecisiveness, many of us—even those of us with the best of intentions—ignore the issue altogether, leaving children to suffer in silence.



GIVING KIDS A VOICE

New York Life is the oldest and one of the largest mutual life insurance companies in America. Helping families deal with the death of a loved one is at the heart of what we do. Through the eyes of our agents, we certainly see the financial impact that the death of a loved one can have on a family. More importantly, we see the emotional side as well.

The New York Life Foundation has a longstanding commitment to helping grieving families, kids most particularly. In an effort to better understand the issue—and how we can better support these families—last year we conducted research among parents who lost a spouse or partner and who still had kids at home. That research gave us a crucial glimpse into what children are faced with when a parent dies. It was clear that the next critical step was to talk to grieving children themselves. The results of that research are described in this article.

Our goal is to give grieving kids a vehicle to express what they are going through and what they need while encouraging greater community support and engagement. We believe that if people are more aware and more informed about the issue of childhood bereavement, they will be in a better position to help—whether they are a parent, a friend, a neighbor, a caregiver, a teacher or a member of their community. No matter where you fall on this spectrum, you can make a difference.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC) poll was conducted in-person at bereavement centers during group sessions between November 21, 2011 and January 5, 2012. Children and teenagers under the age of 19 were given printed copies of the survey, customized with questions pertaining to the gender and type of family member they lost (parent or sibling). An adult Group Leader read each question and response category aloud, allotting time for every participant to answer. Surveys were immediately sealed in an envelope and sent to New York Life Foundation for data processing. Participation in the survey was strictly voluntary and all answers remained confidential. In a similarly sized random sample survey, the margin of error (at the 95% confidence level) for the total population in this study (531) would be plus or minus approximately 4.3 percentage points.

KEY FINDINGS

1. THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE IS DIFFICULT ON A CHILD

After the death of a parent, children experience a wide range of tangled emotions—sadness, anger, loneliness, confusion, or guilt. Three-quarters of the children surveyed said they currently feel sad—the number one emotion by a factor of two.

2. MANY CHILDREN STRUGGLE AT SCHOOL IN THE AFTERMATH OF A LOVED ONE'S DEATH—AND COULD USE MORE SUPPORT

Close to half the children surveyed said it's harder to concentrate in school after their loved one's death and more than a quarter said they don't do as well. When asked to grade their school and teachers on "helping me deal with my loved one's death," almost half (48%) assigned them a "C" or lower.

3. CHILDREN WANT TO BE RESILIENT, BE TREATED NORMALLY, AND GET BACK TO A HAPPY PLACE

Even as they struggle with grief's burden, most kids set their sights on living a normal life and carry considerable hope for the future. Two thirds of the children surveyed say they continue to enjoy life and have fun, and just as many express the wish to "be treated like everyone else."

4. FAMILY AND FRIENDS HAVE A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY

Kids say spending time with friends and family is particularly helpful in dealing with the death of their loved one. But some family, friends, and community members back away. It's important to understand that, as over half the kids we talked to said, "talking to friends about loss is hard."



CHILDREN SPEAK: RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF GRIEVING KIDS

DISBELIEF, WORRY, AND FEELINGS OF LONELINESS AND GUILT ARE
COMMON REACTIONS TO THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE.

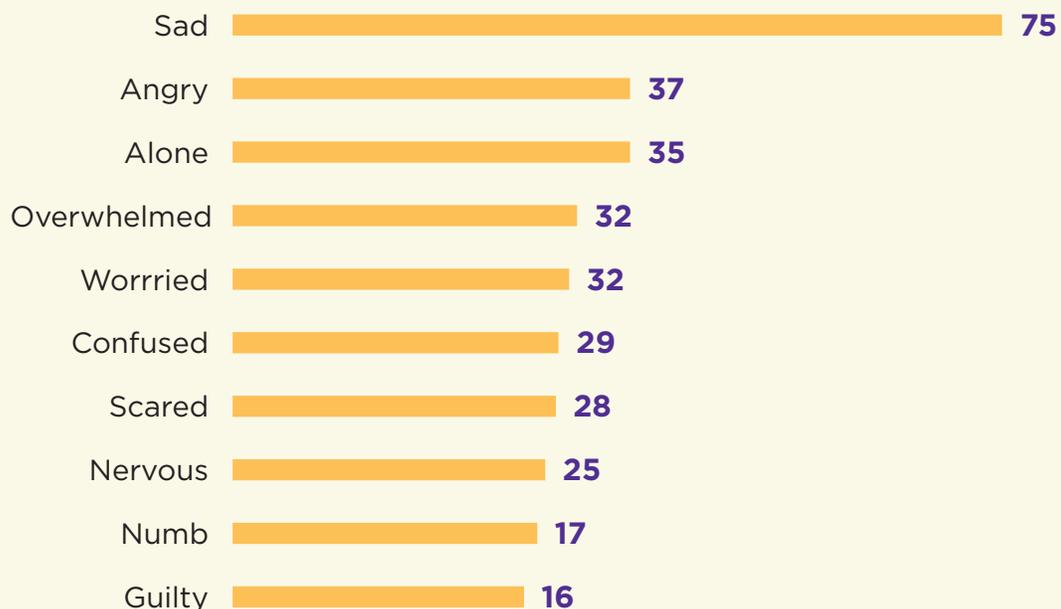
Q WHEN IT COMES TO MY LOVED ONE'S DEATH, TODAY I...

CANNOT BELIEVE IT IS TRUE	46%
WORRY THAT MY PARENT/GUARDIAN MIGHT DIE TOO	39%
FEEL LIKE NO ONE UNDERSTANDS WHAT I AM GOING THROUGH	33%
WORRY THAT OTHER PEOPLE I LIVE WITH MIGHT DIE TOO	32%
FEEL ALL ALONE	28%
DO NOT WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT WITH ANYONE	28%
THINK IT IS MY FAULT	16%

CHILDREN EXPERIENCE A WIDE RANGE OF TANGLED EMOTIONS
AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE.

Q WHEN IT COMES TO MY LOVED ONE'S DEATH, TODAY I FEEL...

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS



SOME CHILDREN ACT OUT IN UNPRODUCTIVE AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS WAYS.

Q AS A RESULT OF MY LOVED ONE'S DEATH, I HAVE...

ACTED IN WAYS THAT I KNOW MIGHT NOT BE GOOD FOR ME	41%
SAID HURTFUL THINGS TO OTHERS	34%
HURT MYSELF PHYSICALLY IN SOME WAY	20%
BROKE THINGS OR DAMAGED PROPERTY	15%
USED DRUGS OR ALCOHOL	10%

THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE CLEARLY HAS AN IMPACT ON A CHILD...

I'd give a year of my life to spend just one more day with my loved one **62%**

You should be nice to the people you love because you don't know how long you will have them in your life **58%**

...BUT THEY ARE NOT AS FRAGILE AS ONE MIGHT THINK

I remember and honor my loved one by enjoying life and having fun **65%**

People don't have to give me special treatment; I just want to be treated like everyone else **63%**

I really miss my loved one, but I am not sad all the time **55%**

I like it when people talk about my loved one or share memories about them **40%**

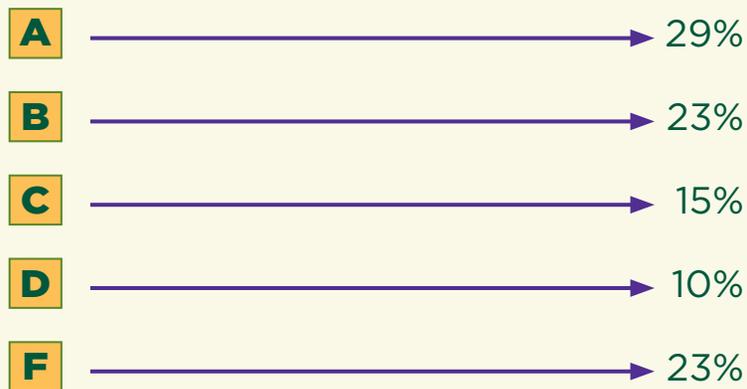
SCHOOL IS AN ISSUE FOR MANY GRIEVING CHILDREN...

Q SINCE MY LOVED ONE DIED...

I have more trouble concentrating in school	45%
I don't do as well in school.....	27%

... AND THE ABILITY OF SCHOOLS TO HELP WITH THE GRIEVING PROCESS IS INCONSISTENT

Q THE GRADE KIDS GIVE THEIR SCHOOLS/TEACHERS ON HELPING THEM DEAL WITH THEIR LOVED ONE'S DEATH:



ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO SHARE MEMORIES OF LOVED ONES WILL HELP THEM IN THE GRIEVING PROCESS.

Q I REMEMBER AND HONOR MY LOVED ONE BY...

KEEPING PHOTOS OR SPECIAL THINGS THAT BELONGED TO THEM WITH ME	71%
DOING THINGS MY LOVED ONE LIKED TO DO	54%
REMEMBERING AND TELLING STORIES ABOUT THE GOOD TIMES WE HAD	53%
TRYING TO DO WELL IN SCHOOL	47%
DRAWING PICTURES OR MAKING THINGS FOR THEM	34%



A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID SCHONFELD, MD

Dr. Schonfeld is a developmental-behavioral pediatrician and Director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

1 IS THERE A TYPICAL HEALING PATH FOR A CHILD WHO HAS LOST A PARENT OR SIBLING?

Children generally experience a profound sense of loss and sadness that may last for an extended period. They may also experience strong feelings such as anger, anxiety, and guilt. Many wonder what they did, didn't do, could have done, or should have done to prevent the death, even if there is no logical reason to believe that they could have done anything. Children often find it difficult to concentrate and make decisions while actively grieving, and this can result in academic problems.

The healing journey is never a straight path. There will be times when the grief will fade, only to return suddenly when something reminds children of their loved one—for example, a school concert with parents in attendance. There is no ultimate destination, no map, and no estimated time of arrival. Each child will take his or her own path.

2 BEYOND THE EMOTIONS ACCOMPANYING LOSS, WHAT OTHER FACTORS COMPLICATE THE GRIEF JOURNEY?

When children experience the death of a parent or guardian, they lose the companionship of that individual but they also experience a range of secondary losses related to what that individual would have been able to provide had he or she survived. For example, families may experience financial stress that requires a move to a new home and/or community, which may, in turn, result in academic difficulties and social isolation. The surviving parent may also need to work longer hours, or may be less available emotionally due to their own grief.

“It is critical to reach out to children who are grieving and let them know you care.”

3 IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT IS IT THAT GRIEVING KIDS WOULD LIKE THEIR FRIENDS AND CLASSMATES TO KNOW?

Children who have experienced a death want their friends and classmates to be sensitive to what they are going through, to be available to listen to them and be with them, and above all, to remain their friends. That can be easier said than done, as peers may withdraw because of the discomfort of being with someone who is actively grieving, fear of saying or doing something that is hurtful, or because they misinterpret their grieving friend’s withdrawal as a rejection of their support.

For these reasons, children who are grieving often find comfort by being with other grieving children who are experiencing similar reactions. This is why bereavement support groups (www.childrengrieve.org) or camps (www.comfortzonecamp.org), (www.moyerfoundation.org) can be particularly helpful.

4 WHAT WOULD BE YOUR GENERAL ADVICE TO THE RELATIVES, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS OF GRIEVING FAMILIES?

Regardless of how close they are, people are often hesitant to reach out to individuals who are grieving, afraid they will say or do something to make a difficult situation worse. In reality, the worst thing you can do is nothing at all. It suggests the loss is unimportant and only adds to feelings of isolation.

It is critical to reach out to children who are grieving and let them know you care and are available to listen and provide support. Grief is not a problem to be solved. It’s not your job to try to eliminate their grief or to suggest how they ought to feel or act. Instead, listen to them, really listen. Give them the opportunity to tell you what they are thinking and feeling. If someone gets upset when asked how they’re doing, remember that they are upset about the death of a loved one, not that you asked the question.

Remember, too, that people often become overwhelmed by routine tasks while they are grieving. Offer to help them with chores—driving a child to a practice, for example. Be specific when you make suggestions, as opposed to a polite offer of general assistance. And don’t be insulted if they decline. Repeat the offer periodically, paying particular attention to holidays, anniversaries of the death, and other special occasions when they are more likely to benefit from extra support.



5 IMAGINE A SITUATION WHERE MY CHILDREN HAVE FRIENDS WHO RECENTLY LOST A PARENT. WHAT SHOULD I BE TELLING MY KIDS?

For young children, try and help them understand what death means. Be straightforward. The New York Life Foundation has a very good booklet, *After a Loved One Dies—How Children Grieve* (New York Life Foundation—Bereavement Resources) that provides information on how to explain death to children. For children of all ages, help them to understand what their friends may be experiencing and provide them with advice on how to reach out to their friends—and the encouragement to do so. Brainstorm with them about ways they might be helpful.

Most children will have no experience supporting a friend who is dealing with a major loss. They might very well be upset seeing a friend in emotional turmoil. It's important to realize that experiencing the death of a friend's parent may cause your own children anxiety about their own family or friends. Don't dismiss these concerns, making yourself available to provide support to your children.

“It's important to be an advocate for training teachers and school personnel on childhood bereavement.”

6 WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO GET SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND GUIDANCE COUNSELORS TO MEANINGFULLY ENGAGE?

Teachers and other school staff generally want to help grieving children, but often have insufficient training. They worry about saying and doing the wrong thing, believing it is a private experience for family members, and often do not do enough to aid the grieving child.

As such, surviving parents or guardians should reach out to teachers directly and ask for their support and assistance. Request ongoing communication to monitor how your child is coping. Share what you have observed about your child's adjustment and the impact the loss is having on your child's ability to do school work—and ask school staff to do the same. Be sure to thank teachers for their support and inform them of the positive impact of their efforts.

It's important to be an advocate for training teachers and other school personnel on childhood bereavement. School administrators need to communicate directly that schools can, and should, play a critical role in helping children adjust to loss. This is more likely to occur when parents shed light on the issue and help set an expectation.





THE TWO-MINUTE DRILL WITH BRIAN GRIESE

Brian Griese played quarterback in the National Football League for 11 years, earning a Super Bowl ring and being selected an All-Pro while with the Denver Broncos. Prior to his NFL career, Brian helped lead the University of Michigan to a share of the NCAA national championship, while earning his degree in political science. He is currently a college football analyst with ESPN and a radio color commentator for the Denver Broncos.

Brian lost his mother Judi to breast cancer when he was 12 years old. He and his wife Brook founded and currently run Judi's House, a bereavement center in Denver whose mission is to "help children and families who are grieving the death of a loved one find hope and healing within themselves."

Brian spoke with us about the ordeal of losing his mother.

Q What are some of the best memories you have of your Mom?

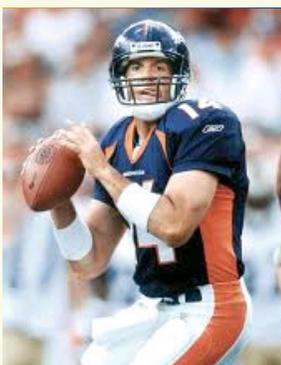
A My mother was the most compassionate and thoughtful person I have ever known. She always put the needs of others ahead of her own and was constantly finding ways to help those who needed help. I remember her smile most of all - warm, engaging, proud, and knowing.

Q Who was helpful to you when your Mom died? How were they helpful?

A The truth is that outside of my Dad I did not have any other adult figures who were particularly helpful to me during this time in my life. Looking back, it's clear that I could have used some additional adult support and guidance.

My mother died when I was 12 years old and I had two older brothers who were on their way to college at the time, so we went from a family of five to a family of two very quickly. My father and I were the only

“Looking back, it would have been nice to have that adult who took an interest in me and checked in occasionally and allowed me to be me. Someone that wouldn’t try to fix me, but someone to ask me questions and be a good listener.”



ones left in the house. I depended on him and he depended on me. But he was grieving the loss of his soul mate and had stressors and needs I could not help with. On top of that, I was an adolescent who at that time was naturally trying to become more independent from his father. It was a pressure-cooker. We both needed to vent and be heard and guided, but it was hard to put the individual grief aside and be there for each other.

Q What are the positive lessons you learned about yourself from losing your Mom?

A It is very difficult to have any kind of perspective on the situation as you go through it. It is only after many years of reflection that I can answer this question. I realize today that I am the man I am in a large part because of the ordeal of losing my mother at such a young age. My personality, way of handling stressful situations, giving back, and mentoring young people all stem directly from my grief experience as a child. Judi’s House is the culmination of my lifelong grief process and has allowed me to find new meaning in my life, sharing my mother’s compassion with so many grieving children and families.

Q Looking back, what are some of the things that friends and the adults in your life could have done to be more helpful to you?

A I have thought about writing a book on this subject and titling it “When the Casseroles Run Out.” There was a period of about three months where everyone came by the house and checked in on us. Everyone knew that my Dad and I were not going to do much cooking, so they often would bring food. After a while, though, everyone goes back to their own lives—understandably—leaving us to fend for ourselves.

Looking back, it would have been nice to have that adult who took an interest in me and checked in occasionally and allowed me to be me. Not someone to judge me about how I was dealing with the situation, but someone who would be supportive no matter how I was feeling on a particular day. Someone who wouldn’t try to fix me, had “all the answers,” but someone to ask me questions and be a good listener.

Q How did sports help you cope with the death of your mother?

A I think it is safe to say that sports became my therapy during the most difficult time in my life. Sports gave me structure when I was lost. It gave me teammates when I was lonely. It gave me a constructive outlet for the anger which was building inside me. It gave me purpose when life seemed to lack direction. Sports taught me that you get out only as much as you put into something, which was an important equation for a kid like me who didn't think life was all that fair after his mother dies.

“There are people that care about you. There are other kids that are going through similar situations. You do not have to be alone in grief.”

Q What would be your advice to kids who have lost a parent?

A It is alright for you to be angry, sad, relieved, confused, happy, and all the emotions in between.

There are people who care about you. There are other kids who are going through similar situations to yours. You do not have to be alone in grief.

You will have questions to which you will be unable to find the answer-and that is okay.

Do something that honors your loved one who died. Make them proud. It will give you a sense of accomplishment and help transform your relationship with the person from a physical one to a spiritual or emotional one. Judi's House is the culmination of my grief process, and has allowed me to share my mother's compassion with so many grieving children and families.



EIGHT TIPS TO HELP GRIEVING CHILDREN

It can be hard to know how to help a grieving child or family. There are no handbooks, and lots of us are afraid of “doing the wrong thing.” So despite our good intentions, many of us do nothing—or, worse yet, withdraw. The truth is, the support of friends, neighbors and other concerned adults is critical. It’s not hard to help. Here are ideas for ways to be helpful to grieving kids and their families.

1

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ENGAGE

Relatives, neighbors, friends, teachers, and coaches can have an enormous influence on children. When a child you know loses a parent, it is important to engage that child on some level. Visit with the family. Share a favorite memory—any gesture that shows you care can help.



3

IT'S OKAY TO ASK

When in doubt, ask a grieving child how you can help. Expect that you might get a range of answers or even a myriad of questions about grief. Check in with them every now and then. If they don't want to talk, that's okay. Children find comfort when adults are considerate of their feelings.

2

LISTEN AND BE PRESENT

Having an opportunity to tell his or her story is often beneficial to a child's healing process. It is important to really listen when they are sharing. Children need adults in their lives who are present with them in their grief. Be open to sharing your own story, but do not monopolize the conversation. And make sure to respect a child's desire **not** to talk about their grief.



4

UNDERSTAND HOW CHILDREN GRIEVE

Grieving kids do not just “get over it.” The truth is that in some ways, children will grieve for the rest of their life. It is important to remember that each child has his or her own way of grieving. Some are expressive, while others are reluctant to share. Honor each child's story and be respectful of their grief journey.

5

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RITUALS

Rituals can give children tangible ways to acknowledge their grief and to honor the memory of those who have died. Lighting candles, recognizing special occasions, sharing stories about those who have died or doing something kind for someone else in memory of a special person are a few of the ways rituals can be used with grieving children. Be cautious not to “push” a ritual on a child and always make rituals optional for children to participate in or not.



7

LEND A HAND, BUT BE SPECIFIC

It’s a good idea for grieving parents to delegate more, but they often hesitate to do so. Don’t wait to be asked—and be specific when you do ask. Instead of using a blanket sentiment like “Let me know how I can help” ask pointedly, “Could I take your kids to basketball practice on Tuesday?”



8

SPREAD THE WORD

What you do as an individual is commendable, but it “takes a community” to help the healing process. Make sure to talk to **your** friends about engaging with grieving families. Be an advocate whose mission is to ensure that grieving children and families do not have to grieve alone.



6

BRING YOUR FAMILIES TOGETHER

Although invitations might be turned down, continue to invite grieving children and families to participate in social gatherings and outings. It is encouraging to grieving children and their families when they are included in normal community activities or social gatherings.

For more information on how you can help, please visit the National Alliance for Grieving Children website at www.childrengrieve.org or New York Life Foundation Bereavement Resources at www.newyorklifefoundation.org



A MOTHER REFLECTS

SANDY BRUNO

Sandy Bruno's husband Marc died unexpectedly on March 17, 2009. Sandy lives in Warren, N.J. with her two daughters Sarah and Elizabeth, ages 9 and 10.

The hardest words I have ever said in my life—and will ever say for that matter—were, “girls, your daddy is dead.” The wonderful, big and strong man who had wished them “sweet dreams” the night before was never coming back.



As a mom, I am conditioned to make what is wrong with the world right for my girls. But I can't fix this. I can only help them navigate through it.

As my girls walked into school the week after their dad died, they were afraid and nervous. Would they have to answer questions about their dad and his death, would they be able to hold back their tears, would their friends notice the big “D” that they felt was tattooed on their forehead?

While those initial fears have eased, sometimes even the happiest of events becomes hard. At a recent school show, my daughter stood up on stage, disengaged and obviously sad. For the life of me

I couldn't figure out what was wrong—and then it hit me. Looking out into the audience, all she saw were the faces of her friends' dads, knowing full well she would never see her own Dad's face again.

It's hard to know what may trigger a memory or thought about Marc, what things may bring on a new set of fears or worries. A simple play-date when a friend's dad is at home brings tears and sadness. They see the friend's dad interacting with their friend and they see first-hand something they will never get to enjoy again. Even a wedding brings on tears when my eight year old sees the father/daughter dance and realizes that she will never have that dance with her dad.

“My daughters feel isolated and alone when no one mentions Marc. In the words of my youngest, ‘It makes me feel invisible.’”

You never know when the sadness will take over, when the pain will come flooding back. That is what is hard for a surviving parent, trying to handle the pain when it arrives and helping them to work through it, each in their own individual way—all while simultaneously dealing with your own grief.

Their dad's death makes my daughters feel different from the others. They don't want to feel different and alone, but they do. They are also upset because adults in their lives promised to be there for them after Marc's death—and haven't been. My girls don't understand why people don't recognize their loss or why the adults in their world are too afraid to approach the issue of death, ignoring their pain simply because they don't know what to say.

That's the thing. There are no magic words, but any word, or maybe just a hug, is better than avoiding the issue altogether. My daughters feel isolated and alone when no one mentions Marc. In the words of my youngest, “It makes me feel invisible.”

I just don't understand how we, as a society, can so readily ignore kids' grief. It's not just because I see how it has affected my family first hand. I look at my daughter's fourth grade and see three other children without a parent. This is a difficult reality to brush aside.



These are hard things to learn and accept at ages of six and eight, but my girls are resilient. Each day brings with it new joys—and sometimes new struggles—but they are smiling more, laughing more, and finding joy in more things. That doesn't mean we don't miss Marc each and every day; we do. But we are finding what works for us in our grief journey—a journey that is different for everyone—helped along by an understanding word, a hug, or helping hand.

IN THE WORDS OF GRIEVING CHILDREN

As part of the research, children were asked some open-ended questions. Here are some of their responses.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST THING MOST PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND ABOUT LOSING A PARENT WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG?



It hurts, but I want be treated the same.

Live every moment like it is your last and try your best to treat everyone like how you want to be treated.

It is fine to ask about the parent that was lost; we want to talk about them sometimes. If we're comfortable talking about them, our friends should be okay with listening to us.

It's not easy at school when the whole time you need to pay attention. I'm often busy thinking about my dad.

That it hurts but as long as you have good friends it makes the pain easier to deal with.

Stay strong. Everything will be okay and even if it's not okay, it's not the end.



IF YOU COULD TELL YOUR MOM/DAD ONE THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?



I love you. I am sad and happy at the same time.

I miss you, I love you and I hope you're happy where ever you are.

I hope you are proud of me.

I passed and I'm in 6th grade now!

I'm playing basketball, FINALLY!



IN THE WORDS OF GRIEVING CHILDREN

The following “text chats” were developed by grieving children as part of a healing exercise.

Courtesy of The Mourning Star Center.



Sup! dude: P

Wuts wrong? = O

awww that's horrible :(i <3 u, so sorry, do you want to talk?

u no I got u rite? U can always talk to me im here 4u XOXO

I think its ok 2 cry do u want me 2 come ova

Hey

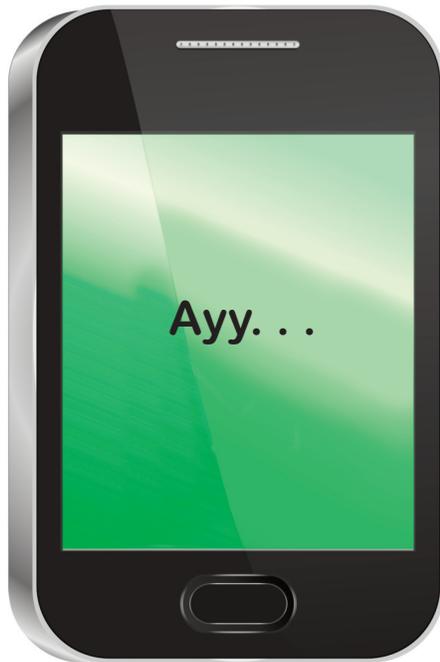
my mom died </3 :(

its really hard and I cant accept the fact that shes gone I cry every nite and im depressed over this I just want her to come back :(

no matter where im at I think of her and I break down

YEA!!!! I need sum 1 2 talk 2





“ nothing really. . . .hbu?

ive been feeling kind of bad tho bro. . .

My dads death has juss been getting 2 me – its juss not the same without him

ight maybe I will chek into that. THX BRO

ill be there

oh u know same ol.

Yea? What's on ur mind man?

I feel u dog. . . .do u want to play some ball after school? It might help u feel better. . . .bro that gurl tonya had a dad die 2. She talks 2 the counselor or something maybe u should 2.

no prob take it easy =/ c u on the courts bro

”

RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

www.childrengrieve.org

Offers a national listing of programs for grieving children, teens and their families.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOOL CRISIS AND BEREAVEMENT

www.cincinnatichildrens.org/service/n/school-crisis

Includes information on how schools and school-related personnel can support children who are dealing with loss and crisis.

THE NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION

www.newyorklife.com/foundation

State-by-state listing of organizations serving grieving adults and youth, with suggested readings and web sites.

COMFORT ZONE CAMP

www.comfortzonecamp.org

Provides online grief resources for adults and teens, information about free bereavement camps for children ages 7 to 17 and support groups for adults and children ages 5 and up.

THE MOYER FOUNDATION

www.moyerfoundation.org

The mission of The Moyer Foundation is to empower children in distress by providing education and support—helping them to live healthy and inspired lives.

FOR TEACHERS—SCHOLASTIC

www.scholastic.com/childrenandgrief

Guidance and Support resources. Learn how to best help children who might otherwise feel alone and lost as they navigate through their grief.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

The National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC) promotes awareness of the needs of children and teens grieving a death and provides education and resources for anyone who wants to support them. NAGC provides a network for nationwide communication between hundreds of children's bereavement centers who want to share ideas, information and resources with each other to better support the families they serve in their own communities. To learn more, please visit: www.childrenrgrieve.org



ABOUT THE NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION

Inspired by New York Life's tradition of service and humanity, the New York Life Foundation has, since its founding in 1979, provided more than \$155 million in charitable contributions to national and local nonprofit organizations. Through its focus on "Nurturing the Children," the Foundation supports programs that benefit young people, particularly in the areas of educational enhancement and childhood bereavement. The Foundation also encourages and facilitates the community involvement of employees, agents, and retirees of New York Life through its Volunteers for Life program. To learn more, please visit the Foundation's Web site at: www.newyorklifefoundation.org

