

# eluna

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## RESOURCE CENTER

[www.elunanetwork.org/resources](http://www.elunanetwork.org/resources)

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## Grief Resources for Campers:

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### READ

- [Postcard Pointers: Sudden Grief](#) provides some pocket-size pointers for adults supporting a child grieving a sudden death. We recommend sharing these with mentors, caregivers, staff, and family.
- [Dealing with Sudden Death](#) is a practical, 8-page guide that provided insight into understanding an adolescent's developmental stage and how that informs their reaction to death and grief.
- Some youth can get “stuck” on the traumatic aspects of the death and cannot process their grief successfully. This [downloadable resource](#) provides ideas for this specific reaction to grief.
- [Understanding Anger and Grief in Children](#) is a great resource that helps us to understand how all children grieve differently and that all emotions are appropriate.
- Recommended books on grief for [Ages 2-5](#), [Ages 5-7](#), [Ages 7-12](#), [Ages 13-17](#). We particularly recommend [A Terrible Thing Happened](#) to discuss tragic events with *elementary age children*. The young raccoon saw something awful happen. He tries to forget about it, but over time, it bothers him and makes his tummy feel sick. The story never goes into specifics about what "terrible thing", which makes it helpful for discussing any type of tragic event.
- [Teenage Grief Sucks](#) (TGS) is a teen-run website that's starting conversations about teenage grief.



### DRAW / WRITE

- [Art with Heart](#): A Seattle-based non-profit that creates **therapeutic books** that combine art and writing to help kids cope with overwhelming feelings. We recommend [DRAW IT OUT](#) for Elementary/Middle school age and [INK ABOUT IT](#) for High school age.



### TRY

- We've partnered with [Help Texts](#) so that **teens** and their adults can receive ongoing, expert grief support via text message all year long, with our *special discount*. Text messages are personalized based on age, relationship, cause of death and more. [Click here for our special Eluna discount](#).
- We recommend these activities for navigating grief. Try: [Grief Puzzle](#), [Feeling Faces](#), [Inside Out](#), [Stepping In & Out of Grief](#).
- Check out [Apps for Grieving Kids](#).
- [Memory Jar](#): This is one way to remember and to keep the conversation going about a loved one.

## Grief Resources for Camp Staff:

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### READ

- The National Center for School Bereavement website includes a [five-step crisis response strategy](#) and [sample letter templates](#) for notifying staff, parents and students.
- As a caregiver impacted by a traumatic death, it can be difficult to support children while working through the overwhelming feelings of grief. [This article](#) is your reminder to prioritize self-care.
- [Actively Moving Forward](#)® (AMF), a HealGrief® program, is a national network created in response to the needs of grieving *young adults*. For over a decade, they have connected, supported, and empowered grieving young adults to “actively move forward” in memory of their person. They also offer [virtual support](#) through their app.
- The Jed Foundation is focused on the mental health of *pre-college and college* students. They have wonderful resources on their site like [How to Deal with Grief and Loss](#).
- [What’s Your Grief](#) is a helpful website to explore a broad range of feelings and techniques in a creative and uniquely personal tone.
- Recommended books on grief for [Young Adults](#) and [Adults](#).
- [The Dinner Party](#) is a virtual program is designed specifically for grieving *young adults*.



### WRITE

- We also invite you to consider these [grief journaling](#) pointers and [story writing](#) activity.



### TRY

- We recommend these activities for navigating grief: [Mindfulness & Grief Podcast](#), [Guided Imagery](#), [Grief Yoga Practice](#), [Stepping In & Out of Grief](#).
- We've partnered with [Help Texts](#) so that teens and **adults** can receive ongoing, expert grief support via text message all year long, with our *special discount*. Text messages are personalized based on age, relationship, cause of death and more. [Click here for our special Eluna discount](#)
- Check out [apps for grieving adults](#)
- [Memory Jar](#): This is one way to remember and to keep the conversation going about a loved one.

## Camp Erin Online:

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[Camp Erin Online](#) is a free bereavement program for youth and their families grieving the death of a significant person in their lives. Participants attend an online experience that combines grief education and emotional support with fun, interactive activities. Led by bereavement professionals and caring volunteers, participants are provided a safe environment to explore their grief, learn essential coping skills, and experience community with other families who are also grieving. Camp Erin Online is a program of Eluna.

### [Camp Erin Online – Grief Compass Groups](#)

Grief Compass Groups support families in finding their way through grief. Camp Erin Online invites you to come and experience community with other families who are grieving. Programming is most appropriate for youth ages 6-17 and their adult caregivers.

- Hosted on the 2nd Thursday of each month for 1 hour
- Families will opt in/out each month; attendance is not required at all sessions
- Accessible nationally via online programming
- Available to families who have experienced the death of someone significant in their lives
- Free of charge
- If interested, [fill out this inquiry form](#).

## Developmental Stages and Grief:

*Every child's grief journey is unique and there's no right or wrong way to grieve. However, there are common grief responses that tend to appear as children grow and move through developmental stages. We also know that grief can resurface around milestone events and responses will fluctuate. We recommend reading through all stages, and the strategies for supporting each phase, in the hope that you will recognize your child's individual responses, understand how to help, and develop coping skills together.*

## Grief Responses by Age: Infants/Toddlers (Age 0 - 3)

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**Developmental Stage:** During these first two years, children's development is focused on creating an attachment bond with primary caregiver/s. These bonds are the foundation of trust and healthy relationships. Infants are also rapidly building their social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Personality and self-awareness are starting to form.

**Concept of Life & Death:** Up to age 3, all objects are alive. Infants and toddlers have very little understanding of death, but they may notice that something is missing or different.

**Symptoms of Grief:** All children, regardless of their experience with grief, may exhibit the following traits at various ages and stages of their life. However, research has found that after the death of loved one, children may have prolonged or noticeable experiences with one or more of the following symptoms:

- **Behavioral:**
  - reduced affection towards caregivers
  - rejecting their environment
  - slow movement or hyperactive movement
  - staring off with a dazed expression
- **Emotional:**
  - prolonged sadness/weepiness
  - anxiousness and inability to self-soothe or be soothed
- **Physical:**
  - loss of appetite
  - more colds/sickness than usual
  - sleep disturbances (waking up frequently/nightmares/night terrors)
- **Cognitive:**
  - fragmented memory (feeling like something is missing and only remembering some details)

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## Grief Responses by Age: How to Help (Age 0 to 3)

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### Reassure:

- Gaze into their eyes and mirror expressions (smiling or frowning when they are) to strengthen your bond.
- Identify special ways that the deceased person would soothe the child and incorporate these into routines (cooking a comfort food, using a specific rocking chair or technique, wrapping infant in a special blanket).
- Be present during self-regulation (take deep breaths together while embracing). Try infant massage as a soothing technique.
- Avoid overstimulation and teach self-soothing through play (using stuffed animals or puppets).
- Model appropriate ways to express [grief](#).

### Routine:

- Create a comfortable, safe, and predictable environment to the best of your ability.
- Create consistent schedules for sleeping and eating routines.
- If you are one of the primary caregivers, avoid being away for several days at a time.

### Release:

- Make time for creative outlets, such as playing, music, rhythm, art, dancing, movement, and repetitive nursery rhymes.
- Read a [picture book](#) together about grief.

### Remember:

- [Include child in memorializing/funeral activities](#). Display pictures of the person who is deceased.

### Reflect & Connect:

- Tell the infant/toddler that they will be taken care of and loved.
- Prepare by reading [10 Things Grieving Children Want You To Know](#) or [Seven Suggestions for Explaining Death to Children](#).
- When explaining the death, using simple and short sentences. Use the words dead and died. Avoid euphemisms such as "gone", "passed on", "lost". Here are some sample scripts to consider:

*"Daddy's heart stopped working. He died and won't be coming home from the hospital."*

*"Your mom had an accident and died. We will not be seeing her again."*

### Reach Out:

- Visit the [National Bereavement Resource Guide \(NBRG\)](#) to find counseling and support groups in your area.
- *For additional resources, visit our [Eluna Resource Center](#).*

## Grief Responses by Age: Preschool (Age 3 - 5)

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**Developmental Stage:** During this preschool age, children develop social/emotional/moral reasoning, engage in imaginative and fantasy play, understand cause and effect, can experience two emotions at once, begin to self-soothe, and experience feelings of shame and guilt.

**Concept of Life & Death:** Young children will transition from believing all objects are alive to seeing anything that moves as alive. This age group does not understand permanence of death: they may believe the person is asleep and will wake up.

**Symptoms of Grief:** All children, regardless of their experience with grief, may exhibit the following traits at various ages and stages of their life. However, research has found that after the death of a loved one, children may have prolonged or noticeable experiences with one or more of the following symptoms:

- **Behavioral:**
  - clingy
  - stubborn
  - impulsive
  - temper tantrums
  - risky behaviors
  - regression (bed wetting/thumb sucking)
  - talking less
- **Emotional:**
  - fear of separation
  - extreme sadness/depression
  - unable to be soothed/comforted
  - difficulty with change
- **Physical:**
  - frequent headaches or stomachaches
  - more colds than usual
- **Cognitive:**
  - magical thinking (that the deceased will return)
  - constant questioning
  - child may believe they caused the death and toxic shame or excessive guilt may develop

Continued...

## Grief Responses by Age: How to Help (Age 3 to 5)

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### Reassure:

- Remind the child that they are safe and loved.
- When implementing consequences, have child in sight during time-outs (1 min per year of child's age) and use a repair phase afterwards like: "you and I are okay now".
- Identify special ways that the deceased person would soothe the child and incorporate these into daily routines (cooking a comfort food, singing a specific lullaby, comforting child with a special blanket).
- Be available for their emotional needs and acknowledge feelings "I see that you are...upset/angry/frustrated".
- Model appropriate ways to express feelings.
- Provide choices when possible "would you like to wear the green or red shirt today".

### Routine:

- Try to stick to a consistent schedule for sleeping, eating, and childcare.
- Offer healthy comfort foods when child is having a hard day.
- If you are one of the primary caregivers, avoid being away for several days at a time.

### Release:

- Make time for creative & physical outlets through play, art, dancing, movement, music.
- Read age-appropriate [books about grief](#).

### Remember:

- [Include child in memorializing/funeral activities](#).
- Create a [legacy book](#) or box to store mementos and special items.

### Reflect & Connect:

- Tell the child that they will be taken care of and loved.
- Prepare by reading [10 Things Grieving Children Want You To Know](#) or [Seven Suggestions for Explaining Death to Children](#).
- When explaining the death, using simple and short sentences. Use the words dead and died. Avoid euphemisms such as "gone", "passed on", "lost". Here are some sample scripts to consider:

*"Daddy's heart stopped working."*

*"Your mom had an accident and died from her injuries."*

*"Grandma died today, and we will not be seeing her again."*

*"Grandpa died today and won't be coming home from the hospital."*

### Reach out:

- Visit the [National Bereavement Resource Guide \(NBRG\)](#) to find counseling and support groups in your area.
- Proactively intervene & respond promptly to signs of a suicidal crisis or emotional distress by calling or texting **988**, or chatting with a mental health professional at [988Lifeline.org](#)
- **For additional resources, visit our [Eluna Resource Center](#).**



## Grief Responses by Age: Elementary School (Age 5 – 11)

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**Developmental Stage:** During the elementary school age range, children are developing cognitive, social, emotional, and moral reasoning. Children will begin to socialize and identify friend groups. Competition, eagerness, fairness, and rule-following are common traits of this age group. Anxiety and phobias may also form during this stage (scared of spiders, monsters under the bed, etc.)

**Concept of Life & Death:** Children will gradually start to understand that death is permanent, and the person will not return. Children may believe that death has scary and mysterious powers. Around age 9, children start to understand that death is both personal (that they will eventually die) and universal (that all living things will die).

**Symptoms of Grief:** All children, regardless of their experience with grief, may exhibit the following traits at various ages and stages of their life. However, research has found that after the death of loved one, children may have prolonged or more extreme experiences with one or more of the following symptoms:

- **Behavioral:**
  - irritability
  - tantrums
  - aggressive outbursts
  - argumentative
  - impulsive
  - hyperactive
  - difficulty with change
  - social challenges or isolation
  - fills emptiness with screentime or eating
- **Emotional:**
  - scared about the safety of others
  - fear of disapproval
  - feeling helpless or hopeless
- **Physical:**
  - frequent stomachaches, headaches, colds
  - difficulty sleeping (nightmares)
  - loss of appetite or overeating
  - hair may start falling out
- **Cognitive:**
  - trouble in school and paying attention
  - identifies with deceased
  - obsessed about details around death and dying

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## Grief Responses by Age: How to Help (Age 5 to 11)

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### Reassure:

- Stay present and focused on building your relationship with the child.
- Reassure them with messages of safety and belonging for the child.
- Identify special ways that the deceased person would soothe the child and incorporate these into daily routines (cooking a favorite meal, playing a favorite type of music, comforting child with a special item of choice like a sweater of the person who died).
- Be available for emotional needs and acknowledge feelings.
- Model appropriate ways to express feelings and fill feelings of emptiness ([drawing a body map](#) instead of watching TV or tossing a ball together when feeling sad).
- Provide choices whenever possible.
- Set limits for unsafe or unhealthy aggression.

### Routine:

- Stick to a sleep, eating, and an after-school routine if possible.
- Increase predictability in their environment (set family dinner time, etc.)

### Release:

- Provide time for creative outlets through play, [art](#), dancing, and music.
- Check out age-appropriate [books about grief](#) to read together.
- Plan regular physical activities (sports, exercise, yoga, dance).

### Remember:

- Allow child to keep mementos of deceased loved one.
- [Include child in memorializing/funeral activities.](#)
- Create a [legacy book](#) or box together.

### Reflect & Connect:

- Answer all questions about the death of their significant person. Respond to questions with concise and concrete answers. Avoid giving advice unless requested. Ask about excessive daydreaming.
- Prepare by reading [10 Things Grieving Children Want You To Know](#) or [Seven Suggestions for Explaining Death to Children](#).
- When explaining the death, using simple and short sentences. Use the words dead and died. Avoid euphemisms such as "gone", "passed on", "lost". Here are some sample scripts to consider:

*"Daddy's heart stopped working."*

*"Your mom had an accident and died from her injuries."*

*"Grandma died today, and we will not be seeing her again."*

*"Grandpa died today and won't be coming back home from the hospital."*

- Help children find a support network of trusted peers and adults.
- For toxic shame or survivor guilt allow child to spend time with a person who had a similar experience.

### Reach out:

- Visit the [National Bereavement Resource Guide \(NBRG\)](#) to find counseling and support groups in your area.
- Proactively intervene & respond promptly to signs of a suicidal crisis or emotional distress by calling or texting **988**, or chatting with a mental health professional at [988Lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)
- **For additional resources, visit our [Eluna Resource Center](#).**

## Grief Responses by Age: Middle School (Age 11 – 13)

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**Developmental Stage:** During the middle school years, pre-teens may experiment with different roles/identities and try to separate that identity from the family. They may show less affection towards caregivers and/or come across as rude. Pre-teens have trouble calculating the level of risk in situations and will experience a rollercoaster of emotions (moodiness). Pre-teens often look to fit in, which can lead to social anxiety.

**Concept of Death:** Middle schoolers understand that death is permanent, however they may also experience magical thinking (that the person went away on a trip and will return). They also realize that death is both personal (they will die and experience the death of a close person) and universal (that everyone will die).

**Symptoms of Grief:** All children, regardless of their experience with grief, may exhibit the following traits at various ages and stages of their life. However, research has found that after the death of loved one, children may have prolonged or noticeable experiences with one or more of the following symptoms:

- **Behavioral:**
  - risk-taking
  - acting out
  - experimentation with unsafe substances and behaviors
  - may try to take on a caregiving role
  - may isolate from their friends
- **Emotional:**
  - difficulty managing big emotions (anger, revenge, sadness, relief, worry)
  - survivors guilt
  - depression or anxiety
  - suicidal ideation
  - fear for safety of self and others (the world is no longer safe)
  - hypervigilance (sensitive to noises/light/movement)
- **Physical:**
  - headaches, stomach aches, body pain
  - trouble sleeping (nightmares)
  - changes in eating habits (eating too much or too little)
  - possibility of self-harm
- **Cognitive:**
  - unable to stay focused and pay attention
  - trouble in school
  - constant thoughts or questions about the death

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## Grief Responses by Age: How to Help (Age 11 - 13)

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### Reassure:

- Reinforce safety and love within your relationship and family.
- Look for subtle signs of grief as this age group is better about masking or hiding their feelings.
- Be available for emotional needs and acknowledge feelings.
- Model appropriate ways to express feelings and fill feelings of emptiness (writing/drawing in a diary instead of watching TV or this [shake & ground technique](#)).
- Provide choices whenever possible.

### Routine:

- Identify clear and consistent roles, rules, and responsibilities within the family.
- Monitor high-risk behavior and set limits with practical consequences.
- Encourage healthy eating, sleeping, and exercise habits.
- Increase predictability in their environment (set family dinner time, etc.)

### Release:

- Provide and support creative outlets through [art](#), music, theater, journaling, etc.
- Offer fiction and nonfiction [books](#) to provide a variety of perspectives into grief.
- Encourage physical outlets (sports, exercise, yoga, dancing) and appropriate options for aggression/anger (boxing/martial arts)
- Set limits for unsafe or unhealthy aggression.

### Remember:

- Allow youth to keep mementos of deceased loved one.
- [Include child in memorializing/funeral activities.](#)
- Create a [legacy book](#) or box together.

### Reflect & Connect:

- Initiate conversations about the death of your loved one.
- Engage in active listening by asking open-ended questions and listening without judgement or interpretation.
- Allow for a wide range of emotional expression (child may want to throw or hit something – support them with safe ways to throw a baseball or hit a punching bag).
- Answer all questions clearly and accurately. Have patience and prepare by reading [10 Things Grieving Children Want You To Know](#) or [Seven Suggestions for Explaining Death to Children](#).
- Provide opportunities to talk with nonfamily members for support.
- For toxic shame or survivor guilt allow child to spend time with a person who had a similar experience.

### Reach out:

- Visit the [National Bereavement Resource Guide \(NBRG\)](#) to find counseling and support groups in your area.
- Proactively intervene & respond promptly to signs of a suicidal crisis or emotional distress by calling or texting **988**, or chatting with a mental health professional at [988Lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)
- *For additional resources, visit our [Eluna Resource Center](#).*

## Grief Responses by Age: High School (Age 13 - 18)

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**Developmental Stage:** During their high school years, teenagers will experiment with different roles and priorities, develop a distinct identity, and may seek to separate that identity from the family. They have trouble calculating risk and their emotions will fluctuate (moodiness). They turn more toward peers for a sense of belonging, which can lead to social anxiety as they seek to fit in. Intimate relationships form (boyfriends/girlfriends), which may lead to a sense of vulnerability. Teenagers begin to be more resourceful, reasonable, and reliable as they age towards adulthood.

**Concept of Death:** Teenagers understand that death is permanent, however they can experience magical thinking (that the person went away on a trip and will return). Teens often question the meaning of life.

**Symptoms of grief:** All children, regardless of their experience with grief, may exhibit the following traits at various ages and stages of their life. However, research has found that after the death of loved one, children may have prolonged or noticeable experiences with one or more of the following symptoms:

- **Behavioral:**
  - higher risk-taking than normal (substance abuse/unsafe behaviors/reckless driving)
  - taking on caregiving roles or pushing towards independence from the family
  - avoidance
  - social challenges
- **Emotional:**
  - difficulty managing big emotions (sadness/anger/relief)
  - survivors guilt
  - depression or anxiety
  - suicidal ideation
  - fear for safety of self and others
  - hypervigilance (sensitive to noises/light/movement)
- **Physical:**
  - challenges with sleeping (nightmares)
  - changes in eating habits (eating too much or too little)
  - possibility of self-harm
- **Cognitive:**
  - memory flashbacks
  - low attention span
  - struggling with academics and school attendance
  - extreme perfectionism

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## Grief Responses by Age: How to Help (Age 13 to 18)

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### Reassure:

- Reinforce safety and love within your relationship and family.
- Look for subtle signs of grief as this age group is better about masking or hiding their feelings.
- Model appropriate ways of grieving and processing, such as [guided mindfulness](#).

### Routine:

- Identify clear and consistent roles, rules, and responsibilities.
- Monitor high-risk behavior and set limits with practical consequences.
- Provide opportunities for extending sleep within reason and encourage healthy eating and exercise habits.
- Increase predictability in their environment (family dinner times).

### Release:

- Provide and support creative outlets through [art](#), music, theater, journaling, etc.
- Offer fiction and nonfiction [books](#) to provide a variety of perspectives into grief.
- Encourage physical outlets (sports, exercise, [yoga](#), dancing) and appropriate options for aggression/anger (boxing/martial arts)
- Set limits for unsafe or unhealthy aggression

### Remember:

- Allow teen to have mementos of deceased loved one.
- [Include teen in memorializing/funeral activities](#).
- Create a [legacy book](#) or box together.

### Reflect & Connect:

- Initiate conversations about the death of the significant person. Engage in active listening by asking open-ended questions and listening without judgement or interpretation. Try sharing your own emotions to start the conversation.
- Allow for a wide range of emotional expression (child may want to throw or hit something – support them with safe ways to throw a baseball or hit a punching bag). Answer all questions clearly and accurately.
- Have patience and prepare by reading [10 Things Grieving Children Want You To Know](#) or [Seven Suggestions for Explaining Death to Children](#).
- Provide opportunities to talk with nonfamily members for support.
- For toxic shame/survivor guilt allow child to spend time with a person who had a similar experience

### Reach out:

- Visit the [National Bereavement Resource Guide \(NBRG\)](#) to find counseling and support groups in your area.
- Proactively intervene & respond promptly to signs of a suicidal crisis or emotional distress by calling or texting **988**, or chatting with a mental health professional at [988Lifeline.org](#)
- ***For additional resources, visit our [Eluna Resource Center](#).***

## Grief Responses by Age: Young Adults (Age 18 – Mid 20's)

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**Developmental Stage:** Young adults start to consider plans for independence, post-secondary education, and career goals. Social maturity and intimate relationships may evolve and develop. Personality and identity strengthen during this time.

**Concept of Death:** Young adults understand that death is permanent. The death of a significant person can have a profound, permanent effect on young adults. Young adults continue to be vulnerable when processing grief as they are still developing their social, emotional, and coping skills.

**Symptoms of Grief:** All people, regardless of their experience with grief, may exhibit the following traits at various ages and stages of their life. However, research has found that after the death of loved one, young adults may have prolonged or noticeable experiences with one or more of the following symptoms:

- **Behavioral:**
  - avoidance
  - isolation
  - risk-taking
- **Emotional:**
  - depression or anxiety
  - stress
  - unexpected sadness (crying)
  - range of feelings that may include frustration, shock, relief, guilt, and/or anger
- **Physical:**
  - aches and pains
  - tight chest
  - loss of appetite
  - exhaustion
- **Cognitive:**
  - disruption in academic or professional functioning
  - fracturing in personal identity development

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## Grief Responses by Age: How to Help (Age 18 to Mid 20s)

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### Reassure:

- Reinforce safety and love within your relationship and family.
- Examine roles and responsibility within the restructured family system.
- Adjust boundaries and expectations as needed.
- Talk openly about how your relationship will continue to evolve through adulthood. Look for subtle signs of grief as this age group is better about masking or hiding their feelings.
- Model appropriate ways of grieving, such as this [grief body scan](#).
- Monitor high-risk behavior and reset expectations as needed.

### Routine:

- Provide opportunities for extended sleep within reason and encourage healthy eating habits.
- If the young adult has moved away, discuss opportunities for communication and visits.

### Release:

- Support creative outlets in art, music, theater, journaling, sports, [yoga](#), exercise, outdoors, hobbies, clubs, etc.
- Offer fiction and nonfiction [books](#) to provide a variety of perspectives on grief.
- Plan physical outings together (walking, hiking, biking, etc.).

### Remember:

- Allow young adults to keep mementos of deceased loved one.
- [Include young adult in memorializing/funeral activities.](#)
- Create a [legacy book](#) or box together.

### Reflect & Connect:

- Engage in open conversations and active listening.
- Answer all questions clearly and accurately.
- Try sharing your own emotions to start the conversation.
- Have patience and prepare by reading [10 Things Grieving Children Want You To Know](#) or [Seven Suggestions for Explaining Death to Children](#).
- Provide opportunities to talk with nonfamily members for support.
- For toxic shame or survivor guilt encourage the young adult to spend time with a person who had a similar experience.

### Reach out:

- Visit the [National Bereavement Resource Guide \(NBRG\)](#) to find counseling and support groups in your area.
- Proactively intervene & respond promptly to signs of a suicidal crisis or emotional distress by calling or texting **988**, or chatting with a mental health professional at [988Lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)
- ***For additional resources, visit our [Eluna Resource Center](#).***



## Your Grief is Unique

Grief often affects us in ways that take us by surprise and can show up differently for each person. We invite you to [print this worksheet](#) to explore the various ways that grief shows up for you emotionally, physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Consider sharing your reflections together with friends or family:

- Discuss how your grief reactions are similar and in what ways they are different.
- Explore which grief reactions feel the hardest.
- Identify ways to support one another as you move through grief together.

### Your Grief is Unique

Grief often affects us in ways that take us by surprise. Take a moment to explore the various ways in which your grief shows up for you. Circle or highlight the reactions you have experienced.

EMOTIONALLY	sad hopeless helpless miserable worthless invisible hurt	guilty regretful abandoned angry revengeful embarrassed lonely	crazy alone numb emotional moody irritable disappointed	scared shocked disbelief denial worried confused lost	happy relieved loved peaceful hopeful content understood
PHYSICALLY	crying eating more eating less sleeping more sleeping less	tired/fatigued tense muscles stomach aches headaches weight changes	short of breath rapid heart rate throat tightness exercising more leg tremble/tap	staying busy fidgety recklessness self harm seeking comfort	
MENTALLY	forgetful unfocused fixated feeling crazy	blocked spiralizing racing thoughts pessimistic	dreams nightmares flashbacks optimistic	hopeful goal oriented insightful focused	
SOCIALLY	prefer to be home prefer to stay busy prefer to not be alone prefer to be with family feeling misunderstood	withdrawn feeling alone change in friends irritable impatient	little interest in typical activities offended easily trying to pretend to be OK seeking escape in drugs/alcohol new hobby		
SPIRITUALLY	questioning "why?" questioning faith questioning meaning of life questioning "who am I?" thoughts about the afterlife		angry at higher power better appreciation for life desire to be with loved one sensing presence of loved one change in values		

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**Remember: It is YOUR grief, YOUR way. Name it. Express it. Share it.**

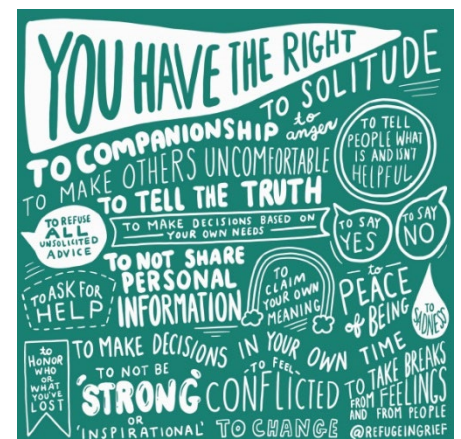
## Grief Rights

Grieving often comes with some added layers of unsolicited advice, untimely offers of support, and unrealistic expectations. While it may feel like you are swimming upstream, know that It's OKAY to grieve your way and stay true to you.

To start, we invite you to check out: Megan Devine's [The Griever's Bill of Rights](#).

Then, choose an activity to deepen your conversation.

- Create a Bill of Rights for YOU or YOUR family! Be creative. Use prompts from the example AND your words!
- Choose 2 "Rights" to focus on this month. Write an "Action Plan" with steps your family can take.
- Write a song, poem, or spoken word piece focused on remembering YOUR RIGHTS in grief.
- Start a family or personal journal. Write about times when you demonstrated YOUR RIGHTS.



**Disclaimer:** The resources in this document have been compiled by clinical and non-clinical staff at Eluna who are dedicated to supporting children and families. Personal situations vary and these resources may not be helpful for everyone. The following are a not an exhaustive set of resources and there are many other resources available through other organizations and websites. While we hope that you find these resources useful, we encourage you to find the resources that work for you.

# Ten Things Grieving Children Want You to Know

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## **1. Children want to be told the truth about the death:**

- Tell them in age-appropriate and direct language
- Ask them if they have any questions and clear up misconceptions

## **2. Children look to you as a role model for how people grieve:**

- Share your feelings with them as long as they are relieved of the task of having to “fix it”
- Each child will grieve in their own unique way
- They will grieve alone in an effort to shield you from their pain

## **3. Children want to talk about their person who died:**

- They need you to tolerate listening when they tell their story or share their feelings
- They fear that they will forget their loved one

## **4. Children express their emotions through play and behaviors which may be problematic for you:**

- They can't always tolerate intense emotions or know how to talk about them
- They might make decisions you don't agree with
- They need to take breaks from their grief and engage in age appropriate activities.

## **5. Children need to know who would take care of them if you could not:**

- They may fear for your safety especially when you are apart

## **6. Children benefit from being included in mourning rituals:**

- Your child needs the opportunity to participate in ongoing rituals
- Rituals aid in their understanding of death

## **7. They need you to help them feel safe:**

- Provide clear and consistent boundaries, limits and expectations
- Give them room to safely interact with peers and adults outside of the family

## **8. They need to be taught coping strategies:**

- Include ways to comfort themselves in your absence

## **9. Children need to be included when making decisions:**

- About how to celebrate holidays, birthdays and anniversaries
- About other family circumstances such moving or changing schools.

## **10. Children need you to take care of yourself: they will only adapt as well as you do.**

## Seven Suggestions for Explaining Death to a Child:

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1. **Explain the immediate cause of death simply and honestly** - rather than using euphemisms or giving a philosophical or religious interpretation. "Your father died of a disease called cancer." rather than "God took your father because he was a good man." or "Your Dad is visiting Heaven." or "Your dad died because he was very sick."
2. **Offer reassurance about their fears.** Children who experience the death of a loved one often fear for themselves or the lives of other family members. Talk openly and honestly with children... explain that "most people live 'til they are very old."
3. **Offer reassurance that they are not to blame for the death.** Many times, children believe that they "caused" the death because of misbehaving or arguing or wishing harm. Clearly explain that this does not cause someone to die. You may think your child does not blame themselves but this has been shown to happen to many children.
4. **Use correct terminology when explaining what happens to the body when someone dies.** Clearly state that the person's body has stopped working, that the person has died, and that they won't be coming back. Explain the process for burial/cremation and make it clear that the person cannot feel any pain.
5. **Develop a plan with children** regarding who will care for and love them should something happen to you. "Mommy doesn't plan on anything happening to her but if something does, Aunt Jenny will be there to take care of you."
6. **Include children in family mourning rituals.** Explain what they can expect to happen during the ritual and ask them if there is anything special that they would like to say or do. Have a caring adult there to support them and answer any questions they might have.
7. **Accept children's feelings about the death.** Children often have a wide range of emotions after a death. Children grieve differently than adults. Developmentally they can only handle small amounts of pain/grief at a time; therefore, they may be openly sad one moment and happily playing the next. This is normal behavior especially for younger children.

## Goodbye Letter

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Sharing emotions related to grief and saying goodbye is often difficult, especially for children and teens. Writing goodbye letters can help with the exploration of complex and conflicting feelings. You can use the goodbye letter template as is (below) or you can ease in with [these creative options](#).



# Goodbye Letter



Writing a goodbye letter to someone who died can be a powerful way to express your thoughts and feelings. Complete all or some of the prompts below. Then you choose: Share, save or shred.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I want you to know that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I will miss not being able to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I feel sad that you won't be there when I \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I miss most is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you were here now, I would tell you \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I think if you were here now, you would tell me \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I feel good knowing that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One thing that you taught me is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



, \_\_\_\_\_