

# How to talk to kids about Grief/Loss/Change

## Important points to know and remember...

- Loss is defined as not being able to see/hear/hold something that we expected to, want to. Something we had/knew that is gone/different.
- Do your own work so that you can be a non-anxious, non-judgemental presence.
- Be: **sincere, honest, and authentic**. Children have laser-beam detectors for this. This means having self-awareness and the courage to be truthful.
- LISTEN. Don't make assumptions or predictions about how a child feels, hear what they are actually saying. Offer your caring self. Ask: "What do you miss the most about (\_\_\_) today?" "What has been helping you get through this time?" and then **listen**.
- Children need to know they are not alone in their fears and feelings, and that they have a place to ask questions. Let them ask. "Is there anything you want to talk about that you haven't been able to talk about, or ask questions about?"
- **Trust** children to be able to ask what they are wondering and to understand simple answers. Don't say more than they are asking, but don't withhold what they want to know. They want, need, and deserve the truth.
- Don't try to fix or take away the feelings. Be courageous to sit with them.
- Sarcasm has no place in grief work. It doesn't fit. It doesn't work. Don't attempt humor. Do bring authentic joy, notice beauty around you/them, point out something sweet or lovely (a tree, an animal, a piece of art).
- Grief is about remembering, not forgetting. Put more photos out, don't put them away.
- EVERY loss brings up previous losses.
- WE GRIEVE only BECAUSE WE LOVE. (Read that again.)
- Be open to talking about COVID19, stay-at-home orders, diagnosis, hospitals, and all of it.
- Have self-compassion and self-empathy before/during/after a difficult conversation. This is real work. You are a helper and a healer. Hug yourself. (Go ahead, right now.)

# Resources

## General Grief and Loss

Organization	Description of Content	Link to Site
<p><b>The Dougy Center</b></p> <p>If you want one org/site to turn to, The Dougy Center is the one.</p>	<p>The Dougy Center provides support to children, teens, young adults, and their families. They provide support and training locally, nationally, and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children in grief.</p>	<p><a href="http://dougy.org">dougy.org</a></p>
<p><b>National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC)</b></p>	<p>A nonprofit organization that raises awareness about the needs of children and teens who are grieving a death and provides education and resources for anyone who supports them. Active professional member organization.</p>	<p><a href="http://childrengrieve.org/resources">childrengrieve.org/resources</a></p>
<p><b>American Academy of Pediatrics</b></p>	<p>PDF entitled: After a Loved One Dies—How Children Grieve</p>	<p><a href="#">PDF</a> from aap.org</p>
<p><b>American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)</b></p>	<p>Facts for Families page on Grief and Children</p>	<p><a href="http://aacap.org">aacap.org</a></p>
School Specific		
Organization	Description of Content	Link to Site
<p><b>Coalition to Support Grieving Students</b></p>	<p>The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a collaboration with a common conviction: grieving students need the support and care of the school community.</p>	<p><a href="http://grievingstudents.org">grievingstudents.org</a></p>
<p><b>American School Counselor Association</b></p>	<p>School specific resources to support kids and families, especially in this time of online learning. Mostly focused on the work of counseling, but good info with lots of links.</p>	<p><a href="http://schoolcounselor.org">schoolcounselor.org</a></p>

## COVID-19 Specific

Organization	Description of Content	Relevant Page on Site
<b>National Association of School Psychologists</b>	<i>Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19</i> : focuses specifically on changes at this time, and includes links to other sites such as CDC.	<a href="https://www.nasponline.org">NASPOnline.org</a>
<b>National Alliance for Grieving Children</b> (also listed above for general resources)	COVID-19 Specific blog posts and links.	childrengrieve.org <a href="https://www.childrengrieve.org/covid-19">COVID19</a>
<b>Child Mind Institute</b>	Article and video entitled: <i>Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus</i>	<a href="https://www.childmind.org">childmind.org</a>
<b>National Child Traumatic Stress Network</b>	Provides information for parents and caregivers about infectious disease outbreaks..	nctsn.org <a href="https://www.nctsn.org/parent/caregiver">parent/caregiver</a>
<b>National Alliance on Mental Illness</b>	"How to Ease Children's Anxiety About COVID19" and other blog posts...	NAMI <a href="https://www.nami.org/blogs">Blog</a>

## Help for Ourselves

Organization	Description of Content	Relevant Page on Site
<b>American Foundation for Suicide Prevention</b>	We are amid an unprecedented public health crisis, yet we also have an extraordinary opportunity to come together within our families and our communities to reduce the stigma that often surrounds mental health. (EXCELLENT resource.)	<a href="https://www.afsp.org/mental-health-and-covid-19">Mental Health and COVID-19</a>
<b>Edutopia</b>	A good article (from 2017). Talks about ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), which this current time will be for all of our students, and therefore, for us.  The second link is a current article about teaching through a pandemic.	<a href="https://www.edutopia.org/when-students-are-traumatized-teachers-are-too">When Students Are Traumatized, Teachers Are Too</a>  <a href="https://www.edutopia.org/teaching-through-a-pandemic">Teaching Through a Pandemic: A mindset for this moment</a>