

# GRIEF BEFORE LOSS

A WORKBOOK FOR CHILDREN FACING ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

A graphic consisting of a cluster of red and yellow dots of varying sizes, arranged in a roughly triangular shape, positioned above the text.

CareFirst



For Your Little Heart,

Have you recently learned that someone you love is sick? What does that mean? Does this make you feel angry or sad? It is never easy to hear that those we love are sick.

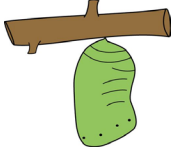
Maybe you spend a lot of time with them, or talk to them on the phone. You may feel like no one could possibly understand what you are going through. You may feel like your heart could break into a million pieces. Many people find different ways to deal with their feelings when they are sad or scared about losing a loved one.

We here at CareFirst want you to know that you are not alone. This book is designed to help your young heart through this difficult time. Grief and sadness are natural parts of life. We hope that this workbook can teach you that all feelings about grief are normal.

Sincerely,  
Your Friends at CareFirst

# Change

Change is when something or someone takes on a completely different form, like when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly.



Change is natural and it happens all around us. Seasons are another example of change.

**Draw what each season looks like.  
See the changes from one season to the next...**

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.

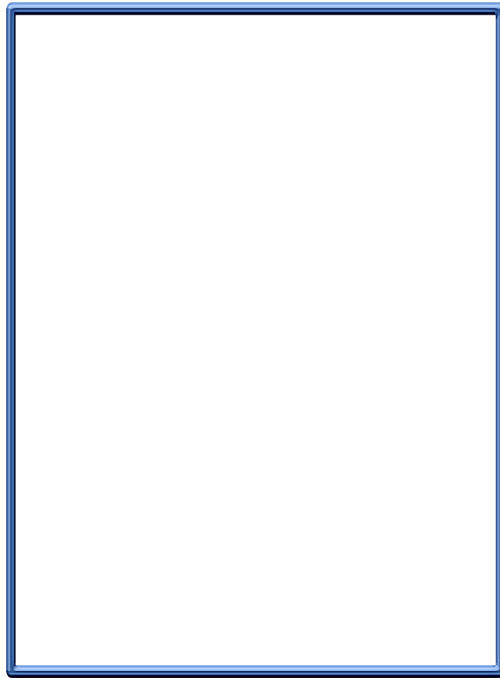
**Draw or write some ways your friends or family members have changed.....**

# 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.

Sometimes people are very sick. They know they are going to die and their life will soon be over.

**Draw a picture of your loved one who you know is going to die soon...**



\_\_\_\_\_  
(person's name)

# What is Death?

When a person's body doesn't work anymore, their heart doesn't beat and they stop breathing, then that 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 cannot be treated.

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, their body doesn't work anymore and they cannot come back.

Now that you understand more about what death means, do you have any other questions?



This would be a good thing to talk about with an adult that you trust.

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)

# Terminal Illness

Most diseases can be helped with medicine or other treatment, but some cannot. A terminal illness is when someone gets sick or has a disease and they are not going to get better. Sometimes when someone gets really sick their bodies stop working and they die. When people know that someone is sick they say that person is "terminal."

When someone you love has a terminal illness it is natural to be angry or upset.

**Draw or write about how you feel about your loved one having a terminal illness...**

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)



# What to Expect

You probably have questions about what to expect as your loved one gets closer to death. There are many changes you might see in how they act, look, and behave.

## Here are some things you might notice:

- Sometimes when people are sick they don't eat as much as before. They might not feel well enough to eat or they may just not be hungry. They may not even want their favorite food, but that's okay – it isn't a bad thing.
- As people get more sick they may feel like their muscles are getting weaker and they are losing their strength. Sometimes they also have a difficult time catching their breath or getting comfortable.
- In time, your loved one may not have enough energy to do all kinds of things. They may be too tired to get out of bed. If so, they may decide to eat in bed or have someone help give them a sponge bath in bed.
- Whether they get out of bed or not, people who are sick still like to do all kinds of things when they are awake like read a book, listen to music, or talk to their family. When your loved one is awake it might be a good time to spend time with them to talk and tell them how much you love them. In time, they may be too sick or tired to talk, but you can still tell them how you feel. It is okay - they can hear you.

# Quality of Life

When we know someone has a terminal illness, we often try to identify how much longer we think that person is going to live. Rather than focusing on how much time is left, it is important to focus on helping your loved one live the best and most enjoyable life they can while they are still living. This is called "quality of life." What does your loved one like to do? What can you do with them to enjoy the time you have together while they are still alive?

**Write or draw some of the things your loved one enjoys doing and circle the things they can still do, even though they are sick...**

# Showing Your Love

When you know someone in your life is dying, it is important to let them know how special they are to you.

What can you do to show how much he or she means to you?

**Write or draw your ideas then talk to an adult to see if they can help you complete your plan...**

# Caregiver

A caregiver is someone who takes care of another person when they are sick.

**Who has taken care of you when you've been sick with a cold or the flu?**

**List 3 things that made you feel better:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)

# Hospice

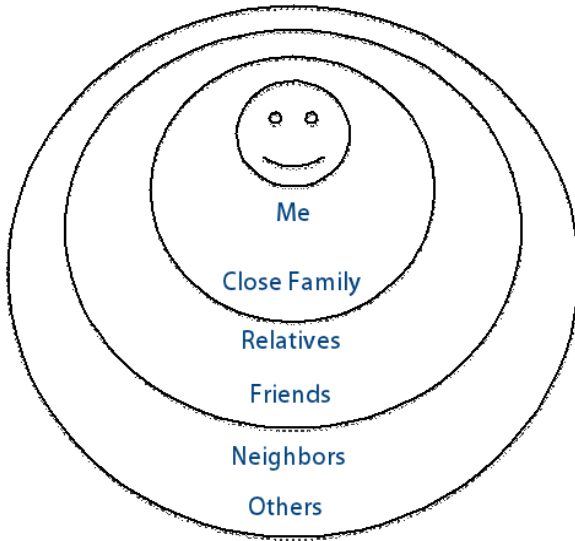
Hospice is a program that helps take care of people who have a terminal illness and are going to die. They are a group of nurses, social workers, doctors, chaplains, and volunteers who help someone who is dying. They also help their family prepare for when the person they love dies.

**Draw or write about something you think Hospice could do to help you or someone else in your family....**

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)

# 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 know the people in your life who support you. This is usually close friends and family. Write in the diagram below the people who are in your life, and identify those you are closest to...



**Who in your life can you go to for support? List them below:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Questions

We ask questions because we want to find answers to things we wonder or worry about. Usually when someone is going to die people have questions. Below are some things you might want to know.

*-What illness does my loved one have that is making them so sick?*

*-What does my family believe happens to someone who dies?*

*-Is this disease something I can catch from my loved one?*

*-Who will take care of me after my loved one 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 & Johnson, 2006)

# Where Do People Go When They Die?

There are many things we don't know about death. Many people believe the spirit or soul lives on after the body dies. When someone dies the spirit leaves and the body is left. The body is usually buried in a casket or cremated.

Some people believe the spirit goes to Heaven to be with God or 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.

Sometimes when people believe that their loved one's spirit continues on in Heaven or somewhere else then they also believe that the spirit of that person can "watch over" and protect those of us who are still alive.

Other people believe in something called "reincarnation." This is when, after dying, someone's spirit comes back in a different form. 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 & Johnson, 2006)



# Where Do People Go When They Die?

**What do you believe?**

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This is another good thing to talk about with an adult who you trust

# Spirit

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

When someone you love is dying, many people think about the parts of their loved ones spirit they are going to miss. For example, Elizabeth knows she is going to miss her Dad's sense of humor. What about your loved one's spirit will you miss most?

**Draw or write something special about your loved one who is sick and dying...**

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)

# Legacy

One way to honor your loved one before they die is to talk about their legacy. Someone's legacy is what they are leaving behind and the impact they have had on the lives of their friends and family. For example, Melissa's Mom taught her how special her family was and the importance of enjoying time together.

**Draw or write about the legacy your loved one will leave and the impact they have had on you...**

**Draw or write about something that your loved one taught you**

**Draw or write about something special your loved one did**

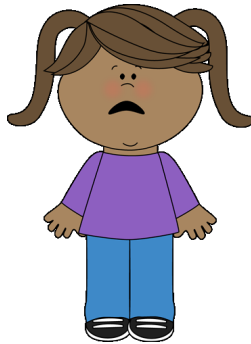
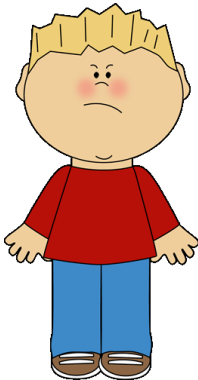
# Grief

Grief is all of the feelings 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 over, like when a friend moves away, people you love get divorces, or someone you care about dies.

**Anticipatory Grief** is when we prepare for a loss we know is going to happen. All of the feelings we have are the same as grief because our hearts and our minds are getting ready to lose them.

Some of the things that you may feel are:

- Sadness
- Anger
- Loneliness
- Guilt
- Fear



(Smith & Johnson, 2006)

# Feelings and Coping

Feelings are the “ups and downs” we feel inside when things happen to us. Everyone has lots of different feelings and they are all OK! When someone you love is going to die, feelings sometimes seem stronger.

Feelings are also called emotions and the way we deal with our feelings is called coping. Everyone copes differently with difficult things. Some people try ignoring things and pretend they 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 - the first step is identifying how we are feeling.

**Make a list of some of the emotions you have felt before:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)

# Sorrow and Sadness

When you know that someone you love is dying, it is common to feel very sad, like there is something very heavy on your heart. If you lose your favorite toy you get sad, then later the sadness goes away. When someone is sick and dies you can be sad for a very long time and that is called sorrow.

One of the most helpful ways to cope with sadness is to talk, draw, or write about what is making you sad.

**Draw or write about the hardest part of knowing your loved one is sick and eventually is going to die.**

# Anger

Another feeling you might experience when someone you love is dying is anger. You might be angry at the disease your loved one has or because you know that your life won't be the same after your loved one dies.

**Draw or write about what makes you angry...**

# 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.

**Below 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 scared or afraid. When someone is sick and going to die there are many things that might be scary for you. You might be afraid of what it is going to look like or feel like when your loved one actually dies. You may also be scared of how your life is going to change after your loved one dies. Your life won't be the same, but don't worry because you and your family will create a new normal. And remember, it is okay to feel afraid just like it's okay to feel sad or angry. It won't last forever.

Sometimes expressing what you are afraid of makes it less powerful.

**Draw or write about something you're afraid of...**

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)

# Learning How You Feel

Sometimes it is difficult to know how you feel or understand what makes you feel a certain way. Finishing a sentence can help us understand more about our feelings and ourselves.

**Try answering some of these sentences...**

Since he or she got sick, my family doesn't \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I'm alone I think about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I feel best when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**If I could change three things they would be:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

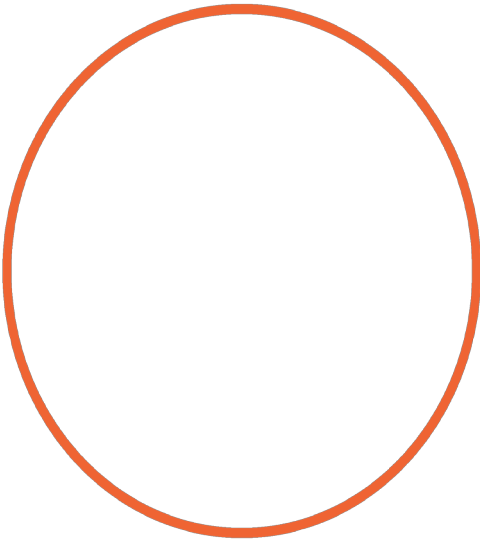
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Masks

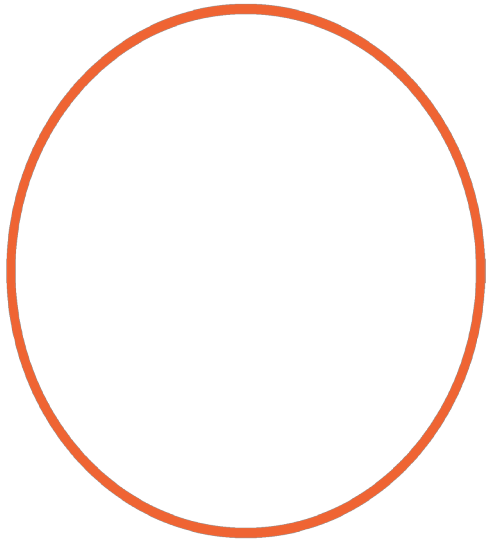
Sometimes people don't want to show everyone how they are feeling so they "mask" their emotions.

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

**Feeling**



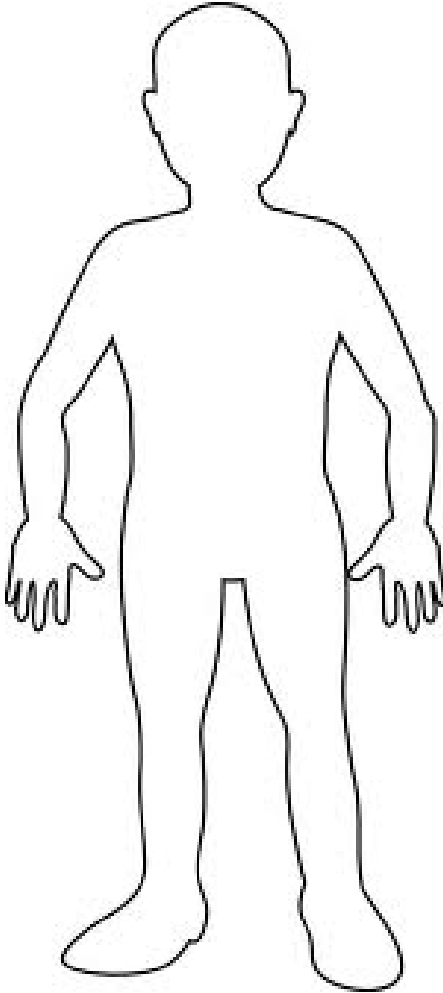
**Mask**



# 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**

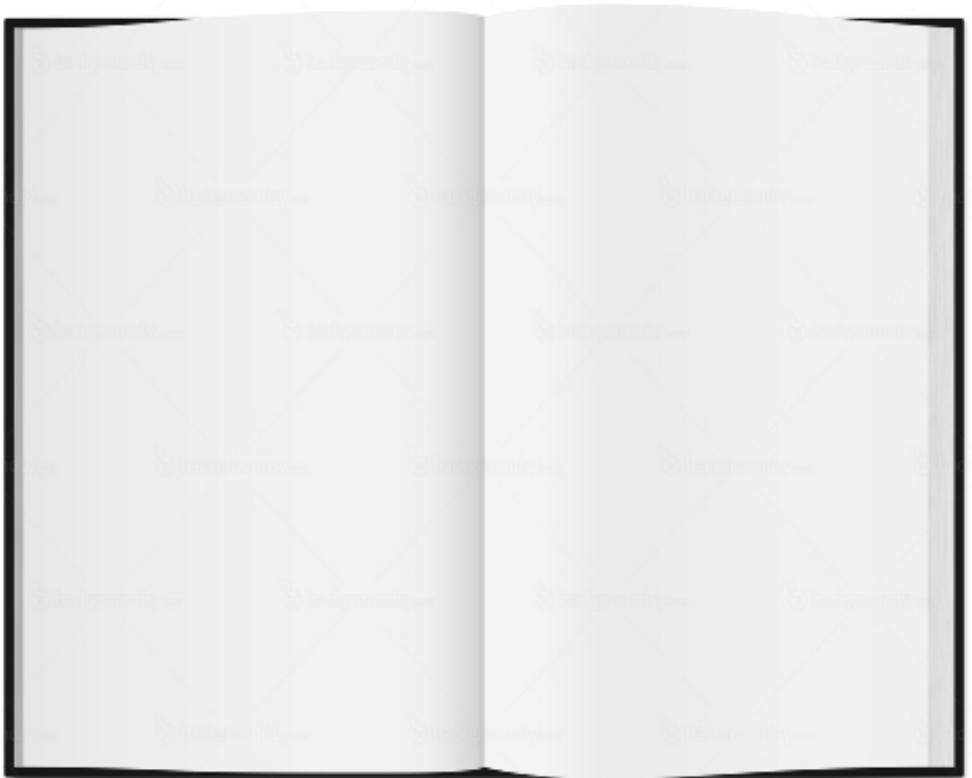
**Happy → Yellow**

*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 of things that make you feel happy, sad, safe, and anything else. Put the date at the top of each page and write the feelings you had that day so you can see how your feelings have changed over time.

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



# Your Family Is Grieving Too

When someone is dying and we begin grieving, we can feel very alone - but we aren't alone. Your family and friends are grieving too. This means they are feeling sad, angry, and lots of other things - just like you! If it seems like your family and friends are acting differently, try to remember that they are grieving too but are still trying to support you.

**Draw or write about something you can do to support someone else who is grieving...**

Person you know who is also grieving:

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**What can you do to support this person?**

# Saying Goodbye

When we know that someone we love is dying it is important to say goodbye. We can do this in many different ways. We can tell someone how much we love them, draw them a picture of what we are going to miss about them, or re-assure them that we will be okay without them.

**What kinds of things would you like to say to your loved one to say goodbye before they die?**

# Funeral

A funeral is when friends, family, and neighbors gather after someone has died. It is a time to remember the person, to say goodbye, and to celebrate the life that person lived.

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

Usually there is at least one person who will speak at the funeral about the person who died. There may also be music, songs, and prayers.

**Write or draw about what you would say about your loved one if you talked at their funeral. You could also write down the name of a song that reminds you of your loved one.**

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)



# Burial and Cremation

Some people's bodies are buried in a casket, and other people choose to be cremated. Often, 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.

Sometimes, people put flowers, pictures, or other special things in the casket or on the grave of their loved one.

**Draw or write about something special that you would like to have your loved one be buried with.....**

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)

# Remembrance

After someone has died, there is usually a brief announcement that is put in the newspaper - this is called an obituary. The obituary usually includes information about the person who died, such as what their accomplishments were, what family they left behind, and what made them special. It also usually includes information about the plans for the funeral.

**What makes your loved one special to you? Write about what you think should be included in your loved one's obituary...**

(Smith & Johnson, 2006)



# Moving Forward

Coping with a loss is difficult. One of the most important things is moving forward while carrying the memories of that person with you. Doing memorial activities and other rituals with your family 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.*

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