

# Addressing Grief & Loss in School





# What We Will Be Learning About Grief

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## What Grief Is

Grief 101

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## How to Spot It

What you can do as a educator to identify grief

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## How to Support Grief

How you can assist your students in their grieving process

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## Who Else Can Help

The role your school counselors and Pathfinders can play in all this





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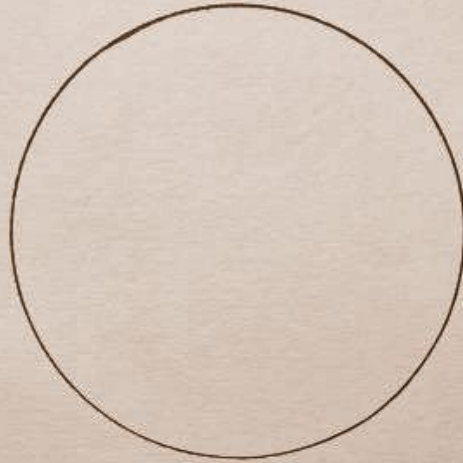
# What Grief Is

Understanding Grief

# What is Grief, Anyway?

- Grief is the normal and natural emotional reaction to loss or change of any kind.
- The response to the loss of something or someone we love and care about.
- Grief is both a universal and personal experience.
- Everyone has their own unique grief journey.

A VENN DIAGRAM OF LOVE VS. GRIEF:



# Grief is Complicated, Messy, & Exhausting

- **Grief is a complex journey**, filled with unpredictable emotions and moments that can feel overwhelming. It's a messy, exhausting process that doesn't follow a linear path and **requires patience and self-compassion**.
- Grief manifests uniquely in each person, with no two experiences alike. It's a deeply personal process, **shaped by individual emotions, circumstances, and relationships**.

# Cycles Not Lines

THE "STAGES OF GRIEF"



REALITY



# No Matter Where Students Are, You Can **ALLOW** Their Feelings!

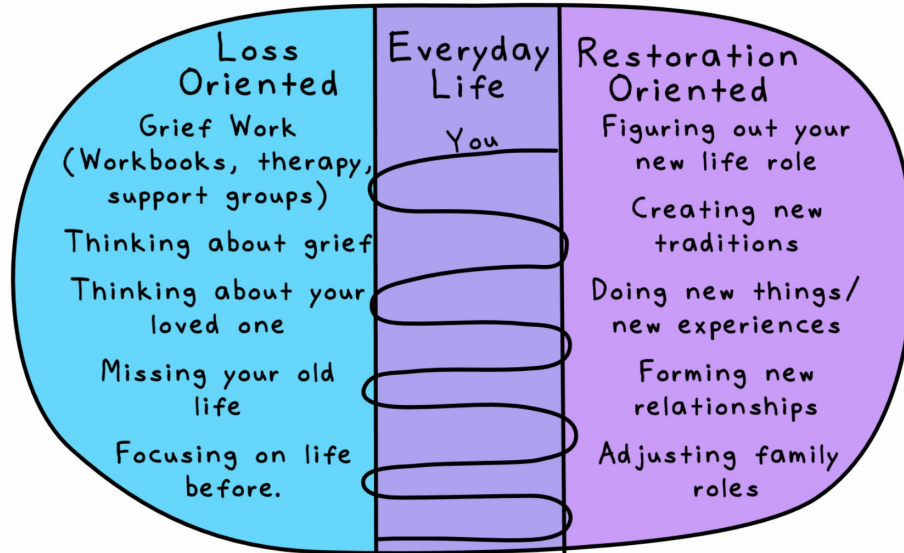
- Students are allowed to feel... **Distraught**
- Students are allowed to be... **Hopeless**
- Students are allowed to feel... **Okay**
- Students are allowed to be... **Angry**
- Students are allowed to feel... **Hopeful**
- Students are allowed to feel or be... \_\_\_\_\_





# Dual Process Grief

Dual Process Grief demonstrates how we bounce between loss-oriented coping (things that focus on grief) and restoration oriented coping (things that focus on rebuilding your life).



# 2

## How to Spot Grief

Identifying Signs of Grief





# Signs of Grief in Children/Teens

## Physical

- Lethargy
- Physical distress
- Weight change
- **Fatigue**
- **Memory loss and brain fog**



## Emotional / Behavioral

1. **Sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety**
2. Despondency
3. Withdrawal from normal activities
4. **Difficulty concentrating**
5. Development regression
6. Clinginess, anxiety, feelings of abandonment
7. **Poor sleep and tiredness at school**



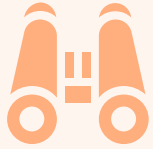
# 3

## Supporting Grief

Helping Students  
Experiencing Grief & Loss



# What to Do



## Identify

Be on the lookout for the signs of grief.



## Ask

Check in with students to see how they are doing.



## Comfort

Offer genuine compassion for what a student is experiencing.



## Connect

Make sure that a school counselor knows what's going on.

# Helping Grieving Students

## Keys to helping students in the thick of it

### **Normalize, Nurture, Comfort**

Acknowledge grief as natural and healthy, be comforting, flexible, and kind.

### **Create Safety**

Engage with students, let them lead, and allow their feelings.

### **Ask What They Need**

Ask if there is anything you can do to help.

### **Be Present & Listen**

There is nothing to try to fix, open your ears and your heart.

### **Respect Boundaries**

If students don't want to talk about it, don't make them.

### **Alert a Counselor**

Make sure a counselor is aware and checking in on the student



# Even The Best Intentions...

“When others call into question our grief, defy our perennial relationship with those we love who have died, treat us as anathema and avoid us, and push us toward healing before we are ready, they simply redouble our burden.”

— Joanne Cacciatore, *Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief*



# What NOT To Do

Things you should avoid if at all possible

## **Don't Ignore the Loss or Feelings**

Compassionately acknowledge the student's loss in privacy.

## **No Silver Linings or Platitudes**

Validate and empathize instead of providing silver linings and platitudes.

## **Don't Minimize or Compare**

Don't minimize the loss or make direct comparisons to your own.

## **Avoid Pressuring For Normality**

The student's new normal will come in it's own time, don't rush it.

## **Don't Offer Unsolicited Advice**

Avoid "you need to...," "You should...," or things like "Try to be positive."

## **Don't Try to Justify the Loss**

Avoid statements like "God has a plan" or "this is a test of faith."





The image features a central text area enclosed by a thin orange border. At the top-right and bottom-left corners of the border are hand-drawn icons of a paperclip. On the left and right sides of the border, there are hand-drawn curved lines that resemble a flourish or a smile.

**Be Caring.  
Be Brave.**

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## Additional Resources

Other ways to help

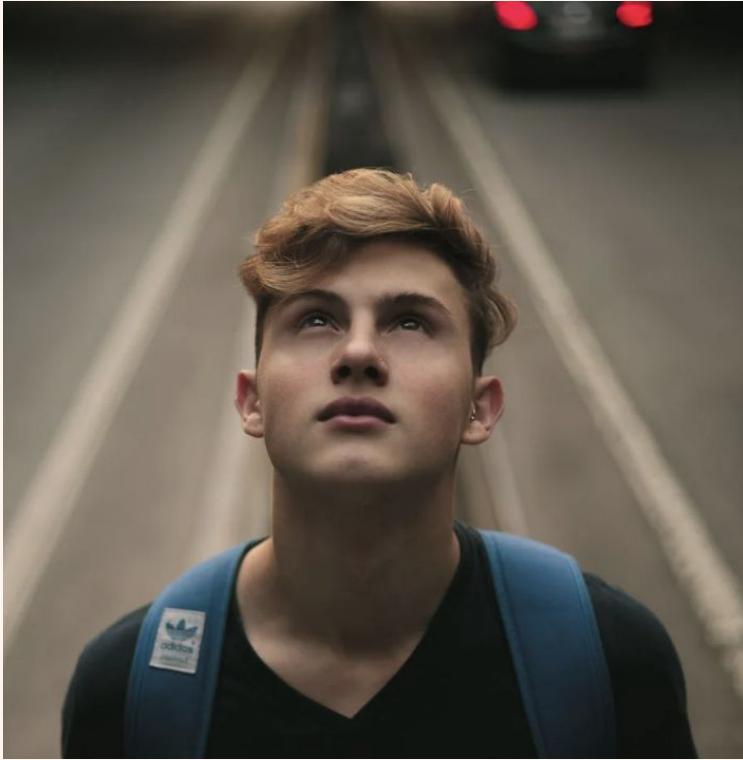


**Grief is best processed in the company of safe and trusted others.**





- Pathfinders provides group and individual counseling for students that have lost a loved one.
- Students are able to access **6-8 FREE** session of counseling.
- Students school counselors or liaisons are the ones who connect students with Pathfinders.
- Pathfinders grief and loss counseling services are available to you, too!



# Thanks!

Do you have any questions?

[Pathfindersforyou.com](https://Pathfindersforyou.com)