

# Responding to Grief and Loss

Grief and loss can be hard to experience, and it's a common part of being human. What makes it challenging is that it affects our normal daily rituals and sometimes makes it hard for us to handle big feelings. Everyone experiences grief and loss differently; we call this the grief cycle. It's important to respect an individual's feelings as they go through grief, and try to provide support where we can, when we can.

**Grief is challenging for youth, and it's also an opportunity for healing and connection.**



## What we know

- \* Grief is a normal reaction to the loss of someone or something important. It can happen due to death, divorce, or a move away from family and friends.
- \* It is estimated that 1 in 14 children in Wisconsin will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18.
- \* Grief can contribute to difficulties in school, relationships, and the ability to manage stress.



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## What you can do

- \* Normalize the youth's feelings. The wide range of feelings around grief and loss is okay and expected.
- \* Remind the youth that healing is a journey, and, sometimes it may take time. The way to get to healing is by experiencing their feelings.
- \* Old feelings might come back again without warning, and that's ok. Traditions, holidays, memories, etc. can bring up feelings they thought were gone.
- \* Get active through art. There are many hands-on activities that help youth take difficult thoughts and feelings and transfer them into visual art and off their hearts and minds. Try a few and see if it helps untangle complex emotions.

Photograph from Jon Tyson



## More for you

Caring adults are key to helping young people thrive. There are so many ways you can support the youth you care about.

Find additional tips and resources by visiting



[go.wisc.edu/youthtoolkit](https://go.wisc.edu/youthtoolkit)