

Grief and Loss Resources for Elementary Students

BOOK RESOURCES

Ages 4 and Up

When I Miss You, by Cornelia Maude Spelman

The Invisible String, by Patrice Karst

The Memory Box: A Book About Grief, by Joanna Rowland and Thea Baker

I Miss You: A First Look at Death, by Pat Thomas

Everett Anderson's Goodbye, by Lucille Clifton, about a father's death

My Grandson Lew, by Charlotte Zolotow, about a grandparent's death

Samantha Jane's Missing Smile: A Story About Coping With the Loss of a Parent, by Donna Pincus

Where Are You? A Child's Book about Loss, by Laura Olivieri

Chocolate Chipped; A Smelly Book About Grief, by Shelley Gilbert and Vicky Baruch

When Dinosaurs Die: Guide to Understanding Death, by, Brown, L.K.

Rachel and the Upside Down Heart, by, Douglas, E., Price

Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children, by, Mellonie, B. & Ingpen, R

Why Did It Happen? Helping Children Cope in a Violent World, by, Cohen, J.

Ages 8 and Up

Good Answers to Tough Questions About Death, by Joy Berry

A Complete Book About Death for Kids, by Earl Grollman, for all ages

When Something Terrible Happens, by Marge Heegaard

When Someone Very Special Dies, by Marge Heegaard

Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for Helping Kids Cope When a Special Person Dies, by Janis Silverman

All Ages

What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? by Trevor Romain

The Next Place, by Warren Hanson, for all ages

FACTS ABOUT GRIEF

- Everybody grieves differently.
- When someone close to you dies, your emotions and behavior might change. You might sleep differently, be moodier or angrier, or feel sick. It's okay to feel this way.
- You can have different feelings at different times of the day. You can play and still be sad.
- Everything that lives eventually dies.
- People who die won't come back into our lives but we can always remember them with our thoughts and actions.
- There is no “right” way to grieve and no one goes through the stages of grief in the same way

ACTIVITIES FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

ALLOW A GRIEVING CHILD THE OPPORTUNITY TO WRITE, DRAW, OR TALK ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS RELATED TO THEIR GRIEF

If they need prompting a few possible topics are:

- Grief feels like _____
- The best thing someone did to help me feel better was _____.
- I like to think of my loved one doing _____
- The thing I remember most about my loved one is _____
- Have them draw a picture of a memory that brings a smile to your face

MEMORIALS, RITUALS AND FUNERALS Age Level: 3 to 8 Years

Materials Needed: Paper, crayons, felt pens, book: The Tenth Good Thing About Barney, by Judith Viorst.

Goal: To help students become more comfortable with funerals and memorials following the death of a loved one.

Description of Activity: 1. Read the book, The Tenth Good Thing About Barney. 2. Have the children list or draw things they remember about the person who died. 3. Discuss the funeral/memorial service of the deceased. Have the children discuss if they attended, what they remember, what were the best and worst parts for them. 4. Discuss the importance of remembering someone who died.

PARTING GIFTS Age Level: 3 to 12 Years

Materials Needed: Book: Badger's Parting Gifts, by Susan Varley, paper, crayons, liquid crayons and lapboards.

Goal: To remember the abilities taught to us by the person who died, to acknowledge that the person who died gave us lasting gifts and to remember them and have them with us always.

Description of Activity: 1. For younger students, tell the story of Badger's Parting Gifts or read the story as written. 2. Model an ability (i.e. whistling, skipping, climbing trees, singing, etc.) for the children that you learned from a person who died. 3. Invite the children to share abilities they were taught by the person who died.

Examples: Katie (5): "I can talk because my mommy talked to me. She helped me to learn to talk." John (11): "My dad taught me how to shoot baskets. We went to the park almost every Saturday to shoot hoops. He was going to build a backboard for the driveway at our new house."

WHAT I REMEMBER MOST Age Level: 4+ Years

Materials Needed: Small plates, pens, paper, pencils, paints and brushes.

Goal: To give the students an opportunity to remember and share.

Description of Activity: 1. Have the students draw a circle on a piece of paper 8" x 10" or larger. 2. In the middle of the circle have them draw a picture of the person who died. Around the edges of the circle have them draw pictures and symbols or write words that remind them of that person. 3. Have students share their remembrances with the class.

MEMORY BOX Age Level: 6+ Years

Materials Needed: Shoe boxes with lids, photos and personal items of the person who died, construction paper, magazines, fabric, scissors and glue.

Goal: To help the students remember the deceased and have a safe place to put things that belonged to the deceased, as well as art or writings they make for that person.

Description of Activity: 1. Have the students decorate their box with materials, pictures and photos, etc. 2. Ask them to place memory objects, pictures, poems or written memories in the box. 3. Allow students to share with the group.

ANAGRAMS Age Level: 7 to 18 Years

Materials Needed: Paper and pens.

Goal: To remember and memorialize the person who died.

Description of Activity: 1. Have the children/teens write the name of the person who died

vertically on a piece of paper. 2. The children/teens then write down words, sentences or phrases which remind them of the person, using the letters of the name. 3. Have the students share their remembrances

BOOK OF THOUGHTS Age Level: 6+ Years

Materials Needed: Paper folded in half to make a book, pencils, pens, markers and a stapler.

Goal: To facilitate journal-writing activities as a way of processing grief.

Description of Activity: 1. each student is given a booklet of blank pages stapled together. 2. Ask the students to write one question or topic on the top of some of the pages that they would like to include in their Book of Thoughts. Examples: “One thing I would like to tell my mom.” “One thing I would like to know about the person who died.” Some of the pages can remain blank for writing whatever they are feeling. 3. The students can share their questions and topics with each other. 4. They then illustrate each topic page with a story, poem or drawing. Allow the students to have unfinished pages. 5. Have the students break up into small groups of two or three to share their books with others. 6. Encourage students to write daily in their journal.

MEMORY PICTURES Age Level: All

Materials Needed: Construction paper, magazines, index cards, colored pencils, crayons, metal rings, hole punch and snapshots (optional)

Goal: To acknowledge the experience of the students as real and valuable and to give them a way to share their feelings with classmates, family and friends

Description of Activity: 1. Have the students connect 4” x 6” index cards or pieces of paper with a metal ring representing pages of a book. 2. They can then make a border for each page so the pictures will look like snapshots on the page. 3. The students will then draw memories and/or attach snapshots. They can use any media available to decorate the pages. 4. Encourage the students to share the book with family and friends whenever they feel ready.

SMILE: Share, Memories, Imagine, Love and Enjoy. An uplifting approach to helping children heal from grief and loss. Detail information about creating a memory book.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50FQiaQed-c>

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SPECIALIZE IN GRIEF AND LOSS

Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents, and Their Families

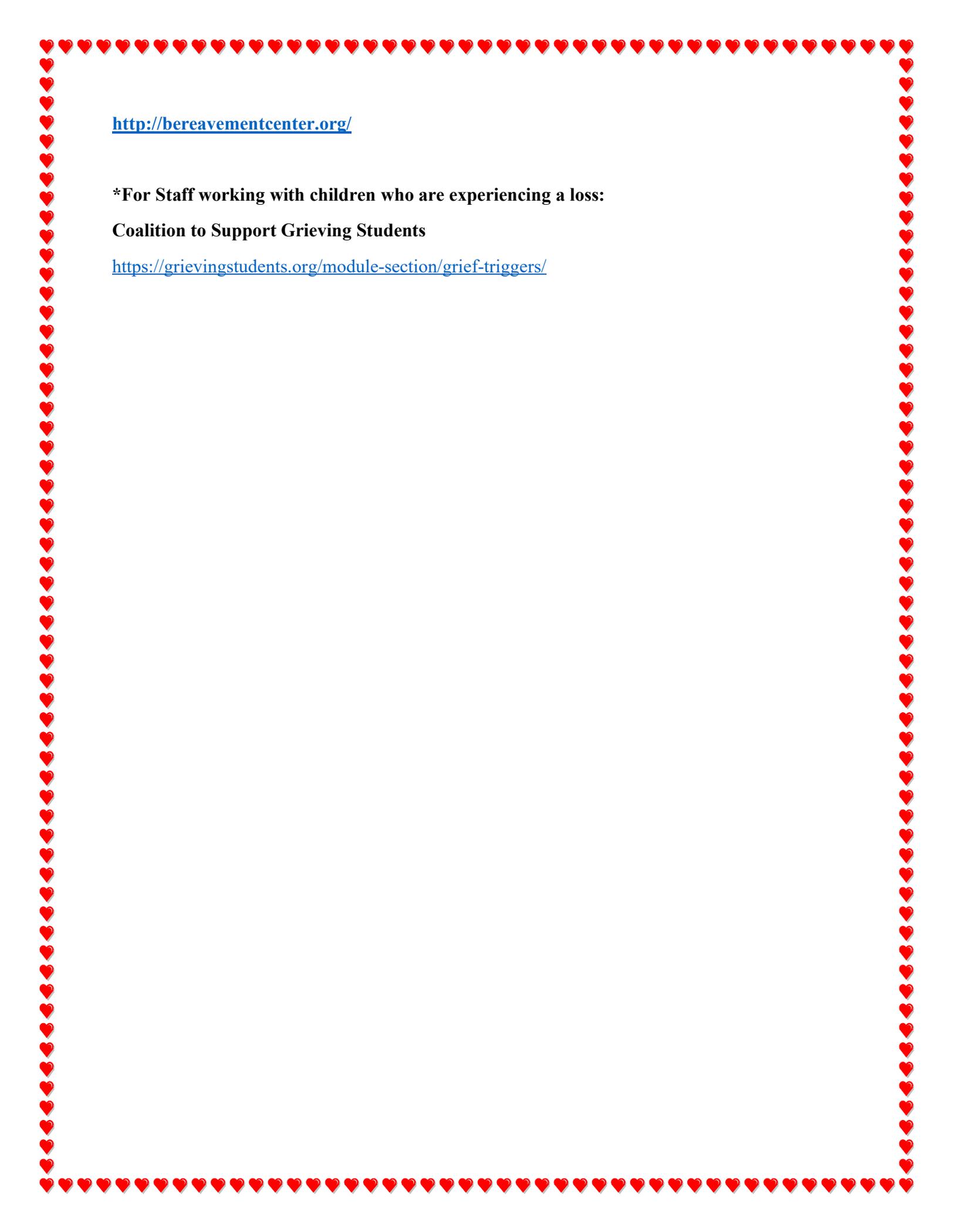
This organization has wonderful information and resources about grieving on their website:

<https://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/index.shtml>

Safe Harbor is a great resource in our area with support groups, camps, and information and resources for children who have lost parents.

<https://www.abingtonhealth.org/services-specialties/childrens-health/resources/safe-harbor/>

The Center for Loss and Bereavement provides specialized grief counseling, group counseling with peers, and additional resources.

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<http://bereavementcenter.org/>

***For Staff working with children who are experiencing a loss:**

Coalition to Support Grieving Students

<https://grievingstudents.org/module-section/grief-triggers/>