

2011

# Children's Grief Resources: A Website for Children Grieving the Loss of a Parent and their Caregivers

Jami L. Pfirman  
*Wright State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd\\_all](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all)



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

---

## Repository Citation

Pfirman, Jami L., "Children's Grief Resources: A Website for Children Grieving the Loss of a Parent and their Caregivers" (2011).  
*Browse all Theses and Dissertations*. 1106.  
[https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd\\_all/1106](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all/1106)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Browse all Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact [corescholar@www.libraries.wright.edu](mailto:corescholar@www.libraries.wright.edu), [library-corescholar@wright.edu](mailto:library-corescholar@wright.edu).

**CHILDREN'S GRIEF RESOURCES:**  
**A WEBSITE FOR CHILDREN GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A PARENT**  
**AND THEIR CAREGIVERS**

**PROFESSIONAL DISSERTATION**

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY**

**OF**

**THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

**JAMI PFIRMAN, PSY.M.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE**  
**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE**  
**OF**  
**DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**Dayton, Ohio**

**September 2011**

**COMMITTEE CHAIR: Cheryl Meyer, Ph.D., J.D.**

**Committee Member: Scott Fraser, Ph.D.**

**Committee Member: Eve Wolf, Ph.D.**

**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

July 15, 2011

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY **JAMI PFIRMAN** ENTITLED **CHILDREN'S GRIEF RESOURCES: A WEBSITE FOR CHILDREN GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A PARENT AND THEIR CAREGIVERS** BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY.

---

Cheryl Meyer, Ph.D., J.D.  
Dissertation Director

---

Eve M. Wolf, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

## **Abstract**

The death of a parent can represent one of the most devastating life experiences for children. It is an experience that disrupts a developmental path. It is also a crisis that families and communities must address in order to help a grieving child cope and develop resilience. Currently, there are few mental health resources available for parentally bereaved children. Literature on bereavement following the death of a parent suggests that children may experience long-term negative psychological consequences from the loss. However, the literature also notes that with appropriate support, access to resources, and opportunities to express their grief and build self-efficacy, grieving children can emerge from the loss of a parent as resilient individuals. A mental health informational website was created to help families and communities foster resilience in grieving children. The website contains information for children, parents, caregivers, and professionals. The creation of the website is discussed in addition to issues of childhood bereavement, future directions of the website, and ethical considerations.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER

1. Introduction	
Statement of Problem	1
2. Historical Perspective of Bereavement	
Changing Views of Bereavement	6
Childhood Bereavement	7
Bereavement in Childhood Following the Death of a Parent	11
Research findings on the	
Impact of Parental Death during Childhood	13
Defining Resilience	17
Conceptualization of Resilience	
in Children Following the Death of a Parent	19
3. Internet Resources and Bereavement	
Use of Mental Health Information Websites in Bereavement	23
Review of Existing Sites	25
4. Creation of Children's Grief Resources	
Construction of the Informational Website	29
Purpose of Each Page	30
Research Regarding Existing Websites	36
Setting the Design of the Website	36
Development of Content	37
Publishing the Website	38

5. Findings and Future Directions	
Present Project Purpose	39
Examination of Findings	39
Obstacles	41
Limitations and Future Directions	41
Implications	44
6. Appendix A	
Site Map	45
7. Appendix B	
Children’s Grief Resources Website	47
8. References	102

## **Acknowledgements**

Few people complete a dissertation project without the support of others. I am honored to thank those individuals who supported me on my journey to complete this project. First and foremost, I would like to thank my chair and adviser, Dr. Cheryl Meyer, for not only suggesting this project; but also for her guidance and calm support in the face of many challenges. I would also like to thank family and friends for their encouragement. I would especially like to thank my daughter, Madeline, for reminding me that children who are grieving the death of a parent are still kids who can grow and be resilient even after the most traumatic events. She is my inspiration.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **Statement of Problem**

One of the most devastating events for a child can be the death of a significant person or family member. In particular, the death of a parental figure can forever alter a family. According to the United States Census Bureau (1990), before they reach the age of 18, one in 20 children will experience the death of a parent. While most individuals will eventually experience grief, parental death during childhood represents a deviation in the typical path of development and is considered particularly disruptive and destructive (Mitchell, Wesner, Garand, Gale, Havill, & Brownson, 2007). Theorists and researchers have tied pathological outcomes like the development of mental illness to the death of a parent experienced in childhood (Bonanno, 2004). Though some children who lose a parent do experience psychological distress that would meet criteria for diagnosis of psychological disorder, many others do not. Researchers have acknowledged that the majority of bereaved children do not experience long-term psychological distress. Whether children experience long-term psychological distress following the loss of a parent or not, they do benefit from supportive and informed caregivers as well as from encouragement of emotional expression.

The study of bereavement has provided some insight into the factors that lead to resilience following the death of a parent. In the limited number of studies, several factors



are beginning to emerge as possible contributors to resilience in parentally-bereaved children. The factors range from caregiver attributes to individual child characteristics. For example, resiliency has been tied to factors like the ability of caregivers to provide warmth and consistent messages. In addition, the development of self-efficacy and the opportunity for self expression regarding the death by have been noted as factors that may increase resiliency in the child (Lin, Sandler, Ayers, Wolchik, & Lueken, 2004).

In the study of resilience and parentally-bereaved children, little is known about the impact of either professional or self-help interventions like psychoeducational Internet websites. Researchers have begun to explore the ways in which the Internet is assisting grieving individuals with the process of coping with death and loss. Much of the limited research has focused on adults and their experience with grief. The research to date has noted that Internet websites dedicated to providing information for grieving individuals help to reduce anxiety about coping with the loss. They also increase self-efficacy, which has been linked to resilience (Dominick, Irvine, Beauchamp, Seeley, Nolen-Hoeksema, Doka, & Bonanno, 2010).

While the research on the use of the Internet for coping during bereavement is limited, it is known that an increasing number of people are utilizing the internet in general and for mental health information in particular. The Internet is utilized by 220 to 300 million Americans annually (Internet World Statistics, 2002). Eighty percent of Internet users gather health information on line, which represents 59 percent of the total United States adult population (Fox, 2011). An increasing number of people are accessing the Internet for information regarding mental health topics for themselves and for their children. One in five users that access the Internet are searching for mental

health information (Pew, 2011). As they do, the necessity for reliable and easily accessible information about the experience of bereavement following the death of a parent is also increasing.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Historical Perspective of Bereavement**

Bereavement has traditionally been defined as the experience following the loss of a person significant to one's life. Grief refers to the emotional reaction to the bereavement experience (Stroebe, Hansson, Schut, & Stroebe, 2008). The first systematic theory of bereavement emerged from the psychoanalytic perspective in the early 1900s. Freud (1915) provided a conceptualization of grief in comparison to melancholia (depression). Freud believed that for healthy grief to be the outcome of bereavement, the individual must work to come to terms with loss (Freud, 1942). He discussed the process of bereavement following a death as one in which the bereaved learns to let go of the deceased in order to seek new attachments. The process of mourning requires a painful detachment from the person who is lost. This process became a model of what was considered to be "normal" and "healthy" resolution of grief. Freud's psychoanalytic view of mourning and the process of grief work leading to a healthy resolution were influential for researchers for decades to come.

Theorists were not only interested in the process of how one reaches healthy resolution of grief. They provided comparisons of healthy outcomes to those considered pathological. Lindeman (1944) outlined the symptomatology of normal grief. He noted that common symptoms of normal grief included somatic distress (tightness of throat, empty feeling in abdomen, and shortness of breath), tension or mental pain, exhaustion, and preoccupation with guilt about things left unsaid or undone. Emotional distance from

others, feelings of hostility, and a loss of patterns of daily activity were also common. Siggins (1966) noted that normal reactions to grief include feelings of guilt and anger; emancipation from the influence of the deceased; relief, particularly in the case of death following long-term illnesses; anxiety; helplessness; and somatic symptoms.

Theorists continued to examine the intrapersonal experience of loss that was considered pathological. Lindeman (1944) classified morbid, or pathological, bereavement outcomes with the following symptoms: delay of affective reaction to the death, which refers to the lack of overt grieving immediately following the death, and distorted reactions to the death as displayed by abnormal behavior like acquiring symptoms similar to the deceased. The development of medical conditions and alteration in relationships with friends and relatives were classified as pathological as well. Furious hostility toward a specific person like a doctor was noted by Lindeman (1944) and considered pathological. Agitated depression, which referred to depression with bouts of anger following the death, was also considered pathological. Siggins (1966) noted that pathological reactions could be an exaggeration of any of the normal reactions.

Belitsky and Jacobs (1986) noted that pathological responses to bereavement include excessive or chronic grief reactions. Additionally, the absence of emotional response was considered denial of the death and pathological. Those individuals who were unable to work through grief to come to a healthy resolution, because they could not move beyond distress, were considered as impaired by bereavement. They also considered individuals who did not display any signs of grief to be exhibiting delayed grief, which was a pathological response.

## **Changing Views of Bereavement**

Conceptualizations of grief reactions continue to focus on the internal process during bereavement. Freud's notion of grief work and other psychoanalytic theorists' description of normal and pathological bereavement continued to influence the field of thanatology (Archer, 2008). However, theorists have further described the ultimate internal process goal as letting go of the deceased. Stage-based models of grief emerged and expanded on the psychoanalytic framework. These models outlined stages of emotional reactions that bereaved individuals progress through in normal grief (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Worden, 1996). The stage models, particularly Kubler-Ross, removed some of pathology of past conceptualizations of bereavement. In Kubler-Ross' conceptualization of grief reactions, for example, denial was considered to be a stage an individual must go through in the course of normal grief. Previous theorists considered denial, as displayed by the absence of affective responses like crying, to be pathological.

Theorists in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries developed additional models for bereavement outcomes including task-based and meaning-making models. Worden (1994) defined the outcome of bereavement as a series of tasks that individuals must accomplish including accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of the loss, adjusting to the environment without the deceased, and emotionally distancing from the deceased. In Worden's model of normal grief, the stages were sequentially followed and must be completed for a healthy outcome. Meaning-making or meaning-reconstruction models presented individual bereavement as a search for purpose in the death. Bereavement, in these models, is an individual experience without progression through stages. Grieving individuals experience symptoms of grief like anger

and depression as a way to help achieve an understanding of the death and integration of the experience into their lives, which is the purpose of bereavement (Niemeyer, 2001).

As many theorized what the experiences of bereaved individuals were like, researchers provided empirical investigations of those experiences. Maciejewski, Zhang, Block, and Prigerson (2007) examined how 233 adults adjusted to the loss of a loved one over the course of three years. They found the average progression during the three-year period included symptoms of disbelief, yearning for the deceased, anger, depression, and finally acceptance. They noted that the most common reactions for grieving individuals were yearning for the deceased and eventually acceptance. Maciejewski et. al. found that negative reactions to grief, as defined by yearning, depression, and anger, peaked at six months following the loss. Prigerson, Vanderwerker, and Maciejewski (2008) found the majority of bereaved individuals are able to reengage with social connections, return to employment, and begin to find meaning and purpose in their lives six months after the deaths.

### **Childhood Bereavement**

Researchers have also provided insight about the impact on bereavement of contextual factors (Archer, 2008). The research on contextual factors has altered the view of bereavement beyond generalized concepts of healthy versus unhealthy or normal versus pathological by examining how these factors impact the experience of bereavement (Bonanno, Boerner, & Wortman, 2008). Bonanno, Boerner, and Wortman (2008) noted that bereavement is an event experienced differently based on individual factors like age of the bereaved or type of loss. For example, a child whose parent dies

will have a very different bereavement experience than an adult who loses a sibling. Bereavement during childhood is experienced differently than bereavement in adulthood.

Bowlby's attachment theory (1963) provided a theoretical basis to understand impact of loss of a significant figure during childhood. He noted that children as young as six months old experience grief following loss. His framework outlined the significant life-long impact on an individual who is separated from an attachment figure during childhood.

Bowlby (1963) noted that children first experience a yearning for the lost attachment figure, which could be a parent or another caregiver. The yearning is followed by a temporary repression of yearning. The yearning returns to consciousness of grieving children as they age. Bowlby noted that following separation the child fluctuates between angry protests and tearful yearning. The fluctuation between anger and yearning is replaced by detachment from the significant figure. Bowlby stated that when this separation is permanent, as in the case of death of an attachment figure, individuals are at risk for the development of psychopathology throughout the lifespan. However, he also noted that not every child who experiences the death of an attachment figure develops adult psychopathology. He hypothesized that mediating factors like the child's stage of development at the time of the loss and nature of relationship with the lost attachment figure may play an important role in preventing psychopathology tied to bereavement. Though he did not expand on why those factors may mediate psychopathology, Bowlby did describe the painful loss of attachment as experienced by children.

Worden (1996) postulated children develop the capacities to grieve a loss around age three or four, which differs from Bowlby's conceptualization. Worden believed

children must first develop object permanence and the ability to form mental representations of important people before they can experience loss. Once the developmental milestones of object permanence and ability to form mental representation were achieved, children could experience grief in a period of bereavement.

Worden detailed bereavement as progression through a series of four tasks. The first task of children during bereavement is to accept the reality of loss. Grieving children must first accept that the deceased is not returning before they can experience the emotional impact of the death. He further noted that as grieving children develop cognitively, they are better able to understand the finality of death. This means grief will be experienced by a child in different ways as the child ages. For example, a child whose parent dies when the child is three may believe that death is like sleep. The child will grieve by waiting for the deceased to wake. As this same child ages, she will learn that death is permanent and may grieve by experiencing extreme sadness at the realization her parent will not return.

The second task is to experience the emotional aspects of loss. He noted that the affective responses of bereaved children are similar to that of bereaved adults. The responses include the expression of sadness, anger, guilt, and anxiety. Worden stated that unlike adults, grieving children often lack the cognitive and social skills to cope with the emotional intensity of this task and therefore approach it gradually. Bereaved children often experience the emotional intensity over and over again as they pass through developmental stages and acquire the skills to cope.

In the third and fourth tasks, grieving children must adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing and redefine the emotional ties to the deceased while



finding ways to memorialize that person. Worden noted that these tasks help grieving children to continue living while still maintaining a connection to the deceased. He also stated as a grieving child moves through all four tasks, the experience and expression of grief will be highly impacted by his or her progression through developmental phases. For example, redefining emotional ties to the deceased parent will not be the same for a toddler as it will be for an adolescent. Each child must pass through this stage and redefine ties. However, the toddler may do so by sleeping in the parent's clothing to retain the connection to a person she hardly remembers. The adolescent may search for ways in which she is similar to her deceased parent.

Himebauch, Arnold, and May (2008) further postulated that the progression through developmental stages often shapes the experience of bereavement for children. Preschool children ages two to six years-old, for example, hold a cognitive concept of death as reversible. Grief during the preschool developmental stage may involve magical thinking in which the child can undo death. As bereaved preschool children move to school age, they understand the permanent nature of death. During ages six to eight, bereaved children personalize death, which often leads them to blame themselves. School-age children may experience anxious, depressive, and somatic symptoms in response to self-blame. Preadolescence and adolescence is marked by the understanding that death is final and universal. Abstract thinking abilities are developing during this time period. As bereaved children develop the ability to abstract, they often begin to explore the implications of death and their emotional responses to it.

Himebauch, Arnold, and May theorized that children often experience bereavement as a fluctuation between periods of intense emotion and normal functioning

regardless of developmental stage. They further noted that bereaved children often re-grieve at new developmental stages as they conceptualize death differently.

### **Bereavement in Childhood Following the Death of a Parent**

In addition to developmental considerations during bereavement, researchers have examined the relationship of the deceased to the bereaved child. Worden (1996) provided an extensive look at the experience of childhood bereavement following the death of a parent. He tracked 125 children between the ages of six and 17 years-old during the first two years following the death of one of their parents. He outlined the impact on daily functioning by describing changes in daily activities and academic difficulties. The majority of the bereaved children in the study experienced disruption in daily living conditions and activities including changes in basic routines (mealtimes and sleeping arrangements), family communication patterns, and physical and emotional availability of the surviving parent. Worden noted that the greater the disruption of daily life, the greater the impact on the children as evidenced by difficulties in social interactions, behavior, academic performance, and self concept. Participants also reported disruption in social interactions and relationships with peers. For example, they spent less time with peers than they had before the deaths of their parents and they reported they felt different from their peers.

Worden stated one-fifth of the children had difficulty in school during the two years of the study. The children reported difficulty with concentration, which impacted academic performance. Concentration and academic difficulties for the bereaved children improved within the first year but were still experienced at higher rates than the control

group. Learning difficulties at school were related to lower self-esteem, higher levels of aggressive acting out, and a lower sense of self empowerment.

Worden noted the most common affective responses included crying, anxiety, guilt, and anger. Worden reported that a majority of the participants reported crying almost daily immediately following the death. Most reported a steady reduction over the course of the two-year study in the frequency of crying. Anxiety for the study participants centered around fears of losing another loved one and fears of their own death. Similar to crying, Worden found a decrease in the level of anxiety over the course of the study. Feelings of guilt remained consistent for many of the children. Worden stated guilt typically focused on regret of things left unsaid or undone. Feeling angry and acting out aggressively in response to this feeling was tied to feelings of being abandoned by the deceased. Anger was often directed at several targets including the deceased, a higher power, or the surviving parent. Intense feelings of anger were related to a lower sense of self-efficacy.

Worden also examined self perceptions of the children during the two years. He contended that death of a parent had a profound effect on the way a child sees and interacts with the world. The perception and interaction with the world then influences a child's view of self. Self perception was evaluated on three domains including self efficacy, self esteem, and view of maturity. Worden believed that self-efficacy was tied to coping. Self efficacy referred to locus of control. An internal locus of control is a belief in the ability to change what is happening and the circumstances one encounters. This differs from an external locus of control in which one believes events or circumstances are beyond one's control. An external locus of control was tied to an increased rate of

depression, social withdrawal, and emotional and behavioral problems in comparison to before the death of a parent. Worden reported that the bereaved children were more likely than nonbereaved children to have an external locus of control resulting in the belief they were less likely to be able effect change in their lives.

Worden reported the impact of the death on the children's self-esteem was unclear until roughly two years following the death of their parents. He noted that in most children, including bereaved children, a lower sense of self esteem was associated with more behavioral problems, anxiety, and social withdrawal. The bereaved children's perception of their own maturity, which Worden believed was a key component of esteem, changed in bereavement. The children reported that they had matured in the time following the death of their parents. Three-fourths of the study participants reported feeling more mature within the first year following the death.

### **Research findings on the Impact of Parental Death during Childhood**

Research on the outcomes of bereavement following parental death has produced mixed results, particularly in regard to the development of psychopathology. Dowdney (2000) reviewed a series of studies on bereavement in childhood following the death of a parent. Dowdney examined childhood dysphoria/depression, anxiety and somatization, and points of distress that were troubling for children but did not meet the qualifications for diagnosis of a psychological disorder. She found depressive symptoms, including a loss of pleasure, were common in the first year following the death of a parent. Only a small number of participants in any of the studies reported severe depressive symptoms. Dowdney concluded that a minority of children were in danger of developing a depressive disorder following the death of a parent.

Dowdney further noted that there was scant evidence of generalized anxiety in the bereaved children. However, specific anxiety related to fear of death of surviving parents and separation anxiety was common following the deaths. Somatic complaints, including headaches and stomachaches, were also common. Dowdney noted that neither anxiety levels nor incidents of somatization met criteria for diagnosis of a psychological disorder. She also found marked affective responses like crying, anger, and sadness from the bereaved children were common within the first year following the death of a parent.

Servaty and Hayslip (2001) compared the experience of adolescents following the death of a parent with the experience following parental divorce. They hypothesized that they would find a higher rate of internalized adjustment difficulties in the bereaved group than in the divorced group. However, in comparing adolescents following the death of their parents with those following divorce and a control group, Servaty and Hayslip found the bereaved adolescents did not differ from the adolescents in the divorced group on measures of internalized difficulties. They reported that both groups experienced similar levels of somatization, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, and anxiety. Both groups scored higher than the control group. Servaty and Hayslip stated that this finding suggested that some adjustment must occur after a loss and that the adjustment must be similar for bereaved children and those whose parents divorce.

Servaty and Hayslip did note one exception to the similar experiences of bereaved children and children of divorce. They found bereaved children scored higher than the divorced group and the control group on feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Servaty

and Hayslip attributed the higher scores to an increased sensitivity about being perceived as different from their peers.

In comparing clinical depression with bereavement, Cerel, Fristad, Verducci, Weller, and Weller (2006) evaluated 360 children and adolescents whose parents had died with a sample of clinically depressed children and a control group of children. They used data obtained through clinical interviews and assessments to compare psychiatric symptomology. Over the course of the two-year study, Cerel et al. found an increase in psychological distress including depressive symptoms during the first two years following the death of a parent. They also found that the bereaved children scored higher on depression measures than the control group but lower than children in the group with clinical depression diagnosis. The researchers concluded that children were negatively affected by bereavement. However, the impairment experienced by bereaved children was less than the impairment experienced by those who were diagnosed with clinical depression in childhood.

While many researchers have supported a distress outcome experienced by bereaved children, others have reported contrary findings. Pfeffer, Karus, Siegel, and Jiang (2000) compared the experience of children whose parents committed suicide to those whose parents died from cancer. They examined the occurrence of psychological symptoms, behavior problems, and social competence during the first 18 months of bereavement. Pfeffer et al. found that regardless of type of death, the bereaved children reported low levels of psychological distress as measured by standardized assessments of depression, behavior, and social competence. They found low occurrence of depressive symptoms. They also found normal to high levels of social competence and normal to

low levels of behavior problems in the bereaved children. Pfeffer et al.'s findings contrast with previous research. Pfeffer et al. postulated several reasons for this difference. The sample size, which included 80 children, and the measures used were discussed as limitations in the study. In regard to the assessment measures used, Pfeffer et al. noted that the assessments used may have lacked the sensitivity to identify the true experience of bereavement since the scales used were not designed for bereavement. The scales used included the Children's Depression Inventory (Kovacs, 2003) and the Children's Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1994), which had been used in much of the previous research. Pfeffer et al. posited another reason for the results. In particular, they hypothesized that the low levels of psychological distress reported by both samples of bereaved children may reflect high levels of resilience in the children.

While resilience following bereavement was mentioned briefly by Pfeffer et. al, other researchers have provided more evidence suggesting that adaptation without psychological impairment may be a common outcome following bereavement. Lueken (2008) analyzed several studies regarding bereavement during childhood following the death of a parent. Lueken noted considerable inconsistency in the findings that link parental death with the risk of development psychological disorders. Lueken examined short-term consequences, occurring within the first two years following the death, and long-term outcomes, defined as consequences tied to bereavement in childhood that manifest in adulthood.

Lueken found that many children experience an acute crisis immediately following the death of a parent including symptoms of depression and anxiety, conduct issues, school performance difficulties, social withdrawal, and a loss of sense of internal

locus of control. Lueken noted that despite the acute crises, many bereaved children do not experience mental health problems in the short term. Some researchers did find vulnerability to mental health problems later in life citing higher rates of depression and anxiety. However, Lueken reported that long-term findings were inconsistent and were complicated by other factors that contributed to adult psychopathology. For example, other life events, like divorce, that may also be tied to depression. Because of the number of life events an adult experiences, it would be difficult to directly tie bereavement in childhood to psychopathology in adulthood,

Lueken attributed lack of mental health difficulties after the death of a parent to mediating factors that occur both interpersonally and intrapersonally for children. For instance, positive parenting by the surviving parent has been linked with positive outcomes of bereavement. Intrapersonal factors like a high self-esteem, self-efficacy, ability to express emotion, and the ability to maintain a positive sense of self during adversity have been linked with better coping in children. Lueken noted that the one limitation of studies of bereavement during childhood following the death of a parent was the focus on mental health difficulties. Instead, the examination of positive outcomes that reflect resilience, which appeared to be a more common experience for bereaved children, would be beneficial.

### **Defining Resilience**

Resilience, as a psychological concept, has been defined in numerous ways. It has been examined from many theoretical perspectives resulting in several working definitions that often differ on points of risk and protective factors, processes, and outcomes. Bonanno, Papa, and O'Neil (2002) defined resilience in terms of factors such



as the ability to maintain and restore identity following adversity. Lepore and Revenson (2006) describe resilience as processes that lead to adaptation in the face of adversity. Resilience, from this perspective, is the ability to recover and adapt to stressors. Lueken (2008) expanded on the notion of resilience as a process and noted that it leads to perceptions of efficacy.

Much of the early considerations regarding resilience were focused on high-risk populations. Of particular interest were individuals who had overcome emotional, developmental, economic, and environmental challenges. For instance, Werner and Smith (1992) examined children who were born into poverty and family discord yet developed into young adults who were free of mental health problems. These findings defied previous beliefs that psychopathology developed from challenges like economic, developmental, and familial hardships. Lepore and Revenson (2006) noted that a paradigm shift about the etiology of psychopathology occurred because researchers noted that relatively healthy adults were emerging from conditions once thought to only produce negative outcomes. The paradigm shift resulted in the closer examination of the concept of resilience (Lepore & Revenson, 2006).

This closer examination has led to a consideration of how people thrive following adverse events like parental death. In fact, many theorists have begun to focus on the possibility of personal and psychological growth following traumatic events. Gerrish, Dyck, and Marsh (2009) suggested individuals may experience post-traumatic growth in which they emerge from a traumatic event in a better psychological state as a result of dealing with adversity of the event.

## **Conceptualization of Resilience in Children Following the Death of a Parent**

Sandler, Wolchik, and Ayers (2009) provided a conceptual framework for understanding resilience in children following the death of a parent. They described resilience as the outcome of the adaptation processes. Sandler et. al. stated that when a child faces the death of a parent, both the child and the environment must adapt. The purpose of the adaptation is to find new ways to satisfy needs and complete developmental roles of the child. The adaptation must occur over multiple domains of functioning including mental health. The adaptation affects the child's sense of well-being and experience of bereavement. Adaptation is shaped by risk and protective factors that are present at the individual and the environmental levels. Environmental factors include the surviving caregiver's mental health, therapeutic interventions, and cultural practices. Individual factors include the child's self efficacy and locus of control. These factors allow for greater adaptation to the loss.

Lin, Sandler, Ayers, Wolchik, and Lueken (2004) studied resilience-enhancing factors in parentally bereaved children ages eight to 16. The children, their teachers, and their families completed a series of assessment measures and interviews. The children were placed in subgroups based on their scores on measures of mental health problems. Children who scored below the clinical cutoff on the measures were considered resilient. Resilient children were compared with those that were identified as not resilient.

In comparing responses from the assessments and interviews with both groups of children, they found the experience of children in bereavement was shaped by both family and child variables. Lin et al. identified a series of protective factors for children and their families that differentiated resilient children from those that were not. Lin et al.

found that in particular, caregiver warmth and discipline were positively related to resilience. Caregiver warmth was assessed by three measures that evaluated acceptance of the child by the parent, positive routines between parent and child, and perceptions of the parents' interaction style by the children. Consistency of discipline was measured through the children's perceptions. Lin et al found that resilient children in the study were in the families that maintained a warm and consistent relationship between the surviving parent and the bereaved child.

Lin et al. suggested that individual characteristics also were positively related to resilience. Some characteristics present in the resilient group of children included appraisal of negative events as less threatening and perception of self-efficacy. They concluded that these factors were often tied to the use active coping skills instead of avoidant coping skills. An example of an active coping skill for a bereaved child may be the ability to talk about the death. Lin et al. stated that active coping skills may lead to greater self efficacy. Greater self efficacy may in turn encourage further use of active coping skill. They stated that this may indicate that positive adaption, or resilience, may involve a chain of processes. The individual factors, as well as familial factors, may guide adaptation processes that result in resilience and aid in post-traumatic growth.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Internet Resources and Bereavement**

As Lin et al. (2004) noted, active coping skills and greater self efficacy fuel a child's adaptation process in coping with the death of a parent. Theorists and researchers have noted the ways in which interventions ranging from individual psychotherapy to peer support groups help with the adaptation process for children. Currently, nothing in the body of literature addresses the use of the Internet for grieving children in general or children grieving the death of a parent in particular. In the limited amount of literature on the use of the Internet for grieving adolescents and adults, authors highlight the ways in which the Internet serves to foster active coping skills and self efficacy for grieving individuals.

Literature regarding the experience of grieving adolescents highlights the ways in which the Internet is emerging as a vehicle for coping during bereavement. Sofka (2009) noted that although thanatology research with this population is limited, it is important for mental health professionals to understand the ways adolescents utilize technology as they grieve.

Sofka emphasized a multitude of reasons for the widespread use of technology. The author noted that the Internet provides a way to gain support safely and anonymously. In addition, it allows adolescents to gain a sense of empowerment in their lives particularly at a time, such as following the death of a parent, when they may feel as though they have little control or power in their own lives. The independence and privacy

as well as the opportunity to explore their identity, particularly as a grieving person, is another benefit of technology for this population (Sofka, 2009).

Sofka also noted that the Internet serves as a venue for social interaction and helps to create a participatory culture in which there are low barriers to engagement with others and high acceptability for expression. This may be particularly important for grieving adolescents as they experience changes in social interactions, interpersonal relationships, and social isolation following the death of a parent (Servaty & Hayslip, 2001). For grieving adolescents, the social interaction and emotional expression may be critical for supporting resilience.

Sofka (2009) highlighted the different avenues for adolescent use of technology during bereavement including blogs and virtual memorials for the deceased. The author stated that sites may be critical in providing informational support and factual information which may alleviate fear for adolescents. Sofka noted that teens are more likely to utilize social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, which allow for the formation of online communities. Sofka stated that these websites are often used during times of grief to keep others informed and to garner condolences.

Williams and Merten (2009) studied how online social networks facilitate adolescent grief following the death of a peer. The researchers evaluated how the Internet facilitates coping, expression, and interaction following the death of a peer by utilizing 20 profiles posted on a social networking site of teens who died between 2005 and 2007. They tracked comments and posts by their adolescent peers over a 10 month period following the death. Comments were evaluated for themes including emotional pain, guilt, self-concept, anger, depression, sadness, and acceptance. Williams and Merten

examined emotional or cognitive coping strategies related to grief and coping and found that comments included themes of reminiscing, relaying current events, about the causes of death, the funeral, body or afterlife. In coding the comments for elements of emotional and cognitive coping strategies, Williams and Merten concluded that opportunities to disclose personal thoughts and feelings and interact with others through the internet may aid in the grieving process for teens who have experienced the death of a friend.

### **Use of Mental Health Information Websites in Bereavement**

The variety of Internet resources provides a multitude of avenues for self-directed coping and grieving. In particular, mental health information websites offer the opportunity for individuals to seek out information and resources to aid in coping. Limited research is available regarding the impact of mental health information sites on the grieving process of bereaved individuals.

Dyer and Thompson (2000) outlined the creation of “Journey of Hearts,” a website designed to provide medical and nonmedical information to grieving individuals. The authors noted that the motivation for the site was to educate visitors and heighten public awareness of grief, loss, and bereavement. In addition, the site was designed to help de-stigmatize societal views on depression.

Dyer and Thompson stated that the site and other information based sites for mental health and health education provide many advantages to individuals as they grieve. Among those advantages, the authors noted that websites like “Journey of Hearts” are available to individuals at any time of day, can be accessed from home, ensure privacy, and provide an abundance of information. They stated that informational sites for grieving individuals also provide many of the same benefits as self-help groups. The

authors stated that, like a self-help group, “Journey of Hearts” helped to normalize the grief experience and provided useful information, sympathy, and personal mastery. The site also offered connection to others who were also grieving.

Feigelman, Gorman, Beal and Jordan (2008) analyzed the impact of connection through online support groups. They reviewed the impact of Internet support groups for individuals following the suicide of a child. Their examination of the website “Parents of Suicide” evaluated the experience of parents who utilized the website for support group participation. They analyzed the factors that participants felt were valuable to them as grieving individuals. Individuals then completed a 27-page survey that asked for information regarding amount of time spent utilizing on-line groups, reasons for seeking Internet groups, and factors that maintain usage of the site (Feigelman et. al., 2008).

They found that overall participants were highly satisfied with their participation with Internet support groups. Eighty-five percent of the respondents reported that one of the most noteworthy features of the site was that it offered help to cope with the pain and sadness. Among other possible factors identified by more than half of the respondents were sharing of experiences, having the power and opportunity to discuss grief-related subjects, having a source of information readily available when problems arose, memorializing a love one, having information about getting through the holidays or other difficult times, and learning about how to handle discussing suicide with others (Feigelman et. al., 2008).

Like Feigelman et. al (2008), Dominick et. al. (2010) proposed that Internet based resources would be beneficial for bereaved individuals as they grieve the loss of a loved one. Irvine et. al. (2010) outlined the use of a website sponsored by the National

Institute of Mental Health entitled “Making Sense of Grief.” The website was established with the mission of normalizing the experience of grief for individuals who had lost a loved one within one to six months prior to participation in the study. They evaluated the efficacy of psychoeducational Internet self-help tool for bereaved people.

In Dominick et. al. (2010), the 68 participants were all adults grieving the death of an older relative or loved one. The researchers surveyed participants before and after accessing the website for changes in attitudes, self-efficacy, and anxiety. The researchers stated that as an individual uses the website for information the individual’s experience is normalized. As that happens, attitudes toward coping and self-efficacy would increase and anxiety about loss would decrease. Dominick et. al. (2010) hypothesized that progress toward normalizing individual grief would be indicated by improvement in the areas surveyed.

They found an increase in attitudes toward coping and self-efficacy. Dominick et. al. (2010) also found that utilizing the site reduced anxiety about loss. Participants also provided qualitative feedback about the site and identified several factors as being key to their positive experience with the site, these included learning about different grieving styles and identifying their own personal grieving style through information provided on the site.

### **Review of Existing Sites**

Currently, there are no websites devoted specifically to children grieving the loss of parent. Searches of the Internet utilizing such search terms as “children grieving the death of a parent,” and “parentally bereaved children” yielded no results that included websites for that population. Searches for terms such as “children’s grief,” “children’s



grief resources,” “grief,” and “children’s bereavement” produced minimal results of varying quality. Many of the results were websites of nonprofit organizations and centers that offer peer support groups available throughout the country. Only two sites were found that were informational sites.

GriefNet.com (Lynn, 2010), created by psychologist Cendra Lynn, Ph.D., provides an Internet based community for people dealing with grief, death, and major loss. The site primarily serves to connect individuals of any age who are grieving any loss with one another. It offers 50 email support groups that are monitored by trained professionals and that are available 24 hours a day year round. Participation in the support groups require paid membership. Through the site, the founder offers counseling both online and in person for a fee. In addition, the site provides virtual memorials for the deceased and links to additional Internet resources.

The website contains a link and special section dedicated to grieving children, called Kidsaid.com. The section provides access to two email support groups for children age 12 and under and for children ages 14 to 18. The site posts questions and answers from children and adults. It also provides a place for children to submit artwork and written work. Kidsaid.com (Lynn, 2010) also offers a memorial section for kids to honor deceased pets. In terms of information about the grief experience for children, the site provides brief synopses of general grief reactions of children.

While both GriefNet.org and Kidsaid.com (Lynn, 2010) offer many resources to children and adults, both are lacking in information about the grief experience of children in general and the developmental experiences of children who are grieving the death of a

parent. Additionally, the sites offer limited information for parents, caregivers and professionals about addressing the needs of children as they are grieving.

Search results produced one other site dedicated to grieving children. Childgrief.org, has been created by a nonprofit organization the Children's Grief Education Association (CGEA, 2010). The site operates from a mission of providing information for children and families as they cope with a variety of losses. It also has limited resources available to professionals, including a continuing education opportunity through an online program entitled "Navigating Children's Grief."

From its Homepage, the site provides brief descriptions on topics such as anticipatory grief, funerals, and informing a child about a death. The site does provide a chart that outlines common reactions to grief based on age of the child, though it does take some navigating to find the chart. The Homepage also provides a link to an offer for professionals to purchase curricula for support groups designed by CGEA.

The site divides the information by audience, providing resources for children, teens, parents, teachers, and counselors. For children, the site provides a brief overview of common reactions to a death. In addition, the children's section has art and writing activities that are available for children to use. The teen section addresses common physical, emotion, and behavioral reactions and changes that may occur when grieving. CGEA (2010) provides a section to address the needs of military families who are grieving the death of a serviceperson.

In general, the site provides brief overviews of the topics related to the grief process of children. It also allows users to have access to resources that may be helpful in assisting that process. It is, however, challenging to navigate making it difficult to

quickly access those resources. The scope of the site, in its effort to encompass children grieving many types of loss, may prohibit the depth of information that may be possible with a more limited mission.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Creation of Children's Grief Resources**

At present, no website exists to address the specific needs of children grieving following the death of a parent. There is no compilation of information available regarding the experience of children grieving the death of a parent. Children, parents, caregivers, and professionals working with grieving children would benefit from having a resource available on the Internet. A mental health resource website would be an easily accessible and thorough compilation of information. Families and professionals would have a reliable and easily accessible resource to aid in supporting and promoting factors linked to resilience in children who have lost a parent to death.

#### **Construction of the Informational Website**

**Identifying the purpose and audience.** The purpose of creating a website related to the grief experience in childhood is to expand the availability of information for parents and caregivers, children, and professionals ranging from psychologists to teachers and school administrators. Easy access to information will help to streamline the process of searching for resources for those caring for children following the death of a parent. By expanding access and availability of information, families and professionals will gain a greater understanding of the experience of parental bereavement in childhood. It is intended to de-pathologize the experiences of grief, to provide an understanding that each individual may have unique grief experiences, and to provide resources that may enhance post-traumatic growth and resilience. Increased understanding in conjunction with access

to relevant resources may help children not only survive after the death of a parent; but also emerge from the experience as resilient adults.

The site is intended to be a clearinghouse of information and links to other resources. Available resources include articles, publications, and websites that offer information about childhood bereavement. The site is a portal for users to easily connect with information that is scattered throughout the Internet. The purpose of each web page of the website is described in the following pages. A hierarchical view of the website is included in Appendix A entitled Site Map.

In determining the purpose of the site, it was important to consider the intended audiences. Grieving children are members of a system that may include parents, caregivers, other family members, teachers, and mental health care providers. Each member of the system can play a role in supporting grieving children. From this systemic perspective, it was important to provide information that is relevant to each group – children and the adults who care for them. Resources included on the site were selected that would be useful for each group. The content and organization of the site were driven by the overriding principle that each audience be provided those resources that would help in the support of parentally bereaved children. Sources were selected based on their congruence with the literature and research regarding children, bereavement, and resilience.

### **Purpose of Each Page**

**Home.** The first page to appear is the “Homepage,” on which users will find a brief description of the mission of the website. It serves as an introduction to the content

and the concept of the site. The following disclaimer statement will be included on the Homepage:

“This site is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for direct consultation with a qualified mental health professional.”

**About Us.** The section entitled “About Us” provides an overview of why the site was created and a mission statement. The mission of the website is to provide children and the adults who care for them with information to aid in the process of grieving the loss of a parent. The goal is to utilize technology to expand the availability and accessibility of information for the core audiences, including grieving children, parents and caregivers, and professionals.

**Information by Audience.** From the Homepage screen, users will be able to select information appropriate for children, parents/ caregivers, and professionals. The information provided has been tailored to the audience.

**For Caregivers.** The “Parent/Caregivers” tab provides information specifically aimed at adults who are raising and caring for children grieving the loss of a parent. Information includes an overview of grief, typical responses based on age of the child, practical tips for helping children grieve, ways to talk to children about death and grief, handling changes following the death, tips for dealing with important days like holidays, and professional resources. Each section features hyperlinks to external websites. The “Parent/Caregiver” section includes the following subsections:

- **About Grief:** This page includes information about general grief responses, bereavement following sudden death and suicide, and anticipatory grief.
- **What to expect of a grieving child (by age group):** This section provides information about the grief experience for children at each stage of development including infants and toddlers, two to five-year-olds, six to nine-year-olds, 10 to 12-year-olds, and teens.
- **Helping Children Grieve:** The page includes activities that can be done to help with expressing grief.
- **Funerals:** The page outlines the experience of attending funerals and provides information about helping children through the memorial services.
- **Talking About Death:** The section provides ways for parents and caregivers to talk about death, emotional responses, and sharing emotions with children.
- **Dealing with Changes:** This page provides information about discussing the changes that occur within family dynamics, daily routine, and responsibilities following a death.
- **Moments to Reflect and Remember:** This page focuses on ways to commemorate and cope with birthdays of the deceased, anniversary dates, special occasions, and holidays.
- **For LGBT Families:** Families of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals face added challenges during the process of bereavement. The

page provides links to information for LGBT families who are dealing with the death of a parent.

- Professional resources: This page includes contact information for therapists and psychologists and bereavement support groups. Initially, those resources included on this page will be limited to those in Ohio. Over time, resources from around the United States will be added and listed by state. Additionally, parents and caregivers can find links to list of book recommendations. This section also provides information to help parents and caregivers determine if their grieving child may need professional intervention to help cope with the death.

***For Professionals.*** The “Professionals” link provides information specifically aimed at mental health providers, teachers, bereavement support group facilitators, and other professionals who work with grieving children. Much of the content in this section will be similar to that which is included in the Parents/Caregiver page. It will also provide hyperlinks to external websites for additional information. This tab includes the following subsections:

- About Grief: This page includes information about general grief responses, bereavement following sudden death and suicide, and anticipatory grief.
- What to expect of a grieving child (by age group): This section provides information about the grief experience for children at each stage of development including infants and toddlers, two to five-year-olds, six to nine-year-olds, 10 to 12-year-olds, and teens.



- **Helping Children Grieve:** The page includes activities that can be done to help with expressing grief.
- **Funerals:** The page outlines the experience of attending funerals and provides information about helping children through the memorial services.
- **Talking About Death:** The section provides ways for professionals to talk about death, emotional responses, and sharing emotions with children.
- **Dealing with Changes:** This page provides information about discussing the changes that occur within family dynamics, daily routine, and responsibilities following a death.
- **Moments to Reflect and Remember:** This page focuses on ways to commemorate and cope with birthdays of the deceased, anniversary dates, special occasions, and holidays.
- **Cultural Considerations:** The page outlines the impact of cultural and religious beliefs on the grieving process for professionals who may work with individuals from varied backgrounds to aid in providing culturally competent care to grieving families.
- **For LGBT Families:** Families of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals face added challenges during the process of bereavement. The page provides links to information for LGBT families who are dealing with the death of a parent.
- **Resources:** This page includes professional resources for mental health practitioners.

*For Children.* The “For Kids” tab provides information specifically for children and teens. Information includes education about grief in general, communicating with others about death, coping with changes, and honoring the deceased. It includes links to other websites that are specifically designed for children. The link will include the following subsections links:

- **What is Grief? – And Other Important Questions:** The page answers questions about grief, death, and related topics. The answers provide information about the grief process as experienced by children. Children may send questions to the site to be answered.
- **Kids 12 and Under:** The purpose of this page is to connect children under age 12 with resources for understanding and expressing their grief experience.
- **Teens:** The purpose of this page is to connect teens with resources for understanding and expressing their grief experience.
- **For LGBT Families:** Families of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals face added challenges during the process of bereavement. The page provides links to information for LGBT families who are dealing with the death of a parent.
- **Maddie’s Story:** The page features the personal story of an 11-year-old girl’s personal journey through grief following the death of her father when she was three.

## **Research regarding existing websites**

Following the establishment of the mission statement and identifying the target audience, research was conducted on websites currently available on the Internet. The researcher evaluated several websites including information based-sites like those for newspapers, academic sites, corporate websites, and finally, bereavement related sites. The websites were explored to gain more information regarding website design, navigation capabilities, and color schemes. The structure and graphic presentation of the sites were evaluated.

Websites that appeared to be the most effective in terms of design were ones that were easily navigated with a clear structure. The most appealing sites were those in which users could access the navigation bars easily and return to the homepage quickly. Sites that utilized a clean design with few graphic elements seemed to be the easiest to navigate and better compiled with the primary mission of the sites. Color schemes of two to three colors contributed to a consistent presentation and assisted in the ease of navigation and overall access of information.

Following a general evaluation of many websites, those directly related to childhood bereavement were explored. Many of these websites were challenging to navigate. Though they contained significant amounts of information that may be useful to the target audiences, it was often difficult to access quickly because of the challenging navigation.

## **Setting the design of the website**

After evaluating other websites, the design and architecture of Children's Grief Resources were created. The goal was to create a website that was engaging, had a clean

and clear design, and was easy to navigate. The software Website Tonight, which was available through the company Go Daddy©, was used to select the template for the design. The template that was selected featured a clean design with tranquil colors. Additionally, the template allowed for easy navigation with an easy to locate navigation bar on the left-hand side of the template. Photos were selected from the software's databases of more than 8,000 pictures. The stock photography that was used included pictures of children and adults in addition to nature and landscape scenes, which were often elements utilized by other websites dedicated to bereavement.

The layout of the website was determined by topic areas that were relevant to the various audiences. The topic areas were selected based on the research and literature on the bereavement experience of children in general and those who are grieving the death of a parent in specific. The topic areas were organized into a site map (See Appendix A). The site map guided the design and hierarchy of the topic areas.

### **Development of content**

The content that was selected and written for Children's Grief Resources was based on the research and literature available regarding childhood bereavement. The content was developed with the underlying goal to provide information that would aid in the promotion of the factors that have been identified as enhancing resilience in children. Written content was crafted to allow for quick scanning, ease of readability, and consistency with other bereavement websites.

The content and hyperlinks provided were selected based on several factors including consistency with the mission of Children's Grief Resources and credibility of sources. Hyperlinks were evaluated for their consistency with the goal of providing

information for the target audiences. Additionally, any website connection provided for children was evaluated for the inclusion of safety measures like required parental consent to use.

### **Publishing the website**

Following the design and population of the website with content, routes for publishing were researched. Go Daddy ©, an Internet domain registrar and webhosting company, was selected based on reviews by existing customers, competitive pricing, and ease of use. After the webhosting and design plan was purchased, the domain name [www.childrensgriefresources.com](http://www.childrensgriefresources.com), was purchased.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Findings and Future Directions**

#### **Present Project Purpose**

Children who experience the death of a parent are faced with the challenge of incorporating the loss of one of their most significant attachment figures into their lives. The death of a parent experienced in early childhood can dramatically change a child's life. For some, this experience may lead to life-long emotional and psychological challenges. For others, the death of a parent may not result in long-term distress. Researchers have identified many factors that may lead to resilience in parentally-bereaved children including avenues for expression of emotion and informed caregivers who provide nurturing support.

The current project serves as an attempt expand the access to information that may promote factors that enhance resilience in children who are grieving the death of a parent. By utilizing technological advances, Children's Grief Resources attempts to fill a void in easily accessible information for children grieving the death of a parent and the adults who care for them. It provides a clearinghouse of information currently available through numerous other sources from professional and support group literature to other websites.

#### **Examination of Findings**

The creation of a mental-health resource guide provided tremendous insight about the availability of information for families and communities that support grieving

children. Additionally, it illuminated the role that a clearinghouse would play in streamlining the process of accessing of information and resources. The creation of Children's Grief Resources also highlighted the role mental health practitioners play in enhancing access to information that can serve to empower individuals to not only survive grief but to grow and thrive.

The process of researching resources already present on the Internet provided insight about areas of concern for target audiences in which information was readily available. In addition, the research process also highlights areas in which information was lacking. For instance, Internet searches revealed many resources for information on the experience of child bereavement at each developmental stage. Additionally, many websites provided articles that explored how to talk with children about death as well as articles about grief following suicide and anticipatory grief. Conversely, information was less available about topics like unexpected death. Much of the information and resources that were present on the Internet covered bereavement in childhood in general. Few resources directed addressed grief following the death of a parent.

Much of the information present on the Internet was provided by organizations like bereavement support groups and hospice organizations. The information was provided as part of the services offered by the organization. Research revealed very few websites that were devoted specifically to the childhood experience of grief. A significant amount of the information was written for adults. Very few resources were directed at children as the primary audience.

## **Obstacles**

The creation of *Children's Grief Resources* revealed several obstacles and challenges in establishing a mental health information website. Technical challenges, selecting content, and meeting the needs of multiple audiences presented some obstacles that needed to be overcome in order for the clearinghouse to be created.

Technical challenges were tied to the training, experience, and resources that were available to the creator of the website. Limited training and experience in website design coupled with limited financial resources resulted in a website with a simple design. The design program was selected based on the level of website design training, experience and resources.. The program allowed for a clean and simple design but did not permit a distinctly different design for the children's section, which had been the original intent of the creator.

In terms of content selection, resources included in the clearinghouse were often challenging to locate. Much of the information was scattered throughout the Internet. Multiple searches with many different search terms needed to be conducted to compile the information. For example, many searches had to be conducted to locate information for the variety of topics like cultural considerations regarding death for practitioners and resources for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender families. Search criteria had to be expanded to find all of the resources and information included on the website.

## **Limitations and Future Directions**

The current website created through the process of this project has several limitations that may be addressed in the future to improve service to users. In terms of content, many of the searches conducted in the compilation of information resulted in the



same resources being presented by search engines. It is likely that these resources are among the most popular and easily accessible. Additional searching and exploration of less popular sites may reveal more resources.

The website also is limited in the professional resources available to families. Because the website will go live following the oral defense of this project, practitioners were not contacted to include contact information. It is intended that once the website is accessible to the public, mental health care practitioners will be contacted to gain permission to be included as resources. It is also intended that this list of professionals will grow over time.

Future improvements to the site are under consideration. The improvements range from technical changes to make the site more user-friendly to the expansion of services provided to both adults and children. For example, adding a search feature to the website would allow users to access information with greater ease. Further, the intention is to improve the section for children. The section would benefit from a design that is more appealing to children and teens with brighter colors and more graphic features. The children's section would also be improved by creating original content for children that is not already present on the Internet. As few resources were written for children, providing hyperlinks to resources specifically for children was a challenge. Original content would fill the gap in information available.

Ideally, future growth for the site will include the production of original content that provides more information on factors that facilitate post-traumatic growth and resilience. Original content can be produced that incorporates many different perspectives of bereavement and expands the information available to families and communities.

In addition to original content, future growth and expansion of existing sections of the website may prove beneficial. For instance, many grieving families face significant challenges with the legal ramifications of the death of a parent. This is particularly salient for LGBT families, in addition to families in which legal matters of custody and probate are complicated. Providing legal resources may be an important area of growth for the site and would require consultation with legal experts. Additionally, creating a section specific to teachers and school administrators may be critical for educating all members of a grieving child's support system. Schools and educators play a unique role in the lives of grieving children and communities and would benefit from additional resources.

The largest area for future growth may be in expanding the services available to grieving children and the adults who care for them. In its current state, *Children's Grief Resources* is a website that provides mental health information. The website may better serve the public by expanding service capabilities to include the following options:

**Group Options.** Much of the literature cited the impact of connection with others in helping to normalize the experience of grieving for children. The Internet offers the opportunity for people to connect to others through several forums. The future direction of the current website can include many of those forums. Discussion forums, chat rooms, or email support groups can be utilized to connect grieving children and adults with others who are living similar experiences.

**Screening.** In the future, the site may offer an online screening option for parents and caregivers to determine if their children are in need of additional professional support. The screening will be free and will not ask individuals to submit their names in completing the materials.

**Internet Therapy.** Many mental health sites are in the process of expanding service delivery through Internet-based therapy. The modality of on-line therapy can increase access to people who are underserved and is convenient for many others (Ragusea & VandeCreek, 2003). Telepsychology can include the use of e-mail, video-conferencing, and live chat-based interactions. In working with parentally bereaved children, the use of telepsychology may prove to be difficult with young children. However, for teens, parents, and caregivers, it may be an effective consultation tool.

### **Implications**

Future growth for *Children's Grief Resources* will allow for greater access to information and services for a vulnerable population and the adults who care for them. In its current state, *Children's Grief Resources* serves as a clearinghouse for information that supports factors related to increasing resilience. It is a beginning step in improving access and availability of information. For parents, caregivers, and mental health providers, it compiles information and resources that detail the experience of grieving children and provides guidance to help them through the process of bereavement. For children, the website provides connection to others who have experienced a loss similar to their own.

## **Appendix A**

### **Site Map**

Home

About Us

For Caregivers

- About Grief
- Infants and Toddlers
- 2 to 5 year olds
- 6 to 9 year olds
- 10 to 12 year olds
- Teens
- Helping Children Grieve
- Talking About Grief
- Funerals
- Dealing with Changes
- Remembering on Special Days
- For LGBT Families
- Professional Resources

For Professionals

- About Grief
- Infants and Toddlers

- 2 to 5 year olds
- 6 to 9 year olds
- 10 to 12 year olds
- Teens
- Helping Children Grieve
- Talking About Grief
- Funerals
- Dealing with Changes
- Remembering on Special Days
- Cultural Considerations
- For LGBT Families
- Resources

#### For Kids

- What is Grief? – And Other Important Questions
- Kids 12 and Under
- Teens
- For LGBT Families
- Maddie’s Story

#### Virtual Memorials

## **Appendix B**

### **Children's Grief Resources Website**

#### **Welcome Children's Grief Resources**

“Growing Through Grief”

Children's Grief Resources is dedicated to providing information for children who are grieving the loss of a parent and the adults who are caring for them. Our mission is to establish a resource to help grieving kids thrive and become resilient following the death of a parent. We respect the notion that there is no one way to grieve. While commonalities exist, we believe that, with loving support, each child will chart his/her own course through grief.

This site is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for direct consultation with a qualified mental health professional.

For questions or concerns, please send an email to

[childrensgriefresources@gmail.com](mailto:childrensgriefresources@gmail.com).

#### **About Us**

Children's Grief Resources was created by Jami Pfirman, Psy.M., as part of her Professional Dissertation project which is creating a mental health web-based resource guide for children who are grieving the loss of a parent and the adults who are helping them cope with the loss. Jami's goal is to use technology improve access to information about childhood bereavement. It is her hope that through access to information,

individuals, families, and communities can help to foster resilience in children who have experienced significant loss.

“This project represents the blending of my professional and personal experiences. As a clinician, I have worked with many families as they have dealt with issues of death and grief. My professional work has been fueled and informed by my personal experiences. I am, first and foremost, a mother who is raising a grieving child. In 2003, my husband died in a car accident. Our daughter was three at the time of his death.

My efforts to understand and support her grieving process often led me to the Internet for information. While I found useful information, it often took significant time and effort to search through resources. As a widowed parent, time and effort were resources that were limited, particularly during the first year following my husband’s death.

Adults who are raising grieving kids often have to balance many factors and competing demands – usually while carrying an intense wish that their grieving kids will not just survive the loss but that they will thrive. I realized that a website could serve as a centralized database of information that pulls together resources helping to reduce demands of time and effort on grieving families.

I believe that the experience of losing a parent to death, while tragic and life-changing, does not have to mean long-term psychological turmoil for kids. With caring and informed adults, kids can move through grief to a state of resilience and personal growth.”

**About the Site Creator.** Jami received her Masters degree in Clinical Psychology and is completing her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Wright State University School of Professional Psychology in Dayton, Ohio. Prior to that, Jami attended Kent State University, where she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism. She will be completing her Pre-doctoral Psychology Internship at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio and plans to graduate in July 2012.

Additionally, Jami has primary clinical interests in trauma recovery including rape and sexual abuse; adult and family psychotherapy; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender issues. She has experience working with individuals of all ages in various settings such as community mental health centers and university counseling centers. She has experience helping individuals deal with various issues including self-harm, abuse, domestic violence, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, personality disorders, behavior problems, family conflict, trauma, substance abuse, and interpersonal relationship difficulties. Jami's therapeutic style blends a Feminist framework with interpersonal, multicultural, strength-based, and cognitive-behavioral approaches.

Jami is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA's Graduate Student Affiliate), Division 44 of the APA (Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues), and Division 35 of the APA (Psychology for the Psychology of Women).

### **For caregivers**

Caring for a grieving child can be both a difficult and rewarding endeavor. It is difficult to watch a young person struggle with the changes and emotions that come



following the death of a parent. For those lucky kids who have patient and loving caregivers to help them, the path through grief can lead to resiliency.

For information and resources to assist in caring for a grieving child, check out these links:

[About Grief](#)

[Infants & Toddlers](#)

[2 to 5 Year-olds](#)

[6 to 9 Year-olds](#)

[10-12 Year-olds](#)

[Teens](#)

[Helping Children Grieve](#)

[Talking about Death](#)

[Funerals](#)

[Dealing with Changes](#)

[Remembering - Honoring Special Days](#)

[For LGBT Families](#)

[Professional resources](#)

## **About Grief**

Grief can be a strong and overwhelming emotion for children following a loss of someone they love. While grieving, kids may experience many different emotions and feelings. They may have physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions while grieving. It is important to remember that grief is a natural reaction to loss and that each person may experience it in his or her own way. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

**General responses.** In general, children grieve more sporadically than adults. They may have moments of intense grief and then not show any signs of grieving. As children age, they will experience grief in new ways. At each developmental stage, they will have to learn how incorporate the death of their parents into their lives.

For more information on general responses:

Title: Young Kids and Grief (KIDSAID.com)

Description: KIDSAID.org is a site for kids to deal with their feelings with other kids who have suffered major losses. An overview of typical grief responses is provided.

Title: Children and Grief (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet provides a general description of children's grief.

Title: Death in the Family (Royal College of Psychiatrists)

Description: Royal College of Psychiatrists is the professional and educational body for psychiatrists in the United Kingdom. It provides a look at how children respond to death.

Title: Children and Grief (AtHealth)

Description: AtHealth.com is a provider of mental health information and services for mental health practitioners and those they serve. The site looks at the "tasks" of mourning for children in addition to exploring how children react and how adults can help.

**Grief after sudden death.** A sudden, unexpected death can send a family reeling. Events surrounding the death may require surviving adults to focus their attention on

things other than the children. This can leave children confused, scared, and feeling left out. By being included in age-appropriate discussions, children may be less worried.

For more information on grief after sudden death

Title: Coping with Sudden Death (LegacyConnect)

Description: LegacyConnect hosts grief support groups and provides advice on grieving and provides an overview of experiences common to the sudden loss of a loved one.

**Anticipatory grief.** When a parent is terminally ill, children may have a variety of emotional and behavioral responses ranging from deep sadness to relief once the illness is over. They may wonder if there is anything that they could do to stop the death. Parents may worry about how much to involve their children in the dying process. In general, talking with your child about the illness and death in plain terms and facts will help to reduce anxiety.

For more information on anticipatory grief

Title: Anticipatory Grief (Children's Grief Education Association)

Description: The Children's Grief Education Association is nonprofit organization that serves children and families and provides education and support to those who serve them. The association provides an overview of the impact of anticipatory grief on children.

Title: Anticipatory Grief (American Hospice Foundation)

Description: The American Hospice Foundation supports programs that serve the needs of terminally ill and grieving individuals of all ages. The foundation provides an overview of symptoms related to anticipatory grief.

Title: Anticipatory Grief Work (American Hospice Foundation)

Description: The American Hospice Foundation supports programs that serve the needs of terminally ill and grieving individuals of all ages. The foundation provides an overview of working through anticipatory grief.

Title: Anticipatory Grief (New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital)

Description: Ranked as one of the top children's hospitals in the country, New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital outlines the four phases of anticipatory grief as experienced by children.

**Grief after suicide.** Death by suicide can be a very difficult thing to explain to children. Many families may experience shame or fear of social stigma that is often associated with suicide. Adults may worry that it will be too difficult for children to understand. Children may feel afraid about explaining the death to others and wonder if they could have stopped the death.

More information on grief after suicide

Title: Grief After Suicide (BuddhaNet)

Description: BuddhaNet is a not-for-profit organization affiliated with the Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. The organization provides an overview of common experiences following a suicide.

Title: What to Tell Children (SAVE)

Description: Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) is an organization dedicated to the prevention of suicide. SAVE outlines common reactions children may have to suicide and provides advice on talking with children about it.

Title: Helping Children Grieve Suicide Loss

Description: Surviving Suicide was created by a survivor and prevention advocate to provide information on suicide. This article outlines ways to help children cope with loss through suicide.

Title: Grief Support Related to Suicide (The Healing Place)

Description: The Healing Place is a non-profit facility that offers education and grief support programs for grieving children, adolescents and their families or guardians. The organization explores ways to help children understand and grieve a loss after suicide. It also provides an overview of emotional reactions of children experiencing this type of loss.

### **Infants and Toddlers**

Little ones have a sense that someone important in their daily lives is missing when a parent dies. They may look for that person. It is likely that they will respond with tantrums and crying that may seem unrelated to the death. There may be a change in eating, sleeping, and toilet habits.

For more information on the responses of infants and toddlers:

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on infants.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of infants following a death.

### **2-5 year olds**

It is a misconception that children in this age group do not grieve. They do grieve and experience emotions similar to older children. However, they do not have the cognitive or emotional maturity to understand or communicate in the same way as older children.

Typical responses of this age group include:

**Confusion:** They may not understand that death is permanent and may be expecting their parent to return.

**Ambivalence:** They may be withdrawn and sad one minute and want to go to the park to play in the next moment.

**Express grief through play:** Often, children in this age group will reenact the death and experience surrounding the death while playing. This is a normal way for them to handle their fear and sadness.

**Regression:** Children may revert to behaviors that are common of younger children. For example, a child who is already toilet trained may begin to have accidents.

For more information on responses of 2 to 5 year olds:

**Title:** When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

**Description:** HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on young children.

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. HospiceNet explains how young children conceptualize death.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of children following a death.

### **6-9 year olds**

Children of this age group are beginning to understand what death means. They understand that death is permanent. However, they may not understand what that permanent loss of a parent may mean in their life.

Typical responses of this age group include:

**Denial:** Children in this age group may deny that their parent is dead. In fact, they may seem happy and unaffected by the death. This is often a way to cope with intense feelings that they cannot yet understand.

**Idealization:** They may begin to see their deceased parent as "perfect" and as the ideal parent.

**Guilt:** Children of this age group are very self-focused. They may worry that something they did or did not do contributed to the death of their parent.

**Fear:** Six to nine-year-olds may worry quite a bit about the safety of the surviving parent. They will need reassurance when the surviving parent is out of their sight. They may also fear that they will die as well.

For more information on response of 6 to 9 year olds:

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on children who are of elementary school age.

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on young children.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of children following a death.

### **10-12 year olds**

This time in a child's life is a transitional period. Kids in this age group are becoming more independent. They may feel ambivalent about wanting to have more freedom and still needing connection to parents. During this time of life, children are beginning to look to their peers. They are highly sensitive about being "different." When a parent dies, they may fear being different.

Typical responses in this age group:

Caretaking: Children in this age group may feel that they must take care of their surviving parent and siblings.

Anger: They may be irritable, act aggressively, or bully others.



Fear: Ten to 12 year-olds may fear the death of the surviving parent, their own death, and of the unknown.

For more information on reactions of 10 to 12 year-olds:

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death emerging preteens.

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on children.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of kids following a death.

## **Teens**

Kids in this age group are already in a tumultuous time of life. Many changes are going on internally and externally. The death of a parent during this time of development can bring with it a wide range of emotions and experiences that teens are just learning to handle.

Typical reactions of teens:

Guilt: Teens may feel guilty about the normal process of growing up and pulling away from the surviving parent.

Depression: Many teens may experience intense feelings of sadness and depression following the death of a parent.

Questioning: Teens may begin questioning the meaning of life and death. As their cognitive skills develop, they may begin looking at the death and its impact on their lives in new ways.

For more information about reactions of teens

Title: How to Help Teens (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the ways to help teens cope with grief.

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on teens and young adults.

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the ways teens come to understand death and bereavement.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of teens following a death.

## **Helping children to grieve**

Grief is an individual experience. Every child will grieve in his or her own way. Often, a grieving child may visibly show signs by crying. Sometimes it will be less obvious. A child may be very happy one minute and then angry about the death the next. Because of the nature of grief for children, it is important for caregivers to follow the child's lead in terms of what he or she may need. For instance, a child may need alone time. At other times, your child may benefit from discussing the death with you. At times, kids benefit from having down time to just be still. Having a special place to sit, reflect, remember and/or cry will help kids when they need quiet time to deal with their grief. At other times, grief can be an active experience for kids. Drawing, writing, and acting out fears through play are ways in which kids may actively grieve the loss of their parent. Some other activities that may be helpful include:

Title: Just for me: Healing Activities for Grieving Children and Teens (Ryan's Heart)

Description: Ryan's Heart is a non-profit organization helping grieving families. This eBook provides grief activity ideas for children and teens. Activities encourage physical, verbal, and emotional expressions of grief. The book provides instructions and materials lists for each activity.

Title: Activities, Games, and Relaxation Techniques (Hospice Support Care)

Description: Hospice Support Care, an organization to provide information and care to families of dying individuals, outlines a series of activities and games for children to help cope with grief. Relaxation techniques included guided imagery and visualizations that were written with young kids in mind. Activities include active games

and art projects including The Life Book, which allows kids to reflect on feelings and remember the people they love.

Title: Activities that Support Grieving Youth (LiveStrong.com)

Description: Athlete Lance Armstrong's organization Live Strong provides a list of activities to help grieving kids to express their emotions and honor the memory of the deceased. Activities include the creation of memory boxes, visiting grief camps, and writing grief letters.

Title: Activities for Children (The Dougy Center)

Description: The Dougy Center, a safe place for children, teens, young adults and their families who are grieving a death to share their experiences, outlines a few activities for children to cope with death.

Title: Activities for Children and Teens (The Center for Grieving Children)

Description: The Center for Grieving Children, which provides support for grieving families in Maine, outlines activities to help to give children and teens healthy outlets from emotional and physical experiences of grief.

Children

Teens

Title: Activities for Children and Teens (The National Alliance for Grieving Children)

Description: The National Alliance for Grieving Children provides the instructions and material lists for several activities to help children and teens process the loss of parents and other loved ones. Follow the links below to the individual activities:

Day of the Dead Celebration

Sweet Dreams Pillowcase

Feelings

Memory Lane

Questions I Have

### **Talking About Death**

Many parents and caregivers struggle with how to talk to their children about the death of a parent. Often, you may feel overwhelmed by your own emotions in losing someone you love. It may be very difficult to talk about the death. But talking with your children can help them begin to understand the loss of their parent. It can be a good step toward healing for the entire family

**Telling your child about the death.** Children understand death in different ways depending on their ages. The language that adults use in explaining how a parent died and what death means is important to helping them understand. In general, use direct and concrete terms to avoid confusion. Telling a child that “Daddy is sleeping” or the “We’ve lost Mommy” may be confusing, particularly for young children.

**Talking about the funeral.** Funerals are important to help the living acknowledge, accept and cope with the loss of a loved one. Each family will have to determine how much children will be included in the funeral. For children who attend funerals, it is important to prepare them for what they will see and hear before, during, and after the ceremony. It is important to prepare children for the differences in reactions that they may see from adults.

**Talking about emotional responses.** Children may be very confused about the emotional reactions they have to the loss of a parent. They may also be confused about

the reactions of others. They may not understand why they are sad one minute and then happy the next. Children need help talking about their feelings. They also need to know that it is okay to feel many different emotions.

**Sharing your emotions with your child.** Many parents worry about how or if to show their emotions with their kids. Denying feelings can send a false message and prolong the grief experience for kids. Young children may be confused by parents who do not show emotional responses to death. It may negate their internal experience. Sharing grief will be a teaching opportunity for your children.

For more information on talking with grieving kids:

Title: Helping Your Child Deal with Death (KidsHealth)

Description: As part of The Nemours Foundation's Center for Children's Health Media, KidsHealth provides families with information about physical, emotional, and behavioral issues that affect children and teens. It stresses the importance of talking with kids in ways that fit their age and level of understanding.

Title: Talking to Children about Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. HospiceNet provides advice on important things to consider when talking with children about death.

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the ways talk with kids about the death of a parent.

Title: Talking to Children about Death (The National Institute of Health)

Description: The National Institute of Health offers advice on following key factors when talking with children about death including using age-appropriate language and providing clear and honest information.

Title: How to Talk to Children about Death (Center for Effective Parenting)

Description: The Center for Effective Parenting provides an overview of why it is important to talk to children about the death of a loved one. It also provides practical tips for having conversations with kids.

Title: What Do You Tell Children? (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet stresses the importance of open and honest communication about death with children.

## **Funerals**

In many cultures, funerals and memorial services provide opportunities for grieving individuals to have closure. For children, funerals may or may not offer that same kind of closure that adults may experience. Many parents, caregivers, and professionals struggle with the decision to allow children to attend the funeral of a parent. They must weigh the benefits of providing children with a chance to say goodbye and to be included in the process with the negative emotional impact that may result.

Funerals can be an unusual and potential scary experience for children. The environment of a funeral may be overwhelming. Before the funeral, children should be informed about what funerals are like. Aspects of funerals, like the display of the deceased's body and emotional displays by adults, should be discussed. In general,

inviting children to decide if they would like to attend will allow them to have their wishes heard by the adults who care for them.

For more information about funerals and children;

Title: Helping a Child after Death (Arkansas Children's Hospital)

Description: Arkansas Children's Hospital provides parents, caregivers, and professionals with information about immediate concerns following the death of a loved one. Advice on handling funerals is included.

Title: Should a Child or Children Attend a Funeral (The Healing Place)

Description: The Healing Place is non-profit facility that offers education and grief support programs for grieving children, adolescents and their families or guardians. The organization explores ways to help children through the funeral process.

Title: Should Children Attend Funerals? (Lutheran Children's Hospital)

Description: Lutheran Children's Hospital in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, provides information regarding the importance of funerals in the grieving process and explains ways to help children deal with them.

Title: Should Young Children Attend Funerals? (The Lucy Daniels Center)

Description: The Lucy Daniels Center for Early Childhood is a nonprofit organization that strives to promote the healthy emotional development of young children. The center responds to a father's questions regarding attendance of children at funerals. The response addresses children's experiences of funerals, saying good-bye, and preparation for funerals.

Title: Kids and Funerals (The Dougy Center)



Description: The Dougy Center allows kids and families to share their experiences, discusses the considerations that adults must make in deciding to take a child to a funeral.

### **Dealing with changes**

When a parent dies, children encounter a new world full of changes. Routines, environments, and relationships will be impacted by the loss. These dramatic changes can contribute to intense distress. Knowledgeable caregivers and professionals can be of great assistance in navigating the changes.

**Changes in family dynamics.** The death of a parent dramatically changes the relationships of family members. Extended family may become more prominent in the care of the children. Children may be required to take on new responsibilities. These changes will require periods of adjustment as each member of the family redefines his or her role in the family.

**Changes in the daily routine.** When a parent dies, the remaining family members will have a new daily experiences. Responsibilities that were once handled by the deceased parent will need to be covered by other members. Children may have to learn new rules and boundaries.

For more information on changes following death:

Title: Coping with Change after Loss (Cancer.Net)

Description: Cancer.Net provides an overview of areas in which changes occur for grieving families including in relationships, finances, and responsibilities. Not written specifically for children, the site does cover general changes as experienced by families.

Title: Remarriage after Death of a Spouse (BonusFamilies.com)

Description: A psychologist provides insight on the blending of families following the death of a spouse.

Title: Single Parenting (Widow.com)

Description: A resource for widowed parents, Widow.com provides a list of ways for parents to create new routines and traditions for their families as they enter into single parenthood.

### **Remembering and coping with special days**

Holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries take on a whole new feel following the death of a parent. Often, the once joyous occasions become challenging obstacles for families to navigate. It can be difficult for kids and families to face special days without a parent. Children may be fatigued by the overwhelming emotions that accompany the hustle of special days during which their parent is missing. Caregivers and professionals can help kids adjust to new ways of honoring special days while remembering and celebrating the past.

For information on handling the special days:

Title: Help for the Holidays (The Dougy Center)

Description: The Dougy Center gives a list of tips for families as they face the holidays without their loved one. Tips include ways to remember the deceased, reach out for help, and plan ahead.

Title: The First Birthday after a Father's Death (LiveStrong.com)

Description: Athlete Lance Armstrong's organization Live Strong provides tips to help grieving kids to cope with their first birthday after the death of a father.

Title: Coping with Grief during the Holidays (FuneralPlan.com)

Description: The site provides a list of “dos” and don’ts” for grieving families as they face the holidays.

Title: Helping Grieving Children through the Holidays (GriefShare.org)

Description: GriefShare.org, which provides resources for grieving families, highlights ideas for assisting grieving kids through the challenging time of the holidays and special occasions.

Title: Holidays after the Death of a Loved One (LiveStrong.com)

Description: Athlete Lance Armstrong’s organization Live Strong provides tips to help grieving individuals to make it through the holidays. Though not specific to parental loss, the article highlights creating new traditions and special tributes to loved ones that would be beneficial to parentally bereaved children.

### **For LGBT families**

The loss of a parent is never easy for any family. Families from the LGBT community face added challenges tied to homophobia and heterosexism that are ever present in our culture. Partners may have been denied survivorship benefits and may face a precarious financial future due to lack of legal protection. Partners and nonbiological children may not have been permitted to visit at a parent’s deathbed.

Following the death of a parent, LGBT families often face intense legal, financial, and emotional hurdles that families headed by heterosexuals may not.

For more information on grief issues for LGBT families:

Web Resources

Rainbow Babies – Death and Dying

Gay and Lesbian Widows

Growthhouse.org

The Center

Articles

Grieving Loss in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community

Invisible Grief: Addressing the Needs of Lesbian Widows

### **Professional Resources**

For most kids, grieving is a healthy and typical response to the loss of a parent. They move through many phases of grief, sometimes experiencing intense emotion and at other times not feeling much emotion about the loss. For other children, the process may be complicated by factors like past abuse or multiple losses, leading to prolonged intensity of grief that may feel like the child is emotionally frozen in time. When grief becomes complicated, professional helpers like counselors and psychologists may provide support to children and families.

For more information on when to seek help

Title: Children's Complicated Grief – A Case Study (American Hospice Foundation)

Description: The American Hospice Foundation provides an explanation of complicated grief as experienced by children. The site explains how complicated grief differs from the normal grieving process.

Title: Information about Children and Grief (Goldman)

Description: Linda Goldman, a counselor specializing in issues of death and dying, explains the experience of complicated grief, factors that may contribute to it, ways to help children move beyond it, and activities that may help with the process.

For more information on professional resources

Ohio

Michelle Schultz, Psy.D.

The Ellis Institute of Human Development

937-775-4300

\*For professionals: If you would like to be added to our list of resources, please email contact information to [childrensgriefresources@gmail.com](mailto:childrensgriefresources@gmail.com).

**Additional resources.** Many resources are available to adults who are caring for grieving kids. Support groups offer families the opportunity to spend time with caring professionals and other grieving families. Reading and Internet resources provide adults with information about how to promote resilience and address the needs of parentally bereaved children.

For more information about support groups

Ohio

Joel's Place for Children (Cleveland)

Fernside (Cincinnati)

Hospice of Central Ohio (Columbus)

Oak Tree Corner (Dayton)

Hospice of Northwest Ohio – Kids Grief Support (Toledo)

\*For professionals: If your organization would like to be added to our list of resources, please email contact information to [childrensgriefresources@gmail.com](mailto:childrensgriefresources@gmail.com).

For additional Internet resources

Children's Grief Education Association

GriefNet.org

Grieving Parents

GROWW - Grief Recovery Online for all Bereaved

For additional reading resources

Book list on parental death for children (Fernside)

Book lists for children ages 8 and under

WARM Place

Kidsgrief.org - preschool

Kidsgrief.org – grades 1-3

Book lists for children ages 9 to 12

WARM Place

Kidsgrief.org

Book lists for teens

WARM Place

Kidsgrief.org

### **Cultural Considerations**

As families grieve, cultural and religious beliefs can play an important role in the understanding of death, loss, and grief. Professionals working with grieving children and families can support the incorporation of cultural and religious beliefs in the grieving process. From memorializing and remembering the deceased to emotional expressions of loss, many differences can be found throughout cultural and religious belief systems. By understanding and supporting those differences, professionals can help individual children and their families cope with the death of a parent.

For more information on cultural and religious beliefs about death

Title: Understanding Cultural Issues in Death (NASP)

Description: The National Association of School Psychologists discusses the impact of cultural beliefs on the experience of trauma including death. Cultural beliefs of many racial, ethnic, and religious groups are outlined.

Title: Pagan Afterlife and Salvation (Patheos)

Description: The spiritual beliefs of people who identify as pagan are discussed. The overview covers general beliefs and provides some beliefs specific to individuals who identify as Wiccan or Hellenistic.

Title: Death Customs and Beliefs Across Different Religions (HARP)

Description: The Health for Asylum Seekers and Refugees Portal provides overviews of death customs for many religions.

The Jewish Faith

Islam

Buddhism

Hinduism

Christianity

Shona

### **For Professionals**

Working with a grieving child and family can be both a difficult and rewarding endeavor. It is difficult to watch a young person struggle with the changes and emotions that come following the death of a parent. For those lucky kids who have patient and

loving caregivers and professionals to help them, the path through grief can lead to resiliency.

For information and resources to assist in caring for a grieving child, check out these links:

Resources

About Grief

Infants & Toddlers

2 to 5 Year-olds

6 to 9 Year-olds

10 to 12 Year-olds

Teens

Helping Children Grieve

Talking about Death

Funerals

Dealing with Changes

Remembering - Honoring Special Days

Cultural Considerations

For LGBT Families

## **Resources**

Consultation and Training Services

The Dougy Center, an organization that has provided support to grieving kids and families since 1982, offers training and consultation for professionals.

*Training and Consultation Overview*



2011 Summer Institute

2011 Training Schedule

The Association for Death Education and Counseling®, The Thanatology Association®, offers numerous educational opportunities like Webinars. It is one of the oldest interdisciplinary organizations in the field of dying, death and bereavement.

ADEC Webinars

*Conferences*

ADEC - Making Connections: Dying, Death and Bereavement in the Global Community

June 22-25, 2011

Pre-conference Institute June 21-22, 2011

InterContinental Miami

Miami, Florida, USA

*Professional Organization Websites*

The Center for Thanatology Research and Education, Inc.

The Association for Death Education and Counseling

*Publications*

Handbook of Thanatology – Rutledge

OMEGA — Journal of Death and Dying

Death Studies

Journal of Loss and Trauma: International Perspectives on Stress and Coping

## About Grief

Grief can be a strong and overwhelming emotion for children following a loss of someone they love. While grieving, kids may experience many different emotions and feelings. They may have physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions while grieving. It is important to remember that grief is a natural reaction to loss and that each person may experience it in his or her own way. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

**General responses.** In general, children grieve more sporadically than adults. They may have moments of intense grief and then not show any signs of grieving. As children age, they will experience grief in new ways. At each developmental stage, they will have to learn how incorporate the death of their parents into their lives.

For more information on general responses:

Title: Young Kids and Grief (KIDSAID.com)

Description: KIDSAID.org is a site for kids to deal with their feelings with other kids who have suffered major losses. An overview of typical grief responses is provided.

Title: Children and Grief (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet provides a general description of children's grief.

Title: Death in the Family (Royal College of Psychiatrists)

Description: Royal College of Psychiatrists is the professional and educational body for psychiatrists in the United Kingdom. It provides a look at how children respond to death.

Title: Children and Grief (AtHealth)

Description: AtHealth.com is a provider of mental health information and services for mental health practitioners and those they serve. The site looks at the “tasks” of mourning for children in addition to exploring how children react and how adults can help.

**Grief after sudden death.** A sudden, unexpected death can send a family reeling. Events surrounding the death may require surviving adults to focus their attention on things other than the children. This can leave children confused, scared, and feeling left out. By being included in age-appropriate discussions, children may be less worried.

For more information on grief after sudden death

Title: Coping with Sudden Death (LegacyConnect)

Description: LegacyConnect hosts grief support groups and advice on grieving and provides an overview of experiences common to the sudden loss of a loved one.

**Anticipatory grief.** When a parent is terminally ill, children may have a variety of emotional and behavioral responses ranging from deep sadness to relief once the illness is over. They may wonder if there is anything that they could do to stop the death. Parents may worry about how much to involve their children in the dying process. In general, talking with your child about the illness and death in plain terms and facts will help to reduce anxiety.

For more information on anticipatory grief

Title: Anticipatory Grief (Children’s Grief Education Association)

Description: The Children’s Grief Education Association is nonprofit organization that serves children and families and provides education and support to those who serve

them. The association provides an overview of the impact of anticipatory grief on children.

Title: Anticipatory Grief (American Hospice Foundation)

Description: The American Hospice Foundation supports programs that serve the needs of terminally ill and grieving individuals of all ages. The foundation provides an overview of symptoms related to anticipatory grief.

Title: Anticipatory Grief Work (American Hospice Foundation)

Description: The American Hospice Foundation supports programs that serve the needs of terminally ill and grieving individuals of all ages. The foundation provides an overview of working through anticipatory grief.

Title: Anticipatory Grief (New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital)

Description: Ranked as one of the top children's hospitals in the country, New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital outlines the four phases of anticipatory grief as experienced by children.

**Grief after suicide.** Death by suicide can be a very difficult thing to explain to children. Many families may experience shame or fear of social stigma that is often associated with suicide. Adults may worry that it will be too difficult for children to understand. Children may feel afraid about explaining the death to others and wonder if they could have stopped the death.

More information on grief after suicide

Title: Grief After Suicide (BuddhaNet)

Description: BuddhaNet is a not-for-profit organization affiliated with the Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. The organization provides an overview of common experiences following a suicide.

Title: What to Tell Children (SAVE)

Description: Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) is an organization dedicated to the prevention of suicide. SAVE outlines common reactions children may have to suicide and provides advice on talking with children about it.

Title: Helping Children Grieve Suicide Loss

Description: Surviving Suicide was created by a survivor and prevention advocate to provide information on suicide. This article outlines ways to help children cope with loss through suicide.

Title: Grief Support Related to Suicide (The Healing Place)

Description: The Healing Place non-profit facility that offers education and grief support programs for grieving children, adolescents and their families or guardians. The organization explores ways to help children understand and grieve a loss after suicide. It also provides an overview of emotional reactions of children experiencing this type of loss.

### **Infants and Toddlers**

Little ones have a sense that someone important in their daily lives is missing when a parent dies. They may look for that person. It is likely that they will respond with tantrums and crying that may seem unrelated to the death. There may be a change in eating, sleeping, and toilet habits.

For more information on the responses of infants and toddlers:

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on infants.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of infants following a death.

### **2-5 year olds**

It is a misconception that children in this age group do not grieve. They do grieve and experience emotions similar to older children. However, they do not have the cognitive or emotional maturity to understand or communicate in the same way as older children.

Typical responses of this age group include:

Confusion: They may not understand that death is permanent and may be expecting their parent to return.

Ambivalence: They may be withdrawn and sad one minute and want to go to the park to play in the next moment.

Express grief through play: Often, children in this age group will reenact the death and experience surrounding the death while playing. This is a normal way for them to handle their fear and sadness.

Regression: Children may revert to behaviors that are common of younger children. For example, a child who is already toilet trained may begin to have accidents.

For more information on responses of 2 to 5 year olds:

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on young children.

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. HospiceNet explains how young children conceptualize death.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of children following a death.

### **6-9 year olds**

Children of this age group are beginning to understand what death means. They understand that death is permanent. However, they may not understand what that permanent loss of a parent may mean in their life.

Typical responses of this age group include:

Denial: Children in this age group may deny that their parent is dead. In fact, they may seem happy and unaffected by the death. This is often a way to cope with intense feelings that they cannot yet understand.

Idealization: They may begin to see their deceased parent as "perfect" and as the ideal parent.

Guilt: Children of this age group are very self-focused. They may worry that something they did or didn't do contributed to the death of their parent.

Fear: Six to nine-year-olds may worry quite a bit about the safety of the surviving parent. They will need reassurance when the surviving parent is out of their sight. They may also fear that they will die as well.

For more information on response of 6 to 9 year olds:

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on children who are of elementary school age.

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on young children.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of children following a death.

### **10-12 year olds**

This time in a child's life is a transitional period. Kids in this age group are becoming more independent. They may feel ambivalent about wanting to have more freedom and still needing connection to parents. During this time of life, children are



beginning to look to their peers. They are highly sensitive about being “different.” When a parent dies, they may fear being different.

Typical responses in this age group:

Caretaking: Children in this age group may feel that they must take care of their surviving parent and siblings.

Anger: They may be irritable, act aggressively, or bully others.

Fear: Ten to 12 year-olds may fear the death of the surviving parent, their own death, and of the unknown.

For more information on reactions of 10 to 12 year-olds:

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent’s death emerging preteens.

Title: Children’s Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent’s death on children.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of kids following a death.

## **Teens**

Kids in this age group are already in a tumultuous time of life. Many changes are going on internally and externally. The death of a parent during this time of development can bring with it a wide range of emotions and experiences that teens are just learning to handle.

Typical reactions of teens:

**Guilt:** Teens may feel guilty about the normal process of growing up and pulling away from the surviving parent.

**Depression:** Many teens may experience intense feelings of sadness and depression following the death of a parent.

**Questioning:** Teens may begin questioning the meaning of life and death. As their cognitive skills develop, they may begin looking at the death and its impact on their lives in new ways.

For more information about reactions of teens

Title: How to Help Teens (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the ways to help teens cope with grief.

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. HospiceNet highlights the impact of a parent's death on teens and young adults.

Title: Children's Understanding of Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the ways teens come to understand death and bereavement.

Title: Grief: Children (The National Center for Victims of Crime)

Description: The National Center for Victims of Crime is a resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. The center provides an outline of responses and needs of teens following a death.

### **Helping children to grieve**

Grief is an individual experience. Every child will grieve in his or her own way. Often, a grieving child may visibly show signs by crying. Sometimes it will be less obvious. A child may be very happy one minute and then angry about the death the next. Because of the nature of grief for children, it is important for caregivers to follow the child's lead in terms of what he or she may need. For instance, a child may need alone time. At other times, your child may benefit from discussing the death with you. At times, kids benefit from having down time to just be still. Having a special place to sit, reflect, remember and/or cry will help kids when they need quiet time to deal with their grief. At other times, grief can be an active experience for kids. Drawing, writing, and acting out fears through play are ways in which kids may actively grieve the loss of their parent. Some other activities that may be helpful include:

Title: Just for me: Healing Activities for Grieving Children and Teens (Ryan's Heart)

Description: Ryan's Heart is a non-profit organization helping grieving families. This eBook provides grief activity ideas for children and teens. Activities encourage

physical, verbal, and emotional expressions of grief. The book provides instructions and materials lists for each activity.

Title: Activities, Games, and Relaxation Techniques (Hospice Support Care)

Description: Hospice Support Care, an organization to provide information and care to families of dying individuals, outlines a series of activities and games for children to help cope with grief. Relaxation techniques included guided imagery and visualizations that were written with young kids in mind. Activities include active games and art projects including The Life Book, which allows kids to reflect on feelings and remember the people they love.

Title: Activities that Support Grieving Youth (LiveStrong.com)

Description: Athlete Lance Armstrong's organization Live Strong provides a list of activities to help grieving kids to express their emotions and honor the memory of the deceased. Activities include the creation of memory boxes, visiting grief camps, and writing grief letters.

Title: Activities for Children (The Dougy Center)

Description: The Dougy Center, a safe place for children, teens, young adults and their families who are grieving a death to share their experiences, outlines a few activities for children to cope with death.

Title: Activities for Children and Teens (The Center for Grieving Children)

Description: The Center for Grieving Children, which provides support for grieving families in Maine, outlines activities to help to give children and teens healthy outlets from emotional and physical experiences of grief.

Children

Teens

Title: Activities for Children and Teens (The National Alliance for Grieving Children)

Description: The National Alliance for Grieving Children provides the instructions and materials lists for several activities to help children and teens process the loss of parents and other loved ones. Follow the links below to the individual activities:

Day of the Dead Celebration

Sweet Dreams Pillowcase

Feelings

Memory Lane

Questions I Have

### **Talking About Death**

Many parents and caregivers struggle with how to talk to their children about the death of a parent. Often, you may feel overwhelmed by your own emotions in losing someone you love. It may be very difficult to talk about the death. But talking with your children can help them begin to understand the loss of their parent. It can be a good step toward healing for the entire family

**Telling your child about the death.** Children understand death in different ways depending on their ages. The language that adults use in explaining how a parent died and what death means is important to helping them understand. In general, use direct and concrete terms to avoid confusion. Telling a child that “Daddy is sleeping” or the “We’ve lost Mommy” may be confusing, particularly for young children.

**Talking about the funeral.** Funerals are important to help the living acknowledge, accept and cope with the loss of a loved one. Each family will have to determine how much children will be included in the funeral. For children who attend funerals, it is important to prepare them for what they will see and hear before, during, and after the ceremony. It is important to prepare children for the differences in reactions that they may see from adults.

**Talking about emotional responses.** Children may be very confused about the emotional reactions they have to the loss of a parent. They may also be confused about the reactions of others. They may not understand why they are sad one minute and then happy the next. Children need help talking about their feelings. They also need to know that it is okay to feel many different emotions.

**Sharing your emotions with your child.** Many parents worry about how or if to show their emotions with their kids. Denying feelings can send a false message and prolong the grief experience for kids. Young children may be confused by parents who do not show emotional responses to death. It may negate their internal experience. Sharing grief will be a teaching opportunity for your children.

For more information on talking with grieving kids:

Title: Helping Your Child Deal with Death (KidsHealth)

Description: As part of The Nemours Foundation's Center for Children's Health Media, KidsHealth provides families with information about physical, emotional, and behavioral issues that affect children and teens. It stresses the importance of talking with kids in ways that fit their age and level of understanding.

Title: Talking to Children about Death (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. HospiceNet provides advice on important things to consider when talking with children about death.

Title: When a Parent Dies (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet highlights the ways talk with kids about the death of a parent.

Title: Talking to Children about Death (The National Institute of Health)

Description: The National Institute of Health offers advice on following key factors when talking with children about death including using age-appropriate language and providing clear and honest information.

Title: How to Talk to Children about Death (Center for Effective Parenting)

Description: The Center for Effective Parenting provides an overview of why it is important to talk to children about the death of a loved one. It also provides practical tips for having conversations with kids.

Title: What Do You Tell Children? (HospiceNet)

Description: HospiceNet is a site for families facing the illness and death of a loved one. As part of its bereavement section, HospiceNet stresses the importance of open and honest communication about death with children.

## **Funerals**

In many cultures, funerals and memorial services provide opportunities for grieving individuals to have closure. For children, funerals may or may not offer that same kind of closure that adults may experience. Many parents, caregivers, and

professionals struggle with the decision to allow children to attend the funeral of a parent. They must weigh the benefits of providing children with a chance to say goodbye and to be included in the process with the negative emotional impact that may result.

Funerals can be an unusual and potential scary experience for children. The environment of a funeral may be overwhelming. Before the funeral, children should be informed about what funerals are like. Aspects of funerals, like the display of the deceased's body and emotional displays by adults, should be discussed. In general, inviting children to decide if they would like to attend will allow them to have their wishes heard by the adults who care for them.

For more information about funerals and children;

Title: Helping a Child after Death (Arkansas Children's Hospital)

Description: Arkansas Children's Hospital provides parents, caregivers, and professionals with information about immediate concerns following the death of a loved one. Advice on handling funerals is included.

Title: Should a Child or Children Attend a Funeral (The Healing Place)

Description: The Healing Place is non-profit facility that offers education and grief support programs for grieving children, adolescents and their families or guardians. The organization explores ways to help children through the funeral process.

Title: Should Children Attend Funerals? (Lutheran Children's Hospital)

Description: Lutheran Children's Hospital in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, provides information regarding the importance of funerals in the grieving process and explains ways to help children deal with them.

Title: Should Young Children Attend Funerals? (The Lucy Daniels Center)



Description: The Lucy Daniels Center for Early Childhood is a nonprofit organization that strives to promote the healthy emotional development of young children. The center responds to a father's questions regarding attendance of children at funerals. The response addresses children's experiences of funerals, saying good-bye, and preparation for funerals.

Title: Kids and Funerals (The Dougy Center)

Description: The Dougy Center allows kids and families to share their experiences, discusses the considerations that adults must make in deciding to take a child to a funeral.

### **Dealing with changes**

When a parent dies, children encounter a new world full of changes. Routines, environments, and relationships will be impacted by the loss. These dramatic changes can contribute to intense distress. Knowledgeable caregivers and professionals can be of great assistance in navigating the changes.

**Changes in family dynamics.** The death of a parent dramatically changes the relationships of family members. Extended family may become more prominent in the care of the children. Children may be required to take on new responsibilities. These changes will require periods of adjustment as each member of the family redefines his or her role in the family.

**Changes in the daily routine.** When a parent dies, the remaining family members will have a new daily experiences. Responsibilities that were once handled by the deceased parent will need to be covered by other members. Children may have to learn new rules and boundaries.

For more information on changes following death:

Title: Coping with Change after Loss (Cancer.Net)

Description: Cancer.Net provides an overview of areas in which changes occur for grieving families including in relationships, finances, and responsibilities. Not written specifically for children, the site does cover general changes as experienced by families.

Title: Remarriage after Death of a Spouse (BonusFamilies.com)

Description: A psychologist provides insight on the blending of families following the death of a spouse.

Title: Single Parenting (Widow.com)

Description: A resource for widowed parents, Widow.com provides a list of ways for parents to create new routines and traditions for their families as they enter into single parenthood.

### **Remembering and coping with special days**

Holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries take on a whole new feel following the death of a parent. Often, the once joyous occasions become challenging obstacles for families to navigate. It can be difficult for kids and families to face special days without a parent. Children may be fatigued by the overwhelming emotions that accompany the hustle of special days during which their parent is missing. Caregivers and professionals can help kids adjust to new ways of honoring special days while remembering and celebrating the past.

For information on handling the special days:

Title: Help for the Holidays (The Dougy Center)

Description: The Dougy Center gives a list of tips for families as they face the holidays without their loved one. Tips include ways to remember the deceased, reach out for help, and plan ahead.

Title: The First Birthday after a Father's Death (LiveStrong.com)

Description: Athlete Lance Armstrong's organization Live Strong provides tips to help grieving kids to cope with their first birthday after the death of a father.

Title: Coping with Grief during the Holidays (FuneralPlan.com)

Description: The site provides a list of "dos" and don'ts" for grieving families as they face the holidays.

Title: Helping Grieving Children through the Holidays (GriefShare.org)

Description: GriefShare.org, which provides resources for grieving families, highlights ideas for assisting grieving kids through the challenging time of the holidays and special occasions.

Title: Holidays after the Death of a Loved One (LiveStrong.com)

Description: Athlete Lance Armstrong's organization Live Strong provides tips to help grieving individuals to make it through the holidays. Though not specific to parental loss, the article highlights creating new traditions and special tributes to loved ones that would be beneficial to parentally bereaved children.

### **For LGBT families**

The loss of a parent is never easy for any family. Families from the LGBT community face added challenges tied to homophobia and heterosexism that are ever present in our culture. Partners may have been denied survivorship benefits and may face

a precarious financial future due to lack of legal protection. Partners and nonbiological children may not have been permitted to visit at a parent's deathbed.

Following the death of a parent, LGBT families often face intense legal, financial, and emotional hurdles that families headed by heterosexuals may not.

For more information on grief issues for LGBT families:

Web Resources

Rainbow Babies – Death and Dying

Gay and Lesbian Widows

Growthhouse.org

The Center

Articles

Grieving Loss in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community

Invisible Grief: Addressing the Needs of Lesbian Widows

### **Cultural Considerations**

As families grieve, cultural and religious beliefs can play an important role in the understanding of death, loss, and grief. Professionals working with grieving children and families can support the incorporation of cultural and religious beliefs in the grieving process. From memorializing and remembering the deceased to emotional expressions of loss, many differences can be found throughout cultural and religious belief systems. By understanding and supporting those differences, professionals can help individual children and their families cope with the death of a parent.

For more information on cultural and religious beliefs about death

Title: Understanding Cultural Issues in Death (NASP)

Description: The National Association of School Psychologists discusses the impact of cultural beliefs on the experience of trauma including death. Cultural beliefs of many racial, ethnic, and religious groups are outlined.

Title: Pagan Afterlife and Salvation (Patheos)

Description: The spiritual beliefs of people who identify as pagan are discussed. The overview covers general beliefs and provides some beliefs specific to individuals who identify as Wiccan or Hellenistic.

Title: Death Customs and Beliefs Across Different Religions (HARP)

Description: The Health for Asylum Seekers and Refugees Portal provides overviews of death customs for many religions.

The Jewish Faith

Islam

Buddhism

Hinduism

Christianity

Shona

### **For kids**

**What is grief? – and Other Important Questions.** When a parent dies, your life really changes. It can be a very confusing time. You may be feeling many things all at once. You may feel angry or sad. You may have lots of stomachaches or headaches. School may be tough in ways that it was not before your parent died.

Because life changes so much, many kids have a lot of questions after a parent dies. They want to know lots of things like:

“Are my feeling normal?”

“What happens when you die?”

“Is it okay that I don’t feel like crying all the time?”

Kids just like you probably wonder about many of the things you do. We have answered some common questions here about what it’s like when a parent dies. We hope you find the answers to your questions. If you have a question that is not listed here and would like an answer, email us at [childrensgriefresource@gmail.com](mailto:childrensgriefresource@gmail.com). We will do our best to answer and post a response here.

**What is grief?** Grief is the strong feelings we have after someone we love dies. Sometimes it can feel sad. Sometimes it can feel angry. Grief is a normal response to loss.

**What happens when someone dies? Will my mom wake up and be okay?**

When a person dies, her body stops working. Her heart doesn’t beat and she doesn’t breathe anymore. Although many kids hope that their parent will wake up and be okay, death is forever. Your mom will not come alive again in that body.

**Do people’s spirits go somewhere when their bodies stop working?** Lots of people believe that our spirits go somewhere after we die. Some believe our souls go to a place called heaven. Others believe that our spirits get a chance to be reborn in a new body. There are many ideas on what happens to our spirits. Talk to an adult that you trust to help you learn more about it.

**Is it my fault that my dad died?** Absolutely not. A lot of kids worry that they have done something wrong or bad that caused their parent to die. But that is not true. Angry thoughts and word by kids will not cause your parent to die.

**What happens at a funeral?** Funerals can be very different and sometimes very overwhelming. Funerals are ceremonies that help us say good-bye and honor the people we love who died. People usually speak about the person who died. Sometimes prayers are said and music is played. You will probably see many people who cry and many people who will not. Some families have the body of the person who died displayed at the funeral. Others may choose to show pictures and videos.

**What is cremation? Does it hurt?** Some people choose to have their bodies cremated after they die. It happens when the body is placed in a special room that turns it to ashes. Many people keep their love one's ashes in a small container called an urn.

Cremation does not hurt your parent. When people die, their bodies no longer work. They cannot feel any pain.

**Will my mom be cold or be able to breathe if she is buried?** No. Your mom will not be cold or able to breathe because her body does not work anymore. Her spirit is not there anymore. When people die, they do not feel cold or breathe.

**Is it okay that I still want to play and have fun?** Yes, it is absolutely okay. You will feel many things after your parent dies. Sometimes you will feel sad or mad. Other times, you will feel happy and want to play. Your parent would probably want you to have a full and happy life that includes playing. Just because you want to have fun sometimes, does not mean that you do not love your parent. You are a kid – have fun.

**Will someone take the place of my dad?** Probably not. Your dad will always be your dad. No one can change that. There will be other people who come into your life who will be special to you. Your other parent or another adult may have to do the things your dad once did. But no one can take your dad's place in your heart.

### **Kids 12 and under**

Welcome kiddos to a page just for you. The Internet has several places for you to go to find stuff to help you deal with the death of your parent. We've put some here for you to explore.

**Sharing your story.** Sometimes sharing your story and memories can help you feel less alone. You can write it or draw it. Lots of places online let you share it with others. Check out a few of these.

Title: KIDSAID

Description: Lets you post your stories and artwork for other kids to see.

**Talking with others.** When a parent dies, it can feel like you are the only person who feels the way you do. It can be very lonely. There are other kids who know what it's like. Online support groups can help you feel less alone.

Title: KIDSAID

Description: Connects you to other grieving kids. You have to get permission to join. But once you do, you can talk to other kids.

Title: GROWW

Description: GROWW helps grieving teens connect through chat rooms.

\*\* Please check with your parents before joining any online chat or group. And never give out you name, address, or phone number online to stay safe.



## **Teens**

Welcome to a page just for you. The Internet has several places for you to go to find stuff to help you deal with the death of your parent. We have put some here for you to explore.

### **Stuff to read.**

Title: Help for Teens.

Description: The Dougy Center talks about what it's like to be a teen who is grieving

Title: The Bill of Rights for Grieving Teens

Description: Check out the list of things teens who visit the Dougy Center said should be the rights of every grieving teen.

**Sharing your story.** Sometimes sharing your story and memories can help you feel less alone. You can write it or draw it. Lots of places online let you share it with others. Check out a few of these.

Title: KIDSAID

Description: Lets you post your stories and artwork for other teens to see.

**Talking with others.** When a parent dies, it can feel like you are the only person who feels the way you do. It can be very lonely. There are other kids who know what it's like. Online support groups can help you feel less alone.

Title: KIDSAID

Description: Connects you to other grieving teens. You have to get permission to join. But once you do, you can talk to others.

Title: Hello Grief – Online community

Description: Hello Grief not only provides article to read; it started an online community so teens and adults who are grieving can talk to other grieving people.

Title: GROWW

Description: GROWW helps grieving teens connect through chat rooms.

\*\* Please check with your parents before joining any online chat or group. And never give out you name, address, or phone number online to stay safe.

### **For LGBT families**

The loss of a parent is never easy for any family. Families from the LGBT community face added challenges tied to homophobia and heterosexism that are ever present in our culture. Partners may have been denied survivorship benefits and may face a precarious financial future due to lack of legal protection. Partners and nonbiological children may not have been permitted to visit at a parent's deathbed.

Following the death of a parent, LGBT families often face intense legal, financial, and emotional hurdles that families headed by heterosexuals may not.

For more information on grief issues for LGBT families:

Web Resources

Rainbow Babies – Death and Dying

Gay and Lesbian Widows

Growthhouse.org

The Center

Articles

Grieving Loss in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community

## Invisible Grief: Addressing the Needs of Lesbian Widows

### **Maddie's story**

My dad had died when I was three on a snowy January 16, 2003. He died when a truck hit his car. The force was so hard it sent him flying out of one of the car windows then he hit his head on the road. Later the police called my mom and I about what happened. This made my mom cry and left me confused.

**How it impacted my life.** Ever since my dad died, I have seen things different than other kids. I have often felt jealous because I don't have a dad. I feel like other kids have it better than me because they have both parents; while I feel sad for the other kids who lost one or both of their parents. I think losing my dad made me able to understand other people that are experiencing grief since I have felt that. After I had lost my dad I felt guilty because I thought it was my fault. But after a little while, I realized it was not my fault and felt better.

### **What advice would I give to other kids?**

- Tell yourself it wasn't your fault for your parent's death
- Read helpful books
- Celebrate lost parent's birthday
- Take time to remember that parent
- Make a photo book of that parent
- Draw or write about your feelings
- Talk to someone you love about what you feel or your experience

## **Virtual Memorial**

For grieving families, the Internet offers an opportunity to memorialize and honor loved ones through virtual memorials. Many sites provide free memorials; while others charge a fee. Most allow families to post life stories, photos, and memories.

### Virtual Memorials on CGR

To post a short memorial notice on Children's Grief Resources, send an email to [childrensgriefresources@gmail.com](mailto:childrensgriefresources@gmail.com). Include your loved one's first name, year of birth and death, a short message about his or her life, and/or a photo.

## References

- Arkansas Children's Hospital (2011). *Helping a child after death*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.archildrens.org/Services/Center-for-Good-Mourning/Good-Mourning-Resources/Helping-a-Child-After-Death.aspx>
- AtHealth (2010). Children and Grief. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.athealth.com/consumer/disorders/childgrief.html>
- Achenbach, T. (1994). *Child Behavior Checklist*. Burlington, VT: University Medical Education Associates.
- Belitsky, R., & Jacobs, S. (1986). Bereavement, attachment theory, and mental disorders. *Psychiatric Annals*, 16(5), 276-280.
- Bowlby, J. (1963). Pathological mourning and childhood mourning. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic association* 11(3), 500-541.
- Bonanno, G.A., Wortman, C.B., Lehman, D.R., Tweed, R.G., Haring, M., Sonnega, Carr, D., & Neese, R.M. (2002). Resilience to loss and chronic grief: A prospective study from pre-loss to 18-months post-loss. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83(5), 1150-1164.
- Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events. *American Psychologist*, 59(1), 20-28

- Bonanno, G. A. (2008). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? *American Psychologist* 59(1), 101-113.
- Bonanno, G. A., Papa, A., & O'Neill, K. (2002). Loss and human resilience. *Applied & Preventative Psychology* 10(3), 193-206. BonusFamilies (2006). *Remarriage after Death of a Spouse*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.bonusfamilies.com/articles/singleparent.php?id=262>
- BuddhaNet (nd.). Grief after suicide. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from [http://www.buddhanet.net/r\\_suicid.htm](http://www.buddhanet.net/r_suicid.htm)
- CancerNet (2011). *Coping with change after a loss*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Grief+and+Bereavement/Coping+With+Change+After+a+Loss>
- Center for Effective Parenting (1997). *How to talk to children about death*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.parenting-ed.org/handout3/General%20Parenting%20Information/death.htm>
- Cerel, J., Fristad, M.A., Verducci, J., Weller, R.A., & Weller, E.B. (2006). Childhood bereavement: Psychopathology in the two years postparental death. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 45(6), 681-690.
- Children's Grief Education Association (2006). *Anticipatory Grief*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://childgrief.org/documents/AnticipatoryGrief.pdf>.
- Children's Grief Education Association (2011). *How children grieve*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.childgrief.org/childrenandgrief.htm>

- Currier, Neimeyer, & Berman (2008). The effectiveness of psychotherapeutic interventions of bereaved persons: A comprehensive quantitative review. *Psychological Bulletin* 134(5), 648-661.
- Dominick, S. A., Irvine, A. B., Beauchamp, N., Selley, J. R., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., Doka, K. J. et al. (2009). An internet tool to normalize grief. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 60(1), 71-87
- Dowdney, L. (2000). Annotation: Childhood bereavement following parental death. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 41(7), 819-830.
- Dyer, K. A., & Thompson, D. (2000). Internet use for Web-education on the overlooked areas of grief and loss. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 3(2), 255-270.
- Feigelman, W., Gorman, B. S., Beal, K. C., & Jordan, J. R. (2008). Internet support groups for suicide survivors: A new mode for gaining bereavement assistance. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 57(3), 217-243.
- Fernside (2011). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.fernside.org/>
- Fernside (2011). *Books on death of a parent*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.fernside.org/resources/literature/Death%20of%20Parent.pdf>
- Fox, S. (2011). *Health topics*. Pew Internet and American Life Report. Retrieved April 2, 2011, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/HealthTopics.aspx>.
- Freud, S. (1942). On transience (1915). *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 23, 84-85.
- Freud, S. (1915/1989). Mourning and Melancholia. In Gay, P. (Ed.) *The Freud Reader* (584-588). New York: W.W. Norton Company, Inc.

- Gay and Lesbian Widows (2010). *Community Links*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.gayandlesbianwidows.com/>
- Gerrish, N., Dyck, M. J., & Marsh, A. (2009). Post-traumatic growth and bereavement. *Mortality*, 14(3), 226-244. doi:10.1080/13576270903017032
- Goldman, L. (1996). *Children's complicated grief: A case study*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.americanhospice.org/articles-mainmenu-8/grieving-children-mainmenu-12/467-childrens-complicated-grief-a-case-study>
- Grieving Parents (2011). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.grieving-parents.com/>
- GriefNet.org (2011). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://griefnet.org/>
- GROWW: Grief Recovery Online for all Bereaved (2011). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.groww.org/>
- Growthhouse.org (2011). *Lesbian and gay families*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.growthhouse.org/gayfams.html>
- Harpweb (2011). *Buddhism*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.harpweb.org.uk/external.php?url=http://www.ukm.uio.no/utstillinger/farvel/buddhism.html&harpid=248>
- Harpweb (2011). *Christianity*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.harpweb.org.uk/external.php?url=http://www.ukm.uio.no/utstillinger/farvel/christian.html&harpid=251>
- Harpweb (2011). *Hinduism*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.harpweb.org.uk/external.php?url=http://www.ukm.uio.no/utstillinger/farvel/hinduism.html&harpid=249>



Harpweb (2011). *Islam*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from

<http://www.harpweb.org.uk/external.php?url=http://www.ukm.uio.no/utstillinger/farvel/islam-eng.html&harpid=247>

Harpweb (2011). *The Jewish faith*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from

<http://www.harpweb.org.uk/external.php?url=http://www.ukm.uio.no/utstillinger/farvel/jew.html&harpid=246>

Harpweb (2011). *Shona religion and beliefs*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from

[http://www.harpweb.org.uk/external.php?url=http://www.zambuko.com/mbirapage/resource\\_guide/pages/culture/shona\\_religion.html&harpid=252](http://www.harpweb.org.uk/external.php?url=http://www.zambuko.com/mbirapage/resource_guide/pages/culture/shona_religion.html&harpid=252)

Hello Grief – Online community (2010). *A place to share and learn about grief*.

Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.hellogrief.org/>

Himebauch, A., Arnold, R. M., & May, C. (2008). Grief in children and developmental concepts of death #138. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 11(2), 242-243.

Hodgson, H. (2005). *Anticipatory grief symptoms: What's the big deal?* Retrieved March 30, 2011 from

[http://www.americanhospice.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=13](http://www.americanhospice.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=13)

Hodgson, H. (2005). *Anticipatory grief work: What it is and how to do it*. Retrieved

March 30, 2011 from <http://www.americanhospice.org/articles-mainmenu-8/working-through-grief-mainmenu-13/81-anticipatory-grief-work-what-is-it-and-how-do-you-do-it>.

Hospice of Central Ohio (2011). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from

<http://www.hospiceofcentralohio.org/bereavement.cfm?ID=1>

Hospice of Northwest Ohio (2011). *Reaching out to help yourself and others*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from [http://www.hospicenwo.org/index.php?submenu=grief\\_support&src=gendocs&ref=SupportGroups&category=grief\\_support](http://www.hospicenwo.org/index.php?submenu=grief_support&src=gendocs&ref=SupportGroups&category=grief_support)

HospiceNet (1997). *Children and grief*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/children.html>.

HospiceNet (2011). *Children's understanding of death*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/understand.html>

HospiceNet (2011). *Helping teenagers cope with grief*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/parent.html>

HospiceNet (2011). *Talking to children about death*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/talking.html>

HospiceNet (2011). *What do you tell children?* Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/what-tell.html>

HospiceNet (2011). *When a parent dies: A guide for patients and their family*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/parent.html>

Hospice Support Care (2011). *Helping children cope with grief*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from [http://www.hospicesupportcare.org/help\\_children.html](http://www.hospicesupportcare.org/help_children.html)

Joel's Place for Children (2010). *About Joel's place for children*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.joelsplaceforchildren.org/About.html>

Kidsgrief.com (2007). *Resources for children experiencing grief: preschool*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.kidsgrief.com/preschool.html>

Kidsgrief.com (2007). *Resources for children experiencing grief: grades 1-3*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.kidsgrief.com/grades1-3.html>

- Kidsgrief.com (2007). *Resources for children experiencing grief: grades 4-6*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.kidsgrief.com/grades4-6.html>
- Kidsgrief.com (2007). *Resources for children experiencing grief: teens*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.kidsgrief.com/teens.html>
- KidsHealth (2011). *Helping your child deal with death*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/death.html>
- KidSaid (2011). *Guiding for youth: For kids and teens*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.groww.org/Branches/guiding2.htm>
- KidSaid (2011). *Stories and poetry*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://kidsaid.com/stories.html>
- KidSaid (2011). *Support groups*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from [http://kidsaid.com/k2k\\_support.html](http://kidsaid.com/k2k_support.html)
- KidSaid (nd). *Young kids and grief*. Retrieved from March 30, 2011 from <http://kidsaid.com/dougypage.html>.
- Kovacs, M. (2003). *Children's Depression Inventory*. North Tonawanda, NY: Multi-Health Systems, Inc.
- Kubler Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Leach, L.S., Christensen, H., Griffiths, K.M., Jorm, A.F., & Mackinnon, A.J. (2007). Websites as a mode of delivering mental health information: Perceptions from the Australian public. *Social Psychiatry* 42, 167-172.

- Lepore, S. & Revenson, T. (2006). Relationships between posttraumatic growth and resilience: Resilience, resistance, and reconfiguration. In Calhoun, L.G. & Tedeschi, R.G. (Eds.) *Handbook of posttraumatic growth* (24-46). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers: Mahwah, New Jersey. Not correct cite
- Lin, K. K., Sandler, I. N., Ayers, T. S., Wolchik, S. A., & Luecken, L. J. (2004). Resilience in Parentally Bereaved Children and Adolescents Seeking Preventive Services. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 33(4), 673-683.
- Lindeman, E. (1944). Symptomatology and management of acute grief. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 101, 141-148.
- Lintermans, G. & Stolzman, M. (2011). *Grieving loss in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender community*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://ezinearticles.com/?Grieving-Loss-in-the-Lesbian,-Gay,-Bisexual-and-Transgender-Community&id=160599>
- Livestrong (2011). *Activities that support grieving youth*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.livestrong.com/article/128009-activities-support-grieving-youth/>
- Lueken, L.J. (2008). Long-term consequences of parental death in childhood: Psychological and physiological manifestations. In Stroebe, M.S., Hansson, R.O., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (Eds.) *Handbook of bereavement research and practice* (3-25). American Psychological Association: Washington, D.C.
- Lutheran Children's Hospital (2011). *Should Children Attend Funerals?* Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.lutheranchilrenshosp.com/interior.php?t=115>

- Maciejewski, P.K., Zhang, B., Block, S.D. & Prigerson, H.G. (2007). An empirical examination of the stage theory of grief. *Journal of American Medical Association* 297(7), 716-723.
- Mitchell, A.M, Wesner, S., Garand, L., Gale, D.D., Havill, A., Brownson, L. (2007). A support group intervention for children bereaved by parental suicide. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 20(1), 3-13.
- NASP Resources (2003). *Understanding cultural issues in death*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from [http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/culture\\_death.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/culture_death.aspx)
- National Alliance for Grieving Children (2011). *Day of the dead celebration*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org/activity-day-dead-celebration>
- National Alliance for Grieving Children (2011). *Feelings*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org/activity-feelings>
- National Alliance for Grieving Children (2011). *Memory lane*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org/activity-memory-lane>
- National Alliance for Grieving Children (2011). *Sweet dreams pillowcase*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org/activity-sweet-dream-pillowcases>
- National Alliance for Grieving Children (2011). *Questions I have*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org/activity-questions-i-have>

- National Institutes of Health (2006). *Talking to children about death*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from [http://www.cc.nih.gov/ccc/patient\\_education/pepubs/childeath.pdf](http://www.cc.nih.gov/ccc/patient_education/pepubs/childeath.pdf)
- New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital (2008). *Anticipatory Grief*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://childrensnyp.org/mschony/terminal-anticipat.html>
- Oak Tree Corner (2011). Hospice of Northwest Ohio <http://www.oaktreecorner.org/>
- Niemeyer, R.A. (2001). *Meaning reconstruction and the experience of loss*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Patheos (2011). *Pagan afterlife and salvation*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Pagan/Beliefs/Afterlife-and-Salvation.html>
- Pew Internet & American Life Project, (2011). *Americans search online for mental health, insurance, and drug information*. Retrieved on April 2, 2011, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2003/Americans-Search-Online-for-Mental-Health-Insurance-and-Drug-Information.aspx>
- Pfeffer, C.R., Karus, D., Siegel, K., & Jiang, H. (2000). Child survivors of parental death from cancer or suicide: Depressive and behavioral outcomes. *Psychooncology* 9, 1-10.
- Prigerson, H.G., Vanderwerker, L.C., Maciejewski, P.K. (2008). A case for inclusion of prolonged grief. In Stroebe, M.S., Hansson, R.O., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (Eds.) *Handbook of bereavement research and practice* (165-186). American Psychological Association: Washington, D.C.
- Ragusea, A.S. & Vandecreek, L. (2003). Suggestions for the ethical practice of online psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 40, 94-102.

- Rando, T. (2010). Coping with Sudden Death. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.connect.legacy.com/inspire/page/show?id=1984035%3APage%3A2625>
- Recupero, P. R., & Rainey, E. (2005). Informed Consent to E-therapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 59(4), 319-331.
- River of Memories (2011). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://riverofmemories.com/index.html>
- Royal College of Psychiatrists (2004). Death in the family. Retrieved March 30 from <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/mentalhealthandgrowingup/deathinthefamily.aspx>
- Ryan's Heart (2009). Just for me: Healing activities for grieving kids and teens. Retrieved on March 30, 2011 from <http://campbell.k12.va.us/tes/wpuckette/media/justforme.pdf>
- Sandler, I.N, Wolchik, S.A., & Ayers, T.S. (2008). Resilience rather than recovery: A contextual framework on adaptation following bereavement. *Death Studies* 32(1), 59-73.
- Servaty, H. L., & Hayslip, B. (2001). Adjustment to loss among adolescents. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 43(4), 311-330.
- Siggins, L. D. (1966). Mourning: A critical survey of the literature. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47(1), 14-25.
- Sokfa, C.J. (2009). Adolescents, technology, and the Internet: Coping with loss in the digital world. In Balk, D.E. & Corr, C.A. (Eds.) *Adolescent encounters with death, bereavement, and coping* (155-170). Springer Publishing: New York.

Stroebe, M.S., Hansson, R.O., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (2008). Bereavement research: Contemporary perspectives. In Stroebe, M.S., Hansson, R.O., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (Eds.) *Handbook of bereavement research and practice* (3-25). American Psychological Association: Washington, D.C.

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (nd.). *What to tell children*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from [http://www.save.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page\\_id=EB8CDAFC-7E90-9BD4-CDB77DB42FD5C2CE](http://www.save.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=EB8CDAFC-7E90-9BD4-CDB77DB42FD5C2CE)

Surviving Suicide (nd.). *Helping children grieve a suicide loss*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.survivingsuicide.com/children.htm>.

The Center (2011). *About grief and bereavement*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.gaycenter.org/health/griefbereavement/about>

The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families (2011). *Activities for children*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/activities/>

The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families (2011). *Help for the holidays*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/help-for-the-holidays/>

The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families (2011). *Help for teens*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/help-for-teens/>



- The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families (2011). *Bill of rights for grieving teens*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/bill-of-rights/>
- The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families (2011). *Kids and funerals*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/kids-and-funerals/>
- The Healing Place (nd.). *Grief support related to a suicide*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from [http://www.thehealingplaceinfo.org/grieving\\_suicide.html](http://www.thehealingplaceinfo.org/grieving_suicide.html).
- The Healing Place: A Center for Loss and Change (2011). *Should a child or children attend a funeral?* Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.thehealingplaceinfo.org/funerals.html>
- The Lucy Daniels Center for Early Childhood (2011). *Should young children attend funerals?* Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.lucydanielscenter.org/page/should-young-children-attend-funerals>
- The National Center for Victims of Crime (2000). *Grief: Children*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbName=DocumentViewer&DocumentID=32354>
- The Rainbow Babies (2010). *Dealing with death and dying in GLBT families*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.therainbowbabies.com/Death.html>
- The Warm Place (2010). *Resources for teenagers grieving the death of a loved one*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.thewarmplace.org/Resources/HelpforTeens13orOlder/tabid/494/Default.aspx>

The Warm Place (2010). *Suggested grief resources for children age 8 or younger*.

Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.thewarmplace.org/>

[Resources/HelpforChildren8orYounger/tabid/492/Default.aspx](http://www.thewarmplace.org/Resources/HelpforChildren8orYounger/tabid/492/Default.aspx)

The Warm Place (2010). *Suggested grief resources for children age 9 to 12*. Retrieved

March 30, 2011 from <http://www.thewarmplace.org/>

[Resources/HelpforChildren9to12/tabid/493/Default.aspx](http://www.thewarmplace.org/Resources/HelpforChildren9to12/tabid/493/Default.aspx)

Valley of Life (2011). *Remember a loved one with an online memorial*. Retrieved March

30, 2011 from <http://www.valleyoflife.com/>

Virtual Memorials (2008). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from <http://www.virtual->

[memorials.com/](http://www.virtual-memorials.com/)

Virtual Memorials (2010). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from

<http://virtualmemorialsonline.com/>

Werner, E.E. & Smith, R.S. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth*

*to adulthood*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Widow (2011). *Single parenting*. Retrieved March 30, 2011 from

<http://www.widow.com/coping-resources/single-parenthood/single-parenting/>

Whipple, V. (nd). *Invisible grief: Addressing the needs of Lesbian widows*. Retrieved

March 30, 2011 from <http://www.counseling.org/Resources/Library/>

[VISTAS/vistas04/11.pdf](http://www.counseling.org/Resources/Library/VISTAS/vistas04/11.pdf)

Williams, A.L. & Merten, M.J. (2009). Adolescents' online social networking following

the death of a peer. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 24(1), 67-90.

Worden, J.W. (1996). *Children and grief: When a parent dies*. The Guilford Press: New

York.

World of Rememberance (2011). Retrieved March 30, 2011 from

<http://www.worldofrememberance.com/index.php?section=memlist>