

Lesley University

DigitalCommons@Lesley

---

Mindfulness Studies Theses

Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences  
(GSASS)

---

1-15-2023

## Understanding Grief Through the Eyes of a Child (Ages 3-12): Mindfulness and Other Mindful Modalities as Supportive Tools

Clare Duplace  
cduplace@lesley.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/mindfulness\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/mindfulness_theses)



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Duplace, Clare, "Understanding Grief Through the Eyes of a Child (Ages 3-12): Mindfulness and Other Mindful Modalities as Supportive Tools" (2023). *Mindfulness Studies Theses*. 75.  
[https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/mindfulness\\_theses/75](https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/mindfulness_theses/75)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences (GSASS) at DigitalCommons@Lesley. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mindfulness Studies Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Lesley. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@lesley.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lesley.edu), [cvrattos@lesley.edu](mailto:cvrattos@lesley.edu).

**Understanding Grief Through the Eyes of a Child (Ages 3-12):  
Mindfulness and Other Mindful Modalities as Supportive Tools**

Clare Duplace

Mindfulness Studies, Lesley University

January 15, 2023

Dr. Melissa Jean & Dr. Andrew Olendzki

## **Abstract**

This study demonstrates how mindfulness and other mindful modalities can be supportive tools for children experiencing grief and loss. The literature reflects the importance of understanding the ways in which children grieve at varying ages and developmental stages, facilitating grief and death-related conversations, the connection between mindfulness and grief and the use of mindfulness-based interventions within the realms of grief and death. This thesis is supported through findings from peer-reviewed articles, books, podcasts, activities, and meditations. The creative project aims to reflect that grief and loss-related experiences can be openly talked about and supported through appropriate resources and mindful modalities for parents/caregivers, to use with their children. Conclusions and implications for future study include the continuous study of appropriate age-related understanding, supportive tools for children holding grief as an individualized journey, while also shedding light on the importance of grieving in community, and the invaluable connection between conscious living and mindful grieving, as preparation for the inevitability of life.

## Table of Contents

Introduction:	4
Understanding Grief Through the Eyes of a Child (Ages 3-12): Mindfulness and Other Mindful Modalities as Supportive Tools	
Understanding Grief and Loss for Young Children:	5
• Working with Feelings	6
• Conversations about Death	8
• Developmental Context	9
• Accepting Inevitability Creates Inclusivity	11
School-Based Support	12
Mindfulness and Grief	14
Mindfulness-Based Interventions and Grief	16
Mindfulness with Grieving Children	18
Supportive Interventions and Tools	22
• Mindful Movement	23
• Therapeutic Arts	26
Discussion	28
Conclusion	29
References	30

## Creative Thesis

Resource Guide for Parents/Caregivers:	34
Supporting Children (ages 3-12) with Grief and Loss- Related Experiences	
Using Mindfulness and Other Mindful Modalities	

## **Understanding Grief Through the Eyes of a Child (Ages 3-12): Mindfulness and Other Mindful Modalities as Supportive Tools**

In human life, there has always been the presence of deep loss and suffering, both on internal and external levels. Humans are constantly finding ways to balance staying informed of current events and dealing with the effects of them. As adults, we come to rely on supportive tools, therapeutic modalities, faith, and if we are lucky, our friends, family, and community to get us through challenging times. Children depend on the adults around them to feel safe and secure. If a loss occurs, children will be looking to the adults around them for support, as navigating loss-related situations extends beyond the capacity a child may have to deal with what is happening. Supporting children with difficult experiences requires a much different approach and presents a challenge without the appropriate understanding and resources to draw upon.

This challenge prompts the following concerns: How to support our youngest aged children through grief and loss, while they are still figuring out their feelings and how to express them, providing developmentally appropriate strategies that support younger-aged children, which they can also draw upon as they grow, and incorporating these supportive strategies into the myriad of home life situations. There are countless opportunities and modalities in connection to grief and death that adults can provide for children. Through learning and understanding how children grieve at different ages, exploring the cycles of life and death within the natural world, recognizing, and talking about feelings arising during and after loss, and engaging with therapeutic modalities such as mindfulness, movement, and art, children are supported amid their present experience and gain a plethora of coping skills and supportive resources to draw upon moving forward in their life.

This paper will begin by discussing how children (ages 3-12) grieve and how developmentally appropriate support can be approached. Continuing, this paper will demonstrate the importance of school-based support, in connection to using a holistic model of support for children and their families. This paper will go on to explore the connection between grief and mindfulness and provide supportive approaches using mindfulness and other mindful therapeutic modalities. In conclusion, this paper will underscore the importance of understanding the ways that young children grieve and how mindfulness and other mindful modalities can be supportive tools.

### **Understanding Grief and Loss for Young Children**

Traditionally, grieving in connection to children was more about just pushing through it and coming back around due to their youthful age (Griffith, 2003). Dr. Alan Wolfelt, a well-known speaker, counselor in the realms of grief and bereavement and the director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, has challenged the ways in which grief is viewed and can be expressed. In doing so, he provided a way for us to understand that age has nothing to do with grieving. Just as it is with adults, mourning is a natural response to loss for children (Griffith, 2003). Because of their age, children's grief can often be unacknowledged, and their experience of grief overlooked or ignored (Griffith, 2003). Parents play a crucial role in connection to grief-related experiences for their family unit and affect how a child learns to adapt. This is significantly true concerning two main aspects of adaptive grief, facilitating connections that extend beyond the moment and lived experiences (Rosetto, 2015). Children need support the most, as they are looking to the adult figures in their lives for safety and security. Given that adults constitute such a critical aspect to a child's growth on an emotional level, children may feel uncertain or directionless when witnessing the adults around them experiencing emotional

pain (Griffith, 2003). It is vital to a child's sense of security to witness the adults they are in connection with hold a balance in feeling their emotions while remaining present in the natural aspects of daily life (Griffith, 2003). Therefore, there are endless opportunities for an adult to show up for a child even amid feelings of grief but given navigating the challenges of working with and through painful feelings, those moments can very often be missed (Griffith, 2003).

### **Working with Feelings**

Young children often experience tenderness around the loss of a loved one, particularly because they have little control over what is happening around them. As a result, feelings can manifest themselves in more assertive ways and behaviors (Griffith, 2033). For children under 5, expressing their feelings through words can be challenging and can manifest on emotional and behavioral levels (Sherner, 2015). Given that fear can be the most apparent and yet often more restrained of the emotions, adults can support children with their fears around experiencing the death of family members or those they love through conversation that discuss and validate potential fears (Griffith, 2033). The absence of discussing feelings in connection to an experience or with general thoughts in connection to the natural cycle of life; appropriately of course and the natural lack of control children have at certain developmental stages, can create situations where the child may not be able to fully express themselves in a general way, let alone when they have experienced a loss of some kind. "In the United States, before their 20th birthday approximately 11% of children and adolescents experience the death of a parent and approximately 14% of children and adolescents experience the death of a sibling" (Prazak & Tillman, 2018, p. 395). Loss manifests itself in many forms, just as grief does. Approaching each loss as an individual experience allows for grief to be met in the same way. Even so, providing opportunities for children to learn how to express their experience in connection to a loss can be

beneficial both for them in the moment and when they may not have the capacity or development to express themselves.

Teaching children about feelings and understanding how they show up in their body, what signals they send to them, how to name and express them is the foundation for being able to do that no matter the circumstance but most definitely when conversing about grief or loss.

“Death can be perplexing and confusing for us all. For children who have experienced the death of a significant person, grief can produce many challenging and unfamiliar feelings like guilt, isolation, and anger” (Marlow, n.d.). Although actions connected to protecting them from the hard things in life may be rooted in good intentions, this very well may result in children being shielded from the realities of life, which honestly, most children around the world face daily. Protection from a wide range of emotions can result in children choosing to avoid feelings of sadness and thus, resulting in a lack of skills to cope with challenging feelings and situations as they move forward in their developmental abilities (Griffith, 2003).

It is essential to not only validate the natural feelings arising for a child in connection to loss but to find ways to connect those feelings in a real-life context. The natural world provides endless opportunities to connect with young children about the inevitability of life. Exploring changes during the fall season is a prime example of allowing for natural conversations surrounding life and death to occur. The process that all trees, excluding evergreens of course, go through each fall, provides a beautiful opportunity to learn about the changing and falling of leaves. Nature walks in general provide endless opportunities to seek out flora and fauna that have naturally died and the process of decomposition. Approaching the natural cycles of our life with young children in this way, begins to build a foundation that provides context for when a child faces the death of a loved one.



One of the most foundational and supportive approaches to supporting a child when they are or have faced a death-related experience is to allow for children to feel the pain arising. As previously stated, it can be both uncomfortable and cause feelings of helplessness when witnessing a child in pain, due to a loss. Knowing how to approach a child in this state begins with allowing them to, “We can normalize a kid’s grief by allowing them to share openly about the loss without stepping into the experience with them... How can I bear witness to my child’s grief without stepping in to fix it?” (Generation Mindful, 2022). This goes for anyone experiencing a loss. Allowing grief to surface and be tended to can serve us in many ways but most importantly, at a foundational level. Through the process of grief, we come to accept the deep sadness that comes with the physical absence we are grieving while finding ways to stay present on an emotional level with ourselves and our life (Gold, 2020). Sometimes it can be hard to find the balance between acknowledging someone’s pain and holding a healthy boundary when offering support.

It is also particularly important to understand the specific loss the child is experiencing. There are ways to appropriately support children depending on the loss they have experienced. Approaching an unexpected or “fast” death such as an accident or suicide is much different than a loved one who had been battling an illness for a prolonged period (Sesame Street in Communities, n.d.). When approaching a conversation about death with a young child, knowing the specific loss they are dealing with is just as important as creating space for them to feel their feelings and ask questions about what happened.

### **Conversations about Death**

Children see, feel, and notice everything, this goes for not only witnessing adults around them experiencing emotions surrounding a loss but if on top of that, those feelings are not talked

about or the topic of death not addressed, this can create an even greater divide in how death is viewed. Children may regard death as something so unwelcome when no one around them is talking about it, or working to process the loss in any way, so much so that it is as if death means someone vanishes and is never spoken about again (Griffith, 2003). At the most simplistic level, death can be explained as the biological process of the body ceasing to function. Given the inherent abstractness of death for young children, it is important to use the words “died” over the person “passed away.” It is invaluable when speaking about a loss, especially with younger aged children, to use language that provides a true context and reflects their developmental capacity for taking in information.

In connection to developmentally appropriate conversations, it is important for adults to reflect and ask some questions themselves before approaching a conversation. “When working with the youngest grievers, several developmental competencies need to be addressed. What is their concept of death? Is it forever? Who dies? What happens to the body? Will it happen to me? Was it my fault? Who will take care of me?” (Griffith, 2003, p. 218). When supporting a three-year old with death-related questions, it is important to note that education in connection to death is not appropriate unless the death will affect the child directly (Griffith, 2003).

Understanding what is developmentally appropriate at each age to discuss is extremely important. This understanding not only prompts thoughts in connection to questions they may have in general about death but what can cause someone to die (Griffith, 2003). Questions like this allow not only for appropriate support to be given by the adult to the child, but these questions provide opportunities to have conversations around feelings in connection to loss.

### **Developmental Context**

As children grow, so does their emotional intelligence, capacity for understanding, and ability of expression. Children ages 6-12 know that death is an ending to being alive and that death will naturally occur at some point (Sherner, 2015). Given this developmental knowledge, a natural curiosity begins to arise for children at this age about what happens to the body when it dies and feelings surrounding their own inevitability of death (Sherner, 2015). As children grow, not only do the ways in which children process their feelings in connection to death and loss change but the outward expression of them, too.

With all the qualitative research within the realms of grief and loss, there is still a limited number of studies done concerning the basic quality of children and their grief (Flahaulta et al., 2018). Quantitative studies that have been conducted with children who have experienced the loss of a parent show that younger-aged children tend to express their feelings with greater ease compared to older-aged children (Flahaulta et al., 2018). Concerning results of panel studies, it has been found that girls tend to impute their feelings and express increased vulnerability of the situation compared to boys, who tend to consistently exteriorize (Flahaulta et al., 2018). There is a wide spectrum of responses that children experiencing grief may exhibit but panel studies have shown that the timeline of children expressing grief on both emotional and behavioral levels are longer in duration than for adults. Children are also more susceptible to demonstrating their feelings of anger and desertion on a behavioral level (Flahaulta et al., 2018).

As adults, we may feel that preschool aged children are too young to converse about death but as it is an inevitable occurrence just as being alive is, they are going to see examples of it in one way or another. Curiosity naturally arises in young children, especially ages 3-6. By the age of 5, children are most likely to understand that death is a natural occurrence (Prazak & Tillman, 2018). During these early years, while children want to understand a wide array of

death-related concepts due to their growing curiosity, their thoughts on death are often that death can be overturned, that someone has not died but instead is only sleeping, that the person has not actually left but will return (Sherner, 2015). In meeting a young child where they are developmentally and appropriately providing support that contextualizes both the reality of what is occurring and their feelings about it is at the core of conversing about death with young children. It is just as invaluable as adults to take the time to explore our own feelings and questions in connection to the natural cycles of life, so that we can not only feel more comfortable with these realms for ourselves but in approaching conversation with children. This allows children to feel comfortable asking questions about the natural cycles of life and understand that everything that is alive will one day die. Knowing that they can safely ask questions about what is happening and feel held in the process of understanding, provides opportunities and safe space for young children to explore the natural cycles of life.

### **Accepting Inevitability Creates Inclusivity**

Acceptance of the inevitability of life is extremely beneficial not only for adults but by working with the acceptance of such, the benefits of support offered to children will be even greater (Griffith, 2003). “It is important that caregivers are open and honest about their own losses and grief processes. When parents and caregivers can normalize grief within themselves, it can create a culture of inclusivity” (Generation Mindful, 2022). This idea of creating an inclusive grieving community between families and their children is the reasoning behind the “Family Matters Program.” The program uses “...a holistic approach to family support and treatment...in the context of a safe, non-judgmental community where children, adolescents, and their parents can honestly and authentically share thoughts and feelings...” (Biank & Werner, 2012, p. 5). In doing so, “...This enables dialogue across families and creates a community to combat the

emotional isolation families often experience when faced with a chronic medical condition” (Biank & Werner, 2012, p. 5). The connection between how adults approach their own feelings surrounding death and when working with children experiencing death, cultivate ways to not only be with the realities of life but develop the coping skills as children grow and move forward in all parts of their life.

The benefits of a child being supported through a loss are far greater than no support at all and can increase the inevitability of how much that loss affects a child’s daily life. Navigating a loss within the home setting is one thing but when it comes to carrying all of that within a school setting it can be quite another. Children may begin to avoid school and withdraw from their friends and peers. Changes may be noticeable when it comes to grades and overall school performance. Even further, children may carry the weight of worry around how they will be taken care of and by whom and feelings surrounding desertion may begin to arise. Many worry about who will take care of them and may have increasing clinginess and fear abandonment (Sherner, 2015). These examples reflect the need for families and schools to find ways to work together so that an understanding of where a child is developmentally and where they may be in their processing of a loss-related experience, can be supported in two of the main settings a child may find themselves in. This does not necessarily mean more work for teachers and school staff but is more about creating more integration within the classroom, which could help other children whether they have already or will be experiencing a loss of some kind and the grief that goes along with it.

### **School-Based Support**

Schools provide an inherent setting for mindfulness-based programs. The practice of mindfulness aligns naturally with foundational learning outcomes (Sciutto et al., 2021) and

“Mindfulness-based interventions target a range of core skills (e.g., self-regulation, attentional control) that are likely to impact children’s experience in a school context (Sciutto et al., 2021, p. 1522). As we continue to understand all the ways in which a child is affected by grief and loss, we come to see the intricate layers of how those effects may be manifested in all facets of their life. When it comes to children and school, most of their time is spent there. When a child is experiencing grief, there are few opportunities for them to leave their grieving behind for the day (Decristofaro, 2016). It is also important to note that experiencing a loss changes us in ways we may not even fully realize in the moment. Many may experience feelings of not being normal or like everyone else, anymore (Shami, 2022). This can lead to further feelings of isolation and helplessness. Given that in both dealing with grief, loss and unresolved grief, children can be affected both internally and externally. It is not only important for children to receive some level of attention in their home setting but within educational facilities, as well. Some of the ways in which a partnership can be created between families and schools, begin with creating a plan to support a child with their grief, a designated space for children who are grieving to go and feel some level of comfort, personalized counseling, and compassionate listening (Hume et al., 2016). In addition, through integrating classroom materials and literature on the topics of death and dying can help to prepare children for loss and prompt initial conversations and questioning.

All of this said, supporting children can be a team effort and include educators.

“Following traumatic deaths children may develop Childhood Traumatic Grief (CTG), a condition in which trauma symptoms interfere with adaptive child grieving” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 117). One of the main ways educators can assist children receiving support for CTG-related grief is facilitating skills that foster resilience when managing stress in school (Cohen et al., 2011). The more emphasis placed upon sustainable skills such as what has previously been

mentioned, the greater probability of increased coping skills being created for children will occur. Innovative approaches are invaluable, especially when supporting children navigating grief and loss related experiences and situations. Processing and understanding death differ between children, their parents, and other adults (Prazak & Tillman, 2018). Children grieve and their emotions are valid (Prazak & Tillman, 2018). Whether a child chooses to display said emotions outwardly or not the likelihood that they are still struggling with a death-related experience and internalizing emotions stemming from such an experience, is highly likely (Prazak & Tillman, 2018).

We cannot predict when healing will begin after a loss, each situation and individual has its own timeline for such. Even so, it is imperative to take the time to process so that spaciousness is created for healing to be received and to feel balance come back into place for all aspects of one's life. Diane Le Count (2000) speaks to this saying "As the child begins to recover from his loss and is able to pick up the threads of a new sense of self, so he may begin making choices concerning all areas of his life" (Count, 2000, p. 27). Grief can affect all aspects of one's life and as much as we can create a community around grief, grief is still a very personal and individual experience. As we learn to move forward with the presence of grief in our life, we are reminded of our courageous capacity to persevere and all that is inherently within us to get us through.

### **Mindfulness and Grief**

Mindfulness is defined as intentionally bringing oneself to the present moment and meeting any feelings, thoughts or sensations that are arising without judgment. Rooted in early Eastern and Buddhist philosophy, spanning over 2,500 years ago, the concept of mindfulness began to emerge. Although mindfulness has been linked to the teachings of the Buddha and was

brought into the Western world by the American professor Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues through the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, the practice of mindfulness could be seen as “an inherent human capacity” (Cacciatore et al., 2014, p. 269). From this perspective, mindfulness teaches us that we already possess the capacity to approach our life in a mindful way and that every moment is an opportunity to begin again. In this way, practice in approaching whatever experience may be encountered, as a beginner of the present experience, begins and endless lessons emerge. The choice to move through life in such a way, understanding and holding the value of a “beginner’s mind,” a practice in equanimity also emerges. Equanimity is defined as a mental state of stillness, serenity and neutrality. Equanimity holds a valuable lesson in reflecting to us the difference between reacting and responding to any experience. Through understanding this difference and holding a “beginner’s mind” approach, each thought and action becomes a reflection of mindful living.

When it comes to the realm of grief, integrating the benefits of mindfulness, a “beginner’s mind” and equanimous approach to an experience, the suffering we have attached ourselves to instead emerges as a chance to release our hold or the hold we feel said suffering has upon us and deepen our awareness towards the root of our suffering. As we come to understand how suffering can become an attachment in our lives, we may begin to see grief as not just a form of suffering but as a teacher. From this perspective, being with our suffering and the feelings and sensations attached to our suffering in each moment they arise, we may come to see a path towards relieving ourselves of said suffering. Grief can show us how deeply attached we are to all parts of our life. (Wolkin, 2021). Grief reflects the depth of love we had for whom we are grieving the loss of, and mindfulness supports us in holding loving kindness for our grief experience. As Wolkin (2021) says, “It takes a boat load of self-compassion to allow oneself to



feel whatever it is you are feeling at any given time, without judgment, without comparison...to grieve is to be mindful of our thoughts and feelings.” Although grief never fully leaves us, processing the layers of our grief, building a connection with it, recognizing and validating it, the possibility that grief can walk with us and not lead us in our life, is possible. In this way, we see the partnership that mindfulness and grief create. As we begin to understand and delve deeper into this connection, the teachings these two aspects hold for us begin to be uncovered and so we begin a refreshed process of “mindful grieving” (Wolkin, 2021).

### **Mindfulness-Based Interventions and Grief**

Joanne Cacciatore, a well-known grief educator and counselor, helped to create a program for social workers, as “...an experiential traumatic death course using a mindfulness-based framework that may help prepare individuals to be effective helpers in such situations by providing a chance to work through their own death-related concerns and by increasing empathy and mindfulness” (Cacciatore et al., pp. 105-106). Stemming from this work, a model was created that aims to bridge mindfulness and bereavement. “The ATTEND model (attunement, trust, therapeutic touch, egalitarianism, nuance, and death education) is a mindfulness-based bereavement care model built upon the precept of self-care and compassion, integral for those who work in emotionally intense fields of social work” (Cacciatore et al., 2014, p. 272). Although the model aims to support families and parents who are experiencing traumatic bereavement, it is still very much a reflection of support within the bereavement care realm for all involved. The role that “mindfulness-based approaches” can hold within supportive solutions may not “...eliminate grief after the death of a loved one, they may alleviate some of the distress often experienced after traumatic bereavement” (Thieleman et al., 2013, p. 265).

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBI's) have been used in a wide range of mental health related capacities and in the support of stress alleviation, mental health and even relief of pain on a physical level. With the positive benefits demonstrated in connection to MBI's, there has been a rise in inquiry for evidence-based research into the application of MBI's within the psychosocial realm (Thieleman et al., 2013). Given that there is inadequate research when it comes to the use of MBI's within bereavement support, the study conducted by (Thieleman et al., 2013) aims to "...illustrate a mindfulness-based model of bereavement care that is consistent with social work values" (Thieleman et al., 2013). This work may prove to be an invaluable tool for navigating bereavement support and continued evidence-based research (Thieleman et al., 2013). Given that bereavement care within the realms of children and families is multi-layered and challenging, this work adds to the increased need for professionals working within medical and mental health settings to be better equipped and informed to support families dealing with the loss of a child, as well as supporting children who are dying, since they are highly likely to be anxious about how their families will deal with their death (Thieleman et al., 2013).

Given the wide range of bereavement-related emotions one may experience and the need for sustainable pathways of support in moving forward in life, studies being conducted concerning mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) have proven to be successful and efficient for the bereaved when managing and responding to emotional situations (Huang et al., 2021, para. 1). The use of MBCT has demonstrated improvement in connection to comfort for those who are bereaved by strengthening cognitive functioning (Huang et al., 2021, para. 1). In the study conducted by (Huang et al., 2021), "...hypothesized that bereavement grief fundamentally triggers global alterations in the resting-state brain networks and part of the internetwork connectivity could be reformed after MBCT intervention (Huang et al., 2021, para.

1). The effects of grieving are not limited to cognitive and/or emotional duties but impact “...the overall brain circuits and internetwork connectivity in the intrinsic resting state” (Huang et al., 2021, para. 26). Given this, the study used an integrative inquiry approach to look at overall brain functioning when bereaved individuals were in both a state of rest and during a heightened emotional state stemming from their grief (Huang et al., 2021, para. 26). The results of the study reflected that the use of MBCT had notable effects on “...internetwork connectivity between salience, auditory, frontal-parietal, and visual networks but not on the functional connectivity under emotion inducement” (Huang et al., 2021, para. 26). Continued studies of the brain and connective functioning in relation to bereavement grief need to be conducted to see more of the correlation between certain brain functioning with mindfulness, anxious feelings and managing emotions (Huang et al., 2021, para. 26).

### **Mindfulness With Grieving Children**

Mindfulness supports the feelings and sensations that naturally arise with non-judgement and compassion for our human experience. In learning and practicing how to meet our experience in such a way helps us to learn the difference in our approach to a situation, feeling, or sensation that is arising. Choosing to react to one or more of those examples compared to responding becomes more than just a change in wording. Mindfulness provides an opportunity to embody the difference between reacting and responding so that the understanding of approach becomes a conscious choice. Practice in mindfully embodying our experience creates a deeper awareness and attunement to the feelings and sensations that arise when experiencing grief. Allowing for this connection between what is arising and embodying such provides acceptance of what is occurring. Grief naturally follows loss, and concerning the well-being of a child, it is integral to provide space that is safe for them to share their feelings without judgement (Stang,

2022). This is another gift of mindfulness, one learns to validate and give permission to what feelings are arising, name them, feel them and then let them move through. This is no easy feat amid a culture that does not easily recognize grief or the external display of grieving. Many feel they cannot outwardly express what is going on internally when experiencing a loss, given this societal view of grief. We are asked when will you be done being sad? When will you move on? We are told to hurry it up, to speed up the process, to give a finite timeline to something that is linear and cannot be placed into a timeline like a work deadline or task at hand.

The task at hand is to not only be with our grief, which is very much an individual journey, but to find ways to honor the loss we have experienced and find ways to incorporate said loss into our lives in some way. This goes for both adults and children, and it is especially important to model such honoring for our children, so that the abstractness of the absence can become a part of their life as they move forward. All the ways to show up for us and our grief begin to shift the paradigm and instead create a community that deep down we are all craving. A community to be fully seen, to be heard, to feel safe to express our emotional state; which changes all the time, especially when grieving. This community extends to finding ways for children to grieve with other children. It is invaluable for children and teens who are grieving to be around peers that are also experiencing grief not just because of the developmental need to be in connection but to ease the challenges one may feel in navigating feelings of isolation and separation that can come with grieving (Stang, 2022). Each time we allow space to do this for ourselves we are creating a deep relationship with ourselves and our inner knowing, our intuition. “The people that we are working with- the kids and the teens- they know what they need, they are an expert in their own experience. Our job is to facilitate safe opportunities for expression, not to tell them or teach them what they have to do” (Stang, 2022). We must

remember that we oversee our own experience and how we choose to express ourselves in connection with said experience.

There is an immense amount of emotional intelligence to be gained in allowing for what is naturally arising to come forth to the surface and to take some time with not just what is but what we may have previously attached to it all. In doing so, we see that we can shift the narrative, not be tied down to all we attached to a feeling or experience. There exists the possibility of seeing those feelings and experiences arising as reminders to be with them, to understand all that has been attached, to draw upon the inherent strength we have, and to heal. Our capacity to end a cycle of suffering for ourselves, which may very well be tied up with another, is still more than we think it is. The Buddha taught “The Four Noble Truths;” suffering exists, there is a cause of that suffering, there is an end to suffering, and there is a path to end such suffering. In connection to grief and children grieving, the cause of suffering is attachment. The depth of suffering that is felt is rooted in the attachment to the loved one or pet that has died. Although some children experience little to no connection to whom has died, which can manifest in a myriad of ways, as a loss within a loss, relief, or feeling of safety restored, the solution to said suffering is to let go of the attachment. Guiding a child in the process of letting go prompts inherent challenges, in addition to the reality of what level of connection the child may or may not have held with whomever has died. The core of the attachment a child feels from the death of a loved one or pet is directly connected to the physical absence of said loss. Even though a child may still have physical treasures such as pictures, gifts, objects/mementos that represent the memory and love shared between them and their loved one or pet, the physical body of what was once there is no longer present. It is difficult for a child to understand what loss really looks like and how it will affect their day-to-day life until they come to understand death as a physically

finite experience. Even then, the reality of not seeing this person or pet any longer can create continued suffering. To guide a child in the process of releasing the level of attachment they hold to whom has died, to relieve the natural suffering that ensues with loss, one can help them to see that in utilizing the benefits of a mindfulness practice, there is a way forward. Mindful grieving allows for whatever is naturally arising to be met with loving kindness. Practicing loving kindness for our experience can begin to replace the attachment felt by the loss of physical absence, at any moment. Moment to moment is mindful living. This way of mindful living can also be mindful grieving. Thus, providing a way to hold love for those who have died, while tending to and nurturing the feelings, sensations that arise. In doing so, suffering can be met with loving kindness, which can in turn, begin to liberate us from the feelings and sensations previously experienced in suffering and prompt a renewed perspective of how we hold suffering in our body, mind, and heart.

Being a witness to someone we care about who is suffering can be such a helpless feeling, it can be even more heartbreaking to witness the suffering of a child. Sometimes to keep said suffering at bay for our children, it can be easier for adults to choose not to divulge all the information surrounding a loss. With all well-meaning intentions aside, this becomes more of a hindrance to the child in many ways. The most obvious of them all is the fact that children notice everything going on around them. This creates a natural challenge if they are seeing, and hearing things being said or experienced around them, which gives them only a part of the whole picture of what is really going on. They may in turn feel they need to provide feelings of safety and protection to the surrounding adults if a different narrative is being given to them and they think the adults do not have the right information (Stang, 2022). If the child knows a loss has occurred and they can ask questions about what happened, the choice of the adults involved to withhold

information not only invalidates the child's natural curiosity but the situation at hand. This withholding results in a missed opportunity to not only connect with the child in an authentic and honest way about the situation but about whatever wonderings, questions, or feelings that may be arising for the child in connection to the realms of loss and death. If we provide opportunities for a child to engage in conversations such as this, whether in the company of family, appropriately supportive adults, or fellow grieving peers, we are not just opening the doorway for them in their potential experience of a loss-related situation, but we are supporting them in learning how to walk through this doorway as they move forward in their life and encounter a wide spectrum of loss. We are also allowing for grief to be faced in a supportive and safe way, so that a child does not have to continue in their life weighed down by the burden of unresolved grief. Count (2000) speaks to this in connection to working with children in a therapeutic setting "...By recognizing the symptoms of unresolved grief, we can begin to peel back the mask and work with the child inside out" (Count, 2000, p. 27). Given that loss and grief manifest in many forms, it is important to find a wide range of supportive resources. These resources can be anywhere from meditations, movement exercises, art activities, to grief and loss related literature and resources for further support.

### **Supportive Interventions and Tools**

There are many ways to support oneself through troubling and challenging times. The interventions and tools one may choose to use include many factors, some of which can be what resources are available, the cost, how the intervention and tool aligns with personal beliefs, approach to processing and healing. When navigating the realms of grief and loss, it is highly beneficial to find holistic modalities, as they work to support the body as a whole entity and reflect the importance of addressing all parts and layers of the self –physical, emotional, mental,

spiritual, and psychological. Mindfulness is a supportive modality that addresses all the previously mentioned layers of the self and further on, shows us just how deeply connected they each are to the other. These connections become clearer as we develop a practice in mindfulness in all aspects of our life. The more we allow spaciousness for what is arising at any moment, replace judgement for whatever is arising with loving kindness, embody our feelings and sensations to understand how they manifest on a physical level, we are creating and cultivating a connection between the layers of self. In addition to, seeing beyond the physical body and experience we know as the “self” and instead as a collection of states we can choose to attach ourselves to or not. The following mindfulness-based interventions and tools reflect this most integral connection to oneself and a supportive and sustainable path forward to greater wholeness.

### **Mindful Movement**

Given the somatic perspective that the body holds and stores trauma and if not given attention to this fact, can create great harm both internally and externally, “It seems fair to claim that the role of the body has been overlooked in much of the literature on grief and bereavement” (Brinkman, 2019, p. 290). Brinkman’s note on the absence of connections being made between the body and grief reflects the discrepancy that exists between the lack of attention with the body when it comes to bereavement and the need for it (Brinkman, 2019, p. 290). For one to fully understand the place the body holds within the process of grieving, one must have a solid understanding of emotions (Brinkman, 2019, p. 291). Given the varying theories on emotional and physical states of the body, Brinkman (2019) brings the focus back to what he sees as “...a neglected relationship between grief and the body” (p. 291). Brinkman (2019) declares that instead of emotions being at the forefront in the realm of bereavement, turning our attention to



the body in connection with grief could provide a deeper level of understanding (Brinkman, 2019, p. 291). Asking a child about the physical sensations arising in the body when they are feeling big emotions can be a supportive prompt to conversing about the body and feelings. Allowing space for a child to explore their feelings, while at the same time learning to make connections on a somatic level, not only is beneficial in helping them to navigate their experience but provides supportive anchors to come back to amidst challenging times and ground themselves. Unresolved emotions, experiences, and trauma can become compounded in the physical body. It is just as important in understanding and dealing with emotions and feelings arising as it is with physical sensations. We can learn how to meet the physical sensations in the same way we do with feelings- acknowledge their presence, name them, meet them with loving kindness and non-judgement, and let them pass through. Each time we process our feelings and sensations in this way, we are approaching our experience as it is, in the present moment. This process reflects a practice in mindful living.

Extending beyond the foundational evidence-based research that reflects the benefits of approaching all facets of life in a mindful way the study conducted by (Rosenstreich et al., 2022) “...sought to investigate the underlying motor abilities affected by mindful-movement (MM) intervention, and which mediate its effect on academic achievement among kindergarteners (Rosenstreich et al., 2022, p. 249). The factor that differentiates movement from mindful movement can be defined as “sensorimotor awareness” (Rosenstreich et al., 2022, p. 249). “Mindful movement practice encourages mindful learning driven by awareness of sensorimotor distinctions and alternatives...moving mindfully increases the availability of sensorimotor information, which in turn may promote different perspectives of the learning task at hand” (Rosenstreich, et al. 2022, p. 249). Teaching children who are grieving mindful movement

techniques and finding ways to integrate them into the school day proves to be highly effective for supportive success amid grief (Rosenstreich et al., 2022). Further on when one is in a state of mindfulness the following four attributes have been found to define said state (Rosenstreich et al., 2022). Firstly, when one is being mindful, they will naturally become more aware of their surroundings giving way to an increased level of consciousness of themselves and the world around them (Rosenstreich et al., 2022). Secondly, a state of mindfulness provides spaciousness to receive incoming information resulting in action and discernment stemming from a more introspective and intuitive place (Rosenstreich et al., 2022). Thirdly, acting from a place of mindfulness can open new pathways for organizing insight thus providing different viewpoints (Rosenstreich et al., 2022). Lastly, a state of mindfulness increases understanding of differing perspectives that may be present (Rosenstreich et al., 2022).

Some children constantly hear the words “Sit still,” “Be quiet,” “Pay attention,” and in more than one setting. “...movement (bouncing, running, fidgeting, skipping) is a natural state of being...when we ask kids to “pay attention,” what we are really saying is “stop moving,” ...physical movement has such a positive impact on the emotional well-being of children” (Melhorn, 2022). When a child is struggling with something on an emotional level and they feel they cannot express themselves, their physical body may manifest what is going on internally. This is relative and not always the case, but from an integrative approach, it is known that our emotional level impacts our physical bodies and vice versa. When one hears the word mindfulness, one may immediately think of being still, being quiet and paying attention, although mindfulness includes these elements, one is not limited to such a rigid regime. Practicing mindfulness shows us how to bring balance to these elements on an internal level so that no matter what is occurring externally, we can hold a center that is still aware of everything

swirling about. In the realms of grief and supporting grieving children, all that is swirling about can feel very much like a storm at times and trying to navigate said storm without a compass. Mindfulness brings us back to our internal compass, the deep knowing place that always resides within us. Mindfulness provides an anchor during challenging times, even when it may feel our center has wavered and diminished. Grief can bring us so far from this place of deep knowing. Mindfulness reminds us that the center is always there and how we can come back to it time and time again, moment to moment. Children can be supported in finding a centered place within themselves through mindfulness practice, beginning most simply with breath. Coming back to the breath can provide a touchstone when everything internally and externally feels overwhelming and chaotic. As comfort with coming back to this touchstone of breath or other modalities of mindfulness in day-to-day life grows, a practice in mindful living begins. Melhorn (2022) says, “Oftentimes when we think about mindfulness, we send the message to kids that they need to “calm down.” The goal with mindful movement, though, is to support children in finding a balance of energy which will support well-being” (Melhorn, 2022). In connection to the previously mentioned integrative approach to one’s body and to one’s experience and finding ways to support and honor all the layers of the self, mindful movement becomes “...a powerful tool to support grieving children as movement is linked to decreased anxiety and improved mental health. Through movement, stress hormones are processed more quickly out of the blood stream...” (Melhorn, 2022). In doing so, we are allowing for an increased opportunity to center and ground oneself, which is especially supportive for children who are grieving and when words cannot be expressed.

### **Therapeutic Arts**

It is important to listen to our children and what they are trying to express to us, even when words are not possible. Therefore, it is also especially important to use other ways for them to communicate difficult emotions or navigate big questions, like the use of therapeutic art modalities. Griffith (2003) speaks to the importance of freedom in play for a child, especially when it is challenging to converse about the situation. "Play is the child's work and the best way for the helper to overcome any resistance to talking about the death" (Griffith, 2003, p. 221). When using art as a therapeutic tool in connection to a child navigating loss, have an array of crafting supplies available (Griffith, 2003, p. 221). When supporting a child through a traumatic death-related experience, it is valuable to provide paints and markers, especially in red (Griffith, 2003, p. 221). Having a wide range of resources and materials is important, not just for the situation at hand but for the individual. Understanding both elements and having more particular supplies on hand can sometimes have a greater impact for the child to feel more fully supported and heard without words. In alignment with the previously mentioned sentiment, Count (2000), used art-based therapeutic evidence from working with children who have experienced some form of loss and found that working with the arts can provide a feeling of safety for the child in connection with releasing their emotions. In some instances, "...pictures or play may enable the expression of the struggle and confusion surrounding a loss or multiple losses which the child may only be able to express non-verbally" (Count, 2000, p. 18).

Using art as a therapeutic modality has many benefits. Art provides a safe outlet for what is arising within us, especially when it feels we cannot express ourselves otherwise. Taking the time to be with what we are feeling not only acknowledges what we are going through but allows spaciousness in finding supportive tools for ourselves amidst difficult emotions and when facing or navigating challenging situations. "If a part of us continually harbors the feelings we ignore,

we are left only with a part of ourselves for the process of living” (Count, 2000, p. 18). By allowing ourselves time and space to be with all that is arising, we are not only allowing ourselves to work on releasing ourselves from what may feel like it is weighing us down and finding a way forward.

### **Discussion**

My creative project will determine major themes based upon the literature presented in this rationale paper and provide information in a reader friendly format, giving parents necessary resources for supporting their children through grief and loss related experiences. Navigating grief and loss can be extremely overwhelming. There is also the fact that everyone approaches and experiences grief and loss in a unique way, at their own pace, as well as the presence of racial and ethnic factors to contemplate. For children, there can be little to no context, so as a parent, feelings of helplessness can arise when witnessing one’s child navigating and experiencing feelings surrounding grief and loss. There is a need for resources and supportive tools parents can draw upon when supporting their children with grief and loss, which in doing so, can offer support to them at the same time. The contents of this guide will be divided into eight sections. Each section of the resource guide will incorporate pertinent research gained from the literature presented in this rationale paper. The first section will be an introduction into understanding grief and loss through the eyes of a child (ages 3-12). This section aims to create a foundational understanding of the developmental connection between children and grief and loss. The second section will focus on the important connection between mindfulness and grief. The third section will contain resources for mindfulness practices, mindful movement exercises, mindful art, and a connection to the natural world. The fourth section focuses on creative activities to process grief and loss. The fifth section focuses on how to approach conversations

about death and prompts for reflection and conversation. Section six contains grief and loss-related picture books, organized by theme. The seventh section contains resources for parents to seek out more support from podcasts, organizations, and professionals devoted to supporting children in grief and loss. Section eight contains the contemplative cards to be used in tandem with the journaling/conversation questions in section five.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to understand what is occurring developmentally for a child, so that appropriate support can be given. Conversations centered around grief and loss work best in tandem with this developmental understanding. Supporting a child in understanding and working with their feelings plays a significant role in their experience and in their relationships with the adults involved. A partnership can be created and cultivated between a child's home and school and is invaluable to a child's grieving experience to do so. A deep connection between mindfulness and grief exists and both hold endless lessons for healing and wholeness. Understanding mindfulness-based interventions and their role within bereavement care can provide support for anyone experiencing loss. Mindfulness provides a context for working with big feelings, emotions, and the inevitability of life. Mindful modalities such as movement and art can be supportive tools when working with grieving children.

## References

- Biank, N. M., & Werner-Lin, A. (2012). Holding parents so they can hold their children: Grief work with surviving spouses to support parentally bereaved children. *OMEGA- Journal of Death and Dying*, 66(1), 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2190/OM.66.1.a>
- Brinkman, S. (2019). The body in grief. *Mortality*, 24(3), 290-303.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2017.1413545>
- Cacciatore, J., Thieleman, K., Killian, M., & Tavasolli, K. (2015). Braving human suffering: Death education and its relationship to empathy and mindfulness. *Social Work Education*, 34(1), 91–109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2014.940890>
- Cacciatore, J., Thieleman, K., Osborn, J., & Orłowski, K. (2013). Of the soul and suffering: Mindfulness-based interventions and bereavement. *Springer Science+ Business*, 42, 260-268. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-014-0491-4>
- Cohen, J. A., & Mannarino, A. P. (2011). Supporting children with traumatic grief: What educators need to know. *School Psychology International*, 32(2), 117–131.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034311400827>
- Count, D. L. & Lang, P. (2000). Working with ‘difficult’ children from the inside out: Loss and bereavement and how the creative arts can help. *Pastoral Care*, 18(2), 17-27.
- Decristofaro, J. (Host). (2016). *Supporting grieving children with mindfulness- tips for teachers & parents* [Audio podcast]. Dougy Center. <https://www.dougy.org/news-media/podcasts/supporting-grieving-children-with-mindfulness-tips-for-teachers-parents>
- Flahaulta, C., Dolbeaultb, S., Sankeya, C., & Fassecc, L. (2018). Understanding grief in children who have lost a parent with cancer: How do they give meaning to this experience?

- Results of an interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Death Studies*, 42(8), 483-490.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2017.1383951>
- Generation Mindful. (2022). How to support your child through grief. *Generation Mindful*.  
<https://genmindful.com/blogs/mindful-moments/grief>
- Gold, J. (2020). Generating vocabulary of mourning: Supporting families through the process of grief. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 28(3), 236-240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480720929693>
- Griffith, T. (2003). Assisting with the “Big Hurts, Little tears” of the youngest grievers: Working with three-, four-, and five-year old’s who have experienced loss and grief because of death. *Illness, Crisis, and Loss*, 11(3), 217-255.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1054137303254312>
- Huang, F. Y., Hsu, A. L., Chao, Y. P., Shang, C. M. H., Tsai, J. S., & Wu, C. (2021). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on bereavement grief: Alterations of resting-state network connectivity associate with changes of anxiety and mindfulness. *Human Brain Mapping*, 42(2), 510-520. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbm.25240>  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33068043/>
- Hume, K., Regan, T., Megronigle, L., & Rhinehalt, C. (2016). Supporting students with autism spectrum disorder through grief and loss. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 48(3), 128-136.
- Marlow, J. (n.d.). Coping with grief: activities for children and teens. Calvary Hospital.  
<https://doi.org/www.calvaryhospital.org/coping-with-grief-activities-for-children-teens/>
- Melhorn, R. (2022). *Mindful movement to support grieving children*. Full Circle.  
<https://fullcirclegc.org/2022/02/01/mindful-movement-to-support-grieving-children/>



- Prazak, M., & Tillman, K. S. (2018). Kids supporting kids: A 10-week small group curriculum for grief and loss in schools. *British Association for Counseling and Psychotherapy, 18*, 395-401. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12190>
- Rosenstreich, E., Shoval, E., & Sharir, T. (2022). The effects of mindful movement intervention on academic and cognitive abilities among kindergarten children. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 50*, 249-258. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01150-5>
- Rossetto, K. R. (2015). Bereaved parents' strategies and reactions when supporting their surviving children. *Western Journal of Communication, 79*(5), 533-554.
- Sciutto, M. J., Veres, D. A., Marinstein, T. L., Bailey, B. F., & Cehelyk, S. K. (2021). Effects of a school-based mindfulness program for young children. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 30*, 1516-1527. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-01955-x>
- Sesame Street. (n.d.). *Helping kids grieve*. Sesame Street in Communities. <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/grief/>
- Shami, R. (Host). (2022). *Supporting children's grief through mindfulness, compassionate care, and Buddhist philosophy* [Audio podcast]. The Lighthouse Beacon Podcast. <https://rshami.podbean.com/e/episode-9-supporting-children-s-grief-through-mindfulness-compassionate-care-and-buddhist-philosophy/>
- Sherner, T. (2015). Help children understand grief and loss. *ONS Connect, 30*(3), 36.
- Stang, H. (Host). (2022). *Children & grief: How to help kids cope with loss early in life* [Audio podcast]. Mindfulness and Grief Institute. <https://mindfulnessandgrief.com/children-and-grief-with-jana-decristofaro/>

Thieleman, K., Cacciatore, J., Hill, P. W. (2014). Traumatic bereavement and mindfulness: A preliminary study of mental health outcomes using the ATTEND model. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 42, 260-268. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-014-0491-4>

Wolkin, J. (2021). *Mindful Magazine*, name <https://www.mindful.org/5-ways-mindfulness-can-help-us-work-through-grief/>

**Resource Guide for Parents/Caregivers:  
Supporting Children (ages 3-12) with Grief and Loss- Related Experiences  
Using Mindfulness and Other Mindful Modalities**

**Contents**

A Note About This Guide	35
Introduction	36
Section 1: Understanding Grief and Loss for Young Children	38
• Developmental Stages of Grief and Loss for Children	
Section 2: Mindfulness and Grief	41
Section 3- Mindfulness Practice	44
• A Mindful Meditation for Grief	
• Mindful Movement Exercises	
Section 4- Creative Activities for Processing Grief and Loss	49
• Creative Activities	
• Drawing Prompts	
• Connecting to the Natural World	
Section 5- Approaching Conversations About Death	52
• Contemplative Cards	
Resource List	56
• Grief and Death-Related Literature and Picture Books	
• Organizations	
References	62
Blank Pages for Reflections, Drawing, Writing, and Mementos	63

### **A Note About This Guide**

This guide was created to provide supportive resources for parents/caregivers to use when helping their children through grief and loss-related experiences, with an emphasis on mindfulness and other mindful modalities. This guide pulls together and honors resources that already exist in the realms of children's grief and loss in addition to ideas created by the author. This guide adheres to providing support for families/caregivers and their children with the foundational values of inclusivity for all children, no matter their age, experience, identity, pronoun usage, and/or varying developmental abilities/needs, at the forefront. This guide is rooted in a trauma-informed approach and honors the varying use in connection to one's culture, ethnicity, and demographic.

It is important to note that when supporting your child in grief or loss, you are finding appropriate ways to support yourself. This personal support extends to cultivating comfort in dealing with and talking about the grief or loss-related experience for yourself so that you can be fully present for your child. This is no easy feat but integral in providing adequate support for your child, while also supporting yourself.

## Introduction

It is apparent that the topics of grief and death can feel uncomfortable to most of us without even thinking about them in connection to how they must feel for children. It is important that we as adults not only find ways to support ourselves within the realms of grief and death but begin to understand what grief and loss looks like through the eyes of a child. Although, an increase in movements towards recognizing the need and support for positive grief and death education, connection, reflection, and conversation is prevalent, at a societal level the topics of grief and death are still very much viewed as taboo topics. It is valuable to create supportive ways to be with, understand, and learn about grief, including how to grieve, cultivating comfort with impermanence and death-related topics as adults, so that we can be better equipped to support not just ourselves but our children. What has been previously seen as taboo does not need to continue for us or for our children.

There are numerous resources that support learning about feelings from an early age, supportive ways to process, understand and grow from them. Experiencing grief and loss can be unlike anything experienced before, so it is imperative that safe space is created to be with and explore ways to navigate the myriad feelings that stem from situations connected to grief and loss, using a wide spectrum of supportive and holistic modalities. It can be challenging to know what to do for a child going through experiences connected to grief and loss. As we know, everyone approaches and processes those realms in their own way and we need a range of resources at hand, especially when it comes to children. As we continue to understand how children grieve at different developmental stages, we come to see what supportive tools and approaches would be most beneficial for them. As we continue to learn about mindfulness and

other mindful modalities, we learn just how big of an impact they can have for children experiencing grief and loss.

This guide aims to provide developmentally appropriate and supportive resources for parents, caregivers and children. The guide is broken up into eight sections. The first section is an introduction into understanding grief and loss through the eyes of a child (ages 3-12). This section aims to create a foundational understanding of the developmental connection between children and grief and loss. The second section focuses on the important connection between mindfulness and grief. The third section contains resources for mindfulness practices, mindful movement exercises, mindful art, and a connection to the natural world. The fourth section focuses on creative activities to process grief and loss. The fifth section focuses on how to approach conversations about death and prompts for reflection and conversation. Section six contains grief and loss-related picture books, organized by theme. The seventh section contains resources for parents to seek out more support from podcasts, organizations, and professionals devoted to supporting children in grief and loss. Section eight contains the contemplative cards to be used in tandem with the journaling/conversation questions in section five.

## **Section One**

### **Understanding Grief and Loss for Young Children**

Traditionally, grieving in connection to children was more about just pushing through it and coming back around due to their youthful age (Griffith, 2003). Dr. Alan Wolfelt, a well-known speaker, counselor in the realms of grief and bereavement and the director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, has challenged the ways in which grief is viewed and can be expressed. In doing so, he provided a way for us to understand that age has nothing to do with grieving. Just as it is with adults, mourning is a natural response to loss for children (Griffith, 2003). Because of their age, children's grief can often be unacknowledged, and their experience of grief overlooked or ignored (Griffith, 2003). Parents play a crucial role in connection to grief-related experiences for their family unit and affect how a child learns to adapt. This is significantly true concerning two main aspects of adaptive grief, facilitating connections that extend beyond the moment and lived experiences (Rosetto, 2015). Children need support the most, as they are looking to the adult figures in their lives for safety and security. Given that adults constitute such a critical aspect to a child's growth on an emotional level, children may feel uncertain or directionless when witnessing the adults around them experiencing emotional pain (Griffith, 2003). It is vital to a child's sense of security to witness the adults they are in connection with hold a balance in feeling their emotions while remaining present in the natural aspects of daily life (Griffith, 2003). There are endless opportunities for an adult to show up for a child even amid feelings of grief but given navigating the challenges of working with and through painful feelings those moments can very often be missed (Griffith, 2003).

### **Developmental Stages of Grief and Loss for Children**

Preschoolers	Early School Age	Late Elementary to Middle School
Regressions in language and communication abilities	Might blame themselves for the death or loss	Expect age-appropriate responses
Presents with anxiety when a caregiver leaves	Express discomfort in the tummy, head, or other body aches	Be a regular presence
Toileting problems, bed wetting	Emotional aggression	Invite support from mentors, therapist, and teachers
Sleep disruption	Loss of expressive language abilities	Give honest answers
	Changes in social patterns and personal interests	Acknowledge when you do not know something

Note: The information on the developmental and behavioral connection presented in this table is adapted from the following resource (Generation Mindful, 2022).

As children grow, so does their emotional intelligence, capacity for understanding, and ability of expression. Children ages 6-12 know that death is an ending to being alive and that death will naturally occur at some point (Sherner, 2015). Given this developmental knowledge, a natural curiosity begins to arise for children at this age about what happens to the body when it dies and feelings surrounding their own inevitability of death (Sherner, 2015). As children grow, not only do the ways in which children process their feelings in connection to death and loss change but the outward expression of them, too.



As adults, we may feel that preschool aged children are too young to converse about death but as it is an inevitable occurrence just as being alive is, they are going to see examples of it in one way or another. Curiosity naturally arises in young children, especially ages 3-6. By the age of 5, children are most likely to understand that death is a natural occurrence (Prazak & Tillman, 2018). During these early years, while children want to understand a wide array of death-related concepts due to their growing curiosity, their thoughts on death are often that death can be overturned, that someone has not died but instead is only sleeping, that the person has not actually left but will return (Sherner, 2015). In meeting a young child where they are developmentally and appropriately providing support that contextualizes both the reality of what is occurring and their feelings about it is at the core of conversing about death with young children. It is just as invaluable as adults to take the time to explore our own feelings and questions in connection to the natural cycles of life, so that we can not only feel more comfortable with these realms for ourselves but in approaching conversation with children. This allows children to feel comfortable asking questions about the natural cycles of life and understand that everything that is alive will one day die. Knowing that they can safely ask questions about what is happening and feel held in the process of understanding, provides opportunities and safe space for young children to explore the natural cycles of life.

## **Section Two**

### **Mindfulness and Grief**

Mindfulness is defined as intentionally bringing oneself to the present moment and meeting any feelings, thoughts or sensations that are arising without judgment. Rooted in early Eastern and Buddhist philosophy, spanning over 2,500 years ago, the concept of mindfulness began to emerge. Although mindfulness has been linked to the teachings of the Buddha and was brought into the Western world by the American professor Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues through the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, the practice of mindfulness could be seen as “an inherent human capacity” (Cacciatore et al., 2014, p. 269). From this perspective, mindfulness teaches us that we already possess the capacity to approach our life in a mindful way and that every moment is an opportunity to begin again. In this way, practice in approaching whatever experience may be encountered, as a beginner of the present experience, begins and endless lessons emerge. The choice to move through life in such a way, understanding and holding the value of a “beginner’s mind”, a practice in equanimity also emerges. Equanimity is defined as a mental state of stillness, serenity and neutrality. Equanimity holds a valuable lesson in reflecting to us the difference between reacting and responding to any experience. Through understanding this difference and holding a “beginner’s mind” approach, each thought and action becomes a reflection of mindful living.

When it comes to the realm of grief, integrating the benefits of mindfulness, a “beginner’s mind” and equanimous approach to an experience, the suffering we have attached ourselves to instead emerges as a chance to release our hold or the hold we feel said suffering has upon us and deepen our awareness towards the root of our suffering. As we come to understand how suffering can become an attachment in our lives, we may begin to see grief as not just a

form of suffering but as a teacher. From this perspective, being with our suffering and the feelings and sensations attached to our suffering in each moment they arise, we may come to see a path towards relieving ourselves of said suffering. Grief can show us how deeply attached we are to all parts of our life. (Wolkin, 2021). Grief reflects the depth of love we had for whom we are grieving the loss of, and mindfulness supports us in holding loving kindness for our grief experience. As Wolkin (2021) says, “It takes a boat load of self-compassion to allow oneself to feel whatever it is you are feeling at any given time, without judgment, without comparison...to grieve is to be mindful of our thoughts and feelings.” Although grief never fully leaves us, processing the layers of our grief, building a connection with it, recognizing and validating it, the possibility that grief can walk with us and not lead us in our life, is possible. In this way, we see the partnership that mindfulness and grief create. As we begin to understand and delve deeper into this connection, the teachings these two aspects hold for us begin to be uncovered and so we begin a refreshed process of “mindful grieving” (Wolkin, 2021).

As Jennifer Wolkin writes, grief is also intermingled with self-compassion and resilience. Wolkin (2021) offers us 5 ways to “Grieve Mindfully”:

Accept your feelings- Allow yourself to feel what you feel at any given moment, with a sense of self-compassion, and without judgment.
Express your feelings- Just as important as accepting your feelings is expressing them in a way that is helpful to you. <u>Journaling</u> , talking about the experience, scrapbooking, or dancing, for example, are helpful ways to process grief instead of allowing the feelings to stay stuck.
Reach out- During this time, it is important to reach out in multiple ways. Reach out for guidance from a spiritual counselor or a psychologist. Reach out to share stories of your

loved one with others. Reach out to offer support to other grievers. Find a balance between sitting with yourself, and being with others, but ultimately, reach out—do not isolate.

Continue to take care of yourself and others- Living life while grieving often feels like scaling a mountain. Grieving takes energy and can often feel draining. As much as possible during this tough time, continue to eat well, exercise, and maintain wellness practices.

Celebrate your loved one's life- It is important through the grief process to keep the memory of your loved one alive in some way that both inspires growth and reflects and honors your unique relationship. This can include donating to a charity, meditating in their honor, and even planting a tree.

Note: The information on the connection between grief and mindfulness presented in this table is adapted from the following resource (Wolkin, 2021).

When we feel a loss, we grieve. We know in our hearts it is more valuable to our life to be with the pain of that loss, so that we may find a way to move forward in greater wholeness, which is no easy feat and requires a great deal of us. Allowing ourselves to grieve, feeling held in our grief, finding resources that support us along our grief journey and honoring ourselves and our loss amidst it all, is how we walk with grief in our life but not forever weighed down by it.

## **Section Three**

### **Mindfulness Practice**

You can begin incorporating a mindful way of living into your life by noticing all that arises- feelings, emotions, responses, and reactions, without judgement. Holding this intention of non-judgment allows for the naming of what arises, observing how it may feel in the body and meeting what arises with compassion. The following mindfulness meditation practice can be done alone or together with your child. It is important to note that in practicing meditation, it is possible for past wounds, trauma, and challenging memories to surface. As well as the emotions attached to said experiences, in addition to the present emotional states of mind and/or emotions attached to the future.

### **A Mindful Meditation for Grief**

The following meditation is from Judy Lief (2022), written for Mindful Magazine. Lief (2022) says, “Our hearts break, but our hearts also heal. The thread that pulls us from heartbreak to healing is love.” Lief (2022) offers this meditation as a mindful supportive tool when working with grief.

A 12-Minute Meditation for Grief and Loss

1. **To begin, take a comfortable seat and rest.** Slowly, breathe deeply, in and out. Relax and settle, coming into a present-moment experience. What is really happening to you here and now?
2. **Now bring to mind a personal loss.** This could be the recent death of a friend or relative or a loved one; it could be a loss you’ve been carrying as a burden for a long time. It’s not something you’ve read about or something at a distance or abstract, but something personal, a person or experience or aspect of your life.

3. **Start with your body and your immediate somatic experience.** What bodily sensations do you notice? Do you feel grounded? Spacey, tight, hollow, full, edgy, dull, squirmy? What do you notice? Don't interpret, just feel. What is your body saying to you right now?
4. **Now, bring yourself to your heart, in the middle of your chest, and simply feel the heart holding the grief,** being filled and heavied by that grief. Your raw, tender, loving, vulnerable, beating heart. And rest with that.
5. **Now rest in your throat center.** So often the throat is connected with grief. And it wells up in tightness and has a kind of ache that can arise when we're about to cry, when we're shocked or have a sense of loss. Notice where else your grief is being held in your body—it could be your heart, your throat, your stomach. They all hold something, they are processing something—without words, without direction, naturally, the body knows.
6. **Then direct your attention to what emotions are arriving.** Sorrow, anger, a quality of love, disappointment, there could be a sense of intensity or a sense of just being dull. Note what emotions are arising; don't be embarrassed or afraid to feel whatever you're feeling. Don't judge what you're feeling. Just feel. Let your emotions manifest. Welcome them. Don't suppress them and also don't feed them. Emotions are the energy of our grieving. And they change. They're always changing, like life itself. Be gentle. If you start to feel overwhelmed, take a break, rest, breathe. Resettle. Allow yourself time to rest in your present-moment bodily emotional experience.
7. **Just rest, just feel, just be.** Let grief do its work. Let it heal you. Don't push. Don't be impatient. Let yourself grieve. Process this change in your life. Let it teach you.
8. **Reflect on grief in your life,** on the losses you've had and how your losses connect you with so many others. Just bringing your attention to that fact can be so healing. It happens to everyone.

It's hard to accept change. It's hard to say goodbye. But when you stop fighting the inevitability of loss and change, a new and deeper love and appreciation is possible. We no longer take our friends, our loved ones, or our life all together for granted. We liberate our love, liberate our joy and appreciation in a very powerful way, through this difficult journey, through loss, through grief, through sorrow, with a vulnerable and tender heart.

(Lief, 2022, Mindful Magazine).

### **Mindful Movement Exercises**

These mindful movement exercises can be done with your child, or your child may choose to do them alone. The benefits of mindful movement are many but at the root, moving mindfully supports the body at a physical level which can provide an opportunity to support emotions or feelings arising that are too difficult to express in another way. In conjunction with these exercises, talking with your child about how these exercises reflect mindfulness, the sensations, feelings or thoughts that arose in performing them, and how they may be used in daily life or when grief needs spaciousness.

#### **Move Like Spaghetti**

Walk around the room pretending to move like uncooked spaghetti! Gradually tighten your toes, and then your feet, legs, stomach, chest, arms, and face. Walk around like this for about a minute. Then pretend you are cooked spaghetti! With your body loose and free, move and wiggle around the room.

#### **Cat & Cow**

- Come on to all fours with your hands and knees on the ground. Spread your fingertips wide. Check to make sure your hands are underneath your shoulders, and your knees are directly underneath your hips.

- On a breath in – arch your back, pull your shoulders down and look toward the ceiling. Cow pose!
- On a breath out – round your back and look at your belly. Cat pose!
- Repeat this as many times as you like, moving slowly and connecting your breath to movement. Inhale for cow pose (look up) and exhale for cat pose (look at your belly!)

### **Walk Stop Wiggle Sit**

Begin by inviting children to be prepared to walk around in a circle and then provide the following directives:

**Round 1:** “Walk, stop, wiggle, sit.” Mix up what you say and allow children to follow your statements by moving.

**Round 2:** Time to switch things up! For this round, the word walk means stop, the word stop means walk. Wiggle still means to wiggle and sit still means sit.

**Round 3:** It’s getting harder! For this round, the word walk means stop, the word stop means walk, the word wiggle means sit and the word sit means wiggle.

### **Body Awareness Techniques**

- Rub your palms together as fast as you can for thirty seconds. Pay attention to the sound your hands make and the feeling of warmth.
- Drink a glass of ice water. Notice how the cooling sensation as it moves through your body.
- Take off your shoes and wiggle your toes in the grass. How do your feet feel?



- Bring your hands to your heart and feel your heart beating. Notice how it feels.  
Now jump up and down for fifteen seconds. What do you notice?
- Use the pointer finger of your left hand to trace your right hand and then switch hands.
- Create “snow angels” by lying on the ground and moving your arms and legs together.

These mindful movement exercises are adapted from: Melhorn, R. (2022). *Mindful movement to support grieving children*. Full Circle. <https://fullcirclegc.org/2022/02/01/mindful-movement-to-support-grieving-children/>.

## **Section Four**

### **Creative Activities for Processing Grief and Loss**

It can be an added challenge to find the words to express oneself when in a place of deep pain or sadness, especially when navigating or learning to navigate a grief or loss related experience and even more so for young children. Creative approaches to processing grief and loss can be supportive tools that allow space to be with what is arising and not feel pressured to speak. They can also prompt conversations and cultivate comfortability with the myriad of challenges that come with the territory.

#### **Creative Activities**

- Collage- using found materials or cuttings from magazines and newspapers, create a collage of your feelings surrounding your loss or grief in this moment. Take some time and then make another one. Notice any changes in how you are viewing your grief/loss and expressing it through mixed media
- Scrapbook/s- ongoing project that family members, friends and wider community can add to and available to look at
- Painting- using one or many colors to paint about your grief/loss related experience
- Body maps- outline your body and draw or color in the places where you feel your body is holding emotions attached to a grief and loss-related experience. You can use this body map to support at a somatic level and during meditations.
- Memory box making- activity in tandem with the book “The Memory Box” by Joanna Rowland- using a shoebox or cardboard box to begin a collection of memoirs of the person/pet loss

- Music- play instruments or create handmade ones, write songs about your loved one/pet, learn how to play songs that they liked, make a playlist, and listen, sing
- Rituals for honoring- altar building- pictures and other special treasures and mementos of the person/pet in a designated space in the house- can have a family altar and/or personal one in a bedroom, creating a special place to visit person/pet who has died if no gravesite or is too far away, planting a tree or other living thing to represent them
- Creating traditions for holidays, birthdays, passing anniversaries- how to remember the person/pet on big days
- Practicing home funerals with pets or found dead bugs, etc...
- Resource- “When Someone Dies: A Child-Caregiver activity book” By the National Alliance for Children’s Grief, has lots of activities parents' and children can do together

### **Drawing Prompts**

- Draw a picture of a loved one or pet that has died
- Draw things you liked to do with the person or pet that has died
- Draw things you remember about that person or pet or things that remind you of them
- Draw what you think happens when you die
- Draw where you think you go when you die
- Draw diverse ways someone/something can be buried
- Resources- Everything Dies! A coloring book about life! Bri Barton

### **Connection to the Natural World**

Nature is a beautiful example of the natural cycles of life and death. Spending time outside with your child and finding opportunities to talk about these inherent natural cycles provides understanding and comfort.

- Nature walks and chats about the seasons, natural changes, life cycles and collecting examples- leaves in the fall, dead bugs for home funeral practice
- Resources- Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen and The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life or All Ages by Leo Buscaglia

## **Section Five**

### **Approaching Conversations About Death**

Children see, feel, and notice everything, this goes for not only witnessing adults around them experiencing emotions surrounding a loss but if on top of that, those feelings are not talked about or the topic of death not addressed, this can create an even greater divide in how death is viewed. Children may regard death as something so unwelcome when no one around them is talking about it, or working to process the loss in any way, so much so that it is as if death means someone vanishes and is never spoken about again (Griffith, 2003). At the most simplistic level, death can be explained as the biological process of the body ceasing to function. Given the inherent abstractness of death for young children, it is important to use the words “died” over the person “passed away.” It is invaluable when speaking about a loss, especially with younger aged children, to use language that provides a true context and reflects their developmental capacity for taking in information.

In connection to developmentally appropriate conversations, it is important for adults to reflect and ask some questions themselves before approaching a conversation. “When working with the youngest grievers, several developmental competencies need to be addressed. What is their concept of death? Is it forever? Who dies? What happens to the body? Will it happen to me? Was it my fault? Who will take care of me?” (Griffith, 2003, p. 218). When supporting a three-year old with death-related questions, it is important to note that education in connection to death is not appropriate unless the death will affect the child directly (Griffith, 2003). Understanding what is developmentally appropriate at each age to discuss is extremely important. This understanding not only prompts thoughts in connection to questions they may have in general about death but what can cause someone to die (Griffith, 2003). Questions like

this allow not only for appropriate support to be given by the adult to the child, but these questions provide opportunities to have conversations around feelings in connection to loss.

### **Contemplative Cards**

The following pages can be copied and cut into cards. Each card has a contemplative question/prompt for conversation, journaling, reflection, or for creating art. Parents can do these on their own and/or with their child.

What does dying mean to you?

Have you ever seen something/someone die?

What do you think happens after you die?

What are the ways people/pets can die?

What are the ways people/pets can be taken care of after they die?

What is a home funeral?

Can they hear me before they die?

How do I remember them?

What are my favorite memories?

What do I wish I had asked more about?

What stories did they pass onto me?

What do I want to make sure to do in my life?

What is important to me?

What helps me feel safe?

If I do not want to talk, what helps me express myself?

When I am sad, what helps me feel better? When I am angry, I feel better when I...?

How can I help myself when I am feeling overwhelmed?

What are supportive tools I can use to help my body, mind, and heart?

What can I do when I am really missing the person or pet that has died?

What can I do when I do not know what to do with all of my questions, with all of the uncertainty I feel about death?

What is mindfulness?

What is mindful living?

What does it mean to mindfully grieve?

How can someone know that I am okay, even when I want to be alone?

What are ways that I can honor the person or pet who has died?

What feels supportive to me when I am having a hard time?

**Additional Resources:**

- Roldan, M. (2022). *How I Feel Grief Journal for Kids: Guided prompts to explore your feelings and find peace*. Rockridge Press.
- Primo, M. J. (2013). *What Do We Tell the Children? Talking to kids about death and dying*. Abingdon Press.
- McWhorter, G. (2010). *Healing Activities for Children in Grief*. G. McWhorter.
- Lowenstein, L. (2006). *Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children*. Champion Press.



## Resource List

### Mindfulness, Grief, and Death-Related Literature and Picture Books

#### Mindfulness

- Feinberg, H. H. (2021). *Crying is Like the Rain- A story of mindfulness and feelings*. Findaway World, LLC.
- Oriard, K. (2018). *Sprite*. Slumberkins.
- Romo, D. (2021). *The Feelings Activity Book for Children: 50 activities to identify, understand, and manage your feelings*. Rockridge Press.
- Creech, S. (2013). *The Great Unexpected*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- Bartolj, M. (2021). *Every Little Kindness*. Chronicle Books.
- Edwards, N. (2020). *Happy: A beginner's book of mindfulness*. Random House Children's Books.
- Larson, L. (2019). *Wild Mindfulness*. Laura Larson.
- Willey, K. (2022). *Breathe Like a Bear: 30 mindful moments for kids to feel calm and focused anytime, anywhere*. Welbeck Balance.
- Silver, G. (2019). *Mindful Bea and the Worry Tree*. American Psychological Association.
- Coombs, K. (2017). *Breathe and Be: A book of mindfulness poems*. Sounds True.

#### Talking About Death

- Zucker, B. (2016). *Something Very Sad Happened: A toddler's guide to understanding death*. Magination Press.
- Eribruch. W. (2007). *Duck, Death, and the Tulip*. Gecko Press.

### Pregnancy Loss

- Baill, C. I. (2021). *Why is Mommy Crying? Explaining early pregnancy loss to young children*. River Grove Books.
- Gryte, M. (1998). *No New Baby: For siblings who have a brother or sister die before birth*. Centering Corporation.

### Nature-Related

- Mellonie, B. (1983). *Lifetimes: The beautiful way to explain death to children*. A Bantam Book.
- Buscaglia, L. (2002). *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A story of life for all ages*. SLACK Inc.

### Pet Loss

- Rylant, C. (1995). *Dog Heaven*. Scholastic Inc.
- Wahl, P. (2018). *Sonya's Chickens*. Tundra.
- Rogers, F. (1998). *When a Pet Dies*. PaperStar.
- Karst, P. (2021). *The Invisible Leash*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Gerk, A. L. (2019). *Dar Brave Friend*. Golden Harvest Publishing.

### Saying Goodbye

- Viorst, J. (1998). *The Good-Bye Book*. Atheneum.
- Henkes, K. (2015). *Waiting*. Greenwillow Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

### Grief-Related/Being with Loss/Change

- Rowland, J. (2017). *The Memory Box: A book about grief*. Sparkhouse Family.
- Jeffers, O. (2011). *The Heart and the Bottle*. HarperCollins Children's.
- Ringtved, G. (2016). *Cry, Heart, but Never Break*. Consortium Book Sales and Dist.
- Wahl, P. (2020). *The Blue House*. Tundra.
- Martina, T. (2020). *When the World Went Quiet*. Inspirebytes Omni Media.
- Wolfson, P. R. (2021). *Eddie's Brave Journey: How one little elephant learned all about grief*. Grief & Grits.
- Lamber, T. (2020). *Why Do I Feel Sad? A grief book for children*. Rockridge Press.
- Cook, J. (2021). *Grief is Like a Snowflake*. National Center for Youth Issues.
- Rahman, H. (2021). *I Lost Something very Special*. Bright Book Box.
- Heaney, C. (2021). *The Cardinal's Gift: A true story of finding hope in grief*. In the Spirit of Healing Press.
- Janes, M. (2020). *A Land Called Grief*. Bjork Print.
- Slate, J. (2021). *Marcel the Shell with Shoes On: Things about me*. Razorbill, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.
- Peden, S. (2021). *The Good Mourning: A kid's support guide for grief and mourning death: For kids by a kid*. 1<sup>st</sup> Word Publishing, LLC.
- Yang, K. K. (2021). *A Map into the World*. Carolrhoda Books.

### Staying Connected/What to do When You are Missing Someone/Remembering

- Karst, P. (2018). *The Invisible String*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

- Doerrfeld, C. (2020). *The Rabbit Listened*. Scallywag Press Ltd.
- Brosgol, V. (2021). *Memory Jars*. Roaring Brook Press.
- Thomas, P. (2001). *I Miss You: Grief and mental health books for kids*. Sourcebooks Explore.
- Arnoldy, L. F. (2021). *Map of Memory Lane*. Francesca Lynn Arnoldy.
- Correnti, J. (2021). *Forever Connected*. Kids Grief Support.

### Where Do They Go When They Die

- Hanson, W. (2002). *The Next Place*. Waldman House Press.
- Hest, V. P. (2019). *Maybe Dying is Like Becoming a Butterfly*. Clavis Publishing.

### Parents

- Perkins, J. (2020). *Mom's Sweater*. Eardmans Books for Young Readers.
- Disbury, T. T. (2021). *Lost in the Clouds*. DK Publishing.

### Grandparents

- Carvalho, L. (2018). *Grandma is a Star*. Friesen Press.
- Paquette, J. A. (2022). *All From a Walnut*. Abrams Books for Young Readers.
- Fan, T., & Fan, E. (2018). *Ocean Meets the Sky*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

### Funerals

- Brown, W. M. (2016). *The Dead Bird*. HarperCollins Children's Books.

- Lucianovic, V. W. S. (2020). *The End of Something Wonderful: A practical guide to a backyard funeral*. Sterling Children's Books.
- James, M. (2019). *The Funeral*. Affirm Press

### Sibling Loss

- Yeomans, E. (2000). *Lost and Found: Remembering a sister*. Centering Corporation.
- Reagan, J. *Always my Brother*. (2009). Tilbury House.
- Lands, A. (2019). *Perfectly Imperfect Family*. Thirty-Three Press.
- Blanford, C. (2019). *Something Happened*. Centering Corporation.
- Old, C. W. (19995). *Stacy Had a Little Sister*. A. Whitman.
- Maier, M. I. (2012). *Ben's Flying Flowers*. Magination Press.

### **Organizations**

- The Dougy Center- <https://www.dougy.org/>
- Child Bereavement Center- <https://childbereavement.org/>
- National Alliance for Children's Grief- <https://nacg.org/>
- Kids Grief- <https://kidsgrief.ca/>
- Coalition to Support Grieving Students- <https://grievingstudents.org/>
- Four Seasons Compass Program- <https://fourseasonscare.org/our-services/grief-services/compass-child-adolescent-grief-services/#:~:text=The%20Compass%20program%20offers%20help,through%20individual%20and%20group%20sessions.>
- Speaking Grief- <https://speakinggrief.org/>

- Child Mind Institute- <https://childmind.org/>
- Caring Matters- <https://www.caringmatters.org/children-s-grief-support>
- Children and Youth Grief Network- <https://www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com/>
- Sesame Street- <https://hcoe.org/project/sesame-streets-toolkit-on-grief/>
- Mr. Rogers- <https://www.fredrogersinstitute.org/archive>
- National Association of School Psychologists- <https://www.nasponline.org/>
- Mindfulness and Grief Institute- <https://mindfulnessandgrief.com/>
- Full Circle Grief Center- <https://fullcirclegc.org/>
- Teaching Children Meditation- <https://teachchildrenmeditation.com/>
- Good-Grief- <https://good-grief.org/>
- Generation Mindful- <https://genmindful.com/>
- Kidsmatter- <https://kidsmatterinc.org/>
- Lighthouse for Grieving Children- <https://lighthousegriefsupport.org/>
- Calvary Hospital- <https://www.calvaryhospital.org/children-and-grief/>
- This Beautiful Ugly- <https://www.thebeautifulugly.com/>

## References

- Cacciatore, J., Thieleman, K., Osborn, J., & Orłowski, K. (2013). Of the soul and suffering: Mindfulness-based interventions and bereavement. *Springer Science+ Business*, 42, 260-268. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-014-0491-4>
- Generation Mindful. (2022). How to support your child through grief. *Generation Mindful*. <https://genmindful.com/blogs/mindful-moments/grief>
- Griffith, T. (2003). Assisting with the “Big Hurts, Little tears” of the youngest griever: Working with three-, four-, and five-year old’s who have experienced loss and grief because of death. *Illness, Crisis, and Loss*, 11(3), 217-255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1054137303254312>
- Melhorn, R. (2022). *Mindful movement to support grieving children*. Full Circle. <https://fullcirclegc.org/2022/02/01/mindful-movement-to-support-grieving-children/>
- Prazak, M., & Tillman, K. S. (2018). Kids supporting kids: A 10-week small group curriculum for grief and loss in schools. *British Association for Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 18, 395-401. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12190>
- Rossetto, K. R. (2015). Bereaved parents’ strategies and reactions when supporting their surviving children. *Western Journal of Communication*, 79(5), 533-554
- Sherner, T. (2015). Help children understand grief and loss. *ONS Connect*. 30(3), 36
- Wolkin, J. (2021). *Mindful Magazine*, name <https://www.mindful.org/5-ways-mindfulness-can-help-us-work-through-grief/>

**Blank Pages for Reflections, Drawing, Writing, and Mementos**