



Rose LaPiere LPC, RPT-S, ACS
www.roselapiere.com

Email: rjlapiere@mac.com

Helping Families Grieve:

Loss Of Parent or Sibling

ABOUT ME



© Rose LaPiere, LPC, RPT-S, ACS

Registered
Play Therapist
-Supervisor

Synergetic
Play Therapist
Supervisor

Certified
EMDR &
Consultant
in Training

Foundational
Theraplay
Practitioner



Teaching, Providing Workshops & Consultation

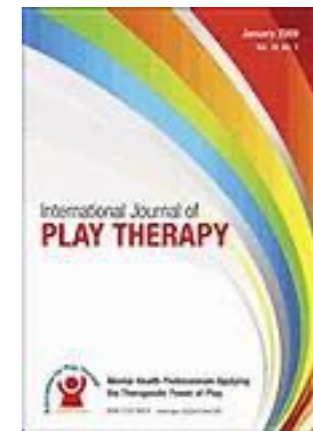
Today's Agenda

- Therapist's own experience of loss / grief.
- Misconceptions about grief
- Grief and the nervous system
- Children's expressions of grief
- Families activities that heal
- Resources



The importance of theory...

- Disaster Mental Health
- Grief Model/Theory (Kubler-Ross & Kessler) (Worden)
- Family Systems Theory / Attachment Theory
- Polyvagal Theory
- Child Development
- Prescriptive play therapy



October 2020

**“Feeling so much & nothing
at all
at the same time”**

“Sadness”

**“You carry your pain with you
inside, people can’t always see it, but it’s there”**

What is Grief

**Deep sorrow, especially caused by someone’s death (the
psychological, behavioral, social, physical reactions to a loss)**

**“Big mix of all sorts of
Emotions: anger, sadness..”**

**“It’s like my inside’s have ripped
apart.”**

“Whole in your chest”

“Lost”

**“Taken someone you love away from you
And you can never get it back”**

How comfortable is talking about death for you?

Consider these questions.

“Helpers must come to terms with their own anxiety about death. We can not expect to be helpful when we ourselves have a need to deny our own mortality...”

Crenshaw, Page 30

- My first experience with death. Who was the person and what do I remember about that experience?:
- When I think of someone close to me dying, this is what goes through my mind and what I feel:
- This is what I think happens after we die:
- What concerns do you have with working with families who have experienced loss.

Source: The Families Goal Project

**Sometimes I don't want
To experience anything.**

**When my mom died:
I wish people told me it was
Okay to cry.**

I am extremely lonely.

**My feelings change moment to moment.
Sometimes I am so happy I have forgotten about
my mom not being here but mostly
I feel sad, lonely, angry, lost.**

**When my dad died: I wish people
asked me how I felt.**

What I wish people knew:

**When asked about individual
vs family therapy :
Hard enough to talk about
her, I can't do this
without my family.**

**When my sister died: I wish people knew
That not only was I dealing with loss of my sister but
my parents were changed too!**

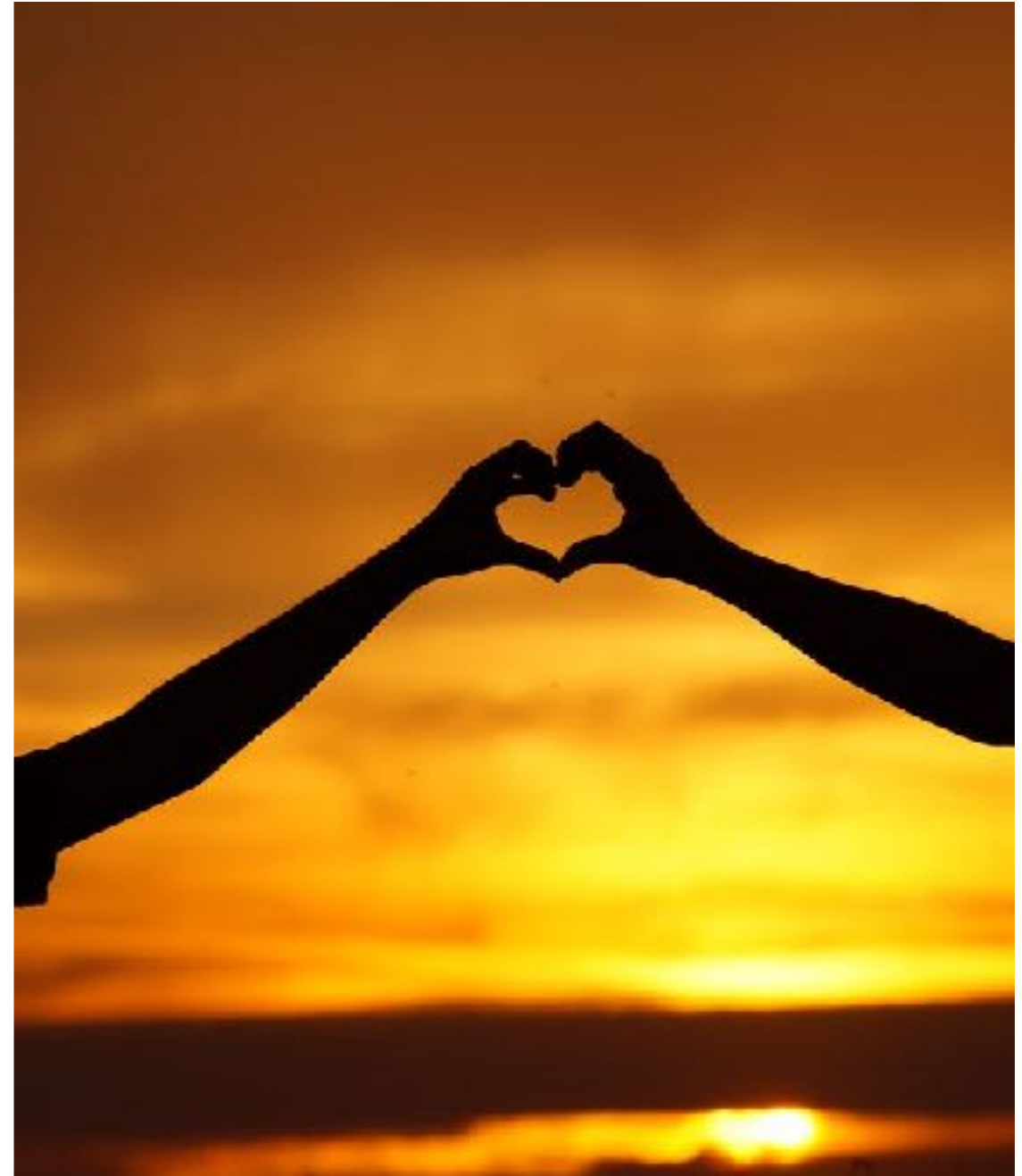
**You can't understand unless it happens
to you, friends don't really know. They say things
Like you will be okay. I don't say anything but it
Makes me realize they don't get it.**

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**Even when we are happy and having fun I think of him and wish
he was here to see it, or imagine her in the moment. Then I might feel sad.**

Statistics

- 1-5 children will experience death of someone close to them U.S.
- 1.5 million children are living in single parent house hold because of death of one parent.
- 1 out of every 20 children (15 & younger) will have loss of 1 or both parents (not included in this number are caregivers who could be aunt, grandparent, etc..).
- Estimated 73,000 children die every year & of those 86% have siblings.



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Source of Statistics: <https://www.experience.camp/stats>

Common Misconceptions About Grief

- Grief follows a timetable.
- Generalizing grief for all despite culture background.
- Generalizing grief for a family.
- It will heal in time- no need to do anything.



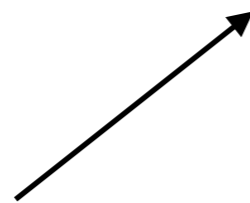
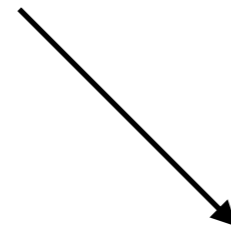
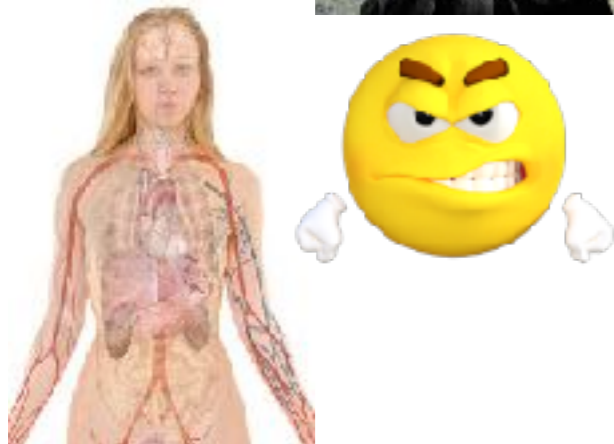
Nervous System Safety

After Loss

Book: Clinical Applications of The Polyvagal Theory.
Ch. 18 Ossefort-Russell

Environmental impact
From the loss

Factors that are individual



Regulated
Inconsistent

Chaos
Fight/Flight/Freeze

Collapse





Connection

Our brains are always asking: (Especially during times of transition/change.)

Do you see me? Am I Safe? Do I matter?

Dan Siegel

Impact of Change at Different Developmental Stages

0-8mths & 8mths-2years

Sources: Lowenstein & The Families Goal Project

Grief Response

<p>0 - 8mths- needs parent to meet needs</p>	<p>-Distress: sleep disturbance, clinginess, crying - May sense parent sadness -Loss impact later clingy or standoffish</p>
<p>8mths - 2 years</p>	<p>-will feel loss of primary caregiver Similar distress above</p>

Impact of Change at Different Developmental Stages

2-4 years old

Information in chart adapted from: Lowenstein
As well as NJ Mental Health Assoc. and Crenshaw

	Concept of Death	Grief Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -developing more independence -verbal skills developing and feelings and needs -Can keep absent parent in mind to comfort 	<p>Belief: The person might come back. They are living somewhere else.</p> <p>wondering "Am I responsible for this."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anxious about needs being met (food, shelter, visitation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Regression-tantrum, anxious. bathroom, needing security blankets, old toys -Anxiety at bed time -Fear of other parent leaving not coming back -Seeking physical comfort

Impact of Change at Different Developmental Stages

5-8 years old

	Concept of Death	Grief Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developing peer relationships -Moral development 	<p>Understands finality of death, but may perceive can't happen to me, "I'm quick" (death is not understood as universal).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Overt signs sadness, anger, hyperactivity, anxious -Changes in eating, sleeping, somatic complaints -Behavioral problems -May try to take on role of departing parent -_talks about death, worry others die, feel abandonment, act in similar way of deceased person

Impact of Change at Different Developmental Stages

9-12 years old

	Concept of Death	Grief Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increased awareness of self -Trying to fit in with peers 	<p>Understands finality of death, and understands bad things can happen to me (as move to adolescence they usually try to deny reality of death.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Intense sadness, anger, withdrawal, acting out, argumentative, demanding, hyperactive, no reaction at all. -Changes in eating, sleeping, physical complaints <p><u>Death</u>-preoccupation of it, having similar symptoms, concerns for self or others</p>

Impact of Change at Different Developmental Stages

Teen Years

	Concept of Death	Grief Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Abstract Thinking -At times more likely to act on impulse -Parents not usually idealized at this point. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Understands finality of death. -Ability to discuss death in more of an adult way. - In conflict with role they should play in family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Intense sadness, anger, withdrawal, acting out, argumentative, demanding, denial embarrassed. -Changes in eating, sleeping, physical complaints. - May use drugs / alcohol deal with feelings related to death.



- 1. Which would be the reactions that you find the most challenging? Why?**
- 2. What expression of grief might be the most difficult for you to tolerate? Why?**
- 3. How can you regulate through those challenges?**

Structure of Counseling Session

- Intake parents only
- Family Session
- Family Session continued or Parent / Child session (15 min) then child play therapy rest of session. Teen sessions may also have time with parents in part of session.
- Parent only session every 4-6 weeks
- Create a flow of the session: Beginning, middle, & end.

Beginning & Ending Activities

- Playfulness, Regulation Skills, & Sense of Safety
- Check in-
- Family Handshake
- Affirmations
- Flower / Stones/ shell
- Preparing family day before. (Make the unknown known)



Affirmations

- It is okay to feel afraid
- I am lovable and special
- My feelings are important
- I can talk to grown-ups about how I feel
- It's o.k. to be mad
- I am brave
- I will always have my memories of my special person



“When you’re free, you can play and when you’re playing you become free.”

Dr. Heidi Kaduson

Connection Activities

Do you see me? Am I Safe? Do I matter?

Dan Siegel

- Cotton ball loves
- Drawing designs on back
- Making bracelet-adult keeps one, & child keeps one.
- Family Rock Pass
- Older teens need to vary

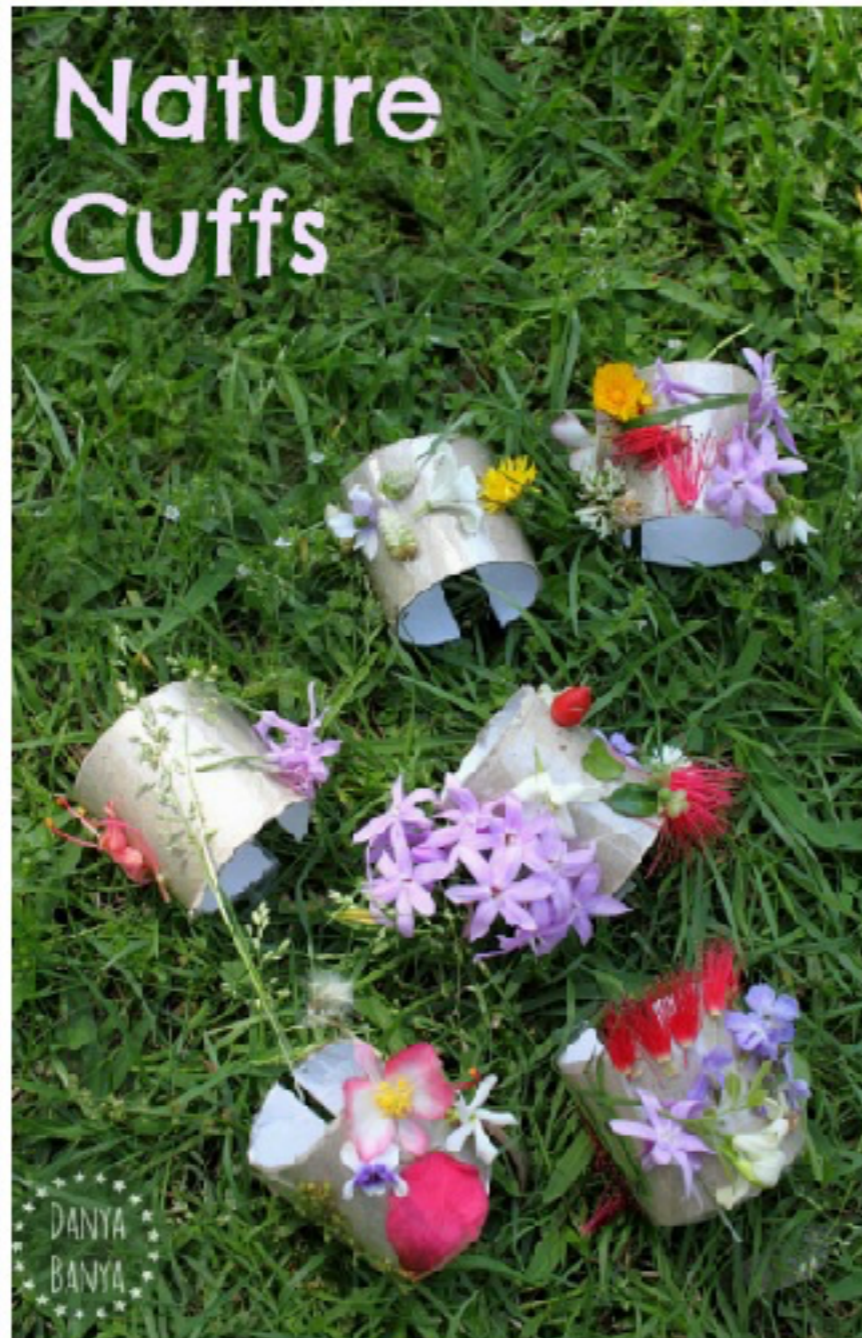


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Nature Cuffs



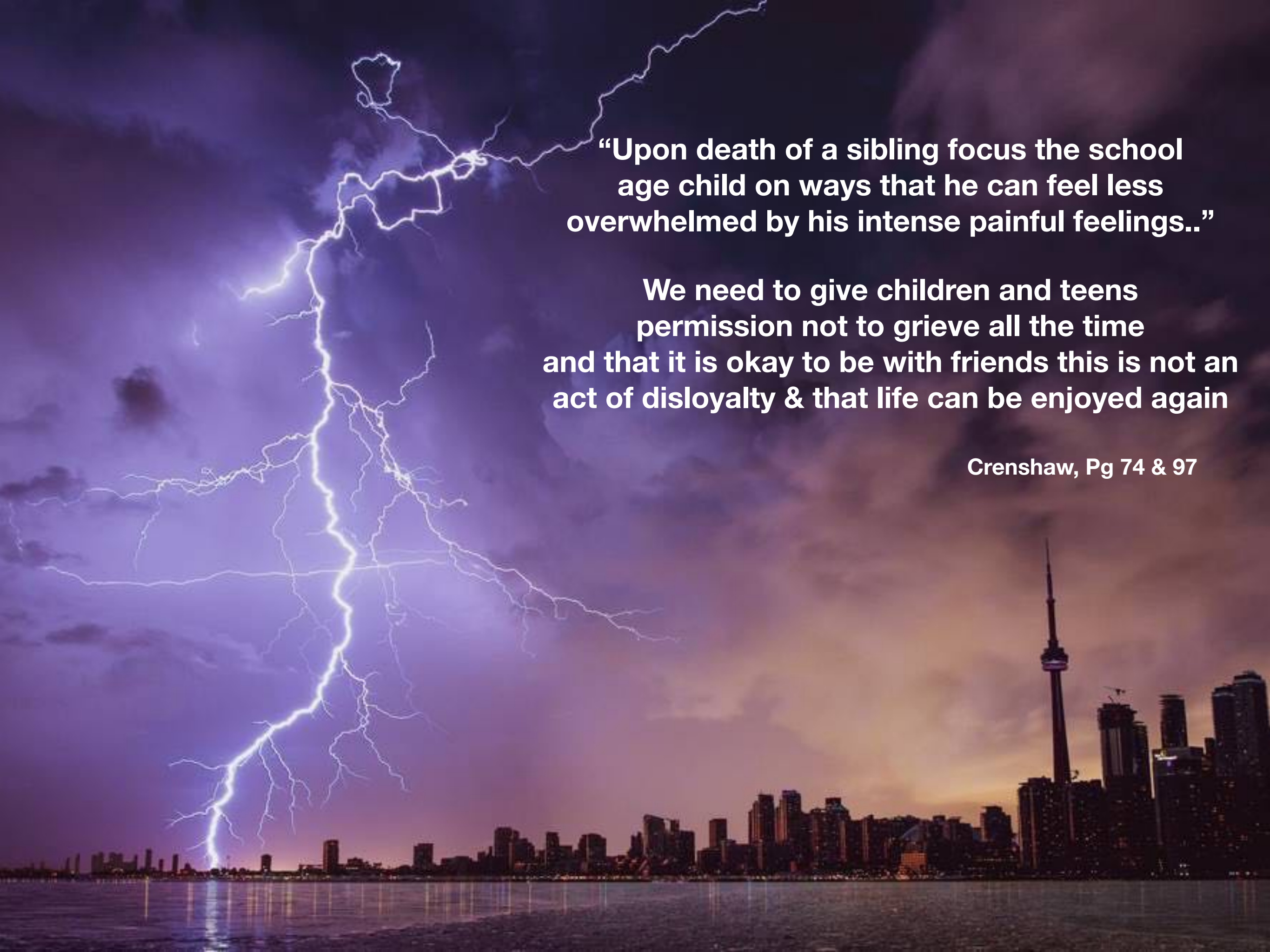
Kids Crafts
Beaded Stretch Bracelets



Toilet paper roll

Clear packing tape- sticky side of clear tape up

**Go on nature walk together and decorate your bracelets- leaves,
& Flowers**

A dramatic night sky with a city skyline and a massive lightning bolt striking down. The lightning bolt is bright white and purple, branching out across the dark, stormy clouds. The city skyline is visible in the background, with the CN Tower prominently featured on the right side. The water in the foreground reflects the city lights and the lightning.

“Upon death of a sibling focus the school age child on ways that he can feel less overwhelmed by his intense painful feelings..”

We need to give children and teens permission not to grieve all the time and that it is okay to be with friends this is not an act of disloyalty & that life can be enjoyed again

Crenshaw, Pg 74 & 97

Regulation Activities

- Music
- Movement - move 1 body part as fast as you can then move slow.
- Eagle Balancing Breathe (coin)

(Balance bird gravity)

- Partner yoga poses





Family Activities That Heal

1. Weathering the Storm
2. Dreams
3. Family Poem Name
4. Snow globe Story (Snow globe or Ornament) - Taleidoscope /
5. I get by with a little help from my friends. (questions with puppets).
6. Memories on a Tree
7. Flying Wish Paper



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Weathering The Storm

By: Rose LaPiere, LPC, RPT-S, ACS

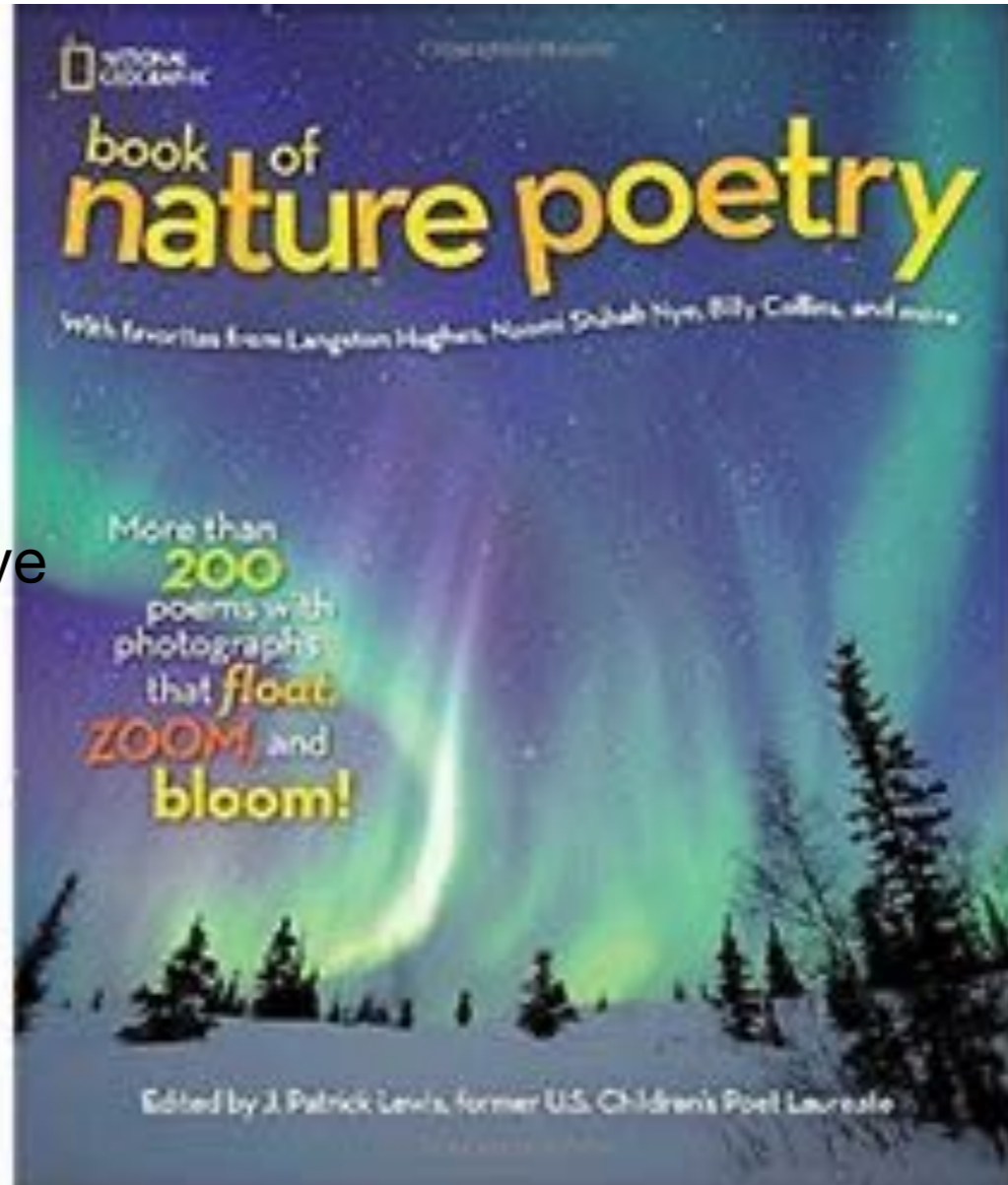
1) What type of
Weather matches....
How your feel about
What happened
To your special
Person or how you feel right now?

2) Create that weather in the
sand tray or VSA app. Or let's move
Our bodies like that weather.

3) After your creation in the sand
Tell a story beginning, middle
and end.

-Notice: what do they use to
protection? (maybe none)

-how do they survive the storm?



Dreams

Explain to client the Native American History of Dream catcher



Instructions on how to make a dream catcher and information on dream catchers
<http://www.dream-catchers.org/make-a-dream-catcher-for-kids/>

Family Poem

Smart

A good friend

Kind

Caring

Rational

Grateful

Silly

Optimistic

Silly

Loving

Creative

Expressive

Funny

Forgiving

Joyful

Brave

Energetic

Observant

Helpful

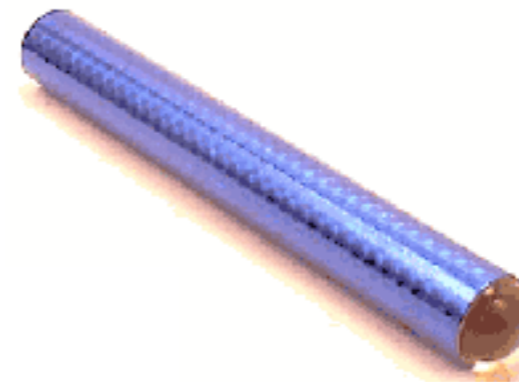
Helpful

Nice

- Give each person in family someone else's name to make a poem.
- The whole family each does the person name who died or they make one together.

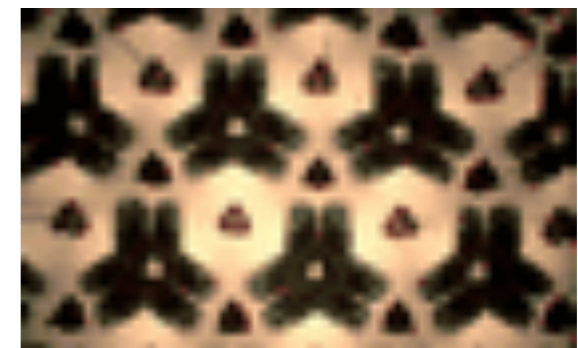
Snow Globe /Ornament

Snow Globe Story adapted from Family Goals Project



Transparent Prism

[Click to Enlarge](#)



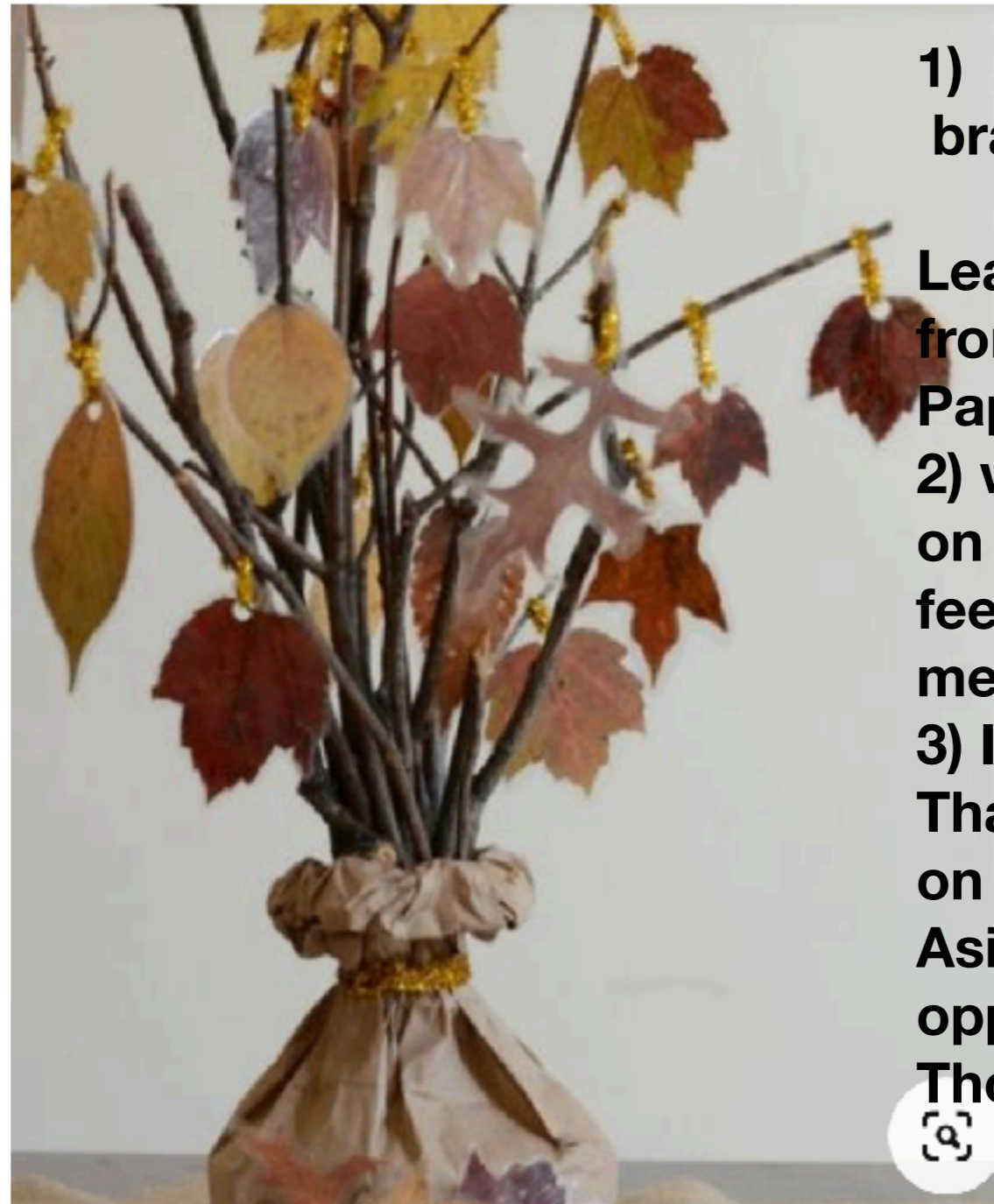
**Oriental trading company
Dollar Store- party section**

I get by with little help from my friends

- Who in your family laughs a lot...
- I think of _____ every time I see...
- When I lay in bed at night and think of _____
this is what I think...
- Who in your family makes the craziest faces...
- Who in your family tells the most jokes...
- Do a silly dance move.
- I wish I had talked to _____ about...
- Who in your family is most stubborn...
- I would like to ask _____...
- I always laughed when _____...
- Who in your family has the best dance moves...
- If I could change things I would change ...



Memories on a Tree



- 1) Pick fallen leaves & branches or
or use
Leaf cutouts
from construction
Paper
- 2) write / draw
on leaves
feelings or
memories
- 3) If there are feelings
That you don't want to
on the tree put them
Aside. (Offer
opportunity to share
Those)

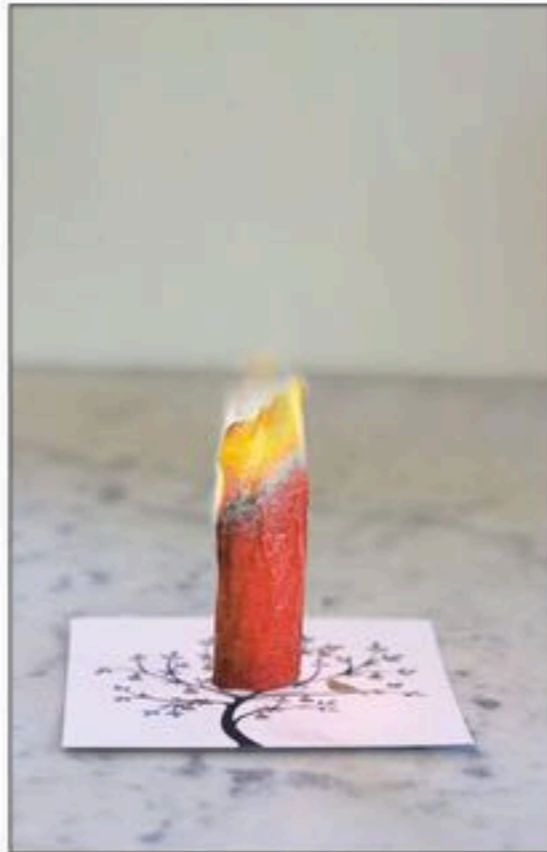


Flying Wish Paper



write it

Or draw...



light it



watch it fly

<https://www.flyingwishpaper.com>

What is something you would like to tell your special person?

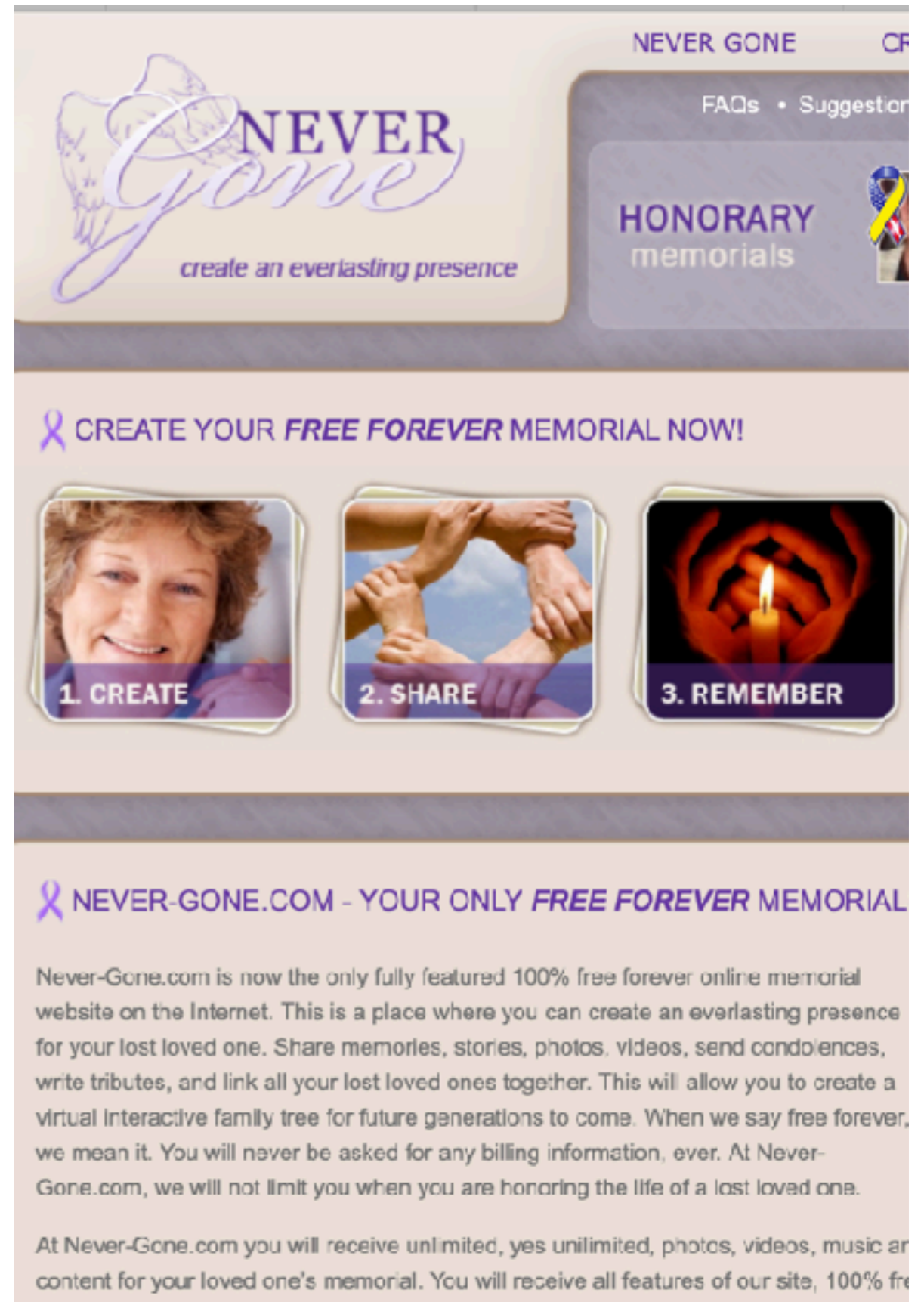
I wish... I feel... I hope... Thank you for... It was fun...

One thing I want you to know about me is...

Thanatechnology

The use of media and technology to mourn.

Through an online memorial site (which there are many) to create a digital scrapbook of the person who died favorite music, places, pictures, special places they have gone together, etc. Possibly explore future that had planned on. Check out free website: never-gone.com



The image shows a screenshot of the Never-Gone.com website. At the top left is the logo for "NEVER GONE" with the tagline "create an everlasting presence". To the right, there are links for "FAQs" and "Suggestions", and a section for "HONORARY memorials" featuring a ribbon icon. Below this is a call to action: "CREATE YOUR FREE FOREVER MEMORIAL NOW!". Underneath are three numbered steps: "1. CREATE" (with a photo of a smiling woman), "2. SHARE" (with a photo of hands clasped together), and "3. REMEMBER" (with a photo of a lit candle). At the bottom, there is a paragraph of text describing the website's features and a link to "NEVER-GONE.COM - YOUR ONLY FREE FOREVER MEMORIAL".

MOVIES

About Loss

COCO

LION KING

BAMBI

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

HARRY POTTER

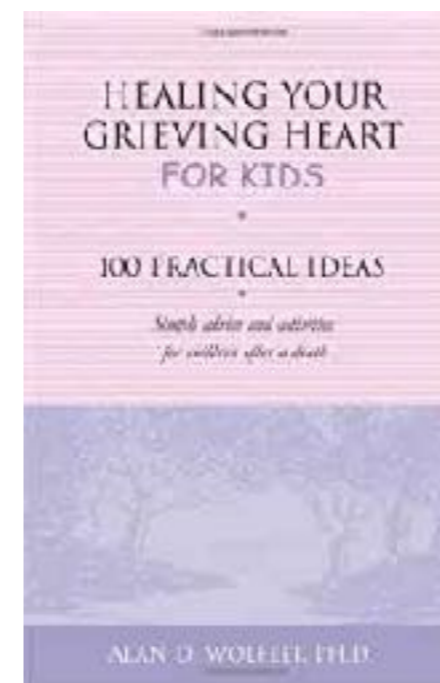
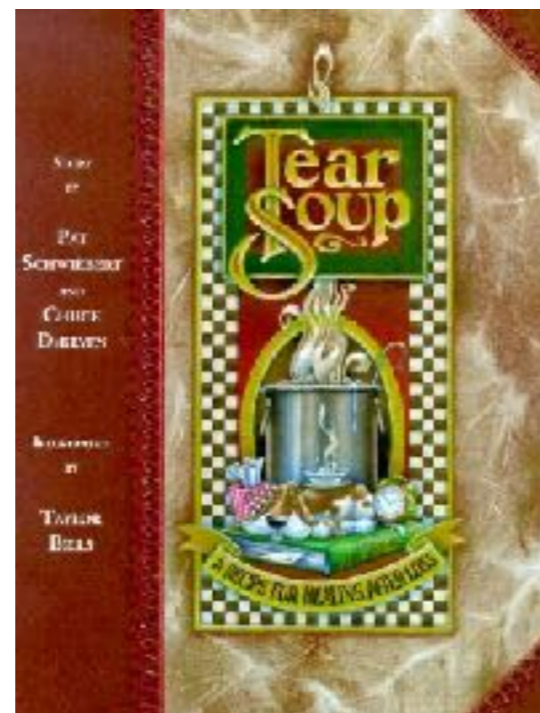
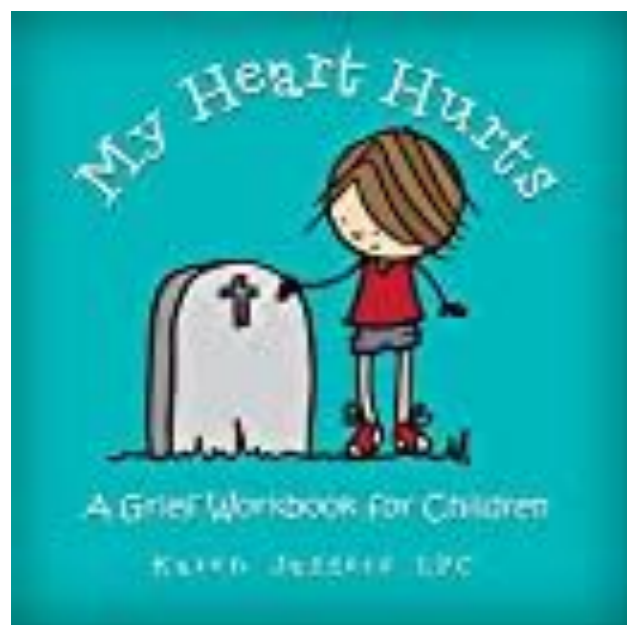
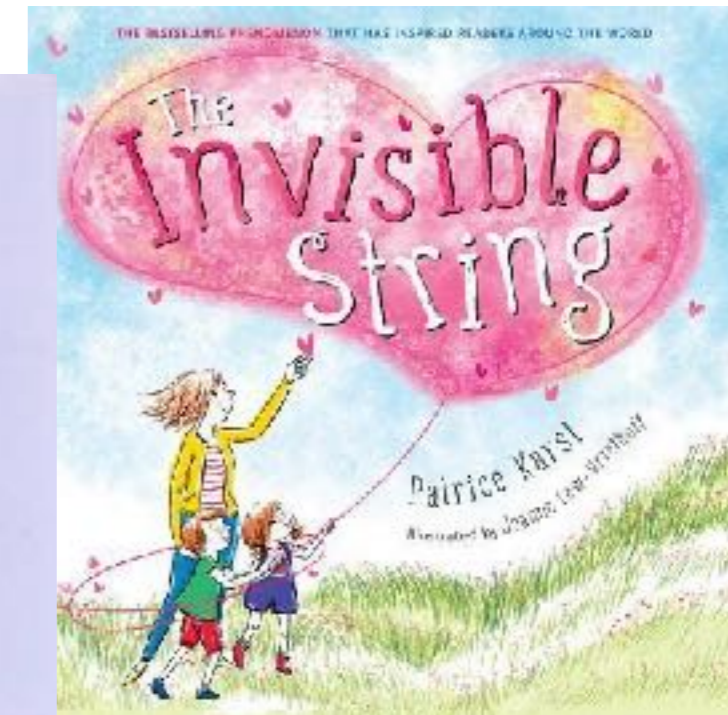
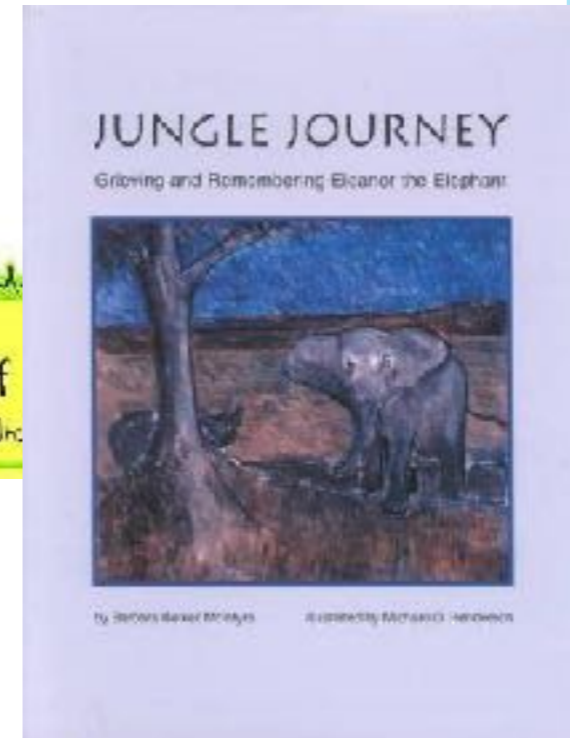
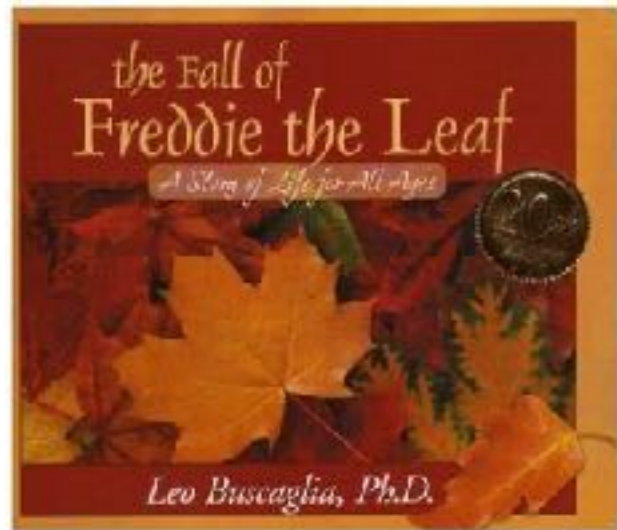
THE STONE BOY

UP

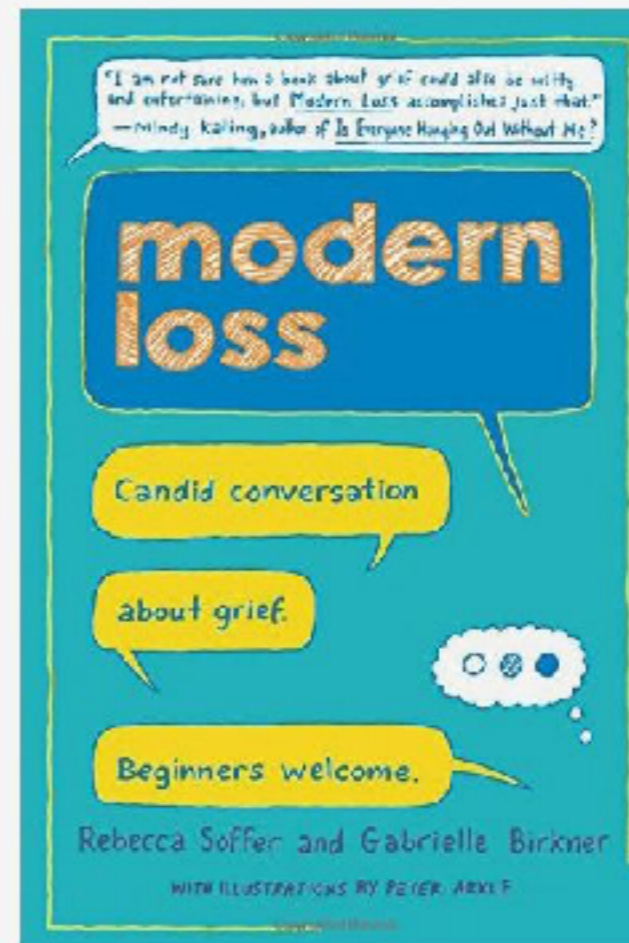
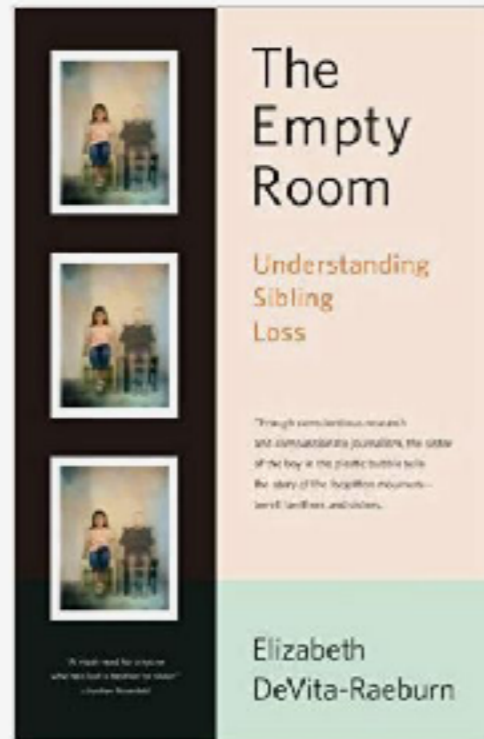
A FOLDED WISH - (short film)



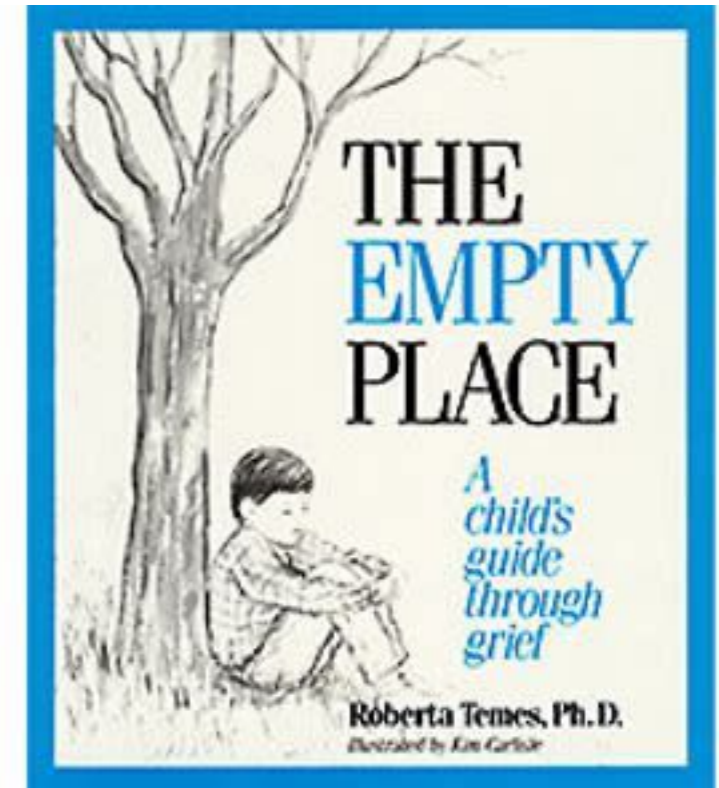
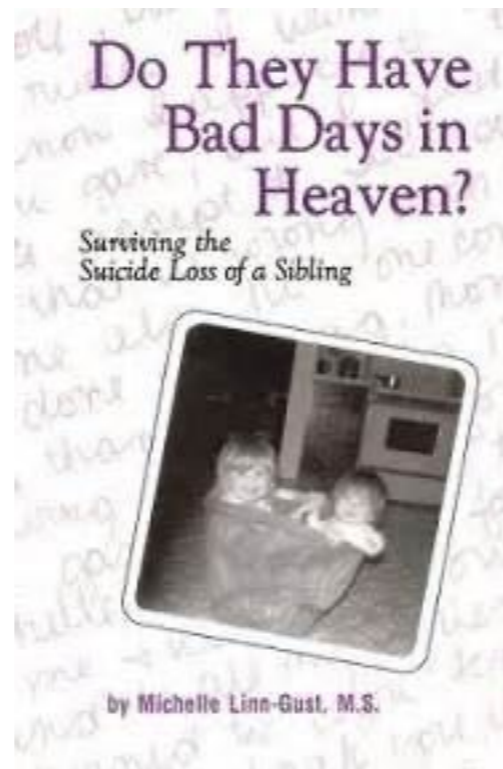
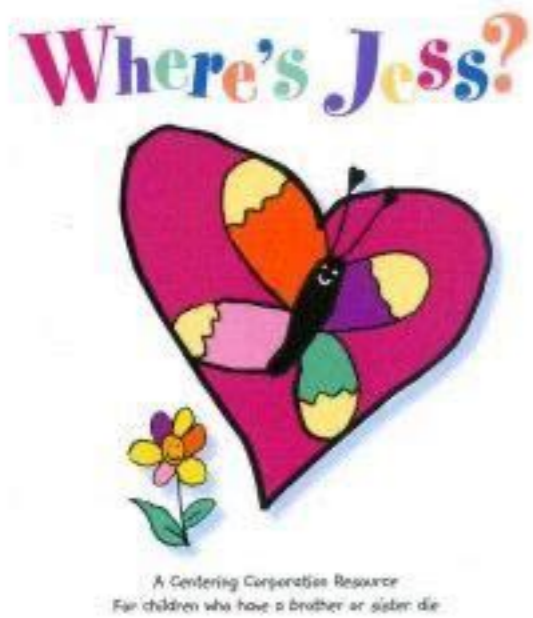
CHILDRENS BOOK'S



Books for Teens



Books for loss of sibling



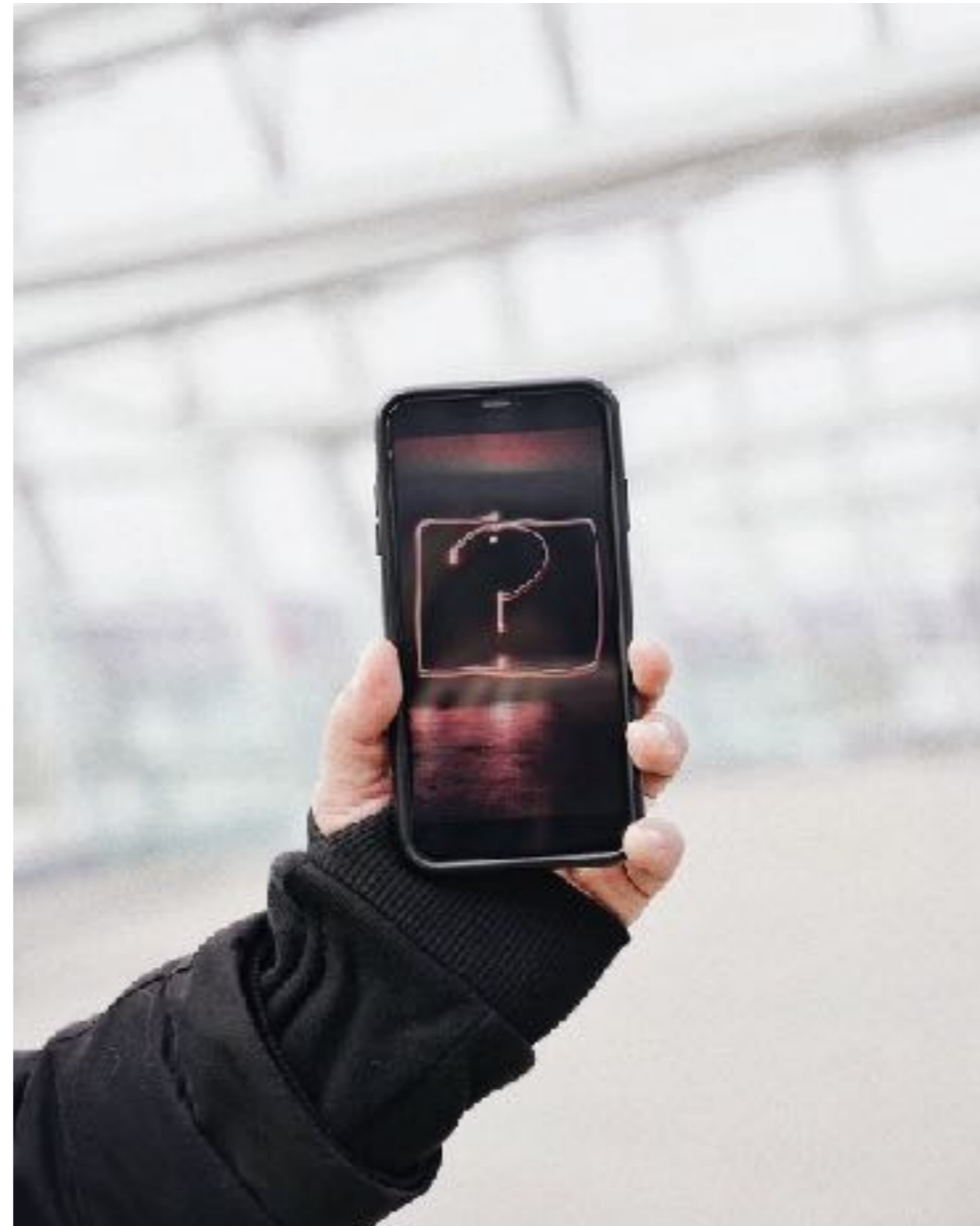
Other Resources

- School Counselor at the child's school.
- Library- ask children's librarian
- Podcast: Grief Outloud- by the Dougy Center. Bringing stories, tips and support.
- <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/>
- Grief activities free downloads:
http://schoolcounselorsconnect.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/2/4/10242617/clinical_grief_activities_booklet.pdf

<https://www.hospicesantacruz.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Teen-Grief-Handbook-web-version.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2UfF76-Dw93SW0nFzvDkA6QnovjROJyYPCcSH2M07r3eU2Me3CM-YejEk>



“Since there is no way to eradicate suffering from the world, perhaps, the most genuinely humane thing we can do for ourselves and each other is to feel our suffering and that of others. And in so doing, search the spark, the light, within the ashes.” -Dr. Joanne Cacciatore



Rose LaPiere LPC, RPT-S, ACS
www.roselapiere.com
rjlapiere@mac.com

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