

# Teens

This section is designed for teens, aged 13-19. As reported by the Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Families, teens respond better to adults who choose to be companions on the grief journey rather than direct it. They have also discovered that adult companions need to be aware of their own grief issues and journeys because their experiences and beliefs impact the way they relate to teens.

## Different Models of Stages of Grief

Adapted from [www.mentalhelp.net](http://www.mentalhelp.net) and [ellisabethkublerross.com](http://ellisabethkublerross.com)

### Five Stages of Grief (Elisabeth Kubler Ross)

Probably the most famous formulation of the stages of grief was developed by Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her book "On Death and Dying". Dr. Kubler-Ross actually wrote about the stages that dying people tend to go through as they come to terms with the realization that they will soon be dead. However, her stages have since been borrowed by the larger grief community as a means of describing the grief process more generally. Coming to terms with dying is certainly a loss experience and an occasion for grief, so there is merit to this borrowing and reason to become familiar with Dr. Kubler-Ross' stages.

1. Denial : A conscious or unconscious refusal to accept. Natural defense mechanism. Usually temporary shock and disbelief before reality sets in.
2. Anger: Manifests as anger at self, others (including medical staff). Important for medical staff and family to understand and be non-judgmental.
3. Bargaining: traditionally bargaining with their deity and is most common in grief with someone who knows they are dying
4. Depression: Feelings of loneliness and hopelessness; difficulty in performing daily activities
5. Acceptance: adjusting to the finality of death and going on with life

### Therese Rando's "Six R's"

Researcher and Clinical Psychologist Therese Rando also has contributed a stage model of the grief process that she observed people to experience while adjusting to significant loss. She called her model the "Six R's":

1. Recognize the loss: people must experience their loss and understand that it has happened
2. React: people react emotionally to their loss
3. Recollect and Re-Experience: review memories of their lost relationship (events that occurred, places visited together, day to day moments)
4. Relinquish: begin to put the loss behind them, realizing and accepting that the world has truly changed and there is no turning back
5. Readjust: begin the process of returning to daily life and the loss begins to feel less acute and sharp
6. Reinvest: re-enter the world, forming new relationships and commitments. Acceptance of the changes that have occurred and moving past them.

## **Grief & Bereavement (from [www.elisabethkublerross.com](http://www.elisabethkublerross.com))**

Grief is a natural process to death and dying. It is not pathological in nature, but rather, is a necessary response to helping heal from the overwhelming sense of loss when a loved one dies. It is important to understand grief as part of the human experience. If you are grieving, some things you can do to help yourself include:

### **-Attending support groups in your area**

Many communities have secular and faith based support groups focused on spousal, parental, and child death.

### **-Therapy with a psychologist or other qualified mental health professional**

Therapy can be helpful in many ways especially when combined with a support group.

### **-Journaling**

Writing is a catharsis for many!

### **-Eating well**

It is important to eat healthy foods and take supplements.

### **-Exercise**

Take walks or work out: jog, aerobics or a spring-cleaning week will do as well. Physical exertion is a great stress reliever and may afford you some time alone to gather your thoughts in the process.

### **-Get enough rest**

Give yourself plenty of time to rest. Grief drains your emotional battery and you will need to recharge more often. If you simply don't want to get out of bed in the early stages of grief, don't!

### **-Reading and learning about death-related grief responses**

Knowledge helps people regain a sense of control over their experiences and environment and helps reduce feelings of vulnerability.

### **-For some, seeking solace in the faith community**

It can be helpful for some to seek the wisdom and comfort that churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and other places of worship provide.

### **-Seek comforting rituals**

This include funerals and memorial services, planting gardens and trees, donating to a cause, and other comforting and culturally appropriate ritual

**-Allow emotions** -Tears can be healing.

### **Avoid major changes in residence, jobs, or marital status**

Major changes can be too burdensome during grief. Wait for about one year after the death of a loved one before making any major changes.

## How should I grieve?

Grief is different for everyone. Your feelings may change from day to day or even from minute to minute. Below are some common ways that teens tend to grieve. We have intentionally left some blank lines for you to write in how YOU are grieving.

- Crying. Tears are healthy, not childish.
- Talk about it. Confide in an adult that you are comfortable with.
- Write about death, your experience with death and how it has made you feel. Keep a journal or a notebook.
- Express your feelings in creative ways. Draw pictures. Paint. Build. Scrapbook.
- Exercise. Physical activity helps release anger and sad emotions. Play sports. Dance. Join a gym.

Today I.....

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## The Bill of Rights for Grieving Teens

*Developed by grieving teens and shared by the Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Families.*

### **A grieving teen has the right....**

- to know the truth about the death, the deceased, and the circumstances.
- to have questions answered honestly.
- to be heard with dignity and respect.
- to be silent and not tell you her/his grief emotions and thoughts.
- to not agree with your perceptions and conclusions
- to see the person who died and the place of the death.
- to grieve any way she/he wants without hurting self or others.
- to feel all the feelings and to think all the thoughts of his/her own unique grief.
- to not have to follow the “Stages of Grief” as outlined in a high school health book.
- to grieve in one’s own unique, individual way without censorship.
- to be angry at death, at the person who died, at God, at self, and at others.
- to have his/her own theological and philosophical beliefs about life and death.
- to be involved in the decisions about the rituals related to the death.
- to not be taken advantage of in this vulnerable mourning condition and circumstances.
- to have guilt about how he/she could have intervened to stop the death.

## 12 Helpful Hints for Your Personal Grief Journey

Grief is exhausting. It takes a lot of time and energy and can wear you out. That is why anyone who is going through grief needs love, understanding and encouragement. Grief is a journey and no two journey's are alike. However, here are some helpful hints that you can use along the way.

1. Eat healthy foods and snacks. A healthy diet will keep your physical body in good health and will promote a better well being.
2. Get lots of rest. Take naps—remember grieving takes a lot of work.
3. Talk about your feelings. Find someone you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and emotions with.
4. Exercise. Physical activity will help to release negative energy.
5. Laugh often. Laughing, even when you are sad or angry is healthy. In fact, it's nature's own best medicine.
6. Spend time with friends.
7. Write down your feelings. Keep a diary or a journal.
8. Draw pictures or paint. Art is a fantastic way to express yourself! Share it with others.
9. Start a book of memories or make a memory box, power-point or video. Be creative. Scrapbook or journal. Include special pictures and thoughts. When you are finished you will have a very special keepsake all about you and the person who died. Refer to it often. It will make you smile.
10. Don't rush grief. It takes it's own time. You do not "get over" grief. In time however, you will accept things intellectually and will learn how to go on.
11. Write a letter to God, or a counselor or to the person who died. Tell them how you feel, what makes you angry or sad. It will make you feel better, even if you don't send it.
12. Join a support group or workshop. Being with other teens who have experienced a loss is comforting.

## WRAPPING UP

Ask participants to complete the program evaluation which you will return to your county Extension agent. Plan time for informal discussions after the lesson is concluded. This may be a good time for refreshments. If participants want more information refer them to the books listed at the end of this teaching guide. Refer anyone who seems particularly upset to their spiritual leader, family physician or community mental health center.

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO USE WITH LESSON

You may find these activities helpful to introduce or summarize the lesson.

### Activity 1

Read one or more of these sayings to the group and ask for discussion. As an introduction, discuss how the verse deals with grief and mourning. As a summary, discuss how the verse relates to what has been learned. Be prepared to begin the discussion yourself.

*Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted—  
We had ne'er been broken hearted.*

Robert Burns

*Do not appease your fellow in his hour of anger  
Do not comfort him while the dead is still laid out before him;  
Do not question him in his hour of misfortune.*

Rabbi Simson Ben Ehazer

*Home they brought her warrior dead.  
She not swooned nor uttered cry;  
All her maidens watching said,  
She must weep or she will die.*

Tennyson, The Princess

*No matter what may fill the gap, ev'n if it be filled completely,  
it nonetheless remains something else.*

Sigmund Freud

### Activity 2 (for use with Part 2)

Ask group participants to think about their own experiences with grief and mourning. Ask them to think about helpful and hurtful things that were said. Write each of the following statements on a card, mix them up and ask the group if the statement is helpful or hurtful? Discuss differences of opinion.

#### Helpful Statements

“How can I be of help?”

“Tell me how you are feeling.”

“It must be hard to accept.”

“That must be very painful.”

"It's O.K. to be angry with God."  
"I'm sorry."  
"I wish I could take the pain away."

Notes:

### **Hurtful Statements**

"It's God's will."  
"I know how you feel."  
"Time heals all things."  
"She/he led a full life."  
"You will marry again."  
"You can have other children."  
"Your child is in heaven now."

### **RESOURCES:**

- Buscaglia, Leo. *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages*.  
Thorofare, NJ: Charles B. Slack/Book Division, 1982.
- Kushner, Harold. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.  
New York, NY: Avon Books, 1981.
- Loewensohn, Ruth Jean. *Survival Handbook for Widows (and for relatives and friends who want to understand)*. Glenview, IL:  
AARP, Scott, Foresman and Co, 1984.
- Rando, Therese A. *Grieving: How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies*.  
Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1984.
- Sanders, Catherine, M. *Grief and the Mourning After*. New York,  
NY: Wiley Interscience, 1989.

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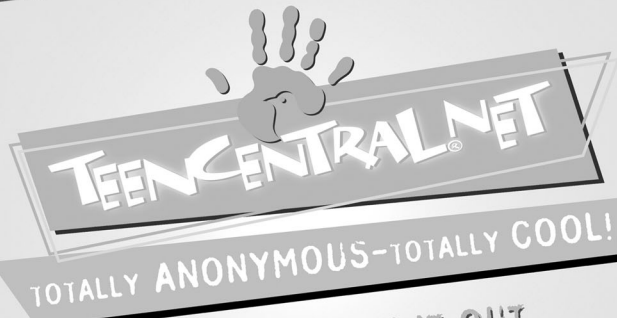
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## Create a Grief Support System

1. Find three people you are comfortable talking to.
2. Name a place that you can go that is comfortable and safe.
3. Name three things you can do, or three people you can be with, where you can let out anger without hurting yourself or others.
4. Name three things you can do or three people you can be with to let out sad feelings.
5. Name three non-harmful ways to release feelings of anger or sadness.
6. Name three things you can do when life feels meaningless.
7. Name three activities you can do that will help you to express your feelings. Examples: writing, drawing, hitting pillows, singing, playing sports, dance.
8. Name some things that will help you get your mind off your loss.





TOTALLY ANONYMOUS—TOTALLY COOL!

LOG ON. WORK IT OUT.  
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America's unique, personalized, anonymous,  
and safe Internet resource  
to help kids face and  
overcome crisis and life's  
daily challenges.

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