

Supporting Grieving Students and Families: A Resource Guide for Educators

THANK YOU for participating in the April 2024 restorative workshop, a part of the *Replenish Series* designed by Dr. Rajni Shankar-Brown and brought to PA in partnership with the [Center for Schools and Communities](#) as a part of the ARP–HCY initiative. This handout highlights some of the key concepts discussed at our session and provides extended resources for further exploration, learning, and growth.

Recognizing the impact of grief on learning and emotional well-being is the first step in providing the necessary support and resources.

Here are a few examples of loss. In addition, note that loss types often overlap and may also be interwoven in nature.

- **Traumatic Loss** (loss from natural disasters, housing, loved one, etc.)
- **Emotional Loss** (loss of a pet, relationship, divorce/separation, etc.)
- **Object Loss** (loss of a valued object, car, etc.)
- **Physical Loss** (loss of property, body part, etc.)
- **Psychological Loss** (loss of self-image or self-concept, social status, etc.)
- **Financial Loss** (loss of a job, bankruptcy, assets, investments, etc.)
- **Perceived Loss** (loss of youth, potential estrangements, etc.)
- **Anticipatory Loss** (terminal illness, pending graduation or retirement, etc.)

Loss can be sudden, gradual, expected, or unexpected. Grieving is a deeply personal and varied experience.

1 in 12 children in the U.S. will experience the death of a parent, guardian, or sibling by the age of 18. Nearly 8 million children and youth lost a parent or caregiver to COVID-19. – JAG Institute, 2024

Strategies to support grieving:

Be present: Sit with grief and the complexities of emotions, as well as fluctuation of stages such as denial, sadness, guilt, distress, anger, loneliness, acceptance, etc.

Seek help: Seeking professional support is a sign of strength and a step toward healing.

Provide space: Create space for grieving students and families to share, including space without advice, judgement, etc.

Express grief: Arts integration has numerous benefits to support grieving and healing.

Utilize affirmations: In my sadness, I love myself; I honor my pain and warm memories in the cycle of life; I choose healing, etc.

Reframe thinking: Shift mindset, use positive reframing, and give grace. For example, instead of thinking/saying *I should be over this ...* reframe by thinking/saying *healing takes time*.

Create rituals: develop an activity or practice that honors loss. Rituals help create space for s to emotionally process grief.

Nature Heals: Science shows that spending time outside in nature and/or bringing nature indoors (plants, sound of water, etc.) can bring comfort, have restorative powers and help with healing.

Share resources: Provide access to school and community resources and tools that may help in working through loss and grief.

Grief is like the ocean; it comes in waves, ebbing and flowing. – V. Harrison

Keep growing!

Here are a few extended learning resources:

WEBSITES:

[National Education Association \(NEA\) Grief and Loss Resources for Educators and Students](#)
[National Alliance for Children's Grief](#)
[Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute](#)
[NCTSN Helping Teens with Grief](#)
[NCTSN Helping School-Age Children with Grief](#)
[Kate's Club – Grief Resources](#)
[Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model & CDC](#)

BOOKS:

[The Grieving Brain](#) by Dr. Mary-Frances O'Connor
[Books for Grieving Students](#) Compiled by Allina Health

TED Talk:

[It's Time we Reframe Grief for Children](#) by Kate Atwood

ARTICLE:

[When Students Grieve, How Can Educators Help?](#) By Mary Ellen Flannery (NEA)
The Healing Power of Gardens by Oliver Sacks (NY Times)