



SUGGESTED LITERATURE & RESOURCES GUIDE

NOTE: The MCEC generally does not recommend the use of these books by children experiencing and coping with trauma, grief, and loss without direct parental supervision or guidance and support from other caring adults. This list was compiled with a committee of our MCEC advisors representing various perspectives: psychologists, educators, military families, grief specialists, and our professional developers. The statements included in this list are opinions based on our MCEC perspective and guiding principles and are not intended to be a comprehensive review of the literature, but rather a guide.

EARLY ELEMENTARY

A Bunch of Balloons

Dorothy Ferguson

Author discusses loss and grief by introducing a story about a little child who loses a balloon. The author then introduces the topic of death and grief and leads the reader through activities using balloons to capture what is lost and what remains in the grieving child's life. The goal is to help grieving children acknowledge what they have lost and celebrate what they still have left when someone they love has died.

I had a Friend Named Peter: Talking to Children About the Death of a Friend

Cohn, Janice

A young child learns of the sudden death of her school friend, Peter, who was accidentally hit by a car while chasing a ball. Excellent introduction helps adults understand the many questions children pose following the death of a loved one. Addresses dying, funerals, and burial in direct language. Also has a school setting with teacher and classroom. Picture book. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Have child talk about their memories of the deceased – their likes AND dislikes of the person. For sudden death situations, ask child how they would say good-bye to the person.

A Good Day

Henkes, Kevin

Four little creatures encounter dilemmas in their day. Using their circumstances, relatable to the young child, this story presents a simple message of reassurance in times of sadness, disappointment and challenge. This book encourages hope and resilience and invites discussion with children regarding their own situations.

Ragtail Remembers – A Story That Helps Children Understand Feelings of Guilt

Duckworth, Liz

The death of an old cat who was a playful companion and good friend of the storyteller, a mouse named Ragtail. The language is clear and direct, that lends to the open discussion of feelings and emotions that are experienced when there is a death and loss. It demonstrates the importance of friends, the help

rendered by a wise blue jay that acts as a faithful guide and teacher and becomes a new friend and playmate of the mouse. It is also about honoring and remembering in death.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf

Bascaglia, Leo

Freddie learns about the cycle of life from his fellow leaf friend, Daniel. Freddie comments on his experience regarding his mentor's death and then his own death. Caution to ensure child understands that death is not sleeping, but is permanent.

The Wall

Bunting, Eva

In this moving picture book, a little boy and his father visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial ("The Wall") to find the name of the boy's grandfather. They notice details: items left in remembrance, the uniformity of the engraved lettering, a veteran who is an amputee, and more. Together they make a rubbing of the name, which is a popular tradition.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death

Brown, Marc, and Laurie Krasney

Uses dinosaurs to explain in simple language the feelings people may have regarding death of a loved one and ways to honor memory of someone who has died. Does not tell a story; addresses fears, curiosity, customs, and acknowledges military death and war.

CAUTION: Some may take offense that the death of a pet is represented as equal to the death of a person. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Dinosaurs are extinct (this can cause a whole separate discussion!) Look closely at the drawings for details related to the children's questions in the book.

MID ELEMENTARY

Everett Anderson's Goodbye

Clifton, Lucille

Written in verse and beautifully illustrated with charcoal line drawings, this book features a young African-American boy whose father has died. The theory of stages of grief is presented through the eyes of the young boy and his profound loss. Theories differ in describing grief as stages, phases or processes. Stages infer a linear progression. Current research emphasizes grief as a process with phases that individuals may experience at different times.

Geranium Morning

Powell, Sandy

Two elementary aged kids, a boy and a girl, each lose a parent, a father and a mother, respectively. The father dies suddenly in an accident and the mother dies from illness. The children help each other deal with their grief; story expresses the value of shared experience as the root of recovery. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Talk about the benefit of sharing a new friendship with someone who has had a similar experience. NOTE: This book is out of print, but used copies may be available online.

I Don't Have an Uncle Phil Anymore

Pellegrino, Marjorie

When a young boy's uncle dies, he must board a plane and fly to the funeral. He recalls the fun times he had with his Uncle Phil and how he used to play and do special things with his Uncle Phil and his cousin. He worries about his cousin and aunt and who will play with his uncle now. The boy witnesses the support of his uncle's fellow firefighters when the funeral procession passes the fire house. The boy calls this a sad parade. The boy hugs his cousin Jenny and comforts her when she exclaims while playing blocks, "I don't have a daddy anymore."

I Miss You – A First Look at Death

Thomas, Pat

The story uses language that is gentle, simple, clear, and straightforward, directed to a little girl. It explains death as a natural part of life, that after death, the body stops working. It discusses the funeral and provides an excellent discussion of the variation in cultural practices and beliefs regarding death. The question, “What about you?” that appears at the bottom of several pages stimulate discussion of questions a child may have about death, feelings and emotions a child may experience, and the difficulty of understanding. There are suggestions for how to use the book at the end that are useful and instructive. A list of suggested books and resources is provided; the glossary is rather brief. CAUTION: On page 23, one line, “the souls of other people who have passed away” is unusual since otherwise very factual and realistic text is used throughout the story.

Memory String

Bunting, Eve

Young girl's mother dies and her stepmother helps her remember the love they shared using buttons as mementos. Highlights stepmother relationship as helpful. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Gather buttons – including military buttons or insignia – to make a memory string. Discuss the meaning of each button and why it holds that meaning.

The Hero in My Pocket

Lee, Marlene

A brother and sister, ages 10 and 7, experience the loss of their father who died serving in the U.S. military. The children progress through the grief process and positive recovery is encouraged. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Child can write or draw their part of the story on Hero Pages in the book to give voice to their thoughts and feelings. Discuss keepsake memento child may have (or want) of the deceased (95% of children have a keepsake object (transitional linking object) from a deceased parent that they keep in their rooms). Gather Remember Letters or have class write Remember Letters.

What Does That Mean? A Dictionary of Death, Dying and Grief Terms for Grieving Children and Those Who Love Them

Smith, Harold and Joy Johnson

More of an encyclopedia than a dictionary, the clever format of word, pronunciation, definition and example or quotes, sometimes from known literature, could be a good, objective classroom resource.

Owen & Mzee

Hatkoff, Isabella and Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumbu

This is the tale of a baby hippo named Owen and his friend Mzee, a 130 year old giant tortoise. Owen is a survivor and an orphan as a result of the December 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. This profound true story offers a potent reminder that even in the face of tragedy, the power of friendship endures – and that our most important friends are sometimes those we least expect. A true demonstration of resilience and living in a new normal.

Annie Loses Her Leg but Finds Her Way

Philipson, Sandra J. and Robert Takatch

Based on an actual incident, this is both a poignant and funny story of a nine year old English Springer Spaniel who loses her front leg to cancer. Annie and her high-spirited brother, Max, experience her illness and recovery in very different ways. Max is in denial, and Annie is in a state of sad acceptance. This is a book about love, loss, friendship, and optimism.

ELEMENTARY AND EARLY TEENS

A Taste of Blackberries

Smith, Doris Buchanan

Two 'tween boys, best friends, "planned to have fun all summer," but one boy dies suddenly. Novel follows range of thoughts, emotions, and actions of surviving best friend.

Coping with Death & Grief

Heegaard, Marge Eaton

Eight vignettes about the death of a person and the child (ren) affected. Several different kinds of death and relationships are illustrated in easy-to-read format, followed by factual discussion points about grief, changes in relationship, realities of day-to-dayness, and many other aspects. References military funerals, playing taps, and much discussion about school settings, including death discussed in the classroom. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Discuss the concept of grief as a fact, a normal aspect of the human condition. Discuss how the relationship to someone is a primary factor in one's experience with grief.

How It Feels When a Parent Dies

Krementz, Jill

Eighteen kids, boys and girls ages 7-16, wrote personal essays about their experiences and feelings about the death of their parent. Different types of loss are represented as are a range of normal feelings: anguish, guilt, confusion, anger – and their lives since the death. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Discuss how book shows that grief reactions and responses are as individual as people. With teen-ages, discuss aspects that make it individual (age at time of death, family composition, type of death).

Part of Me Died, Too: Stories of Creative Survival Among Bereaved Children and Teenagers

Fry, Virginia Lynn

First-person stories by kids of different ages who experienced loved ones' death (father, mother, friend, other relative) from different means (sudden death, lingering illness, and suicide). They describe their reactions and effects. Table of contents lists type of death and ages of kids so reader can go right to the section. In the epilogue the kids reflect on their original writings and talk about how they are now. Also lists follow-on reading suggestions. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Discuss how book shows that grief reactions and responses are as individual as individuals. With teenagers, discuss aspects that make it individual (age at time of death, family composition, type of death).

What We Do When Someone Dies

Arnold, Caroline

Fact-based book that explains vocabulary related to someone eddying and afterwards (obituaries, funeral service, etc.) Ranges from concept that all living things must die to what happens to the body, funeral ceremonies and afterwards. Acknowledgment of multi-cultural beliefs and customs. Acknowledges that people die in war. Memorial Day, and Arlington National Cemetery. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Discuss military-related traditions (taps, veterans' cemeteries, flags, etc.). Discuss how having facts helps alleviate some of the fear associated with the difficult topic of death (fear of the unknown, fear of taboo topic, etc.). Further discussion on respecting culture and traditions of different religions, nationalities, and allow child to choose topics to discuss further since book is fact-based.

TEENS

Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins – A Journal for Teenagers Experiencing Loss

Traisman, Enid Samuel

A workbook that allows teens to describe their feelings and thoughts related to the death of someone they cared about. A brief statement appears at the top of the page, followed by several responses to encourage and focus their expressions in writing or drawings to remember and honor the one who died. The statements are very probing. This process allows teens to be open and candid about their feelings. TEACHABLE MOMENT: Provides valuable discussion opportunities between caring adults and teens experiencing loss.

The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends

Fitzgerald, Helen

Written about and for teens, this guidebook covers a wide range of situations and topics – and suggestions – for grieving teens and those who care about them. Teen voices are heard throughout the book. Does not discuss death of service members but it does discuss secondary losses and complicating factors such as dealing with the press and sudden death. TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Discuss what kind of secondary losses or compounding factors someone may have experienced.

The Healing Your Grieving Heart Journal for Teens

Wolfelt, Alan, PhD and Megan Wolfelt

Guided journal encourages teens to self-explore through self-expression. Designed as a companion book to *Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas*. Useful weeks, months, or even years following the death of a loved one.

When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens about Grieving and Healing

Gootman, Marilyn

The book is about acceptance and compassion. Focuses on answering teen/ pre-teen questions about death.

You Are Not Alone: Teens Talk About Life After the Loss of a Parent

Lynne Hughes

The author, Lynne Hughes, the founder of the Comfort Zone Camp for grieving children who have lost parents or siblings, personally experienced the death of her parents at an early age. The voices of teens who have attended the camp provide illustrative insights into ways young people have dealt with loss. As the title suggests, teens are encouraged to seek help and to know that there are others who share feelings of immeasurable loss.

Finding My Way: A Teen's Guide to Living With a Parent Who Has Experienced Trauma

Michelle D. Sherman, PhD and DeAnne Sherman

An interactive, workbook format that offers teens practical tools and information about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other responses to trauma. Clearly and concisely written, it encourages teens to address their own emotions and key issues in dealing with a parent who has experienced trauma. The gentle guide, using honest and concise language, offers valuable tools for coping, identifying social support networks, and dealing with friends. An extensive resource list, glossary, and frequently asked questions section completes this useful manual.

Facing Change: Falling Apart and Coming Together Again in the Teen Years

Donna O'Toole

Founded on the belief that young adults can make effective choices that can transform pain into resilience, the author provides an abundance of information and coping choices to assist the process. A book about loss, change, and possibilities.

ADULTS – GENERAL

Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief

Boss, Pauline

Offers insight into the meaning and impact of ambiguous loss and suggestions for coping. Author draws from her own research, including interview with military spouses of POW and MIA. Ambiguous loss is applicable to families of those with traumatic injury, Alzheimer's, missing and intense absence.

Helping Children Cope with the Loss of a Loved One: A Guide for Grownups

Kroen, William

Answers questions relative to developmental ages, uses vignettes along with practical and theoretical advice.

Life and Loss: A Guide to Help Grieving Children

Goldman, Linda

Tools, ideas, and inventories for educators and other community members to use in helping kids commemorate loss. Discusses different types of childhood losses and avoids clichés. Provides an example of a "Community Care Team" concept to help the grieving child.

Raising Our Children to be Resilient

Goldman, Linda

Resource for adults to understand how children experience traumatic events and empowering them to be resilient.

Raising An Emotionally Healthy Child When a Parent is Sick

Rauch, Paula, K., M.D. and Anna C. Muriel, M.D., M.P.H.

A friendly and accessible guide to communicating with children about illness, death, and dying. Assists parents in understanding unique temperaments of individual children and practical advice and examples of how to establish and organize a family support system.

Military Widow

Steen, Joanne M., MS, NCC and Regina Asaro, MS, RN, CT

An insider's perspective to understanding and surviving the death of a military service member, as well as implications for surviving dependents. Helpful blend of personal experiences and professional references and research. Addresses the unique aspects and challenges of military widowhood.

Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment

Seligman, Martin E. P.

Positive Psychology is a new approach to psychology focusing on mental health rather than mental illness. Readers learn that happiness, can be cultivated by identifying and using many of the strengths and traits that they already possess; their signature strengths. By calling upon these strengths in all the critical aspects of life, one develops buffers against misfortune and negative emotion. Break free from learned helplessness to learned optimism resulting in greater resilience.

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A Parent's Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings

Ginsburg, Kenneth R.

This practical guide assists parents in showing their children how to be more resilient when facing compounding stressors by developing healthy coping strategies. Dr. Ginsburg introduces parents to the 7 Crucial Cs—competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control and how they work together to help kids 18 months to 18 years bounce back from challenges and manage stress.

ADULTS – EDUCATIONAL FOCUS

Grief Comes to Class: An Educator's Guide

Gliko-Brado, Majel

Short, to-the-point guide, based on results of a study, conducted through the College of Education at Montana State University, to obtain perceptions and feelings about bereaved children. The views of teachers, parents, and the children are represented in the discussion of the environment, culture, individual personality, and circumstances. Examples of children's experiences are interspersed throughout the text, especially helpful in the section on developmental changes among children of different ages, with special attention on teen grief. The "What You Can Do to Help" section offers sample letters and activities for the classroom, with a teacher/ parent/ student conference plan that can be modified and personalized.

Helping Children Grieve & Grow – A Guide For Those Who Care

O'Toole, Donna

This booklet provides a useful, easily understood synopsis to help children to grieve and to grow. The format is functional in its arrangement of concise information with practical suggestions on understanding reactions and what to do to encourage the children. It speaks of resilience in children and offers resources available both nationally and locally. The language is compassionate and demonstrates that the writer has broad experience in the field.

ADULTS-REFERENCE

25 Things To Do: Activities to Help Children Suffering Loss or Change

Kanyer, Laurie A, MA

Practical and simple activities to engage a child suffering a painful loss or change. A creative, sensitive, "Mr. Rogers" like reference for parents and care givers. Encompasses a broad range of loss topics children may encounter in their developmental years; from the loss of a pet, to the divorce of their parents, to the death of a loved one.

35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child

The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

Drawn from stories, suggestions, and insight shared by children and their family members at The Dougy Center, this book explores behaviors and reactions of children at different ages and maturity levels; outlets for children to safely express their thoughts and feelings; and ways to be supportive during difficult times, such as memorial service, anniversary or holidays.

How To Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies

Rando, Terese A.

Step-by-step guide for adults to talk about death with children of all ages to help understand what they think, how they feel, and what they comprehend. Directly addresses how adults can help, providing checklists, scripts, and quick reference information.

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How Do We Tell Children: Helping Children Understand and Cope When Someone Dies

Schaefer, Dan and Christine Lyons

Written by a former funeral home director who dealt with thousands of families, this book helps adults understand how to talk with children openly about death. Covers age range from 2 to teenager. Helpful for adults to understand what children can and cannot grasp at certain developmental stages but it is not a textbook.

Losing Parents to Death in the Early Years

Lieberman, Alicia

Written by one of the most respected professionals in the field of early trauma/ loss, the author explains how vulnerable children can be given their immaturity. Addresses difficult issues that arise as a result of death due to military service or socially-stigmatized causes.

Treating Trauma and Traumatic Grief in Children and Adolescents

Cohen, Judith

This book describes the state-of-the-art cognitive behavioral therapies used in treating children who are exposed to trauma and traumatic death. While it is mainly targeted for therapists, and clinicians who work with this population of children, it is also an excellent reference for others who would like to understand the most effective, evidence-based approaches to helping children and adolescents who suffer with trauma related disorders.

INTERNET & TECHNOLOGY – BASED RESOURCES

www.militarychild.org

The Military Child Education Coalition™ is a 501(c) (3) non-profit, world-wide organization. A model of positive leadership and advocacy, the MCEC®'s work is focused on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition.

www.fishfulthinking.com

Useful activities and information for parents and caregivers to help foster resilience in children. Look for the quiz on resiliency and positive thinking in children.

www.authentichappines.com

Be sure to check out the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire to determine your personal strengths and then consider how you can apply them to supporting children.

www.militaryonesource.com

Whether its help with child care, personal finances, emotional support during deployments, relocation information, or resources needed for special circumstances, Military OneSource is there for military personnel and their families... 24/7/365! The service is available by phone, online and face-to-face through private counseling sessions in the local community. Highly qualified, master's prepared consultants provide the service. Personalized consultations on specific issues such as education, special needs, and finances are provided. Customized research detailing community resources and appropriate military referrals are offered. Clients can even get help with simultaneous language interpretation and document translation services.

www.sesameworkshop.org

Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping Families During Military Deployment

This Sesame Workshop's DVD is a bilingual educational outreach initiative designed for military families and their young children. We see Elmo and his family preparing for a separation and learn how they establish routines that help them feel connected while apart. Though it's designed to relate to the young child, families find viewing this DVD together generates valuable discussion about deployment at every age.

www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org

The Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress works to provide knowledge, leadership and applications for preparing for, responding to and recovering from the consequences of disaster and trauma. The Center advances knowledge, health care and preparedness through education, research, consultation and training. This occurs onsite, offsite, through distance learning initiatives and through collaborations with federal, state and private organizations as well as national and international networks of disaster organizations and experts.

www.zerotothree.org

Zero To Three is a national nonprofit whose mission is to support the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers, and their families. Their Coming Together Around Military Families – Duty to Care initiatives have wonderful resources for parents and caregivers of very young, military-connected children.

www.mghpact.org

The Massachusetts General Hospital Marjorie E. Korff Parenting at a Challenging Time (PACT) program focuses mainly on parents dealing with a Cancer related illness, but the “For Parents” section of the website has very useful tips for parents and caregivers on how to share information about a parent’s illness or long term recovery with children. This website is in conjunction with the book *Raising An Emotionally Healthy Child When a Parent is Sick* by Paula K. Rauch., M.D. and Anna C. Muriel, M.D., M.P.H. Be sure to check out the “15 lessons learned” section.

www.aap.org/sections/unifserv/deployment/index.html

Mr. Poe and Friends Discuss Family Reunion After Deployment

An animated multi-media deployment support toolkit for elementary aged children.

Military Youth Coping with Separation: When Family Members Deploy

This program contains an excellent interactive stress plan for teens. For additional information and resources visit the Military Youth Deployment Support Web Site at:

www.wordscanwork.org

Words Can Work is a leading producer and distributor of DVD’s and Words Can Work booklets for young people, parents, and other caregivers, about the challenges kids face growing up. These DVDs and booklets are produced with technical assistance from advisors at Harvard Medical School and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.