

GOOD GRIEF

A WORKBOOK FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN



CareFirst

Dear Little Heart,



Have you recently lost someone you love? Is your heart hurting? It is never easy to lose someone who we have loved. It may feel like your heart could break into a million pieces.

Maybe you spent a lot of time with them, or talked to them on the phone. Even though you cannot call or see that person any more, they are still a part of you.

Sometimes it feels like no one could possibly understand what you are going through. Although people grieve differently, everyone deals with death and the feeling of sadness that comes along with it.

We want you to know that you are not alone and it is okay to be sad. We would like to offer some ideas that we hope will help you during your difficult time. We hope that it will help you while your heart is hurting, and teach you not only what grief is, but ways you can make yourself feel better.

Your friends at CareFirst

Change

Change is when something or someone takes on a completely different form. For example, a caterpillar changes when it goes into its cocoon and comes out as a beautiful butterfly.

Change is natural and happens all around us. Draw the change in seasons....

SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
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Living, Growing, and Changing

People change too. Change doesn't only happen around us, it happens to us. How have you changed? Is there anything you do, think, feel, or believe now that you didn't when you were younger?

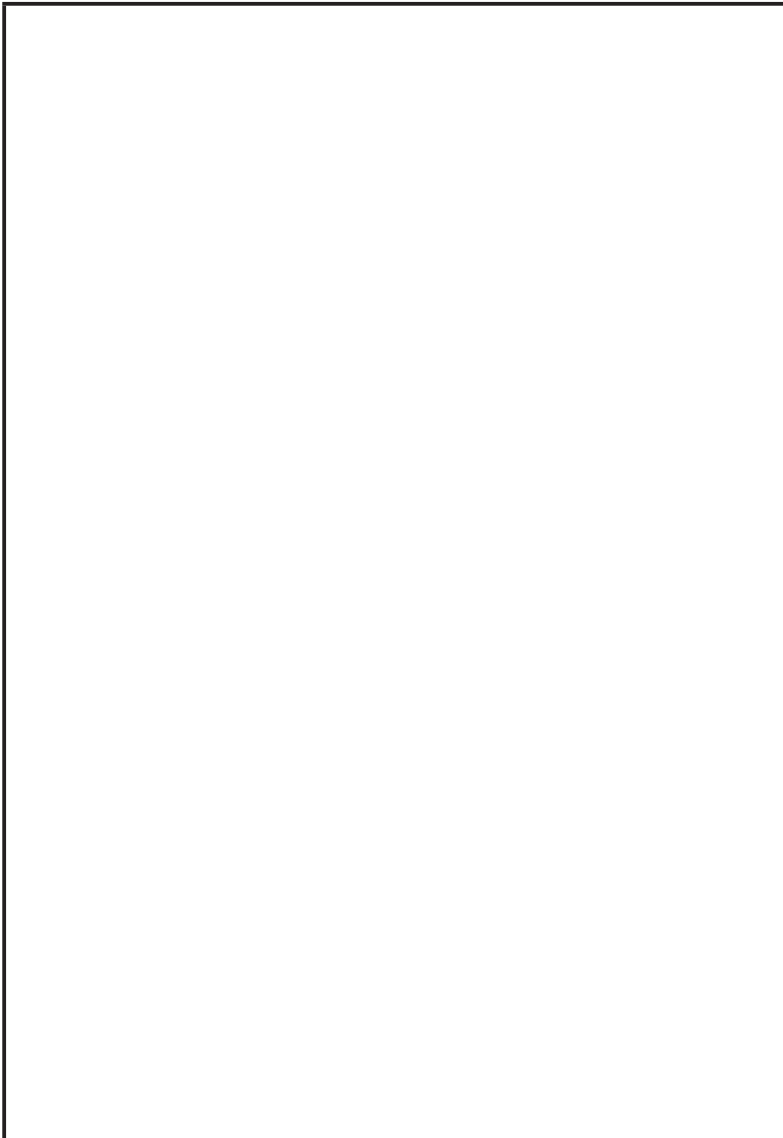
Draw or write some ways you have changed....

Living, Growing, and Changing

Other people around you have changed too. Friends, brothers, and sisters grow up, people get older, have babies, get married or divorced, move to a new home, cut their hair, or change in other ways.

Draw or write some ways your friends or family members have changed.....

Life and Death



One change that happens in people's lives is death.

Death is a natural part of living. It is the end of life. Plants die, animals die, and people die.

A person who has died has experienced death and is no longer living.

Draw a picture of your loved one who has died....

(person's name)

What is Death?

When a person's body doesn't work anymore, their heart doesn't beat and they stop breathing, that is when a person is dead. People who are dead don't eat, sleep, think, or feel.

There are many things that cause death. Sometimes people die suddenly like in a car accident. Other times people know they are going to die like when they get very sick with a disease that doctors cannot fix or cure. What caused your loved one to die? This would be a good thing to talk about with an adult in your life that you trust.

Sometimes people say that the dead person "passed away" or is "gone". This can be confusing because it makes it sound like that person has gone into another room and might come back. When a person is dead, it means their body doesn't work anymore, and they cannot come back.

Sometimes the word "dead" can also be confusing because it is used in so many different ways..."My computer is dead," or "The room was dead silent." No matter how the word is used, dead always means that something is not working or not there.

(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

Where Do People Go When They Die?

Some peoples' bodies are buried in a casket, and other people choose to be cremated. Often times the body or ashes are buried in a place called a cemetery. This has been done for many years. The hole where the body is placed in the ground is called a grave. A grave is dug very deep and wide so that the casket can be lowered into it for burial.

Sometimes when people are cremated the family keeps the ashes of the body in a special place. Other times they scatter the ashes in places that were important to the person who died. Sometimes people put flowers, pictures, or other special things in the casket or on the grave of their loved one.

Sometimes, people have funerals or memorials for their loved one. This is a time when friends, family, and neighbors gather to remember the person, to say goodbye, and to celebrate the life the person lived.

Funerals happen in lots of different places. Sometimes they happen in a funeral home; the place where a body is taken after the person died. Sometimes funerals also happen in churches and synagogues, or even at a cemetery.

(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

Spirit

When a person dies their body is just the shell of them that remains. The spirit or soul that made that person special is no longer there. The life inside of that person, their feelings, and personality are gone. Their body is like an book cover without pages inside.

Some people believe the spirit goes to Heaven to be with God and other friends and family members' spirits who died before them. This is why you might hear some people say, "I know I'll see her again someday." They believe that eventually, when they die, they will be with their loved one's spirit again somewhere else.

Other people believe in something called "reincarnation." This is when, after dying, someone's spirit comes back in a different form. You may hear people say that when people die they, "come back in a different body to learn more lessons."

Others believe that the spirit becomes a part of those who they loved or that it becomes a star in the sky. Some people don't believe that a spirit continues on at all and think that when people die, those people and their spirits are simply gone.

(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

Spirit

Sometimes the hardest thing about losing a person you love is that it feels like you have also lost the spirit which made them special.

Draw or write your favorite thing about your loved one's spirit...

Questions

We ask questions because we want to find answers to things we wonder or worry about. Usually when someone dies people have questions. Some things you might want to know are:

What happened to my loved one who died?

Does everyone die some day?

What does my family believe happens to a spirit after someone dies?

It is important that you find an adult in your life who can help answer your questions honestly. What are some things you are wondering about?

Write some questions you would like to ask someone you trust...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

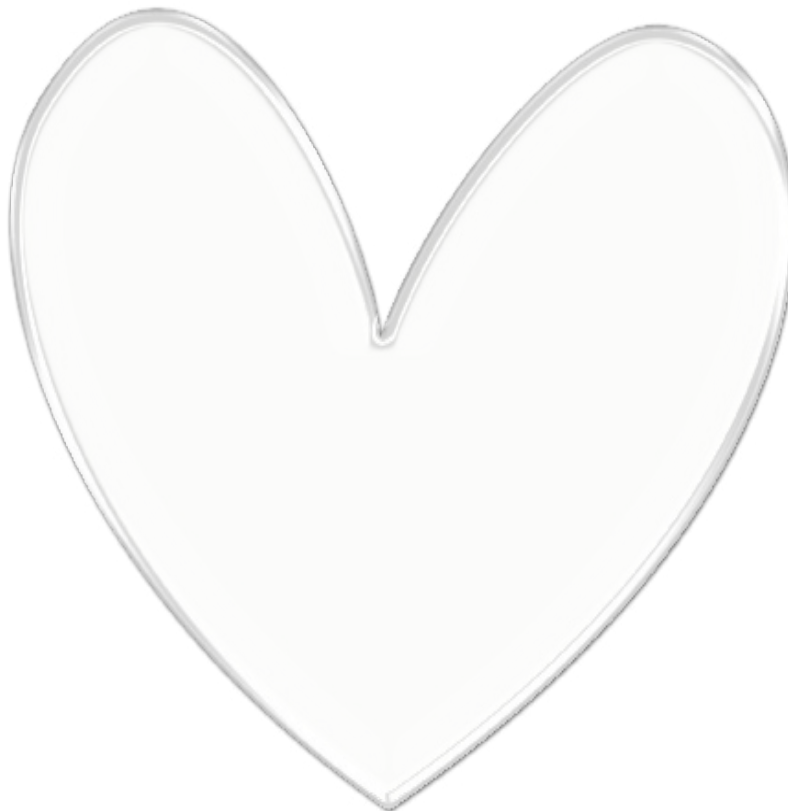
Loss

When we talk about someone who has had a loved one die we often say that “they have suffered a loss.” You may also hear someone say something like, “he lost his grandfather this year,” or “I’m sorry for your loss.”

This can be confusing because most of the time when we lose something, we look for it and usually find it. When someone has died, we can’t find them alive again.

Even though we can’t find the person we have lost, we can hold the memory of them inside our hearts.

**Fill in this heart with what you will hold
in your heart about your loved one...**



(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

Remembrance

One way we hold our loved ones in our hearts is to remember how they have impacted our lives. This is a way of honoring them and making you feel closer to them.

Draw or write about how you think you look or act like your loved one...

Grief and Bereavement

Grief is all of the feelings that you have when you lose something or someone you care about. When people are experiencing grief we say that they are “grieving.” There are many things that we grieve about, like when a friend moves away, people you love get divorced, or someone you care about dies. When a loved one dies, your grief can last for a long time.

Some of the things you may feel are:

- **Sadness**
- **Anger**
- **Loneliness**
- **Guilt**
- **Fear**

Are there some other things you are feeling? If so list them here...

When someone you love dies it affects you in many ways. You also have to get used to being without that person, experience the first holidays without them, first birthday, and many other things. This is also called bereavement. Are you worried about any of the things you will experience? What are they?

(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

Feelings

Feelings are the “Ups and Downs” we feel inside when things happen. Everyone has lots of different feelings and they are all OK! When someone you love dies, feelings might seem stronger.

Feelings are also called emotions and the way we deal with our feelings or emotions, is called coping. Everyone copes with things differently. Some people try ignoring things or try to pretend something didn’t happen. Some talk about how they feel. Others cope by learning about what they are struggling with.

There are many different ways to cope with our emotions, but the first step is identifying how we are feeling.

Make a list of some of the emotions you have felt before...

1. _____

4. _____

2. _____

5. _____

3. _____

6. _____

(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

Coping with Anger

When you feel angry it is often difficult to know how to cope with that emotion. Sometimes feeling angry makes you feel out of control or like you have a lot of feelings stacking up inside. It is important to let anger out without hurting anyone or anything.

Here are some ways to LET OUT YOUR ANGER. Circle the ones that you think work best for you...

1. Talking with someone you trust
2. Writing down how you feel in a journal
3. Punching a pillow or stuffed animal
4. Drawing a picture of what you are angry about then tearing it up to throw away
5. Yelling or screaming at the top of your lungs in the shower
6. Scribbling all over a big piece of paper really hard then wadding it up into a tiny little ball to throw away
7. Running really hard or jumping up and down until you get tired
8. Writing why you're angry and having an adult help you burn it in a fire

Fear

Fear is what you feel when you are afraid. After someone dies there are many things that change and that can be scary. You might be worried that someone else will die too. You might be scared because you don't know what life will be like now that your loved one has died. You don't need to worry though, because you and your family will create a new normal. Remember, it is okay to feel afraid just like it's okay to feel sad or angry. Fear won't last forever.

Sometimes expressing what you are afraid of makes the feeling less powerful.

Draw or write about something you are fearful of ...

(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

Guilt

Guilt is when you wish you had done or said something differently. It is normal to feel guilty about something after someone you love has died.

When someone dies people often think they should have spent more time with the loved one before they died. That can make them feel guilty. Some people wish they had told their loved one that they loved them before they died and then they feel guilty that they didn't. Other people say and do things they don't mean to their friends or family after a loved one dies and then they feel guilty because they hurt someone's feelings.

Sometimes people even feel guilty that their loved one died. It is very important for you to know that you didn't do anything to cause your loved one's death. It is not your fault that they died. No matter what you said or didn't say, did or didn't do, they knew you loved them just like you know how much you still love them. If you are feeling guilty about anything, it would be a good thing to talk about with an adult you trust.

I'm Sorry

When you feel sorry or guilty about something that you didn't say or didn't do before your loved one died sometimes it can be helpful to say goodbye in a different way.

Write a letter or draw a picture for your loved one to say everything you didn't get a chance to say...

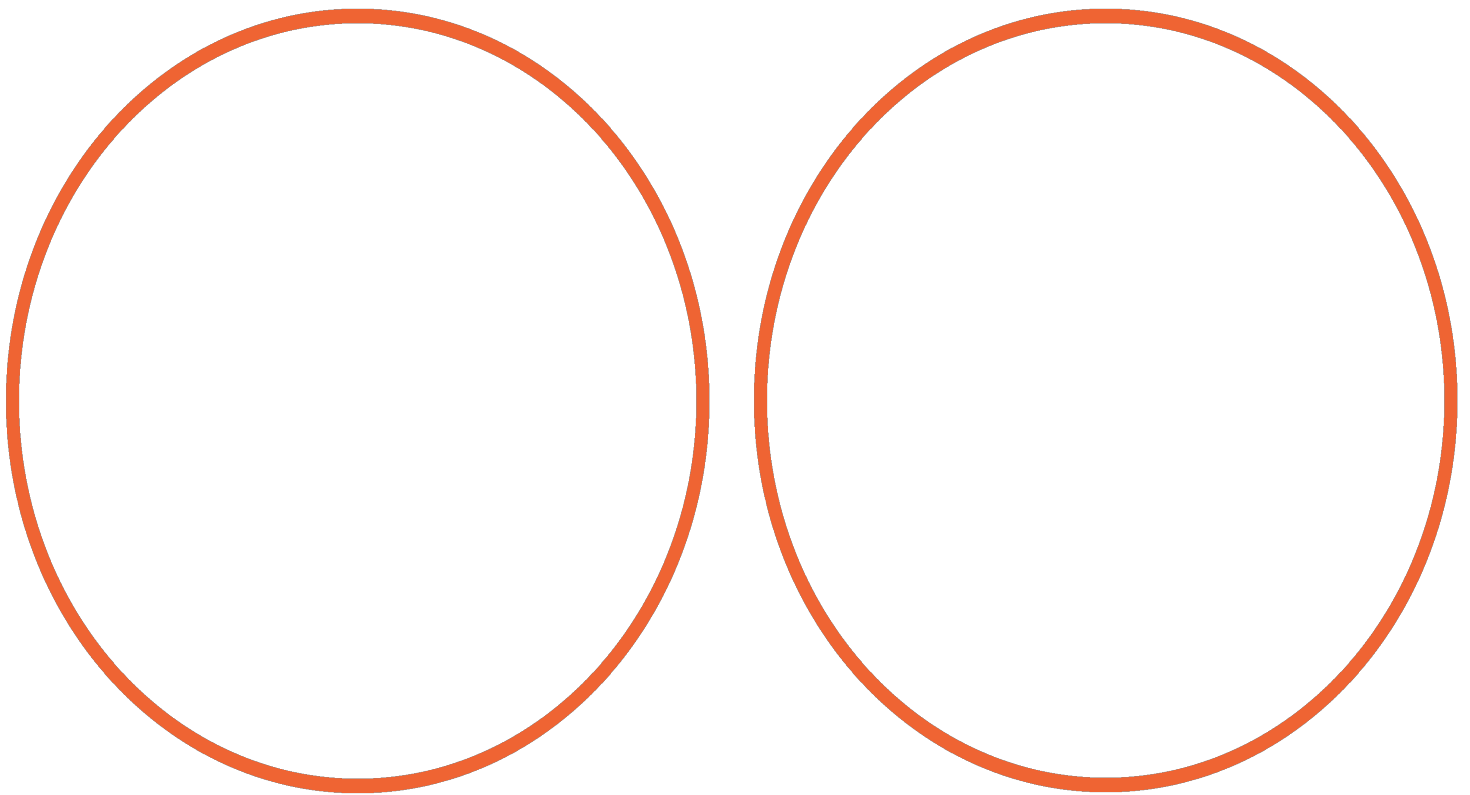
Dear _____,

Love, _____

Masks

Sometimes people don't want to show everyone how they are feeling so they "mask" their emotions.

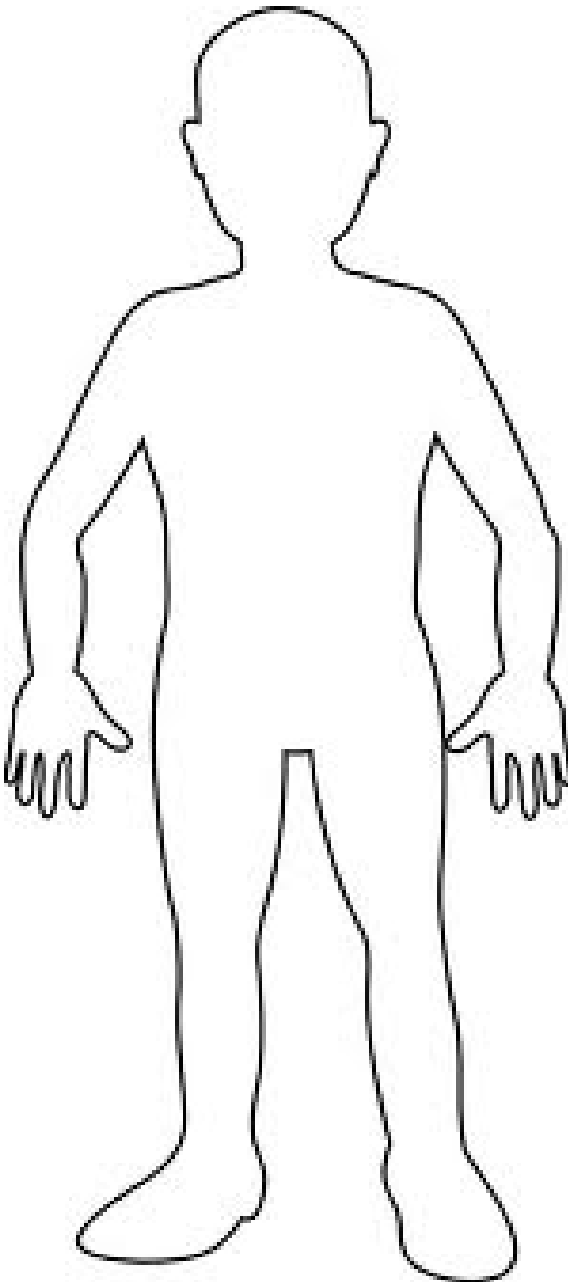
Draw a feeling you have had and the mask you used to hide it...



Inside...

Feelings are something you experience inside of your body.

Where do you feel your feelings?



*Use the colors below
to show your
feelings.*

Sad → Blue

Fear → Brown

Guilt → Black

Anger → Red

Jealous → Green

Nervous → Orange

Happy → Yellow

*If you have an emotion
that isn't listed, add it with
a new color.*

Feelings Book

One thing that can help you cope with your feelings is writing them down. You can create a feelings book that includes both difficult things as well as those which make you feel safe. Write your feelings of the day on a page and make sure to date each page so you can see how your feelings have changed over time.

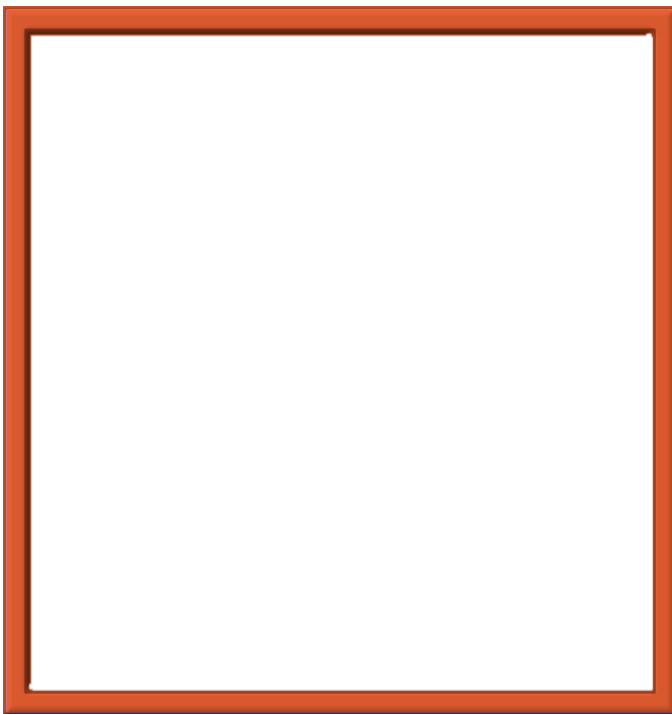
Write some ideas here of things you could include in your feelings book...



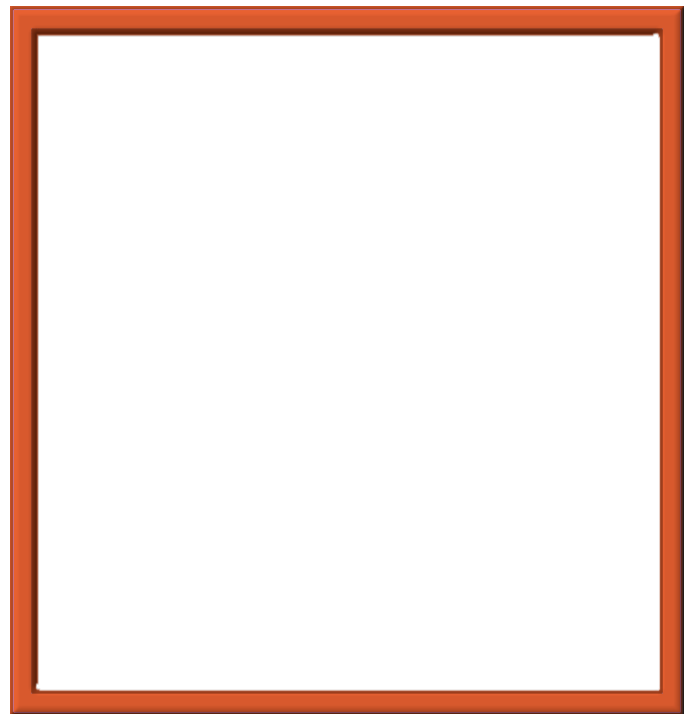
Remembering

Memories are the moments you remember. You probably have a lot of memories about your loved one who died. You might remember how they taught you to play softball, how they looked or smelled, or how they always made you spaghetti on your birthday. Sometimes memories can be complicated because we have specific emotions attached to them.

Draw or write about a happy memory and a sad memory of your loved one...



Happy Memory



Sad Memory

Remembering

Doing things that help you remember your loved one is helpful as you grieve for them. On days where you have lots of feelings inside you might want to do special things to honor your loved one and hold them in your heart. One thing you could do is create a memory book with your family.

Draw or write about a memory that would go on the first page of your book....

Honoring

Here are some other ideas of things you could do to honor and remember your loved one...

- Keep something that belonged to your loved one so that you can touch it and look at it to remember them.
- Ask your family to help you plant flowers or a tree in your yard in memory of your loved one.
- Find an old box to decorate and keep your photos and special objects from your loved one in. They will be in the box so that you can go and look at them whenever you want.

Draw or write about some things that you would like to keep in a box you create in your loved one's memory...

Rituals

Something that people do over and over again is called a ritual. Everyone has rituals like brushing your teeth in the morning or reading a book before you go to sleep at night. Your family might also have rituals like visiting family on Thanksgiving.

When someone dies, there are often rituals people do after the death, like putting flowers on their grave. Some special events that only happen once are rituals too, like a funeral service. You can also create your own rituals. Here are some ideas for rituals you or your family could do to honor your loved one...

- Every time you think about your loved one, pick up a stone and put it in a jar or bowl to represent all the memories you have of them.
- Keep a journal and every night before you go to bed, write down a quick message to your loved one like, "I wish you could have seen me in dance class today. I miss you."
- With the help of an adult, light a candle on your family's holiday dinner table in honor of your loved one.

(Smith and Johnson, 2006)

Memory Jar

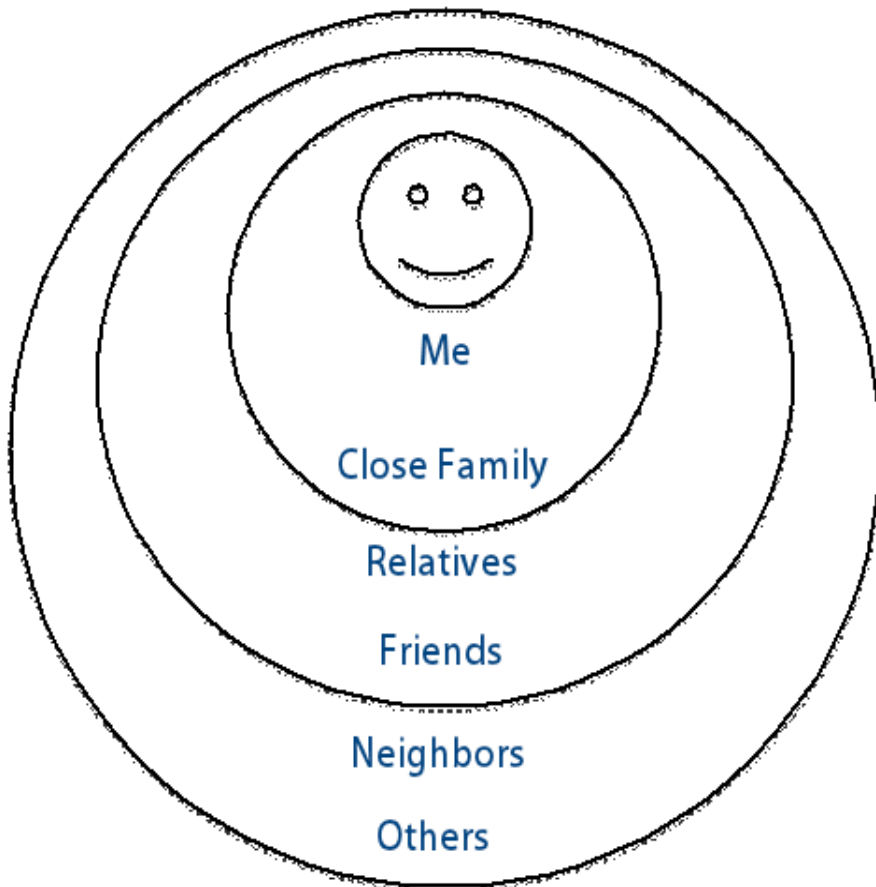
Memory jars are a great activity for you to do with your family to help everyone grieve for your loved one who died. You can set it up by cutting a bunch of pieces of paper and putting them out somewhere in your house with a pen or pencil and a special jar. Every time you or a family member walks by, write a memory of your loved one down on a piece of paper and put it into the jar. A can or box that you decorate will work well too! After the jar is filled, pull one memory out every day and put it somewhere that everyone can see it, like on the refrigerator. This way everyone can share the memory.

Start your memory jar by writing a few memories below...

Support

Support is when someone is available to help and listen to another person who is having a difficult time. It is important for you to find people in your life who will support you. This is usually your closest friends and family.

Write in the diagram below the people who are in your life, and who is closest to you...



Who can you go to for support?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Moving Forward

Coping with a loss is difficult. One of the most important things is moving forward while carrying that person with you. Doing memorial activities, such as the memory jars and other rituals, will help you carry your loved one with you in your heart and memory. Moving forward can be difficult which is why it is important for you to remember that everything changes and you can still have fun and be happy!

Draw or write about something that makes you happy....

References

Smith, H. I., & Johnson, J. (2006). *What does that mean?: A dictionary of death, dying and grief terms for grieving children and those who love them.* Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation.

Notes

SUPPORTING YOU
EMBRACING FAMILY
STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITY

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*CareFirst is a not-for-profit community-based program providing residents of
Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben counties of New York State with complete
hospice, palliative care, and grief services.*

www.CareFirstNY.org

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