



Helping Kids with Grief After Loss During the Pandemic

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Key points to remember about helping a child cope with the death of a loved one

- After a death, many children want to share their story
- Telling their story is a healing experience
- One of the best ways adults can help young grievers is to listen to their stories
- Children also need continuity (normal activities), care (plenty of hugs and cuddles) and connection (to still feel connected to the person who has died and to you)

Steps to remember how to help grieving children

- *Tell the truth* – As tempting as it is, be honest about what happened, in an age-appropriate way. Kids know when we are not being truthful and it can erode their trust.
- *Reassure children* – Let them know it will be OK and you are there for them.
- *Encourage self-expression* – Ways to do this may include art, singing and dancing.
- *Say good-bye* – If possible, allow them a last visit with their loved one. If not possible, have a private memorial together; share stories, write letters and celebrate their life.
- *Constructive action* – Take an action that allows them to demonstrate their love and grief for the person lost. For example, releasing a balloon, writing a letter or planting a tree.

Books for children who are grieving

- *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst (Ages 3 – 8)
- *I Miss You - A First Look at Death* by Pat Thomas (Ages 4 – 8)
- *Tear Soup* by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck Deklyen (Ages 8 – 12)
- *Mick Harte Was Here* by Barbara Park (Ages 8 – 12)
- *When Children Grieve: For Adults to Help Children Deal with Death, Divorce, Pet Loss, Moving, and Other Losses* by John W. James, Russell Friedman (Adults)

Coping/Stress Management Activities

Hot Chocolate Breaths

- Pretend you are holding a cup of hot chocolate in your hands
- Breathe in through your nose while you lift the hot chocolate up to your nose to smell its goodness. Count to 5 while you breathe in.
- Breathe out through your mouth to blow on the hot chocolate to cool it down. Count to 5 while you breathe out and lower the cup.
- Repeat until you feel calm

Coping/Calm Down Kit

Together, you and your child can create a box of special activities your child can use to help alleviate stress or when they need alone time. Suggested items:

- Music
- Journal
- Stress ball
- Bubbles
- Coloring pages
- Photos

Local Resources for Grieving Children

HFHS Behavioral Health Clinical Therapists

Through the school-based program, therapists are able to help Pediatric patients/families by providing grief/loss counseling/therapy and additional behavioral/mental health needs that may be present. These services are being offered via MyChart Mobile Visits and/or Virtual Telephone Calls.

- Please contact Amy Gallagher at (313) 451-0720 to schedule an appointment

Henry Ford SandCastles

2850 W Grand Blvd, 3rd Floor, Detroit, MI 48202

(313) 771-7005

sandcastles@hfhs.org

SandCastles is creating virtual groups during the pandemic. In-person groups will be available once the pandemic clears.

Anchors Programs for Children Hospice of Michigan

400 Mack Ave., Detroit, MI 48201

(888) 247-5704

www.hom.org

Includes pediatric hospice, Compass palliative support for Children, perinatal hospice care and the Center for Pediatric Research & Education

Camp Kangaroo Children's Grief Camp Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care of Michigan

27355 John R Road, Madison Heights, MI 48071

(248) 291-2698

www.seasons.org

No charge children's grief camp - occurs annually over MLK weekend

The Guidance Center

13101 Allen Rd, Southgate, MI 48195

(734) 785-7700

<https://www.guidance-center.org/>

Currently participating in Telehealth: both phone and videoconferencing. Provides children's behavioral health services

Ele's Place

Ann Arbor (734) 929-6640 / Flint (810) 242-3040

<https://www.elesplace.org/>

Virtual/phone-based counseling, access to grief related activities/resources/articles/book lists.

Additional Resources

www.healthychildren.org

<https://www.stopbreathethink.com/kids/>