

# Grief:

A Normal Emotional Response to Loss

## About this Curriculum

Grief comes in many forms and is not just a reaction to death. Grief is a complicated experience that looks different for everyone. In this curriculum module, we provide tools for understanding and normalizing grief, whatever form it might take.

### Objective

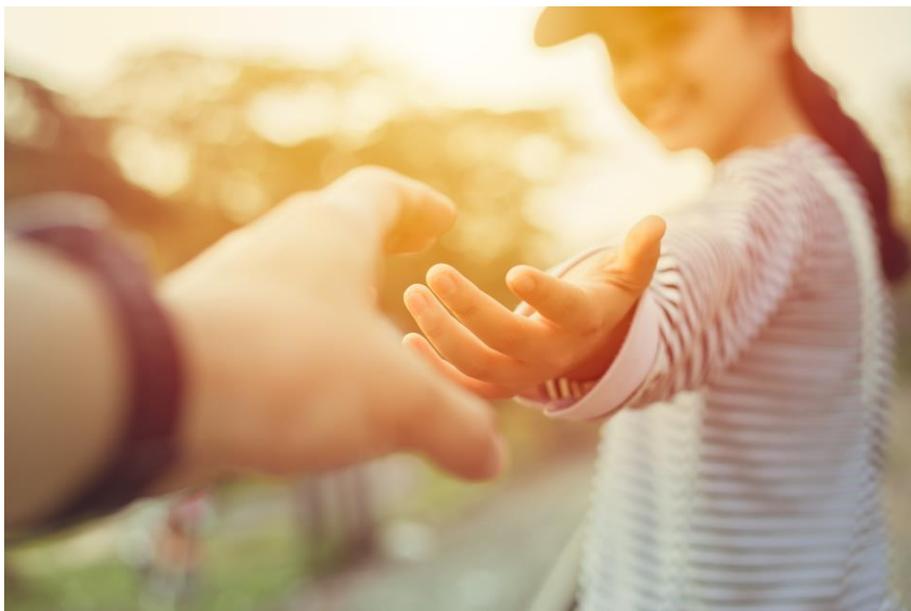
- Provide students with tools to manage grief related to death and loss
- Help normalize reactions to death and other losses
- Provide resources for understanding and working through those reactions

### Materials

- Grief Facilitator Guide
- Grief PowerPoint deck
- Grief Student Workbook

### Time

45-60 minutes, depending on level of engagement and discussion



# Grief:

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## Presentation Guide

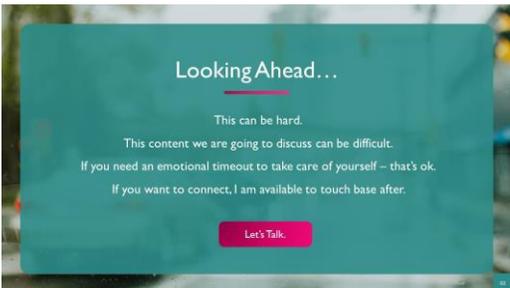
### Slide 1



#### Title Slide | Grief: A Normal Emotional Response to Loss

- Introduce yourself – Your name, role, and why you're leading this curriculum module.

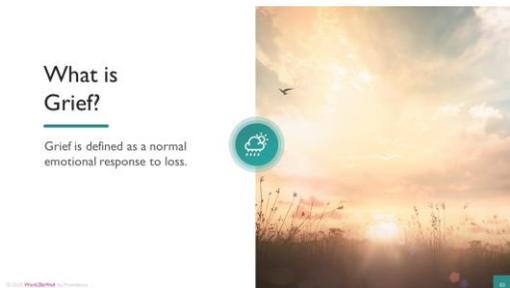
### Slide 2



#### Looking Ahead

- Read the Trigger Warning.
- Be sure to emphasize and normalize that this is a difficult topic and that it is OK to need time to process everything.
- If using a virtual setting, students can remain anonymous by renaming themselves.

### Slide 3



#### What is Grief?

- Ask students to define grief on their worksheets
- Ask students to make a list of what life events can lead to grief.
- After the students have finished, ask them to share their answers aloud, if they are willing.
- Other examples of grief to share with students:
  - Moving to a new location
  - Divorce, Death
  - Loss of events
  - Transition in the friend group
  - Relationship loss
  - Experiences lost to COVID
  - Routine changes (peers leaving)
  - Adjusting to new environments like college
  - Disasters (hurricanes, wildfires, etc.)

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## Presentation Guide (continued)

### Slide 4

#### Let's Discuss

How do you define grief?

Have you experienced loss? If so, in what capacity?

Do we think there is one type of loss and grief? Or more than one? Explain.

What can lead to grief?



#### Let's Discuss

- In small groups, have the students share their own experiences and how they view grief. Emphasize the point that grief never looks the same .
- Have the students discuss the questions listed on the slide.

### Slide 5



#### How Teens Deal with Grief

- Watch the video (10:13 min)
- In 2010 Marieke Poelmann, 22 at the time, suddenly lost her parents as a result of a plane crash. It took her several years to see that bad things in life do not necessarily have to define you. In her talk she discusses her loss and how she learned to cope with it, and as a result came out a stronger person.

### Slide 6



#### Key Takeaways from Video

- Have the students discuss their takeaways from the video.

### Slide 7



#### What does Grief Look Like?

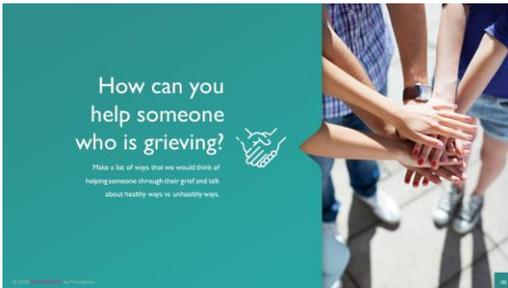
- Activity: Ask students to share in small groups, breakout rooms or use a virtual chat box, to share ideas of what might be reactions to grief.
- Alternatively, list some of the possible reactions: Feeling numb or depressed, overwhelmed with sadness, decreased academic performance, low attention/concentration, attendance, avoidance, withdrawal, high-risk behavior or substance drug/alcohol abuse, difficulty with peer relations, nightmares, flashbacks, increased sadness and bouts of crying, anger or irritability, etc.

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## Presentation Guide (continued)

### Slide 8



### How Can You Help Someone Who is Grieving?

- Activity: In Small groups, students will make a list of how to help someone through grief on their worksheet.
- The facilitator will discuss ways to help someone who is grieving.
- For example:
  - Validate their feelings and don't judge them
  - Check in with them and also know when to give them space
  - Try to distract them with a joke, care package, letter, or positive text
  - Anxiety grounding techniques: Focus on your breathing then identify: 5 things you can SEE, 4 things you can TOUCH, 3 things you can HEAR, 2 things you can SMELL, 1 thing you can TASTE.
  - E-First Aid Kit: Revisit what is in your Emotional First Aid Kit: sounds, site, touch, smell, humans, and take action

### Slide 9

#### Normalizing Grief: Validate and Create a Brave Space



- Understand that grief is a normal feeling and is common after loss.
- Be sensitive to each experience. There is no "right" way to respond to loss.
- Normalize expressed feelings by reassuring they are common after a loss
- Allow people to share their feelings privately
- Know that everyone's grief is personal.

### Normalizing Grief: Validate and Create a Brave Space

- Discuss the importance of allowing our brains to process grief for healing to happen and that triggers come along with grief, both expected and unexpected.
- Grief can be expected: Birthdays, Anniversaries, others losing the same thing
- Grief can be unexpected: A specific smell that reminds you of your loss, seeing something on social media.
- People Grieve in different ways: Verbally, through art, keep busy or stay active, writing poetry, notes, or songs. Some create a dedicated project in honor of the loss.
- Responses can vary based on culture, location so we should be sensitive to cultural differences in expressing grief and honoring the loss.

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## Presentation Guide (continued)

### Slide 10



#### Outlets That Help During Grief

What are outlets that have helped you during times of grief?

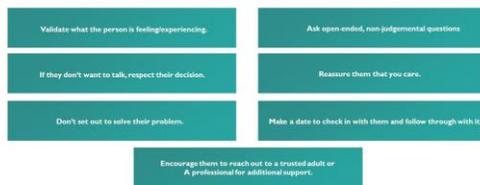
Create a support system! Your support system can guide you to find healthy coping techniques. Who is in your support system?

#### Outlets That Help During Grief

- Ask the students: What are outlets that help during times of grief?
- Activity: Ask students to speak up (or use a virtual chat box) to share things that have helped them during times of grief.
- Give examples of helpful outlets: Find ways to express your grief: listen to music, journal, dance, sing, bike, hike, fish, write a letter to someone you lost, do things that remind you of your loved ones etc.
- Examples of support systems: Find a therapist, confide in a trustworthy friend, ask a family member for support, talk to a trusted adult (mentors, counselors, teachers)

### Slide 11

#### How to Support Someone Who is Grieving?



#### How to Support Someone Who is Grieving?

- Read the bullet points out loud and thoroughly go over each example.
- Have students give other examples on how to reach out.

### Slide 12

#### What Should I Say?

Finding the right words is not easy. Practice the support tips on the previous slide and think of what is most helpful to say to someone who is grieving.

Instead of Saying...	Say...
It was only your dog.	Are you ok? I know your dog was a part of your family.
It has been a month, you should be getting over this.	Healing takes time. I am always here for you.
You will get new friends.	Reach out to them or make a facetime call.
I know what you are going through.	I am here for you. I am here with you.

#### What Should I Say?

- Finding the right words is not easy.
- Think of what is most helpful to say to someone who is grieving.
- Practice the support tips on the previous slide.
- Other examples:
  - Are you ok?
  - What are you doing today?
  - Is there anything on your mind?
  - What are you watching?
  - Want to facetime later?
  - How are you taking care of yourself today?
  - What times of the day/week are the hardest?

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## Presentation Guide (continued)

### Slide 13

#### Help During a Crisis

If you or someone you know is in crisis, professional support is available.

<b>YouthLine</b> A Division of @nami.org YouthLine is a teen-to-teen youth crisis and support service. YouthLine operates a national helpline that provides crisis support and referrals via call, text, and chat. <a href="https://youthlineonline.org/">https://youthlineonline.org/</a> Call 877-765-8491 Or Text "teen2teen" to 839863	<b>NAMI</b> National Alliance on Mental Illness The NAMI HelpLine is a free, nationwide peer-support service providing information, resource referrals and support to people living with a mental health condition, their family members and caregivers, mental health providers and the public. <a href="https://www.nami.org/home">https://www.nami.org/home</a> Call 800-955-4244 Or Text "NAMI" to 741741	<b>TREVOR</b> LGBTQ CRISIS HOTLINE CALL, TEXT AND CHAT The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 25. <a href="https://www.thetrevorproject.org/">https://www.thetrevorproject.org/</a> Call 866-488-7386 Or Text "Start" to 687687	<b>iCANHELP</b> iCANHELP educates and empowers students to create positive online communities and become inspirational digital citizens. <a href="https://www.icanhelp.net/">https://www.icanhelp.net/</a>
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#### Help During a Crisis

- If you or someone you know is in a crisis, professional support is available. Go over the different professional support and explain what each support system does.
- Emphasize that individuals are not responsible, or always well-equipped to provide direct help. Connecting someone with professional help is best.

### Slide 14

You can't take care of others until you take care of yourself.

#### You Can't Take Care of Others Until You Take Care of Yourself

- Emphasize this point.
- Allow yourself to grieve.
- What are some steps you could take if you are grieving?

### Slide 15

#### Self-Care While Supporting

- Sounds** Create a list on your phone using any streaming service like Spotify or Apple Music.
- Touch** Have things that bring you joy like stress balls, pens, weighted blankets, soft clothing items, or other accessories.
- Flavors** Make a list of people who inspire you.
- Smells** Put scents that make you happy and relaxed.
- Take Action** Pick a 10, 15, 30-minute activity, set a timer, and express yourself with judgment free.

#### Self-Care While Supporting

- Remember to take care of yourself.
- Have students share their favorite emotional first aid kit items in small groups.

## Additional Resources