

WHEN GRIEF ENTERS YOUR CLASSROOM

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS: WHAT TO DO AND WHAT TO SAY

*“The haunting
memories of
grief and loss,
once gone,
are back like a
door slammed
in my face.”*

– Dainan Anderson
GED Program



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This booklet is dedicated to:

Muffy Winklemann

August 26, 1946 – October 5, 1993

RCSD educator, sister, daughter, wife, mother and friend.
She continues to be the inspiration for the Grief Resource Network.

From “Don’t Take My Grief Away” by Doug Manning

***A cut finger—
Is numb before it bleeds,
It bleeds before it hurts,
It hurts until it begins to heal,
It forms a scab and itches until finally,
The scab is gone and
A smaller scar is left where
Once there was a wound.
Grief is the deepest wound you
Have ever had.
Like a cut finger,
It goes through stages and
Leaves a scar.***

Student excerpts from
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INTRODUCTION

“The day started out normal enough, and it ended up being fatal for two people. On the corner of Seward and Cady, a boy and his father had been shot. I was there to watch. It was just one of those days.”

– Candyce Singletary
Marshall

Dear Colleague,

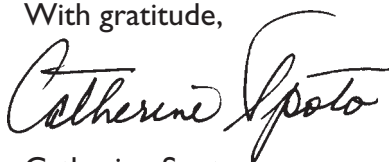
What better way to celebrate the tenth year anniversary of the Rochester City School District Grief Resource Network than to honor the classroom teacher! It is the classroom teacher who has the most direct contact with the student, usually knows the student best, and deals regularly with student behaviors resulting from grief and loss...so, *When Grief Enters Your Classroom* is our gift to you. I invite you to spend some time with this booklet, to discuss it with your colleagues, and then to keep it handy as a resource. Consult with your school's grief resource specialists to incorporate it into strategic planning for the classroom and school. We do not expect you to be a grief counselor or provide a support group in your classroom, but we do know that grief and loss are a natural and inevitable part of the human experience that requires special care.

The Rochester City School District's Grief Resource Network was established in 1994 by the Board of Education's Student Support Committee and was created in partnership with Genesee Region Home Care and Hospice. The school district recognized that its success in creating a culture of caring and confronting issues of grief and loss was crucial to the success of its educational mission.

The Network consists of at least two staff members from each school who have voluntarily received training as grief resource specialists and who provide onsite support. We thank them for their commitment! Since its inception, the Network has conducted workshops for staff and community; presented at local and national forums; hosted experts in the field of grief; produced a video, CD and two publications; developed a newsletter for grief resource specialists; and obtained grant funding to provide grief materials to school libraries. Both RTA and ASAR have been supporters and sponsors of numerous Network initiatives.

The Grief Resource Network continues to exist after a decade because hundreds of dedicated volunteers know it is vital and choose to devote themselves to this cause. You will not find the Network on any budget line. Our partner Genesee Region Home Care receives no compensation. Yet, the Network continues to survive and thrive. We are committed to remain a presence and a resource for you, the classroom teacher, as you reach out to students. Let us know how we can help.

With gratitude,



Catherine Spoto
RCSD Grief Resource Network

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



The success of a school district is dependent first and foremost on the quality of its education program. In addition, the Rochester City School District recognizes that creating a culture of caring and emotional support for students is also crucial to academic success.

With that premise in mind, the District created its Grief Resource Network ten year ago. School staff members volunteer to be trained in understanding the language of grief, helping students cope with loss of various types, and turning their emotional struggles into opportunities for growth.

This network of skilled, trusted adults from each school effectively assists our students in dealing with grief and loss in healthy ways. That in turn allows those students to maintain their focus on learning. It also strengthens the bond between student and school, a bond that is more important than ever in the lives of our students.

At this ten-year milestone, I salute everyone who has helped our Grief Resource Network to grow and succeed. The positive support you provide to our students at their most troubles times is valuable beyond measure as we foster their social, emotional and academic growth each day.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Manuel J. Rivera". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Dr. Manuel J. Rivera
Rochester Superintendent of Schools

WHEN GRIEF ENTERS YOUR CLASSROOM

***It's hard to bear when
nobody's there,
I could still smell
her hair
And feel the warmth
of her care.
I lost the will to sleep
at night,
I lost the will to
continue to fight.
I lost the choice of
wrong and right,
I lost the care that
embraced me tight.***

– Tyree Powell
Franklin

***A while ago I told a
close friend that I
hated him;
Then the next thing
you know,
We were at his funeral.
I wish I had a chance
to say, "Sorry..."
I wish.***

– Shiesha Balkman
Edison

We all know that education has historically focused on the 3 R's—Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Yet, we know that when students come to school worried about things at home, the 3 R's may not be very important to them. There is much turmoil in students' lives today, with loss being a huge factor. Students may have a parent or sibling who has left the home, one who is unemployed, a family member with medical problems, the stress of living in unsafe surroundings, and of course, the ultimate loss of someone close to them through death. Some of our students have seen a shooting, or know someone who has been killed in the community. Children enter our classrooms every day experiencing these kinds of problems; it is the classroom teacher who usually is first to know that something is wrong.

While most of us have experienced some type of loss in our life, it is sometimes hard to know what to do or say when we hear of someone else's sorrow. What is not OK is to do nothing! This booklet offers you, and every other classroom teacher, a few new tools available when grief enters your classroom.

In keeping to the theme of the 3 R's, this booklet has been arranged with the theme of the 5 R's: Recognition, Response, Rituals, Referral, and Resources, the pivotal markers needed in helping students through loss.

Recognition.....	pages 9-10
Response	pages 10-12
Rituals	pages 13-14
Referral	pages 14-15
Resources	pages 17-18

Actual stories and events plus examples of student writings illustrate each section. The appendix at the back includes additional worksheets and suggestions for you to use with your students.

Whenever a homicide occurs in the city, I go to school knowing that it will have personally touched my students and that family relationships and other connections are often present. When the Democrat and Chronicle printed a list of the seventy-seven homicides occurring in 2003 in Monroe and surrounding counties, I debated whether to post it on my classroom wall. After seeking the guidance of several students, I decided to display the article and incorporate it into that day's English lesson. Students clustered around it pointing to the photographs of the people they knew. A heartfelt discussion ensued with even normally reticent students participating. A seventeen year old girl spoke of her certainty that she would die young and spelled out the directions she had given her family for her funeral—"no dress, just the jeans I always wore; don't cry and be sad, but have a party." Another young woman spoke of the dream which foretold her death on December 14 and the annual anxiety as that date approached on the calendar. Together we read Tupac Shakur's poem "In the Event of My Demise" and discussed what it meant to "die for a principle." Students were vehement in their belief that these homicides were the result of "junk"—drugs, women, things definitely not worth dying for. They spoke of the changes they needed to make in their daily lives if they were to realize their dreams and aspirations. The hour was powerful for all involved. It allowed students to acknowledge their feelings, express their fears, and consider alternatives. The following day a student brought me this poem, which eloquently expresses the interior struggles of so many of our students.

Submitted by Catherine Spoto
English Teacher at Clinton Avenue Learning Center
and Chairperson of the Grief Resource Network

Deep Sadness

– By Tamara Stock

***Throughout this life there has been deep sadness.
At those times people take advantage,
Play games with both your mind and feelings,
Not caring about what you have to deal with,
Not showing any kind of sincerity.
When will things become clear to me?
Every day waking up feeling sorrow,
Hoping that good will come with tomorrow,
Hoping that one day someone will care,
Hoping that someday someone will want to hear
What I have to say about this life I live.
It's come down to where I have nothing to give,
A heart that's been broken into a million pieces
Pain so bad it sucks the life from you like leeches.
Sick of the world and all of the violence,
What I would give for some silence.
In the event of my demise I hope all is well
For those who care to listen to the story I tell.
Life is too short
Never knowing when it may end,
Deep sadness, a feeling that only God can mend.***

Loss, grief, trauma are human experiences we all share. It is also an experience that affects us immediately and over time. The moment we become aware of a loss/trauma we are no longer outside but within its wave.

As members of the schools' community, preparation is a very familiar task. When thinking about loss/trauma, preparation may seem out of place. Each loss is so unique, how can we be prepared? Recognizing that any loss we have experienced has affected us, is a place to start. Having a plan for how to manage a loss when it occurs in our school community is helpful. Within the plan there needs to be a focus on how to take care of yourself. If we do not care for ourselves, how can we be available to care for students, families, colleagues? Take a moment to reflect on the losses in your life, how have they affected you, how have you managed them, what has been helpful/not helpful, where are you within the process of healing, what are specific ways you take care of yourself and allow others to care for you. Share this reflective process with students, families, colleagues so they can use this process as a way of preparing, caring for and healing themselves. Loss, grief, and trauma are shared experiences.

Submitted by Louise DeLaus
School Social Worker and
Member of RCSD Crisis Team

I. RECOGNITION

“It has been almost a year and I still miss her. I think that’s normal though. I’m scared that I will never get over losing her. Every day spent without her here is like not being myself.”

– Patricia Perry
Monroe

“My loss took place in the country of Laos. My father is just a person in a picture I look at now and then. There is loss in that alone”.

– Phang Inthavong

“All grief must not be thought of as being awful or destructive. The world would be worse without it. If no person’s life were significant enough to cause weeping and if the measure of our years on earth were nothing, then we would not be “real” human beings. Profound grief is preceded by deep love which gives life meaning.” (From: *A Time to Grieve, A Time to Grow* by Roberta Beckmann in *Healing Magazine*). The grieving process is essential to healing a broken heart. Grief is real. It affects us physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. Certainly, a preschool student does not experience loss in the same way that an adolescent or adult does, but everyone who experiences grief has to have the time to go through the grieving process.

So what are the signs of normal grief?

General reactions that may occur are:

Shortened attention span, trouble concentrating, not completing school work, headache or stomach ache, impaired judgment, short term memory problems, fatigue, depression, isolation from others, being overly sensitive, disruptive in class or becoming the class clown, hyperactive, impulsive, disorganized, difficulty following directions (the need to re-teach is not uncommon).

More age-specific characteristics:

Ages 3-5 years: Bedwetting and/or needing to sleep with an adult are common, as are inability to verbalize feelings, asking questions, playing “death,” reverting to baby talk, and wanting a bottle and diapers. Preschoolers do not understand the word “forever;” their concept of death is temporary.

Ages 6-10 years: Playing “death” and “funeral,” increasing shyness, acting out may increase, grades may suffer, school may become a safe haven. Young school age children begin to realize that death is permanent, but they think that only old people die. Older school age children know that death can happen to young and old, and has many causes. They also are intrigued by what happens to the body. By the age of 10, they may begin to fear the death of their own parent.

Ages 11-teens: Anger is normal, feelings of everything being unfair, acting out occurs, search for spirituality, philosophical talks with friends, increase of risky behaviors. Teenagers often intellectualize death, and may even fantasize about their own death, but don’t think it will ever happen to them.

“When the firefighters arrived, it was too late. My brother was gone. They put out the fire, and they pronounced him dead. I cried and cried because I knew that he was gone for good. To this day, I pray for my family. Even though Travis is gone, I still talk to him every night.”

– Lekia Miller
Charlotte

“I’m sad because my mom is not around. I’m scared because I do not know what happened. I’m depressed because I can’t talk to her anymore.”

– Robert Kintner
Monroe

While not every child experiences loss in the same way, all loss must be mourned. This is an ongoing process with no easy answers. We need to be mindful that children carry experiences of loss into adult life, and that grieving is automatic, natural and lifelong. As educators, it is as important to help students through these challenges as it is to teach them a new math problem or history fact. Learning appropriate coping mechanisms helps throughout life.

II. RESPONSE

Fred Rogers, the creator of “Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood,” recognized that loss sparks fear in children and adolescents. He worked to help children understand their feelings and not be so frightened. In his book, When Someone You Care about Has Died, he included this message for adults.

“It can be hard to know just what children need at such times, but very often the same things that can help us can help them, too—simple things like hugging, talking, being close, and having quiet times together. It’s easy to forget that children are having some of the same feelings we’re having—like sadness, loneliness, even anger and guilt. Knowing that those feelings are natural and normal for all of us can make it easier for us to share them with one another. . . . Making difficult matters mentionable is one of the best ways to help make them manageable.”

As a classroom teacher, don’t be afraid to acknowledge and talk about loss.

Here are some examples of what to do:

- Be simple and straightforward. A simple statement such as, “I’m sorry your mom died” is much more effective than a long attempt to comfort.
- Listen and respect the child’s feelings and fears. Give them a safe place to talk and accept whatever feelings they are sharing.
- Don’t be afraid to be honest, using words like dead and died (or, in jail, arrested). This helps to create an atmosphere of acceptance.
- Share your feelings with the child and even the class (with the child’s permission). Let them know it is okay to cry, be angry, sad and even to laugh. Recognize that laughter and play do not mean that a child is not grieving. Also, don’t be afraid to show your own sadness.
- Realize that a child may need a place to be alone, even in school.
- If a very young person has died through illness, reassure a child

“I remember the night my brother called and told me that my mom had passed away. It’s going to be so hard to walk across the graduation stage in June without her there.”

– Meisha DiAguilar

***I lost my father to cancer about a year ago.
Why God chose him to die, I’ll never know.
Now he’s gone so far away.
The heartache of loss gets worse and worse every day.
He died in the hospital all alone.
“Your father died,” my mom said on the phone.
I should have been by his side.
I should have been there when he died.***

– Sherri Grant
Franklin

that this is highly unusual.

- Trust your own judgment. If something the child is telling you doesn’t seem right, call home and check it out with the parent, or ask the grief resource specialist, school counselor or social worker for information.
- Attend the wake or funeral, if possible.
- Send a note to the family, expressing your sadness at their loss.

Here are some examples of things to say that students have appreciated upon returning to school:

“I’m sorry to hear that (your mom, brother) died.”
 “I can’t know how you feel, but I want to help in any way that I can.”
 “Let’s talk about what might make you more comfortable in class.”
 “I can see that you are very sad.”
 “I wish that I could take your pain away.”

Here are some things that are not helpful to say:

“I know just how you feel.”
 “Don’t cry, you’ll upset yourself.”
 “You have to be brave for your parents.”
 “He lived a good life.”
 “He is out of pain.”

Supporting students in the classroom setting does not have to take a lot of time. Here are some suggestions developed by Karen Sangmeister, an RCSD Grief Resource Specialist.

What to do if you have only 5 minutes:

- Help the student to figure out how he or she will get through the rest of the school day.
- Set up a future touch-base time.

What to do if you have 15 minutes:

- Listen (“What happened?”)
- Help the student figure out how he or she will get through the rest of the school day, and perhaps the evening at home.
- Help the student to identify one other resource person, at home or in school. Preferably, this is not a person who has suffered the same loss.
- Set up a future touch-base time.

What to do if you have a class period:

- Listen.
- Reassure that the student’s feelings are normal.

*Leaning against the
bathroom door,
I cried in solitude,
feeling ashamed
To unveil my feelings
in front of dry-eyed
people.*

– Lynette Evans
SOTA

- Check child’s understanding of the circumstances of loss (to reference and to correct misperceptions). Ask what parents told them, and try to build on that.
- Help student to plan the rest of the day, and ahead.
- Identify one other resource person, other than a family member, if possible.
- Set up a future touch-base time.

What to do when a student discloses to a whole class:

- Listen respectfully; encourage students to do the same.
- Model the behavior you want the students to have.
- If the student has friends in the room, let them help to take care of the student while you get the rest of the class back on track.
- Set up a time to talk with the student alone, or with a friend present, if the student chooses.

In all cases, decide if you need to report to: other teacher(s), administration, social worker, parents, Child Protective Services. Make the child aware of the actions you are taking. Consider a note in the cumulative file, if appropriate.

In 2000, Landon Richardson, a senior at Edison Tech High School, died in school of complications due to asthma. Landon was a very popular young man with a wonderful sense of humor. Upon his death, the senior class was given an opportunity to grieve his death. There were counselors available who met with seniors in small groups. The auditorium was opened up all day, and students were able to sit and reflect—whether in small groups, or alone—accompanied by a pianist playing soft background reflective music. Counselors led discussions as to what the senior class had wanted to do for Landon and his family. The principal allowed each senior to have the option to attend the funeral and buses were rented to provide transportation. Students were selected to eulogize Landon at his service—a service swept with powerful emotion and grief. Since students were given the time to appropriately grieve, we had no crisis after the fact, and all students were sent a positive message as how to honor their feelings of loss. Edison was able to model an effective and healthy way to handle a major loss of a student.

Submitted by Rose Marie Tischer
Teacher and Grief Resource Specialist

***Don't look at me
And think I am ok.
I have problems.
Don't assume
Just became I'm pretty
That I have a wonderful
life.
I am normal,
But I feel different.
I am depressed,
But I know how to hide it.***

– Miriam Gonzalez
GED Program

***"I am a young,
beautiful girl who's
looking for a mother.
Sometimes I wonder
if I will ever find her
before it's too late."***

– Princess Cooper
Marshall

***"I was raped at the
age of five. Nobody
would believe me."***

– Pam Dorn
GED Program

III. RITUAL

The word “trauma” comes from the Greek, meaning “wound”. The losses our students experience create many kinds of wounds and will manifest in other symptoms if not acknowledged and reconciled. The act of mourning gives honor to these losses, helps us accept what has happened, and allows for reconnecting to life. Rituals help students understand that the death of one dream is not the death of every dream. Rituals can be simple, meant only for the grieving child, or multi-faceted, when a class or a whole school community is involved. Rituals work because they slow us down and help us to pay attention to what we are honoring. They also provide a safe structure, with a beginning and an end. As a classroom teacher, you have probably done many of these, but did not formally identify them as rituals.

Some widely used rituals and activities:

- Have students use construction paper, crayon, markers or clay to express their feelings about what happened.
- Write a letter (or draw a picture) to the deceased to say goodbye.
- Have younger students make a paper bag mask and then talk about the face and what it's feeling.
- Let students plan appropriate memorials of their choice with an emphasis on living.
- Encourage students to keep a journal, write poems, stories or music.
- Encourage the student to make a memory book. This can include pictures, drawings, letters, stories or even small physical items, such as a favorite piece of clothing.
- Read an age-appropriate book on grief to the class. Ask your librarian for suggestions.
- Have the class make a scrapbook about the deceased and share it with the family.
- Hold a ceremony, releasing a balloon with a special note.
- Create a memorial wall with stories and pictures.
- Plant a memory garden.
- Establish a scholarship fund.
- Establish a fundraiser, with the proceeds going toward the family's designated charity, or to the family, if money is needed.
- Develop a memorial page and picture in the school yearbook or newspaper.
- Fill a basket of homemade cookies or other treats that students bring in to deliver to their classmate after the family returns from the funeral.

***“I’m still mad that I
lost you in these
ruthless streets
The fact that you
can’t teach me lyrics
and new hip-hop
beats.
It’s been six long
years, and till this day
I still cry tears.”***

– Keyone Rivers
Marshall

***Do you know how it
feels to lose a child?
Well I do.
I know God and what
He is about.
And in a blink of an eye,
He can take anything
away from you,
Including your child.
So be aware.***

– Gloria Sutton
Young Mothers

- If a student dies, have the class discuss what to do with the desk.
- Allow the bereaved child to tell the story as many times as is necessary.
- Encourage students and staff to donate books to the school library in honor of someone who is deceased.

IV. REFERRAL

Since there is no “right” way to grieve, complete with a magic time line, it is sometimes difficult to understand where the behaviors of normal grieving end and those of more complicated issues begin. As a classroom teacher, do not hesitate to use your judgment and knowledge of children if you feel something is wrong. Here are some of the “red flags” that professionals look for in determining signs of complicated mourning:

- Total denial of the reality of the death (or other loss)
- Persistent panic or fear
- School work falls drastically and does not improve over time
- Prolonged physical complaints without medical verification
- Chronic patterns of apathy and/or depression*
- Chronic hostility, acting-out toward others or self
- Prolonged change in typical behavior patterns or personality
- Consistent withdrawal from friends and family members
- Dramatic, ongoing changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Drug or alcohol abuse in older children
- Suicidal thoughts or actions

*** Depression and grief are often confused. Children who suffer from clinical depression:**

- Are unable to respond to comfort and support
- Are unwilling to respond to play situations
- Are unable to directly express anger about the loss
- Are unable to relate their feelings to any life event, even the loss
- Are unable to experience moments of joy
- Project a sense of hopelessness and chronic emptiness
- Express chronic physical complaints
- Often express generalized feelings of guilt (not specific to the loss)
- Have a deep loss of self-esteem

“After the funeral, I made myself believe that Rick wasn’t dead, but just away for a few days. I continued to wait for his arrival home every day. When my family couldn’t take my behavior any longer, my mother had me taken to the hospital. I continued with counseling with my loss. Finally, after a year, I was able to grieve.”

- Anonymous
GED Program

If you recognize any of these indicators in a student, here are some things you can do:

- Consult with your grief resource specialist at any point through the process for support, ideas and suggestions. It always helps to talk over your concerns with someone, and this is a great place to begin.
- Talk to the parent and see if they are noticing similar behaviors at home. Suggest an appointment with the pediatrician or family doctor.
- In an elementary setting, talk to the school nurse or social worker to see if they can assess how the child is doing with the loss.
- At the middle/high school level, share your concerns with the school counselor and ask that person to become involved.
- Encourage the student to seek counseling or join a grief support group, either through the school or a community based agency. If parents or students are reluctant, try saying something like, “I think it would help. The painful feelings you have about the loss are just as real as the pain you experience when you fall off your bike. Just like there are doctors and nurses to help you with a broken arm, there are people who can help you with the pain of your grief.”
- If the family refuses to get help, ask the school counselor, nurse, psychologist or social worker to intervene. They are trained in knowing what to do next.

Several years ago, Regina Atwater, a teacher at Monroe Middle School, was hit by a car as she crossed the street at the end of the school day. She was taken off life support several days later and died. Since her death and funeral occurred during winter break, it was important to meet with her students when school resumed. Knowing her love for animals, her students asked to have a schoolwide fundraiser and use the money to purchase animal books for the library in her name. In the springtime, a weeping cherry tree was purchased and planted in the front of the building. The staff and students and her husband were there. Students read poems and anyone who wanted to write Mrs. Atwater a message was able to burn it in a fire pot outside. As the smoke rose up into the blue sky, we were able to say our goodbyes. The tree is beautiful and her animal books are still displayed on a special bookshelf in the library.

Submitted by Jeanne Carlivati,
School Counselor and Grief Resource Specialist

In the spring of 2002, a first grade student at School No. 20 was struck and killed by an automobile. The incident occurred on a Friday afternoon at approximately 4:30 p.m. The media covered the news of the tragedy throughout the weekend. Several staff members formed a telephone tree to notify the teaching staff regarding the incident and to schedule a staff meeting before school on Monday. The school principal and social worker reported to the school on Sunday afternoon to develop strategies regarding the best method of addressing both students and staff. The staff members gathered at 8:15 a.m. on Monday. Materials relating to grief and loss were issued to the staff and they also received yellow ribbons to wear and distribute to the students in their class. The Rochester City School District's Crisis Team was utilized to provide support for the school community. A letter was distributed to parents.

This tragedy was the third incident in 2002 involving a student at No. 20 School and a motor vehicle accident. As a result of the tragedy, the school staff developed a comprehensive traffic safety program in conjunction with Monroe County Office of Traffic Safety. Later in the year, a tree was planted in the front of the school in memory of the student.

Submitted by Greta Davis
School Social Worker at School No. 20

V. RESOURCES

*13 years, still ain't
seen your face;
You left my life
without a trace.
No card, no word
from you at all,
Birthdays you missed,
didn't even call.
A storm is building I
need to unleash.*

– Janeese Stevenson
Marshall

*When I was young
You began to drift
away from me.
Far away from me,
Down the wrong
path,
Doing the wrong
thing,
In jail far away from
me.*

– Derrell Wright
Jefferson

Just as you use resources for study in your classroom, it is important to have resources available to you and your students when loss occurs.

At the end of this booklet, you will find a bibliography and web site listings where you can find information on grief, mourning and rituals. Don't forget to also include the following in your list of resources:

Yourself. Your life experiences and your work in the classroom give you the necessary skills to support students in crisis.

Parents. They can be a wealth of information about what is happening at home.

Your school's grief resource specialist(s). They have volunteered and/or were chosen by the principal because of their knowledge of how to help in the grieving process. Make sure you know who they are and do not hesitate to go to them for help.

School counselors and social workers. These are the staff members most comfortable in dealing with this subject.

School librarian. Most librarians have books at varying skill levels on death and dying and would be willing to either read a story to your class or help them research material on the subject. Also, the school has a Grief Resource Box containing helpful information on grief and loss. Ask to see it.

Grief Resource Directory. This informative booklet, published in 2003 by the Grief Resource Network, lists the names of local organizations and therapists who provide support to grieving families. It also contains a bibliography and website addresses, as well as national resources for survivors of violence. This booklet has been made available to all GRN specialists, as well as school librarians.

Rochester Public Library. The main library and its branches have an extensive selection of resources on the subject of grief, including bibliographies and videos to be used in the classroom.

*When things began to
fall apart
I felt excruciating pain
in my heart
That's when I found out
A family we would no
longer be
I used to think it was
because of me.*

– Tamera Miller
Franklin

Before loss occurs, consider building grief education into your classroom. Here are some suggestions for things you can do:

- Make lesson plans that incorporate death and grief into the curriculum.
- Teach that death and grief are a part of life, like being born, sleeping and eating.
- Take advantage of teachable moments to discuss death and grief before personal experiences occur.
- Use everyday encounters with death (stories in the news, etc.) for discussions.
- Discuss appropriate TV shows and movies.
- Normalize death through class discussions and have students build their vocabulary, using words like mourning, grieving and loss.

The goal of helping children in grief is to help them acknowledge that there is a time for pain, and that's okay. There is also a time to move on. With the right type of support, children learn to work through their grief and often become stronger people for it. Your help is invaluable through this journey.

APPENDIX I

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

Often parents are unsure what to do because they are not done with their own grieving, and any help you can provide them is greatly appreciated. Here are some suggestions:

- Set aside special time to be with your child.
- Listen carefully so that she knows you hear her.
- Allow all feelings (encourage talking, not acting out).
- Relate to your child on her level.
- Let your child be part of the family grieving process.
- Talk honestly and let her see your own emotion.
- Explain that death is:
 - Not like sleep
 - Is final
 - Not a punishment
 - Not your child's fault
- Provide security and assure your child that someone will always care for them.
- As you yourself are grieving, continue to be the best parent you can.
- Allow time for healing.
- Seek professional services if you are worried about your child—you are not expected to have all the answers.

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Heegard, M. **When Someone Very Special Dies.** Minneapolis MN: Woodland, 1988. (A story line for children to illustrate or color. Open ended and practical.)

Jewett, C.L. **Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss.** Harvard, MA: Harvard Common Press, 1982. (Useful advice for adults from a child and family therapist.)

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Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. **On Children and Dying.** New York NY: Macmillan, 1985. (Offers the families of dead and dying children honest information, helpful ideas and strength to cope.)

Kushner, Harold. **When Bad Things Happen to Good People.** New York, NY: Avon Books, 1981. (Rabbi Kushner shares his thoughts and feelings of why we suffer. The book was written following his son's illness and subsequent death.)

LaTour, K. **For Those Who Live: Helping Children Cope with the Death of a Brother or Sister.** Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation, 1983.

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Stein, Sara Bonnett. **About Dying: An Open Family Book for Parents and Children Together.** 1974.

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Wolfelt, Ph.D. Alan. **Healing the Bereaved Child.** 1996. (An attractive presentation of enormously useful information by the leading expert in this field.)

Websites for Teachers:

Lesson Plans Dealing with Grief and Loss

How children often react to trauma, grief and anniversaries

www.Connectforkids.org/usr_doc/CopingwithGrief

A brief overview of each stage of grief and suggestions for helping teachers, counselors or others interacting with children during the denial stage.

www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-6980

List of links to resources specifically dealing with curriculum, materials, and lesson plans for teachers and parents to discuss terrorism, grief and trauma.

www.cmh Alliance.org/links.asp

Topics covered include grief, bereavement, recovery and other helpful information.

www.educationplanet.com/search/Health_Nutrition_and_Sports/DeathGrief

A resource for teachers, parents, counselors and other caring adults. Classroom strategies, book lists and a wealth of other resources for bereavement issues.

www.allkidsgrieve.org

Create masks of how grief looks. Kodak lesson plans for K-12. A kaleidoscope of ideas. Lesson plan exchange of art ideas from teachers to other teachers.

www.humanityquest.com/topic/art_activities/index.asp/theme1=grief

Trauma-specific resource materials and programs need to help children find relief from the terror of violent incidents. A help for schools, crisis teams and school counselors.

www.tlcinst.org

Helping Strategies for Dealing with Grief:

1. Search for inner peace.
2. Talk with loved ones/trusted people.
3. Use self-talk.
4. Reach for supports.
5. Learn to let people help you/soothe you.
6. Keep a journal.
7. Take it slow. Be gentle with yourself.
8. Start a sporting activity.
9. Develop a diversionary activity.
10. Play a musical instrument.
11. Make quiet time for yourself.
12. Make a list of 10 things you like to do. Make time for 2 of them.
13. Exercise.
14. Pray.
15. Join a group.
16. Take a course.
17. Read a book.
18. Listen to music.
19. Draw or paint a picture.



Grief Reactions

Listed below are some grief feelings or reactions you might have had. First, check in the left-hand column the reactions you have had. Then, in the right-hand column, check if you think it is “OK” or “Not OK” to have these reactions.

Reactions I have had	OK to HAVE	NOT OK to HAVE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Tears.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Restlessness (hard time sitting still)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Low level of energy.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Loneliness.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Relieved that the death is over	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Wondering who will take care of me now	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Find it hard to concentrate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Find it hard to care about things going on around me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Anger at God.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Anger at loved one for dying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Nightmares/Dreams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Fear that I might die the same way my loved one did	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 13. Guilt or regrets that I sometimes got mad at my loved one when he or she was alive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A Letter to...

Guided Imagery, Writing and Discussion

Objectives:

The students will:

- recall a happy memory involving a person they have lost.
- express their feelings and thoughts by writing a letter to the person.

Materials:

writing paper; cassette tape or CD player and relaxing music (optional)

Procedure:

Have the students close their eyes and take a comfortable position. If you have music, begin to play it at a low volume. In a gentle but audible voice, read the following guided imagery exercise, pausing for at least 5 seconds between phrases.

Take a deep breath and let it out slowly . . . Begin to relax your body and your mind . . . Keep breathing deeply . . . Feel the tension leave each part of your body . . . Relax your feet and ankles . . . your calves and thighs . . . your hips, stomach, and chest . . . your hands and arms. . . your back, shoulders and neck . . . your face . . . And while you are relaxing, begin to think about the person you have lost . . . See the person exactly the way you like to remember him or her . . . Picture everything in detail . . . And with this image in your mind, begin to recall a happy memory that you shared with the person . . . a vacation, a job that you did together, a meal . . . Remember it in detail . . . Recall the surroundings . . . the sounds . . . the aromas . . . what you both were wearing . . . what you said . . . how you felt . . . Keep breathing deeply while you relive completely that happy memory (pause 15 seconds) . . . Now, think of something that you would like to say to the person you lost . . . If you could communicate with this person right now, what would your message be? . . . Would you tell the person what you appreciated about him or her? . . . Would you share the memory you just recalled? . . . Would you ask a question? . . . See yourself speaking to the person now (pause 15 seconds) . . . When you are finished, say good-bye to the person . . . Take your time . . . Know that you can revisit this person in your mind whenever you wish . . . When you are

(Continued)

Stages of Loss

¥ Denial

When you know you are about to lose someone or something that you value, the first reaction is disbelief. No, this can't be happening.

Everything will be okay tomorrow. This is just a bad dream. I'll wake up soon.

¥ Anger

When you can no longer deny the loss, you experience frustration and anger. What did I do to deserve this? How can s/he do that to me?

This could only happen in an unfair, stupid world.

¥ Bargaining

After you express your anger, you may begin to feel hopeful again. You think, Maybe if I'm a better person, Dad will stay. If I promise to help take care of her, maybe God will let Grandma live. I'll change all of my bad habits and she'll like me again.

¥ Grieving

At this stage, you allow yourself to feel the pain and hurt. You may cry a lot and feel very depressed and hopeless. Difficult as it is, this is a very important stage. A person can't fully recover from a loss without grieving.

¥ Acceptance

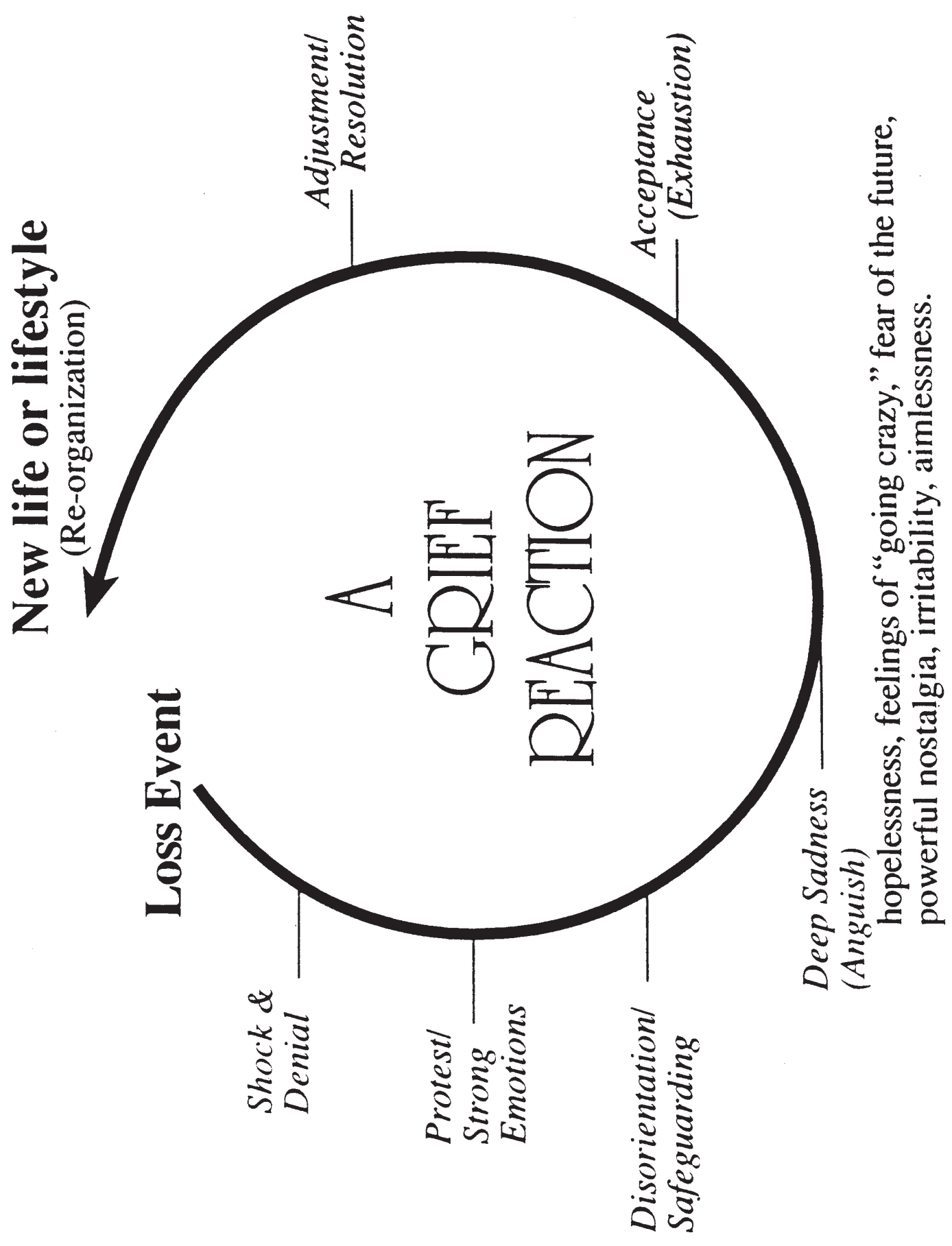
Finally, you start to feel okay again. You may still be sad sometimes, but life returns to normal and you no longer think constantly about the person or condition you lost.

Point out that people don't always go through the stages in sequence. Sometimes they bounce back and forth between a couple of stages for a long time. In some cases, completing the cycle can take many months. Friends, relatives, and teachers who don't realize how long it can take may wonder why the person hasn't snapped out of it.

Use the remainder of the time to facilitate discussion concerning the stages.

Discussion Questions:

1. How many of the stages have you been through?
2. How did you feel at each stage and how did you behave?
3. Which of the five stages are you in right now?
4. Many people who want to help simply don't know what to do or say. What would you like them to do or say?
5. What have you learned from this activity?



The Nature of Loss



Author: Jennie Matthews

Source: Living With Grief: At School, At Work, At Worship, 1999

Experiencing a sense of loss?

Grief grabs you when you're least prepared!

Do you:

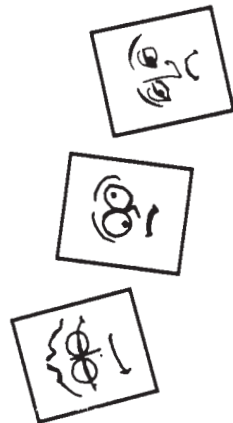
- start to say something and forget what it was you wanted to say?
- feel lonely even though you are in a room filled with people?
- feel overwhelmed with the flooding of many emotions?
- often misplace your books, keys, clothes, shoes, etc.?
- forget what you were about to do 5 minutes ago?
- become upset when watching TV or a movie; when reading a newspaper or a book?
- have a difficult time concentrating?
- cry for no apparent reason?
- feel cheated?
- feel a *twang* when you see a striking resemblance, a familiar hairdo, certain clothing?
- feel like staying in bed, or better yet, climbing under the bed?
- feel a sense of loss at Thanksgiving, birthdays, other holidays?
- feel someone's missing even though you are surrounded by loved ones?
- feel a tremendous sense of emptiness, void, or hole in your life?
- feel "shook-up" when you see a photograph unexpectedly?
- feel fine for a period of time, and get depressed again for no apparent reason?
- feel angry at your loved one whom you've lost, yourself, your family, or people who are trying to help you?
- feel as if your values have changed — things that used to be important to you aren't important anymore?
- feel as if you should look different to others, and are surprised that they can't see your sadness?
- other _____



feel saddened when:

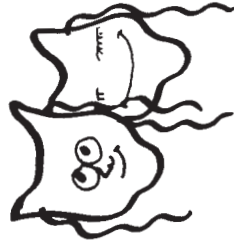
- it's the anniversary date of a birthday? death? divorce?
- you notice a familiar scent that reminds you of the past?
- you go to a certain restaurant? certain place? certain neighborhood?
- the seasons change?
- you see other kids' parents getting along well?
- you see a father and son, mother and daughter, siblings, best friends, etc., together?
- you hear a certain song? certain type of music?
- other _____

... it'll get better ... and if not better, it'll get different!



INSIDE

OUTSIDE



Name a situation in which you experience grief.	"Inside, I feel..." (only I know that I am feeling...)	"Outside, I appear..." (other people view me as...)	Outcome/results of inside/outside differences.
<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> aggressive</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> alienated</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> angry</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> annoyed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> anxious</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> apathetic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> bored</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> cautious</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> confident</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> confused</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> depressed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> determined</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> disappointed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> discouraged</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> disgusted</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> embarrassed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> envious</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> exhausted</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> fearful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> frustrated</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> guilty</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> happy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> helpless</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> hopeful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> hostile</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> humiliated</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> hurt</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> hysterical</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> innocent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> jealous</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> lonely</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> loved</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> miserable</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> negative</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> optimistic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> pained</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> paranoid</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> peaceful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> puzzled</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> regretful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> relieved</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> sad</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> shocked</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> shy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> sorry</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> stubborn</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> surprised</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> suspicious</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> thoughtful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> undecided</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> withdrawn</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Physical symptoms:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral symptoms:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Emotional symptoms:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

While it is OK to have differences between our feelings and expressions, it is also important to recognize that the greater this difference, the greater the internal stress level. Bridging the gap between inside and out can be done in several ways. What are some of your ideas?