

# GRIEF

*Thoughts and tips to help support you  
during life's hardest moments.*



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# INTRODUCTION

This guide is a starting point to learn about grief and how to find support and feel comforted. Here you will find general concepts about the process of grief as experienced by children, teens and adults. We encourage you to spend time with this information throughout the various phases of your grief journey.

Some of this information can be challenging to read, whether you are the one grieving or just want to find out more about the grief process. Use this guide in a way that feels most appropriate for you — being mindful of your environment, time and emotional energy. Each person is unique, please know that there is no wrong way to feel or experience grief.

Grief is defined as the internal thoughts and feelings one experiences after a loss, and it impacts one's whole person.

You may have physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual reactions. Mourning is the expression of your grief and is a critical aspect of healing. Your thoughts and feelings of grief need to be expressed and shared.

It is important to know that grief is normal and natural yet can be deeply painful. In time, the pain can soften along with the hard work of learning to live in a world that has changed because someone in your life has died. Accepting support and help, though difficult, can prove to be very beneficial. Remember to be patient with yourself. Basic self-care make a big difference, and can include getting enough rest, eating well, engaging in mild exercise, and staying hydrated.

# COMMON GRIEF EXPERIENCES

## Anticipatory grief

You may experience anticipatory grief when someone you love is diagnosed with a terminal illness. Friends, caregivers and family — as well as the person with the life-threatening illness — may struggle with the many losses this type of situation can bring. For example, loss of independence, loss of health status and loss of finances. Anticipatory grief includes awareness of the impending death and hope that the situation isn't really happening. Even with "preparation" efforts, one might still not be ready for the death of a loved one. Others, after living with anticipatory grief, may feel that they have been grieving for a long time before the loss occurred.

These feelings can make you feel like you're on a roller coaster. Anticipatory grief can, however, provide the opportunity to prepare for the loss, complete unfinished business, resolve conflicts and begin imagining a life without the dying person. You may notice physical, behavioral, cognitive and spiritual reactions in yourself or others who are close.

Although unsettling, a wide range of emotions is normal and natural. For example, some find themselves wishing the person would die rather than suffer or linger, and then feel guilty for those thoughts. There is a list of some common grief reactions within this guide (see pages 4 and 11). Anticipatory grief does not replace the grieving process that begins when death occurs, but it can be a steppingstone before the death.

## Sudden death

If the death is sudden or unexpected, it may leave you reeling with the shock of an event for which you had no chance to prepare. The shock of a sudden or tragic death can intensify feelings of grief and leave you feeling temporarily less safe, fearful and unsure. You may experience psychological numbness as you react to a loss of a sense of security and your adjustment may take longer than expected.

You may feel cheated that there was no opportunity to say goodbye or tell the person how you felt about them. You may feel the unfairness of losing someone "too young." You may question whether or not things could have gone differently and changed the event. You may feel angry with many aspects of the death. Grieving people often feel guilty and replay the time prior to the death over and over, hoping that the outcome may somehow be different. It's important to express your feelings. If you hold your feelings in, they tend to intensify and can lead to prolonged suffering. Whereas expressed feelings tend to release emotional energy that can lead to healing.

For more information, see page 23.



# COMMON GRIEF REACTIONS

Often, people assume that grief is simply an emotional response experienced in the aftermath of losing someone. In all reality, grief is a much broader experience, affecting your body, emotions, behaviors, thoughts and spiritual beliefs. While there are often similarities in the grief you experience compared to others, it's important to note that **everyone grieves in their own unique way**. Grief is impacted by your relationship with the person who died, the nature of the death and other stressors you may be experiencing. Keep this in mind as you move through your grief journey, recognizing that you're not grieving incorrectly just because you're doing so at a different speed or in a different way.

## Emotional responses

- + Anger
- + Anxiety
- + Depression
- + Fear
- + Fatigue
- + Guilt and regret
- + Helplessness
- + Loneliness
- + Numbness
- + Relief
- + Sadness
- + Shock
- + Yearning

## Suggestions for coping

- + Acknowledge and express your feelings without judgement
- + Move your body to produce positive brain chemicals
- + Use the arts to express your feelings (e.g. music, visual arts, journaling, dance)
- + Remember and tell stories
- + Find objects or activities that help you feel connected to the person (e.g. pictures, jewelry, music, places)
- + Create rituals that bring you comfort
- + Reach out to the people who support you

## Behavioral responses

- + Social withdrawal
- + Dreaming of the person who died
- + Searching for or talking to the person who died
- + Avoiding or visiting reminders of the person who died
- + Restlessness, overactivity
- + Carrying or treasuring objects
- + Heightened emotional responses (e.g. arguing)

## Suggestions for coping

- + Make time to care for yourself through rest and social activity
- + Carry tissues everywhere
- + Connect with social support or join a grief support group
- + Get help with difficult tasks like sorting through personal items and managing legal or financial matters
- + Give yourself permission to decline social plans based on how you're feeling

## Physical responses

- + Crying
- + Sleep changes
- + Appetite changes
- + Upset stomach
- + Tightness in chest or throat
- + Headaches
- + Breathlessness, feeling short of breath
- + Weakness in muscles
- + Lack of energy
- + Dry mouth
- + Oversensitivity to noise

## Suggestions for coping

- + Develop regular bed time rituals
- + Take naps throughout the day as needed
- + Eat small, healthy meals rather than "three squares"
- + Avoid alcohol which is a depressant
- + Minimize caffeine which can lead to nervousness
- + Drink plenty of water
- + Have a check up with your physician
- + Only use medications prescribed by your physician
- + Get pill boxes or a chart to keep track of taking your own medications appropriately
- + Practice deep breathing
- + Choose comforting physical activities (e.g. massage, warm bath, watching the sun rise or set)



## Thinking/cognitive responses

- + Confusion
- + Difficulty concentrating
- + Disbelief
- + Distracted
- + Forgetfulness
- + Preoccupation
- + Sensing presence of the person who died

## Suggestions for coping

- + Make lists and leave them in a predictable place
- + Break down tasks into smaller, more manageable parts
- + Share concerns about experiences with a trusted person
- + Be gentle and show compassion to yourself
- + Tell your story to people you trust, even if you repeat yourself
- + Balance painful memories of the person who died with pleasant ones
- + Acknowledge and communicate with the person who died (e.g. talking or writing letters to them)
- + Read and learn about grief as a process

## Spiritual responses

- + Anger
- + Disconnection
- + Questioning beliefs
- + Searching for meaning
- + Revisiting faith traditions
- + Reevaluating your place in the world
- + Thinking about your own mortality

## Suggestions for coping

- + Use faith traditions that are helpful (e.g. rituals, beliefs)
- + Use prayer or meditation
- + Consider talking with a religious or spiritual leader
- + Change time or place of worship
- + Attend worship with someone supportive
- + Explore forgiveness for yourself and others
- + Remember you are still connected through love and memories

# WHERE DO YOU GO **FROM HERE?**

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for coping with grief. Our suggestions come from the experience of other grieverers who have encouraged us to share what helped them. This information is a first step in providing care for you. Support groups, workshops and grief counseling are available to anyone in the community through OhioHealth Bereavement Services. A list of typical offerings is included here in this guide. We encourage you to call bereavement services at (614) 533-6060 if you would like more information or wish to request grief counseling with a bereavement team member. **We're here to accompany you on this journey, with compassion and understanding.**



## HELPFUL **24/7** **RESOURCES**

**If there is a life-threatening emergency, please call 911.**

**The National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:**

Text or call 988

**The Franklin County Youth Psychiatric Crisis Line:**

(614) 722-1800

**Crisis Text Line:**

Text HOME to 741741

# SUGGESTED **GRIEF** RESOURCES

Below is a list of recommended books, podcasts and online resources which address general grief and coping strategies. It is **not** an all-inclusive list, but merely a few resources that many have found valuable.

## Books

- + ***Angel Catcher: A Journal of Loss and Remembrance***  
by Amy Eldon and Kathy Eldon
- + ***Dancing at the Pity Party*** by Tyler Feder
- + ***Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief***  
by David Kessler
- + ***It's OK That You're Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand*** with accompanying journal "How to Carry What Can't Be Fixed: A Journal for Grief" by Megan Devine
- + ***It's Okay to Laugh (Crying is Cool Too)***  
by Nora McInerney
- + ***Living With Grief: Loss in Later Life*** by Kenneth Doka
- + ***Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy*** by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant
- + ***The Gift of Grief: A Practical Guide on Navigating Grief and Loss*** by Ajita Robinson
- + ***The Grief Recovery Handbook*** by John James and Russell Friedman
- + ***The Year of Magical Thinking*** by Joan Didion
- + ***Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart***  
by Alan Wolfelt
- + ***We Get It*** by Heather L. Servaty-Seib and David C. Fajgenbaum
- + ***What's Your Grief? Lists to Help You Through Any Loss***  
by Eleanor Haley and Litsa Williams
- + ***When Bad Things Happen to Good People***  
by Harold Kushner







## Online resources

- + Center for Loss and Life Transition
- + The Dougy Center
- + Grief.com
- + Refuge In Grief
- + Speaking Grief
- + The Dinner Party
- + What's Your Grief

## Podcasts

- + *All There Is* with Anderson Cooper
- + *Good Grief* by Lemonada
- + *Healing* with David Kessler
- + *Here After* with Megan Devine

# **CHILD AND ADOLESCENT GRIEF**



# STARTING THE CONVERSATION

It's a natural instinct to want to protect children, especially from the intense pain that comes with learning of someone's death. Many well-meaning adults may think it's best to not tell children or are afraid they won't have the right words to respond. Remember, it's okay to say that you don't know or are unsure. You don't need to have all the answers. The most important message for children to hear is that they can come to you to talk about their feelings or ask questions.

## Tips for sharing the news

- + Share information as soon as possible to ensure it's not heard from someone else first and includes what you want your child to know.
- + Consider a space that is private and quiet with little chance for interruption.
- + Be mindful of the time of day and avoid times when your child may be hungry, tired or is getting ready for bed.
- + Take a moment to prepare yourself and practice what you will say.
- + Consider the child's age and development when choosing language (see page 13).
- + Provide a simple and honest explanation of how the person died.
  - Start slowly with short and simple language.
  - While telling them the truth is important, it does not mean they need all the details.
- + Explain in clear terms using words like "died" or "dead" instead of phrases like "he's in a better place" or "she has passed on." Example: "Grandma died. Her body stopped working."
  - Consider what your child is thinking and allow time for questions.
  - This will not be a one-time conversation. It will be ongoing as they process and understand the information.
  - A rule of thumb when deciding how much to share: If your child is old enough to ask the question, they are old enough to hear the answer.
- + It's okay for you to have an emotional response when sharing this information. It may help give your child permission to express feelings and it models healthy responses.
- + Reassure them that all feelings are okay.
- + Identify people and places your child can go to for support.
- + Assure your child that it's okay to remember and talk about the person who died.

# COMMON GRIEF REACTIONS

The death of a friend or family member is a major loss in a child's life. Grief is described as the internal reaction to a loss, such as a death or another significant change in life. When children experience a death, their grief can affect them emotionally, physically, behaviorally, socially, cognitively and spiritually.

**While children of all ages grieve, they grieve differently than adults.** They typically express their feelings and reactions to a death in small doses and process the loss over time. This can be confusing to adults when a child expresses sadness or anger about the death, then wants to play or get together with friends.

Grief is an ongoing process that changes as your child matures and reaches a new understanding about the loss. Young people often experience grief reactions at an older age, even when a loss was several years earlier.

## Emotional responses

### Sadness

- + Missing the person who died
- + Missing out on future experiences with the person

### Anger

- + Directed at self, the person who died or others
- + Looking for something or someone to blame

### Fear/worries

- + About their safety or a caregiver's
- + Abandonment
- + Wondering who will take care of them if someone else dies
- + Ghosts or spirits

### Guilt

- + Concern that their thoughts, worries or actions have caused the death
- + Regrets about things they wish they would have said or done differently

### Shock

- + May not talk about feelings or show emotion
- + May feel disbelief or numbness

### Loneliness

- + Feeling like they are the only one experiencing a loss

### Relief

- + The person is no longer in pain or suffering

## Physical responses

- + Headaches
- + Stomachaches
- + Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- + Dreams about their person or nightmares
- + Racing heart
- + Tight chest
- + Crying

## Behavioral responses

### Regressive behaviors

- + Acting younger than their age
- + Needy or clingy
- + Bedwetting
- + Thumb sucking
- + Difficulty separating from caregivers

### Increased sense of responsibility

- + Protective of caregivers or siblings
- + Acting more adult-like
- + Assuming additional responsibilities a home

### Disruptive behaviors

- + Acting out
- + Fighting or conflicts
- + Lashing out at friends or family members

## Social responses

- + Changes in relationships with friends or family
- + Difficulty trusting others
- + Loss of interest in activities
- + School attendance

## Thinking/Cognitive responses

- + Impact on school work and grades
- + Difficulty concentrating
- + Poor memory
- + Disorganization
- + Not understanding the what, why and how of the death
- + Confusion and fear about their own responses

## Spiritual responses

- + Exploring beliefs about what happens after death
- + Questioning why this happened to the person or my family



# DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

A child's reaction to loss depends on their age and developmental understanding of death. Every child is different and their responses may vary within suggested guidelines.

## Birth to 2 years old

### Understanding of death

- + Infants and toddlers can and do experience grief in the absence of an attached caregiver; if you are old enough to love, you are old enough to grieve
- + Sense there has been a change
- + Do not understand the concept of life and death
- + View death as separation or abandonment

### Common feelings and reactions

- + More intense and frequent tantrums
- + Changes in eating and sleeping
- + Moving back toward younger behaviors (i.e. using a pacifier, thumb sucking, acting clingy)
- + Increased stress when separating from caregivers
- + May ask or look for person who died

### How adults can help

- + In order to care for your child, it's important to take care of yourself
- + Keep change to a minimum; continue to provide structure and routine
- + Continue nurturing; increase comfort and physical affection
- + Encourage age-appropriate play and developmental activities

## Ages 3 to 5

### Understanding of death

- + Sense that there has been a change
- + Do not understand that death is final; see it as something that is temporary and reversible
- + View death as separation or abandonment
- + Wonder if the person who died is coming back or where they went
- + May compare death to sleeping
- + Believe their thoughts, worries or actions caused the death

### Common feelings and reactions

- + Unable to express their grief in words, so their feelings come out in behavior and play
- + Ask or look for person who died
- + Ask the same questions or share that their person died repeatedly
- + Engage in pretend play where stuffed animal or toy dies
- + Moving back toward younger behaviors (i.e. bedwetting, using a pacifier, thumb sucking, acting clingy, using baby talk)
- + Increased stress when separating from caregivers at bedtime
- + Display new aggressive behaviors (i.e. hitting, kicking, biting)

### How adults can help

- + Explain in clear terms, such as "died" or "dead," instead of terms like "passed on" or "lost."
  - Example: "Grandma died. Her body stopped working."
- + Answer questions simply and honestly; what a child asks usually reflects what they want to know at that time
- + Help give them words to explain what they're feeling
  - Give examples of how you're feeling like, "I am sad today because I am missing Daddy."
- + Let them know that nothing they did, said or thought caused the death
- + Keep change to a minimum; continue to provide structure and routine
- + Continue nurturing; increase comfort and physical affection to help them feel safe and secure
- + Reassure your child that there will be someone to love and care for them
- + Encourage age-appropriate play and developmental activities
- + Draw pictures and read children's books about death together (see page 18)



## Ages 6 to 8

### Understanding of death

- + Begin to understand that death is final
- + View death as something that only happens to someone who is old or very sick
- + Unable to imagine that someone close to them can die
- + Associate death with angels, skeletons or monsters
- + Concern that their thoughts, worries or actions have caused the death
- + Curious about the physical aspects, like what happens to the body after death

### Common feelings and reactions

- + Guilt that their thoughts, worries or actions could have caused the death
- + Ask the same questions repeatedly (e.g. how, why, who else?)
- + Display new aggressive behaviors (ie. hitting, kicking, biting)
- + Defiance to teachers and caregivers
- + Impact on schoolwork and attendance
- + Difficulty concentrating and sitting still
- + Daydreaming more frequently
- + Concern about their own safety or a caregiver's can lead to difficulty separating from caregivers
- + Feel anger at the person for dying

### How adults can help

- + Talk about death as a normal part of life
- + Explain in clear terms, such as “died” or “death” instead of terms like “passed on” or “lost”
  - Example: “Grandma died. Her body stopped working. This means she cannot breathe, eat or play.”
- + Answer questions simply and honestly; what a child asks usually reflects what they want to know at that time
- + To address worries that others could die, reassure them that there will be someone to love and care for them
- + Let them know that nothing they did, said or thought caused the death
- + Help give them words to explain what they're feeling
  - Give examples of how you are feeling like, “I am feeling mad today and really missing Mom.”
- + Encourage your child to talk about their person when they want to and model by sharing memories
- + Continue to follow their daily routine and be flexible with choices when possible
  - Rules and structure promote feelings of safety
- + Offer children the opportunity for physical activity and creative outlets to express their feelings
- + Talk with school staff about providing extra support and flexibility
- + Continue nurturing; increase comfort and physical affection to help them feel safe and secure

# DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES (CONT.)

A child's reaction to loss depends on their age and developmental understanding of death. Every child is different and their responses may vary within suggested guidelines.



## Ages 9 to 12

### Understanding of death

- + Understand that death is final and something that happens to everyone, especially older people.
- + Still believe that death happens to others and not to someone they know
- + Have more detailed questions about death and dying.
- + Curious about the physical aspects, like what happens to the body after death
- + Starting to form their own opinions about spirituality and what happens after someone dies
- + Awareness of the absence of their person during sports, celebrations, school events, etc.

### Common feelings and reactions

- + Wide range of emotions and may not be able to express them or understand the cause of them
- + Concerned about how the death is affecting those around them
- + Feel the need to keep their feelings hidden to protect the adults around them
- + Fears and worries about the safety and health of themselves and others
  - Worried that they or someone else close to them will die
- + Express hard feelings through behaviors such as fighting and having trouble following rules
- + Feelings may change between strong emotional reactions to having no reaction at all

- + Changes in school performance (i.e. grades, attendance, ability to focus)
- + Try to please adults and take on adult responsibilities
- + Feel embarrassed that they are different than peers because of their loss
- + Withdrawal from usual activities and social situations

### How adults can help

- + Answer questions directly in words they can understand. Sometimes children fill in the missing information about a death with their own ideas that may not be accurate
- + Explain in clear terms such as “died” or “death” instead of terms like “passed on” or “lost”
  - Example: “Grandma died from a disease called cancer.”
- + Assure them that nothing they did, said or thought caused the death
- + Reassure them that what they are feeling is okay and help them identify healthy ways to express their grief
- + Model appropriate expressions of grief and ways to take care of themselves
- + Encourage your child to talk about their person when they want to
- + Talk with school staff about providing extra support and flexibility
- + Continue to follow their daily routine and be flexible with choices when possible
  - Rules and structure promote feelings of safety



## Ages 13 to 18

### Understanding of death

- + Have a more “adult” view of death and understand that death is final and permanent
- + Awareness about future milestones without their person such as learning to drive, sporting events, graduation, marriage, etc.
- + May question the meaning of life and death

### Common feelings and reactions

- + While their understanding of death is adult-like, their feelings and reactions are not
- + Wide range of emotions they may not share or express
- + Feelings may change between strong emotional reactions to having no reaction at all
- + Difficulty navigating the steps towards independence while now needing increased support from adults
- + Difficulty discussing their grief with others
- + Typically seek support from peers and others outside of the family
- + Act like they are okay when with peers to avoid looking different
- + Use jokes and sarcasm to cover up their feelings
- + Struggle with identifying who they are without their person, which may impact their self-esteem and confidence
- + Experience feelings of shame related to the cause of death
- + Changes in school performance (i.e. impact on grades, attendance, ability to focus, disorganization, memory)
- + A new belief that the world is no longer safe
  - Can result in risky behaviors (i.e. driving too fast, breaking rules, skipping school, using drugs or alcohol)
  - Increased fears about the health and safety of others and themselves
- + Withdrawal from or increased involvement in usual activities and social situations
- + Can take on the caregiving role with siblings, peers or other adults

### How adults can help

- + Create a safe space to talk with your teen
  - Answer questions honestly
  - You don't need to have all of the answers
- + Explain the death in clear terms.
  - Example: “Grandma died from a disease called colon cancer and treatment was no longer working.”
- + Assure them that nothing they did, said or thought caused the death
- + Reassure that whatever they are experiencing is normal in grief
- + Allow for expression of feelings without trying to change or fix them
  - Try to avoid distracting them or attempting to cheer them up
  - Listen and be present
- + Ask open-ended questions
  - Example: “What is it like for you?”
  - Listen without judging, interpreting or advising
- + Set a good example by speaking about your own feelings, without putting them in the role of the comforter
- + Model appropriate expressions of grief and ways to take care of yourself
- + Continue to follow their daily routine and be flexible with choices when possible
- + Encourage connections with other adults in their life such as family friends, teachers or coaches
- + Talk with school staff about providing extra support and flexibility

# ATTENDING FUNERALS OR MEMORIAL SERVICES

Funerals help to honor the life of the person who has died and to provide support for the family and friends. Adults often wonder if it's a good idea to include children and teens in funerals or memorial services. Some may even wonder what age is appropriate for a child to participate in this kind of ritual. There is no specific or right answer to this. Each child is different.

What we do know is that young children do not typically fear seeing the body in the way adults think they do. In fact, it can help them understand the finality of the situation. Allowing them to choose whether to attend the funeral or not is one of the most helpful things a caregiver can do. They should never be forced to go or criticized if they don't want to attend. It's okay for your child to decide not to participate in any aspect of the funeral. Fortunately, it doesn't need to be an all or nothing decision. In order for your child to make a choice, they need to understand what to expect. Start with the basics:

- + **Who...** will be at the funeral or memorial service?
- + **What...** is going to happen? What will they see?
- + **Where...** will the service take place?
- + **When...** will the funeral happen? How long will it last?
- + **Why...** are we doing this?

## Additional tips

- + Having your child help in the funeral planning allows them to feel a sense of inclusion and control. Examples could be picking out photos for posters or slideshows, selecting music, writing a letter or drawing a picture to go in the casket.
- + If they are going to view the body, give an age-appropriate description of what your child will see. Discuss what a casket looks like, how the person who died will be laying down with their eyes closed and this is not the same as sleeping and ways the body may look and feel different. When appropriate, allow your child to view the body before the service to give them time to adjust and ask questions.

- + If cremation is chosen, be prepared to talk to your child about what this means. It can be explained as the process which helps change the person's body into ash. An urn is a special container used to hold the ashes. Reassure your child that this process is not painful because bodies that stop working and die cannot feel anything.
- + Share your emotions with your child. It's okay to model honest feelings and reactions that you're experiencing too. Also, prepare the child for possible emotional reactions of others attending the service.
- + Assign someone to sit with your child throughout the ceremony and identify a designated space for them to go to play or if they need a break. It may be helpful for your child to take a special item from home for comfort.
- + Check in with your child as you arrive, throughout the service and in the following days to answer questions and share feelings. Keep the conversation open.



# IDEAS FOR REMEMBRANCE

## Remembering and honoring the person who died

There are many creative ways to help your child cope with feelings and reactions following a death. It can be helpful to focus on how the person lived and impacted your lives. Together, your family can choose the memories you want to cherish and hold on to. Here are some ideas to consider:

- + Make a memory box and identify items that represent something meaningful to place inside
- + Look through pictures or make a photo album
- + Write a letter to your person
- + Start a journal of stories and memories from people who knew your person
- + Go to familiar places or places you wanted to go to with your person
- + Visit the cemetery or place that reminds you of your person
- + Honor the person on special occasions (e.g. birthdays, holidays, significant dates)
- + Attend a walk or run in memory of your person
- + Give back or participate in a community project



## GRIEF COUNSELING

### Does my child need grief counseling?

While grief is a normal process, it often frightens us because of how painful and overwhelming it can be. Many question if their child is grieving the “right way” and if their feelings and reactions are normal. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for coping with grief. It’s important to remember that grief is something we learn to live with. If your child is progressing through their grief, reactions should soften in intensity and duration over time. If grief reactions seem exaggerated or persist over long periods of time, it may be helpful to seek counseling. Sometimes it is helpful for your child to talk to someone not connected to the loss.

Our Child and Adolescent Bereavement Team is here to accompany your child on this journey. Support groups, workshops and grief counseling are available to anyone in the community through OhioHealth Bereavement Services. We encourage you to call bereavement services at **(614) 533-6060** if you would like more information or wish to talk with a bereavement team member.



# SUGGESTED GRIEF RESOURCES

Below is a list of recommended books, podcasts and online resources which address general grief and coping strategies. It is **not** an all-inclusive list, but merely a few resources that many have found valuable.

## Books

### For school-aged children

- + ***A Kids Book About Death*** by Taryn Schuelke
  - Provides an open and honest conversation about death
- + ***A Kids Book About Grief*** by Brennan C. Wood
  - Acknowledges grief is natural, normal, and healthy, and it's an experience we all have because we're human
- + ***A Terrible Thing Happened*** by Margaret M. Holmes
  - A story for children who have witnessed or experienced trauma or death
- + ***I Miss You: A First Look at Death*** by Pat Thomas
  - Helps explain in a simple and direct way that grief feelings after a death are normal
- + ***Muddles, Puddles, and Sunshine: Your Activity Book to Help When Someone Has Died*** by Diana Crossley
  - Through prompts and activities, this book offers a structure and an outlet for the many difficult feelings which inevitably follow a death
- + ***The Goodbye Book*** by Todd Parr
  - Explores feelings and reactions related to loss

- + ***The Invisible String*** by Patrice Karst
  - Reminds children how we can remain connected to those that have died through a string of love
- + ***The Memory Box*** by Joanna Rowland
  - Explores the fear of forgetting and ways to hold on to memories
- + ***When Someone Dies: A Children's Mindful How-To Guide on Grief and Loss*** by Andrea Dorn
  - Engages readers to learn how to say goodbye and express emotions
- + ***When Someone Very Special Dies: Child Can Learn to Cope with Grief*** by Marge Heegaard, MA, ATR, LICSW
  - Provides prompts for stories or drawings and is designed to help children cope with grief from family loss and change
- + ***Why Do I feel So Sad? A Grief Book for Children*** by Tracy Lambert, LPC
  - A picture book that describes the many forms of grief, typical responses and ways to remember who died

### For teens

- + ***Fire in My Heart, Ice in my Veins*** by Enid Traisman
  - Encourage teens to use their creativity to work through the grieving process using prompts and activities
- + ***Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas*** by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
  - Suggests activities for teens to express their grief
- + ***Healing Your Grieving Heart Journal for Teens*** by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
  - Uses simple, open-ended questions to allow teens to sort through their feelings and reactions related to the loss
- + ***Teen Grief Journal*** by National Alliance for Children's Grief
  - The journal provides a space for teens to share their grief experience with supportive quotes from other teens who are grieving



## Reading (cont.)

### For parents and caregivers

- + ***A Parent's Guide to Managing Childhood Grief***  
by Katie Lear
  - Offers activities to help children express their grief in healthy ways
- + ***Companioning the Grieving Child***  
by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
  - This guide shows caregivers how to support grieving children with the philosophy that children are the expert of their own grief
- + ***Finding the Words*** by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
  - Explores how to talk with children and teens about death, suicide, funerals, homicide, cremation and other end-of-life matters
- + ***Healing a Child's Grieving Heart***  
by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
  - Features 100 practical ideas for families, friends and caregivers to provide healthy outlets for grieving children

### Online resources

- + Highmark Caring Place
- + National Alliance for Children's Grief
- + National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement
- + National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- + Refuge In Grief
- + Speaking Grief
- + The Dougy Center
- + What's Your Grief

## Videos

- + Grief Out Loud: Teens Talk About Loss
- + Brené Brown on Empathy
- + Sesame Workshop Grief
- + How to Support a Grieving Friend

## Podcasts

- + Grief Out Loud

## HELPFUL 24/7 RESOURCES

**If there is a life-threatening emergency, please call 911.**

**The National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:**

Text or call 988

**The Franklin County Youth Psychiatric Crisis Line:**

(614) 722-1800

**Crisis Text Line:**

Text HOME to 741741

A photograph of a sunset over a field of tall grasses. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the upper left, casting a warm, golden light across the sky and the field. The grasses are silhouetted against the bright light, creating a bokeh effect of soft, out-of-focus circles. The overall color palette is dominated by warm oranges, yellows, and browns.

# **SPECIFIC LOSSES**

# PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS

Losing an infant during pregnancy, at birth or within the first year of life can be isolating for the grieving family. Grieving parents are left wondering and never knowing who this child would have become. While the experiences and memories may be few, there is still a lot to say and process. The impact of their absence can be life altering. You are forever changed because they existed. **The way you heal as an individual or as a couple can be drastically different. No two people walk the same exact path in their grief.**

## Suggestions for coping individually

- + Allow yourself to mourn this loss
- + Be compassionate with yourself
- + Acknowledge the various feelings you may experience
- + Learn ways to express these emotions in healthy ways
- + Focus on healing your whole person: emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually and socially
- + Self-care is important during this time of healing

## Suggestions for coping as a couple

- + Be aware and sensitive to each other's unique reaction to this loss
- + Give each other space to express these reactions without judgement
- + Sit with each other and be present with the feelings expressed
- + Decide together how to share your loss with family, friends, co-workers and others
- + Find ways to communicate your individual needs with one another
- + Look for opportunities to stay connected
- + Understand you may shift between times of closeness and wanting to be alone

## Seeking support

This can be crucial in helping you to find your footing in a world that is very different than what you dreamed it would be. There is no "right time" to seek out support. While some feel very private about the experience of their loss, others are open and seek out connection to others. Couples may not be ready at the same time, and one may seek support in some way while the other does not. Being with others and hearing their unique stories of loss can be helpful and make you feel less alone in your own loss.

## Ways to remember and feel connected

No matter the time frame of the loss, it can be helpful to find ways to honor and remember your child. Here are some ideas:

- + Have a memorial at a place that is meaningful
- + Plant a tree or flower bed
- + Collect keepsakes in a special place
- + Take time to honor significant days
- + Take time to capture memories you want to hold close to you about the time you shared with your baby

## Additional resources

- + Alive in my Heart Organization
- + ***Healing Your Grieving Heart After Stillbirth*** by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
- + ***Healing Your Grieving Heart After Miscarriage*** by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.
- + ***Grieving Dads: To the Brink and Back*** by Kelly Farley
- + Star Legacy Foundation
- + The Forget Me Not Foundation

# TRAUMATIC AND SUDDEN DEATH

## Sudden and traumatic loss

While the death of a significant person typically brings about change and grief responses, deaths due to traumatic circumstances can add a variety of complications. Some examples of traumatic loss include deaths due to homicide, suicide, substance use and accident. In these experiences, your feelings and reactions may be stronger. Questions of "why," feelings of guilt, possible involvement of law enforcement and media coverage may complicate your grief journey and leave you feeling overwhelmed.

This kind of loss may impact your sense of safety and security — putting your body's response into high alert. You may have uncertainty about sharing the details of the death and wish to keep some information private. While these reactions and responses to an unexpected death are typical, they may make you feel frightened and out of control.

It can be helpful to seek professional support to learn about traumatic grief and to understand how to manage your feelings and responses.

### Common emotions

- + Anger
- + Loneliness
- + Confusion
- + Regret
- + Fear
- + Sadness
- + Frustration
- + Shame
- + Guilt
- + Shock and disbelief
- + Helplessness
- + Worry

### Common responses

- + Avoidance of people and places
- + Panic attacks
- + Changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- + Quick or shallow breathing
- + Chills
- + Seeking understanding
- + Irritability
- + Sweating
- + Nightmares
- + Racing heart

### Special Considerations

- + Community response
- + Social media
- + Media response
- + Stigma
- + Personal and family safety
- + Navigating the legal system

## Some types of traumatic loss

### Suicide loss

Grief is unique for each individual person. Yet, when you lose someone to suicide, grief can have distinct challenges, including stigma and misunderstanding. In these situations, you come to grief unexpectedly, and often under traumatic circumstances. You may have unanswered questions. At a time when you need support, compassion and human connection, those around you may not be equipped to effectively provide the care you need and desire. This can leave you feeling alone and isolated.

### Suicide loss resources

- + *A Kids Book About Suicide* by Angela N. Frazier
- + *After a Suicide Death: An Activity Book for Grieving Kids* by The Dougy Center
- + *The Wilderness of Suicide Grief* by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D
- + *Understanding Your Suicide Grief* by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D
- + American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- + LOSS Community Services

**If you have lost someone due to a sudden or traumatic loss, we encourage you to reach out for support from our trained and experienced bereavement team. We are here to be a companion through this complicated journey.**



## Substance-related loss

Substances are defined as drugs, alcohol or prescription medication. Losing someone to substance use can be unique and challenging. For some, it comes after watching your person struggle with addiction, receiving the news you always feared might come. For others, it can be a shock and feel very sudden and out-of-character.

As with many types of traumatic loss, one can often feel the weight of unanswered questions and an unresolved search for justice. Substance use, whether prolonged or short term, is often kept secret. When someone dies, there may be pieces of the puzzle that are lost with that person. Ensuring that you allow the time and space for these questions to be processed is very important in the healing journey.

Additionally, a death by substance use can feel very isolating. Addiction is often stigmatized, and for fear of judgment by others, it can sometimes feel easier to keep this part of your life story to yourself.

## Substance-related loss resources

- + ***A Kids Book About Addiction*** by Nicole Lendo
- + Grief Recovery After a Substance Abuse Passing (GRASP) *online resource*
- + What's Your Grief *online resource*

Kelsie the Goldendoodle is a certified therapy dog and proud member of our bereavement team at OhioHealth. She brings a level of calm and unconditional love and support to every encounter and connects with people in a way that only animals can.



## Loss due to violence

Stories of sudden and tragic loss of life due to violence are unfortunately all around us. Experiencing it for yourself firsthand is life altering. Violent loss is a broad category that can include unintentional or intentional harm that results in death. There is no way to prepare for this type of loss and no time to be ready for the sudden absence of the person from your life.

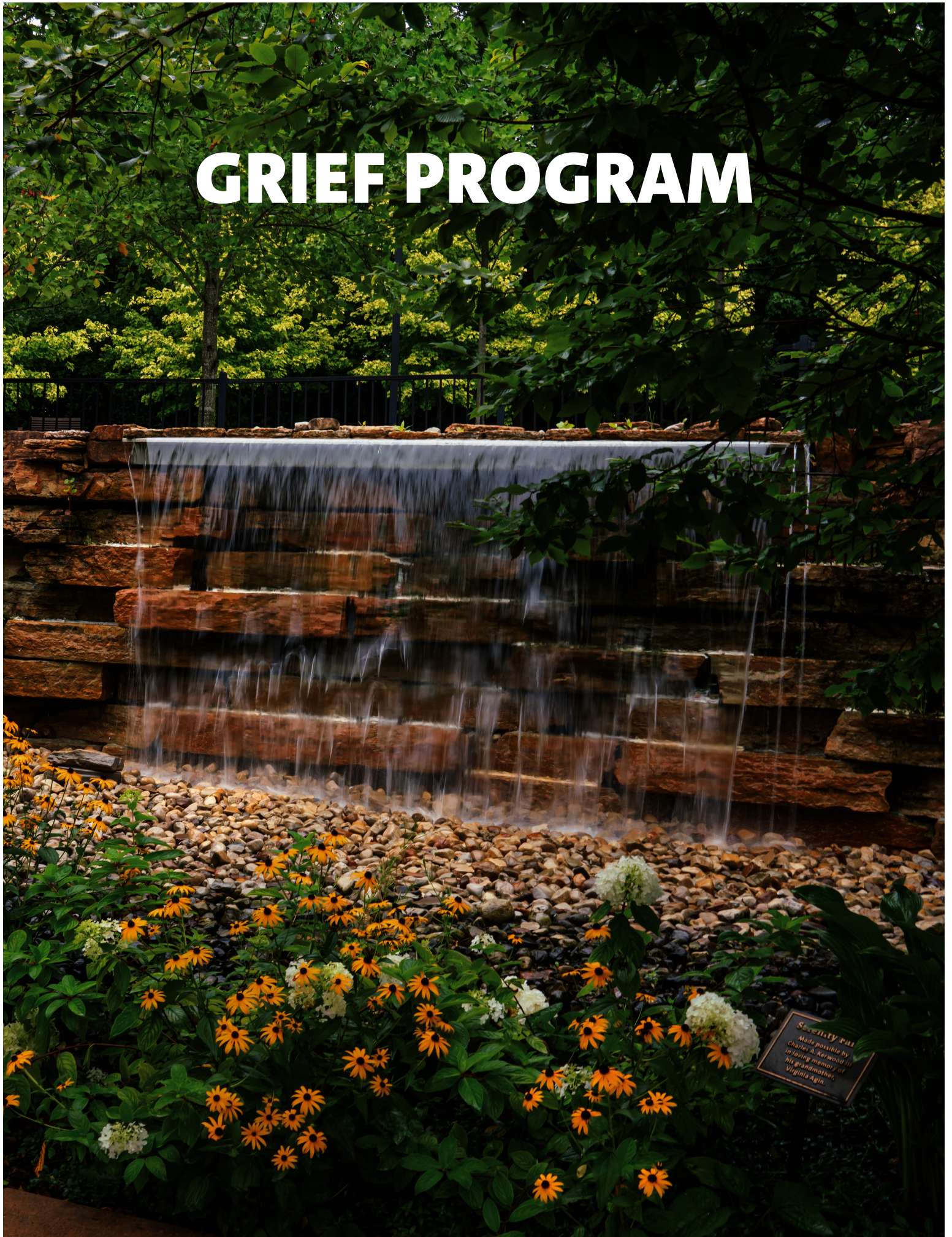
Death as the result of a violent act can create a unique set of challenges for you. These challenges often center on shock, fear and concern for safety. Additionally, the possible involvement of media, the community and law enforcement can impact your ability to grieve. A sudden and violent death often leaves behind more questions than answers, prolonging and disrupting your grieving process.

Grief can also be impacted by navigating the legal system and when seeking justice for the person who died.

## Resources on loss due to violence

- + ***A Grief Like No Other: Surviving the Violent Death of Someone You Love*** by Kathleen O'Hara
- + ***After a Murder: A Workbook for Grieving Kids*** by The Dougy Center
- + ***Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief*** by Dr. Joanne Cacciatore, with foreword by Jeffrey Rubin
- + ***What to Do When the Police Leave : A Guide to the First Days of Traumatic Loss*** by Bill Jenkins
- + **National Center for Victims of Crime:**  
VictimsOfCrime.org  
(202) 467-8700  
info@victimsofcrime.org
- + **Ohio Victims' of Crime Compensation Program:**  
OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov  
(614) 466-5610  
Toll-free numbers:  
General info: (877) 584-2846 (5VICTIM)  
Specific case info: (800) 582-2877

# GRIEF PROGRAM



*Secretary Faa*  
Made possible by  
Charles A. Kerwood III  
in loving memory of  
his grandmother,  
Virginia Akin.

# OUR SERVICES

OhioHealth's Bereavement Services department offers a variety of grief support services no matter the loss. We provide written materials, individual counseling, support groups and workshops, community education and outreach, and grief support events throughout the year. Some of our programming is made possible by generous donations, fundraising, and cooperative partnerships.

## Hospice and palliative bereavement

Our grief services are designed to support caregivers and families for up to 13 months following the death of a patient on our hospice or palliative service. This begins with a condolence call followed by mailings about grief and both individual and group counseling.

## Children and teens

The death of a friend or family member is a major loss in a young person's life. Although grief is a normal reaction to loss, children and adolescents grieve differently than adults and may struggle with unfamiliar feelings and reactions. Our program offers individual counseling services in a school setting as well as our office locations in the community. Our counselors use creative strategies to connect and create a supportive environment.

## Community grief

Our community grief program at OhioHealth was developed to help support those facing any non-hospice loss that has occurred outside of OhioHealth's hospice and palliative program. We offer one-on-one counseling with a licensed grief counselor, and access to our vast selection of support groups.

## Pregnancy and infant loss

A loss at any age is difficult, but when the loss is that of a child younger than 1 year old, or during a pregnancy, the grief can be indescribable. Our bereavement counselors who specialize in pregnancy and infant loss are here to support these parents and families in one-on-one counseling sessions or during our monthly support group.

*Want more info?*

For more information on our grief services, call **(614) 533-6060** or email **[GriefSupport@OhioHealth.com](mailto:GriefSupport@OhioHealth.com)**

# FREE GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Grief Support Programs are offered in-person at Kobacker House and other OhioHealth and community locations (as announced). We also provide virtual bereavement support groups. The following is a list of grief support workshops and classes that have been offered in recent years on a rotating basis.

**To learn about our current groups and register, please call (614) 533-6060 or email [GriefSupport@OhioHealth.com](mailto:GriefSupport@OhioHealth.com).**

## Monthly grief support groups

- + **Book Study- Dealing with Grief:** Read and discuss books to engage in conversation and find meaning after the death of a loved one.
- + **Coping with the Loss of a Parent(s):** Addresses the special issues that adult children face in dealing with the loss of a parent.
- + **Coping with the Loss of an Adult Child:** Caring, confidential support for parents dealing with the loss of an adult child.
- + **Coping with the Loss of Spouse, Partner, Significant Other:**
  - **Healing Hearts:** Bi-monthly grief support group for those who have lost a spouse, partner or significant other after sharing many years together. Participants may loosely describe themselves as middle-aged. Group discussions include: loneliness, needing to return to work, taking on new and unfamiliar household responsibilities, etc.
  - **Living Our Retirement Years Alone:** A support group for those who have experienced the death of a spouse or partner after sharing a long life together. We discuss living our retired years without our loved one, managing grief and loneliness, and learn coping skills.
  - **Younger Adults:** Addresses the needs that adults experience after this significant loss, knowing that your shared life with your loved one ended far too soon, helping children and teens understand this loss and raising them alone.
- + **Pregnancy and Infant Loss:** For parents who have lost an infant either during pregnancy or in the first year after birth.
- + **Pregnancy After a Loss:** Provides a community of support for pregnancies after a prior loss.
- + **Rambling Walk:** Being outdoors is an important part of caring for oneself and one's path to healing. This group explores Columbus area metro parks.



## Workshops

- + **Centering Meditation for Grief and Loss:** This five to six week group is open to anyone who wants to explore practices that build awareness, stability and calm. Each meeting includes exercises that engage the body and mind through guided visualization, breathe awareness and simple meditation.
- + **Ceramics/Memory Bowl:** This five week grief support class is offered for adults and youth 13 years old and up. It focuses on various techniques to create a ceramic memory bowl in honor of a loved one.
- + **Dealing with Holidays and Other Special Days:** Holidays, anniversaries, birthdays and other special days can be challenging and stressful after the loss of a loved one. Suggestions will be provided to help you through these celebrated days. Offered multiple dates and times in November and December.
- + **Expressing Loss Through the Arts:** This five to six week adult grief support group uses art materials as tools to explore expressions of grief and seek ways of healing.
- + **Father's Day Workshop:** Father's Day is a difficult time when your father is deceased. Come and learn about normal grief reactions when dealing with the death of our fathers. Offered each June prior to Father's Day.
- + **Healing Drumming Circle:** For thousands of years, drumming has been a part of almost every culture. Studies reveal that drumming can promote physical and emotional healing, boost the immune system and have a calming effect. This ritual remains alive today. Join us in the spirit of remembrance. Children are welcome and no experience is required. Drums will be provided or you may bring your own. Offered four to six times each year.
- + **Keeping Busy with Meaningful Activity:** The loss of a loved one can leave us with a void that affects not only our emotions, but also our day-to-day routines. This workshop focuses on leisure and the importance of actively planning this aspect of our life. Practical ideas and resources will be discussed.
- + **Mother's Day Workshop:** A workshop/discussion group for those whose mothers have died. Offered each spring prior to Mother's Day.
- + **Mourning Walk:** This exercise of remembrance is a reflective, meditative and guided walk in a nature setting. The approximate distance is one mile and involves some hilly terrain and nature trails. Please wear comfortable shoes.
- + **Spirit Dolls:** Participants create a spirit doll as a tangible reminder of what made their person special. Materials will be provided and no artistic skills are needed.
- + **Steps Toward Healing:** This grief support class meets for six to eight weeks and is for adults who have lost a loved one. Participants will learn what experiences are common and normal in the grief process, as well as how to cope on those emotionally difficult days. Tools will be shared to help participants express and manage their grief and loneliness. Group support is an important part of this class. Regular attendance is requested whenever possible.
- + **Transitioning Through Grief: I Was, I Am, I Hope to Be:** This workshop uses journaling, art and group discussion to process grief. Participants sort through memories, contemplate life without their loved one and identify new challenges they might be ready to face. The class explores how we have been changed by our loss and includes journaling about our changing selves. This class is offered three to four times a year.

**OhioHealth does not charge a fee for Bereavement services.** Through annual philanthropic support, friends help us maintain access to our care no matter one's ability to pay. We are grateful for those who generously make grief support and counseling services available to all who need us.

For more information or to make a gift to support this important work:



Scan the QR code, Call **(614) 544-4483** or email Dana Booth at **Dana.Booth@OhioHealth.com**

