



Dear Teachers and School Administrators,

You are likely reading this information because your school has experienced a significant loss or losses to death. Teachers are often a front-line resource for children/teens experiencing trauma, death, and loss. We know that after events related to trauma and loss, the emotional reactions of students can have a significant impact on their learning and classroom behavior, as well as on their relationships and interactions with classmates, teachers, and often the larger school community.

This packet is an effective tool to provide support and preventative services, reduce potential negative impact on the school environment, and enhance the coping, emotional health, and learning abilities of children and teens.

In addition to caring for students, it is also an opportunity to focus on professional self-care. Be aware that supporting a grieving student can be both deeply gratifying and demanding. Hospice of Lenawee provides grief support to anyone in the community that has experienced a loss free of charge. This includes the *Kaleidoscope* Program.

What is the *Kaleidoscope* Program?

- Individual counseling
- Grief support groups
- Educational in-services for school personnel
- Grief educational materials

The Hospice of Lenawee *Kaleidoscope* Program provides school-based grief support services to students in Lenawee County. It is a universal goal to provide each student with the coping skills and supports necessary to becoming a healthy productive adult: mind, body, and spirit.

To request services or for more information about the *Kaleidoscope* Program, please call Hospice of Lenawee's Bereavement Department at (517) 263-2323 or visit hospiceoflenawee.org.

Sincerely,

Lee Ann Straub, LMSW
Director of Bereavement Services



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Grief Overview

What is Grief?

Grief is the normal and natural response to loss, a universal human experience. Grief takes place over time, sometimes over a lifetime. It does not take place all the time, but surfaces intermittently and usually in unpredictable ways. The experience is different for every student and can include powerful, often overwhelming combinations of reactions.

The Grief Cycle

One of the many struggles of grief is that it can resurface in the months, or even years to come, as the student progresses through life's developmental stages. There is no limit on grief, as it is a process and part of the child's ongoing experience as they develop. Children may need a break from grief. Having fun or laughing is not disrespectful to the person who died. This is a vital part of grief work. Grief is expressed through behaviors, emotions, physical reactions, and thoughts.

Trauma and Grief:

Trauma	Grief
Main feeling is terror or fear	Main feeling is sadness
Trauma includes feeling grief	Grief is not traumatic
The experience is hard to talk about	Can talk about the loss
Left with a sense of being helpless and powerless	Left with sense of sorrow
May experience being more angry more quickly and acting out towards others	May feel angry about the loss, but not so likely to act out in anger towards others
May feel guilt – i.e. “I should have prevented it” or “it should have been me instead”	If feeling guilt, it is more about regrets of what you wished you could of or should have done or said with the person who died
Leaves one feeling bad about self	Does not feel badly about self, just sadness and missing of the other person
Dreams of being victimized	Dreams about the person who died
Can't really forget – may have flashbacks or thoughts that keep coming back of the event	Remembers with sadness for loss, but not so much upsetting thoughts or memories of what has happened
Try to avoid anything that is a reminder of trauma – “numbing” (no feeling)	Want to remember the person who has died
Startle reactions, or hyper vigilance (keeping a look out for threats)	Mostly sadness, but not these other reactions

Trauma reactions are normal reactions that happen when a person experiences an abnormal situation that is very overwhelming and threatening. Grief reactions are normal reactions that happen when a person experiences a significant loss in their life.

A child may have a traumatic reaction after a death that was sudden and unexpected or a death that was anticipated. If the child's responses are prolonged and interfere with his or her functioning, it is important to seek the assistance of a qualified professional.

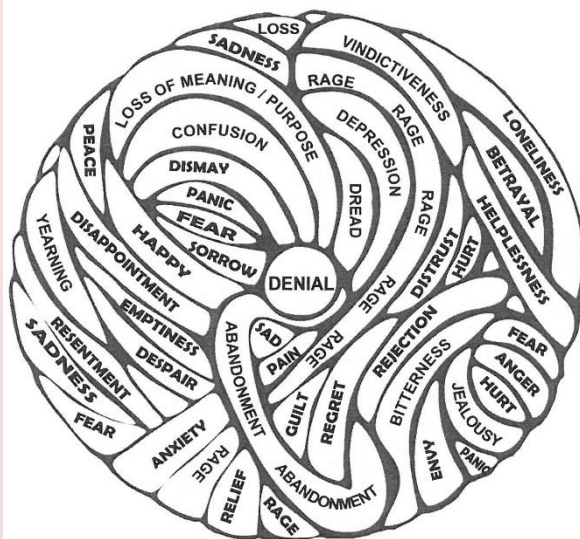
How to Tell When Students Need Additional Help

Most children and teens are in and out of their grief. They experience a range of emotions, but also are able to have fun and engage in activities. This is a normal grief response. Prolonged or chronic depression, anger, withdrawal, or fear over a period of several months may indicate that the student needs professional help in dealing with the loss.

If a child or teen displays severe reactions or you notice disturbing changes in behavior, professional intervention should be sought. Although it is not unusual for children or teens to talk about wanting to join the deceased or to die, any signs of suicidal talk or other self-destructive behaviors or language should be taken seriously. The student should be referred to a qualified mental health professional for an evaluation.

GRIEF

The Tangled Ball of Emotions

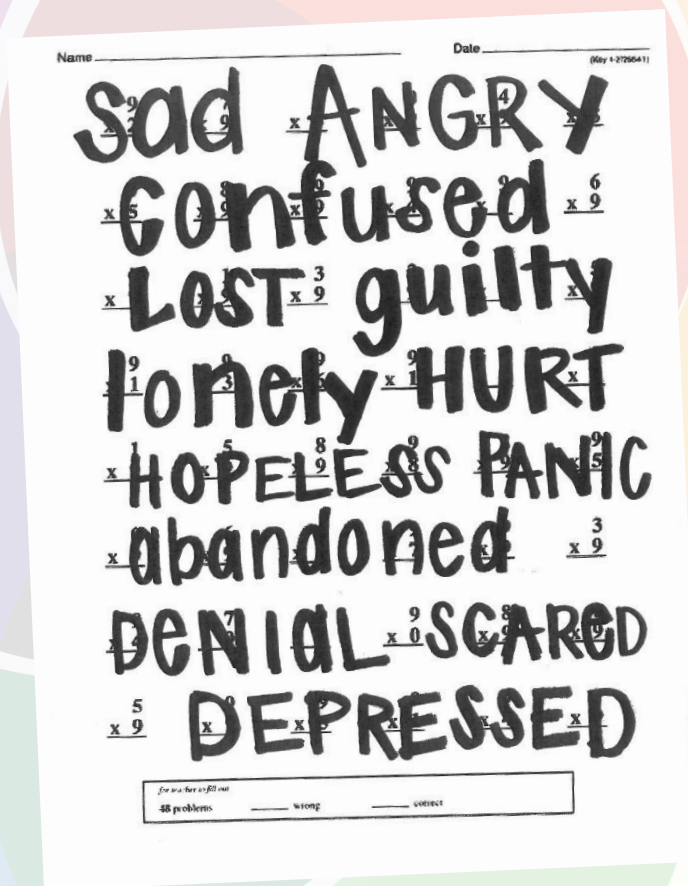


Behaviors that suggest complications in the grieving process and indicate the need for a referral to a qualified mental health professional include:

- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Chronic physical symptoms without organic findings
- Depression with impaired self-esteem
- Persistent denial of the death with delayed or absent grieving
- Progressive isolation and lack of interest in any activity
- Resistant anger and hostility
- Intense preoccupation with memories of the deceased
- Taking on the symptoms of the deceased
- Prolonged changes in typical behavior
- The use of alcohol and/or other drugs
- Prolonged feelings of guilt or responsibility for the death
- Major and continued changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Risk-taking behaviors that may include identifying with the deceased in unsafe ways

How Does Grief Impact Learning?

Children have many learning responsibilities and grief can be a detriment to learning, as the child's safety may be in question and intense feelings may unfold. Grief is part of development and allows us an opportunity to teach children and adolescents about life and death. When a student grieves, it can impact their ability to learn. Many of their thoughts and feelings are then based on the experience of the death, leaving minimal space for new information to be retained.



Grief can be hard work and influences all areas of life – academic, social, physical, spiritual, and behavioral.

Grief Reactions

Grief is the normal and natural response to loss and can be expressed in a number of ways. This list is not all-inclusive or mutually exclusive. These grief reactions occur in no specific order or progression. They may occur near the time of death or many weeks, months, or even years later.

Physical:

Appetite – loss or increase
Breathing difficulties
Chest tightness
Cold hands
Crying, tearfulness
Dizziness or fainting spells
Dry mouth
Headaches

Hives, rashes, itching
Indigestion
Weakened immune system
Muscle tightness or weakness
Nightmares
Numbness or tingling
Rapid heartbeat
Shaking, trembling

Sighing
Sleeping difficulties (too much or too little)
Voice – change of pitch
Slowed speech and stuttering
Stomach problems
Sweating
Weight gain or loss

Social/Emotional:

Anger or angry outbursts
Anxiousness
Blaming others
Critical of self
Crying
Depression
Dread
Fearful
Freedom

Guilt
Helplessness
Hopelessness
Impulsive behavior
Indecisiveness
Irritability
Jealousy
Loneliness and longing
Loss of interest in living

Low self-esteem
Moodiness or mood swings
Relief
Restlessness
Sadness
Shock
Suspiciousness
Withdrawal from activity
Worthlessness

Behavioral:

Absent mindedness
Accident proneness
Clumsiness
Eating difficulties

Fingernail biting
Hair twisting
Restlessness
Searching and calling out

Teeth grinding
Treasuring objects of deceased
Visiting places of deceased
Nightmares

Academic/Cognitive/Intellectual:

Concentration difficulties
Confusion
Disbelief
Fantasy life increased or decreased
Forgetfulness

Preoccupation
Worrying
Inattention
Lack of awareness
Loss of creativity
Loss of productivity

Over attention to detail
Perfectionism
Sense of loved one's presence
Errors in: judging distances, grammar, pronunciation, use of numbers

Flare-ups of:

Allergies
Arthritis

Asthma
Canker/cold sores

Diabetes
Migraines

Ways to Support a Grieving Student

Listen and be available

- Respond with sensitivity
- Try not to offer opinions or judgements
- Remember to be present without the need to “fix” or “problem solve”
- Build trust by listening and understanding; the student will then be more likely to come to you when they are hurting
- You may be a focal point of intense emotions, try not to take it personally

Be open to their way of grieving

- There is no right or wrong way to grieve
- Allow them to grieve in their own individual style; this reinforces that there are many ways to respond to death
- Remember that grief is individual, as long as it doesn't hurt others or themselves

Provide outlets for self-expression

- Grief can be expressed through many avenues (For example, art, writing, music, or play)
- Physical activity is also a means of expression
- Create time for outlets, when possible

Provide consistency and routine

- Times before, during, and after a death can be disruptive. Try to re-establish a routine, with appropriate expectations and limits.
- Teens as well as younger students need the reassurance and sense of security that comes from structure, rules, and limits.

Promote Safety

- It is important for students to feel safe. Here are some areas of interest:
 - I know what to expect
 - I am prepared
 - I have a plan
 - I do not feel physically or emotionally threatened
 - I do not feel judged or wrong
 - I have someone I trust by my side

Know when extra help is needed

- While family and friends provide support to children, some may require additional assistance. If you notice ongoing behaviors that interfere with a child/teen's daily life, seek the advice of a qualified mental health professional.

Classroom Support for a Grieving Student

Provide a grief pass:

- Grieving students often feel like they are being watched by teachers and peers to see how they are adjusting in their grief. They fear being overwhelmed by their grief and becoming emotional in front of their peers.
- A way to help is to provide a discreet way for the student to break away from the classroom to deal with their grief. For example, allowing the student to place an object on the corner of their desk to alert you about needing some space, without drawing attention to the event or having to explain themselves.
- If a student is unable to access a place outside the classroom, another option would be to access a corner of the room as a safe place when needing that break.

Designate a support person:

- Additional support may be needed during the day if the student is feeling overwhelmed with their grief, or worried about their surviving family members.
- A person whom the student feels comfortable with might be designated as a support system during school, ie: school nurse, teacher's aide, a guidance counselor.

Phone calls:

- Grieving students may be preoccupied with the fear that something terrible will happen to their surviving family.
- Allowing the student to make short phone calls with their family members can give the student the reassurance they need that their family members are safe, which can help them continue with their day.

Maintain consistency, but be flexible:

- It is important for the student's sense of normalcy and stability to be maintained. Returning to the classroom that continues to function on the same expectations and schedules as before is important.
- Keep in mind that the grieving student might have a shorter attention span and difficulty concentrating. Reminders about tests or homework may be helpful.
- A teacher's expectations for appropriate behavior should not change, but providing extended deadlines for assignments, papers, and projects, or allowing extended time for testing can make a big difference.

Sensitivity to important dates:

- Special days, dates, and events may be especially painful for the grieving student. Being attentive to these dates will help in understanding what is going on under the surface. Example of special days: birthday of the deceased, date of death, holidays, Mother or Father's Day.

Developmental Stages and Death

<u>Age</u>	<u>Concepts & Beliefs</u>	<u>Difficult Emotions</u>	<u>Possible Behaviors</u>	<u>How to Help</u>
0-2	No understanding of death Child does not have words for feelings Aware of the absence of loved one Notices changes in routine Notices changes in family emotions	Longing Misses contact, sounds, smell and sight of loved one Fears of being abandoned Anxiety	Crying Sickliness Indigestion Thrashing, Throwing Rocking Sucking, biting Sleeplessness	Physical contact, cuddling and reassurance Meet immediate physical needs Include the child in the mourning process when possible Be gentle and patient
3-5	No understanding of permanence of death To be dead is to be sleeping or away May wonder what deceased is doing Can understand that biological processes have stopped, but sees this as temporary or reversible May wonder what will happen if the other parent dies Magical thinking and fantasies, often worse than realities	Fear Sadness Insecurity Confusion Anger Irritable Agitated Worried Guilty	Regressive behaviors Repetitive questions Withdrawn Plays out scenes of death, change and feelings Interested in dead things Acts as if death never happened Intense dreams Physical complaints Crying Fighting	Allow the child to regress Give physical contact Encourage children to play and have fun Allow safe ways to express feelings Give simple, truthful answers to questions Maintain structure and routine Answer repetitive questions Let the child cry Talk (reflective listening) Include the child in family rituals and mourning
6-9	Understands that death is final Interested in the biology of death Death associated with bodily harm, mutilation and decay His or her thoughts, actions or words caused the death Death is punishment Forming spiritual concepts Who will care for me if my caregiver dies Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.)	Sad Anger Lonely Withdrawn Worried Anxious Irritable Confusion Guilty Fear	Regressive behaviors Specific questioning- looking for details Acts as if the death never happened Hides feelings Withdrawn Nightmares/sleep disturbances Concentration difficulties Declining or greatly improved grades Aggressive acting out Protective of surviving loved ones	Allow need to regress Give physical contact Have intentional times together Answer questions truthfully Watch for confusion Allow expression of feelings through verbal and physical outlets - encourage drawing, reading, playing, art, music, dance, acting, sports Let child choose how to be involved in the death and mourning Find peer support for the child Work with school to tailor workload
10-12	Understands the finality of death Denial His/ her words, thoughts or actions caused the death Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.) High death awareness (death may happen again) What if my caregiver dies? Formulating spiritual concepts	Emotional turmoil heightened by physical changes Shock- Sad Anger- Confused Lonely- Vulnerable Fear- Worried Guilty Isolated Abandoned Anxious	Regressive behavior and fluctuating moods Hides feelings, Acts like death never happened Aggressive acting out Withdrawal Nightmares and sleep disturbances Concentration difficulties Changes in grades Talks about physical aspects of illness or death	Allow regressive behavior and offer comfort Expect and accept mood swings Encourage expression of feelings through writing, art, music, sports, etc. Find peer support groups Be available to listen and talk Answer questions truthfully Offer physical contact Give choices about involvement in death and mourning
Teens	Understands the finality and universality of death Denial His/ her words, thoughts or actions caused the death Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.) High death awareness (death may happen again) May sense own impending death I need to be in control of feelings If I show my feelings, I will be weak Internal conflict about dependence and desire independence May utilize spiritual concepts to cope	Highly self-conscious about being different due to grief Shock Sad Anger Confused Lonely Vulnerable Fear Worried Guilty Isolated Abandoned Anxious	Occasional regressive behavior Mood swings Hides feelings Acts like death never happened Acts out role confusion Aggressive acting out Withdrawal Nightmares and sleep disturbances Concentration difficulties Changes in grades Impulsive and high-risk behavior Changes in peer groups Fighting, screaming, arguing Changes in eating patterns	Allow regressive behavior and offer comfort Expect and accept mood swings Allow hidden feelings unless there is risk of harm Encourage expression of feelings through writing art, music, sports, etc. Support relationships with understanding adults Be available to listen and talk Answer questions truthfully Share your grief Watch for high-risk behavior Find peer support groups Offer physical contact Allow choices about involvement in death and mourning

Supportive Words

Words that can help:

Offering support to a grieving child can begin with a simple statement or open-ended question that allows them to share their story. Here are some examples:

- I'm sorry your mom/dad/sister died.
- What was your dad/mom/brother like?
- Tell me about your mom/dad/brother/sister.
- What was their favorite food?
- What do you miss the most?
- What is the hardest part for you?
- What is the hardest time of day for you?
- I cannot know how you feel, but I remember how I felt when my _____ died.
- I care about you and how you are feeling.
- When you feel _____ (feeling they shared), where do you feel it in your body?
- Is there anything I can do in the classroom to help?
- Is there anything in the classroom you would like to change to feel more comfortable?
- Would you like to talk about it?
- I am available at _____ (this time), if you would like to come by to talk.
- Whenever you want to talk about it, I am here for you.
- I'm thinking about you, especially today because I am aware that today is your mother's birthday (anniversary of the death, your birthday, etc.).
- I'm here to listen if you want to talk or just spend time together if you don't want to talk.
- When is your recital (game, rehearsal, etc.)? Would it be okay if I stop by?

Words that can hurt:

The following are a few of the potentially harmful comments that are often offered to children grieving the loss of a loved one:

- I know just how you feel.
- I know just how you feel...my dog died last year.
- They are in a better place.
- You'll get over it.
- It will be okay.
- Don't think about it.
- You are better off without them.
- Don't cry.
- It's your fault.
- If you only had _____.
- Tears won't bring your mom back.
- Be strong.
- Forget about it.
- You are the man/woman of the house now.
- You should feel....(proud, relieved, happy, sad, etc.)

Appendix A: Lenawee County Community Crisis Team Brochure

Mission

The mission of the Community Crisis Team is to assist the Lenawee County Community with support and education in the event of a crisis.



"It gives me a great deal of "peace of mind" knowing we have your services as a resource for our county (especially our staff!). Thank you!"

*Cindy Birdwell
Siena Heights University
Director of Public Safety*



Lenawee County Community Crisis Team

Goals

- ✦ To assist the community in the development of individualized protocols and training in preparation of crises.
- ✦ To provide support to the community in the event of a crisis in an organized, caring and professional manner.
- ✦ To provide ongoing training.

"It was very helpful for me to talk about how I felt during and after the incident and to know that what I felt was normal, even though I felt uncomfortable revisiting the incident. Thank you for your time and kindness."

Participant

Support In Time Of Crisis

**Call 517-263-8905
or
1-800-664-5005**

What is Critical Incident Stress Management?

Critical Incident Stress Management is the most widely used and the fastest growing crisis intervention model in the world today. CISM has become a standard of care by which crisis response services are measured.

These services were originally developed to meet the needs of emergency response personnel (firefighters, law enforcement, emergency medical technicians, etc.) and have been found effective in responding to crises of all kinds in a wide range of settings.

There are no fees for our services.

Services Provided

- ✦ Consultations
- ✦ Crisis Management Briefing
- ✦ Debriefing
- ✦ Defusing
- ✦ Demobilization
- ✦ Family Support Services
- ✦ Follow-Up Services
- ✦ On-Scene Support Services
- ✦ One on One
- ✦ Pre-Incident Education/Preparation
- ✦ Post-Incident Education
- ✦ Presentation
- ✦ Referral

Types of Incidents

- ✦ Abuse
- ✦ Accidents
- ✦ Bomb Threat
- ✦ Death
- ✦ Fire
- ✦ Intruder in Building
- ✦ Missing Person
- ✦ Natural Disaster
- ✦ Terrorism
- ✦ Traumatic Event

Services Provided At:

- ✦ Agencies
- ✦ Extended Care Facilities
- ✦ Factories/Businesses
- ✦ Fire & Police Departments
- ✦ Hospitals
- ✦ Private Homes
- ✦ Schools



Training

All members are certified with the Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation. The team meets on a monthly basis for a business meeting and additional ongoing training.

Lenawee County Community Mental Health (LCCMH) has accepted the responsibility of being the county's 24-hour Community Crisis Response contact agency.

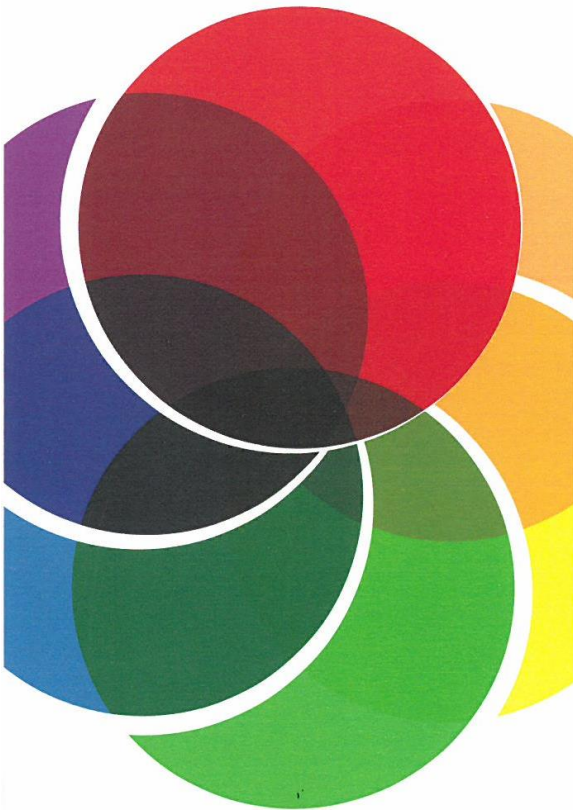
For more information and or questions:

517-263-8905 or 1-800-664-5005

Appendix B: Kaleidoscope

Kaleidoscope

Support for Students Dealing
with Grief and Loss



HOSPICE of LENAWEE
We Carry Your Heart In Our Heart



Kaleidoscope

*Helping students in our community with grief and loss.
Providing education to counselors, teachers and other school personnel.*

Grief can have a major impact on learning, processing thoughts and retaining information. Our Kaleidoscope program brings our grief and loss services into the schools where students can access them in a comfortable, familiar and safe setting. We also provide teachers and school personnel the needed education to support those students they work with on a daily basis.

Through Kaleidoscope, Hospice of Lenawee partners with the school districts in Lenawee County to address the needs of the students and create a safe haven conducive to learning. We provide:

- ♥ Individual school-based counseling
- ♥ Grief support groups
- ♥ Educational In-services for school personnel
- ♥ Grief educational materials available by request or on our website – hospiceoflenawee.org

*As each student's grieving experience is unique,
Hospice of Lenawee provides an individualized
approach in addressing their needs.*



HOSPICE of LENAWEE

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