

APPENDIX C: Kara Resources on Grief

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A Few Thoughts for Teachers and Parents

By Lynn Bennett Blackburn

You are faced with the challenge of helping your class and your children cope with the loss of a classmate. The goal of addressing the student's death with them is to give the children some understanding of what they are experiencing, to give them labels for their feelings, and to let them know they are not alone in having these feelings. The goal is to help them grieve, not to make the grief go away. There are several things to consider:

Be honest about your feelings. Share what you are feeling through simple statements coupled with comments about what you do to express and cope with these feelings. Encouraging the children to share and express what they feel is more effective when you model this behavior.

Be honest with the limits of your knowledge. The death of a classmate may raise questions about why it happened, what it feels like to die, and what happens after death. For many of these you will have no answers. It is important to ask what they think, for often such questions represent other worries or concerns that you can address. Sometimes it will be best to encourage the child to share the question with parents. A simple "I don't know, but I wonder about that, too" may be the most helpful and truthful answer you can give.

Be honest with yourself. Recognize that you are grieving, too. Be an advocate regarding the time you need to deal with this loss. You may need someone to fill in for you while you attend the funeral, visit the family, talk with your children. You'll probably need a few minutes alone, too. If you are uncomfortable with certain topics or aspects of approaching this situation, ask others-- the social worker, school psychologist or counselor. You don't have to do it all and you don't have to do it alone.

Provide opportunities for feeling expression. Grieving is often a mixture of anger and sadness. Allow time for tears. Let the children know that crying is a normal reaction to losing someone or something we value; that saying good-bye to a friend can be very sad. Children often view crying as a sign of weakness or immaturity. They may need help to see tears as something positive for adults as well as children.

Finding constructive outlets for anger may be your greatest challenge. It is important to help the children define the source --at whom and about what they are angry. Anger can be released through verbal activities such as role-playing or writing down what you wish you could say or do to the subject of the anger. Physical outlets, such as throwing bean bags at a target, throwing a ball at a wall, or working with clay (pounding, pulling, squeezing) can help release the energy that anger creates.

For older children, anger may be channeled into a class project related to the cause of their friend's death. A sense of meaning can be attached to the tragedy through fund raising to support community action such as fire safety, water safety, groups against drunk driving or informational

campaigns to increase peer and public awareness such as helmet use.

Maintain class and home routine and rules. Children gain security from structure and routine. While brief interruptions may occur to accommodate a funeral or memorial service, returning to routine provides the comforting reassurance that life will go on.

Don't rush. Some classes have come to school to find a dead schoolmate's desk removed and all evidence of the child hidden away. Let your class decide what to do with the empty desk and other things owned by the class. Making things disappear does not make the death easier. Rather, it gives the children a feeling that they don't really matter.

Add feeling-related ideas to your regular curriculum. The need to express feelings will not end with the funeral. It is important, over the months that follow, to continue to provide opportunities for feeling expression. Art and writing projects can be built around feeling themes—things that make you happy, what you do when you feel sad, drawing or writing about a memorable day. Stories about coping with death, plus losses such as divorce or moving can be incorporated into reading activities.

Recognize and affirm your privileged position. This is a time when you can have a very positive influence on your children. How you help them handle this grief will, in some large or small way, help them in the future. Giving them permission to feel and share those feelings, to cry, to love and to care may be the greatest single gift you ever give them.

About the Author: Lynn Bennett Blackburn has a doctorate in child clinical psychology. She is a Pediatric Neuropsychologist in the Division of Pediatric Neurology at the University of Minnesota. Her work involves assessing children with neurological disorders and learning problems, then working with their families and school staff to help staff and parents better understand and respond to each child's special needs.



Grief and Mourning in Children and Teens Compiled by Kara

Developmental Stages and Grief: Children and Teens

Developmental Age: Infancy--birth to 18 months

Primary Developmental Challenge: Ability Being Developed: Basic trust vs. mistrust
Hope

Child's Beliefs About Death: No concept of death, limited concept of time.
Grief Reactions: General distress, shock, despair, protest, sleeplessness. May show increased needs for holding, touching. May show increased reluctance to be separated from nurturer. Needs: Routines maintained, nurturing from a consistently available caregiver, reassurance, love, secure environment. Meet increased attachment needs for eye contact, facial expressions, touching, rocking, singing.

Developmental Age: Toddlerhood: infancy to 3

years Primary Developmental Challenge: Autonomy vs. shame/ doubt

Ability Being Developed: Will and self-control

Child's Beliefs About Death: Death seen as temporary separation; any separation from parent may create anxiety. Repeated explanations do not increase child's understanding, because cognitive ability to understand death is limited. Confuse fantasy/ reality. On an unconscious and non-verbal level, child may assume what happens is under their control & is therefore "their fault."

Grief Reactions: May relieve anxiety through fantasy or distressed behaviors (regression, aggression, clinging.) May feel guilty. May fear being left alone. May regress to earlier stages, needs. May not understand sadness around him or may seem unaffected. Confusion, agitation at night, nightmares. Repeated questions are common.

Toddlerhood: infancy to 3 years (cont'd)

Needs: Reassure child he will be cared for by maintaining routines, nurturing from a consistently available caregiver, reassurance, love, and a secure environment. Simple, honest words, concrete explanations, repetition, & patience help the child distinguish between fantasy & reality. Assure child he did not cause it to happen & it is not his fault. Offer opportunity for inclusion in

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family rituals such as funeral, and provide a supportive adult to honor the child's wishes if the child changes his mind or wants to leave. Help child acknowledge own feelings-anger, sadness, etc; Accept regressive behavior.

Developmental Age: Early Childhood:
Primary Developmental Challenge: Initiative vs. guilt
Ability Being Developed: Purpose and
direction

Child's Beliefs About Death: May still be quite similar to that of a toddler in that death is not understood as permanent. Some 4 and 5 year olds may have the beginnings of an understanding, as experience over time with the concrete reality of the deceased not reappearing begins to have meaning. Cognitive ability to understand death is still limited, however.

Grief Reactions: May regress and "act younger." May cling to adult caregiver, show or even verbalize anxiety that the adult may die or become ill. May tell everyone and anyone about the death. Confusion, agitation at night, nightmares are possible. Repeated questions about the death or the deceased are common. In general, children cycle through their emotions much more rapidly than adults-smiling one minute, crying the next, angry the next, giggling a minute later. Emotions may seem amplified. Frustrations that would have been minor before the loss may result in more frequent major meltdowns that last longer than expected. At other times the child may say "I'm happy," or may seem unaffected.

Needs: Same as above for toddler, plus increased dialog about the deceased and opportunity to participate in the ways to remember the deceased. Helpful to continue to hear stories about the deceased, see pictures of them, and hear about their relationship with them. Give the child age-appropriate, brief information, and then attune to his questions and curiosities, providing frequent opportunities to talk briefly, and answering questions honestly.

Developmental Age: Middle Childhood: 5 years to puberty
Primary Developmental Challenge: Industry vs. inferiority
Ability Being Developed: Competency

Child's Beliefs About Death: By 5-7 years old, child begins to see death as final & universal for others; neither believes nor denies that he himself will die; may believe he can escape by being good/ trying hard. Death is often perceived as external: a person, a spirit. By 7-11, children perceive the irreversibility, permanence, inevitability of death, and perceive their *own* mortality; they have vivid ideas about what occurs after death, and may be concerned with consequences following death.

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Grief Reactions: May act like nothing happened or deny that things are different. Tend to show grief through play or behaviors instead of talking about it: numbness, shock, sorrow, confusion, fears, anxiety, anger, embarrassment, happiness & humor, in short cycles. May desire to conform to peers and present a façade of coping. May act younger than his age. Want to understand: may want lots of information, may become an expert in the disease that caused a death, for example. Peer relationships are increasingly important. Some children find support from their friends, others try to hide the fact that they've experienced a death.

Needs: Simple, honest answers & information; ample reassurance. Models for mourning. Acknowledgment of their feelings, allowing a child to express or withhold, as needed. Support the child's unique style of coping. Safe place, people & time to talk, share their experience. Assistance in remembering the person who died. Support in showing grief in his own unique way. Limits & rules, upheld firmly but with kindness. Reassurance about future & clarity that they are not responsible for it, nor for the death. Choices, inclusion. Respect of their "need to know," as information returns some sense of control. Respect child's increasing need for peer relationships. Physical outlets, play, expressive art, reading; memory book can be helpful. Do not require children to be "brave," "grown-up," "in-control," or to comfort others.

Developmental Age: Adolescence

Primary Developmental Challenge: Identity vs. identity confusion

Ability Being Developed: Individuation

Three Developmental Stages within

Adolescence: Early Adolescence: 11 to 14

years

Challenge: Reunion vs. abandonment/ separation

Ability Being Developed: Emotional separation from parents

Middle Adolescence: 14 to 17 years

Challenge: Independence vs. dependence

Ability Being Developed: Mastery/ control

Late Adolescence: 17 to 21 years

Challenge: Closeness vs. distance

Ability Being Developed: Intimacy and commitment

Child's Beliefs About Death: Recognize their own mortality but may act as though it could never happen to them. Attitudes towards death becoming similar to adults'.

Grief Reactions

Physical: May feel fatigued, sleep more, gain/lose weight, have headaches, get ill more easily, be accident-prone, restless. May be attracted to alcohol, smoking, drugs, excessive risk-taking.

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Mental:May experience trouble concentrating in school, forgetfulness, lack of motivation, "negative" attitude, "no one understands". May need to ask "why?" or say "if only," mourning what might have been.

Emotional:Sad, irritable, worried, angry, anxious, fearful, relieved, guilty, lonely, mood swings, crying spells, frustration, revenge. Watch for depression, hopelessness, helplessness. May fill emptiness with intimacy, sex.
Adolescence (cont'd.)

Spirit:May experience loss of direction, future, meaning, faith
Relational:Feeling isolated, less cooperative, withdrawing, or getting very busy, perfectionistic, and social. May lash out or show moods more readily. Friendships may change a lot as the teen wants others to reach out or leave him alone. May have difficulty with others' reactions & what is said about the death, as well as with the everyday content of peer's conversations, which may suddenly seem trivial compared to the death. Can be left feeling isolated in a crowd.

Needs: Balanced, healthy food, water, adequate sleep, exercise, medical check-ups. Professional assistance if alcohol, drug, promiscuity, or eating issues develop. Recognition of the importance of their peer relationships.

Understanding, patience, and assistance of teachers & parents needed if grades suffer, if additional help or time are required for assignments, or if teen needs to step out of classroom during a grief burst.

Respect the teen's need to work through the loss independently. Be available but not intrusive: "I'm here if you want to talk or if you need me." They will be most likely to talk to listeners who make themselves available but don't force talking, who respect the teen's need for privacy, and give the teen a clear sense that they have choices about when & with whom they feel comfortable expressing grief emotions. Teens benefit from opportunities & support for self-expression, and need tolerance of conflicting feelings, and push/pull relationship with adults. Even when they protest, they need adults to look after their safety, as well as set and enforce limits. Even when adults are monolithic in their grief, teens need fun, recreation, and time with peers. They also need inclusion, choices in memorializing the deceased.

The above material was prepared by Liz Powell, adapted from the work of Erik Erikson, J. William Worden, Charles A. Corr, Clyde M. Nabe & Donna M. Corr, the Kara community, and hundreds of children and teens served by Kara since 1993. It includes material adapted by Sue Shaffer from the work of John Bowlby, Earl Grollman, Claudia Jewett, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Margaret Nagy, J. W. Worden, Alan Wolfolt, and Valerie Young.



10 Basic Principles of Grieving for Children and Teens:

1. Children are concrete in their thinking: In order to lessen their confusion, use the words "death" and "dying." Describe death concretely. Answer their questions simply and honestly without using euphemisms such as "passed on," "went to sleep," etc. You don't have to add a large number of details. Children will ask if they want to know more. You can see if they are listening because they want to, or if it is for your benefit (they seem agitated, fidgety, and give you little or no eye contact).
2. Children generalize from the specific to the general: If someone died in a hospital, children think that hospitals are for the dying. If someone died in their sleep, children are afraid to go to sleep. If one person died, "someone (or everyone) else will die," or "I will die." They will learn to accommodate new truths on their own if they are allowed to express themselves and try things out (e.g., going to sleep and waking up alive).
3. Children are repetitive in their grief: Children may ask questions repetitively. The answers often do not resolve their searching. The searching itself is a part of their grief work. Their questions are indicative of their confusion and uncertainty. Listen and support their searching by answering repetitively and/or telling the story over and over again.
4. Children are physical in their grief: The older children are, the more capable they are of expressing themselves in words. Younger children simply ARE their feelings. What they do with their bodies speaks their feelings. Grief is a physical experience for all ages, but most especially for younger children. Watch their bodies and understand their play as their language of grief. Reflect their play verbally and physically so that they will feel that they are "being heard." For example, "You are bouncing, bouncing, bouncing on those pillows. Your face is red and you are yelling loudly."
5. Children grieve cyclically: Their grief work goes in cycles throughout their childhood and their lives. Each time they reach a new developmental level, they reintegrate the important events of their lives, using their newly acquired processes and skills. Example: a one year old, upon losing his mother, will become absorbed in the death again when her language skills develop and as she is able to use words for the expressions of her feelings. She may re-experience the grief again as an adolescent, using her newly acquired cognitive skills of abstract thinking.
6. Children need choices: Death is a disruption in children's lives that is quite frightening. Their lives will probably seem undependable, unstable, confusing, and out of control. These topsy-turvy feelings can be appeased if children have some say in what they do or don't do to memorialize the person who has died, and to express their feelings about the death.

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7. **Children grieve as part of a family:** When a family member dies, it will affect the way the family functions as a whole. All the relationships within the family may shift, adjusting to this change in the family structure. Children will grieve for the person who died, as well as the environment in the family that existed before the death. Children may grieve over the changed behavior of family and friends. It is helpful if each family member is encouraged to grieve in his/her own way, with support for individual differences.
8. **Children's feelings are their allies:** Feelings help children pay attention to their loss. Through this attention comes their own understanding about the death that they grieve. It is important not to shield children from their emotions; offering them the option to stay or leave will allow them to feel included, and will give them permission to be with the feelings.
9. **Children's grief is intertwined with normal developmental tasks:** It can be impossible to determine which behaviors are part of developmental phases and which are grief-related (e.g., "Is it adolescence or is it grief?").
10. **Key Tasks of Mourning in Children and Teens:**
 - a. Understand the death, try to make sense of what happened.
 - b. Express emotional and other strong responses to the loss.
 - c. Commemorate the person that's been lost.
 - d. Learn how to go on living and loving.

Let children and teens teach you about their grief



Ways to Support Children in Coping with Trauma or Loss

1. Take time to listen to their concerns; help them to feel safe; encourage expression of their feelings.
2. Acknowledge that trauma and loss are hard to handle for everybody.
3. Smile and hug often; use creative ways to help them express complex feelings.
4. Encourage them through their challenges with "I believe in you" messages.
5. Give age appropriate information about the critical event that is honest and direct.
6. Listen to their experience and respond without judgment.
7. Partner with children; help them decide how they want to deal with difficult "adult" things like funerals and remembrance anniversaries.
8. Let children know about YOUR difficult feelings and vulnerability.
9. Honor their uniqueness and individuality.
10. Affirm that all ways of experiencing grief are "normal".
11. Encourage them to take time for themselves and ask for what they need.
12. Let them know that you are available to talk or just to hang out, as they wish.

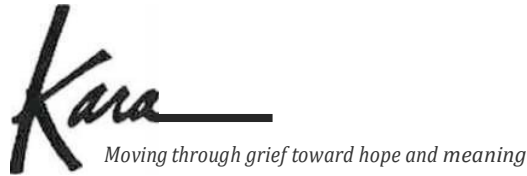


Comforting a Grieving Individual

Many people feel inadequate about what to say to a friend or family member who is grieving. This guide to comforting a grieving individual covers both 1) words that offer comfort, and 2) words that, while well intentioned, may harm or stifle the bereaved, making the journey through grief more difficult.

Saying nothing or pretending the death didn't happen also hurts the individual in the long run. It is important for this person to hear words of comfort from you and especially from friends, family members, or colleagues to whom he/she is close.

Words that Do Comfort	Words that May Not Comfort
I'm sorry.	Now she's in a better place.
I'm thinking of you.	Time will heal you.
I care and want to help.	Think of all you have to be thankful for.
You are so important to me.	Just be happy that he's out of his pain.
I'm here for you.	He lived a long life.
If I were in your shoes, I think I'd feel that way too.	Be strong. You are holding up so well.
One of my favorite memories of (use the name of the person or pet) is ...	Keep busy.
It seems so natural to cry at a time like this.	Try not to think about it.
I don't know what to say but I know this must be very difficult for you.	He wouldn't have wanted you to be sad.
Do you feel like talking for a while?	This is a blessing.
How do you feel today?	Now you have an angel in heaven.
	You shouldn't feel that way.
	Stop acting like a baby.
	You need to be strong.



GRIEF DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS AFTER A SUICIDE

Before the Meeting with Students

- Review "TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE" (AFSP Toolkit, Pages 15-16)

Meeting Guidelines

Before having the discussion with students, students are asked to respect one another and that not a lot of detailed information will be shared about the person who died.

Share the information that you have directly and honestly.

Read "SAMPLE DEATH NOTIFICATION STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS" (AFSP Toolkit, Pages 17-18)

Allow students to ask questions. Answer questions as best you can, knowing that it is okay to say "I don't know" when you don't have the answer.

Talk to your class about how grief affects people and encourage them to share how they feel. One way to do this is to discuss what other types of losses or deaths the students in your class have experienced, and what helped them cope.

Psycho-educate students on the facts about suicide (i.e., brain illness, warning signs, symptoms) and resources to support themselves and others- "FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE AND MENTAL DISORDERS IN ADOLESCENTS" (AFSP Toolkit, Pages 26-28) is a great resource

Let students know that if they would like to write a letter and/or draw a picture to support the family that they could do so.

Let students and families know that there are support counselors that they can speak with today who can help with on-going support as well.

Recommended: SHARE "HELPING STUDENTS COPE" (AFSP Toolkit, Pages 29-31) with teachers, counselors, and administrators who will be supporting the students and parents



Useful Grief Insights for Teachers: A Script

Scene: You are faced with the challenge of helping your students cope with the loss of a classmate. The goal is to help them grieve, not to make the grief go away.

Action: Tell a story of a death you believe the children will understand (a pet, a tree, a bird, etc.)

or use one of the activities from the enclosed notebook.

Setting the scene:

- *Be honest with yourself.* Recognize that you are grieving too. You don't have to do it all. For example, "I miss Sally too."
- *Be honest about your feelings.* Share what you are feeling with your students, share with them through simple statements and comments about what you do to express and cope. For example, "I sometimes feel better after drawing a picture."
- *Be honest with the limits of your knowledge.* The death may raise questions about what it feels like to die and what happens after death. You won't be able to answer many of their questions. Ask what they think so you can hear what their actual worries or concerns are.
- *Provide opportunities for feeling expression.* When we grieve it is often a mixture of anger and sadness. Allow time for their tears. Let the children know that crying is a normal reaction to the death of a classmate and of a loved one.
- *Maintain class and home routine and rules.* Students need structure and routine. Even with the interruption of a funeral or memorial service, your return to routine will provide reassurance to the students that life does go on.
- *Don't rush.* If a classmate has died let your students decide what to do with the empty desk and the other things owned by the child who died. The idea is not to make the child disappear, it doesn't make it easier for the children. Rather, it gives children a sense that the child didn't really matter.
- *Add feeling-related activities to your regular curriculum.* Many children are kinesthetic learners. The need to express feelings about the loss will continue for all your students. In particular, the kinesthetic student is particularly comforted by art and writing projects built around feeling themes. Stories about coping with death and loss can be incorporated into the classroom reading activities. It is important to continue to provide opportunities for feeling expression.
- *Honor and affirm your privileged position.* This is a time you have a very healing influence on your students. Showing them how to handle grief in even these small ways will help them in the future.

Finale: Giving permission to feel and to share feelings may be the single most important gift you ever give to them.



Sample Letter to parents after a death

Dear Parents,

A very sad thing has happened in our school community. Last night, we lost.... This loss was sudden and unexpected, and we are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information with your children today and had discussions with all the students in their homeroom. Bereavement counselors, teachers, and other support staff have been and will continue to be available to students, teachers, and parents. Please contact the school if you have any questions or concerns.

As a parent, you may want to talk to your child about death because it impacts each person in different ways. How children and teens react will depend on the relationship they had with the person who died, their age, and their prior experience with death.

Your child may:

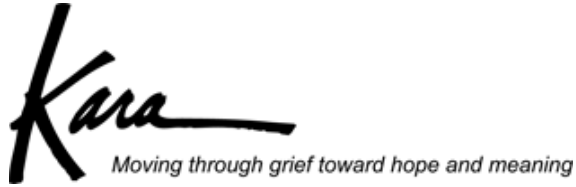
- Appear unaffected
- Ask questions about the death repeatedly
- Be angry or aggressive
- Be withdrawn or moody
- Be sad or depressed
- Become afraid
- Have difficulty sleeping or eating

We suggest that you listen to your children. If they want to talk, answer their questions simply, honestly and be prepared to answer the same questions repeatedly.

Our thoughts are with (family

name). Sincerely,

Principal xxxxxx



Realistic Expectations about Grief

Grief will take longer than most people think.

Grief takes more energy than we ever imagine.

Grief shows itself in all spheres of our life, in the emotional, social, physical, and spiritual.

We feel grief not only for the actual person we lost, but also for our hopes, dreams, unfulfilled expectations, and unmet needs.

New losses bring up unresolved grief from our past, often forcing us to cope with an array of confusing feelings at once.

Grief can temporarily affect our decision-making and problem-solving abilities and cause difficulties in concentrating.

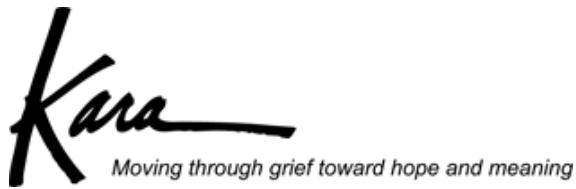
Sometimes grief makes us feel we "are going crazy."

Society has unrealistic expectations about grief and the mourning process and people may respond inappropriately to you.

Grief may cause a variety of physical symptoms, like sleeplessness, tightness in the chest, and decreased energy.

Family members may not always provide the support we expect. And their grief may be very different from ours. Sometimes people have the necessary social support to help them through loss. But more often, they need to reach out for support, let others know what they need, and actively build a network that facilitates personal growth and renewal.

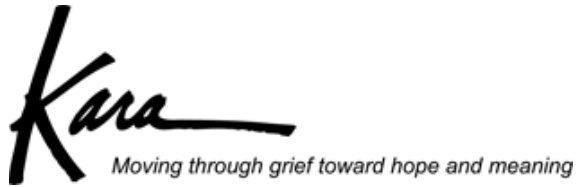
<https://kara-grief.org/article/realistic-expectations/>



How To Help Someone Who Is Grieving

- **DO** let your genuine concern and caring show.
- **DO** be available... to listen or to help with whatever else seems needed at the time.
- **DO** say you are sorry about what happened and about their pain.
- **DO** allow them to express as much unhappiness as they are feeling at the moment and are willing to share.
- **DO** encourage them to be patient with themselves, not to expect too much of themselves and not to impose any “shoulds” on themselves.
- **DO** allow them to talk about their loss as much and as often as they want to.
- **DO** talk about the special, endearing qualities of the person they've lost.
- **DON'T** let your own sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out.
- **DON'T** avoid them because you are uncomfortable (being avoided by friends adds pain to an already painful experience).
- **DON'T** say that you “know how they feel”. (Unless you've experienced their loss yourself you probably don't know how they feel.)
- **DON'T** say “you ought to be feeling better by now” or anything else that implies a judgment about their feelings.
- **DON'T** tell them what they should feel or do. **DON'T** change the subject when they mention their loss or their loved one.
- **DON'T** avoid mentioning their loss out of fear of reminding them of their pain (You can be sure they haven't forgotten it).
- **DON'T** try to find something positive (e.g. a moral lesson, closer family ties, etc.) about the loss.
- **DON'T** point out “at least they have their other ...”
- **DON'T** say they “can always have another ...”
- **DON'T** suggest that they “should be grateful for their so-and-so...”
- **DON'T** make any comments which in any way suggest that their loss was their fault (there will be enough feelings of doubt and guilt without any help from their friends)

<https://kara-grief.org/article/helping-someone-who-is-grieving/>



Kindness Toward Self

Jim Mulvaney, FT

Unkindness Toward Self Happens Through How We:

1. schedule our time
2. push our bodies
3. compare and judge ourselves against others
4. take things personally
5. surrender to too many demands
6. commit to too many projects
7. over-schedule to the point that we rob ourselves of the experience of being alive
8. allocate time in a manner that doesn't reflect our inner priorities
9. want to help everyone in everything
10. go about arranging our lives
11. disregard the signals of imbalance over a long term
12. crave to hold on to what we like
13. crave to get rid of what we find difficult
14. neglect to notice, and to question the truth of, beliefs/expectations that cause us to suffer

Practicing Kindness Toward Self

1. Leave time for the quietness of simply being present with yourself. (mindfulness meditation, music, nature ...)
2. Practice noticing when you are wanting things to be different than the way they are. (Book: Loving What Is, by Byron Katie; thework.org).
3. Stop your thinking or feelings from controlling your life by changing how you perceive them (Byron Katie's Work). Disown them.
4. Do just what has to be done right now, for that's all you can do.
5. Let go of the belief that you should be able to control the 'stormy situations' in your life.

Helpful Thoughts

- Fully accepting what is true in the moment is the only firm ground upon which to make changes in your life and to heal.
- "The internal work and external work of care giving are the same. The more you can develop the internal ability to be a calm, compassionate presence toward yourself, the more you can bring that presence to everyone you serve."
(*Emotional Intelligence*, Dr. Daniel Goleman)
- "The one who can be present with us in our hours of grief, who can tolerate not knowing, and face with us the reality of our vulnerability, that is the one who gives us our best caring." (*Out of Solitude*, Henry Nouwen)
- The more you are able to be with yourself in a kind way, the more kindness/help you will offer to another.
- The true measure of a gift is not in the cost to the giver, but in the need of the receiver.