

JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF

A WORKBOOK FOR GRIEVING ADOLESCENTS



CareFirst



For Your Grieving Heart,

After the loss of a loved one, feelings can be complex, confusing, and even overwhelming. It can be difficult to sort out all of the mixed emotions you may be feeling and you may feel lost. No one can take away your pain and no one can fully understand what you may be going through, but there are people who want to help and support you as you heal. Remember, everyone has the right to grieve and express their grief in their own unique way.

At CareFirst, we want you to know that you are not alone. This booklet is meant to be a supportive resource for you as you navigate your own feelings. Grief is a natural part of life. We hope that this workbook can support you as you begin healing your heart following your loss.

Sincerely,
Your Friends at CareFirst Grief Services

The Grieving Teen's Bill of Rights

As a grieving teen, you have the right to...

- Know the truth about the death, the deceased, and the circumstances
- Have your questions answered honestly
- Be heard with dignity and respect
- Be silent and not tell others your grief emotions and thoughts
- Not agree with other's perceptions and conclusions
- See the person who died and the place of death
- Grieve any way you want without hurting yourself or others
- Feel all the feelings and to think all the thoughts of your own unique grief
- Not follow the "Stages of Grief" as outlined in a high school health book
- Grieve in your own unique, individual way without censorship
- Be angry at death, at the person who died, at God, at yourself, and at others
- Have your own theological and philosophical beliefs about life and death
- Be involved in the decisions about the rituals related to the death
- Have guilt about how you could have intervened to stop the death

(The Dougy Center, 2017)

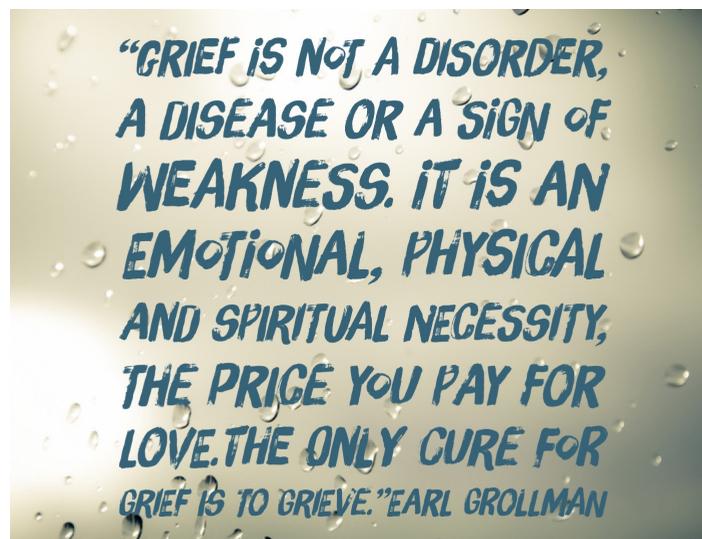
What is Grief?

Grief is:

- The pain we feel when we lose someone we love
- A natural reaction to death
- What can happen after the loss of a loved one such as a grandparent, parent, sibling, friend or even pet
- An emotional rollercoaster
- Often stressful
- A normal, natural part of life
- Unique, with no right or wrong way to grieve
- A process that takes time

Many Factors Influence Grief:

- Your personality
- Your relationship with the person who died
- How the person died- sudden or expected death
- The age of the person who died
- If you witnessed the death
- How you were told about the death
- Your past experience with loss and death
- Your culture
- Your belief systems
- What support is available to you



Let Yourself Grieve....

Feel comfortable grieving in a way that feels natural for you. **Grief does not have a timeline.** Do not compare your grief to those grieving around you. You may take a longer or shorter amount of time than others to work through your pain.

Realize that what you feel is what YOU feel, not necessarily what others feel. No one should tell you how you should or shouldn't feel. You may feel that you want to talk about the death... or not. You may want to cry... or not. However you chose to grieve, it is important to use positive coping mechanisms and activities to release your feelings.

Common Reactions to Death Include:

Shock and Disbelief

This is the typical first reaction after learning of a loss. It is your body's way of temporarily protecting your mind from the impact of loss. You may:

- Have trouble believing your loved one is gone
- Feel numb or on "auto pilot"
- Expect your loved one to appear
- Have a sense of being in a dream

Anger or Resentment

This is common even if there is no one to blame for the death. You may:

- Feel like it is unfair
- Feel angry at family or friends
- Feel angry at God
- Resent your loved one for dying

Guilt

It is normal to regret things your did or did not say, do or feel. You may regret or feel guilty for:

- Not doing something (or not doing more) to prevent death
- Not being there to say goodbye
- Being relieved that the person died (in the case of long-term illness)
- Having arguments with your loved one while he or she was alive

Fear or Anxiety

The death of your loved one can leave you feeling worried or panicked. You may:

- Worry about taking on new or more responsibilities
- Worry you're "loosing it"
- Be fearful of your own death
- Be afraid of life without your loved one

Deep Sadness

Sadness may be a constant presence or hit you all of a sudden. You may feel:

- Lonely
- Like there's a hole in the center of your life
- Deep yearning, like you're reliving all the other sadness you've had

Hope and Personal Growth

After a while you start to look toward the future with hope, even though your heart still aches for your loved one now and then. You may:

- Have new confidence in yourself
- Want to explore new interests
- Feel you have more empathy for others in your life

Physical Problems

Grief can cause a variety of physical symptoms including:

- Weight loss or gain
- Extreme tiredness
- Trouble sleeping
- Nausea

Other Feelings, Thoughts, and Reactions You May Have:

- Crying
- Irritability
- Eating problems
- Decreased activity
- Being overly sensitive
- Short temper
- Avoidance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Nightmares
- Withdrawn
- Headache
- Stomach ache
- Isolation



Depression

Depression is...

A state of low mood and avoidance of activity that may be a normal reaction to life events or circumstances after the loss of your loved one.

Depression is the stress and sadness we feel after the loss of our loved one. When we hold our feelings of anger and sadness in, this can lead to depression.

It is natural to feel “blue” at times. However, depression is more than feeling blue every now and then. It is consistent and overwhelming.

Some Warning Signs to Look For:

- Feeling empty, hopeless, helpless or worthless
- Being preoccupied with feelings of guilt
- Lethargy or no energy (physically or emotionally)
- Desire to hurt oneself or preoccupied with death of oneself
- Inability to function normally, unable to go to school, work, eat, etc.
- Rebellious behavior
- Sudden drop in grades
- Use of alcohol or drugs and promiscuous sexual activity
- Withdrawal from friends
- Not caring about appearance

***If you feel you may be depressed, it's important to talk about your depression with an adult you trust.**

Sudden vs. Expected Loss

Sudden Death:

Any unexpected loss caused by accident, homicide, suicide or illness.

- Shock and disbelief last longer
- No time to say goodbye
- Experience strong feelings of guilt for things you did not get to say or do
- May seem incredibly unfair
- You may experience reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks.
- Need for more information about incident to understand how person died
- Feel vulnerable, jumpy, or uneasy

Expected Loss:

Any expected loss caused by a medical condition or illness (such as cancer).

- Find yourself grieving little losses along the way
- You may experience symptoms of grief even before a loved one has died
- Often more time to prepare for death and plan for life without your loved one
- Often more time to say goodbye and to complete unfinished business

Creative Artwork

Artists have used their art to express human despair, find meaning in life, and transcend their own emotional struggles. Creating artwork following a loss can be very therapeutic, helping you to express and release your own painful, stressful emotions.

Artistic ways to express grief:

- Scrapbooking
- Journaling
- Photography
- Sculpting
- PowerPoint
- Memory book
- Music
- Painting
- Drawing



Artists often use their art to find meaning in life, express their emotions and rise above their own emotional struggles. To access and release your real feelings, you have to use the right side of your brain's language of imagery through art.

Creating images can help you feel a release of any intense emotions you may have of anger and pain in a safe way. Create your own artistic expression by drawing a cartoon strip of your thoughts or emotions through grief.

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Explain what this cartoon meant to you:

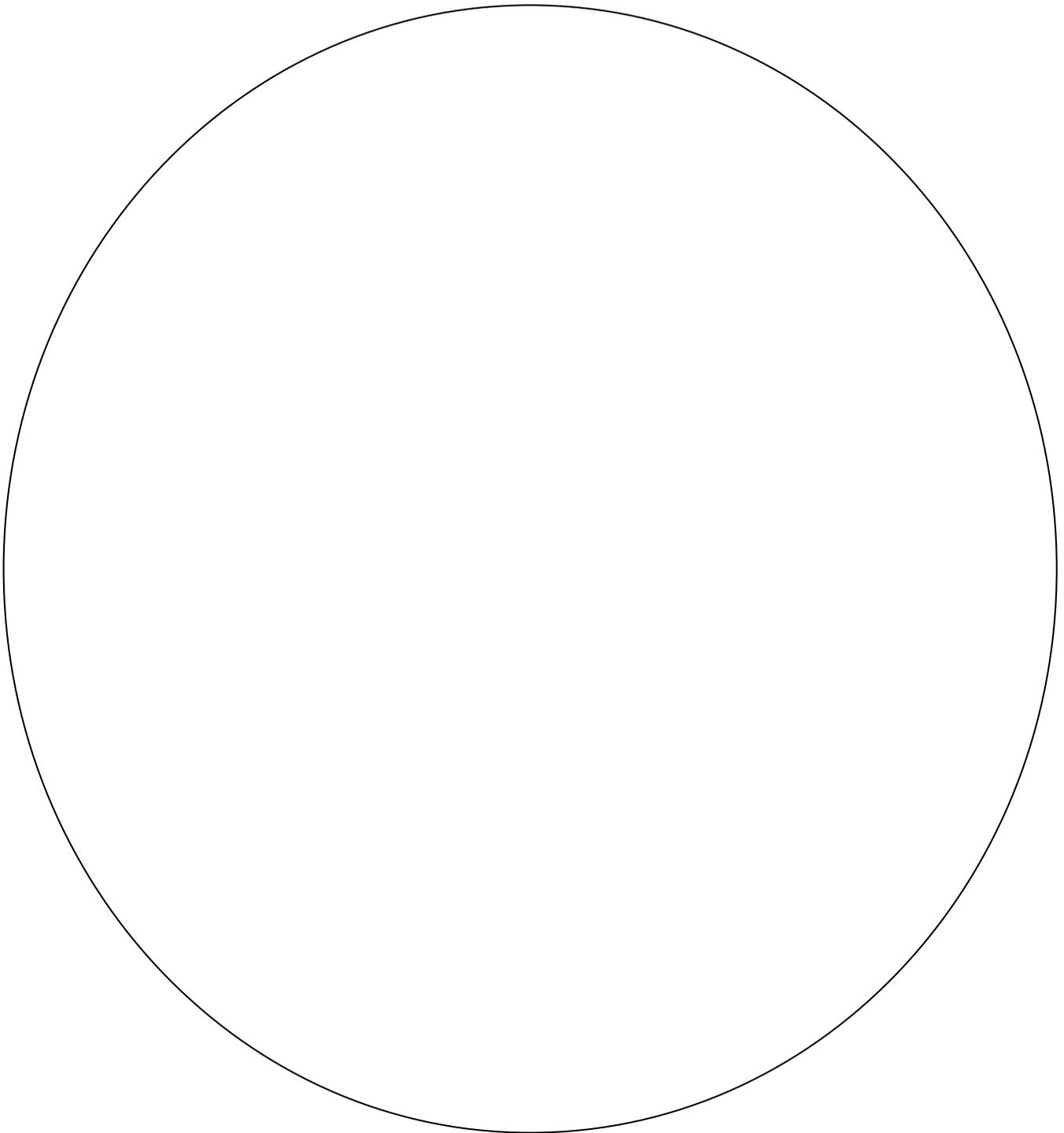
Remembrance

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 a way you look or act like your loved one...

Mandala

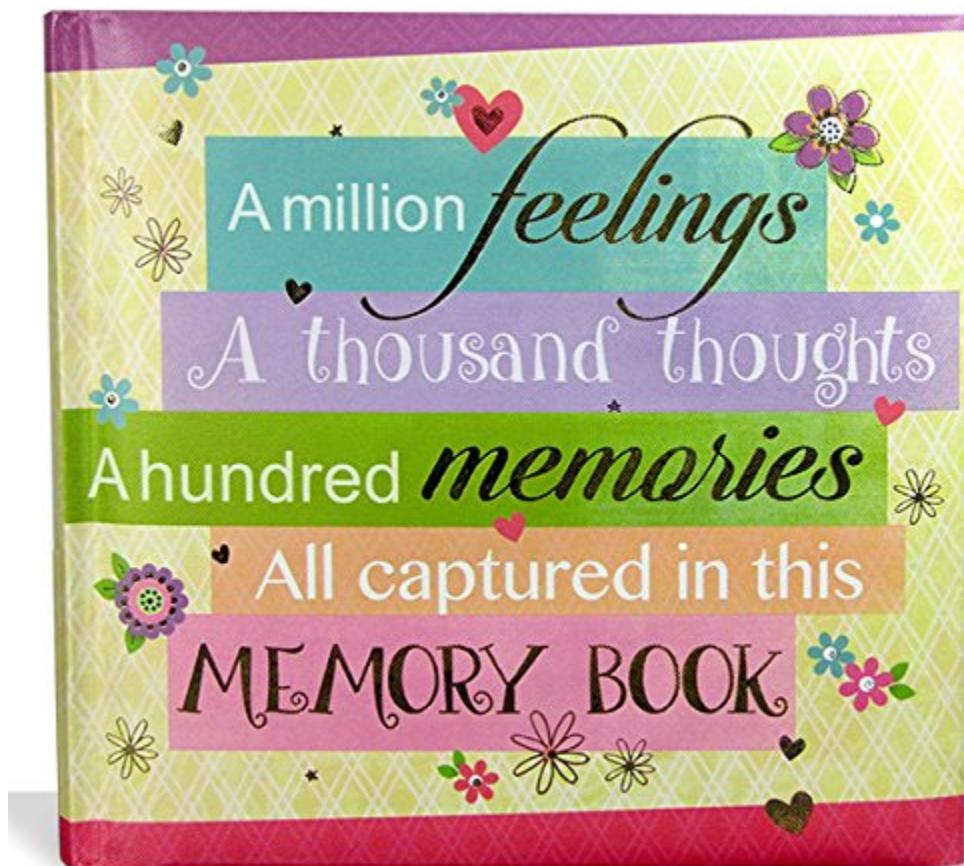
The word "mandala" is from the classical Indian language of Sanskrit, loosely translated to mean "sacred circle" It represents wholeness; draw or paint what your grief means to you. It could be a hospital bed, a phone that represents the call informing you about the loss of your loved one, a headstone etc.



Memory Book

Memory books can be very helpful when grieving because it's a way to not only honor the loved one you lost, but remember the times and stories the pictures provoke

- Purchase or make a scrapbook using a binder and construction paper
- Collect pictures of your loved one and stickers that remind you of them
- Think about songs and memories to write into your memory book



Memory Flag

- Cut fabric in a square or flag shape
- Paint designs or pictures that remind you of your loved one
- Hang outside

**Every time the wind blows...
the memory of your loved one lives on**



Write Your Own Soundtrack



Music therapy is a clinical technique that involves participation in musical activities, such as listening to favorite songs, improvising with musical instruments, and songwriting. Music can touch our hearts and have profound healing effects both spiritually and emotionally. When we are struggling with grief, music can lift us up, trigger memories, and take us to another time and place in our mind. Below is an example of expressing grief through music.

“Cause there’s holes in the floor of Heaven
and her tears are pourin’ down
that’s how you know she’s watchin’
wishin’ she could be here now
And sometimes if you’re lonely
just remember she can see
there’s holes in the floor of Heaven
and she’s watchin’ over you and me”

– Steve Wariner, Holes in the Floor of Heaven lyrics

Music helps individuals express their own feelings and experiences. Singing along with the lyrics of a song provides a healthy release of painful or difficult emotions. Soothing songs may help you relax if you are feeling anxious, heavy metal music may help angry individuals express their rage, while upbeat music may help individuals who are feeling depressed to uplift their mood.

Lyrics

Use the space below to write down some of your favorite lyrics that may help express the way you are feeling...

Create Your Own Playlist

Create a playlist that describes how you view your life now. Include the iPod playlist title and song titles. Use these songs to focus on the specific emotions you identify with since the loss of your loved one. These songs could represent feelings of anger, sadness, or confusion.

Examples could be:

"Broken"- Seether and Amy Lee

"I Will Remember You"- Sarah McLaughlin

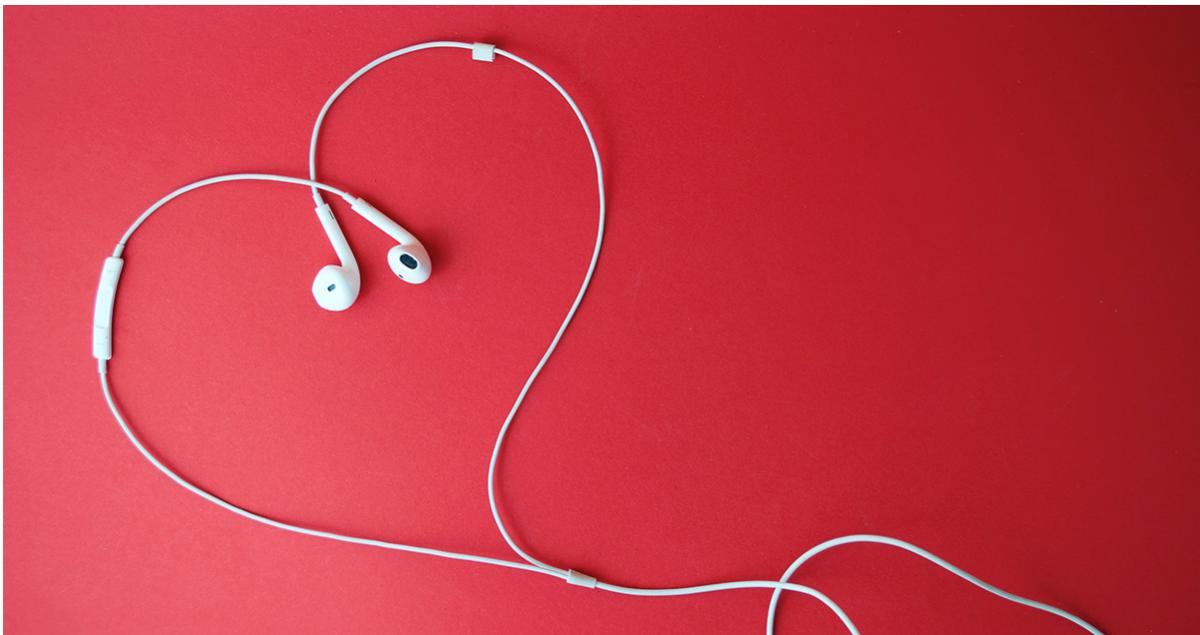
"Heaven"- Beyoncé

"Numb"- Linkin Park

"See You Again"- Wiz Khalifa and Charlie Puth

"What Hurts the Most"- Rascal Flatts

"Tears in Heaven"- Eric Clapton.



Memory Box

Much like a memory book, this allows you to honor the memory of the one you have lost. The nice thing about a memory box is that you can decorate the outside how you please, but put important reminders of your loved one in it and keep it in a sacred place.

- Use an old shoe box or purchase a box from a local craft store
- Decorate as you wish
- Add items such as pictures, poems, or objects that remind you of your loved one
- Take the box out and go through the contents when you are in need of the memory



Affirmations

Affirmations are specific statements that help to overcome negative thoughts and provide encouragement. Saying affirmations out loud or in your head, and often repeating them, helps you to truly believe what you are saying.

Here is a list of affirmations you can try to support and encourage yourself when the pain of grief becomes overwhelming...

It takes a lot of courage to feel the pain of grief and move through it.

I will grieve with purpose.

I know that to face my grief is a way to heal the pain.

I need to let other people support me in my grief.

I will grieve for my special person on and off as I grow up.

I am not alone.

I will survive.

I may not trust everyone, but I can trust some people.

I can find healthy ways to express my feelings.

I can adjust to the many changes of loss, a little at a time.

I have the power deep within me to get through this.

This is the beginning of a transformation.

There will be rocky times and good times.

I can learn from my mistakes.

I can choose to take care of myself.

It is all right to take breaks from my grief and do fun things.

I can live in the precious present.

I can begin to see the silver lining behind the clouds.

Tips to Get Through Your Grief

When you are grieving, it affects your whole body, and the emotional grief that you go through can be physically demanding. It can leave you feeling tired, decrease your immune system, and lower your serotonin. It is important to take care of yourself during this process:

- **Get Lots of Rest:** Sleep is important to healing, but if you find yourself sleeping too much or not enough then you may want to speak with your physician.
- **Eat Healthy:** Stress and grieving can cause us to either over eat or not eat. It is important to keep a balanced diet to help stay energized.
- **Exercise:** Physical exercise releases natural endorphins to help regulate emotions, decrease stress hormones and depression, and improve sleep. Walking is one of the easiest and most convenient ways you can exercise.
- **Join a Gym,** try yoga or Tai Chi
- **Snuggle up with your pet** or visit a friend with a pet
- **Cry as much as you want to**
- **Don't let others hurry you through your grief,** or tell you how you should feel
- **Forgive yourself** for things you might have done differently
- **Talk to other peers or adults** that have experienced a similar loss
- **Keep your sense of humor**
- **Participate in an event,** such as a marathon or fundraiser to support a cause related to the person who died

Supports in My Life

A healthy support system is important, especially while we are grieving. This list will help identify who is there for you and what things give you energy. Fill in the specifics.

People Who Care About Me:

Friends: _____

Family: _____

Relatives: _____

Neighbors: _____

Teachers: _____

Counselor/mental health professional: _____

Minister/Priest/Rabbi: _____

Other adults: _____

Interests That Are Important To Me:

School Related: _____

Spiritual: _____

Work: _____

Sports: _____

Arts/Music: _____

Other: _____

Things That Are Important to Me

Pets: _____

Tangible Items (pictures, awards): _____

My Self-Care Plan

A healthy support system is important, especially while we are grieving. This list will help identify who is there for you and what things give you energy. Fill in the specifics.

Find and name three people you feel comfortable talking to:

Name a place you can go that is comfortable and safe:

**Name three activities that you can do to express your feelings. Examples include:
Writing, Drawing, Hitting a Pillow, Singing,
Playing Sports, Dancing**

Name three symptoms to watch out for and talk to someone about:

Name three favorite memories of your lost loved one:

Name three ways you can honor the memory of your loved one:

References

The Dougy Center. (2017). The bill of rights for grieving teens. Retrieved from <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/bill-of-rights/>

Notes

SUPPORTING YOU
EMBRACING FAMILY
STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITY

Development Led By: Chelsea E. Ambrose

*Contributors: Andrea Barber, Angela Button, Tara Chapman, Sheri Jeffrey,
Carly Nichols, Marissa O'Neal, Hannah Smith*

*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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