

E.J. Moss Counselor Connection

EJ Moss Intermediate | Lindale ISD

CHILDREN AND GRIEF:

What to Expect and How to Help Them Cope

Developmental Responses to Grief:

Grief responses vary by age and developmental stage. Very young children do not understand the concept of permanency and may ask when the loved one will return. Early elementary aged children may see death as reversible and also may attach a sense of responsibility for the loss. Children in the upper elementary grades typically begin to understand the permanency of death and focus their thoughts on how the loss will affect them over the long-term. To read more about developmental responses, take a look at [the fact sheet from The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families.](#)

Tips for Supporting Your Child

- **Be Direct:** Use words like “death” and “died” rather than “passed” or “went to sleep”. Euphemisms can be confusing and scary for children.
- **Funerals:** Whether or not to attend a funeral is a personal decision and you know your child best. If a decision is made to attend, prepare your child for what they will see and hear. Offer them an exit plan if the experience becomes overwhelming.

A child's exposure to grief and loss often varies along a large spectrum of experiences. We may want to shield our children from these heartaches, however life doesn't always cooperate. As parents and caregivers, we can provide the space and forum to support our children through the loss and help to foster healthy coping skills for the future.

- **Stick to Routines:** Routines provide your child with comfort and predictability. Try to stick to the regular schedule as best as possible. Seek the support of other family and friends if you need help getting your child to school, to their activities, or friendship opportunities.
- **Remember to Take Care of Yourself:** Children look to the adults in their life as models for how to respond. Allow yourself to show your child your grief while also demonstrating positive coping skills.
- **Seek Support:** If you notice that your child is struggling to move past the grief for is expressing their grief in a big way, it is beneficial to consult your pediatrician or mental health provider for guidance or support.

[Ehmke, R. Helping Children Deal with Grief, 17, November, 2021.
https://childmind.org/article/helping-children-deal-grief](#)

What's in this month's issue:

- Children and Grief
- Death of a Pet
- Try it at Home! Memory Box
- Holiday Tips for Grief

Death of a Pet

Try it at Home: Creating a Memory Box

A pet can be a best friend. They often become members of the family and it can be devastating when we lose them. Yet, a final gift they may give is the opportunity to set the stage for how to cope with losses throughout life.

Here are some tips:

- Share the News- Do so privately, in a safe environment, and in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- Realize the Magnitude- Pets often provide constant and unconditional love and connection. They greet, comfort, and provide companionship.
- Stick to the Facts- Tell the truth about the circumstances. Avoid making up a story or using the words “put to sleep” as that creates a correlation between sleep and death.
- Be Together- Grieve together. Cry together. Tell stories together. Laugh together.
- Allow for Differences- There is no right way or wrong way to grieve. There is no timeline. Check in with each other and listen to each other.

-As featured in the Haverford Counselor Connection Newsletter.

A memory box is a box or other container which hold special things that will assist your child in remembering the loved one and the experiences they shared with that person. This box is a way for the child to cope with the loss they are feeling.



Step 1: Decorate the box

Allow your child to express creativity

Step 2: Fill the box

Gather photos or mementos of your loved one

Step 3: Process emotions

Allow your child to share stories behind each object in the box

Tips for Getting Through the Holidays

The pressures around the holidays can be even more challenging after the death of a family member. Here are some tips for navigating this time of year. [Click this link for a Holiday Plan Worksheet to help you work through these decisions as a family.](#)

- Plan ahead.
- Don't let other people determine what you “should” or “shouldn't” do.
- Accept limitations.
- Celebrate different feelings and preferences.
- Be informed before attending events.
- Ask for help, even when it's hard to do.
- Take care of your physical body.
- Find ways to remember and honor the person who died.

Upcoming Dates

11/20-11/24: Thanksgiving Break

12/6-12/8: PtP Candy Cane Grams

12/11: 4th grade “Good Behavior” Party

12/12: 5th grade “Good Behavior” Party

12/13: 6th grade “Good Behavior” Party

12/14: First Things First/ Kona Ice

12/15: Early Release Day

12/18-1/1: Christmas Break