

Feelings Teens May Feel after the Death of a Parent, Sibling, Friend or Loved One

Sadness • Confusion • Alone • Left behind • Abandoned
Severe • Frustration • Sorrow • Depressed • Violent
Nervous/Jumpy • Angry at the World • Mad at Everybody
Guilt • Loss of Direction • Unstable • Unable to Function
Trust People Who Have Experienced a Death • Appreciation
Looking for Fights • Anger • Cursing
Fear That Something Might Happen Again • Regret • Shock
Disbelief • Inability to Accept the Death • Selfishness • Not Knowing How
to Live Anymore • World is Unfair • Jealousy
Lost • Bitter • Cold • Values Change • Lots Learned
Regret for things left unsaid and undone
It's Somebody's Fault • Protective of Family
Out of Control • On the Edge • Back Off- Or Else
Don't Want to Listen or Follow Rules • Rebellious
Don't Want to Do Anything • Avoiding Feelings • Short Temper
Why didn't it happen to someone else instead?
Relief that Suffering is Over • Weird and Scary
Hating the Killer (in cases of murder)
Happy Killer Got What He Deserved (In cases of murder)
Sad at Suffering • Should have known • Helpless
Feel like Hitting Someone or Something
Feel Like Being Alone • Felt Uncomfortable Around People
Loss of Appetite • Sleep Problems • Running Away
Want to Die • Loss of Reason to Live
Nobody Can Understand • Lack of Trust
Clamming Up • Disbelief
Hard to concentrate • Overwhelming Sadness

This list was compiled by boys and girls age 12-18

Types of Losses

**When there is change, there is loss.
When there is loss, there is grief.
The bigger the change, the harder the grief.**

What are some of the losses that can happen to teenagers?

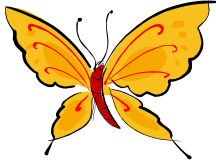
- Someone you love has a terminal illness
- You become terminally ill
- Someone you love dies
- Someone you love is missing
- Your pet dies or is missing
- A friend moves away
- A brother or sister moves out
- Your parents separate or divorce
- You move to a new town
- You start a new school
- You decide you need new friends
- Your house burns down
- You don't make the team
- You lose something special
- You have an unhappy home life

What else can you think of?

What losses have you had?



Serving grieving people of all ages.



Art of Grieving

A bird does not sing because he has an answer, he sings because he has a song

- *Chinese Proverb*

Some people grow stronger from their experiences of grief. The journey they take has sometimes been described as “the road less traveled” or as “good grief.” They use grief as a butterfly uses a cocoon...they emerge from it with new abilities and inner beauty.

Good grief does not mean that people do not experience emotional confusion, anger, despair, or helplessness. It means that they allow themselves to trust the river. They flow with the process until grief is rehabilitated and transformed into new levels of awareness and being.

These people, these artists of grief, meet reality head on with a certain determination, curiosity and imagination.

Grief as art doesn't happen all at once. It isn't easy. It takes time and patience. But when it happens, it's wonderful.

As in all art there are certain raw materials required. Creative grief requires self-trust, integrity, imagination, curiosity and hope.

Here are Ten Ways the Artists of Grief Rehabilitate and Transform Their Losses Into Growth.

1. They allow and feel their feelings.
2. They express their feelings in helpful, non-hurtful ways such as music, journal writing, physical activity, screaming, crying, hitting pillows, talking to others.
3. They connect with some larger meaning or life source.
4. They allow suffering.
5. They take care of themselves.
6. They laugh and learn how to play...even when it hurts.
7. They revisit and resolve earlier losses.
8. They seek and offer forgiveness.
9. They finish business and say their “good-byes” without burning bridges.
10. They have rituals and times of remembrance.

Helping Yourself in Times of Grief

By Donna O'Toole, M.A.

Our task...is to find the few principles that will calm the infinite anguish of free souls. We must mend what has been torn apart; make justice imaginable again in a world so obviously unjust, give happiness a meaning once more...It is a superhuman task. But superhuman is the term for tasks (that) take a long time to accomplish, that's all.

- Albert Camus

Here are some lanterns to light the path and guide you on your journey through grief. They are guidelines written by path-finders who have traveled through grief before you.

1. Seek and Accept Support.

You need acceptance and caring throughout grief. If you lack support, make finding it your first goal. Start with family, friends, or clergy...or call a local counseling agency or school counselor for advice.

2. Accept Your Grief

Time alone may not heal grief. To work through it you must accept and deal with it. Remember it is a natural healing process. Roll with its tides.

3. Find Models

You may need evidence that survival and growth are possible. Look for someone who can give you this hope. Books and support groups may be good places to begin.

4. Learn about Grief

Many a person who has learned about grief has declared, "I found out I am not crazy... I'm grieving." Understanding grief can make it safer and more predictable.

5. Express it

Without expression grief can leave you frozen and stoic. Find someone who can listen to your story—again and again. You may also want to express it privately...through music, art, poetry, or a journal.

6. Accept Your Feelings

Grief has many feelings...some very intense. Accept them and they will help you learn about yourself and the meaning of your loss. Lock them inside you and you will lock away parts of yourself.

7. Pace Yourself

Grief takes energy. You may tire easily. A slower pace alternated with periods of diversion and mild exercise will maximize healing. So will good nutrition.

8. Involve Yourself in Work or Meaningful Activity.

It can help you maintain direction, control and purpose, and occupy your mind.

9. Don't be Afraid to Have Fun

Laughter is good medicine. Allow yourself opportunities for diversion and freshness. Children and pets are great providers of healing. Nurture a friendship with someone who can help you play.

10. Hitch Your Wagon to a Star

Like the song says, "You've got to have hope... miles and miles of hope..." Faith is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to go on when fear is present. Healing will come eventually.

47 Suggestions on How to Help Yourself Conquer Depression

1. Think of something you want that is available; then make a plan to get it.
2. Go for a long walk.
3. Think of people who bring you up; call one of them.
4. Listen to your favorite music.
5. Sing or chant.
6. Do something creative.
7. Take a shower or a long, warm bath.
8. Make a list of your strengths. Spend at least an hour concentrating fully on appreciating yourself.
9. Love a pet expressively.
10. Think of something you would enjoy doing for someone. Then do it!
11. Read a book on higher consciousness, love or other enjoyable subjects.
12. Dance.
13. Forgive someone.
14. Consult a nutrition book and consider what you might add to your diet for pep and vitality.
15. Plan a trip or event that you think you would enjoy. Spend an hour anticipating in fantasy and savor the exciting aspects of the experience.
16. Think about enjoyable ways of relaxing; choose one and do it!
17. Make an appointment for a massage or give yourself a body massage or an invigorating skin brush.
18. Begin something you have been putting off for a long time.
19. Start your own humor book. Write down the funniest jokes you can remember.
20. Consider ways to make yourself more enjoyable to live with.
21. Stop doing anything and just be for awhile.
22. Make a list of things you are grateful for.
23. Scream!
24. Think of a goal that will bring you joy. Then consider ways to attain it.
25. Much unhappiness is caused by lack of knowledge. Learn how to get what you want by looking for the missing information, the right teacher or satisfying philosophy of life.
26. Arrange a meeting with your favorite person.

27. Give something away.
28. Calm and open your mind. Peace and wisdom reside beyond the churning of the mind.
29. Tell someone you love him or her.
30. Make a list of things you feel guilty about. Consider where you can make amends—then burn the list!
31. Plan a surprise for someone.
32. Do breathing exercises for energy and calmness.
33. Clean up something.
34. Plan and anticipate the pleasure of eating your favorite meal.
35. Organize the part of your life that has been producing irritation.
36. Relive with vivid imagination an experience in your life which made you feel extremely loved.
37. In your imagination become the person who has approved you most. See yourself through his or her eyes, feel for yourself the feeling he or she had for you and your response.
38. Think of the most difficult person in your life. Concentrate at length, perhaps half a day, on looking for ways in which he or she is actually good and admirable. Share these thoughts with that person.
39. Check to see where your life is out of balance the most in regards to work and play, rest and activity, excitement and calm. Make a plan to restore the balance in some tangible way.
40. Lie down and relax. Close your eyes. Repeat your name gently and tenderly for half an hour and note the changes in your feelings.
41. Find a photograph of a beautiful calm lake. Relax and contemplate vividly the lake.
42. Find a photograph of a beautiful river. Relax and flow with it.
43. Find a photograph of a blazing sun. Study it in a relaxed manner and absorb its warmth.
44. Find a picture of a towering waterfall. Drink in its refreshing energy.
45. Find a picture of a cozy fire. Stare at it; relax beside it.
46. Find a picture of springtime flowers. Merge with their beauty.
47. Stare at the stars on a lovely evening and feel your oneness with the universe... know the limitlessness of being.

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WHAT DOES DEATH LOOK LIKE? WHAT DOES LIFE LOOK LIKE?

An activity for teens

Time required: 45 minutes

Materials needed: Clay for sculpture, paper, materials for drawing and painting.

Goals:

To provide teens with a way to vent their emotions, explore their ideas and provide concrete materials that allow for abstract expression.

Description of Activity:

1. Talk about different images and feelings/beliefs concerning death and ask the participant to depict “death” through drawings.
2. Discuss these representations and then ask the children to depict “life.”
3. Share drawings and talk about changing their “death” representation to “life.” If they do, let them.
4. It is always important to help people with closure before they leave the group time. One way to do this is to talk about life first, then death. Allow the expression of painful thoughts, but offer a less painful, perhaps positive thought for the group ending.

Helping Others Help You through Your Grief

Sometimes it is hard for others to show how they care for you. They might be afraid they will make you feel worse, or they might be afraid of having such a tragic loss themselves. Often, they are silent or awkward; sometimes they are really foolish. They might say such things as:

- Time will heal
- At least you have another brother (or sister)
- I know just how you feel.
- I can't stand my parents! Sometimes I wish they were dead.
- I wish you would just get over it.

If you have friends or relatives who are awkward with you, try to realize they are having a hard time with your grief. If you can, try to teach them some of the following things:

- Remind them that it is hard for you to reach out and ask for help right now. Ask them to call you sometimes just to check in. Set a date to get together during one of the times you feel most lonely. Go for a walk together.
- Tell them it is good to use your deceased one's name, and to talk about him or her frequently. Sharing stories and feelings is very helpful. Let them know that your tears and theirs, too, are ok.
- Remind them that even though you might appear to be doing fine, underneath you are not feeling fine at all.
- Tell them you do not want to be pitied, treated too carefully, made the center of attention, or to have your feelings taken away. You just want to be cared about and listened to.
- Let them know it's ok if they don't know what to say. Just a hug, a squeeze of the hand or a tender look will say all there is.

Adapted by WinterSpring Center Transforming Grief and Loss, from Loweinsohn's *Survival Handbook for Widows*.

What Teens Wish Their Teachers Knew About Grief:

1. Our fights and arguments may be in response to the death we've experienced.
2. Sometimes we might "space out." Please cut us some slack.
3. We are not the same people we were before the death.
4. Sometimes taking care of ourselves, and being allowed to grieve our loved one, is more important than our homework.
5. Sometimes it is hard for us to concentrate.
6. Sometimes we stay up all night in our grief and are not able to keep up the next day.
7. When we're talking to others in class, we might be talking about the death.
8. Unless you've been in our shoes, you really don't know how we're feeling.
9. Please ask before assuming things.
10. When we're feeling bad during class, we'd like to be able to leave without permission.
11. We need room to be alone.

Suggestions from Teen Grief Group
Eagle Point Junior High School 2001

Comments from Teenagers in Mourning

1. "No one at school understands anything."
2. "I feel very strange. Sometimes I feel like a totally different person since my Dad died, and other times, I feel like nothing has happened."
3. "I hate it when people say, 'I'm sorry'."
4. "Will I ever feel better?"
5. "I always feel like crying, but I hold it back, and then I just shut down."
6. "I'm jealous of friends who have a relationship with their parent."
7. "It's so quiet around my house now. I hate it."
8. "When Mom died, a part of me died too. I was being torn apart."
9. "I don't think I could ever walk into another hospital."
10. "I thought I was doing just fine after Grandpa died, but now I'm not too sure. I miss him more now than I did last year. I think about him all the time and I just want to talk to him again."
11. "I just don't belong anymore-anywhere- home, or at school."
12. "The funeral seemed so stupid to me. All these people were saying things, but none of it helped. No amount of words will ever bring him back. And no one can give me any good reason as to why he had to die. It's just all unfair."
13. "Christmas last year without Sam was really sad. I don't know what to expect this Christmas."
14. "I feel as if Dad is still here. I can't believe he is really gone."
15. "People call the house and ask how my *Mom* is doing, not how *I am* doing."
16. "I hate the way my family has changed."

Grief Work Activities

Light a candle in his/her name- everyone in the house will know that someone else is thinking about them too.

Visit a location that is special to you and share memories with a friend or just with yourself.

Bring flowers to the cemetery, leave half of the bouquet behind, and take the other half home for yourself and others.

Walk, run, jump, row a boat, bicycle, chop wood, scrub floors, paint a room, make a favorite meal to share with friends.

Watch a funny movie, listen to special music, write a song or a poem, sing the “remembrance song,” dance in celebration of their life.

Think about the positive traits of a deceased loved one, and practice them; perform a kind act as a “remembrance.”

Plant a tree, bulbs, flowers; tend them, tell others what they signify.

Keep a journal...write lists of mads/sads/scareds/etc., about the loss... “I’m mad that...I’m alone...that you died...that I had no way to stop it...etc.”

Write letters (not to send) in which you bare your soul, to let thoughts, feelings flow. Do not edit what you write.

Write affirmations (creating positive self-fulfilling prophecies) that show your determination to heal... “I can cope, I will survive this tragedy...”

Employ thought-stopping techniques when your thinking goes in circles...say the word “stop” out loud, trace its letters over and over in your mind...imagine pouring large buckets of grey paint over the troubling scene.

Pray, meditate, actively practice “forgiveness” of yourself and others...writing repeatedly: I forgive myself for _____, I forgive _____ for _____.

Howl, growl, wail, pound a pillow or your bed, twist a towel, scream into a pillow or in the woods (warn others first).

Consciously decide to stop suffering for periods of time.

Create a memory book...ask others for contributions, kids can add drawings, stories...adults can complete the statement... "When I think of _____ I'll always remember the times when ..., add photos, songs, etc.

Celebrate meals with a toast to your loved, make new traditions for holidays and other special times, keep traditions that remain meaningful.

Journaling Ideas for Grieving Teens



Journal writing differs from keeping a diary in that journalers write about their inner feelings and thoughts, rather than just about what they did that day. Journaling is one way of moving what is inside of us to the outside, and can help us express and sort out our feelings and thoughts.

Here are some tips for journaling:

- Keep your journal in a private place, so you know no one else will read it. This will help you be able to write whatever is on your mind without censoring. You don't need to fear your feelings and thoughts.
- You can throw grammar, spelling and neatness out the window!!! Allow whatever comes to you to flow out onto the paper, however it comes.
- Use colored pens or pencils if you like to. You can even draw your feelings.
- Some people like to journal at least a little every day.
- Reviewing past journal entries can help you see changes and themes in your life.

Many grieving people find it helpful to clarify their thoughts and feelings by writing letters to their deceased loved one in their journals. Of course, these are letters that never get sent, but they can be saved, buried, burned, or sent up in helium balloons, if you want to.

Here are some letter starters:

- A special memory that I have about you is...
- What I miss the most about you and our relationship is...
- What I wish I had said (or not said) is...
- What I would like to ask you is...
- What I wish we had done (or not done) is...
- What I have had the hardest time dealing with is...

The Teen's Five Tasks of Mourning

❖ To accept the reality of the loss

When someone dies, even if it is expected, there is an initial feeling that it hasn't really happened. One of the first things we need to get is that the person is really dead and we will never see them again, hear their voice again, talk to them again...at least not in this lifetime. Helping create, or at least attending the funeral, wake or memorial service can help. So does talking about how the death happened and sharing memories of the person who died.

❖ To experience the pain of grief

When we lose someone we love, it hurts really badly. As we tell stories about the death and about the person who died, we have strong feelings like sadness, longing, anger, guilt, fear, confusion, and loneliness. These are normal. The more we love someone, the more it hurts to lose them. We can think of painful feelings as expressions of love for the person who died. Some people might be uncomfortable with our strong feelings, so it is important to find understanding people to hang around with. Journaling, doing art, and playing or listening to music can help to.

❖ To adjust to a world in which the deceased is gone

The realization of what it is like to live without the deceased person usually begins to emerge after about three months. Sometimes we find ourselves thinking we hear their voice or see them driving down the street. We might even pick up the phone to call them. Each time this kind of thing happens is another opportunity to remember the truth: they are gone forever. When an immediate family member dies, there are big changes in family roles and duties. When a best friend, pet or close relative dies, that special someone who occupied our time is no longer there, so our time is spent very differently. Life has dramatically changed. It takes time to get used to this different life.

❖ To reinvest in other activities and relationships

Sometimes we fear that we will forget our deceased loved one. But really, we never do. Being touched by someone is a forever thing. Some of us worry about replacing the person with someone new, but we can never really replace people since they are one-of-a-kind. If we try to replace someone, things are sure to fail. And if we resist loving again, for fear of replacing them, that, too, is tragic. In healthy grieving, we eventually stop investing so much of ourselves in grieving our loved one. We begin to form other relationships and invest in other activities. This is the way we go on living, even though someone we loved died.

❖ To accurately remember the deceased

It is normal during the grief process to have all kinds of memories of the deceased and of our past times with them. Some memories are good and some are not so good. If the relationship was mostly positive, we tend to remember good things at first. If the relationship was hard, we will tend to mostly remember the bad things at first. Eventually, it is important to have a well-rounded memory of the one who died, and of our relationship with them. Our memory is, after all, what we have left of them.

Adapted by WinterSpring, from William Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning.

Bereavement and Stress

In the time following a death we are subjected to very high levels of stress. It is a time when we are vulnerable to accidents, illness and other physical changes. It is a time to pay attention to physical health as well as learning new ways to manage stress.

The “work” of grief must be carried out by the bereaved person; it can’t be successfully “subcontracted.” It is important then to allow yourself the full gamut of emotions, thoughts and physical sensations... without judgment or criticism. Talking about these events with someone who can withhold judgment, criticism, or advice is an important first step.

Understanding that “life as I have known it” is forever changed implies that there are a tremendous number of adjustments to be made in day to day living. An analogy can be made to the process of living our lives as if we are assembling a large and complex jigsaw puzzle. A significant loss through death seems to upend our puzzle and we have to begin the assembly process again. And this time, the puzzle may look quite different from the one over which we had previously been laboring.

Managing stress involves working to put the puzzle back together again...starting with the corners and straight edges! Each corner represents an area of our lives to work toward managing with new strategies and support. The “four corners” of stress management:

- 1). Sleep management
- 2). Exercise and relaxation
- 3). Nutrition
- 4). Papering activities (or learning to be your own best friend)

Ideas for managing stress when grieving:

1). Sleep--Changes in sleep patterns normally accompany grief. Work to establish a “comfort” routine at bedtime. Go to bed at about the same time each night, have something warm (i.e., milk with vanilla and cinnamon) to drink, have a relaxing bath, etc. Try not to go to bed before you are ready to sleep. If you have been sleeping, and then awaken and can’t go back to sleep within 10-15 minutes, get up for a while and do something else. Read a good book or magazine, watch TV, play relaxing music, look through a favorite photo album, work on a craft or project. Perhaps changing where you sleep will be helpful as well, especially if the bed itself represents too many painful memories.

Dreams- They help us cope with the reality of the death. They can also help us rethink our spiritual beliefs and philosophies of living. Lastly, dreams keep us connected with the person who died and we can complete some of our unfinished business with them as well.

2). Exercise and Relaxation—Some form of daily exercise is critical in the management of stress, and can be a way to honor the person who has died...by taking care of yourself. Exercise can raise your energy level, provide relaxation, and even help get rid of some of the angry feelings that are present. Exercise can also help to avoid deep depression. Exercise that is tailored to your personal style is important. Walking for an hour a day will make a difference in your day. When bereaved we often forget to breathe fully. Adding relaxation techniques to your daily rituals will encourage you to pay attention to your need to breathe and unwind your muscles as well as your mind. Work to breathe through your big toes and the air has to circulate to the top of your head and back to your toes before you can fully exhale! Try tensing and relaxing each muscle group in turn, starting with your feet and working you to your head. Practice slow, deep breathing. Transport yourself mentally to a pleasant scene involving all your sense (smell the scents, hear the breeze, be warmed by the sunshine, see the colors). Use relaxing music or purchase a relaxation tape to assist you in your journey.

3). Eating and Nutrition—These are some basic guidelines that will help you through the normal changes that accompany eating, stress and grief. Drink plenty of water. Avoid caffeine, alcohol and tobacco, as they also tend to interfere with sleep and nutrition. Other items to avoid are sugar, spice, and grease as they can compound gastric stress. Add some extra protein as your body needs more to cope with physical demand of stress. If it’s difficult to eat at all, try to eat simple, small and frequent meals (up to six per day). Keep healthy snacks available when overeating seems to take over. Limit “comfort” foods (high calorie, low nutrition) to one item a day when possible. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to find a suitable “stress formula” vitamin and mineral supplement.

4). Learning to be your own best friend—There are many activities that will serve to pamper you during this difficult time. You may have learned to do these activities for *others*, but know it's time to offer them to yourself. Be creative. Write in your journal. Say “no” to overwhelming commitments and activities. Keep expectations and goals realistic for your circumstances. Participate in activities that are spiritually supportive. Find activities that let you just sit and remember. Find constructive and creative outlets. Find ways to control your thinking when you have done enough worrying or remembering that day. And find activities that offer you comfort. Practice and rehearse affirmations; reach out to others to decrease loneliness; participate in activities that offer distraction as well. In the months after the death it is important to encourage yourself to have a daily routine. When you feel a little more stable, add new activities and see how you do. There are times when a little push is needed, but remember to be gentle with yourself!